

Junior Scientists Tandems

Final Report

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German Research Institution (GRI):

Supervisor at German Research Institution (IARC):

National University (Country): Leipzig University (Germany)

Supervisor at National University: Prof. Dr. Andrea Behrends

International Agricultural Research Center (Country): Alliance Bioversity & CIAT (Colombia)

Supervisor at IARC: Dr. Natalia Triana

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Title: Gender realities and disparities in contemporary livestock systems

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ATSAF Academy
Academy for International Agricultural Research for Development



My personal experience:

I came to Cali for the first time in 2017 to be part of a feminist regional congress. It was my first time traveling outside the country with friends and my first time attending an international event. Cali very quickly became close to my heart. This second, longer stay was just as special. From March to August 2025, I conducted the fieldwork for my master's thesis with the financial support of ATSAF e.V. Junior Scientists Tandems Program, where I got to know and work at the international CGIAR++ center Alliance Bioversity & CIAT.

To start, I must say that I was impressed by the campus. It is huge and has all kinds of facilities, from research to recreation, and I was especially impressed by the seed bank. The work environment was really good, my co-workers were extremely friendly, and I am lucky to leave knowing I made some good friends. The Alliance is surrounded by nature, so it was always nice to take a break, walk, and see the trees and birds. I also appreciated the diversity. While I was working in a team with mostly Colombian people, I met on campus other internationals doing research, and that was definitely a plus because not only did I have other people to relate to while getting to know the country and doing my research, but it also made the campus feel open and full of different perspectives as there is also diversity in the research and the backgrounds of people, so it was really hard to feel alone. I feel so lucky to have worked in a place with such dedicated and passionate people. My supervisor was Dr. Natalia Triana, with whom I remain in close contact. She was very supportive of my fieldwork, helped me navigate internal protocols, such as going through the ethics committee, and always expressed openness to future collaboration.



(Campus of the Alliance Bioversity & CIAT)



Moreover, during July, in the framework of the qualitative study group discussions hosted by Fanny Howland at the Alliance Bioversity & CIAT, we had as a special guest Prof. Dr. Andrea Behrends, Head of the Institute and Professor for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Leipzig, and my thesis supervisor. This colloquium was an important space for connecting the university with the research center. It felt like building a bridge between academia and development research, between qualitative and quantitative methods, between Germany and Colombia. I would highly recommend having similar colloquiums, as it was a great learning experience.

On a more personal level, being in Colombia as an Ecuadorian living in Germany for almost two years felt very much like home. The language, the humor, and some of the food reminded me of my country and made me feel immediately welcome. Moreover, as someone committed to social justice and particularly interested in the Global South, it felt like the best time to be there. One of the highlights of my stay was participating in CLACSO 2025, where people from the region met to discuss the problems and solutions we want for our continent. For me, it was a reconnection with Latin American critical thinking. I got to see some authors I admire so much, such as Arturo Escobar and Enrique Leff, and I attended incredible panels. In general, I stay during an important political moment for the country, many changes are happening, for instance, there was a labor reform that improved working conditions for many people.

Cali is the city of salsa, and as such, I took some salsa classes and tried to go out whenever I could. I improved my dancing a lot, and my favorite places were El Mulato and Mala Maña. I met so many new people and made friends so quickly. I was also able to travel a little in Colombia, and I am very happy with the life I built during these months, so much so that leaving feels sad. I now have so many places and recommendations for when someone goes to Cali. One of my favorite things to do was going to La Tertulia, a museum and cinematheque focused mostly on national productions. I tried to go as often as I could, since cinema is one of my passions, and it was the perfect chance to learn more about Colombian cinema. I discovered the work of Marta Rodríguez, an anthropologist and Colombian filmmaker whose documentaries I will always recommend.



Overall, I am grateful for this initiative supporting junior scientists. As a master's student, it was an invaluable opportunity to gain research experience, work in a team, and develop international and multidisciplinary skills. It also gave me the chance to broaden my perspective by experiencing a different culture.

The research:

Gender realities and disparities in contemporary livestock systems was the preliminary name I gave to my master's thesis, which is still in progress. With this rather broad title, I gave myself the chance to move to Colombia and start researching in my area of interest, gender and livestock, while leaving enough room for changes. As an anthropologist, it was important to me to let the field show me its own particular way, and it did.

My goal is to explore gender realities in livestock systems, but I also want to be able to make a novel contribution. As I saw during my literature review, there are plenty of studies that show that livestock is a highly gender segregated sector, with gender roles and inequalities visible across the entire value chain. However, most of the studies are focused on one specific part of the value chain, mostly farming, and are not so connected with what happens afterwards. I also thought an ethnographic approach would be able to show many insights and details that other approaches might have overlooked, so it was completely worth doing. My original idea was to trace the gender realities and disparities in livestock systems by following the meat from the Department of Caquetá, located in the south of the country in the Amazon region, to Cali, and see the gendered roles and knowledge in each stage of the value chain. However, it soon became evident that I was being too ambitious for a six month stay. Not only was time limited, but I also arrived at the Alliance during a particularly challenging period, when funding was scarce, staff were being laid off, and research groups were undergoing reorganization. This remains a delicate moment, especially for social research groups, reflecting a situation similar to what many organizations are experiencing worldwide. With the impossibility of doing my fieldwork in the Amazon and the realization that I needed to narrow my research, I started to think about where else I could conduct my fieldwork. Finally, I decided to go to a local market, since the journey of the meat involves delivering livestock products, processing them, and selling them to consumers.

I started going to Galería La Alameda regularly. The first times I went were purely to observe, and I didn't really have the chance to talk to anyone. I would walk through the meat section, and apart from people offering me their products, there was nothing more than that. During this time, I noticed that the sale of meat is clearly a predominantly male activity, so I had confirmation that my question about gender roles was still relevant. Over the months, I got to talk to most of the meat vendors and see their everyday activities. I conducted some semi-open interviews, but what I mostly did was participant observation: taking notes and engaging in long conversations. I also visited the library and was able to find some old pictures of the market and relevant literature. In addition to Galería La Alameda, I visited two other local markets, which allowed me to compare practices and gain further insights. I carried out my ethnographic work, getting to know the stories of the people working there, the dynamics of the family economy, the gender roles, and how knowledge is passed down. I gained so many insights about this part of the livestock value chain that I am excited to write about them in my thesis.



(Me having a conversation with a meat vendor, alongside a mural of him in a local market)