



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement N° 824546



RE-SHAPING GENDER IN DECISION MAKING

SCOUTING, INSPIRING AND MOTIVATING STAKEHOLDERS FOR SUCCESSFUL GEP IMPLEMENTATION

CIHEAM Bari, Italy

The Gender-SMART project is a community composed of seven European Research Performing & Funding Organisations, operating in the broadly framed field of research in food, agricultural and life sciences, committed to advancing gender equality.

This fact sheet illustrates one of the twelve experience-based good practices collected by the project to encourage and steer change in Gender-SMART Partner Institutions.

Results are meaningful and scalable to reach out to a larger number of beneficiaries.

AREA



Re-shaping Gender
in Decision Making

CATEGORY



Management and
Governance

PARTNER



CIHEAM Bari, Italy



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Main Description

Institutional transformation means a profound change within an Organisation and entails changes in the basic values and beliefs as well as changes in the rules and regulations that lead to certain working results.

At the start of the GEP design, a Human Resources office was not in place yet at CIHEAM Bari. This practice was thus meant to identify and engage appropriate stakeholders and ensure that the voice, needs and priorities of all women and men in the Organisation could be heard and reflected in everyday life, policies, regulations, and budgets.

Therefore, the Gender-SMART Core Team undertook an inventory and mapping of critical stakeholders to be involved in the GEP actions based on their competence, position, area of work and availability.

By understanding stakeholders' interests and aspirations and motivating them, the likelihood of GEP success could be further increased.

Background

Founded in 1962, the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) is an intergovernmental organisation bringing together 13 Mediterranean member countries.

CIHEAM comprises four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes located in Bari (Italy), Chania (Greece), Montpellier (France) and Zaragoza (Spain) and a General Secretariat headquartered in Paris. The main representative bodies at central level are the Governing Board and the Steering Committee, the Advisory Board, and the Board of Auditors.

The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM Bari), staffed with 82 employees and 150 non-permanent consultants, is involved in post-graduate education, networked scientific research and design of in-loco partnership actions within the framework of international cooperation programmes. It pursues its three missions to provide tangible solutions to current issues across the Mediterranean region.

The main thematic areas for research, education and training are 'Land and Water Resources Management' (L&W), 'Integrated Pest Management of Mediterranean Fruit Crops' (IPM), 'Mediterranean Organic Agriculture' (MOA), 'Sustainable Agro-ecosystems and Resilience' (SARe) and 'Open Innovation & Youth Entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean Agri-food Sector'.

With Gender-SMART, CIHEAM Bari has committed to a four-year gender equality plan (GEP) to advance gender equality and develop a genuinely inclusive community in its organisation in which all people can be appreciated for their merits and contributions.

"Championing change for more gender inclusiveness" is not only one of CIHEAM Bari's core values but also a way to establish a new culture that values excellence, encourages talents and promotes inspirational behaviours.



CIHEAM Bari
Gender Equality Plan

VISIT PAGE



Specifics of the measure

All activities under this practice were held both in person and remotely starting from June 2019 throughout December 2021.

A group of KEY STAKEHOLDERS (34 between top and middle management, administrative staff, students, researchers, education and support services) were selected and sorted into 5 working groups with their respective focal points: Administration, Communication, Education, Management, Research. The selected stakeholders were forwarded an email shortly introducing Gender-SMART vision, acknowledging their role in the project implementation and announcing their involvement in audit activities.

Direct interviews were organised with key informants and data holders, within the stakeholder group, in order to check the availability of information and collect/retrieve data related to the audit.

The Core Team invited all stakeholders to participate in the Mirror kick-off meeting (June 2019) to officially present the project, facilitate working groups' activities, and gather information and perceptions towards the implementation of a GEP.

A follow-up meeting was organised (October 2019) with the 5 Focal points for an update about the project's activities and to stimulate their responsiveness and peer advocacy commitment. The Journey map was shared and fundamentals of GEP design were presented. The Focal points were also invited to attend the meeting with CIHEAM Bari's Director (December 2019) to present the framework GEP for validation.

Two meetings (February 2020) were held with the Focal points to take stock of their feedbacks on the GEP. The meeting with all stakeholders to present the validated GEP took place in June 2021.

Stakeholders were invited to participate in several training and capacity building activities. During the lockdown, webinars were offered to increase knowledge on gender mainstreaming, gender equality and gender inequalities in the workplace (see annex reporting the webinars held).

Stakeholders were kept constantly informed, also during the lockdown, on the progress of GEP development and implementation to create ownership, increase commitment and help ensure sustainability. Thus, an internal stakeholder network was built, facilitated by the Gender-SMART Core Team. An example of relationship strengthening is the stakeholders' involvement in the Survey about the impact of COVID-19 launched by the Gender-SMART Core Team in March 2020.

Furthermore, two key stakeholders from the Research area were invited to deliver a presentation in a round table led by CIHEAM Bari's Gender-SMART Core Team in the framework of the online Conference "Cultivating Equality 2021" co-organised by Wageningen University and CGIAR Gender Platform in October 2021 thus contributing to the project's outreach and dissemination.

In December 2021, the focal points were invited to attend a capacity building session held by a Gender-SMART technical partner expert.

The expected outcomes of the practice, namely, i. greater awareness about the need to have a GEP, ii. higher stakeholders' accountability on their role as agents of change, iii. widespread gender culture at CIHEAM Bari, iv. strengthened capacities in gender equality mainstreaming across the Organisation, were fully achieved through communication and participation in meetings and expert sessions.

Moreover, understanding where pockets of support and resistance lie and seeking personal advice for improvement/development were key to pursuing these results.

Monitoring was based on feedback provided to emails, questionnaires and online surveys, participation in meetings, trainings and capacity building sessions and specific indicators set in the GEP for stakeholders' assignments and actions.

Engaging stakeholders can increase the utilisation of results and validate the argument for support of gender equality initiatives. An internal stakeholder network helps build alliances inside the institution. An inclusive and transparent process is more likely to gain additional support, engage more people and reduce resistance, while having a greater number of individuals involved in the efforts creates more ownership, enhances commitment, and helps ensure sustainability.

Lessons learned

Operating with an awareness of human feelings by being empathetic, showing care, listening to stakeholders, generating trust made it possible to create an enabling and finetuning environment and work across constraints. A variety of communication channels aimed at reaching the different stakeholders were proof-full (follow-up emails, status meeting, brainstorming, short reports, one-to-ones).

Experience acquired by the Gender-SMART Core Team on how to facilitate GEP-related activities and communicate gender issues through discursive resources was very useful although the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the process for a certain period of time.

This good practice could be used for video-shooting to tell the story of stakeholders' synergies and alliances that can successfully improve gender equality in the workplace.

