



# Examining the Barriers to Gender Integration in Agriculture, Climate Change, Food Security, and Nutrition Policies: Guatemalan and Honduran Perspectives

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Gender mainstreaming is seen, at international level, as critical to achieving national development goals and addressing key global challenges such as climate change and food and nutrition insecurity in the agriculture sector. Our study examined the barriers leading to poor gender mainstreaming and potential solutions in policies applying to gender, agriculture, climate change, food security and nutrition, in both Guatemala and Honduras. We used a case study approach to analyze the barriers to gender integration in these governments' policies. Based on semi-structured interviews and policy document analysis, we conducted a methodology based on policy mix, policy integration and policy translation. Results show that, despite having made multiple international commitments on gender issues and having gender-labeled policy and governmental gender bodies, gender mainstreaming in the policy cycle is lagging. There are multiple barriers of a different nature and at different levels that explain the lack of gender integration in the policy cycle, related and linked to: (1) policy translation from the international level; (2) structural policy barriers at national level; (3) behaviors and corruption; and (4) lack of knowledge and capacity. Solutions to address these barriers have been identified. Our results confirmed the literature findings and also introduce new elements such as the importance of considering the nature of the relationship (purely technical and/or political) between governments and international cooperation actors to evaluate the level of gender integration in policy. Furthermore, we stress that for key informants, there are no (easy) solutions to redress the poor gender integration strategies implemented. Finally, we noted that no solutions were provided relating to structural racism and machismo, religious extremism, power groups, and censorship of civil society.

**Keywords:** gender mainstreaming, policy integration, climate change, food security and nutrition, agriculture

## INTRODUCTION

Achieving effective gender mainstreaming in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies is considered, by academics and international organizations, as critical to meeting national development goals (FAO, 2011; Bryan et al., 2016; Njuki et al., 2016; CDKN, 2017; Kristjanson et al., 2017; IICA, 2018; Gutierrez-Montes et al., 2020), and to reducing food insecurity

and malnutrition (FAO, 2011; IICA, 2018). The gender and development literature has extensively researched and emphasized the importance of considering the nexus between gender, agriculture, food security and nutrition (FSN), and climate change (CC) (Beuchelt and Badstue, 2013; Bryan et al., 2017b; Howland et al., 2019), not only to reduce gender inequalities, but also to address CC and FSN issues (UN-Women, 2015; Jost et al., 2016; Murray et al., 2016; Nelson and Huyer, 2016; Njuki et al., 2016; Bryan et al., 2017a; IICA, 2018). However, few studies address the process of gender integration in the policy cycle related to the nexus of gender, agriculture, FSN, and CC (Gutierrez-Montes et al., 2020). In this paper we explore the barriers for gender mainstreaming in agriculture, climate change and food security policies.

For agricultural policies, gender considerations are particularly relevant, considering this sector is the most important source of employment for women in rural areas in most developing countries (FAO, 2011). However, despite women's important contribution to the agriculture sector, they have less access to resources in terms of assets, inputs, land, education, financial services, technologies, and decent employment opportunities (FAO, 2011; Coello et al., 2015; IICA, 2018; Gutierrez-Montes et al., 2020). These gender inequalities have a direct effect on aspects such as agricultural productivity. Depending on the country and the crop, the gender productivity gap can vary between 4 and 25% (FAO, 2011; UN-Women, 2015). Rural women are also more likely to receive lower wages than men (FAO, 2011) and female-headed households are more vulnerable to economic shocks and more likely to fall into poverty than male-headed households (IICA, 2018).

On another hand, women play an important role in the three pillars of food security and nutrition (FSN), namely (1) *food availability* (consistently sufficient quantities of food available); (2) *food access* (sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet); and (3) *food use* (appropriate use, based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care, as well as adequate water and sanitation) (Njuki et al., 2016). Regarding food availability level, closing the gender gap in agriculture could reduce hunger between 12 and 17% in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region (IICA, 2018). At the food access and food use level, when women control additional income, they spend more of it on food than men do (FAO, 2011). In Central America, women-headed households whose male partners have migrated have the highest levels of food security and food diversity compared to other groups, suggesting that money controlled by women is allocated at greater rates toward family nutrition (Coello et al., 2015). However, despite their important contribution to each of the three pillars, women are also highly affected by food insecurity and malnutrition (Njuki et al., 2016).

In the context of climate change (CC), gender issues present both opportunities and challenges regarding increasing agricultural productivity and farmers' resilience to CC, and improving livelihoods (Kristjanson et al., 2017). Climate change poses a major challenge; it is expected to aggravate social discrimination, worsening people's situation in general, and of women in particular, because of the gender gaps that remain

in the agricultural sector (Adger, 2003; CDKN, 2017; Gutierrez-Montes et al., 2020). Climate change could thus undermine the progress made in terms of gender equality (CDKN, 2017). However, gender-sensitive CC interventions and programs (those that acknowledge the differentiated and negative impacts of CC on women and men and propose equitable and sustainable measures for both genders, according to their respective roles and tasks) also present an opportunity to design interventions that are better targeted to the needs of rural women and men, potentially overcoming barriers to implementation (Bryan et al., 2016, 2017a).

In the context of a changing climate, failing to address the gender gaps in agriculture not only directly impacts the lives of rural women, but also reduces average yields, and leads to over-cultivation, soil erosion, and land degradation (UN-Women, 2015). In this way, addressing gender gaps has paramount effects for the agricultural sector and for the economy in general (FAO, 2011). It has been estimated that closing the gender gap could increase agricultural productivity in the developing world by 2.5% to 4%, on average (FAO, 2011), as well as address current and future challenges in productivity (FAO, 2011; Kristjanson et al., 2017).

Within this context, the gender and development literature has extensively researched and emphasized the importance of considering the nexus between gender, agriculture, FSN, and CC (Beuchelt and Badstue, 2013; Bryan et al., 2017b; Howland et al., 2019), not only to reduce gender inequalities, but also to influence how CC, and food and nutrition insecurity issues are addressed (UN-Women, 2015; Jost et al., 2016; Murray et al., 2016; Nelson and Huyer, 2016; Njuki et al., 2016; Bryan et al., 2017a; IICA, 2018).

At an international scale, two processes that are ongoing and interlinked have shown their growing influence on practices, institutions, and policy narratives at national levels (Kennett and Lendvai, 2014). First, economic globalization has increased inequalities between men and women, and second, powerful supranational actors have risen and devoted their attention to human and environmental rights issues (True and Mintrom, 2001). In this context, several agreements have been reached and adopted to foster gender equality in development policies (Beijing Platform for Action), to address CC (Paris Agreement/COP21), and food and nutrition insecurity issues (Global Nutrition for Growth Pact "Nutrition for Growth").

Even though different approaches and methods have been developed to assess CC and FSN issues (Ampaire et al., 2017; CEPAL, 2018), and to assess gender and CC issues (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015; Bryan et al., 2016; Kristjanson et al., 2017; Acosta et al., 2019a, 2020; Ampaire et al., 2020), considerably less attention has been devoted to methodologies and frameworks that assess gender and food insecurity issues in policies and interventions. As explained by Bryan et al. (2017a) gender and nutrition issues are rarely addressed in the resilience literature. Conceptualization of the links between gender, CC, FSN, and agriculture have been also elaborated (Beuchelt and Badstue, 2013; Bryan et al., 2017b). However, these frameworks do not specifically assess gender integration in policy design and implementation and, consequently, no specific methodology has

been developed to assess gender integration in CC, FSN, and agricultural policies.

This study seeks to bridge this gap. Through policy document analysis and key informant interviews we examine the barriers that result in poor gender mainstreaming in CC, FSN, and agricultural policies and explore possible solutions, using the cases of Guatemala and Honduras.

Guatemala and Honduras provide us with very relevant cases on these issues. On the one hand, the two countries have made international commitments related to gender integration in policy, and their governments have elaborated gender policies at national and sectorial levels (e.g., agriculture) and created gender bodies in charge of coordinating gender mainstreaming/gender policy implementation. On the other hand, as in many countries, the implementation of gender policies and mandates have been disappointing. Despite a strong international context on gender, and the fact that gender mainstreaming has been broadly adopted in many countries' national policies, gender inequalities have not been systematically addressed on the ground (Acosta et al., 2019a), hence the disconnect between policy and implementation.

Our study seeks to address the following research question: *What are the main barriers to and solutions for gender integration in policies and interventions tackling food insecurity, nutrition, climate change and agriculture in Guatemala and Honduras?* In so doing, we examine whether both countries present similarities, and/or whether there are context specificities to the limited effects of gender mainstreaming in these policies for each of the countries.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is based on the conceptual framework proposed by Howland et al. (2019), which examines gender integration in agriculture, CC, and FSN policies and interventions using three main concepts, namely: (1) policy integration (Van Bommel and Kuindersma, 2008), (2) policy mix (Flanagan et al., 2011); and (3) policy translation (Acosta et al., 2020). In this section, we present an overview of each of these three concepts, highlighting their relevance for and their application in this study.

Following Van Bommel and Kuindersma (2008), “policy integration” refers to the incorporation of an issue in policy making and policy evaluation. This concept is often used interchangeably with mainstreaming [see e.g., Nunan et al. (2012), Brouwer et al. (2013)]. As mentioned by Tosun and Lang (2017), the concept of policy integration was first mentioned in the context of gender equity, education, and anti-poverty policies (see e.g., Jacquot, 2010). And it has increasingly been applied to assess CC and the environment governance (see e.g., Visseren-Hamakers, 2015). It has been used to understand policy-makers' motivation for promoting integration, to analyze the design of legal instruments, or evaluate the performance of policy integration (Tosun and Lang, 2017). Van Bommel and Kuindersma (2008) consider policy integration crucial to address boundary-spanning challenges, such as gender issues, to achieve policy objectives and to avoid contradictory policies.

We therefore defined gender integration as the process of incorporating gender issues into the process of policy making and evaluation for agriculture, CC, and FSN. For our purpose, we rely on the policy integration concept to capture the level of integration of gender issues. We consider integration at all stages of the policy cycle from elaboration, to implementation and evaluation (Laswell, 1956). Following Candel and Biesbroek (2016), we use two dimensions to capture the degree of (gender) integration. The first dimension refers to the subsystem involvement, which corresponds to the range of actors and institutions involved in the governance of a particular cross-cutting policy problem (here, gender equity). The second dimension concerns the policy goals, which refers to the explicit adoption of a specific concern within the policies and strategies of a governance system, including its subsystems, with the aim of addressing the concern (here, gender equity). To characterize the first dimension, we consider in the current institutional layout addressing gender, climate, FSN, and agriculture issues, and the gender-specific office or administrations as an indicator of gender integration (True and Mintrom, 2001). For the second dimension, we assume that the level of gender integration within policy documents constitutes a signal of the likely extent of achievement of gender objectives (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015). We also used the concept of integration to systematically frame our questions during interviews with key informants for them to identify barriers and solutions at each stage of the policy cycle (beyond policy design).

The concept of “policy mix” captures the interactions between relevant policies affecting a boundary spanning challenges in a specific space and time (Flanagan et al., 2011). It also enables us to analyze the coherence of the interaction of policy instruments (instruments mix) to achieve a specific goal. Policy mix acknowledges that policies of different domains have different objectives, which can be in synergy or tension with achieving an overarching goal (here, gender equity). Indeed, academia recognizes that governments rarely address policy goals through a single policy instrument; instead, policy mixes consisting of multiple goals and instruments tend to develop over time, especially where jurisdiction over policy issues is shared among agencies or levels of government (Del Rio and Howlett, 2013). In our case, we considered gender equity as our boundary-spanning challenge, and the scope of our analyzed policy mix includes the policy domains of gender, CC, FSN, and agriculture. Analyzing policy interactions can furnish a more holistic understanding of how policies included in the policy mix affect gender equity. Indeed, the policy mix concept opens the scope of analysis beyond gender-labeled policies to see if, effectively, gender is integrated within agricultural, CC, and FSN policies.

The issue of gender integration has been promoted by international arena toward national or local arena, especially in less developed countries (Acosta et al., 2019a). Hence “policy translation” is one of the processes affecting policy integration (Acosta et al., 2019a). As shown by Acosta et al. (2020), the process of translating international gender norms to the national sub-national levels is one factor that explains the obstacles to effective gender mainstreaming and the implementation

gaps. In fact, gender standards formulated and defined at the international level can compete with other standards at the national or local levels (Acosta et al., 2019a) or be oversimplified through multiple translation processes (Kennett and Lendvai, 2014). In Acosta et al. (2019a), the translation of norms is described as a process of negotiation and adaptation in which meaning is configured and reconstructed to fit a specific discursive and normative context. The translation of international standards involves both a translation of narratives, through which international standards are translated into domestic standards, and a translation of domestic standards into policy instruments, such as budgets (Acosta et al., 2019a). As also explained by Kennett and Lendvai (2014), the concept of translation is a means to explore the ways in which policies move and transform between sites, places, people, and scales. Therefore, for this study that analyzes two different countries in the same region, it is relevant to incorporate the policy translation concept for a better understanding of the potential barriers to gender integration in policies related to CC, agriculture, and FSN during this translation phase. In the Results, we show the importance of considering the policy translation process of the gender concept, propelled from the international level, to understand barriers to gender mainstreaming in our policy mix at national levels.

## METHODOLOGY

### Case Study Selection

This study follows a case-study approach (Yin et al., 2002; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Honduras and Guatemala constitute critical case studies for the examination of the effectiveness of gender integration in agriculture, FSN, and CC policies. Critical case studies are defined as having a strategic importance in relation to the problem under study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Firstly, both countries are highly dependent on agriculture, with more than 50% of their population living in rural areas (FAO, 2016). In Honduras, subsistence, low-productivity agriculture is the most representative in the country and women are involved in most of these production processes (e.g., cutting coffee, tobacco processing, growing vegetables and basic grains, tending the garden, and marketing fish products) (JICA, 2011). In addition, women develop small- and medium-sized agricultural and artisanal enterprises and participate in the processing of artisanal fishery products (JICA, 2011). In Guatemala, women are incorporated young into the rural economy (20% of under 15-year old) and participate actively in creating local livelihood alternatives (Ballara et al., 2012). However, women's integration in agriculture is not equitable since women receive lower incomes, are not properly accounted for in government statistics, and enjoy less access to land, credits, and inputs (Ballara et al., 2012; IICA, 2018; Gutierrez-Montes et al., 2020).

In the LAC region, CC and climate variability are particularly expected to adversely affect the Dry Corridor (“Corredor Seco”) (IPCC, 2014). Within the Dry Corridor, Guatemala and Honduras are the most exposed (together with Nicaragua) to drought, floods, and landslides, among other extreme climate events (IPCC, 2014; FAO, 2016; Central American Agricultural

Council (CAC), 2017). These changes could affect agricultural productivity and threaten the food and nutrition security of the poorest populations on the one hand, and exacerbate future health risks on the other (IPCC, 2014). The effects of CC and climate variability will also be distinct for men and women farmers. For example, research has shown gender-differentiated vulnerability levels to climate shocks stemming partly from women's and men's different roles in agriculture (Bryan et al., 2017a).

Food and nutrition insecurity are also urgent challenges for Guatemala and Honduras. The LAC region is facing the triple burden of malnutrition, which manifests in the simultaneous presence of malnutrition, micronutrient deficiency, and obesity (IICA, 2018). Since women are overrepresented among the rural poor in the LAC region (2/3 of the LAC population still lives in poverty), empowering women in agriculture would be key, not only for the sector's performance and for gender equality, but also for poverty reduction and FSN objectives (IDB, 2014; IICA, 2018). Rural women are more affected by food insecurity issues, but can play an important role in addressing it. Climate change is expected to exacerbate gender inequalities in terms of food and nutrition insecurity, and to increase the populations' overall vulnerability (Bryan et al., 2017a). In 2016, FAO calculated that in Guatemala, 1.5 million people need humanitarian assistance (915 000 are subject to food insecurity—severe and moderate— with 82 000 tons of maize lost) while in Honduras, 1.3 million people require humanitarian assistance (461 000 are food insecure – both severely and moderately, with 60% of maize lost) (FAO, 2016).

Both countries are also experiencing intensive processes of male migration, partly leading to a feminization of agriculture (IDB, 2014; Coello et al., 2015; IICA, 2018). In 2019, 20.6% and 34.2% of men in Guatemala and Honduras, respectively, had intentions of migrating compared to a 15% (Guatemala) and 31.8% (Honduras) migration of women (Quintana, 2019). This situation has important implications for the agricultural sector in terms of decision-making and production since, in the absence of men, the women must compensate by playing a greater role in agricultural production (Coello et al., 2015).

### Data Collection

To examine gender mainstreaming in policy, we first established a general inventory of the main policy and regulatory documents (laws, frameworks, strategies, plans, and policies) related to each of the policy domains considered in our policy mix (i.e., agriculture, CC/ disaster risk management/ environment, FSN and gender) for each of the countries (Table 1) (see **Supplementary Material**). The three criteria used to select the policies were adapted from Drucza et al. (2020): (a) national policies specific to gender equality; (b) current national development plans; and (c) national policies related to agriculture, CC (risk management / environment), and FSN. The objective of this general overview was to establish a map of existing policies at the national level, as well as the international commitments to gender equality made by each country (and mentioned in their policy documents). By doing so, we gathered specific information on gender integration, at policy design level,

**TABLE 1** | Sources of information for this study.

	Honduras	Guatemala
# Documents	23 policy and regulatory documents	28 policy and regulatory documents
Document sector	Agriculture, food security and nutrition, gender, climate change, risk management, environment (forest conservation)	Agriculture, food security and nutrition, gender, climate change, risk management, environment (forest conservation)
Documents type	Law, policy documents, program documents, National Development Plan, National Action Plan, National Strategy	Law, policy documents, National Communication on Climate Change, Strategic Plan, institutional strategy, Action Plan, program documents, National Development Plan
# Interviews	15 interviews	16 interviews
Date of interviews	Between October 2018 and May 2019	
Participating organizations	<p><b>Government:</b> National Women's Institute (INAM); Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG) (CC unit, gender unit and fishing directorate); Directorate of Agricultural Science and Technology (DICTA); Ministry of Environment; Technical Unit of Food and Nutritional Security (UTSAN)</p> <p><b>ONU agency:</b> UNDP</p> <p><b>NGO:</b> Red Cross, Action Aid (Ayuda en Accion) and Swisscontact</p> <p><b>Civil society:</b> National Council of Cooperative Women (CONAMUCCO), Women's Rights Center, Via Campesina</p>	<p><b>Government:</b> Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM); Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) (Intercultural Rural Development Unit, gender unit, Planning Directorate); FONTIERRAS; Secretariat of Food and Nutritional Security (SESAN); Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN)</p> <p><b>International Consultant</b></p> <p><b>University/Academics:</b> Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, ICEFI</p> <p><b>Civil society:</b> The Foundation for the Development of Guatemala (Fundesa)</p>

within the country's policy mix on gender, agriculture, CC, and FSN.

In addition to the policy document analysis, we conducted semi-structured interviews at national level with key informants such as governmental officials, international cooperation representatives, and civil society members (see **Table 1**). We identified the people to be interviewed using snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961) and from policy documents. All interviewees were working in agriculture, FSN, CC/ environment, and/or gender fields. The semi-structured interviews were conducted between October 2018 and May 2019 and focused on five components: (1) the characterization of the person interviewed; (2) the main gender issues in the country; (3) the level of gender integration into the policy cycle (design, budget, implementation, and evaluation) related to agriculture, CC, and FSN; (4) the drivers of gender integration problems; and (5) ideas to overcome the barriers to poor integration.

## Data Analysis

The data analysis followed several steps. First, we analyzed the level of gender integration within the policy mix documents and in the countries' National Development Plan [based on Gumucio and Tafur (2015) grades] and the mention of international agreements related to gender. In addition, we searched for the existence of gender-labeled policy, programs or instruments in the policy mix (gender, agriculture, CC, and FSN). Finally, within the non-gender-labeled policy documents identified in the policy mix, we listed if they mentioned any international agreement on gender (sectorial and national level). This allowed us to assess gender inclusion in agenda setting and policy design.

Throughout the policy document analysis, we also examined the gender location in the institutional structure of our policy mix (gender, agriculture, CC, and FSN), which is an indicator of gender integration (True and Mintrom, 2001). This helped

us to understand the way in which gender was integrated into the different institutions (through specific offices, in the different sectors). The key public institutions for each sector were identified, as well as the institutional platform/arenas for coordination among them through a stakeholder mapping.

To analyze the information shared during the interviews, we used a discourse analysis approach that is based "on the assumption that reality is constructed through processes of social meaning-making, relying on the use of language as well as social practices" (Leipold et al., 2019 p. 447). Specifically, we used policy narrative analysis methodology as developed by Béné et al. (2019), inspired by Roe (1994), on food systems issues, to identify and understand the different interpretations and narratives adopted by actors in relation to the integration of gender into policies on agriculture, CC, and FSN. More specifically, we examined the arguments of the key informants interviewed in response to the question: "To what extent is gender being mainstreamed in agriculture, CC, and FSN policy?." To do that, we identified the barriers to and solutions for gender equality within the policy cycle (Jann and Wegrich, 2007), namely: (1) agenda setting (corresponding here to international influence and national context); (2) policy design or formulation; (3) budget; (4) implementation; and (5) evaluation. Finally, the barriers and solutions were re-grouped, based on Giles et al. (2021) into four transversal categories: (1) international influence; (2) structural barriers at national level; (3) behavioral and corruption barriers; and (4) knowledge barriers. To do so, in an excel document, we grouped the barriers and solutions by categories and counted the barriers and solutions most mentioned by the interviewees. We compared the barriers and solutions between the two countries to identify similarities and differences. We also analyzed the types of actor (government, international cooperation, academic, private) mentioning more types of barriers and solutions. Finally, we compared solutions

identified by the key informant interviews and the ones proposed in the gender policy documents.

## RESULTS

This section first presents a brief contextualization of gender institutionalization within the governments of Guatemala and Honduras and then examines the level of gender integration within the defined policy mix, based on the policy documents' analysis. Following this, we present the main barriers to gender mainstreaming within the policy narratives reviewed, for the policy mix under consideration, comparing the two countries' barriers and the types of stakeholder barriers, considering gender integration across policy levels (from design to evaluation). Next, we present the solutions to improve the gender integration at different levels, identified through the stakeholders' narratives' and the policy documents' reviewed.

### Gender-Oriented Institutional Structure of the Policy Mix: Gender, Agriculture, Climate Change, Food Security, and Nutrition

In order to provide an overview of the institutional context of Honduras and Guatemala, **Figures 1, 2** present both countries' institutional layout concerning the policy mix of gender, agriculture, CC, and FSN domains. As reflected in these figures, both countries present a similar institutional setup with regard to gender, agriculture, CC, and FSN. In both countries, an overarching gender government body is located under the presidency (Presidential Secretariat for Women – SEPREM- in Guatemala and the National Women's Institute -INAM- in Honduras). Aside from this general gender-centered institution, there are also gender units located in sectorial ministries or secretariats. In the case of Guatemala, gender units are present at the presidency level under the Secretariat of Food and Nutritional Security (SESAN) and Secretariat of Planning and Programming (SEGEPLAN) and at the sectorial level in the Ministry of Environment (MARN), Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA), the National Forest Institute (INAB) and the National Land Fund (Fontierra) (see Here: **Figure 1**). In Honduras, there are also gender units located under the different directorates of the Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG) such as the Directorate of Agricultural Science and Technology (DICTA), Directorate of Fishery (DIGIPESCA), and the Management Planning and Evaluation Unit (UPEG) (see here: **Figure 2**). In each municipality of Guatemala and Honduras, there is also either a gender office or directorate.

In both countries, the gender units are not considered as implementing bodies, which is reflected in the limited budget they are allocated. Often, these limited budgets are complemented by international cooperation funds through development projects. Furthermore, the gender units are made up of small teams (2 to 6 persons) who are supposed to cover a wide range of goals (e.g., raising awareness of gender issues among state officials, advising on gender integration, or gender policy implementation within entire ministries) in a wide territory of action (frequently at a national level).

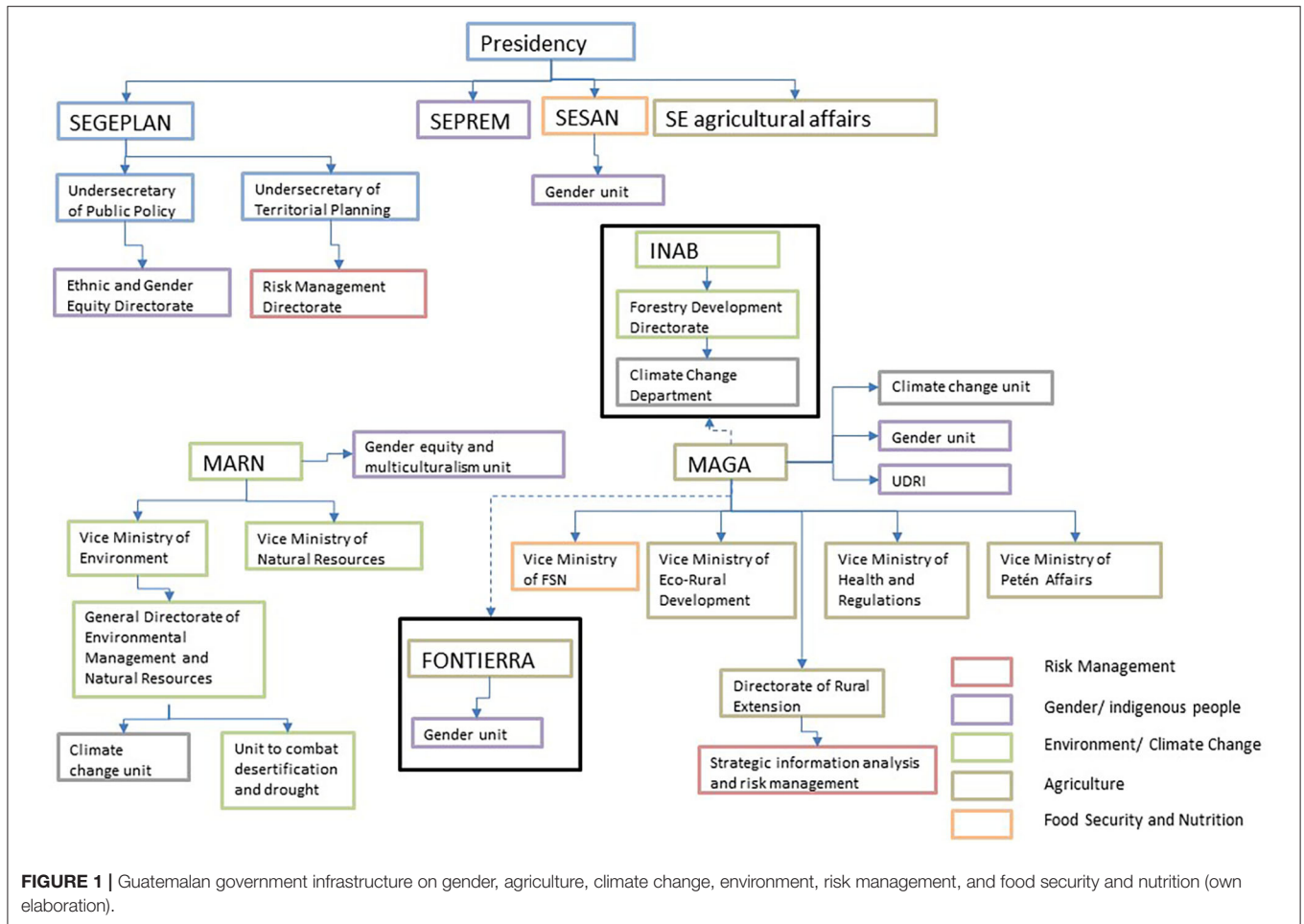
In Guatemala, within MAGA there is the Unit for Intercultural Rural Development (UDRI), which is in charge of ethnic matters and is independent of the gender unit. In contrast, ethnic matters are integrated into the gender units in both MARN (Gender Equity and Multiculturalism Unit) and SEGEPLAN (Directorate of Ethnic and Gender Equity). In Honduras, the Secretariat of Social Works of the Wife of the President (SOSEP) and the Secretariat of Social Welfare (SBS) have some gender mandates and have government budget to implement projects. However, their actions on gender equality are very limited. As stressed by one of the interviewees, "SOSEP has done very little, very little in the way of gender. And, when it does, what it does is reaffirm roles... [...] It is the same as the SBS."

In general, gender governmental bodies are defined as weak, invisible, and with very limited capacity, resources, and political support (with some exceptions, such as the gender unit within MARN) (JICA, 2011 and key-informant interviews). This weakness was noted as especially noteworthy in the activities and project involvement of these gender units. For example, with regard to the specific tasks or projects that the gender units were involved with at the time the interviews were conducted, we found that in Honduras, the gender unit was not involved in any SAG project/program. Furthermore, some members of the gender unit were not working exclusively in the gender unit but also had other functions in parallel. For example, in DICTA, one person was in charge not only of the gender issues but also of rural credits and saving institutions ("cajas rurales").

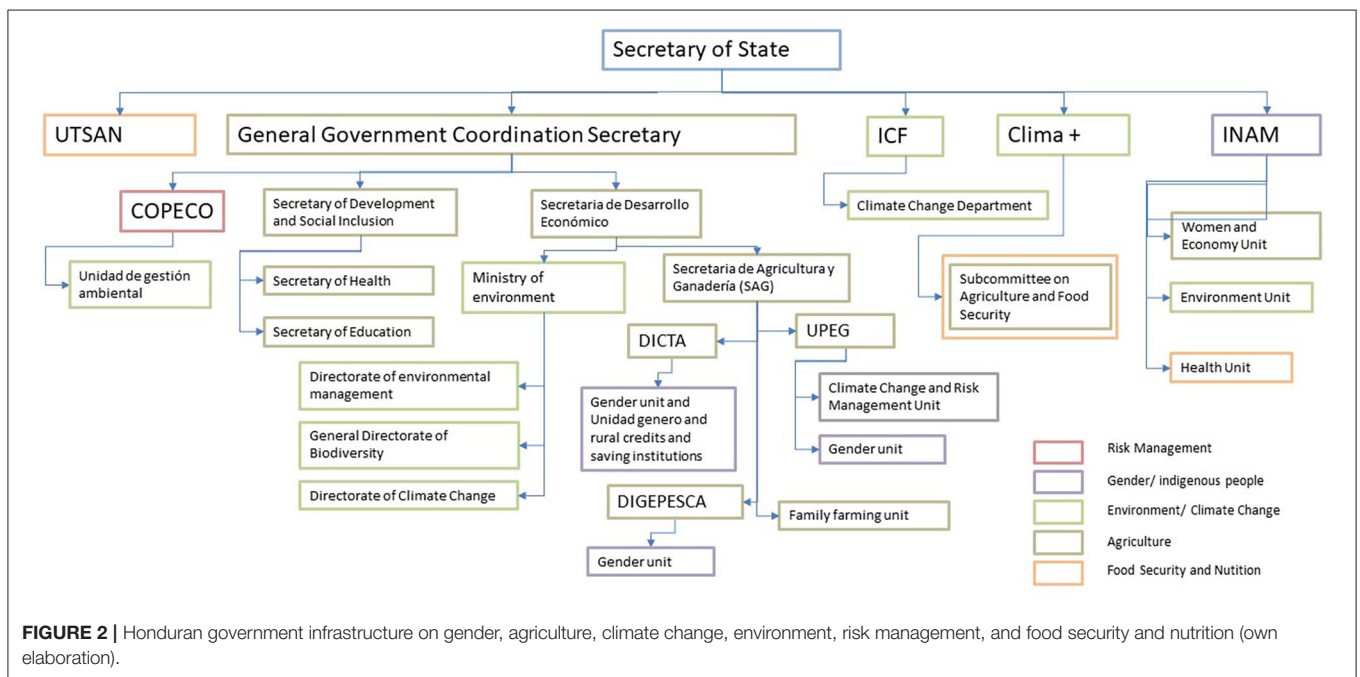
In Guatemala, the gender units of institutions also presented a limited involvement in activities and programs, although the situation was somewhat more favorable than in Honduras. For example, MAGA's gender unit was participating in the ministry's flagship program for family farming and economic development, PAFEC (Programa de Agricultura Familiar para el Fortalecimiento de la Economía Campesina), essentially working with unit directors to include gender considerations and women's participation on the one hand, and to document and share experiences on the other. In MARN, the gender unit had participated in the elaboration of the gender and CC strategy for the National Determined Contributions. Through the involvement and elaboration of these policy and strategic documents, the intention was to commit the members of the government and respective ministries to include gender considerations in their planning.

### Gender Integration in the Guatemalan and Honduran Policy Mix and National Development Plans

In Guatemala, we found five main policies, that explicitly address gender equality and gender equity, in the scope of the studied policy mix (gender, agriculture, CC, and FSN): (1) the National Policy for the Advancement and Integral Development of Women (2008–2023); (2) the institutional policy for gender equality and strategic framework for implementation by MAGA (2014–2023); (3) the Gender Environmental Policy (2015–2020); (4) the institutional strategy for gender equity with ethnic and cultural relevance of Instituto Nacional de Bosques



**FIGURE 1 |** Guatemalan government infrastructure on gender, agriculture, climate change, environment, risk management, and food security and nutrition (own elaboration).



**FIGURE 2 |** Honduran government infrastructure on gender, agriculture, climate change, environment, risk management, and food security and nutrition (own elaboration).

(2013); and (5) the gender equality policy of the CONRED<sup>1</sup> Executive Secretariat (2016–2020). In Honduras, three main gender policies were found: (1) the Policy for Gender Equity in Honduran Agriculture (1999–2015); (2) the compendium of laws on women's rights and (3) the National Women's Policy (2010–2022). This corresponds to grade 4 of 5 grades in gender integration, according to Gumucio and Tafur (2015) ranking, i.e., “Gender included in action plan, but absence of clear earmarked resources for implementation.”

There are thus not only national gender policies, but sectorial gender policies have also been elaborated for agriculture (Guatemala and Honduras), environment (Guatemala), forestry (Guatemala), and disaster risk management (Guatemala). In Guatemala and Honduras, no gender policy was found related to either food security and nutrition or climate change.

The Guatemalan National Development Plan (NDP) called “K’atun Nuestra Guatemala 2032’ (2012–2032), makes explicit reference to six international agreements: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Post 2015 Agenda, the International Conference on Population and Development, the Women's Platform for Action, Rio +20, and the Hyogo Framework for Action. Those international agreements directly or indirectly integrate gender considerations, except for the Hyogo Framework for Action. Moreover, the Guatemalan NDP frames, as a sign of progress toward the Beijing Agreements, the promulgation of the National Gender Policy and its Action Plan; the creation of gender bodies; the development of a normative framework naming the CENADOJ (2008); the Decreto Ley N°9/2009 (2009); and the CONAPREVI (2008) (NDP 2012–2032, p. 71–72). Besides, the Guatemalan NDP includes strategic pillars related to well-being, wealth for all (specifying both men and women), natural resources, and human rights that can be related to gender issues. However, no mention is made to gender-related strategic pillar related to soils, agriculture or FSN.

In contrast, within the Honduran NDP ‘Country Vision 2010–2018 and Nation Plan 2010–2022’, gender is only mentioned on three occasions: (1) gender equity as a transversal strategic pillar for development objectives; (2) the crisis of representation based on ethnicity and gender that challenge democracy, citizenship and governance; and (3) within the vision for the goals of education, where it seeks to eliminate gender inequality.

Thus, in Guatemala and Honduras, gender is poorly integrated in the policy mix and NDP through few mentions (this corresponds to grade 2/5, according to Gumucio and Tafur (2015) ranking: “Gender mentioned in overall objectives but absent from subsequent implementation levels”). In **Table 2**, we summarize the main characteristics of gender integration at institutional layout and policy design level.

**Table 2** indicates that there are no major barriers for gender integration in the policy mix of gender, agriculture, CC, and FSN at institutional and policy design levels.

## Barriers to Effective Gender Mainstreaming

In this section, we present the most cited barriers to further integration of gender in Guatemalan and Honduran policies in

**TABLE 2 |** Characteristics of gender integration within policy mix of gender, agriculture, CC and FSN and National Development plans in Guatemala and Honduras.

	Honduras	Guatemala
Policy domain where a gender-specific policy has been developed	Gender Agriculture - Grade 4 of gender integration (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015)	Gender Agriculture Environment Forestry Disaster Risk Management- Grade 4 of gender integration (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015)
Gender mentioned in National Development Plan	Yes (Country Vision 2010-2018 and Nation Plan 2010-2022)-Grade 2 of gender integration (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015)	Yes (K’atun Nuestra Guatemala 2032)-Grade 2 of gender integration (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015)
Coherence issues in policy objectives (tensions?)	Not visible	Not visible
Main instruments to deal with gender issue	National Women's Policy (2010–2022)	National Policy for the Advancement and Integral Development of Women (2008–2023)
Governance structure to assume integration	National Women's Institute (INAM) Gender units	Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM) Gender units

both the reviewed policy documents and as mentioned in the key informant interviews. They are thematically organized into four sections: barriers relating to international influence, structural barriers at national level, behavioral and corruption barriers, and knowledge barriers.

## Gender Barriers and Policy Translation From International Level

The inclusion of gender in policies, as well as its inclusion in the national political agenda, was framed and translated partly as driven by international cooperation in both Guatemala and Honduras, based on international concepts translated nationally. Interviewees related that through the combination of participation in international events, the signing of international agreements, and the influence/pressure/sensitization of international actors, and organizations, gender equality an equity issues had progressively become stronger in both countries. Partly as a result of this international cooperation, influence, and funding, gender policies and laws were elaborated, and gender bodies created. However, different interviewees highlighted that the government did not necessarily apply gender equality into policy, and that national actors did not fully embrace gender mainstreaming approaches, in their translation of gender into their policies. For example, an academic in Guatemala commented:

“Most people don't do it [include gender] because it's cool, but because there are indicators to be achieved and if not, the funds don't come. If you don't include this issue, if you don't have the strategies included, then there is no funding.”

<sup>1</sup>CONRED: National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction.



Interviewees also highlighted the lack of coordination among international actors and their “top-down” approach that created a gap between the international cooperation lines of action and national realities, limiting the (gender) impact of interventions and questioning national autonomy. For example, three academics from Guatemala and three civil society informants from Honduras expressed frustration at the lack of positioning of international cooperation in relation to government decisions. Indeed, support for international cooperation has been mainly at the technical level (i.e., the development of policy documents) rather than at the advocacy level (debating the country’s decisions and approach to development). In Guatemala, interviewees commented that the current context limits the advocacy efforts made by international cooperation actors. In Guatemala, there is a tense relationship between the government and the International Commission against Impunity, and the international cooperation actors, in general. An Academic commented: *“So I think that now the role of the United Nations, at least this year, is in a low profile.”*

Three academics in Guatemala also raised concerns regarding the Guatemalan law on “Non-Governmental Organizations for Development” (Ley de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales para el Desarrollo). The law allows greater state control over NGO finances, and allows the government to intervene and dissolve the NGOs, among other powers. The academics interviewed qualified the law as a ‘censorship of national and international NGOs’:

*“Practically everything is going to be a crime, everything the NGOs do; if they protest and denounce, etc. It’s like taking away the voice of civil society.”*

In Honduras, there were also concerns that the support from international cooperation to the government prejudices the civil society that fights for women’s rights. A key informant from the Honduran civil society commented:

*“In the last 4 years, we have had an administrative persecution with high levels of control over the organizations by the State, and the international cooperation has said nothing. (...) Cooperation [actors] (...) are afraid of being expelled.”*

According to the interviewees, in Honduras the financial resources from international cooperation were used to implement politicized interventions that had little effect on alleviating poverty or closing the gender inequality gap. For example, a civil society member in Honduras shared that the international cooperation did not question the Honduran government’s neoliberal/extractive development model:

*“Cooperation is not betting on another type of model that changes people’s lives, but rather it is a cooperation embedded in the neoliberal capitalist model that is playing the same interests of the large transnational corporations. (...) I believe that it is necessary to investigate more exhaustively where the resources of cooperation come from, because there are those who may be making the rules.”*

Overall, in both countries, the influence of international cooperation was presented as having played an important role for the formulation of gender policies and strategies, but was also largely criticized for the top-down approach, and lack of coordination and advocacy actions that led to poor appropriation of gender in governments.

### Structural Barriers at National Level

In both countries, two types of structural barriers were identified at rural women’s and governmental levels. Interviewees remarked that the structural poverty in which rural women find themselves constitutes a key barrier to women’s empowerment. Rural women face multiple sources of poverty and discrimination (less access to education, victims of stereotyping and violence, and exclusion from decision making), which limit their political participation and access to opportunities. For example, the double workload that women have and the lack of state infrastructure (e.g., kinder gardens) complicates their participation in development projects. There is also widespread violence against women and an intrinsic vulnerability due to the fact that women are not being sufficiently considered by the government. Women are not amply recognized in the agricultural sector; their role is often stigmatized and largely limited to supporting their husbands and to cultivating small-scale crops for home consumption. For instance, interviewees highlighted that in MAGA’s projects and activities, women are largely not recognized as farmers, but rather as supporting male farmers. In Honduras, key informants shared that, historically, women have been forgotten/ignored in agricultural policies and are poorly active when involved in projects; several interviewees stressed the lack of land ownership by women as one of the main obstacles to women’s empowerment in the agricultural sector.

Furthermore, the interviewees stated that in both countries, the extractive and neoliberal development model pursued by the governments go against smallholder farmers in general and rural women in particular, while favoring foreign multinationals and large landowners. This model was perceived as incompatible (or in conflict) with gender equity and FSN.

Another barrier highlighted in both countries was the weakness of gender institutions, which results in limiting the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming. The units are small, with few resources and little political support. In both countries, the lack of women in political positions of power limits the inclusion of gender in policies. This, added to the lack of articulation between governmental and international actors, and among international actors, and both national and local-level actors have been seen as limiting the impact of actions on behalf of women.

The gap between policy design and implementation is another barrier identified in the two countries. This particularly applies to the gap in gender policies. In Guatemala, interviewees explained there are many policies in place for which there is limited national budget, therefore gender policies are not a priority in budget execution, which partly reflects a lack of interest in gender equality issues by decision-makers. In Honduras, informants lamented the lack of a mechanism for monitoring and sanctioning the non-implementation of gender policies. In addition, the annual budget system in both countries limits the

implementation of policy in the long term, with gender related actions being often eliminated from the budget. The interviewees also considered the lack of state policy as hindering the achievement of policy goals and making gender mainstreaming a decision of the administration in office.

Additionally, interviewees highlighted that the fact that gender is a crosscutting issue in both countries implies that no one takes ownership of the issue. Government officers do not have a crosscutting vision in their work. In Guatemala, an informant shared: “*When it belongs to all, it belongs to none.*” For example, Guatemalan extension workers consider that disaggregating data is not part of their work or that it is an extra workload and a subject outside their daily activities.

### Behavioral and Corruption Barriers

Several interviewees remarked that civil servants (at the national and local level) have no interest in including gender in policy nor in recognizing the diversity of the population and its needs to be addressed. There is no interest from government decision-makers in reducing the budget gap either. The Guatemalan flagship program PAFSEC does not explicitly and intentionally integrate climate change, food security and nutrition, and gender, but it does so by accident, according to interviewees. In Honduras, as mentioned before, no SAG program includes gender.

Some interviewees went further claiming that corruption through groups of powers (military elites, the church, corrupt officials) is a way of functioning in the governments. It leads to poverty in the countries and the instrumentalization of social programs. In the case of Guatemala, the failure to integrate gender into the budget can be seen as a problem of priorities that no longer represent the realities of the country but, in reality, reflects the level of corruption in the country. There is an inertia in the distribution of the national budget where issues of national defense are more of a priority than social issues (such as gender equality). In Honduras, the breaking point that worsened the situation was the 2009 coup d'état, while in Guatemala the breaking point was the expulsion by the President of the Republic of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) in 2018. In both cases, these events have deteriorated relations between the government and international actors, and civil society overall, and, in particular, those actors working on behalf of women.

Other interviewees described their countries as structurally (beyond the sphere of government) racist, sexist, violent, patriarchal, conservative, and religiously extremist, impeding the advancement of the inclusion of gender in policies. According to a Guatemalan interviewee, civil servants (mostly men) do not separate their personal views (racist, sexist, chauvinist, conservative...) from their public function. As such, gender integration competes with personal interests. The vision of how to resolve the gender gap responds to the assistance-based logic and unfounded victimization of women. In Guatemala, an interviewee explained that the gender equality and the feminist movement are discredited and delegitimized, often referred to as “feminazis” and thought of as turning people into homosexuals.

### Knowledge Barriers

In Guatemala and Honduras interviewees considered that there is a lack of data, information, and diagnosis on the gender gap in agriculture and/or on the actions that have an impact on it. According to some of the Guatemalan actors interviewed, this is partly linked to the limited governmental monitoring and evaluation efforts that is partial and done on an *ad hoc* basis, often completed by international cooperation organizations.

For others, the lack of gender integration in policies is a problem of sensitization as is training of civil servants (at national and local levels) on gender issues. There is also a reported lack of capacity on how to conduct gender inclusion. Key informants in both countries pointed out the high rotation of government staff and the inadequate hiring of persons as additional barriers to achieving awareness and an open dialogue with international cooperation bodies or civil society toward gender issues.

When it comes to climate change, in both countries, interviewees revealed that climate change issues are addressed through a technical approach that excludes gender or social considerations. The urgency to act in the face of a disaster (in a risk management approach) in the Honduran dry corridor limits, for instance, the integration of gender in policy. According to a Honduran informant, there is more inclusion of gender in food security and nutrition policies than in climate change because of the roles socially attributed to women.

Finally, some interviews highlighted that the knowledge barrier is also due to the distinct understandings and definition of what gender mainstreaming is or involves (e.g., participation in activities vs. women's empowerment). Because of the lack of understanding of what gender integration means (limited to such things as women's participation in workshop, for instance), programs do not address the key issues that would close the gender gaps and improve food security and nutrition indicators. Examples of key issues would be: improve women's access to land, their participation in household decision-making, reduce their workload etc. In the case of Guatemala, programs currently often go against women's empowerment by promoting and reinforcing traditional roles for women. According to a Honduran informant, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts should include more indicators than simply the number of women participating in activities.

In **Table 3** we present a summary of mentioned barriers for effective gender mainstreaming, by country. The ones in bold are the most mentioned by the interviewees.

### Solutions for Effective Gender Mainstreaming

To overcome these barriers, interviews and policy documents have both provided solutions. In this section, we present the most mentioned solutions for greater integration of gender in Honduras and Guatemala according to where they were identified: actors' narratives or policy documents.

#### Solutions Found in the Narratives

The most mentioned solutions in the Guatemalan narratives were: (i) there is no short-term solution/ change will be difficult and long to achieve (six informants); (ii) the need to produce evidence on gender for political change (advocacy

**TABLE 3** | Synthesis table of most mentioned barriers for gender mainstreaming in Guatemalan and Honduras policies.

Narrative barriers		Guatemala	Honduras
International influence	Without international cooperation, there would be no progress in gender mainstreaming. The advances in gender inclusion have been made possible by international commitments and pressure that commit the country more than from real interest.	8	9
	There is a lack of articulation among international actors. Their “top-down” approach creates a gap between the international cooperation lines of action and national realities, which limit the (gender) impact of interventions and question national autonomy.	5	0
	International cooperation actors lack positioning with regard to government decisions. They blindly support governments.	3	4
Structural barriers at national level	<b>The structural poverty in which rural women are found constitute a key barrier to women’s empowerment. Women are not recognized in the agricultural sector.</b>	8	13
	The extractive and neoliberal development model pursued by the governments goes against smallholders in general and rural women in particular, while favoring foreign multinationals and large landowners.	6	4
	<b>The weakness of gender institutions limits gender mainstreaming.</b>	8	11
	<b>The gap between policymaking and implementation is a barrier identified for gender mainstreaming in policies.</b>	11	10
	The lack of state policy is hindering the achievement of policy goals and makes gender mainstreaming a decision of the administration in office	8	8
	The lack of articulation between governmental and international actors and among international actors, both at national and local level is a barrier.	4	4
	<b>Gender being a crosscutting issue, no one takes ownership of the issue: “When it belongs to all, it belongs to none.”</b>	10	4
The annual budget system limits the implementation of policy in the long term. Gender-related actions are often eliminated from the budget.	8	8	
Behavioral/Corruption	Civil servants (at national and local level) have no interest in including gender in policy nor in recognizing the diversity of the population and its needs to be addressed.	2	6
	Corruption through groups of powers (military elites, church, corrupt officials) is a way of functioning in the governments. It leads to poverty in the country, and the instrumentalization of social programs.	6	3
	<b>The countries are structurally (beyond the sphere of government) racist, sexist, violent, patriarchal, conservative, and religiously extremist, which impede advances in the inclusion of gender in policies.</b>	12	4
Knowledge/Capacity	There is a lack of data, information, and diagnosis on the gender gap and on actions that have an impact on it.	8	4
	<b>The lack of gender integration in policies is a problem of sensitization, as is lack of training of civil servants (at national and local level).</b>	9	10
	When it comes specifically to climate change, the issue is addressed through technical approaches that exclude gender or social considerations.	8	2
	There are distinct understandings and definitions of what gender mainstreaming is (participation in activities vs. empowerment).	4	5

*The barriers in bold are those that were mentioned the most (by informants from Honduras, Guatemala, or both).*

based on evidence) (six informants); (iii) implement training, sensitization, education at institutional/ population levels (six informants); and (iv) the development of state policies (five informants). In Honduras, the solutions that achieved the most consensus were: (i) strengthening the legal framework that protects women and/or enforce the law (nine informants); (ii) improving the design of programs to include women and/or see the impact on women (nine informants); (iii) improving financial support to civil society and gender units (nine informants); and (iv) training, sensitization, and education at the institutional and population level (seven informants).

In Guatemala, the interviewed academics agreed on the need to produce scientific evidence as a solution (five informants),

a response that reflects their field of expertise. They did not see the strengthening of governmental gender entities as a strategic solution. On the other hand, civil servants working on gender issues saw education and sensitization as the main solution (four informants), and to a lesser extent the strengthening of government gender entities (two informants). Civil servants who do not work on gender issues saw solutions in promoting women’s participation as citizens in society and seeking to achieve women’s empowerment rather than participation in programs.

In Honduras, the civil servants working on gender issues focused more on strengthening and politically supporting government gender institutions and improving financial support in an articulated manner to foster program sustainability. At the

civil society level, informants highlighted the need to strengthen civil society and its role in policy advocacy. Members of civil society and the international cooperation actors stressed the importance of the international cooperation promoting other models of development, as well as the need to address the structural poverty barrier (land ownership). The international cooperation actors cited the solution of producing evidence to support policy change.

### Solutions Emerging From Policy Documents

The solutions identified in the policy documents of both countries were consistent with the actors' narratives and focused on issues such as the need to develop research actions to improve knowledge on the gender issues present, capacity building of civil servants on gender, strengthening the enforcement of gender-related legislation, improvement of financial support for gender units, and sensitization of the population on gender (see **Table 4**). Solutions to access to property (in MAGA's, MARN's and SAG's gender policies and, Guatemala's and Honduras's national gender policies) is also consistent with the interviewees' narratives (see **Table 4**).

It should also be noted that two documents mentioned the need for creating policies and programs that reduce the impact of macroeconomic policies on women's lives, which is also consistent with barriers identified by the interviewees in Guatemala and Honduras (see **Table 4**).

The documents also made frequent mention to issues of violence, racism, and discrimination, which was also consistent with the barrier on the structural issue of racism, sexism, violence, patriarchy, conservatism, and religious extremism highlighted by the interviewees in Guatemala and Honduras.

The document analysis also revealed that there seemed to be more focus on women's participation in interventions (in seven documents) than on women's empowerment (in three documents). This suggests that the gender community participating in policy elaboration has a distinct understanding and definition of what gender mainstreaming is (see **Table 4**).

Finally, policy documents made no mention of corruption issues, the lack of articulation among actors, or the low appropriation of gender as a cross-cutting topic. **Table 3** presents the solutions gathered to address gender inequality.

## DISCUSSION

In this study we assessed the integration of gender in the policy mix, including gender, agriculture, CC and FSN policy using Guatemala and Honduras as case studies, and examined the barriers to and solutions for improved mainstreaming in those policies. The study constitutes an important contribution to the Central America policy analysis literature, confirming previous findings and also sharing new ones. In this section, we discuss our results in the light of the existing literature.

## On the Role of Policy Translation From International Cooperation and Gender Integration in Policy Documents

Our study identified the relevance of the international context, through the mobilization of the policy translation concept, toward understanding the level of gender integration in policy, echoing the findings of other authors examining these issues (True and Mintrom, 2001; Rees, 2005; JICA, 2011; Kennett and Lendvai, 2014; Gumucio and Tafur, 2015; Mukhopadhyay, 2016; Acosta et al., 2020). United Nations (1996) constituted the symbol, and turning point, of the promotion of gender mainstreaming in policies, a practice that was adopted widely by governments, and which allowed both the elaboration, through translation of gender concept, of national gender policies and the creation of governmental gender entities (True and Mintrom, 2001; Kennett and Lendvai, 2014; Acosta et al., 2020). Besides influencing governments to include gender considerations in policy, our study supports recent study findings highlighting the important role of international cooperation for funding gender actions, which were otherwise unbudgeted through national mechanisms (Elson, 1998; IICA, 2015; Bryan et al., 2016; Njuki et al., 2016; Ampaire et al., 2020).

However, Guatemalan and Honduran interviewees and authors all agreed on the lack of impact of international cooperation actions. As other authors have pointed out, this mismatch is reflected in the gap that exists between international narratives and the production of documents on the one hand, and implementation and impact on the other (Bryan et al., 2016; Ampaire et al., 2020) and the lack of enforcement of the law in applying gender-sensitive policies (IICA, 2015; Ampaire et al., 2017), leading to an insufficient policy translation of mainstreaming efforts into progress in the area of gender equality (IICA, 2018; Acosta et al., 2020) and incomplete implementation of an effective policy integration.

Our study found a context of poor relationship between the government and the international cooperation conducted in Guatemala, and the disengagement of international cooperation actors, both of which were seen as barriers to influencing policy, and neither of which were reported elsewhere in the literature examined. The narrative on the bad relations between international cooperation and the government was included in an ICEFI Bulletin on the analysis of the public budget for 2018 (Bulletin 24, ICEFI, 2018), but did not link it to the gender issues in the country.

Similarly, in Honduras, our study reveals how some informants highlighted the problem of international cooperation support for the government, which is characterized by its persecution of civil society that fights for women's rights. The issue of the lack of positioning regarding the government's development model and the politicization of public resources and the international cooperation, and the issue of national autonomy being put at risk by international cooperation was not reflected in the literature.

As shown in this study, although gender is integrated in sectorial and national policy, it is not sufficient to observe a change in bridging/closing the gender gaps (no gender

**TABLE 4 |** Lines of action to support women's mainstreaming in gender policy documents.

	INAB (G)	MAGA (G)	National (G)	MARN (G)	CONRED (G)	National (H)	SAG (H)	law compendium (H)	Total
Strengthen internal capacities in gender	1	1		1	1	1	1		6
Guaranty men's and women's participation in interventions/ in policy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		7
Create gender sensitive indicators/ MandE system		1	1	1	1	1	1		6
Empower (rural) women		1			1	1			3
Create policies and programs that reduce the impact of macroeconomic policies on women's lives			1			1			2
Lead research on gender issues		1	1	1		1			4
Foster women access to property/ Establish land titling policies		1	1			1	1		4
Establish specific gender attention in case of disaster/ gender focus on disaster management			1	1	1	1	1		5
Sensitize population on gender issues (participation/ violence/ discrimination, racism)			1	1	1	1	1		5
Have a special focus on rural women in poverty, in terms of food and nutritional assistance and community food production/ focus on gender and FSN		1	1	1		1	1		5
Include special focus on women in REDD+/ CC interventions			1	1		1			3
Enforce gender laws (violence/ racism/ discrimination)/ enforce implementation of gender policies			1	1		1		1	4
Strengthen gender institutions (politically and financially)	1	1	1	1	1	1			6
Include gender in sectoral policies/projects/programmes/documents	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		7
Create budget for gender policy implementation/ gender sensitive budget		1	1	1	1	1			5

integration in policy implementation and evaluation). In stark contrast to the case of Ethiopia (Druzca et al., 2020), Guatemalan and Honduran policy is aligned with international conventions at policy design level, but implementation is lagging. Besides, housing national and sectorial gender policies within specific gender units seems to disembodiment gender as a cross-cutting topic, and reduces ownership of the topic for non-gender civil servants in other units.

## On the National Context

Both the narratives found in the literature (Bryan et al., 2016; Acosta et al., 2020; Ampaire et al., 2020) and the country cases confirm the gap between the creation of policies and their implementation. In this regard, Gumucio and Tafur (2015) assess the degree of gender integration in CC and FSN policies using five grade categories, from grade 1 (no reference to gender issues) through to grade five (gender included in the document from objective to action plan with resources for implementation). Gumucio and Tafur (2015) results showed that, the majority of policies reviewed by our study have been rated with grade 2. The temporal analysis of the policy documents reveals an incremental emergence of gender considerations, but that remain general and unspecific (Acosta et al., 2019b). This situation is explained in the Guatemalan case by a lack of real interest of government actors in integrating gender into policies (beyond its inclusion in documents), a point also mentioned by Bryan et al. (2016). Similarly, the lack of enforcement of the existing law or measures to enforce it was reported among both Honduran and Guatemalan informants and in the literature (JICA, 2011; Ampaire et al., 2017). In this way, the implementation of gender mandates is not considered compulsory but optional. These findings are important from two perspectives: on the one hand, they allow the deep analysis of the level of integration of gender within policy documents; on the other, they allow going beyond the mere analysis of the document to assess the level of implementation and evaluation of such policies.

The narrative found both in the Guatemalan and Honduran cases and in the literature, postulates that the lack of gender integration comes from the way governments operate, divided by sectors and not used to working on cross-cutting issues (as promoted at international level). Because of its cross-cutting nature, gender is seen as an extra workload. This resonates with the literature, which points out the lack of awareness on gender issues (IICA, 2015), a lack of acceptance of the inclusion of gender by members of government (Ampaire et al., 2020), partly because it is perceived as causing extra workload (Bryan et al., 2018) and a lack of information in general about what the gender gap represents (Bryan et al., 2016, 2018; Njuki et al., 2016). This narrative also underscores the lack of coordination among government members due to the fact that the government operates in silos (Ampaire et al., 2017) and the problem of including 'new issues' that cut across traditional sectors such as the Ministry of Agriculture (Levy, 1992). The study on policy mix for sustainable transitions conducted by Rogge and Reichardt (2016) highlighted the key role of coordinating structures and communication networks toward achieving coherence among policy instruments of distinct policy domains and also achieving

the overarching goal of a policy mix (performance of the policy mix). For these authors, one of the major tools needed to achieve policy coherence is policy integration “*by enabling a more holistic thinking across different policy sectors, at the same time involving more holistic processes*” (Rogge and Reichardt, 2016 p. 1627).

The narrative in which a link is established between the country's structural poverty and the lack of gender integration in policies was found in the narratives mentioned by the interviewees in both countries and in the literature on the region. In fact, Oxfam (2015) establishes a relationship between inequalities in the distribution of land in this region, due to pressure from large landowners and the agricultural development model based on extensive crops, which affects small-scale producers and even more so women producers. Thus, it is the entire economic and social system that is questioned in this narrative. Mayoux (1993) argues that social and agricultural policies do not propose solutions that challenge structural gender inequalities and will therefore not overcome them. This finding is also related to the Honduran narrative in which the extractive and neoliberal model pursued by the Honduran government harms male and female farmers while favoring foreign multinationals and landowners. Public policy does not seek transformational change to address the challenges of the effects of CC, but rather serves the interests of extractive projects.

The Guatemalan narrative about the non-use of the M&E system, its data limitations and difficulty in accessing data, corresponds to the narratives in the literature that indicate: (1) a lack information, understanding, and research on gender (Daly, 2005; IICA, 2015; Bryan et al., 2016, 2018; Njuki et al., 2016; Ampaire et al., 2020) and (2) there is a lack of capacity on gender issues (IICA, 2015; Bryan et al., 2016; Njuki et al., 2016; Ampaire et al., 2020).

There is also consensus among Honduran and Guatemalan informants and the literature (JICA, 2011; IICA, 2015; Bryan et al., 2016; Njuki et al., 2016; Ampaire et al., 2020) on the weakness of the gender institutional framework in terms of human resources staff capacity. For example, in Honduras, women's offices are being closed due to lack of resources (JICA, 2011). As JICA (2011 p. 20) concludes: “*The needs and interests of women are not central to the analysis and strategies of poverty reduction, and women remain on the margins of the poverty reduction process*”. In terms of women's participation in politics, studies confirm the marginal space occupied by women, with 19.5% of them in the National Congress between 2010 and 2014 (JICA, 2011). Furthermore, at the local level, the proportion of women mayors is below 10% (JICA, 2011).

The study found no comments on the process of silencing and censorship of civil society by State law in the literature.

## On Behavior and Corruption

There is a consensus between interviewees and literature findings indicating state corruption, patriarchal culture, and lack of interest by politicians as three constraints affecting the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming. In the literature, a lack of interest has been shown to be a barrier (Bryan et al., 2016; Mukhopadhyay, 2016). Corruption as a mode of functioning and

orchestrated by power groups that favors poverty and inequality has also been contemplated in the literature, as has patriarchal culture (Mayoux, 1993; Njuki et al., 2016). This idea is also developed in an Oxfam report (2015) that speaks of the “hijacking of democracy” that translates into corrupt practices by the economic and political elites, giving as examples clientelism, vote buying, the hiring of public employees because of their political affiliation, the prioritization of assistance policies, the granting of public services as favors, and the influence on the media (among others). The influence of religion in policy that tends to maintain traditional gender roles is also an aspect identified both in the case studies and in literature (Druzca et al., 2020).

Finally, the last three narratives constitute a gradient of the same narrative. Indeed, Bryan et al. (2017b) emphasized the complexity of the policy design process that translates into negotiations among actors, their own needs, and preferences and priorities, which sometimes has negative effects on policy outcomes. These potential tensions and disagreements among policymakers are observed not only at the national level, but also at the local level (Acosta et al., 2020).

## On Awareness, Knowledge and Capacity to Address Gender Issues

The narratives for Honduras and Guatemala, and elsewhere in the literature, coincide in identifying knowledge and capacity barriers acting as a brake on gender mainstreaming (IICA, 2015; Bryan et al., 2018; Ampaire et al., 2020). This lack of gender awareness also translates into the co-existence of different definitions of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in policies and therefore different understandings of how to achieve it (Walby, 2005; Acosta et al., 2020). Indeed, gender norms formulated and defined at the international level may compete with other informal norms at the local level (Acosta et al., 2019a) or be oversimplified through multiple translation processes (Kennett and Lendvai, 2014). The lack of capacity among public servants on gender issues identified in Honduras and in the literature reinforces this barrier (Bryan et al., 2016; Ampaire et al., 2017).

In the specific case of CC, the lack of gender inclusion is explained by the technical approach given to this issue ignoring its social aspects (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015; Mukhopadhyay, 2016; Njuki et al., 2016; CDKN, 2017; Acosta et al., 2019a). The case of CC is illustrative since it is an issue that is largely politicized at the international level by actors such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the scientific advisory body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), all of which delayed integrating the discussion on the gender dimensions of climate change, focusing, at first, to a greater extent on technical aspects and solutions to CC (Resurreccion, 2011). Fordham (2003) speaks of the “*tyranny of urgency*,” taking up an expression from BRIDGE (1996) according to which the urgency of a situation allows the elimination of gender (or social issues, in general) through prioritization.

## On Solutions

In the literature, solutions or recommendations are promoted to improve gender integration in policy. Eight main types of solutions have been identified: (1) to promote participatory mechanisms and multi-stakeholder collaborations during the policy-making process (FAO, 2011; Gumucio and Tafur, 2015; Huyer et al., 2015; Tafur et al., 2015; Bryan et al., 2016; Ampaire et al., 2017; Dinesh et al., 2018); (2) to lead capacity building and strategic communication actions at all levels (Ampaire et al., 2017; Dinesh et al., 2018); (3) to include gender considerations at all stages of project cycles (including budget for M&E) (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015; Huyer et al., 2015; Tafur et al., 2015; Ampaire et al., 2020); (4) to establish or adjust policy objectives so that they go beyond improving women’s participation (Huyer et al., 2015; UNDP, 2016; IICA, 2018); (5) to use legal instruments as motivation and guidance for gender integration (Gumucio and Tafur, 2015; Tafur et al., 2015; Ampaire et al., 2017; IICA, 2018); (6) to lead more research on gender to inform policy and project design (Huyer et al., 2015; Bryan et al., 2016, 2017b; Dinesh et al., 2018); (7) to improve policy implementation at local level through a more effective decentralization (Ampaire et al., 2017); and (8) to improve gender-sensitive M&E, integrating sex-disaggregated data and a mix of quantitative and qualitative analysis (DANIDA, 2006; World Bank, 2012; Tafur et al., 2015; Njuki et al., 2016; UNDP, 2016; Bryan et al., 2018).

Some of the solutions mentioned by interviewees in both countries and in policy documents are consistent with literature findings such as the need to keep building capacity on gender, to produce scientific evidence on gender to inform policy, to push for more law enforcement, to foster women access to property, and to improve policy and project design.

Nevertheless, in literature we found no mention of the level of discouragement and feelings of powerlessness of key informants on the situation they shared, to which they saw no solution, as was particularly the case in Guatemala. Furthermore, there were no references to the need to strengthen sectorial gender units and civil society (both financially and in terms of capacity).

Neither in this study (interviews and policy documents) nor in the literature were concrete solutions proposed to overcoming the barriers related to structural racism and machismo, religious extremism, power groups, and censorship of civil society.

## CONCLUSION

This study has pointed out the barriers limiting gender mainstreaming in agriculture, CC, and FSN policies, using the cases of Guatemala and Honduras. Relying on the concepts of policy integration (the object of our analysis, from policy design to evaluation), policy mix (that defined the scope of the study), and policy translation (that considers the translation of international standards in national level policy design), we first show that gender integration is currently occurring through the creation of a dedicated overarching administration and sectorial dedicated unit, and the inclusion of the gender issue in development and sectorial policy documents. Yet, the analysis of policy narratives in documents and stakeholder interviews

also reveals the gender-mainstreaming obstacles permeating a variety of levels, from how international influence translates into national policy design, to behavioral and corruption-related, knowledge and capacity levels of civil servants. Nonetheless, our study also documented solutions to overcome the barriers identified that are related to research, capacity building and sensitization on gender issues, financial support, and women's access to property.

The study results for both Guatemala and Honduras showed similarities and differences in barriers and solutions.

Our case confirms results from the literature, such as the important role of international cooperation and treaties in influencing gender mainstreaming in the national context. But it recognizes it as an insufficient condition to achieve impact. Additionally, our study showed, the importance of considering the nature of the relationship (purely technical and/or political) between governments and international cooperation actors, in order to understand the level of gender mainstreaming in policy. At the national level, our study confirmed the literature in pointing to the gap between policymaking and policy implementation, the difficulty of integrating a transversal topic such as gender in sectorial ministries, the structural poverty of rural women, lack of monitoring and evaluation, and the weakness of the gender institutional framework. Our study points to an additional barrier of the contexts of silencing and censorship of civil society by State law. On behavior and corruption, our study was consistent with the literature, identifying issues of corruptions, patriarchal culture, and poor interest in gender issues. Barriers of knowledge and capacity at civil servant and population levels were also shared between our results and the literature findings. The technical approach given to climate change issues is a specificity that also constitutes a barrier to gender mainstreaming in this sector.

Solutions to overcome poor gender mainstreaming have been identified in the literature and through our study, such as the need to produce evidence at the local level on women's role and contribution in agriculture, FSN, adaptation to and mitigation of CC, but also on related gender gaps, implementing training and sensitization actions at national and local level for civil servants and the population, strengthening the legal framework on gender, improving financial support to civil society and gender units, to name but a few. Moreover, our results shed new light on the feelings of discouragement and powerlessness of key informants regarding women's situations in these countries. Finally, no immediate solutions were identified to overcome the particular barrier of structural racism and machismo, religious extremism, power groups, censorship of civil society permeating both countries.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent for participation was not required for this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

FH: led methodological design, data collection, data analysis, and led writing manuscript. MA, JM, and J-FL: contributed to methodological design, literature review, and contributed to the paper revisions. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

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**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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