

May 1, 2025

GEM Digest of the Month

Published monthly since December 2009



American Robin. *Turdus migratorius*. Photo courtesy of D. Ceplis.

The Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) Digest provides a compilation of information and articles gathered on an ongoing basis on gender equality mainstreaming within agriculture, scientific research, rural development, climate change, organizational development and international development. Information is shared with members, colleagues, scientific societies and diverse organizations.

The views and opinions presented are not necessarily representative of the editor.

If you have information to share, please send it to dinah.ceplis@gmail.com to compile and re-distribute once a month.

Dinah Ceplis, P.Ag. (Ret.), FGHIH, FAIC, (Volunteer Editor)

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Opportunities and Coming Events

1. Future-Proofing Businesses: Investing in Customer Resilience

https://60decibels.zoom.us/webinar/register/9817447148783/WN_6F0u-zsfRFSw_k7SZeUNkA

Three billion people face climate vulnerability, most of whom are in emerging markets. Our **May 7th webinar** brings experts from British International Investment and BRAC International to share practical resilience strategies, showcase how data can help future-proof businesses, and tell us where strategic investment creates lasting climate resilience impact.

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2. Canada-Wide Science Fair

<https://cwsf-espc.ca/>

Witness the future of STEM through the eyes of our youth. From groundbreaking research to inventive solutions, each project at the CWSF is a window into the incredible potential of our nation's young scientists. The CWSF showcases the talents of students from grades 7 through 12, winners of their respective regional STEM fairs. These young scientists represent the future of innovation in Canada, displaying projects that span health, environmental sciences, engineering, computer science, and more. **Public viewing: 9 AM - 2:30 PM, June 5 & 6. University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB.** If you aren't able to visit us in Fredericton in-person, we encourage you to explore the Canada-Wide Science Fair **virtually** from home or school.

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3. 2025 Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation Conference - Abstracts

<https://crrf2025.org/>

The deadline for the 250 Word Abstract Submissions has been extended to **May 2nd, 2025**. Exploring themes of Technology, Data Governance, and Capacity Building, we're hoping to facilitate conversations, panels, and workshops that build deep connections. The conference is scheduled for **September 23-26, 2025, at Brandon University | Brandon, MB.**

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4. IGNITE: STEM Networking Night i

<https://scwist.ca/events/>

Join the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology (SCWIST) at IGNITE: STEM Networking Night for an evening filled with connections, mentorship, and impactful conversations. Don't miss your chance to connect with industry leaders and elevate your career right in your own city. Register in advance. What's in store?

- A panel with seasoned career experts
- Hands-on systems change activities
- Connections with industry leaders
- Networking with STEM professionals
- Discussions on breaking barriers in STEM

Upcoming IGNITE Events:

- **Toronto – June 17**
- **Halifax – July 31**
- **Montreal – September 23**
- **Winnipeg – October 1**

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5. Conference - Extension 4.0: Disruption and Transformation in Agri-food and Rural Development

<https://caree.ca/topics/>

1st International Conference on Canadian Agri-food & Rural Advisory, Extension, and Education (CAREE). Shaping the Future of Agri-food and Rural Development. **Guelph, Ontario, Canada. 29-31 October 2025.**

Scholarly and policy discussions, both globally and regionally, have long been captivated by a compelling question: Does Canada possess a truly effective agri-food and rural extension and advisory service? While Canada boasts a rich legacy of success in crop production, livestock management, environmental stewardship, and rural support, there remains a conspicuous gap. Few efforts have been made to foster shared learning about Canada's unique approach to extension and advisory services, nor have there been sufficient opportunities for scholarly engagement in this field.

If you are a researcher, practitioner, policymaker, or leader in the farming community, we invite you to share your work with us. Join us in conversations about our current state and look ahead to enhance Canadian excellence. Your insights will contribute to strengthening agri-food & rural advisory & extension services, and education in Canada.

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This Month's News

1. Becoming a scientist in the US just got a lot harder

<https://500womenscientists.medium.com/becoming-a-scientist-in-the-us-just-got-a-lot-harder-9b0d8cdb960b>

Unbeknownst to the general public, a generation of scientists is being sheared away as the Trump administration takes a chainsaw to federal science. The United States is losing scientific training programs, research funding, and jobs in federal agencies and sectors that employ scientists. Training grants and direct funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), for example, are key to recruiting and growing scientific talent. Federal research funding to academic institutions supports salaries of students, staff, and faculty — the entire US university system is reliant upon these funding sources. Finally, federal science positions, which provide the backbone of our country's scientific enterprise, are being chaotically terminated.

Early career scientists, those in training or who recently entered the workforce, are bearing the brunt of unfolding funding cuts and employment losses. For early career scientists from underrepresented and lower socio-economic backgrounds, for women, and scientists with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ scientists, the loss of research funding and/or employment is a threat multiplier.

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2. Canada will no longer cover travel costs of experts it nominates to UN's climate science body

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/canada-climate-scientist-ippc-assessment-1.7507979>

In a sudden and unexplained change from previous decades, the federal government has stopped covering the travel costs of Canadian experts volunteering for the next major global climate science assessment.

The decision to end travel funding means that Canadian scientists are now wondering whether they can still participate in the United Nations climate science process, perhaps by using their own money or diverting grant funds that could be going toward research and students.

In a statement to CBC, Environment and Climate Change Canada said it is "not able to commit to providing long-term travel funding for academics to participate in Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) meetings."

Canadian scientists who participate in the IPCC's reports don't get paid for their work, most of which they do remotely through emails and calls. But they do need to travel about four to five times to meet their scientific collaborators, who are other experts from around the world.

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3. Wild Rice Research at U of Manitoba

<https://news.umanitoba.ca/the-comeback-crop/>

The Comeback Crop! Wild rice, or manoomin as it's known in Anishinaabe culture, has been growing in Canada for millennia. It's packed with protein, rich in antioxidants and has a shelf life of up to 30 years. Yet, it remains an underutilized grain.

UM scientists like Az Klymiuk, an Indigenous scholar in the Faculty of Science, are among a team spanning six continents and 10-plus countries, all looking to revitalize Indigenous crops. They're exploring ways to grow it sustainably while reducing methane emissions and advancing economic reconciliation. Could this ancient grain become Canada's next food staple?

Learn more about UM research driving change through food security initiatives.

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4. Scholarship sends Canadian student to Germany for research internship

<https://news.brandonu.ca/2025/04/10/scholarship-sends-co-op-student-to-germany-for-research-internship/>

Brandon University is proud to announce that Kendal Giesbrecht, a fourth-year Honours B.Sc. Chemistry Co-op student, has been awarded the prestigious RISE-GlobaLink Scholarship. This highly competitive international award will take Kendal to Dresden, Germany, where she will contribute to cutting-edge research on amino acid release in the beer brewing process.

Kendal was selected as one of just 250 students from a global pool of over 2,500 applicants, a remarkable achievement that highlights her academic excellence and dedication to research.

Her upcoming research internship at Dresden University of Technology will focus on the release of protein-bound methionine and Selenomethionine (SeMet) in the brewing process. Under the guidance of Professor M. Hellwig's research group, Kendal will conduct experiment to analyze the oxidation process of sulfur- and selenium-containing amino acids. Given selenium's role as an essential trace element in human nutrition, this research could have important implications for food science and health.

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5. Patching the STEM Pipeline

<https://digital.caamagazine.com/mb/spring-2025/patching-the-stem-pipeline>

The oft-used term “leaky STEM pipeline” illustrates the systemic barriers girls and women continue to face in these disciplines, including stereotypes and biases in education and hiring, a lack of mentorship opportunities and the gender-based pay gap. Less than 25 percent of STEM positions in Canada are held by women, with an even lower percentage held by women who are Black or Indigenous, women of colour and women living in remote areas. Five organizations across Canada are creating opportunities for girls and women in science, technology, engineering and math.

- Canadian Association for Girls in Science (CAGIS) <https://girlsinscience.ca/>
- WISE Kid-Netic Energy <https://www.wisekidneticenergy.ca/>
- Girls+ in STEAM at Saskatchewan Science Centre <https://www.sasksciencecentre.com/events-calendar/2025/02/12/2025-girls-in-steam-conference>
- Women in Science, Engineering & Research (WISER) <https://wiseredmonton.com/>
- Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology (SCWIST) <https://scwist.ca/>

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6. Solar-Powered Spinning Machines Help Indian Women Save Time and Earn More

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2025/04/solar-powered-spinning-machines-help-indian-women-save-time-and-earn-more/>

In India's northeastern states like Assam and Meghalaya, silkworm rearing and weaving are common among several rural and tribal communities. The process of spinning and weaving eri is mainly carried out by women. Before switching to the solar-powered spinning machines in 2018, Makri used a traditional hand-held 'takli' or spindle. She would open the empty eri cocoons, draft the fibers by hand, and spin them onto the spindle to create yarn. This process was extremely laborious.

The machines have been distributed by MOSONiE Socio Economic Foundation, a not-for-profit led entirely by a group of women based in Pillangkata of Ri Bhoi district in Meghalaya.

Many women in rural areas, cannot afford to buy the machines or do not have the money to pay direct cash; this is where she said MOSONiE steps in and bridges the gap between Meghalaya Rural Bank (MRB) and the women artisans. For instance, Maslai took a loan from MRB to buy the spinning machine, which she paid off after a year.

Maslai recalls how, with training from MOSONiE, it took her about three days to make the switch from a handheld spindle to the machine.

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7. Andean Women Farmers in Peru Face Climate Crisis with Green Practices

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2025/04/andean-women-farmers-in-peru-face-climate-crisis-with-green-practices/>

Andean rural women are mostly Quechua and have inherited ancestral farming knowledge. But migration and shifting community dynamics have left some struggling to adapt to climate challenges.

Traditionally, reading nature’s signs guided farming, but this is no longer enough with current erratic weather and rain patterns. Women now face turmoil, which causes constant worry as family farming sustains their households.

80 women farmers are taking part in a training project led by the non-governmental Flora Tristán Peruvian Women’s Center, aimed at developing their farming skills to confront climate change while increasing their participation and decision-making in community organizations. Each has a 100-square-meter greenhouse equipped with a drip irrigation system, in which they’ve also been trained for sustainable use.

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8. How Can Research and Data Drive Sustainable and Gender-Inclusive Fishing: The case of Natur'ELLES in Senegal

<https://www.iisd.org/explainer/sustainable-fisheries-gender-equality-senegal-naturelles>

As fish stocks decline and pressure on marine ecosystems grows, fisheries worldwide must adopt more sustainable and inclusive practices. The Natur'ELLES project implemented along the coast of Senegal demonstrates how research and data can make the case for sustainable fishing in mangrove forests.

In Senegal, women play a significant role in the informal economic sector. They are active throughout the fishing value chain, from collecting oysters and processing fish to selling fish products and preparing fish meals for their families. That is why empowering women also means empowering entire communities.

IISD will contribute to the Natur'ELLES project through its Sustainable Asset Valuation (SAVi) analysis tool. It’s an assessment methodology that provides a comprehensive analysis of environmental, social, economic, and governance (ESG)-related risks on infrastructure projects, capturing the full costs as well as the benefits of any intervention.

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9. Climate crisis driving surge in gender-based violence, UN report finds

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/04/1162461>

Without urgent action, climate change could be linked to one in every ten cases of intimate partner violence by the end of the century. That is the warning from a new report by the UN Spotlight Initiative, which finds that climate change is intensifying the social and economic stresses that are fuelling increased levels of violence against women and girls.

The report finds that extreme weather, displacement, food insecurity, and economic instability are key factors increasing the prevalence and severity of gender-based violence. These impacts hit hardest in fragile communities, where women already face entrenched inequalities and are more vulnerable to assault.

Despite the urgency of this issue, only 0.04 per cent of climate-related development assistance focuses primarily on gender equality. The report argues that this gap represents a critical failure to recognize how gender-based violence – or GBV – determines climate resilience and justice.

The Spotlight Initiative calls for GBV prevention to be integrated into all levels of climate policy, from local strategies to international funding mechanisms.

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10. The Widows of Ukerewe and the Ritual They Cannot Escape

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2025/04/trapped-by-tradition-the-widows-of-ukerewe-and-the-ritual-they-cannot-escape/>

On Tanzania’s Lake Victoria’s Ukerewe Island, where the Kerewe, Jita, and Kara ethnic groups dominate, widowhood is not merely about loss—it is a transformation, a passage that demands rituals to separate the living from the dead. It means

submitting to a practice deeply ingrained into the island’s culture: widow cleansing—a sexual rite that forces women into intimacy with a relative of their deceased husband or, in some cases, a total stranger, all in the name of purification.

In Ukerewe, as in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, widowhood is seen as a spiritual contamination. It is believed that if a widow does not undergo cleansing, the spirit of her deceased husband will haunt the entire bereaved family, bringing misfortune or even death.

In some cases, women who refuse the ritual are expelled from their marital homes. Their belongings are thrown out, their children taken away, their connection to the family severed.

Health experts warn that widow cleansing is a gateway for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. With no protection used and with some cleansers involved in multiple rituals, the practice fuels a silent health crisis.

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11. Strengthening One Health Approach in Agriculture Requires Cross-Sectoral Partnerships, Information

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2025/04/strengthening-the-one-health-approach-in-agriculture-requires-cross-sectoral-partnerships-information>

Increasingly, experts in the global health and agricultural sectors are finding the One Health approach effective for identifying and addressing health concerns that can influence facets of health. Implementing this approach worldwide will require partnerships across different sectors.

In adopting the One Health approach to the wider agricultural sector, the impacts of one area of health on another can be assessed with a focus on environmental integration. As part of CGIAR’s Agenda for 2030, the One Health initiative was first built on protecting human health from zoonoses—diseases from wild animals or livestock—food-borne diseases, and antimicrobial resistance. The focus on animal diseases served as an entry point for the One Health approach.

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12. CGIAR Gender Impact Platform Needs a ‘Bold Approach’ in Agriculture Research

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2025/04/cgiar-gender-impact-platform-needs-a-bold-approach-in-agriculture-research/>

Women farmers face structural issues that prevent them from realizing their full potential, from societal perceptions that dictate their limitations to poor land.

However, CGIAR’s Gender Impact Platform Director, Nicoline de Haan, argues that leaning into a “victim” narrative does not serve them, especially when women are demonstrably more involved in agriculture.

De Haan says researchers need to be bolder in examining the gender impact in the agricultural sector to assess the key concerns that women farmers face in the field. The limited tools and resources in developing countries challenge both men and women farmers.

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13. Taliban View Even Women’s Cosmetics as a Threat to Their Rule

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2025/04/taliban-view-even-womens-cosmetics-threat-rule/>

Women in Afghanistan have borne the brunt of the Taliban’s extremist Islamist rule. Four years on, there appears to be no end in sight. In a country where women are denied the right to education, work and the freedom to travel without the company of a mahram – a male family member – the Taliban now seek to erase what little remains of women’s autonomy, even going so far as to confiscate their cosmetics.

In February this year, the Taliban launched house raids to seize women's beauty products, yet another act that marks a new low in their campaign to oppress and exclude women from public and private life.

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14. The Growth of One-Person Households

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2025/04/growth-one-person-households/>

In much of the past, few people lived alone. At the start of the 20th century, one-person households were relatively rare and are estimated to have accounted for less than 10% of all households worldwide. By 1985, the global proportion of one-person households is estimated to have reached about 23 percent. Several decades later, i.e., by 2018, the proportion of one-person households in the world is estimated to have increased to 28 percent. Regarding the future, the global proportion of one-person households by the middle of the 21st century is projected to reach 35%.

Among some countries, such as Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Russia, the proportion of one-person households around 2020 exceeded 40%. Also, the proportions of one-person households in the world's two most populous countries were 25% for China and 16% for India.

Some of the major causes of single-person households include urbanization, a growing economy with rising incomes, financial independence, advanced education levels, high employment rates, and very importantly, improvements in the status of women. Later marriage, delayed childbearing, increased divorce and changing attitudes regarding the family and childbearing are also among the major factors that contributed to the rise of single-person households.

Among the reported consequences of the rise in single-person households are greater independence, personal freedom, economic independence and self-fulfillment as well as having no children to raise. Some men and women, especially those during their middle age, may thrive in one-person households.

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Reports, Publications, Resources

1. Community Capacity Building in Rural Canada

<https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publication/community-capacity-building-in-rural-canada-2/>

<https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/projects/designing-capacity-building-pathways-for-rural-community-development/>

The Rural Development Institute of Brandon University shared the slides presented at the 2025 Manitoba Planning Conference.

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2. Rural Research Symposium 2025

<https://journal.lib.uoguelph.ca/index.php/ruralReview>

The University of Guelph hosted the 11th annual Rural Research Symposium on March 26th, bringing together students, faculty, community practitioners, government, and non-governmental organizations to share research on emerging rural themes. The event featured a series of insightful presentations, posters, and networking opportunities, with the goal of fostering collaboration and innovation in rural research.

Presenters highlighted several critical themes, including sustainability, agriculture, rural peoples, infrastructure development, education, technology, economic development, and Indigenous peoples. These topics sparked engaging conversations among attendees, emphasizing the importance of addressing these challenges to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

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3. The Bodily Health of a Group of Rural Women Living in South Africa

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63315/jrcd.v20i1.2361>

Abstract

South Africa's health system continues to exhibit stark inequalities, with the well-being of individuals inextricably linked to their geographic location and social position. This study explored the concept of bodily health from the perspective of women living in rural areas, employing the human capabilities approach as a theoretical framework. Using a qualitative, exploratory approach, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 45 participants, including parents, caregivers, and key stakeholders, in two rural towns in South Africa. Participants' understanding of health varied, and they highlighted the inadequacy of healthcare services available to them. The findings reveal the multifaceted nature of rural health, where factors such as the proximity of healthcare facilities, the availability of medical personnel and supplies, and the level of trust in the healthcare system all play a crucial role in shaping individuals' experiences and perceptions of bodily health. Collaborative efforts among diverse stakeholders are necessary to develop and implement comprehensive approaches that ensure equitable access to quality healthcare and nutrition in rural areas, ultimately fostering the well-being of individuals and families. This study underscores the importance of a capabilities-oriented perspective in understanding and addressing the complex realities of rural health in South Africa, where the interplay of geography, socioeconomic status, and intersectional identities profoundly shapes the pursuit of optimal bodily health.

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4. The Development of Program Evaluation Tools for Women and Children at Rural Women's Shelters

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63315/jrcd.v20i1.2661>

Abstract

Women's shelters have faced a near-constant state of flux since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This, combined with decades of being severely under-resourced, has culminated in a lack of program evaluation within women's shelters. As such, the purpose of this research was to develop two universal program evaluation tools that will meet the needs of service users (i.e., women and children) and providers at two rural women's shelters in Ontario. To develop the tools in partnership with the shelters, the Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health, the Delphi Method, and Thorne's Interpretive Description approaches were employed. Two tools were developed, with the adult version consisting of 18 questions (e.g., open-ended, Likert scales) and the child version consisting of nine (e.g., yes/no). Future research should explore the utility, feasibility, and acceptability of implementing these tools across a range of women's shelters, including those of varying geographic and cultural contexts.

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5. Peri-Urban Farming: Panacea to Food Insecurity in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63315/jrcd.v20i1.2614>

Abstract

Over this century, as urbanization and climate change intensify, peri-urban agriculture will encounter more and more difficulties. Thus, research on decreasing Ogbomoso's, Nigeria, food problem through peri-urban agriculture is necessary.

The research design used in the study was a descriptive survey. The population in the region consisted of more than thirty thousand (30,000) Ogbomoso individuals. Sixty (60) respondents were chosen from among Ogbomoso farmers, government employees, traders, and artisans, and questionnaires were distributed among them. Data was gathered through the use of structured questionnaires and primary sources. The findings indicate that a greater number of married men and women engaged in farming than unmarried farmers, even despite their familial obligations. The study looked at and evaluated peri-urban agriculture (PUA) as a means of guaranteeing food supply in Ogbomoso. According to the results, PUA has a lot of potential to guarantee a constant supply of food in the city. Ogbomoso's PUA can lessen the city's food scarcity since it gives residents' homes and marketplaces direct access to food that is grown locally. PUA in Ogbomoso has a future if the opportunities it has been identified as having and the obstacles it faces are sufficiently handled.

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6. Exploring the 60dB Farmer Thriving Index

<https://60decibels.com/insights/60db-farmer-thriving-index/>

60 Decibels developed the Farmer Thriving Index as a simple, standardized tool for measuring farmer wellbeing, because we believe that impact measurement should be easy and powered by farmer voice. We also believe that if the sector can consistently measure and compare where, why and how farmers are thriving or merely surviving, we will more effectively address the challenges they face.

The Farmer Thriving Index measures farmer wellbeing across four dimensions grounded in the farmer's own perspectives. It is a short, easy-to-implement survey. The tool is standardized, making it applicable to a farmer in any context or value chain, and making the results comparable across different populations.

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7. Pioneering training course on integrating gender in cost-benefit analysis for climate action

<https://aiccra.cgiar.org/news/pioneering-training-course-integrating-gender-cost-benefit-analysis-climate-action>

Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) reports on the 370 researchers, students and development practitioners who joined the pilot of a new online course focused on integrating gender into cost-benefit analysis of climate interventions. It was designed to strengthen agricultural research-for-development, equipping stakeholders with the skills to ensure that gender equality and social inclusion are systematically integrated into evaluations of resilience programs and decision-making processes at all levels—from national to community levels—for climate adaptation.

Women and men experience climate risks differently due to distinct roles, access to resources and decision-making power. This course addressed this gap by incorporating gender-sensitive metrics into evaluation frameworks.

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8. US aid tracker: Following Trump's cuts to international development

<https://www.devex.com/news/us-aid-tracker-following-trump-s-cuts-to-international-development-109177>

Since being sworn in as United States president on Jan. 20, Donald Trump has left global development professionals scrambling to digest a flurry of decisions that are quickly impacting the sector.

His unprecedented orders to freeze U.S. foreign aid and withdraw from the World Health Organization quickly led to stop-work orders and hiring freezes. Since then, USAID has been effectively shuttered, tens of thousands of people have been laid off, and thousands of contracts have been canceled.

Devex is tracking the impact on development staff as the new U.S. administration continues its efforts to realign government policies and priorities with Trump’s “America First” agenda.

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9. A systematic review of agricultural projects’ contributions to women’s empowerment

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s44264-025-00061-5>

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s44264-025-00061-5>

Abstract

This study systematically reviews the application of the project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) in impact evaluations. Using Harzing’s “Publish or Perish” software, 626 articles published between 2012 and 2024 were initially retrieved, which were narrowed down to eight for detailed review, using the PRISMA framework. Project outcomes were classified into four categories: negative, no impact, positive but non-significant, and positive and significant. Findings show that while many projects aimed to empower women, results varied. Some improved autonomy in income, group membership, asset ownership, and financial access. However, work balance and attitudes toward intimate partner violence had negative impacts, which were mainly linked to the absence of asset transfers, male backlash, and entrenched gender norms. Likewise, the projects involving men, providing assets, and offering skills training also fostered women’s empowerment. We recommend that gender-transformative approaches like integrating socio-technical innovations help address systemic inequalities and advance gender equality.

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