



RURAL WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

OVERALL GOAL

To promote rural women's social and economic empowerment by reducing gender inequalities in rural areas and increasing women's access to resources, assets, services, technologies and economic opportunities.

About the priority area

Women make significant contributions to the rural economy in all regions of the world. In developing countries, women make up on average about 40 per cent of the agricultural labour force, ranging from 20 per cent in Latin America to 50 per cent or more in certain parts of Africa and Asia.

Women's roles range from being cultivators on their own or others' plots – as unpaid or paid workers, employers or employees – to being wage-labourers in on- and off-farm enterprises, alongside their key role as providers of unpaid care work in their households and communities.

However, in many settings women face more constraints than men in accessing key productive resources such as land and to services such as credit, extension and social protection; they face wage discrimination in rural labour markets and often work without remuneration on family farms. This limits their capacity to contribute to agricultural production and take advantage of new opportunities.

On average women spend 85–90 percent of their time each day on household food preparation, child care and other household chores. Women's triple work burden in the productive, reproductive and social spheres, in contrast

to men's, limits their potential to take advantage of new opportunities.

However, when rural women have equal access as men to resources, assets, services and economic opportunities, they become a key driving force against rural poverty.

Enabling women to participate fully in household and community decision-making also translates into improved well-being and better prospects for children, thereby reducing poverty for future generations and contributing to long-term socio-economic development.

Therefore, closing the "gender gap" in access to assets, resources, services and opportunities has been identified as one of the most effective approaches to combat rural poverty and promote agriculture and rural development (FAO SOFA 2010-11).

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Reducing gender inequalities in the agricultural sector offers a critical development pathway for FAO to achieve its three global goals on hunger reduction, economic development (which includes the elimination of poverty) and the sustainable management of natural resources. Consequently, FAO has established an initiative on **Rural Women's Economic Empowerment** that focuses on strengthening the ability and commitment of member countries in implementing rural poverty reduction and food security programmes that benefit women and men equally.



For this initiative FAO has prioritized the following areas:

1. Generating knowledge on good practices, institutional mechanisms and policy options for strengthening women's participation and leadership in rural institutions and organizations, and shaping laws, policies, programmes and investments in agriculture and food security;
2. Analysing gender disparities in rural employment and promoting approaches for advancing rural women's economic empowerment and decent employment, through policies and programmes;
3. Assessment of social and gender impacts of selected value chains to strengthen women's economic and political empowerment;
4. Development of methodological guidelines and tools for the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators for improved monitoring in the agriculture and food security sectors;
5. Global case studies to generate knowledge on promising interventions, good practice and approaches for promoting rural women's social and economic empowerment;
6. Assisting member countries in designing social protection programmes that take into account gender disparities at various levels (household, community and overall society) and contribute to the social and economic empowerment of rural women;
7. Providing policy assistance to ensure equitable access for women and men to technologies, rural advisory services and infrastructure, with particular focus on reducing women's work burden.

IN PRACTICE

Examples of Ongoing Work at the Global Level

- The *Gender and Land Rights Database* provides easy (online) access to up-to-date information on gender and land rights. At present the database comprises 81 country profiles.
- *Governing Land for Women and Men*: This technical guide assists governments in applying the principles of gender equality to the governance of land resources.



- A *policy tool for assessing the gender sensitivity of agriculture policies*: FAO is developing this tool to enable member countries to identify how effectively their policies address gender equality, where there are gaps and incoherencies in policy, and which policy areas require priority action.
- The *guidelines on improving gender equality in territorial issues (IGETI)* to support stakeholders within their community towards promoting gender equality in natural resources management.

Examples of Ongoing Work at the Country Level

- Dimitra Community Listeners' Clubs are empowering rural poor women and men, promoting social mobilization, strengthening collective action, and challenging existing gender-based inequalities.. There are over 1 140 Listeners' Clubs in Senegal, Mauritania, Burundi, DR Congo, Niger, Ghana, and DR Congo.
- FAO has carried out 7 case studies (Tanzania, Ghana, Zambia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Sierra Leone and Mozambique) and a multi-stakeholder conference on the gender-differentiated implications of land-related agricultural investments, with a focus on rural employment.
- FAO is partnering with the UN Women, the IFAD and WFP in implementing a joint 5 year programme on the economic empowerment of rural women, in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, the Niger and Rwanda.

SCOPE FOR DOING MORE AND BETTER

In order to achieve the above results, FAO will strengthen coordination mechanisms both within and work jointly with different partners.

FAO is building on activities underway in the countries covered by the UN Joint Programme (FAO-IFAD-WFP-UN Women) on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment.

FAO will develop strategic partnerships with key institutions working on gender issues, including:

- UN Agencies (ILO, UN Women, IFAD, WFP, World Bank) for all matters related to the promotion of rural women's economic empowerment;
- CGIAR (especially IFPRI and IWMI), particularly in relation to knowledge generation, capacity development and policy support;
- For developing conceptual frameworks and elaborating policy-support and programmatic tools for effective and gender-equitable rural poverty reduction.

In the context of South-South cooperation, the initiative envisages establishing dialogues with India, Ghana, and UN Joint Programme Countries (Rwanda, Ethiopia, Liberia, Niger, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, and Nepal) for learning, sharing of methodologies, good practices, and scaling up interventions across different countries and regions.

FAO will also partner with international and regional think-tanks, and international development cooperation agencies to consolidate international efforts on addressing rural gender inequalities.

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