



A different

Gender integration in livestock and fish research

kettle of fish?

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12 GENETICS AND GENDER: BREEDING DECISIONS IN SOMALILAND

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Organizations

ILRI, IGAD Sheikh Technical Veterinary School and Reference Centre, Terra Nuova, CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets

Species



Methods: Separate focus-group discussions with male and female livestock keepers, to generate semi-quantitative and qualitative information

Summary: Documenting traditional breeding practices, including gendered differences and similarities in livestock-keeping objectives and trait preferences

Locations



LIVESTOCK ARE the mainstay of the economy of Somalia, around two-thirds of whose people are involved in the livestock sector (FAO-Somalia, 2014). Many are nomadic pastoralists, moving with their herds in search of pasture and water. Others are agropastoralists, growing a few crops but relying mainly on their animals for food and income. The men typically manage the main herd of camels and cattle, while the women, children and the elderly take care of the sheep and goats, and milk a home herd of camels and cattle.

Despite the importance of livestock in Somalia, little has been done to document traditional livestock practices. This study fills part of this gap: it investigates the management of breeding. Because men and women have such different responsibilities in livestock management, we suspected they might also use different breeding practices. Little research has been done on this subject.

Separate roles, separate appraisals

We conducted a series of participatory rural appraisals in the Tog-Dheer region of Somaliland. This region has a human population of about 400,000, of whom an estimated 65% are nomadic pastoralists, 30% urban and 5% agro-pastoralists (FSNAU-Somalia, 2011). In each of 20 settlements, we randomly selected households from a list of livestock-keeping households provided by the village elders. We ran separate appraisals for the women and the men in each location, giving a total of 40 appraisals with a total of 506 participants: 252 women and 254 men.

The participatory appraisals were facilitated by staff of the IGAD Sheikh Technical Veterinary School and Reference Centre, located in Sheikh, Somaliland, with support from staff of the non-governmental organization Terra Nuova and the International Livestock Research Institute. All the facilitators (equal numbers of women and men) were trained jointly on how to apply the appraisal method. For cultural reasons, the male facilitators ran the appraisals with groups of men; the female facilitators worked with the women's groups.

The appraisal generated semi-quantitative and qualitative information on different gender aspects related to the breeding of camels, cattle, sheep and goats. We asked the groups only to respond for species they kept (thus not all groups answered for all species). Where relevant, we tested for differences in responses between the male and female groups (see Marshall et al., 2014 and 2016 for details of the statistics used), using a significance level of 0.05.

We asked about four specific breeding practices:

- The objectives for keeping livestock
- Livestock traits of importance
- Intra-household decision making on livestock breeding
- Criteria used to select or cull breeding animals.

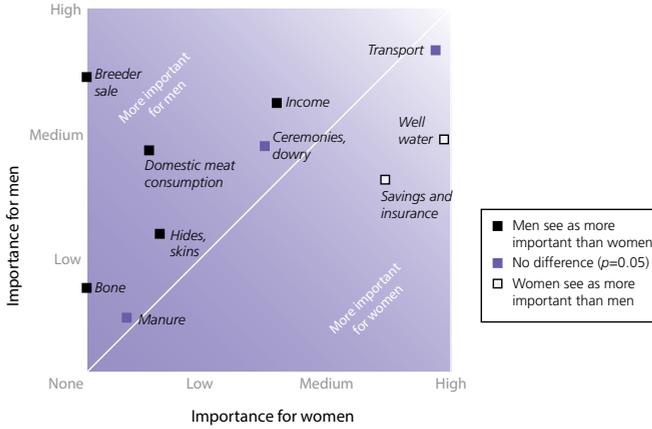
Full results of the study are given in Marshall et al., 2014 and 2016. Here is a brief summary of our key findings, focusing on the gender dimensions.

He said, she said...

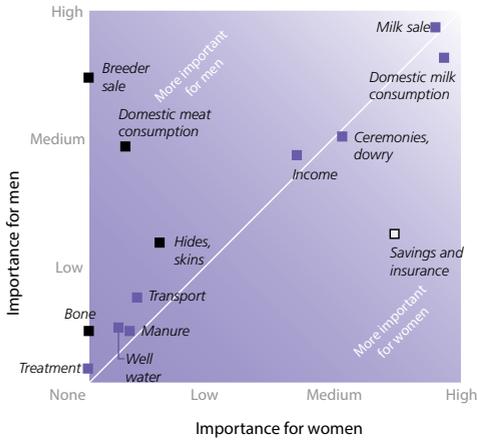
Why keep livestock?

As expected, the pastoralists keep animals for many reasons (up to 14, depending on the species). They include consuming and selling milk, selling animals for slaughter or breeding, as savings and insurance, eating meat, for transport, drawing water from wells, for ceremonies or dowry, and use of the hides. Many of these objectives are equally important to both men and women, whilst other objectives are more important to either women or men (Figure 12.1).

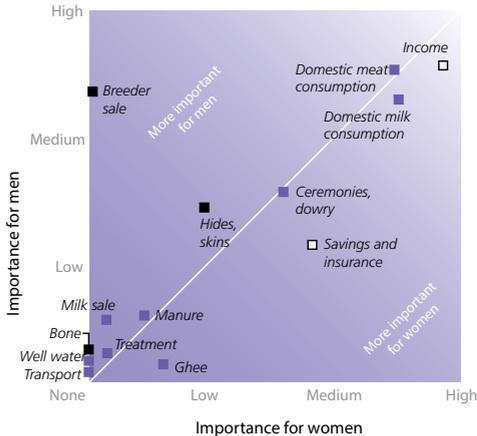
Male camels



Female camels

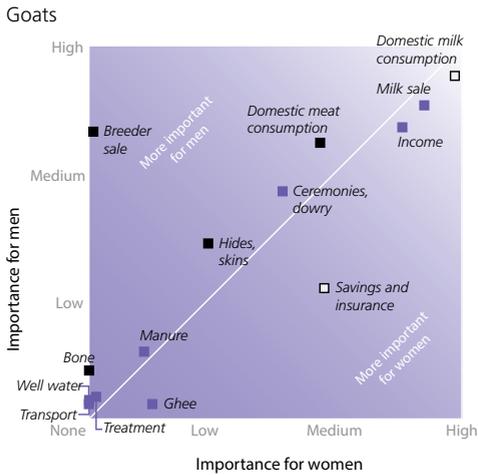


Sheep



Adapted from Marshall et al., 2014

Figure 12.1 Men's and women's reasons for keeping certain types of livestock



The men said that income from selling breeding animals, the consumption of camel meat, and the use of hides, skins and bones were important. The women either did not mention these uses, or saw them as of lower importance. This reflects the gender division of labour and roles that men and women play in Somali society: for example, men sell breeding animals and control the resulting income; they slaughter camels and cook and eat the meat, and use the bone to make soup; and they sell hides and skins to earn money. Women rarely do these things.

The women, on the other hand, saw using camels to draw water as more important than did the men: fetching water is generally a woman’s task. They also emphasized the consumption of goat milk and keeping animals as a form of savings and insurance. While we did not fully explore the last point, it may suggest that women are more risk-averse, or perhaps are more concerned with looking after the family.

Breeding practices

Important livestock traits. The pastoralists named many livestock traits they deemed important (up to 11, depending on the species). The most important were high milk production, high market value, high meat production, and adaptation to harsh conditions. Groups of men talked about meat traits (such as quality, taste and fat content) and the animals’ coat colours more often than women did; women’s groups talked about the use of animals for ceremonies and for drawing water more often than did men (though strictly, these are uses of the animal rather than their traits).

Intra-household decision making on breeding. The men made most of the decisions on breeding camels, while women and men said they made breeding decisions jointly for cattle, sheep and goats. This corresponds to the main division of labour for these species. There is a hint (not quite statistically significant) that men thought of themselves as the main decision-makers for



cattle, sheep and goats, while the women thought that the women were. This could be explored further in future studies.

Criteria used to select breeding animals. We also found overlaps and differences between women and men on the criteria use to select male animals for breeding. For sheep and goats (where women and men make joint decisions on breeding), the groups named up to 15 selection criteria. Both women and men said they would choose an animal if its forebears were good breeding animals or its mother or sisters produced a lot of milk. Men gave more weight than women to coat colour and high fertility, while women put more emphasis on the hardiness and breeding history of the animal's forebears. There were similar overlaps and differences in opinions about which female animals should be culled rather than used for breeding. It is interesting that the men and women had different opinions even though they said they made joint decisions on these issues.

Quality of data

These results suggest that women and men pastoralists in Somaliland have different perspectives on livestock breeding. But we cannot tell for sure, because our female facilitators worked with women pastoralists, while male facilitators worked with men. In statistics, this is called “confounding”: we have no way of telling how far our findings are influenced by the facilitators rather than the groups. We had anticipated this problem, but the option of swapping facilitators between the male and female groups was not culturally acceptable; nor was

doing appraisals with mixed groups of men and women. We tried to overcome the problem by training the men and women facilitators together.

A further issue was that the differences between the women's and men's groups were often not clearly observed until afterwards, when analysis was done on the data obtained from the two sets of groups. That prevented us from probing these differences more deeply. Where mixed groups are permitted, we would suggest holding appraisals with men and women separately, and then follow up with a joint discussion with all participants.

In this work we stratified our focus group respondents by gender, on the basis of previous knowledge that women and men had different roles in livestock management. However, other socio-economic classifications – such as wealth group, or level of market orientation – may have been just as relevant. Such decisions are difficult given the lack of data as to which aspects have a greater effect on livestock-breeding practices. The build-up of data over time may help, but in the meantime researchers are left to make subjective choices.

Feeding, not breeding

We found that women and men Somali pastoralists use sensible livestock breeding practices that produce animals that meet both their own needs and the market requirements. We do not recommend any interventions on breeding at this stage; rather, interventions on livestock management (such as feeding) would do more to improve productivity.

We found that women and men may have different reasons for keeping livestock, trait preferences and breeding practices. Prior studies have also shown these to differ according to the wealth of the livestock keepers (e.g., Ejlersten et al. 2012). We thus strongly recommend that future studies of this nature give strong consideration to stratification by gender, other socio-economic groups, or combinations of these. In particular, the intersection of gender and wealth may be interesting to explore. Advocacy is needed to promote gender integration into the field of animal breeding and genetics.



“This is one of the first studies of this nature... all the studies on breeding practices don't consider it from a gender perspective”

Karen Marshall
Scientist – animal breeding and genetics, ILRI



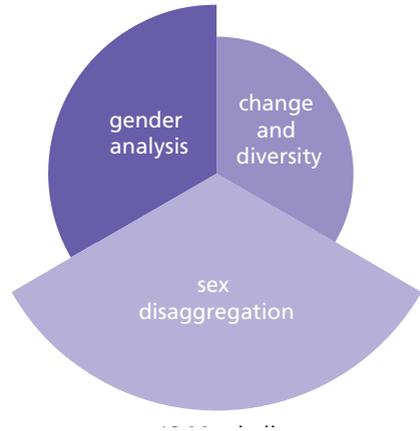
<https://youtu.be/YEiD2HQpHJU>

Whilst livestock-keeping objectives do not directly correlate to breeding objectives, they can inform them: the breeding objectives in turn inform the overall direction of a structured breeding programme. If women and men have different breeding objectives, these need to be taken into account by those designing the breeding programme.

Situating the research

This project addresses the question of how gendered knowledge, decision-making and preferences affect breeding practices. It does not address how the breeding programmes affect gender relations.

- *Sex-separate (male/female) focus-group discussions were done to collect data from and about men and women on gender aspects of breeding camels, sheep, goats and cattle.*
- *Gender analysis focusses on understanding **gendered preferences** in breeding, specifically the importance of livestock traits. This is linked to the **gender division of labour** and use of various livestock, and the related **control over income** and other **benefits** like more meat consumption. The study also touches on the concept of **gendered knowledge** in relation to criteria for culling and selecting breeding animals. This knowledge comes from practice – from women’s daily work demands in animal husbandry. It looks at some aspects of **intra-household decision-making** on livestock breeding, which is also linked to what men and women do in animal husbandry (the gender division of labor).*
- *In terms of differences and diversity, the study raises the importance of wealth and socioeconomic stratifications alongside gender in terms of understanding breeding priorities.*



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