



Food and Agriculture  
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# GENDER NEWS Asia Pacific

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## “Empowering Indigenous women in the Asia Pacific Region”

Indigenous Peoples have unique and ancestral cultures, traditions, languages, food systems and governance systems. They share a strong connection to their land and have developed a rich body of traditional knowledge on agro biodiversity and preservation of endangered plant and animal species.

The Asia and the Pacific region is home to the largest number of Indigenous Peoples, more than 260 million people, or 70 percent of the total indigenous population in the world. Based on ingenious strategies and traditional knowledge, indigenous food systems are locally and climatically adapted and resilient to climate threats. In addition, they are fundamental to broaden the available food base. Indigenous Peoples Territories host 80% of the remaining biodiversity in the world.

Despite their numbers and relevance to food and nutrition security, Indigenous Peoples are among the

most marginalized subgroups in the Asia Pacific region. The lack of respect to their basic human rights, cultures, spirituality and traditions and the encroachment of their traditional lands and natural resources increase their vulnerability by undermining livelihoods, shelters and identity.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has long realized that in order to achieve its mandate of eradicating food and nutrition insecurity and poverty through sustainable agricultural development and natural resource management, development efforts must include indigenous women and men as key allies and partners.

Indigenous women are food producers, guardians of native seeds and custodians of traditional knowledge. With their knowledge and roles in sustainable agricultural production and management of natural resources, indigenous women

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contribute to the achievement of Zero Hunger. Even when facing triple discrimination because of being women, indigenous and poor, indigenous women have demonstrated their leadership and capacity to be agents of change for dignified lives.

As countries face their agrarian transitions, however, indigenous women may face greater challenges in coping with the changes because of lower education, language barriers, family-care responsibilities and the multiple forms of discrimination they are exposed to.

Integrating the gender dimension and Indigenous Peoples' concerns in public policy is fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to leave no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the needs and challenges of indigenous women must be reflected in policies for rural development and poverty reduction. This can be achieved by ensuring their full and effective participation in decision-making processes and fora.

## Global Campaign for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women for Zero Hunger

FAO in collaboration with the International Indigenous Women Forum and the News Agency of Indigenous and Afro-descendent Women, has launched a global campaign that aims at making indigenous women's challenges and contributions visible as a necessary step to "Leave no one behind" in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda and its stand-alone goal on gender equality, Goal 5,

represent a unique opportunity to advance the rights of indigenous women and address many of the challenges they currently face.

There are approximately 185 million indigenous women in the world, belonging to more than 5,000 different Indigenous Peoples groups. Despite the broad international consensus about the important role indigenous women play in eradicating hunger and malnutrition. There are still limitations in the recognition and exercise of their rights.

It is fundamental to raise awareness on the contributions that indigenous women make towards the achievement of Zero Hunger and to engage all stakeholders in eliminating the barriers that prevent indigenous women from enjoying their rights fully.

## Indigenous Peoples' customary Land Rights

Customary access to land and natural resources, often in the form of communal tenure rights, is vitally important for the livelihood, reproduction, identity and spiritual practices of indigenous peoples. From sedentary agriculture to shifting cultivation, from hunting and gathering to fishing and collection of medicinal herbs and non-timber forest products, agriculture and access and use of natural resources have been and still are a significant source of livelihoods and income generations for indigenous peoples in Asia.



Only few countries in the region recognize Indigenous Peoples' customary land rights. Even if indigenous communities may enjoy socially legitimized tenure rights, the lack of formal recognition is exacerbating their vulnerability, especially in the context of large-scale land investment, which have been on the rise in recent years.

**Shifting cultivation** Indigenous Peoples in the Asia-Pacific region have long practiced shifting cultivation as one of their agriculture methods. While agronomist and development workers have begun to recognize shifting cultivation as a form of agroforestry that has provided secure and sustainable livelihoods for centuries, most governmental and non-governmental rural development programmes in Asia still seek to replace shifting cultivation. Through shifting cultivation indigenous communities have been able to practice agro biodiversity, which is being acknowledged as key to promoting sustainable food production and climate change adaptation and resilience.

### CONTRIBUTED BY

Ms HaEun Jazmin Kim  
FAO RAP Intern

### CONTACT:

Ms. Bettina Gatt,  
Gender and Social Development  
Consultant, FAORAP

[Bettina.Gatt@fao.org](mailto:Bettina.Gatt@fao.org)

For further information please visit the: [Campaigns homepage](#)

## “Empowering Indigenous Women in the Philippines”

According to the Global Gender Gap report, released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2017, the Philippines maintained its status of being the most gender equal country in Asia, although the country dropped down from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> place due to the increased wage difference between men and women for similar work done.

Gender gaps are even wider in rural communities, mainly in agricultural areas, where most Indigenous Peoples live. Indigenous women face triple discrimination because of being women, indigenous and poor, and remain seriously underrepresented in decision-making positions. Their participation in economic and social activities is hampered, due to persisting inequalities between men and women.

### FAO's Support

In line with FAO's objectives to eradicate hunger, promote food security and nutrition, enhance agricultural production and productivity, and promote agricultural adaptation and mitigation to climate change, a project partnered with Silingang Dapit sa Sidlakang Mindanao (SILDAP) – Southeastern Mindanao, Inc was initiated to enhance awareness of indigenous women's rights, and increase their participation in agricultural production and entrepreneurship development through community-based activities.

The project focused on capacity building, awareness raising on indigenous women's land rights, recognizing and making their social and economic role visible, as well as on the importance of reducing

violence against women in the community.



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*Women group meeting to discuss about their farm situation and income specially after returning back from nearly 3*

Since January 2018, more than 100 women in four indigenous communities in the provinces of Davao del Norte, Davao Oriental, and Compostela Valley were trained. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as was emphasized as a necessary precondition for achieving sustainable development for all. In particular, indigenous and rural women's equal access to and control over land and natural resources, is critical for equitable and sustainable socio-economic growth and development and the achievement of the SDGs.

The partner communities were able to establish women's groups, electing their own set of officials to continue the project, and encourage food production and community development.

Furthermore, women were trained on agricultural production, particularly with food crops and small farm animals. The importance of ensuring food production for their families and income generation from their own farms was greatly emphasized, along with the significance of farm planning.

The empowerment of indigenous women is not only important in itself but also a necessary condition to eradicate hunger and malnutrition. Participants shared their practices as food producers and received demonstrations on the cacao propagation and on breeding corn and squash. This encouraged women to adopt the methods, and share this new knowledge with their children. FAITH (Food Always in the Home) gardening informed women of minimal maintenance needing crops.



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*A follow up activity in Calapagan, Davao Oriental facilitated by Ms. Angelina B. Ortiz to update their implementation plans for FAITH gardening and Abaca Hemp production as their*

After the training, participants were encouraged to have their own farm planning especially for short-term food crops such as vegetables and corn for consumption as well as income from sale of the surplus.

#### CONTRIBUTED BY

Ms. Jaclyn Grey,  
National Communication Specialist,  
FAO Philippines  
CONTACT:  
[Jaclyn.Grey@fao.org](mailto:Jaclyn.Grey@fao.org)

## Taking Women Along to Ensure Zero Hunger in Pakistan



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*FAOR Pakistan, Mina Dowlatchahi*

In a country where agriculture is the main source of ensuring food security and sustainable livelihood for rural families, the importance of women's role cannot be emphasized enough. While it is encouraging to see women's contribution to Pakistan's agri-sector being acknowledged recently, de facto women doing the hard work in the fields are still largely neglected. It's the women who play a key role in growing and harvesting crops, producing vegetables, maintaining homestead kitchen gardens, and managing herds of cattle, alongside performing their reproductive roles of raising children, feeding and caring for family members, taking care of domestic work, fetching water, animal feed and collecting fuel. It is these women who are often left behind. Their immense contribution remains unrecognized when policies and action plans are being formulated and implemented.

Rural women make up 83% of the nearly 15 million female labor force in Pakistan. Most of them work in agriculture, and are among the most vulnerable subgroups of the population. The national female literacy rate is 49%, but only 38% in

rural areas, with a net enrollment rate in primary level age of girls of only 53%.

Male migration from villages to urban areas to generate adequate income impacts women's agency and agricultural productivity. This situation might be an opportunity for women, but also brings additional responsibilities in farming within the traditionally male-dominant farming practices and tends to increase their workload.

There is a need to develop the capacity of rural women so that they can gain the necessary knowledge to better access and use productive resources, improve their agriculture and livestock practices and the nutritional status and incomes of their families. Unfortunately, however, women in all provinces of Pakistan still have limited access to extension services.

An IFPRI-FAO National Workshop on "Extension Services good practices and way forward" held in March 2018 identified the lack of female extension workers as one problem to be addressed. Out of a total of 6,390 field extension workers in agriculture departments, only 1.31% are female: in Baluchistan there are 49, 25 in Pakistan administered Kashmir, 10 in Sindh and not even one female field extension worker in KP and Punjab. There is a real and urgent need to induct more women officers and field staff in government agriculture and allied natural resource departments. This is key reaching out to women and girls and tapping into their potential by exposing them to modern and climate smart farming practices, helping them to gain better access to productive inputs and credit

at fair prices and enabling them to make informed decisions.

Benefits will be manifold. Vulnerable and subsistence women farmers will gain confidence and feel empowered with improvement in communication with staff of their own gender. Young women graduates from agriculture universities will have more employment opportunities and a chance to play their role in economic growth of their country.

Rural women are key to ensuring transformative change and the sustainable and inclusive growth of Pakistan Agriculture sector.

Sustainable agricultural development in Pakistan, therefore, needs to consider women appropriately by giving them equal access to resources and opportunities. Gender equality needs to be promoted to reduce extreme poverty, improve food security and nutrition for the future generations. Investment in tapping the potential of women and girls will contribute to the achievement of SDG 2, Zero Hunger and SDG 5 Gender Equality in Pakistan.

### CONTRIBUTED BY

Ms. Mina Dowlatchahi  
FAOR, FAO Pakistan

CONTACT:

[Mina.Dowlatchahi@fao.org](mailto:Mina.Dowlatchahi@fao.org)

## Empowering Women in Balochistan through Agricultural Enterprise Development

*"Our dream has come true! We have started receiving fruits of the efforts that we made for a decent living. With all the household chores to take care of, it is not easy to take out time and energy for making handicrafts. However, receiving a reasonable price for our products is a great relief,"* said Fatima Bibi, after a major client placed a sizeable order for purchasing her products.



©FAO/Muhammad Irfan

*Women within the tribal culture of Balochistan.*

Fatima Bibi is a resident of Nushki and is one among dozens of other women who put their embroidery and handicraft at display at Serena Hotel during a ceremony organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as part of its project "Empowering women in Balochistan through Agri entrepreneurship".

The Serena Hotel Management expressed their interest in purchasing Balochistan's traditional handicrafts and 150 pieces of embroidery to decorate hotel rooms.

Women within the tribal culture of Balochistan do not enjoy social safety nets. The literacy rate in rural areas of Balochistan is bleak, with an estimate of only two percent of the rural women being literate. Illiteracy, poverty, dearth of access to services,

jobs and markets have increased Baloch women's woes.

With very limited social and economic opportunities, women in rural Balochistan are entirely dependent on their husbands and male family members.

"When it comes to women's participation in economic activities, they fulfil a key role in agriculture and livestock production in Balochistan, but despite their active role, they continue to receive inadequate remuneration." said FAO Balochistan Chief Technical Advisor, Marcel Stallen. He added that "women mostly do not receive any share in the income from crops, livestock or other agri products, in spite of their hard work".

With the support of the Australian Government, FAO in collaboration with the Government of Balochistan, launched two projects in the province: the "Australian Balochistan Agri Business Program" and "Empowering women in Balochistan through agri entrepreneurship". The latter project aims to empower women from Nushki, Chagai and Quetta districts through female enterprise development in the agriculture sector. Agriculture, livestock, handicrafts and embroidery provide the most suitable opportunities for women in Balochistan to utilize their potential to earn income

Asima Gulistan, FAO team leader on women economic empowerment, explains that "the objective is to develop and strengthen profitable *Agri enterprises* owned by women, thus enabling women to increase

income, reduce their daily workload and to make investment decisions independently to improve their living conditions. Activities include apricot processing, vegetable seedling production, poultry raising, sheep fattening and wool processing".

"After successfully mobilizing women in far flung bordering areas, we are now increasingly focusing on economically empower women" the Deputy Program Manager, Ahmed Jan Essa, highlighted. The wool value chain has ample opportunities for rural women to earn their own income. They can engage in a range of activities from wool shearing, washing, grading, spinning to carpet weaving and of course embroidery and handicrafts production.

Under the Australian Government funded economic empowerment project, women have been trained to prepare the sheep for shearing and to hand wash the sheared fleeces and grade, sort, spin and dye the wool. Once wool has undergone basic processing, it can be spun into yarn.

The yarn can then be dyed and used in carpet making which is also mostly done by women. "To increase the yield, protect fiber length and increasing the efficiency of women engaged in wool addition activities, wool spinning wheels have been introduced to women of rural areas, Ahmed noted.

"I have been provided with a solar operated wool spinning wheel which has greatly increased the efficiency of my work, without dependency on electricity" mother of four children, 50-



©FAO/by Srosh Anwar

Training of Trainers for women.

years-old Bano Bibi, shares. "Now I can spin 1 kg wool in one hour as compared to the traditional methods only 250 gram per hour. I can now easily earn Rs.7,000 per month and help my family to buy food, clothes and medicines."

The President of the Balochistan Women Business Association, Sana Durani, when asked to comment on the FAO women empowerment and entrepreneurship initiative, noted: "I have 5000 registered women in the Balochistan Women Business Association but only 50 are doing business in embroidery jewellery etc." She added that "due to lack of resources and financial constraints, we could not ensure outreach to the women of rural areas of Balochistan. With the support of the Australian Government and FAO we would be able to reach many more women in the districts to become entrepreneurs and start their own agri businesses". She highlighted that "in an environment where tribal restrictions confine women to their

houses and women having insufficient means of income, the Government should support the private sector and help rural women to increase their income from agriculture and livestock, thus also improving food security."

#### CONTRIBUTED BY

Mr. Waqas Rafique  
Communications Officer, FAO  
Pakistan

CONTACT:

[Waqas.Rafique@fao.org](mailto:Waqas.Rafique@fao.org)

#### UPCOMING EVENT

### World Food Day 2018 - Global Campaign for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women for Zero Hunger

Under the framework of the Global Campaign for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women for Zero Hunger, launched by the Director-General in January 2018, the Violet Chair initiative is being promoted to call on countries to guarantee the full and effective participation of indigenous women in policy-making processes related to forestry, fisheries, agriculture and other related matters.

In the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific as well as we national level authorities we contribute on World Food Day celebration (October 19 2018) to raise awareness on the importance of including the participation of indigenous women in decision-making processes related to food security.

The initiative of the violet chair is a call to authorities, organizations, the international community, academia and civil society to guarantee the full and effective participation of indigenous women in decision-making processes that affect them and their communities, and to make them visible.

For additional info, visit:

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1147736/icode/>



## Rosaline Benefits from Climate-Resilient Agriculture Techniques

Lucas and his wife Rosaline, two local farmers, have seven children together. Sometime ago, feeding the family of eight was something Rosaline worried about every day. Although she had some idea about what the problem was, she did not know about any options available to them to improve their situation.

In village Azizabad in Punjab province where Rosaline lives with her family, as the impacts of climate change are intensifying and water is becoming increasingly rare, the challenges for farming communities have grown manifold.

Under its Building Disaster Resilience in Pakistan programme, FAO first identified and mobilized eight willing farmer families holding small lands in this locality.

The project also took into account the gender dimension with the Women Open schools. In Pakistan, women have almost no opportunities to leave their home and work to help improve household incomes. While men work at selling their produce in the market, it's the women who are responsible for looking after family nutrition and well-being.

Women Open Schools were also set up in Rosaline's village to raise awareness among women not only on climate-resilient agriculture techniques but also on nutrition.

Since then, Rosaline has noted an improvement in their living conditions. She can now provide enough food for the entire family and their small vegetable field allows her to sell excess produce and to save money.

"Growing our own vegetables has been very useful. Normally we would spend at least 300 rupees on buying vegetables, but now we use the products from our own field. Sometimes when we have guests, our own vegetables get us through. Following our example, other women in my locality have also made their own garden," she says.

Deeba, FAO Women Open School facilitator, conducted these sessions and said that there was now a healthy competition among women farmers as they tried to get the best product from their kitchen gardens.

She also explained the different stages involved in empowering the women farmers with the latest agri-techniques. "Through the Women Open School schools we wanted to ensure food security for every household in the drought prone locality. To achieve this, we trained a group of 25 women and sensitized them on the importance of growing in their own homes"

On a community level, local farmers are now growing a variety of vegetables, making better use of the available water and increasing their incomes. Through the Farmer Field Schools, this FAO-UK aid programme has also helped establish strong linkages between the farmers and the government agriculture departments.

Women in the area said they felt excited because they now feel needed, contributing to the household income, and therefore being involved in the decision making process.

### CONTRIBUTED BY

Mr. Waqas Rafique  
Communications Officer, FAO  
Pakistan

CONTACT:

[Waqas.Rafique@fao.org](mailto:Waqas.Rafique@fao.org)

### NEW PUBLICATION

We are excited to announce the finalization of the Country Gender Assessments (CGA) report for the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Congratulations to colleagues in the two offices!

The Regional Office has been supporting CGAs in agriculture and the rural sector in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Lao PDR, Maldives and Viet Nam. CGAs are also ongoing in several Pacific Island Countries namely Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu and Solomon Island. Designed as part of the regional proposal for promoting gender equality through knowledge generation and awareness raising, the CGAs will contribute to accelerate effective implementation of the Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific 2017-2019.

CGA Sri Lanka:

<http://www.fao.org/3/CA1516EN/ca1516en.pdf> (CGA animation)

CGA Philippines:

<http://www.fao.org/3/CA1345EN/ca1345en.pdf>

## Ms. Rose Vira's success story: A farm to feed her family in Vanuatu



©FAO/Shukrullah Sherzad

*Ms. Rose a family farmer from Santo, Vanuatu.*

Ms. Rose Vira's farm is situated 30 km away from Luganville in Naunetas, South Santo, Vanuatu. Farm access is mainly along a dusty gravel road. Hers is a mixed crops farm, producing root crops and fruits for family consumption, but the focus is on pineapple production for commercial purposes. Rose sells pineapple in Luganville and the local village market.

Rose took over the responsibility of managing the farm after her husband passed away. She is very confident leading the family and managing the farm. She is closely working with the local extension officers on technical matters and is very open to accept new farming technology in her farm.

Rosa's son and daughter help her as a labor force in their farm. Inputs such as planting materials are prepared internally in the farm. Money generated from the crops sale are used for purchasing daily basic need goods as well as for other cultural and religious obligations.

The farm has approximately 3,000 pineapple plants, planted at wide spacing, following a local production method. Under an FAO Technical Cooperation Programme-TCP implemented in 2015-2017, Rosa introduced new pineapple husbandry practices such as closer spacing, crop nutrition and off-season forcing techniques. In addition, over 1,000 pineapple plants were planted in a new plot, intercropping at close spacing with maize and peanuts.

### CONTRIBUTED BY

Mr. Shukrullah Sherzad  
Agribusiness value chain consultant,  
FAO SAP

CONTACT:

[Shukrullah.Sherzad@fao.org](mailto:Shukrullah.Sherzad@fao.org)

### REPORTING OF FAO'S WORK ON GENDER EQUALITY

Dear Gender Focal Points,  
It's that time of the year again: annual reporting is coming up!

All Gender Focal Points will soon receive a Monkey Survey that is meant to capture the extent of gender work and support provided in mainstreaming gender in the countries office, including all the activities implemented during the reporting year that contribute to the implementation of FAO Policy on Gender Equality

We also remind that Country annual reports ought to consider gender-related results and sex-disaggregated data in their results frame.

Please, also continue with the monitoring and tracking of gender-sensitive indicators and qualifiers at output level in the monitoring framework of each SO.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all FAO Representatives, Gender Focal Points and technical officers for your continued support and kind cooperation.

The RAP Gender Team



## Women's Success Stories from Afghanistan: Zahra and Fahima

### Zahra's Story



©FAO/Jenna Jadin

Ms. Zahra

After hearing Zahra's story, you may wonder how she manages to sleep.

At the age of 35, Zahra has five children, runs two businesses, is part of a women's cooperative, and works on FAO's school lunch program that is part of the larger Household Food and Livelihood Security project. Her husband runs a small farm outside Bamyán Center, and together they are a sort of power couple for this tiny, near rural city. But, while her life is comfortable now, it was not always this way.

Zahra is originally from a small village in Bamyán, which is also known as the Hazarajat, or the center of the Hazara ethnic group. The Hazaras are one ethnic minority in the country, and almost all are Shia Muslims. When Zahra was 13, the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, and while strict with everyone, the Taliban were particularly un-fond of this Shia minority.

Starting around 1999, the Taliban began to wreak havoc on the Hazarajat, infamously destroying two giant, well-preserved 6th century Buddhas in 2001. But, their destruction didn't begin or end there. They also terrorized the citizens of the Hazarajat. Most people, including all of the 11 women and one man in Zahra's school lunch group, left their homes because according to them "everyone who didn't leave was killed."

After seeing her cousin get shot in front of her, Zahra, her two sisters and her mother walked for three days, until they reached Ghazni province where they were able to shelter and blend in with the Hazara there. In Ghazni they found various ways to support themselves while their father stayed behind and fought the Taliban. One of the ways they supported themselves was through teenage Zahra working under her burqa as a health care provider in a village clinic, despite women being largely forbidden from working.

After the Taliban were ousted from power in 2001, Zahra returned to Bamyán. Restrictions against girls going to school were lifted. So at 18 she started high school, and determined to rebuild her family and community, successfully finished.

Shortly after high school, she got married and had children. Her husband has always been supportive of her working, so she began getting involved in community development projects whenever she could. Through this work in community development, she learned how to build businesses, manage finances, and mobilize and empower other motivated women like herself.

Zahra already had her hands full being part of a women's cooperative and owning two women's clothing handicraft stores in the Bamyán Center Bazaar, but when she heard FAO was looking for people to help implement its school lunch program, she eagerly signed up. Though she knew a lot about clothing and managing businesses, she wanted an opportunity to learn more about nutrition and meal planning, so she could better take care of her children, and help her neighbors do the same.

Today, six days a week during the school year, Zahra and the team of 12 lunch providers buy, cook and prepare lunch for two public boys and girls schools in town. The day begins when they collect vegetables from their home gardens and the local market early in the morning. They then bring the ingredients to the school, and using hygienic techniques and balanced menus provided to them by FAO, cook different stews for the 150+ children that go to these schools. Midway through the school day, they serve the children generous, steaming bowls of soup and freshly-made bread.

With even less free time, but more money than before, Zahra is able to employ a female helper to take care of her youngest children. Zahra says that she's "taught her helper hygienic and nutritious cooking techniques so I know my kids are being fed well now too."

And, she adds, her neighbors come to her all the time for nutrition and hygiene advice, so "the best part of being part of this project is that I'm able to train other women in my community, which hopefully will help more of them find jobs in the food

industry and make my community strong again"

Given where Zahra came from, and where she is at a still young age, she is a true inspiration not just for the women of Afghanistan, but for anyone, anywhere in the world.

#### CONTRIBUTED BY

Dr. Jenna Jadin, Ph.D.

Consultant, Analysis and reporting,  
FAO Afghanistan

#### CONTACT:

Ms. Suraiya Khwajazada  
Gender Focal Point of FAOAF,  
[Suraiya.Khwajazada@fao.org](mailto:Suraiya.Khwajazada@fao.org)

## Fahima's Story

Fahima grew up in a well-known Kabul family, and her parents always pushed her to pursue whatever dreams she had. Those dreams changed over the years, but by 10th grade, they had materialized into a desire to be an engineer. Fahima was practical, wanted to work in the field, and wanted to take part in building her country's infrastructure back to what it had been previous to a decade of war and neglect. Fortunately for her, she was able to attend college at Kabul University, and got a MS degree in hydrotechnic engineering long before women's education was temporarily banned.

Out of grad school, Fahima started working with the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW), as a basic field engineer. She wasn't sure what her opportunities for advancement were, given the limitations on women in her society. When the Taliban came to control the government in 1996, she, like all other women, had to put her career on hold. Thankfully it was not a permanent hold, and she returned

to work in 2001. And, when FAO started its' Emergency Irrigation and Rehabilitation Project (EIRP), she found her opportunity for advancement.

FAO hired her on to the Project as a design engineer, and immediately brought in technical experts to train her and her fellow engineers in basic English and computer skills as well as more advanced technical training from FAO on topics like environmental mitigation, supervision, and design and construction quality control. After training and hard work, Fahima moved from design engineer to supervisor in no time.

Fahima says "I dedicate much of my success and opportunities for advancement to my FAO mentor. He showed that he trusted me and he pushed me to reach my potential from day one. Every day of the past decade of working with him has been a pleasure." Her mentor, a long-time FAO Afghan staff member, speaks equally positively of Fahima.

Today she is one of the few female and the most senior engineers working for MEW. She works both in Kabul and in the field, and has great relationships with all of the Provincial governors. "They may have had their doubts at first when they saw a female design engineer, but over the years they've come to respect my technical advice on water projects," she notes. Even better perhaps is the gratitude the beneficiary communities show her. One small community, in which her project built a prayer washing area by a canal, prays for her and her team every day, she tells us with a smile.

Fahima also takes a leading role in many FAO joint activities that require cooperation between the irrigation projects and other parts of FAO, she

participates in government working groups and activities for women and agriculture, and she acts as a bridge between project beneficiaries and the FAO.

Working with FAO has made life unquestionably better. Fahima earns more money, gets respect from her colleagues, has autonomy in her job, and her career opportunities have been advanced beyond what she ever dreamed: she recognizes that it is possible that she could someday be nominated to be a direct adviser to the Minister of Water, like other FAO-trained colleagues have been. Or...perhaps even the Minister of Water? If Afghanistan continues to promote gender equality in agriculture, and all fields, the possibilities for well-educated women like Fahima are limitless.



Ms. Fahima

During a tour of the Ministry of Water, Fahima was not the only woman I encountered doing great work there. MEW, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), is full of talented women in managerial positions. These women, originally or secondarily trained by FAO are essential for promoting agriculture to

other women in the nation, as well as for building a strong, diverse and multi-talented agricultural workforce

Does she try to convince other women to go into engineering?

“Absolutely! It’s such a great opportunity to get into the countryside and really be involved in the development of my beloved country’s infrastructure.” She encouraged her now-adult son and daughter to get into engineering too ...“but they had other plans”... she says with a laugh and a small shrug of her shoulders.

#### CONTRIBUTED BY

Dr. Jenna Jadin, Ph.D.  
Consultant, Analysis and reporting,  
FAO Afghanistan

#### CONTACT:

Ms. Suraiya Khwajazada  
Gender Focal Point of FAOAF,  
[Suraiya.Khwajazada@fao.org](mailto:Suraiya.Khwajazada@fao.org)

#### EVALUATION OF FAO'S WORK ON GENDER EQUALITY

The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) has launched the evaluation of FAO's work on gender equality in 2017 to assess how FAO has been mainstreaming gender and promoting progress towards gender equality and rural women's empowerment.

This evaluation is an opportunity to identify challenges and prospects to further improve FAO's programme effectiveness and development contribution.

As part of the evaluation process, the evaluation team visited RAP and two country offices in the region (Philippines and Nepal) to identify how the regional and country offices are implementing gender-related activities, learn about some results, and understand what are the main challenges that need to be addressed to strengthen FAO's work on gender. The preliminary results of the Evaluation will be presented at Programme Committee.

#### BOOSTING GENDER CAPACITY IN SRI LANKA

The FAO Sri Lanka organized a two-day training on the integration of women in the agriculture sector as part of the FAO-EU FIRST programme with representatives from ministries, private sector, civil society, academia, and development partners taking part in formulation of the Agricultural Policy of Sri Lanka. The training was jointly delivered by Clara M. Park, Regional Gender Officer, and by Francesca Di Stefano, Gender and Policy Specialist from HQ. The training was also an opportunity to present the findings of the Country Gender Assessment.

In addition a one day training on mainstreaming gender in the project cycle was held for FAO Sri Lanka staff.

For media coverage of the event, click here. [FAO EU Training](#)

## GENDER NEWS

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

39 Phra Athit Road

Bangkok, Thailand

[www.fao.org/asiapacific](http://www.fao.org/asiapacific)

For information :

Clara Mi Young Park

[Clara.Park@fao.org](mailto:Clara.Park@fao.org)

Bettina Gatt

[Bettina.Gatt@fao.org](mailto:Bettina.Gatt@fao.org)

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