



# CONDUCTING GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

Researchers, from Masters to Professors,  
share their personal experiences in and  
insights from the field.

Moses Asamoah

Ailish Craig

Henry Hunga

Fiona Ngarachu

John Obiri

Francis Oloo

Gertrude Domfeh Owusu

&

Adelaide Hitchings, Laura Lewis, Jon Lawn &

Julie Reeves



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This field book is composed of **seven case studies** from researchers in the following institutions:

- Kenyatta University,
- Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST),
- Technical University of Kenya (TUK),
- University of Ghana,
- University of Malawi,
- University of Southampton.



Each Case Study includes:

1. Research Topic
2. Preparing for Gender Sensitive Research
3. Demographic Overview
4. Study Site
5. Gender Interactions
6. Improving Gender Inclusion
7. Impact of Own Gender
8. Top Tip



# CASE STUDY 1

## Moses Asamoah

### University of Ghana



## GENDER INTERACTIONS

*“At one point I mixed the group because the numbers that showed up for the discussion were small, so I needed to merge the two genders into a group. I realised that the women were only responding to the questions with a yes and no answer while the men were giving more details to events. I didn’t see this same pattern when the groups were separated by gender.”*

## IMPROVING GENDER INCLUSION

- There were gender separated discussions.

## IMPACT OF OWN GENDER

I used a female translator to translate for the female groups whereas I used a male for the others.

- It was realised that the female group kept repeating already said answers.

## RESEARCH TOPIC

*“Assessing flooding impact and adaptation among community members in the dryland areas of northern Ghana during the raining season and dam spill from the Bagre in Burkina Faso along the white Volta river in Ghana.”*

## PREPARING FOR GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

An initial trip to the study site (reconnaissance visit) was made that -

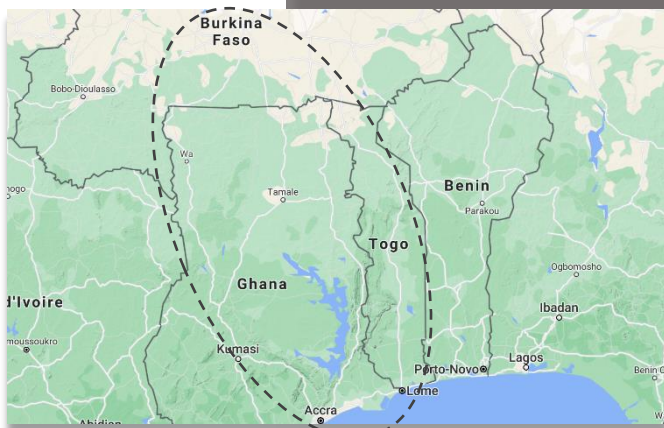
- Allowed interaction with some of the stakeholders and key informants.
- Aided in literature search.
- Co-designing with stakeholders.

## DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Engaging with community members over the age of 18 years.

- Groups were made based on three age categories, 18-35, 36-49 and over 50 to understand the role age plays aside gender in adapting to flooding in their communities.
- Focus Group discussions were held separately for men and women to avoid any gender bias controlling the discussion.
- Personally, the researcher has lived in this community for over five years and has experienced over 2 flooding events.

## STUDY SITE



## TOP TIP

*“It is always good to separate the groups for gender sensitive research for example, if it involved reproductive issues or livelihood issues. Try to also let the conductor be of the same sex.”*





# CASE STUDY 2

## Gertrude Domfeh Owusu

### University of Ghana



#### RESEARCH TOPIC

*“Assessing Well-being Outcomes of Women Shea Processors in Talensi District of the Upper East Region of Ghana.”*

*“Problem Statement: Women’s economic activity as shea processors is challenged by increased commercialisation of shea products without their active participation in the marketing process. This leaves women and their households impoverished and food insecure which could affect their wellbeing.”*

#### PREPARING FOR GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

- Read literature on the problems faced by women in drylands in Ghana.
- Consulted some of the stakeholders identified during the Ghana stakeholder engagements to identify some local communities where women harvested and processed shea nuts into oil and butter and for sale.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

- Research focused on women.
- There were also men who represented organisations and government institutions whose work focused on the shea industry in Ghana, as key informant interviewees. However, they spoke on behalf of their organisations and not as individuals.

#### GENDER INTERACTIONS

- None took place in this [phase of the] fieldwork.
- At the later feedback stage, women welcomed their inclusion in the study as they are not usually involved in research or asked questions.

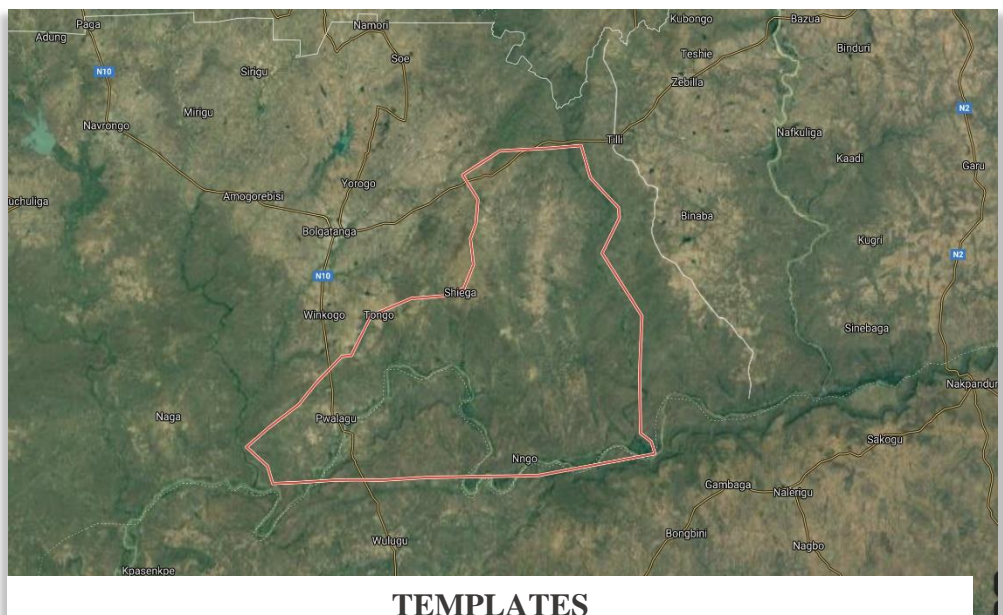
#### IMPROVING GENDER INCLUSION

*“Since the research was mainly focused on women, when the data collectors and translators (identified and recruited on site) were about 99% males, I did not make any extra effort to engage women in the data collection exercise. This also somewhat helped to avoid bias in the collection of the data.”*

#### IMPACT OF OWN GENDER

*“As a woman I am usually empathetic about women's economic livelihoods in general and particularly that of women in poor communities*

#### STUDY SITE



#### TEMPLATES

Questionnaires are available and other data collection tools if required.



#### TOP TIP

*“What people say when in group settings e.g. focus group discussions (FGDs) are not always the same when asked the same questions as individuals. This should be taken into consideration when drafting and conducting gender sensitive research, [and] influenced my choice of research topic.”*



## CASE STUDY 3

Professor John Obiri (our late colleague)  
MMUST



### RESEARCH TOPIC

*“To determine the spatial-temporal distribution of Prosopis juliflora for the past two decades in Turkana region of Kenya.”*

*Who - Turkana people; what-environmental conservation; where - Northern Kenya; when - 2019 onwards; why - to conserve the environment and enhance food security.*

### PREPARING FOR GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

- Gender issues were incorporated by using Gender Desegregated Focus Group Discussions.

### DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

- Research included men and women in the ratios of about 70% to 30% respectively.

### GENDER INTERACTIONS

- Women tend to keep off where men are, such as answering questions or taking lead in discussions.
  - Would be better to have groups separated when answering group questions.

### IMPROVING GENDER INCLUSION

- It is difficult to impose individual ideas in a cultural set up, therefore the researcher decided against trying to improve gender inclusion.

### IMPACT OF OWN GENDER

*“My gender enabled me to easily meet the village men in the survey. If I were a woman, it would have been harder to address the men.”*





## RESEARCH TOPIC

*“Focus groups in Phalombe, Malawi in July 2019 for my Master dissertation. I had 2 male only, 2 female only and 2 mixed focus groups with themes of food security, social capital and extreme weather events.”*

## PREPARING FOR GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

- Focus groups were split by gender to ensure both men and women's experiences and feelings about food security and social capital were captured.
- Asked the village headman to step away after introductions so that women (and men) could freely speak.

## DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

- Any adult man or woman who lived in the community.
- Age range from around mid-20s to mid-60s.
- The participants were not chosen by the researcher; instead the village headman chose them, which does come with its flaws, but as the main gatekeeper, it's important to keep the headman happy.



## GENDER INTERACTIONS

- In the mixed group, the men and women sat separately.
- In one community, the men sat on chairs with the women on the floor.

## CASE STUDY 4

Ailish Craig

University of Southampton



## IMPROVING GENDER INCLUSION

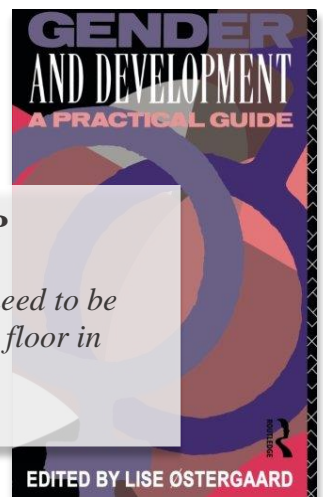
- In the mixed focus group, the researcher tried to directly ask women questions.
- Also, female participants were asked if they agreed with what a male participant said.

## IMPACT OF OWN GENDER

*“I think the women may have felt more at ease as they knew it was my research, however, as a male was translating this may have impacted what they were saying in some way.”*

## LITERATURE

Jo Little & Ruth Paneli (2003) Gender Research in Rural Geography, *Gender, Place and Culture*, Vol. 10, No. 3  
Lise Ostergaard ed. (1992) *Gender and Development: A Practical Guide*.



## TOP TIP

*Women researchers need to be prepared to sit on the floor in community meetings.*



## CASE STUDY 5

### Dr Fiona Ngarachu

### Kenyatta University

#### RESEARCH TOPIC

*"Building capacity for food and water security policy uptake in Kitui and Wajir counties of Kenya"*

*"The research is taking place with participants from Nairobi, Kitui and Wajir counties, but also cutting across with other dryland counties. Participants are policy actors at both national and county government levels as well as Non-governmental organizations and donor agencies. The key objective is to understand the policy environment around food and water security in Kenya including any capacity skills gaps and how these can best be addressed."*

#### PREPARING FOR GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

- Internal review/checklist which:
  - Helped to refocus some of the research questions to understand how the participants conceptualized gender in the first place and address my own gender biases
  - Assisted in thinking about who the beneficiaries of the research would be.
- Ensuring that when recruiting participants, there would be as much as possible a balance between male and female participants.
- When designing the methodology, disaggregating the analysis by gender in order to ensure that important insights are not lost

#### DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF FIELDWORK

- Policy actors from the government at both national and county level.
  - Example at county level: County executives in charge of water, land, environment.
  - Example at national level: Climate officers and environment officers at the national level.
- Also included would be policy actors for non-governmental and donor agencies.
  - For example, policy directors and environmental officers.
- Secondary data from a previous study conducted by one of the BRECCIA stakeholders would also include data from male and female pastoralists, farmers and community members.

#### GENDER INTERACTIONS

*"There were not any significant differences between genders, though the analysis of the data is still ongoing and this may change from that perspective."*

#### IMPROVING GENDER INCLUSION

- Although not particularly relevant with this study, the researcher ensured as much as possible a balance between male and female respondents.

#### IMPACT OF OWN GENDER

*"It allows me to be aware of some of the nuances of gender dynamics, for example it is difficult to have mixed focus groups in certain communities as the women will not be comfortable speaking."*

#### TOP TIP

*"Challenge your own gender biases first so they do not impact on your research."*





## CASE STUDY 6

### Dr Francis Oloo

### Technical University of Kenya

#### RESEARCH TOPIC

*“Predicting food and water security in the dryland regions of Kenya from rainfall-induced land processes.”*

#### PREPARING FOR GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

- Ensuring representation of gender in the research team, data collection team and among the respondents.
- Where necessary, separating male and female respondents to encourage open discussions and feedbacks

#### DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

- Men and women, above 18 years of age.
- Community leaders (above 50 years).
- A youth group (18-40 years).

#### GENDER INTERACTIONS

*“In Kajiado county where we were worked, the community is traditionally patriarchal. Men have the responsibility to speak about the community and their households. Women do not speak where men are. Also, women cannot speak to a stranger unless the stranger is accompanied by a male community member.”*



#### IMPROVING GENDER INCLUSION

- In terms of preparing for the fieldwork, a male field guide who was known by the community was used.
- It was then the responsibility of the guide to speak to the community members and notify them that the discussions will require both male and female participants.
- In the focus group discussions, separate discussions took place with men and women.



#### STUDY SITE



#### TOP TIP

*“It is important to understand the cultural realities of a community and to obey the same. It also makes sense to make a reconnaissance visit of the community before the actual work.”*



# CASE STUDY 7

## Henry Hunga

### University of Malawi



#### RESEARCH TOPIC

*“The research is on **mainstreaming climate information services used for water and food security** in drylands being undertaken in **Malawi** (Salima, Dedza, Ntcheu, Balaka and Phalombe districts).”*



#### PREPARING FOR GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

- Planned a meeting with the Village Civil Protection Committees (VCPCs), who are elected by local district councils and gender balance is paramount.
- Most committees we met had a significant number of women representatives in them.
- Women make up most of the farming population in Malawi hence value seasonal forecasts.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

- Committee members who are elected every five years through the local assembly office.
- The committees comprise representatives from the different committees within the community
- During village VCPC meetings it is mostly women participating and carrying the messages across the community

#### GENDER INTERACTIONS

*“Usually the women would not talk unless you probe them. When you ask who makes decisions **at the household level** women often refer to men as being responsible although most often it is them attending development meetings in the villages. When you probe further then you understand that **the women have an upper hand in decision making because they are well informed.**”*

#### IMPROVING GENDER INCLUSION

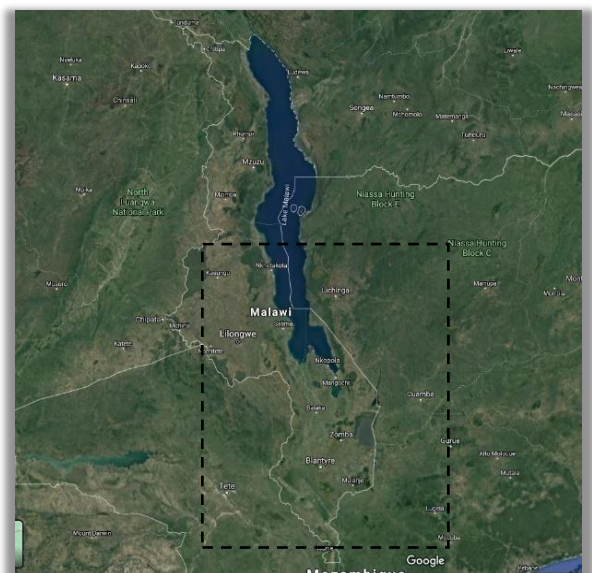
- In this case, the committee members are equally balanced in gender.
  - The elections are done through local government structures.
  - Gender equality in this committee is already a priority.

#### TEMPLATES

- The researcher has templates available if required for similar work.



#### STUDY SITE



#### TOP TIP

*“For a wider reach out, women’s participation is important!”*





**BRECCIA**

BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER AND  
FOOD SECURITY IN DRYLANDS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA