

Gender in CATIE: Experiences and Lessons Learned



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I Background

In 1995, CATIE formulated a gender policy aimed to improve the Center's role in the transfer of knowledge, experience, and expertise on gender issues among various institutions; to develop a strong gender component in higher education, training and outreach activities; and to incorporate gender aspects in the formulation and implementation of research projects.

Three years after the approval of the gender policy, a Dutch gender specialist conducted an internal evaluation undertaken to see if the recommended strategies and approaches had been implemented. As illustrated by the study, CATIE made significant improvements in trying to integrate gender in the institution including staff recruitment, graduate programs, projects being implemented and in its outreach programs. Nonetheless, the study underscored the fact that there were still a number of issues that needed to be addressed to fully incorporate the issue of gender in the Center.

Unfortunately, after this internal evaluation, CATIE was unable to progress further, primarily because of financial constraints that the Center faced. In fact, for the past five years, there was no gender specialist at CATIE which affected the way the Center tackled this issue.

Besides, a reading of both the official documents of CATIE (new Strategic and three-year plans) and the reports by external monitoring and evaluation missions showed us that the gender dimension received a low degree of attention in these benchmarks of policy making.

This problem does not mean, however, that CATIE has completely abandoned this issue. Although not directly targeting this, CATIE has been incorporating this issue in the Graduate Program, research, outreach and training activities. The following sections discusses, in a transparent and balanced way, what CATIE--as an academic, research and training institution—has accomplished and been unable to achieve for the past ten years in regard to gender integration in the center.

¹ The authors are part of the academic/scientific staff of CATIE.

² IUCN worldwide gender specialist.

II Gender in CATIE at the present time

Analysis of gender incorporation in an institution such as CATIE has always been a challenge. Not only does CATIE have various components and projects, it also addresses diversified issues that are traditionally perceived to be male-dominated. Also, the lack of indicators makes it difficult to identify the progress achieved in this regard.

Two major components of CATIE are analyzed in this section: internal, which includes the Higher Education Program and the Human Resources Area where recruitment and development of staff is undertaken; and external, which tackles research and development projects being implemented by CATIE with their international and national counterparts.

Human Resources

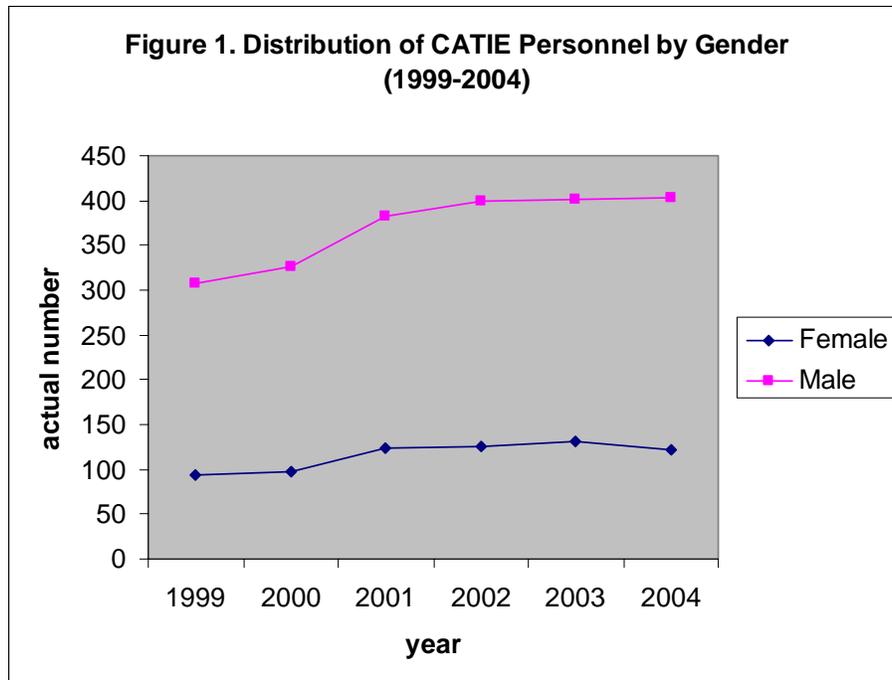
Data disaggregated by gender has always been a good numerical parameter to use in evaluating gender equity in an institution. Although most of job position announcements in CATIE emphasized that there is no discrimination as to religion, race, and gender, the data since 1999 shows that there is a constant trend of employing a higher number of men compared to women (see Figure 1). This is true in almost all the occupational groups that include field workers, administrative support, nationally recruited personnel, and internationally hired staff³ (see Figure 2). On the other hand, there are gender preferences; for example, secretarial positions are given to women while drivers are always men. The tendency of having more males than females is also reflected in the ratio of men to women who have higher education (masters and doctorate) where there are only eight women holding PhDs based in the main office and only one woman working outside. On the other hand, there are 32⁽⁴⁾ men with PhDs at Headquarters and five working outside.

Even though the total number of employees and its distribution by gender has remained constant during the past five years, CATIE personnel now have partial salaries and the number of core positions has declined. Substantial funding is now related to short-term projects and consultancies, and permanency of a CATIE staff member depends on his/her willingness to accept frequent travel or working in a remote area. The latter reason might have a bearing in terms of the lower proportion of women working at CATIE, particularly jobs which are technically oriented. This is crucial to married individuals who must think of their children's education, health services, among others, which could be very limited or unavailable in some areas where these jobs are situated. This is a very interesting and relevant analytical aspect with practical implications to tackle disabling factors.

In addition, a high percentage of the staff are foreign associated experts or out-posted personnel from key partner organizations such as CIFOR, IPGRI, CABI, CIRAD, CIM, ICRA and GTZ, among others. The selection of these experts is not made by CATIE, and most of them are males.

³ Detail description of each occupation group is found in Annex 1

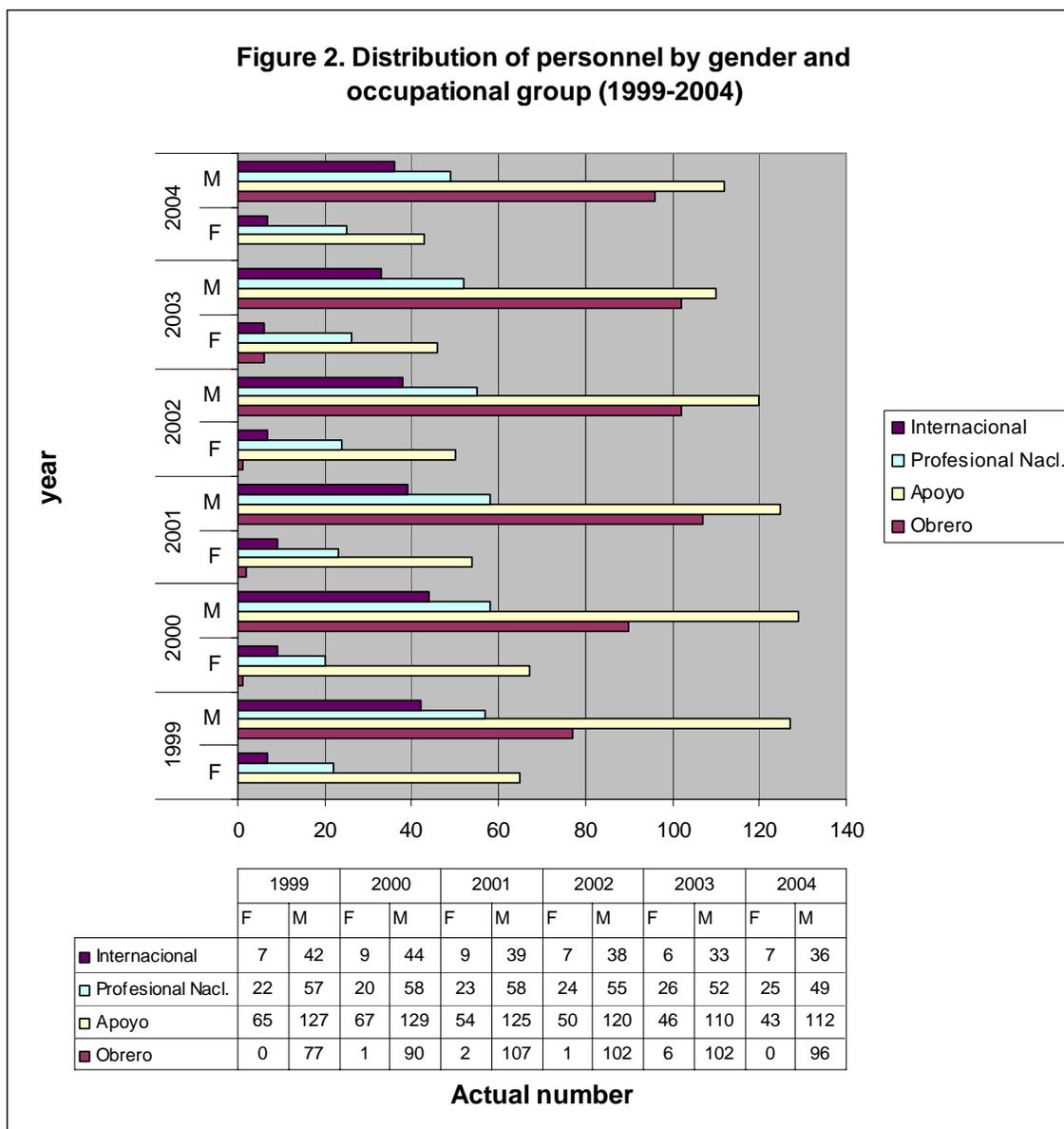
⁴ Excluding WWF personnel, which receives their international mission status from CATIE.



However, for the past two years, the number of women being hired is increasing, particularly at higher and more technical positions. For example, during the 1999-2004 period, for the first time in CATIE's history, two women became Directors and two women became Office Heads in Member Nations. This only means that regardless of gender, CATIE hires staff who are qualified for a particular position.

The uneven distribution of gender positions at CATIE could also be attributed to the fact that very few women have applied for all positions offered by CATIE. As a case in point, the data from 2003-2004 shows that in 48 vacancies announced, only 23% of 1071 applications received were from women. It is hard to identify why very few women are applying for these positions, but it is apparent that CATIE has not implemented any affirmative actions to encourage or promote the incorporation of women in its staff nor to tackle the factors impeding women to apply and compete in an equitable manner.

In regard to salary received by both genders, CATIE pays its personnel based on various factors including educational background and experience, just to name a few. It seems that there is not much discrepancy in the salary received by both men and women. In cases where there are obvious differences in regard to similar positions being held but receiving different salary, these cases are usually influenced by the country's wage regulations where the person is working (particularly for those who work outside Headquarters). As for those who have the same educational background and are holding similar positions, the difference, if it exists, is because of experience acquired.



Graduate Program

Since the creation of the Gender Policy, the Graduate School has implemented an affirmative action plan to balance the number of students entering the Master of Science Program. Although the affirmative action increased the number of women accepted in CATIE, some of the methods were proven to be counterproductive (i.e. less stringent requirements for women resulting in that some female students were unable to finish). These affirmative actions were eliminated in 2000. Since then, the recruitment process in the Graduate School does not make any distinction between males and females. Admission is based on past academic performance, professional experience, publications, and references, giving equal opportunities for both male and female students.

The same is true in regard to awarding scholarships or financial assistance. Because of the sharp decline of contribution to CATIE's core budget and, in particular, to the graduate programs, new strategies were implemented by the Graduate School. The Scholarship-Loan (S-L) Program was created where students from the Member Nations are given a 50% waiver of tuition and fee costs and provided a nine-year loan for the remaining study costs. Although this scholarship does not make any distinction between male or female students, the percentage of acceptance of the S-L mechanism is higher for women (31%) compared to men (22%).

The data regarding the number of students since 1998 to the present reflects that there seems to be a stable trend with a small increase in the number of women (from 20 in 1998-99 to 27 in the class of 2005-06). However, it is noteworthy that for the first time in the history of the Graduate School, the present data shows that female students outnumber their male counterpart (52 to 48, respectively), an indicator that more women are becoming interested in undertaking technical jobs which have traditionally been dominated by men. In terms of percentage of admission, women were more successful (82%) in the admission process than their male counterpart (76%), which further shows the increasing interest of women to succeed in this type of field. The enrollment data of the doctoral program also illustrates this changing trend. From 1999 to 2001, the following ratios of male *vis a vis* female PhD students were observed: 1999 M=3, F=0, 2000 M=2, F=0, 2001 M=6, F=1. In 2002 this trend started to change as 3 women got accepted in the PhD program and in 2004 there were more women (7) PhD candidates than men (3).

Overall, the elimination of affirmative action in the year 2000, the more stringent application procedures and the introduction of the scholarship-loan scheme has not negatively affected the participation of women in CATIE's Graduate School.

Research Projects

CATIE is also known for its research, training and extension activities. Presently, there are more than 40 projects being implemented in 10 countries in Central and South America, but no single project works directly on gender issues. The concept is accepted by all key players but remains very abstract and diverse and, hence, needs further attention. First of all, even though all projects manifest their interest in incorporating the issue in their activities, it seems that project implementers and researchers have different conceptions and definitions of what gender is. Many still believe that the incorporation of women or making them visible in the project is the best way to address the gender issue. Second, there are projects that by nature and as dictated by tradition and culture, are dominated by men (e.g. animal husbandry and forestry). Hence, the majority of research and development activities have focused on production systems that cater to the needs of male members of the households. Third, indicators for monitoring and evaluation of impacts continue to focus on numerical parameters (i.e. number of men vs. women). There is an absence of criteria to measure the impact that the initiatives are having on the promotion of equity. No observation or analysis is made on the more qualitative aspects

of participation (degree of participation in discussion, information sharing, decision making, leadership) when it comes to mixed organizations.

It cannot be denied, however, that most of the projects are trying to address this issue in the best way that they understand the term. First, a number of projects are using participatory approaches to their research and extension activities. This entails giving local people voices in terms of identifying needs and problems and in seeking possible solutions. Although this does not illustrate a direct relation with the gender issue, it is a step toward incorporating members of the households in the activities that were traditionally dictated by technical people. Second, there are projects that show a concern and initiate activities that directly address the issue. For instance, in the Degraded Pastures (MFA-Norway) and Small and Medium Forest Industries (MIF-IDB) projects and the CeCoEco (Eco-Enterprises) Thematic Group, a gender-sensitive approach is applied both in research (analyzing differentiations in roles, needs, decision-making, activities, and perspectives) and extension (initiating projects led by women that target health improvement and income generation), for the case of the Degraded Pastures project. In the FOCUENCAS-Sida project, the local team wants to develop a gender strategy that will give more space for women in production systems and watershed management programs. In the new Talamanca (World Bank-Japan) project on carbon sequestration and payment of environmental services to indigenous producers, the women's indigenous organization, ACOMUITA, will administer the fund and thus will play a central role in the implementation of the project. In projects like Environmental Services-GEF, IPM/AF-NORAD, etc., educational field trips (farm and school visits) were included in activities where all members of the households were encouraged to join. These events become a venue to increase the participation of women and children in the production system. All projects also offer training that promote the participation of both male and female family members. This is particularly true with the Forest Industries (MIF-IDB) project, where they give training to both men and women on how to look for market opportunities for non-timber forest products. There are also cases when the consequence of the project activities helped community members to become innovative and indulge in other income-generating activities such as what happened with the Transforma (COSUDE-Switzerland) project. Women became involved in the collection and marketing of orchids which they collected from the felled trees. Hence, even though the project was mainly focused on men, their activity has led to the creation of the orchid enterprise spearheaded by women.

Recommendations

The present status of gender incorporation and approaches that CATIE is utilizing in this regard illustrates that the gender issue is not completely neglected in the Center. Nonetheless, there are still some major actions that must be undertaken to further improve the integration of gender in all of CATIE's components. The most important actions is the revision of CATIE's Gender Policy and development of a Plan of Action and a strategy with the consensus of all of CATIE's different constituents.

However, it is clear from the above analysis, that the actions to be undertaken require a long-term commitment and, ideally, some permanent investment in personnel and operations. A group of staff devoted to gender, environment, equity and rural development, incorporated in CATIE's Area of Socio-Economics will ideally provide the necessary internal technical backstopping to the Center, and to partner institutions in Central America.

Some of the areas that the Plan of Action should contemplate are as follow:

I. Internal Level

- a. Programatic level – organization and forms of work
 - i. Types of internal organization
 - ii. The role of management/leadership
 - iii. Hierarchies
 - iv. Teamwork
- b. Strategic level
 - i. Ensure gender is mainstreamed in the planning process and incorporated in CATIE's Strategic and Annual Plans (going beyond general statement of principles).
 - ii. Include a gender dimension in CATIE's position paper on rural poverty reduction in Central America, to be presented in the April international workshop on this subject.
 - iii. Include equity and gender indicators in the new CATIE three year plan.
- c. Operational Level
 - i. Human Resources- administration with a gender perspective.
Development of policies that are gender-sensitive in: hiring, incentives, wages. Definition of a gender-sensitive organization (i.e. efforts must be made to encourage women to apply by minimizing factors that can hinder their application. Offer services such as child care and school facilities).
- d. Higher Education
 - i. Revise the curricula in order to ensure that gender criteria are included in the courses.
 - ii. Evaluate the possibility of a gender course as an introductory course to all students
 - iii. Provide access to knowledge, tools and methodologies for professors and students (i.e. improve the library in terms of searches for academic journals that focus on this issue)
 - iv. Awareness process to all CATIE staff on gender and sustainable use of natural resources

- v. Create links with other universities that have strong gender units (i.e. Harvard University, University of Florida, Amsterdam University)
- vi. Include gender considerations in performance evaluations of professors.

II. External Level: Research and Extension/Outreach Component

- a. Develop guidelines that will ensure gender criteria in the formulation of project proposals
- b. Systematize lessons learned from the field on gender equity
- c. Promote interchange with other institutions (i.e. IUCN) according to specific topics and/or needs (watersheds, livestock, biodiversity, forestry) that can further incorporate gender in the projects
- d. Develop gender-sensitive indicators in monitoring and evaluation of projects' impact
- e. Ensure that personnel in projects are gender sensitive

Immediate steps to be taken within a long-term perspective:

- Include and make operational the gender dimension in any CATIE policy papers and plans presently being developed.
- Assign resources for the development of a gender strategy and Plan of Action. CATIE can look for financial support from its partners and collaborating institutions (i.e. IUCN, gender unit)
- Develop a proposal to seek funds to implement the strategy
- Ask donors to jointly fund an endowed Chair on '**Gender, Environment and Rural Development**', creating a permanent funding basis to give CATIE and the region permanent support in those issues.

Annex 1. Description of occupational groups

- a. **International Professional Staff:** are high-level professionals working outside their native country. A doctoral degree is normally required in this category.
- b. **National Professional Staff:** are professionals hired locally, and who require a professional diploma at the graduate or undergraduate level.
- c. **Support Staff:** are hired to carry out tasks that do or do not require specific technical training, and do not need an academic diploma. These are professionals hired locally to develop administrative or service functions.
- d. **Field workers:** are employees who carry out field tasks or activities that normally do not require specific technical or professional training.