

STRUCTURED SUMMARY

THE USE OF GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES (GTAS) IN PASTORALIST SOCIETIES

What we know about what works and recommendations for a way forward

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Motivation

Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in drylands face worsening climate, economic and social pressures, disproportionately affecting women. Droughts driven by climate change force them to travel farther for water and grazing, increasing risks such as gender-based violence. Deep-rooted inequalities limit their mobility, education and economic opportunities. **Gender transformative approaches (GTAs)** can help challenge norms, empower women and build resilient, sustainable livelihoods.

GTAs go beyond surface-level disparities to challenge deep-rooted norms, power dynamics, and policies driving inequality (EU, 2024). Over the past 15 years, GTAs have emerged to address limitations in gender integration, shifting from a narrow focus on women to structural change. Implemented over 12–24 months, they engage households, communities and institutions for lasting impact.

A core principle in facilitating GTAs is that gender transformative change must come from within the communities and societies where this change occurs and cannot be imposed from the outside.

FAO, et al. (2023)

Purpose

We identify gender transformative interventions in food security, particularly for pastoralist communities, for insights to shape future GTA tools for dryland communities.

Approach and methods

We reviewed literature, including development approaches. We analysed 15 interventions from the past decade to change behaviour and monitor change used in the Horn of Africa.

Findings

Gender norms harm food security. Gender norms that disadvantage women contribute to food insecurity. Yet evidence shows that when women control resources, household nutrition improves. Closing the gender gap in agriculture could increase global production by 4% and reduce undernourishment by 17% (Cole and Acosta, 2023).

Adaptation required: GTAs must be tailored to pastoralist communities, considering mobility, seasonal shifts and frequent shocks. Social dialogue, facilitated by community role models, can help challenge unequal norms.

Intersectional challenges: Differences in ethnicity, age and disability amplify risks, requiring GTAs to address these differences for greater resilience and reduced violence, especially for women and youth.

Need for more and better evidence: GTAs are mainly applied in mixed farming communities. Evidence of GTAs in mobile and pastoralist communities is lacking. More rigorous assessments are required to measure GTAs' impacts on food security. More research is needed to identify effective and scalable strategies, particularly in rural areas.

Policy implications

Strengthening women's agency in agriculture, including livestock, is key to building resilient households. Given pastoralists' mobility, GTA models must adapt by integrating frequent social dialogue, mobile communication and community champions along migration routes to sustain engagement and decision-making.

More rigorous evaluation is needed to assess GTAs' effectiveness in pastoralist dryland communities.

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