



Women's workload and their roles in livestock production in pastoral and agro-pastoral communities of Ethiopia

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Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Adapting Livestock Systems to Climate Change

Abstract

With a push to increase livestock productivity in Ethiopia, women's workloads have intensified, as they must now balance livestock and household duties. Through household surveys and focus group discussions, researchers collected data about how much time women in different households spent on various activities. Results helped determine what technologies, adaptation strategies and trainings could be implemented that would increase efficiency and therefore productivity. 🐄

Ethiopian women struggle to balance increased livestock duties with normal household duties

Women make up about 65 percent of Ethiopia's agricultural work force, thus shouldering the base of the Ethiopian economy. And with a push to increase productivity of the pastoral sector and incomes of rural producers, labor has intensified within pastoral households. Social definitions of which tasks should be carried out by men or women vary from one society, region, class or ethnic group to another. This variability indicates that the division of labor is determined not by the physical differences between sexes, but by the social definitions of proper relationship between women and men.

As a result of the drive to increase pastoral productivity, women's workloads have increased substantially without any measure to alleviate their already heavy domestic burden. In order to develop intervention strategies that may alleviate these burdens, researchers had to first identify how much time was spent on different daily tasks. Through this information, researchers could determine what technologies, adaptation strategies and trainings could be implemented that would increase efficiency and therefore productivity.



Survey in Afar. (Photo credit: Aklilu Nigussie)



Household surveys help researchers determine women's duties

This study was conducted in three districts in the Afar Regional State in Ethiopia. Through a formal household survey and focus group discussions, researchers collected data about the type of activities performed by men and women in the field and at home, the manpower requirement of each activity and how often each activity was completed in a year. Specifically, researchers focused on the activities of water fetching, wood collection, livestock management, and forage production. Households were categorized into two groups: women-headed households (WHH) and women in men-headed households (WMHH).

Women in women-headed households devote more time to household activities than women in men-headed households

Researchers found that women in WHH devoted more time to water fetching, wood collection, and livestock management than did women in WMHH. The following tables display labor-hour differences between WHH and WMHH in each activity.

Women in men-headed households devote extra time to backyard forage production

Data analysis shows that the extra time gained in WMHH is devoted to producing forage and selling milk in the nearby area, as shown in WMHH time spent per year devoted to forage production compared to the time devoted by WHH (see Figure 1). Interviews confirmed this result, with one woman saying, "previously, we let alone producing forage much in our backyards for feed, we did not even have enough time to manage sick livestock but at moment my daughters are involved in other responsibilities in helping so that we are trying to manage the forage production for animal feed."

Technology, awareness and capacity building will help correct workload imbalances

The results of this study help to portray the current state of women's workloads, thereby recognizing the vital linkage between women's

status and the implementation of sustainable development initiatives. Steps to help correct imbalances in women's workloads include:

- Promoting gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate technologies to decrease the workloads of pastoral women.
- Greater gender analysis and integration in research and development in livelihoods in order to fill urgent gaps in knowledge and encourage gender development.
- Raising awareness, documenting knowledge, and capacity building, which are critical for sustaining livelihoods and minimizing workloads. 🐄

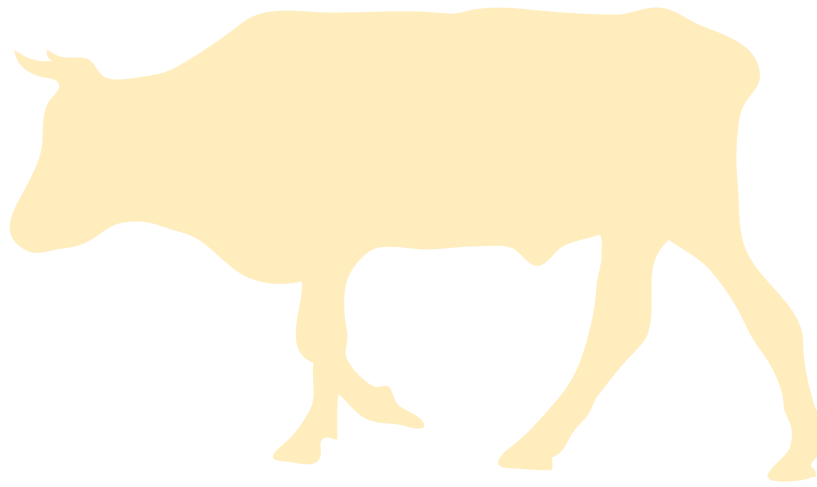
Figure 1: Table of workload differences between women in men-headed households (WMHH) and women-headed households (WHH).

	WMHH	WHH
Mean difference water fetching		
Average labor-hour per 270 days	422.15	936.44
t-value	7.16***	
Mean difference of collecting wood		
Average labor-hour per 12 months	219.23	599.33
t-value	6.35***	
Mean difference in livestock management		
Average labor-hour per 12 months	813.7	1454
t-value	7.21***	
Mean differences in forage production at the backyard		
Average labor-hour 12 months	363.2	122.9
t-value	4.44**	

***, ** and * indicate significance at 1%, 5% and 10% respectively



Survey in Afar. (Photo credit: Aklilu Nigussie)



TIRI, Targeted Investment for Research Impact, identifies early-career researchers who are interested in tackling livestock production problems through innovative approaches and fresh perspectives. This small-grant program is open to early-career researchers (five or fewer years into research career) in any discipline, from student to professor, and from any organization that is engaged in applied research on livestock production in South Asia and East Africa — colleges and universities, government research centers or laboratories, or non-profit organizations.

Proposals are selected based on their potential to make livestock production systems more resilient to increasing climate variability and severity. At the end of one year, TIRI scholars are expected to demonstrate concrete outcomes and real potential for future impact. The 10 selected East Africa TIRI scholars and the 18 selected Nepal TIRI scholars are addressing research problems on various livestock and climate research themes.



Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Adapting Livestock Systems to Climate Change is dedicated to catalyzing and coordinating research that improves the livelihoods of livestock producers affected by climate change by reducing vulnerability and increasing adaptive capacity.

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