FACT SHEET INDONESIA

Women in Agriculture, Environment and Rural Production

KEY FACTS

- The population of Indonesia is 50 percent female.
- The female literacy rate is 82 percent.
- Women’s labour force participation rate is 39 percent.
- 61 percent of rural women are engaged in the agriculture sector.
- The population growth rate has declined to 1.26 percent due to a successful family planning policy.
- 60 percent of migrants are women who work as domestic servants.
- Women do 75 percent of the farm work in rice production.
- Women have active roles in livestock production, forestry and the environment, but their input needs are poorly addressed.
- Women contribute considerably to household income through farm and non-farm activities.
- The impact of the 1997 economic crisis affected women and children the most severely.
- Women’s work is becoming harder due to environmental degradation.

GENERAL PROFILE

Population

Indonesia’s population of 222,611,000 qualifies it as the fourth most populous country in the world. Indonesia is one of the few countries whose female population has consistently outnumbered the male population due to war and the higher mortality rate of males. Gradually the gap has narrowed to the 2003 sex ratio of 50/50 (ESCAP, 2004).

Indonesia is an island country with more than 13,600 islands. Eighty percent of the population lives on the islands of Java and Sumatra (FAO, 1999a). In 2000, 46 percent of the population lived in cities, compared to 22 percent in 1980 (UN ESA, 2002, 2004). Nearly 300 ethnic groups live in Indonesia; the majority are of Malay origin. Eighty-five percent of the population is Muslim; other religions are Christian, Hindu and Buddhist (Indonesian Embassy).

The economic crisis in mid-1997 affected urban more than rural areas. The urban unemployment rate that was 8.3 percent in pre-crisis 1996 rose to 9.3 percent in 1998.

Government education policies reduced inequalities between urban and rural areas. In 1997, 97.7 percent of urban girls and 94.6 percent of rural girls were enrolled in primary education. Secondary education shows gender disparities with female enrolment of 87.1 percent in urban areas and 70.5 percent in rural areas (BPS).

Female illiteracy dropped from 24.8 percent in 1990 to 17.9 percent in 2000 (UNESCO, 1999). It should be noted, however, that the illiteracy rate varies across the provinces, and females who are 45 years or older have higher illiteracy (ESCAP, 1998).

Labour

The adult economic activity rate for women was 52 percent, and for men was 85 percent in 1999 (UN Statistics Division). Women’s labour force participation rate has increased due to the improved educational system, the decreasing family size and increasing economic necessity. Rural women’s labour force participation in agriculture is 61 percent followed by trade (18 percent) and industry (13 percent) (Ifitikhar). However, women tend to engage more in the informal sector and thus are likely to experience unstable, part-time or unpaid work (ILO, 2002a).

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Agriculture accounts for 17.5 percent of the Indonesian GDP. It directly supports the rural population and is an important source of exports (ADB).

Fifty-four percent of the population lives in rural areas where agriculture is the main industry (UN ESA, 2004). Women play pivotal roles in the agriculture sector in addition to their routine domestic work (ILO, 2002a). Agricultural food crops are the main products followed by plantation products, horticulture and livestock. Due to increased numbers of the landless population and large inequalities of land ownership, the rural population generally work as labourers in agricultural enterprises such as plantations, commercial forests, trade and industry (Iftikhar).

Although there is no legal gender discrimination in land ownership, the traditional social norms and customary laws constitute a barrier to women's equitable access to productive resources.

Crop production

Land in permanent crops is seven percent of the total national land area (GEO-3). Historically, agriculture has been the central focus of government policy. Through various government interventions such as BIMAS (Green revolution) and INSUS (special intensification of food crops) agricultural production, especially rice, showed a marked increase (Mugniesyah).

Cropping systems differ among the islands depending on the agro-ecological zone. Indonesia's major agriculture products are rice paddy, cassava, maize, palm oil, copra, sugar cane, bananas, sweet potatoes, soya beans and peanuts (ADB).

Women's participation in agriculture production is high, particularly in rice production where women provide 75 percent of the farm labour. Twenty percent of household income and 40 percent of domestic food supplies are provided through kitchen gardens managed by women. Women have major responsibility in farm management decisions but opportunities for training are limited because, customarily, only male heads of households are invited to training sessions.

The following chart describes the gender division of labour in rice production:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender division of labour in rice production</th>
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<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Gender division of labour in rice production table" /></td>
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Source: Van de Fliert, and Woodhead.

Note: F: Female; M: Male; B: Both

Forestry

Sixty percent of Indonesia's land area is forested. Indonesia holds 10 percent of the world's tropical forests. For the most part, forests are state owned and administered. Forest-related industries are 3 percent of the GDP and employ 1.64 million people (CIDA). Indonesia is a prime producer of wood and wood products for Southeast Asia, having exploited 2.4 m ha of forest in the late 1990s. Forest exploitation is a major concern.

Indonesia is a major source of contract migrant workers for Asian and Pacific countries as well as the Middle East/Africa. Large numbers of women participate in either undocumented or documented migration. A vast majority of these migrant women are employed as domestic workers (MPI).

Indonesia’s Human Development Index (HDI) ranking in 2003 was 112 out of 175 countries, indicating a medium human development, defined by medium life expectancy at birth, high educational attainment and medium levels of income. Its Gender-related Development Index (GDI) rank was 91 out of 175 countries, indicating that Indonesia has targeted basic human capacities of both women and men without substantial gender disparities (UNDP).
livestock has increased sharply. Twenty-five percent of rural households produce livestock.

Mixed farming that combines crop and livestock production is commonly practised. Cattle, buffalo, pigs, sheep, goats and chickens are the most common livestock raised. Large livestock such as cattle and buffalo provide labour and are important sources of cash in times of need. Livestock also is used for rituals and ceremonial occasions and for recreation. Collecting fodder and water for the livestock is usually the responsibility of women, whereas men are responsible for livestock breeding and marketing (FAO, 1999b).

**ENVIRONMENT**

Indonesia’s geographic diversity provides a rich natural resource base. In the interior, rich soils support rice and staple food crop cultivation at lower altitudes, and fruits, vegetables and tea at higher altitudes. Less fertile soils in the outer islands support commercial tree crops such as rubber, oil palm, coffee and cocoa. Forest resources in the less populated outer islands and fish resources are important to the poorer segments of the population.

Rapid industrial and economic growth has resulted in pollution that threatens health and livelihood and causes soil erosion, flooding, landslides, a decrease of groundwater, deforestation and the loss of marine resources. These degradations severely affect rural livelihoods. Women must spend more time collecting water and gathering fodder and firewood, and their income generating opportunities are therefore even more limited.

In support of sustainable utilization of limited resources, the government has instituted policies to improve the current land laws as they relate to gender, to create balanced market mechanisms and to establish fair regulation in the management of natural resources (Indonesia).

**RURAL PRODUCTION**

Although Indonesia is self-sufficient in basic food production, it is still considered a Low-Income Food-Deficit Country (LIFDC). Twenty percent of the population lives below the poverty line and 40 percent of the households are food insecure.

Owing to the high population density, large inequalities of land ownership and increased landlessness, rural people no longer can rely on agriculture alone. Increased numbers of rural women engage in wage labour, non-farm or off-farm income generating activities (Mugniesyah). The most common income generating activities that women undertake are livestock, small enterprises, agriculture processing, home gardens and small agricultural plots. The government promotes income generation through micro-credit schemes such as Kelompok Usaha Bersama (KUB) funded by the government owned commercial bank, the National Family Planning Coordinating Board (BKKBN) and the Village Cooperative Units (KUD). These measures address the needs of vulnerable rural women (ILO, 2002b).

**FOOD SECURITY**

Prior to the economic crisis of 1997, Indonesia was not considered an LIFDC. The impact of the economic crisis, however, followed by severe drought and forest fires placed food security back on the development agenda.

The primary problem was not food availability but that many households could not afford to buy food due to inflation. Food prices increased 118 percent in 1998 with an average inflation rate of 78 percent (HPCR). The decline in household income shifted the household consumption pattern toward increased expenditure on food.

Some of the coping strategies pursued were reducing expenditures on clothing, recreation and transportation and reducing both the quality and quantity of food bought, (Mugniesyah). Data from a recent Central Bureau of Statistics labour force survey show that women’s housekeeping work decreased 2.7 percent since pre-1997 and their participation in the labour force grew from 1.8 percent to 4.2 percent in post-1997, thus indicating that women have taken additional jobs to increase the family income for food security. The crisis affected severely women and children, the most vulnerable groups, with drops in education, health and nutrition (Mugniesyah).

**POLICY AND PLANNING FOCUS**

To recognize gender differences within households in the context of agriculture and rural production, policy-makers and planners in Indonesia need to:

- collect gender disaggregated local data and conduct a gender sensitive agriculture census that incorporates estimates of women’s un-paid labour;
- develop a rural technology and training agenda to assist rural women, especially in the outer islands, to improve their productivity and household income;
- integrate gender into all aspects of programmes and projects of the line-ministries;
- support government initiatives to decentralise and strengthen the capacity of provincial and district agencies to formulate gender sensitive policies and plans based on gender disaggregated need assessment;
- explore land reform policy to ensure more equitable access to land and provision of secure ownership; and
- formulate gender sensitive policies and plans based on gender roles related to household livelihood strategies, rural poverty and household food security concerns.
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PROGRAMME FOCUS

Agricultural and rural development programmes in Indonesia need to address rural women’s and men’s priorities in the following areas:

- train extension staff in gender sensitive and participatory planning and programme implementation;
- transfer gender responsive technology to rural women to increase agricultural and non-agricultural productivity;
- identify and respond to rural women’s needs for agricultural inputs and household technology in collaboration with researchers, implementing agencies and grassroots workers;
- develop programmes to increase women’s access to credit and other production inputs; and
- support women in their marketing activities, by providing local marketing information, improving transportation and storage facilities and improving processing and packaging techniques.

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For more information

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