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FAO'S PROGRAMME FOR **GENDER EQUALITY**
IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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“Women’s empowerment and gender equality are fundamental to FAO’s vision of a world free of hunger and malnutrition” – Jacques Diouf

Foreword

Today, the spectre of hunger has returned to many developing countries. The number of undernourished people has risen above one billion, or one sixth of humanity. The international community faces other daunting challenges, including the global economic downturn, plummeting levels of trade and investment, growing scarcity of natural resources, and the impact of climate change.

We cannot overcome those challenges while age-old, ingrained ideas of gender roles deny women's full participation in decision-making and social and economic development. Rural women make up the majority of the world's poor. Much of their work as household providers and agricultural producers is unpaid, making their contribution virtually invisible. They have far less access than men to land ownership, financial services, training and other means of increasing agricultural production and improving family income, nutrition and health. Women and female-headed households are disproportionately affected by economic recession and higher food prices.

Social and economic inequalities between men and women undermine food security and hold back economic growth and advances in agriculture. That is why FAO's new strategic framework identifies gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision-making in rural areas as one of the Organization's key objectives for the next 10 years. Gender equity will be essential to implementing the decisions of the World Summit on Food Security, held in Rome in November 2009.

By mainstreaming gender equity into all of its programmes for agriculture and rural development, FAO aims at strengthening the impact of its support to member countries, and achieving the goals of gender equality, the eradication of hunger and poverty, and food security for all.



Jacques Diouf
Director-General
Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Why gender

Gender roles, gender relations, gender discrimination, gender equality, gender equity, gender analysis, gender balance, gender mainstreaming...

Over the past decade, all of those terms have been accepted into declarations, plans of action, policies, programmes and projects for agriculture and rural development.

Accepted, but not always fully understood. For some, the stumbling block is the word “gender”, a relatively recent concept in social science. “Gender” refers not to *male* and *female*, but to *masculine* and *feminine* – that is, to qualities or characteristics that society ascribes to each sex. People are born female or male, but learn to be women and men. Perceptions of gender are deeply rooted, vary widely both within and between cultures, and change over time. But in all cultures, gender determines power and resources for females and males.

By any indicator of human development, female power and resources are lowest in rural areas of

the developing world. Rural women make up the majority of the world’s poor. They have the world’s lowest levels of schooling and the highest rates of illiteracy. In all developing regions, female-headed rural households are among the poorest of the poor.

Numerous studies underscore the social costs of rural women’s lack of education and assets, linking it directly to high rates of undernutrition, infant mortality and, in some countries, HIV/AIDS infection. There are also high economic costs: wasted human capital and low labour productivity that stifle rural development and progress in agriculture, and ultimately threaten food security – for both women and men.

That is why gender has become central to FAO’s new strategy for agriculture and rural development, and why understanding the terminology is important.

Gender roles are those behaviours, tasks and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for men, women, boys and girls

In traditional rural societies, commercial agricultural production is mainly a male responsibility. Men prepare land, irrigate crops, and harvest and transport produce to market. They own and trade large animals such as cattle, and are responsible for cutting, hauling and selling timber from forests. In fishing communities, capturing fish in coastal and deep-sea waters is almost always a male domain.

Rural women have primary responsibility for maintaining the household. They raise children, grow and prepare food, manage family poultry, and collect fuel wood and water. But they play an important, largely unpaid, role in generating family income, by providing labour for planting, weeding, harvesting and threshing crops, and processing produce for sale. Women may also earn a small income for themselves by selling vegetables from home gardens, or forest products. They spend that income mainly on meeting family food needs and child education.



Gender relations are the ways in which a society defines rights, responsibilities and the identities of men and women in relation to one another

Although women make substantial contributions to household well-being and agricultural production, men largely control the sale of crops and animals and use of the income. The failure to value their work reduces women to virtual non-entities in economic transactions, the allocation of household resources, and wider community decision-making.

With the increasing commercialization of agriculture, the dominant position of men is changing gender roles – in men's favour. For example, as urban demand for vegetables increases, men are taking over women's traditional gardens to establish commercial enterprises. The expropriation of women's activities reduces their production of food for the household, their income and their social standing. Another growing trend is out-migration of poor rural men in search of employment, which leaves women with sole responsibility for food and cash crop production, as well as raising children.

Gender discrimination is any exclusion or restriction made on the basis of gender roles and relations that prevents a person from enjoying full human rights

Rural women suffer systematic discrimination in the access to resources needed for socio-economic development. Credit, extension, input and seed supply services usually address the needs of male household heads. Rural women are rarely consulted in development projects that may increase men's production and income, but add to their own workloads. When work burdens increase, girls are removed from school more often than boys, to help with farming and household tasks.

In many countries, a husband's family may take land and livestock from a woman on her husband's death, leaving her destitute. Female farm labourers' wages are lower than men's, while low-paid tasks in agro-processing are routinely "feminized". Discrimination can descend into gender-based violence, especially during emergencies when women are isolated and vulnerable. Another form of violence is women's lack of rights to "safe sex", a major factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS in some countries.

Gender equality and the MDGs

The third of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to "Promote gender equality and empower women". It sets a target of eliminating gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015. Gender equality can also help the international community to achieve other important MDGs:

MDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Increasing rural women's agricultural production and participation in the labour force helps to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth.

MDG4: Reduce child mortality

Rural women's lack of access to education and assets is directly linked to high rates of child and infant mortality.

MDG5: Improve maternal health

The vast majority of maternal deaths – estimated at half a million a year – could be prevented through better access for women to reproductive health services.

MDG6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Gender inequality is recognized as one of the driving forces behind the spread of HIV infection and AIDS.

MDG7: Ensure environmental sustainability

As farmers and household providers, rural women manage natural resources daily. Their participation in programmes for the sustainable management of land, water and biodiversity is essential.

Why gender



Gender equality is a state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life

For FAO, gender equality is equal participation of women and men in decision-making, equal ability to exercise their human rights, equal access to and control of resources and the benefits of development, and equal opportunities in employment and in all other aspects of their livelihoods.

Gender equality makes good sense. One study calculated that agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa could rise by 20% if women had equal access to land, seed and fertilizer. A World Bank report concluded that reducing gender inequality leads to falling infant and child mortality, improved nutrition, higher economic productivity and faster growth. For the global community, gender equality is also a commitment, embedded in international human rights agreements and in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Gender equity means fairness and impartiality in the treatment of women and men in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities

FAO has placed gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision-making among its key strategic objectives in agriculture and rural development for the next 10 years. By creating social relations in which neither of the sexes suffers discrimination, gender equity aims at improving gender relations and gender roles, and achieving gender equality.

The essence of equity is not identical treatment – treatment may be equal or different, but should always be considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. Since male predominance in the family, public policy and institutions – not only in rural areas, but worldwide – has long obscured women's interests

and concerns, a key strategy for gender equity lies in women's empowerment. Development must encompass rural women's long-term needs and aspirations, their decision-making power, and their access to and control of critical resources such as land and their own labour.

Gender analysis is the study of the different roles of women and men in order to understand what they do, what resources they have, and what their needs and priorities are

FAO uses gender analysis to address differentiated access to and control over resources and decision-making within rural communities and households. By understanding how different members participate in and are affected by development interventions – who stands to gain and who stands to lose – gender analysis helps planners to avoid costly errors of the past and design programmes and projects that are effective, efficient and equitable.

For example, gender analysis can reveal that if weeding and harvesting crops are considered “women's tasks”, a programme to increase cash crop production may add to women's burdens and provide few benefits. A better investment may be piping water to rural households, thus giving women more time for small livestock production and horticulture. In emergency projects, gender analysis differentiates between potential impacts on girls and women – such as increased risk of malnutrition – and on men and boys, who may risk recruitment into conflicts.

Gender balance is the equal and active participation of women and men in all areas of decision-making, and in access to and control over resources and services

The United Nations considers gender balance fundamental to the achievement of equality, development and peace. To accomplish it in

agriculture and rural development, action is needed by rural communities, governments and international development agencies.

At the local level, for example, gender balance means men and women are actively involved in decision-making bodies, including those managing community facilities and infrastructure. Ministries responsible for rural development need to improve gender balance among technical and managerial staff, especially in extension work. FAO strives for gender balance by employing women among front-line staff in its development projects. FAO has trained female facilitators to pass on biological pest control measures to women farmers, built up cadres of female livestock assistants to advise women's poultry enterprises, and used female promoters to form women's groups for income-generation. Within FAO, the proportion of female professional staff has increased from 23% in 1994 to 40% in 2009.

Gender mainstreaming is the globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality

Gender mainstreaming is defined by the United Nations as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action in all areas and at all levels. As part of its new strategic framework, FAO has made gender mainstreaming central to its development policies and programmes. The Organization's work now extends beyond “women's issues”, into areas once considered “gender-neutral”, such as agricultural science and economic policy making. Within the Organization, gender mainstreaming entails sensitizing staff to gender issues in technical and administrative work, creating accountability mechanisms, and ensuring the allocation of resources equal to the challenge.

This guide outlines the gender dimensions of each of the Organization's strategic objectives, and FAO action to achieve gender equity in agriculture and rural development.



FAO strategic objective:
Gender equity in access
to resources, goods, services
and decision-making

Gender equity

FAO's new strategy will mainstream gender equity in all of its programmes for agriculture and rural development

Mainstreaming gender equity has become a strategic objective of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. To achieve FAO's vision of a world free of hunger and malnutrition, its new strategic framework identifies a series of objectives that define impacts – in countries, regions and globally – to be achieved in the coming decade.

Strategic objective K – “Gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision-making” – responds to overwhelming evidence that gender inequality exacerbates food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty. FAO says strategies for agriculture and rural development do not always benefit rural populations, particularly women, but sometimes even amplify existing disparities.

That trend is likely to worsen in the face of today's unprecedented challenges, including climate change, international migration, transboundary infectious diseases and the global economic downturn. Unless gender is addressed comprehensively, the global community will not achieve the targets set by the 1996 World Food Summit, and the UN Millennium Development Goals.

FAO's “comparative advantage”

As the United Nations lead agency for agriculture and rural development, FAO has a clear comparative advantage in addressing rural gender issues. For decades, FAO has championed the contribution of women to food production and food security, and spearheaded efforts to remove the barriers that limit their opportunities, and the full enjoyment of their rights.

Between 1989 and 2001, two six-year FAO plans of action for “Women in development” focused on improving rural women's access to resources, training and other services. In 2002, a new plan for “Gender and development” defined the different roles and unequal power relations between women and men as a central category of analysis, applying it not just to “women's projects” but to the Organization's wider programme of work, and linking it to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.



The three key instruments for implementing the 2002-2007 plan were capacity development, raising awareness, and gender-sensitive indicators and statistics. FAO led efforts to promote gender mainstreaming in agriculture through socio-economic and gender analysis training courses for an estimated 4 000 development specialists in more than 100 countries. FAO also trained national policy analysts in the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data, and developed gender-sensitive indicators in technical fields ranging from animal health and water management to nutrition, fisheries and rural employment.

Through capacity building and access to more reliable data, FAO has promoted gender-sensitive policy and planning in 30 countries. Botswana and Namibia have adopted national action plans for food security, which seek to eliminate inequalities in women's access to productive resources. FAO's technical assistance contributed to mainstreaming gender in Chile's agricultural policy and helped to increase the use of gender statistics by policy makers in China.

In FAO, a Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW) was created in 2007, within the Economic and Social Development Department, with corporate responsibility for gender equality. A training programme has enhanced both staff commitment to gender mainstreaming and the skills needed to carry it out. A network of senior-level focal points in the Organization's technical units has been created to mainstream gender in all FAO's technical programmes. For example, gender perspectives are now seen as central to FAO's strategy for disaster risk management, and have been incorporated prominently in its emergency relief and rehabilitation operations.

FAO: A voice for women's empowerment

The Food and Agriculture Organization's support to rural women began in 1949, when it created a Home Economics and Social Programme to deal with issues related to women's domestic and reproductive roles. During the 1970s, when the real extent of their contribution to agriculture became clear, FAO's focus shifted to rural women as producers and providers of food for the household.

That evolution was part of a "global awakening" to the inequality between men and women, which was reflected in numerous United Nations declarations and international agreements. They included the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which entrusted FAO with assisting member countries to report on the progress made towards eliminating discrimination against rural women.

FAO's first Women in Development Plan of Action (1989-1995) aimed at incorporating international commitments in the Organization's policies and programmes. FAO was also designated the responsible Agency for the implementation of food and agriculture components of the first UN System-Wide Medium-Term Plan for Women in Development (1990-1995).

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, renewed global commitment to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming emerged as the common strategy to promote gender equality throughout the UN system, and among member countries. FAO linked gender to food security issues at the World Food Summit in 1996, which declared that the full participation of women and men is fundamental to achieving food for all.

FAO's second Women in Development Plan of Action (1996-2001) reflected that broader understanding of food security issues. Its Gender and Development (GAD) Plan of Action (2002-2007) realigned the Organization's strategy to promote gender equality, with focus on emerging challenges such as the impact of globalization, population dynamics and pressure on natural resources. The second GAD Plan of Action (2008-2013) has been integrated into FAO's new strategic framework.

Gender equity

Critical gaps remain

Thanks to FAO's work on gender, many countries have embraced development policies and programmes that are more gender and socially inclusive. But critical gaps remain: cultural biases and lack of political will have led to uneven adoption and implementation of internationally agreed policies and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Data needed to understand gender differences in access to productive resources remain scarce, and the capacity of many developing countries to integrate gender issues in development programmes is still weak. Even where progress has been made, the capacity to implement policies and evaluate impact is often inadequate. FAO's gender strategy seeks to close those gaps and raise the level of gender equality in rural areas.



Men and women in professional positions, FAO headquarters, 1994 and 2009



Towards gender balance

In line with the United Nations goal of achieving gender balance in staffing, the proportion of women in professional positions at FAO headquarters in Rome rose from 23% in 1994 to more than 40% in 2009.



FAO's targets 2008-2013

To mainstream gender equity in its programmes for agriculture and rural development, FAO has set itself the following targets to 2013:

UN policies and joint programmes

Support gender mainstreaming in agriculture and rural development within the "One UN" initiative, identify needs, gaps and entry points for FAO technical support, and contribute to common approaches to gender within the United Nations system.

Policies for agriculture and rural development

Assist governments in integrating gender into development policies and programmes through the analysis of disparities that affect people's access to resources and of issues that threaten gender equity and rural livelihoods.

Capacity building

Expand support to training in gender mainstreaming (using tools pioneered by FAO's Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis programme), and to the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and statistics used in policy making.

FAO skills, resources and technical programmes

Upgrade the gender analysis skills of FAO staff, allocate specific budgets to meet gender targets, and support the Organization-wide network of gender focal points to promote gender mainstreaming in all FAO's technical programmes.

FAO strategic objective:
Sustainable intensification
of crop production

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Horticulture best practices

Sharpen the gender focus of training in best practices for horticultural and other sustainable crop intensification and diversification initiatives in rural and in urban/peri-urban areas.

Integrated pest management

In national IPM programmes and policies, focus on vulnerable groups, including women, in developing methods for the conservation and enhancement of ecosystem services.

Crop diversity

Incorporate issues of concern to both men and women in efforts to develop policies and strategies for plant genetic resources.

Bioenergy crops

Investigate the implications of new bioenergy crops for food security, the use of labour and time by men and women, and the division of income from crop production or employment.

Crops

Women have the least access to the means for increasing yields and moving from subsistence crops to market-oriented production

Increasing crop productivity is crucial to food security, rural development and conservation of natural resources. To feed a world population of 9.2 billion in 2050, agriculture will need to double food production, and do so despite a shrinking base of per capita arable land, a steady decline in crop yield gains, mounting stress on ecosystem services, and the impact of climate change.

The first of FAO's new strategic objectives, therefore, is sustainable intensification of crop production. FAO calls for increasing crop productivity and its contribution to food security and rural livelihoods, through sustainable farming practices (such as integrated pest management and conservation agriculture), better management of biodiversity, and a shift from subsistence farming to market-oriented production.



Gender dimensions of crop production

Women make major contributions to crop production. They provide up to 90% of the labour used in rice cultivation in Southeast Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, they produce up to 80% of basic foodstuffs for both the household and sale. In home gardens, rural women grow vegetables that are important to household nutrition. Women's roles in crop production are expanding: the out-migration of young men from rural areas in some regions has led to permanent changes in women's responsibilities and tasks.

Yet women have the least access to the means for increasing output and yields, and for moving from subsistence farming to higher-value, market-oriented production. Less than 10% of women farmers in India, Nepal and Thailand own land. Only 15% of the world's agricultural extension agents are women. A study of farm credit schemes in Africa found that women's share of loans was just 10%. Statistics on women's yields, technology adoption rates and use of inputs are rarely reported.

The lack of women's participation in commercial crop production is often not a preference, but the result of limited access to inputs and markets. One study calculated that agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa could rise 20% if women had equal access to land, seed and fertilizer. Women's adoption of new crop production technologies is also strongly affected by who controls and ultimately owns the crop: men often move into "women's" crop production when it becomes more profitable.

Careful analysis is needed to evaluate the importance and impact on the rural poor of bioenergy crops, such as sugarcane, maize and jatropha. Small-scale biofuel crop production could provide income and a source of electricity that would reduce women's domestic burdens. But studies indicate that the alternative – capital-intensive, large-scale plantations – may compete for use of marginal land where poor women grow food crops.

Efforts to conserve and utilize agrobiodiversity need to consider the approach of both men and women towards managing crop varieties and ecosystem services. While male-dominated commercial systems typically use standard varieties of a single species, women manage complex and species-rich production systems designed for overall stability. Because the loss of crop diversity reduces the capacity of poor farmers to adapt to climate change, agricultural research needs to draw on women's production strategies and experience in crop selection.

Finally, gender differences can influence farmers' adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which aims at minimizing pest problems, misuse of pesticides and environmental pollution. The fact that women are responsible for family health makes them more responsive to information on pesticides and IPM techniques.

FAO action for gender equity in crop production

Many agricultural development programmes have undervalued women's role in crop production. FAO promotes participatory research, links between extension and small farmers' groups, and between formal and local seed systems that help identify and meet their needs.

In Kenya, FAO used farmers' field schools to train men and women farmers in conservation agriculture, a production system that reduces crop vulnerability to drought and farmers' dependence on fertilizers. Conservation agriculture led to more stable yields, enhanced food security and more time for livelihood diversification.

In Tanzania, FAO helped to organize community seeds fairs where 14 000 farmers exchanged, local seed varieties suited to local conditions. Owing to constraints on women's mobility, more men participated from the surrounding villages, but more women than men from the host villages attended.

In Pakistan, FAO trained female facilitators to pass on IPM practices in cotton to women farmers concerned about the health risks of pesticides. Reduced applications of pesticide also benefited women farm workers, who pick the cotton by hand.



In Haiti, FAO helped to revive local bean production – and to protect genetic diversity in the process – by distributing 50 tonnes of seed for multiplication among 23 producer groups, composed mainly of women.

FAO strategic objective:
Increased sustainable
livestock production

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Policies and programmes

Develop gender-sensitive tools and approaches that enable livestock experts to mainstream gender issues in the planning and implementation of livestock policies and programmes.

Gender "hot spots"

Analyse gender-related "hot spots" in dairy, poultry, confined and grazing production systems.

Gender checklists

Prepare and use checklists to ensure that gender issues are incorporated and addressed in livestock sector studies.

Livestock

Development programmes must take account of gender roles that shape the small-scale livestock sector

Traditional livestock systems based on local resources and animal breeds are the major source of livelihoods for 200 million rural families, and provide food and income for some 70% of the world's rural poor.

But the traditional livestock sector is under growing pressure. Booming urban demand for meat, milk and eggs is being met worldwide by intensive, large-scale production systems that squeeze traditional producers from markets, erode the genetic diversity of local livestock breeds, and favour the emergence and spread of animal diseases.

FAO's strategy aims at sustainable increases in world livestock production, which, in turn, contribute to food security, poverty alleviation and economic development. FAO calls for action to increase low-income producers' access to resources and services, such as land, water, credit, extension and veterinary care.



Gender dimensions of livestock production

Males and females of all ages participate in small-scale animal production. Men usually own and manage large animals, such as cattle and buffalo, while women are almost always responsible for poultry and small ruminants, such as goats. In fact, their livestock is often one of the few sources of income over which women have complete control.

But gender roles change. A study in Tanzania found that women do perform "men's tasks" during labour shortages. The reverse rarely occurs, except when there is potential to gain control over assets – for example, when milk production becomes more profitable.

Although all household members are involved in livestock production, gender discrimination denies women access to resources, rights and services. Secure land tenure, for example, is crucial to productivity increases: farmers who own land are more likely to make long-term investments and try new production technologies. In most rural societies, however, women can only access land through their male relatives. Insecurity of title often extends to the animals themselves. In Namibia, it is still common (despite legislation to prevent it) for a husband's family to take livestock from a woman at her husband's death.

Male livestock keepers also have far better access to training and technology. Extension programmes are usually oriented towards men's livestock, and extensionists lack the incentive and communication skills needed to work with often illiterate women. Among households affected by HIV/AIDS in Uganda, the death of the male head of the household can leave women and children without the financial resources or extension services needed to care for the cattle.

Interventions to control animal diseases should also take account of gender roles. Men's income may be more at risk from outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease, which has decimated cattle herds

in many countries. But as the primary managers of poultry, women and children face greater health and economic risks from avian influenza.

The negative impact of gender discrimination on productivity is more obvious in the livestock sector than in most other areas of agriculture. But the potential benefits of gender equality have made the sector a privileged entry point for gender mainstreaming.

Low-cost investments in poultry and small animal production – which is easily managed and has a quick rate of growth and return – can provide women with new income generating activities. Because poor rural women spend most of their income on buying food and paying school fees, that can do more to improve family welfare than expanding men's cattle herds.



FAO action for gender equity in livestock production

FAO advises governments on livestock sector policies and programmes. It also provides assistance in developing the skills of small livestock owners, and in facilitating their access to productive resources such as land, water and credit. It works with rural institutions to make extension and veterinary services more responsive to small producers' needs.

In Afghanistan, an FAO project helped to organize more than 20 000 rural women in poultry producers' groups, and provided them with training, improved pullets and equipment, and access to urban markets. Their poultry enterprises now produce 30 million eggs per year.



In Ethiopia, trypanosomiasis – a livestock disease transmitted by tsetse flies – limited milk production and the availability of healthy draught animals. FAO encouraged the participation of women farmers in a project that integrated tsetse control with improved mixed farming systems. The project helped 700 000 farmers to double their milk output, drastically reduce time spent on ploughing, and cut the need for veterinary treatment by 60%.

In Gambia, the productivity of small ruminants and poultry was limited by disease outbreaks and women's lack of access to extension. An FAO project trained 50 female livestock assistants to deliver extension advice, and upgraded animal disease diagnostic laboratories. The project helped to reduce small livestock mortality from disease by 45%.

FAO strategic objective:

Sustainable management and use of fisheries and aquaculture resources

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Women's empowerment

Use women's empowerment as an indicator in assessing the contribution of small-scale aquaculture to sustainable rural development.

Aquaculture training

Incorporate gender concerns in information and other tools for aquaculture development, and increase women's participation in training in management, seed production and entrepreneurship.

Fisheries research and management

Improve the ratio of men and women trained or participating in capacity building in fisheries research and management.

Global conference

Include gender as a thematic area in FAO's Global Conference on Aquaculture 2010.

Fisheries

Gender discrimination is perpetuated in women's limited access to credit, storage facilities and training

Fisheries are essential to the economic well-being of millions of rural people in the developing world. Capture fisheries and aquaculture provide direct employment for some 200 million people, the vast majority of whom work in the traditional, small-scale sector, which accounts for about 70% of fisheries production.

Fish and other aquatic species are also vital to food security. They provide almost 30% of the animal protein consumed in Asia and the Pacific, and more than 20% in low-income food-deficit countries.

FAO's strategy for fisheries development seeks to enhance productivity in the small-scale sector – and its contribution to food security and livelihoods – in the face of growing competition from industrial capture fisheries and large-scale aquaculture.



Gender dimensions of fisheries and aquaculture

Capturing fish in coastal and deep-sea waters is almost always a male domain, and carries with it high occupational health and safety risks. Women in fishing households do perform preparatory work, such as mending nets, although their contribution is often "informal" and rarely remunerated.

Women's most prominent role – in small-scale and industrial fisheries – is in post-harvest, processing and marketing. In West Africa, as much as 80% of seafood is marketed by women. In fish processing factories surveyed in India, 60% of workers were young women. In Viet Nam, females make up 80% of the aquaculture workforce.

Gender roles and responsibilities are evolving. In parts of Cambodia and Thailand, women increasingly fish and own boats. In Bangladesh, women make up about 60% of fish farmers, and many are successful entrepreneurs. But much of women's contribution to fisheries is "invisible". Gender discrimination stems from the low value attached to women's work and is perpetuated in their limited access to credit, processing technology, storage facilities and training.

Without training and storage technology, many women traders are unable to keep fish fresh, and suffer considerable post-harvest losses. In West Africa, studies found that the poorest fishmongers in the processing and sales chain had access to only low quality fish and no access at all to market information – or ice.

Programmes for the mechanization of small-scale fisheries production risk displacing women from traditional sources of livelihoods. In India, the motorization of fishing vessels in one area led to bigger catches and the replacement of women fishmongers by male merchants. Studies show that when improved fish preservation and processing facilities are made available, men engaged in capturing fish begin to compete with women for access.

Gender discrimination follows women into the industrial processing sector. Women from fishing communities in India who became wage earners in the seafood export industry were found to be paid less than men, and were away from their homes for longer periods, making it more difficult for them to fulfill their domestic roles.

Opportunities offered by aquaculture also need to be assessed from a gender perspective. If a woman knows she may lose a fish pond at the death of her husband, she may not invest in the enterprise. The introduction of cage culture may deprive women of water used for drinking, washing dishes or soaking cassava. If aquaculture reduces water levels in wells, women may have to look for other, more distant sources.

FAO action for gender equity in fisheries and aquaculture

As part of its global Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, FAO has developed technical guidelines for mainstreaming gender in small-scale fisheries development. The code promotes the practice of “co-management”, in which entire fishing communities, comprising both men and women, participate in controlling fish and aquatic resources.

In West Africa, FAO worked with 20 coastal and five inland countries in a programme aimed at sustainable improvements in the livelihoods of men and women in fishing communities. In Niger, literacy, management and accountancy training helped women fishmongers to increase their incomes and play a much greater role in community decision-making.



In Viet Nam, a project for aquaculture development gave high priority to raising awareness of gender issues among farmers and local institutions, and improving access to extension services, credit and fish seed. Thanks to loans and training, some 2 500 women started home fish ponds, which led to a rise of 20% in incomes and of 30% in household fish consumption.

In Malawi, incidence of HIV/AIDS is high in fishing villages, where male migration often leaves women with no choice but to trade sex-for-resources to ensure family survival. FAO recently helped to develop Malawi's Fisheries and HIV/AIDS Strategy, which incorporates both HIV/AIDS issues and gender dimensions in the country's development planning.

FAO strategic objective:
Sustainable management
of forests and trees

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Sector studies

Include gender issues in socio-economic analysis and forest sector outlook studies, and encourage countries to provide sex-disaggregated data.

Income generation

Promote methodologies for men and women to generate income from forests and trees in order to reduce poverty and to manage natural resources on a sustainable basis.

Stakeholder participation

Develop and implement approaches that increase the participation of male and female stakeholders in forest-related processes and activities.

Forest tenure systems

Promote equitable forest tenure systems through policies and laws that improve access to, and use and management of, forest resources for the benefit of men and women.

Forest institutions

Collect gender-disaggregated data on employment in public-funded forest research centres and graduation from forestry educational institutions.

Forests

Given their responsibility for meeting household food and fuel needs, the depletion of forest resources increases burdens on women

Forests make a significant contribution to livelihoods in the developing world. An estimated 1.2 billion people rely on agro-forestry farming systems. Although the net loss of forests is slowing down, deforestation and forest degradation continue, especially in tropical regions.

Because of the growing demand for ecosystem services from forests, a strategic approach is needed to optimize the capacity of forests to mitigate climate change, conserve biodiversity, safeguard wildlife and protect land and watersheds.

FAO's strategy for sustainable management of forests and trees calls for action to increase the involvement of forest stakeholders in policy making and legislation, to enhance the contribution of forests to livelihoods, and to make forestry a more economically viable land-use option.



Gender dimensions of forest management

Rural women and men often have disparate knowledge of forest resources and different roles in tree and forest management. Women practise traditional agro-forestry production systems, such as home gardening, and harvest and sell wood and tree products as part of small-scale enterprises. They are mainly responsible for collection of fuel wood for the household, and of wild plants used as food and medicines.

Men are involved more in high-value activities such as cutting and hauling timber. But gender roles vary – in parts of Nepal, men weave bamboo baskets, while in Lao PDR, women are more active in the craft. Women are the sole collectors of fuel wood in Bhutan, but men help out in Sri Lanka.

Research suggests that trees and forests are more important to rural women's livelihoods than to those of men. In Madagascar poor women in one community earned 37% of their income from forest products, compared to 22% earned by men. In Andhra Pradesh, 77% of women's income in some areas was derived from forests.

In many countries, forest land is owned by the state, while local men have rights to trees and women to tree products such as fruit. On Pacific islands, women harvest breadfruit for food, but breadfruit trees are controlled by men, who use its timber to make furniture. For both men and women, access to forest resources is becoming complex, as rights based in negotiable customary law give way, increasingly, to government action to protect threatened forest habitats by restricting human encroachment.

Restrictions on access affect men and women in different ways. Forests can be crucial to farming women's survival strategies. In sub-Saharan Africa, responsibility for caring for household members afflicted by HIV/AIDS falls mainly on women, leaving less time for agricultural production. As a result, they are becoming more reliant on forest foods and

income from fuel wood. During conflicts and natural disasters, displaced rural people also become more reliant on forest products and services.

Given their responsibility for meeting household food and fuel needs, depletion of forest resources increases burdens on women especially. A study in Malawi found deforestation was forcing elderly women to walk more than 10 km a day to collect fuel wood. Women spend on average 800 hours a year in Zambia and 300 hours a year in Tanzania on the same task. In East Africa, fuel wood scarcity has led to a reduction in the number of meals cooked in poor households.

FAO action for gender equity in forest management

FAO's "community forestry" approach recognizes the intimate relationship between women, men and trees. It builds on local knowledge to increase the benefits of forests, especially for the poor, and involves rural women and men in designing and implementing forestry programmes.



In Uganda, FAO helped 200 women and 100 men living in communities around the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park to set up profitable enterprises such as beekeeping, cultivating mushrooms and conducting eco-tours to protected gorilla areas. The project helped to improve livelihoods while protecting the park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, a three-year FAO project strengthened small-scale, non-food forest product enterprises in seven communities. As most traders are women, they were also the prime beneficiaries. The project trained them in marketing, supplied improved processing technologies, and linked them to financial services.

In Lao PDR, FAO is collaborating in a programme to preserve bamboo weaving, which is regarded as a national heritage and is also a significant source of rural livelihoods. In one village, FAO helped marginalized women to forge links with national and regional markets for their bamboo furniture, boosting their incomes by 50%.

FAO strategic objective:
Sustainable management
of land, water and genetic
resources

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Land issues and gender

Develop training modules on gender and land rights, and use gender analysis as an integral part of land use planning.

State of world land and water resources

In reporting on the state of world land and water resources, address differences in women's and men's access, control and ownership.

Water management projects

Collect and disseminate sex-disaggregated data on agriculture water management and include gender analysis in water management projects.

Plant genetic resources

In reporting on implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, address women's access and share of benefits.

Land cover and GIS

Develop geographic information systems that integrate gender-related environmental and socio-economic data.

Natural resources

Understanding gender dimensions of natural resources management is a starting point for reversing environmental degradation

Land, water, climate and biological diversity form the natural base of agriculture, essential to rural development and sustainable livelihoods. The growing demand for food, water, fibre and energy is disrupting agro-ecosystems, eroding biodiversity and depleting land and water. Those impacts will be exacerbated by climate change.

Natural resources must be used in a way that meets today's needs, while conserving them for future generations. That will require action to develop capacities, from global to farm level, for their sustainable management and regulation.

FAO's strategy for sustainable management of natural resources calls for a variety of measures: improved water productivity in farming systems, conservation and sustainable utilization of agricultural biodiversity, and responsible governance of access to land.



Gender dimensions of natural resources management

The developing world's 1.3 billion rural poor make up the world's largest group of natural resources managers. Understanding their roles and responsibilities – including the gender dimensions of natural resources management – is a starting point for reversing environmental degradation.

Women manage natural resources daily in their roles as farmers and household providers. Typically, they are responsible for growing subsistence crops, and often have unique knowledge of local crop species. To meet family needs, rural women and girls walk long distances to collect fuel wood and water. Despite their reliance on natural resources, women have less access to and control over them than men. Usually it is men who put land, water, plants and animals to commercial use, which is often more valued than women's domestic uses.

Gender inequality is most evident in access to land. Custom prohibits women from owning land in many countries. Frequently women have only use rights, mediated by men, and those rights are highly precarious. Landless rural women often depend on common property resources for fuel wood, fodder and food. In many countries, overuse of those resources poses a serious threat to rural livelihoods and food security.

Without secure land rights, farmers have limited access to credit – and little incentive – to invest in improved management and conservation practices. Women and men are more likely to make environmentally sound land management decisions when they have secure ownership and know they can benefit.

Improved water management, especially irrigation, is critical to higher agricultural productivity and conservation of the resource. Women farmers have limited access to irrigation networks or, when they do, to irrigation management decisions: membership

of water users' associations is often linked to land ownership. Women's limited water entitlements force them to use subsistence agricultural practices that may lead to soil erosion, a major source of instability in watersheds.

Over generations, small-scale farmers have shaped a wide diversity of crop species and animal breeds. Commercialization of agriculture, driven partly by global trade in high-yielding crops and animals, is responsible for a rapid decline in agrobiodiversity, which threatens not only local production but, ultimately, global food security.

To protect their natural resources, rural women and men must be empowered to participate in decisions that affect their needs and vulnerabilities. Addressing the gender dimensions of natural resources management will help policy makers formulate more effective interventions for their conservation and sustainable use.



FAO action for gender equity in natural resources management

FAO promotes community-based management of natural resources that gives a voice to the men and women who rely on them. It works with national institutions to improve inheritance rights and draft land reform legislation, promotes gender equity in irrigation water users' associations, and encourages local seed production to preserve agrobiodiversity.



In Morocco, an FAO project to reduce depletion of natural resources organized 3 500 rural people – mainly women, girls and boys responsible for collecting fuel wood and water – into village associations. The project installed cisterns, wells and irrigation canals to improve water availability, and introduced a system for rotating pasture use and forage production.

In Tajikistan, a joint FAO/UNIFEM project to improve poor farmers' access to land and agricultural services created 74 women farmers' groups and provided them with information on national land reform legislation. The project also linked the groups to legal services and a credit revolving fund, and trained the groups in business planning and marketing.

In Nepal, FAO's Livelihood Support Programme improved women farmers' production and incomes by promoting their participation in irrigation water users' committees. The project also provided them with training in literacy, leadership and women's rights.

FAO strategic objective:
Enabling environment for
markets to improve livelihoods
and rural development

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Agro-industries and rural infrastructure

Address gender issues in policy guidance for agro-industrial development, and produce technical guidelines of best practices in infrastructure design that recognizes gender needs.

Conditions and wages

Promote equitable employment conditions for men and women in agro-industries, measured by ratio of men's to women's wages.

Fisheries policy and enterprise development

Include gender issues in guidance to governments on fisheries and aquaculture policy, and increase men's and women's incomes through enterprise development.

Gender equity in value chains

Produce business development training materials that address the different needs of rural men and women, and promote gender sensitive activities that link both male and female farmers to value chains.

Employment and livelihoods

Rural development programmes must address gender discrimination in wages and access to livelihood assets

Economic globalization has linked even isolated rural areas in a chain that connects local, national, regional and international markets. Value chains are evolving rapidly with the expansion of supermarkets and of demand in industrialized countries for fresh produce year round.

For millions of agricultural producers, agro-processors and rural workers, globalization offers increased employment and income opportunities. But improvements in livelihoods will depend on how effectively developing countries can participate in markets.

FAO's strategy aims at creating "enabling environments" that benefit everyone in the value chain, from producers to exporters. It calls for policies that enhance the development impact of agro-industries, promote rural employment and help small producers diversify into new enterprises.



Gender dimensions of rural employment and livelihoods

As agriculture shifts from subsistence to commercial production, the future of small-scale producers in developing countries depends on their being able to diversify into new income generating activities, including off-farm employment.

Rural women's employment prospects are severely limited. Like women everywhere, they have primary responsibility for raising children, preparing food, and taking care of sick family members, plus extra burdens, such as collecting fuel wood. Gender roles reduce rural women's participation in labour markets and confine them to lower paid and more precarious employment in agriculture.

As farmers, women grow traditional food crops, while men are more likely to grow cash crops and, therefore, are better positioned to capitalize on new market opportunities. Women farmers face systematic discrimination in access to the resources and services needed to improve their productivity, such as credit, secure land title and education. Gender bias in North Africa and the Near East limits women's use of machinery, such as tractors, which affects the productivity of farms run by women.

Women farmers in some countries have established profitable businesses supplying international markets with organic or fair trade produce. But studies show that women can lose income and control as a product moves from the farm to the market – in Uganda, strong urban demand for leafy vegetables led men to take over their cultivation.

When off-farm employment is available – for example as farm labourers or in agro-processing – women continue to suffer gender discrimination. In India, the average wage of female farm workers is 30% lower than that of men. As casual or seasonal labourers, they are usually the first to be laid off.

Worldwide, the processing of vegetables, flowers, shrimp, pigs and poultry is carried out mainly by women. Low-paid tasks in agro-processing are generally “feminized”, while men are more likely to have jobs that require training and earn higher wages. Limiting women’s range of occupations has high efficiency costs. It also leads to less investment in girls’ education. Because girls receive less schooling, they are more likely to be employed as poorly paid “bonded labour” on large farms and plantations.

Rural wage employment can help women escape from poverty by increasing their income and strengthening their household bargaining power. However, there can be significant trade-offs. In Ecuador, young women’s employment in the cut-flower export industry has brought them economic benefits, but reduced the amount of time they have for communal work and child care.



FAO action for gender equity in employment and livelihoods

FAO works directly with farmers’ groups and agribusinesses to strengthen their managerial and technical skills and links to markets. It conducts gender-sensitive analyses of trends in farm and off-farm employment, and promotes gender equity in government policies for expanding rural job opportunities. It promotes labour standards, occupational health and safety, and the participation of rural workers’ unions in negotiations for improved working conditions.

In Papua New Guinea, FAO trained 1 000 rural women to identify market opportunities, design business strategies and improve production methods. The benefits included improved household nutrition and increased income.

In Asia, Africa and Latin America, FAO’s Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development programme helped small-scale farmers groups to respond to new market opportunities through training in marketing, financial management, business planning and value chain development. The programme provided small grants for some 50 micro-enterprise projects.



In the Democratic Republic of Congo, FAO helped women in and around Kinshasa to expand their small-scale horticulture businesses by securing access to land and water, improving produce quality and safety, and finding viable markets. The project introduced 4 500 producers to conservation agriculture practices, trained 2 000 women and men in business management, and provided loans to 115 micro-enterprises.

FAO strategic objective:

Improved food security
and better nutrition*

Food security and nutrition

Women play a decisive role in household food security, dietary diversity and children's health

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Nutrition policy

Promote sector policies and programmes for nutritional improvement at national and community-levels that recognize gender-defined needs, opportunities and constraints.

Nutrition education

Develop gender-sensitive nutrition education initiatives, training programmes and materials that target men, women, girls and boys.

Food quality and safety

To reduce disease outbreaks caused by home-prepared food, develop awareness and educational materials on household handling of food.

Street foods

Improve the quality and safety of street foods through training for men and women vendors in basic hygiene.

Gender-specific data

Promote assessments of nutrient requirements, dietary intakes and nutritional status that analyse gender, age and development stage.

FAO estimates that around one billion people are undernourished, and that each year more than three million children die from undernutrition before their fifth birthday. Micronutrient deficiencies, which affect about two billion people, lead to poor growth, blindness, increased severity of infections and sometimes death.

The root causes of world hunger – including rural poverty, population growth and environmental degradation – are exacerbated by the global economic slowdown, volatile food prices and the impact of climate change.

FAO's strategy for improved food security and nutrition calls for action to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations and to strengthen government capacities to formulate and implement food security policies and address nutrition issues.



Gender dimensions of food security and nutrition

In developing countries, rural women and men play different roles in guaranteeing food security for their households and communities. While men grow mainly field crops, women are usually responsible for growing and preparing most of the food consumed in the home and raising small livestock, which provides protein.

Rural women also carry out most home food processing, which ensures a diverse diet, minimizes losses and provides marketable products. Women are more likely to spend their incomes on food and children's needs – research has shown that a child's chances of survival increase by 20% when the mother controls the household budget. Women, therefore, play a decisive role in food security, dietary diversity and children's health.

But gender inequalities in control of livelihood assets limit women's food production. In Ghana, studies found that insecure access to land led women farmers to practise shorter fallow periods than men, which reduced their yields, income and the availability of food for the household. In sub-Saharan Africa, diseases such as HIV/AIDS force women to assume greater caretaking roles, leaving them less time to grow and prepare food.

Women's access to education is also a determining factor in levels of nutrition and child health. Studies from Africa show that children of mothers who have spent five years in primary education are 40% more likely to live beyond the age of five.

Having an adequate supply of food does not automatically translate into adequate levels of nutrition. In many societies women and girls eat the food remaining after the male family members have eaten. Women, girls, the sick and disabled are the main victims of this "food discrimination", which results in chronic undernutrition and ill-health.

The physiological needs of pregnant and lactating women also make them more susceptible to

* Note: This description incorporates FAO's strategic objective on improved quality and safety of food

malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Twice as many women suffer from malnutrition as men, and girls are twice as likely to die from malnutrition as boys. Maternal health is crucial for child survival – an undernourished mother is more likely to deliver an infant with low birth weight, significantly increasing its risk of dying.

Good nutrition and health depends on the safety of the food consumed – contamination leads to illnesses such as diarrhoea that are a major cause of illness and death in children. Efforts to improve food safety must take into account existing gender roles in the food chain. Training for women in hygiene and sanitation can make an immediate contribution to household and community health.

FAO action for gender equity in food security and nutrition

FAO interventions to improve household food security and nutrition address broader issues of livelihoods and gender. They improve small farmers' access to productive resources, and provide nutrition education and training in food safety, processing and storage. FAO enhances homestead food production, especially through home gardens that provide a nutritionally rich diet and allow savings on food purchases.

In Viet Nam, a FAO programme to reduce vitamin A deficiency in four communities promoted home gardens and nutrition education. Evaluations confirmed that home gardens had greatest impact when men and women understood their nutritional and economic benefits. The project reduced the rate of malnutrition by more than 12% in just two years.



In Lesotho, FAO worked with UNICEF and the WFP to improve food security and nutrition among 7 000 HIV/AIDS-affected households by providing training in conservation agriculture, crop diversification and improved child feeding practices. To improve women farmers' incomes, the project introduced soap making, goat breeding and beekeeping.

In Afghanistan, FAO used literacy classes to help improve the nutrition status of 3 500 women and their families. It trained literacy facilitators to deliver, along with the literacy classes, key messages on health, sanitation, nutrition, backyard farm management and business development. FAO is expanding the programme to reach another 35 000 families.

FAO strategic objective:

Improved preparedness and response to food and agricultural threats and emergencies

Emergencies

All rural people suffer during emergencies, but men and women are affected in different ways

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Early warning

Address gender-related concerns in FAO special alerts on food supply difficulties and crop prospects, and mainstream gender into regional food security assessments.

Identifying vulnerable households

Use socio-economic and gender analysis to identify food insecure and vulnerable (e.g. female-headed, orphan-headed and elderly-headed) households as participants in emergency projects.

Needs and livelihoods

Address women's and men's different needs and household livelihoods in needs assessment and livelihood assessment guidelines.

NGO partners

Require that NGOs and other partners in agriculture emergency operations use gender-sensitive approaches, including sex-disaggregated data.

Gender-based violence

Specifically address the vulnerabilities of men, women, boys and girls (e.g. to gender-based violence), in projects aimed at mitigating the vulnerability of populations displaced by emergencies.

Impact assessment

When performing impact assessments, analyse how men and women in households benefit from emergency projects.

Emergencies arising from natural disasters, drought, diseases, civil conflict, market shocks and extreme climate events often have their greatest impact on poor rural populations. During 2009, the UN estimates that some 30 million people required emergency assistance.

FAO says emergency preparedness and response must address the specific needs of populations dependent on agriculture, with particular focus on food insecure and nutritionally vulnerable groups.

Its strategy to help countries to prepare for food and agricultural threats and emergencies, and respond to them effectively, calls for the use of socio-economic and gender analysis tools to identify the most vulnerable communities.



Gender dimensions of emergencies

In emergency situations, rural communities are frequently traumatized and agricultural systems devastated, leading to disruption of food production, livelihoods, health care and law enforcement. Understanding how men and women experience and respond to crises, and assessing their capacity for recovery, are essential to effective emergency relief operations and to rehabilitation.

All rural people suffer during emergencies, but men and women are affected in different ways. Studies after the Asian *tsunami* of 2004 revealed that in several coastal villages in Indonesia, females made up 80% of all fatalities, possibly because they had not learned to swim. Throughout the region, men lost fishing boats, reducing many to poverty and forcing them to migrate in search of work. Women who traditionally processed fish also lost their livelihoods. With male household members absent, cases of rape increased, discouraging women from seeking employment.

During emergencies, women and children may be more exposed to risk of malnutrition because they have limited access to resources such as land, animals and savings. With fewer survival options, female-headed households especially may be forced to submit to "survival sex," which increases their exposure to HIV and other diseases. Men and boys have particular vulnerabilities – for example, when they are targets for recruitment into armed conflicts or when boys are unable to feed themselves due to lack of cooking skills.

Emergencies may present opportunities for poor men and women to participate more in decision-making and contribute to the rehabilitation process. Since rural women are usually responsible for household food production, preparation and storage, they should be seen as potential partners in emergency related planning rather than simply "victims".

Post-disaster, women remain more vulnerable than men. Along with reduced access to resources, they

must cope with increased responsibility for caring for members of the household. Following a devastating hurricane in Honduras, the increase in women's domestic workload made it impossible for many to return to off-farm work. Women's nutrition and health may also suffer as workload increases.

If rural women normally have limited access to land, their rights may be even further reduced following a natural disaster. With many title holders dead and boundaries erased, poor and marginalized women and men often have no alternative but to remain in refugee camps, and have little say in programmes for land redistribution.

FAO support to gender equity in emergencies

FAO works to reduce rural people's vulnerability to emergencies, first by helping to improve their food security and strengthen their livelihoods. When emergencies occur, it uses socio-economic and gender analysis to identify the most vulnerable groups. It designs emergency interventions for rapid distribution of food and agricultural relief, and supports the transition from relief to reconstruction and development.



In Indonesia, following the *tsunami*, FAO used its socio-economic and gender analysis approach to build the capacity of national trainers to integrate gender concerns into rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes.

In Colombia, FAO trained 2 700 people – mostly women and young boys displaced from rural areas by escalating conflict – in urban horticulture and provided them with basic nutrition education, seeds, agricultural tools and other inputs. Nutritional benefits reached an estimated 14 000 vulnerable people.

In Sudan, FAO is helping female-headed and other vulnerable displaced households to overcome seasonal food shortages by growing vegetables in winter and taking up new income generating activities. Inputs to 4 000 households included training, vegetable seeds, hand tools and labour-saving technologies. Around 450 women will be trained in food processing, egg production and cheese-making.



FAO strategic objective:
Increased and more effective
public and private investment
in agriculture and rural
development

FAO's targets 2008-2013

FAO/World Bank Cooperative Programme

Address gender considerations in all sector and subsector studies conducted for the World Bank, and in appraisals and evaluation of Bank-financed projects.

IFAD projects and studies

Include a gender focus in all poverty-eradication projects and studies prepared on behalf of IFAD.

Financing institutions

Address gender dimensions in all relevant documents prepared for international, bilateral, regional and sub-regional development financing institutions.

Social analysis

Mainstream gender considerations in guidelines for social analysis in the preparation of agricultural investment projects.

Investment

Ignoring gender inequalities carries great costs to rural women and to developing countries' potential for economic growth

The share of agriculture in official development assistance was 18% in 1979, but less than 5% in 2007. To boost agricultural production and productivity, especially that of the world's 450 million small-scale farmers, the sector's share needs to reach 10% within five years.

FAO's strategy aims at securing increased public and private investment in agriculture and rural development. But it also seeks to make investment more effective, in accordance with international agreements to enhance donor co-ordination and countries' management of development aid.

The strategy calls for improvements in the design of investment operations, and says public funding must be applied in core areas to maximize leverage and impact on poverty reduction and food security.



Gender dimensions of development investment

Development planners have two main options for targeting investment interventions to redress gender inequalities: designing projects exclusively for women, or mainstreaming gender by addressing gaps in gender equality in all relevant projects and project components. International lending institutions agree that the latter is more effective – IFAD, for example, has adopted gender mainstreaming in all its operations for reducing rural poverty.

Yet evidence suggests that gender issues are incorporated explicitly into less than 10% of official development assistance to agriculture. Ignoring gender inequalities carries great costs not only to rural women, but to developing countries' potential for economic growth.

Analysis of gender relations in the division of labour, access to resources, and control of crops and income from their sale is essential for sustainable investment programmes. Property rights are particularly crucial, since they often determine the willingness of men and women to invest in production and to protect natural resources.

Members of the same household may not agree that selling livestock should be a priority – who benefits depends on who decides how the income is spent. Women may be reluctant to provide labour for income-generating activities which they do not control, or activities that could be expropriated by men.

Gender analysis of time allocations in agriculture may reveal that lack of proper soil management is due to out-migration of male household members, which leaves women with more agricultural work and no time for soil conservation. Weeding, harvesting and threshing crops are often "women's tasks" – therefore, a programme to increase cash crop production can have negative impacts on women already overburdened with domestic work, and fail to reach its objectives.

Understanding women's workloads can suggest other areas for investment. In northern Pakistan, surveys found that almost a third of rural women's time was spent collecting fuel wood and water. In response, the government launched a programme to provide rural households with piped water and kerosene, allowing women to increase their earnings from livestock and horticulture.

The success of agricultural investments often depends on equitable access to services. In some countries, women farmers rarely receive production loans. Credit components of projects may establish a separate line of credit for women's groups or earmark loans for women's crops and activities, such as agro-processing. Adjusting extension messages to focus on activities that women control can facilitate their contact with male extensionists.

One final, important lesson: include men. Programmes designed to reach both men and women are more effective. Getting men's support is critical to the success of gender-responsive projects.



FAO's action for equity in investment in agriculture and rural development

FAO's Investment Centre helps developing countries to formulate policies and strategies that promote investment in agriculture and rural development, and to prepare investment programmes and projects for funding by international financing institutions and bilateral donors.

In Viet Nam, the Investment Centre helped formulate a \$50 million IFAD programme to increase participation of small-scale farmers in food and agricultural value chains in two provinces. A FAO study recommended investment in coconut processing – since 90% of the workforce in coconut processing was female, women would benefit from new employment opportunities.



In Ghana, a \$100 million programme, prepared by the Investment Centre and funded by IFAD and the African Development Bank, is helping 32 000 farming households in the country's northern regions to develop commodity chains to southern markets. The 8-year programme, which targets women, young people and vulnerable groups, will strengthen producer organizations, improve rural infrastructure and facilitate access to financial services.

In Gabon, FAO helped to formulate an IFAD-funded project aimed at improving the access of 28 000 smallholders to value chains (for banana, cassava and peanuts) with high market potential and strengthening service providers to rural communities. Gender was an important consideration in the project design: it targets 160 villages and 240 producer groups, and half of the beneficiaries are women farmers.



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