

# Equal Power, Better Food Systems



*This brief highlights RAISE-FS experience in applying gender transformative approaches (GTAs) to address inequalities and social norms at a systems level from the individual up to the agricultural research and extension system.*

## Introduction

Ethiopia's food system hold immense potential for inclusive agricultural and economic transformation, with women and youth at the centre. The playing field, however, is not level. Social norms and other systemic barriers limit them in contributing to and benefiting from food system transformation. This affects not only women and young people, it also limits the wider society and food systems to become more resilient, inclusive and sustainable. RAISE-FS has applied a gender transformative approaches (GTAs) to address inequalities and social norms at a systems level from the individual up to the agricultural research and extension system.

### Core gender equity and social inclusion bottlenecks limiting food systems performance

Gender inequality and exclusion of youth are bottlenecks that constrain the transformation of the food system. It limits women's and young people's access to the resources, decisions, and benefits that are needed to produce, consume and trade food efficiently and fairly. The main bottlenecks are:

- Restrictive gender norms, stereotypes and unequal power relations limit the leadership roles and decision making of women and youth, and cause an unequal (unpaid) labour burden.
- Unequal access to resources causes a lack of secure access to land, credit and markets, which are essential for adopting and scaling agricultural innovations.
- Institutional barriers cause a limited uptake of social inclusion and gender and youth responsive strategies in agricultural research & extension, leading to highly biased outreach.
- Social and economic vulnerabilities are evidently visible in the disproportionately high unemployment rates, economic exclusion, and inequities within agricultural value chains.

These conditions reduce overall agricultural productivity and deepen household food insecurity and malnutrition, especially for women and girls. Evidence shows that closing gender gaps in access to land, finance, and services could significantly raise agricultural outputs and reduce hunger and malnutrition.

### RAISE-FS transformation and empowerment pathways

RAISE-FS demonstrates how GTA can be adapted to the Ethiopian agricultural research and extension system. GTA at community level are not enough: change is needed from within the research institutes as well.

#### At community level:

##### ★ Inclusive targeting

Improves outcomes by involving couples, families, women, youth, and marginalized groups in innovations and scaling. To address scaling failures, test "innovation bundles" that combine social and agro-technical solutions.

##### ★ Challenging harmful norms

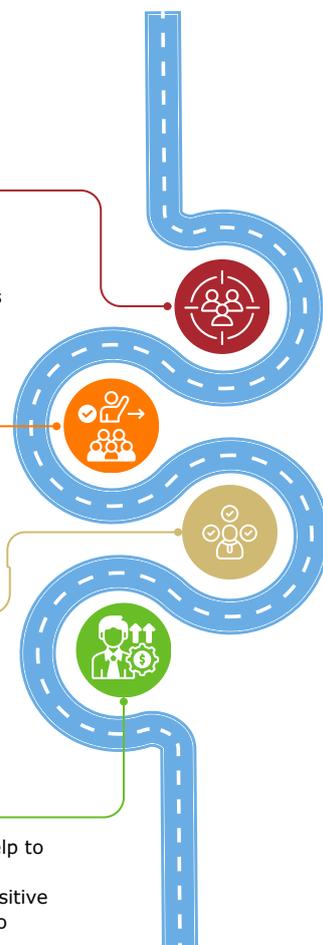
Challenging harmful norms works best when done respectfully and playfully, with support from leaders, research, and community involvement.

##### ★ Youth & women-led enterprises

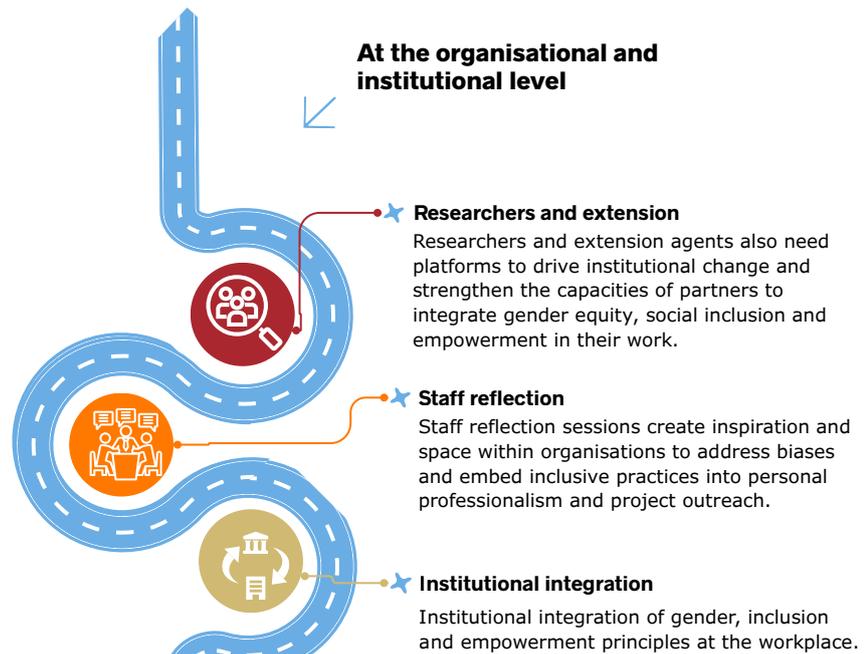
Youth & women-led enterprises like poultry keepers, processors and traders drive economic independence. Women and youth need deliberate support to access services and markets.

##### ★ Community platforms

(Informal) community platforms help to plan, carry out and evaluate social change actions, and provide the positive peer pressure that helps them to go against restrictive gender norms.



## At the organisational and institutional level



## At community level

RAISE-FS promotes women and youth empowerment to be part and parcel of a systems approach to trigger the effective uptake innovations in food systems, by:

### ★ Multi-level transformation

At community and organisational to scale changes in the food system.

### ★ Evidence-based and participatory approach

Solutions need to be co-created with communities and partners based on research, ensuring that they reflect real needs and are owned by those affected.

### ★ Inclusive business models

Inclusive business models trigger new solutions for empowering women and youth in agriculture.

### ★ Strategic partnerships

Strategic partnership amplify impact by combining local expertise with global insights.

### ★ Linking local action to policy

Community-level initiatives with national-level policy processes.

## Key publications

Challenging gender inequality in rural Ethiopia: what does it take?



Mapping gender and women focused initiatives in the agriculture sector: a scoping study



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