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Family farming is the predominant form of food production in Asia and the Pacific which is home to 70 percent of the world's family farmers. Family farmers produce 80 percent of the region's food,¹ working on 85 percent of the total arable land² and largely relying on the contribution of household members whose capacities, opportunities and constraints are greatly shaped by their gender. Therefore, family farming has an important gender dimension.

Women family farmers in Asia and the Pacific

Women play a major role in family farming, contributing up to 85 percent of the work in family farming.³ However, they receive barely 20 percent of the family's farming income. Moreover, only 2 percent of them own assets while suffering from unequal access to and control over key resources including land. In addition to their important contribution to family farming activities, women shoulder household and care responsibilities. But their role and work still remain often undervalued, unrecognized and not captured in official statistics.

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¹ FAO (2014), Towards stronger family farms. Voices in the IYFF, p7

² FAO (2015), Family Farming Knowledge Platform – Regional pages

³ FAO (2014), Towards stronger family farms. Voices in the IYFF, p8

Women farmers also face another increasing challenge due the ongoing demographic changes which affect the structure of the rural population. As a result of lack of job and livelihood options, young farmers and men are forced to migrate to cities and other countries, leaving behind a rising number of elderly people and women.

Support to family farmers at the center of poverty reduction



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Family farming workshop in Rome

During the FAO workshop “Support to family farming and small scale agriculture as a strategy to achieve rural poverty reduction: opportunities and priorities to strengthen FAO Regional Initiatives”, held in Rome, 9-10 June 2016, the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment was highlighted by many participants. Mainstreaming gender in family farming policies

and strategies was emphasized as key to poverty reduction efforts, along with strengthening collective action, institutional capacity, social protection measures and access to services and resources. The celebration of the International Year of Family Farming in 2014 not only raised significantly the profile of family farming across the world but also recognized that family farming has the power to make a fundamental contribution in enhancing rural livelihoods, providing economic opportunities in rural areas and therefore contributing to poverty reduction.

Family farming and the SDGs

The recognition of the central role of family farming is evidenced by its prominence in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which proposes an integrated and indivisible set of global priorities that address family farming in all of its dimensions. Specific reference is made in **SDG 2: Ending hunger, achieving food security and promoting sustainable agriculture** where **Target 2.3** commits countries to doubling the productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers. Additionally, references to family farmers and their connection with

rural poverty reduction can be found under most of the other



@ Mayling Flores Rojas
A Nepalese woman using a women-friendly technology for separating dry maize kernels

SDGs, including **Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**, which promotes women’s equal rights to economic resources, and access to ownership and control over land, other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources.

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The Family Farming Knowledge Platform (FFKP)

Launched in 2015, the FAO FFKP gathers a wide range of digitized quality information in family farming worldwide. It brings together information concerning family farming including national laws and regulations, public policies, best practices, relevant data and statistics, researches, articles and publications. The FAO FFKP is a participatory tool bringing together a large number of entities for sharing knowledge, solutions, and action-oriented initiatives around the world. It is intended for a broad range of users and contributors ranging from Government Officers to Farmers’ Organizations, from Academia to Civil Society Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

For more information, visit the FAO FFKP website at <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/en/> or contact: family-farming@fao.org

Source: FAO Family Farming Knowledge Platform

Gender involvement and good practices in groundnut cultivation in Sri Lanka



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Female project beneficiaries

"I am confident that this groundnut cultivation will help educate my children and earn a substantial income for my family" says Nelka Kumari Ariyasena. Nelka is one of the 11 women, out of a total number of 15 farmers, who have benefited from groundnut cultivation as part of the Other Field Crops (OFCs) cultivation promotion under the European Union – Support to District Development Programme (EU-SDDP) – implemented by FAO in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture (DoA) in Puttalam district, Sri Lanka. The overall objective of the programme is to increase income generation and improve sustainable livelihoods of beneficiary farmers focusing on gender involvement and shared roles.

"Through the income I earned this time from selling the groundnut seeds I was able to buy a bicycle" adds Nelka Kumari Ariyasena. The farmer's group made a net profit of 920,000 Rupees after three months of cultivation vis-à-vis expenditures amounting to 133,000 Rupees. "We were given guidance and the agriculture officers and FAO officers

constantly inspected our cultivations" explains 50-year old Deepa Priyadarshani, another female beneficiary. In addition, "the DoA through the intervention of FAO provided us good quality seeds which we cultivated in November last year" she says.

Besides having received good quality seeds, guidance, trainings and frequent field inspections, the farmers' group was registered by FAO as a member of the Seed Certification Service Center of the DoA allowing them to have a better price for the groundnut seeds, a reliable partner for sustainable commercial scale production, and maintaining high standards for the production.

Interest, collective and labor sharing system are success factors

The women farmers involved in groundnut production displayed a keen interest to adopt improved agricultural practices, obtain and follow advice from the Agricultural Instructors of the DoA and participate in trainings organized by FAO. Additionally, the preference among women to work as a group rather than individually has had a positive impact for training, extension services, knowledge sharing and capacity building. "I don't need to look far for help because the other farmers in the groundnut field assist me, especially during harvesting" explains Nelka Kumari Ariyasena.

"There is unity within the group and that is our main strength. If I fall ill and I am unable to work in the field, somebody from the group will tend

to my plot of groundnut production. We can depend on each other" says H.M Ariyaratne, a 65-year old male beneficiary. Labor sharing has clearly become the key feature in the efficient functioning of the group.

The burden on beneficiary farmers in groundnut cultivation has reduced due to the labor sharing system adopted by the farmers, especially among women. "My husband supports me by encouraging me to work in the groundnut cultivation and also by helping me in the farming



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Agriculture officers during a field inspection visit.

activities" says 38-year old Chandrika Kumari Ranasinghe. Moreover, labor sharing and collective participation based on the identification of which roles are best suited for each group member has resulted in equal responsibility among male and female beneficiaries. As a result, women find more time for household chores and time to engage in commercial scale production while the men have time to attend to their paddy cultivations.

Looking ahead, the main challenge for improving production comes from the lack of involvement of women in the marketing of groundnut, mainly due to their poor knowledge of marketing channels and pricing. FAO has already taken steps to conduct trainings on entrepreneurial farming to encourage product diversification (such as removing the shell and selling groundnut for consumption), product strategy and profit maximization in order to convert groundnut production into a viable business activity.

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FAO Sri Lanka scales up efforts to strengthen attention to gender in their work

FAO Sri Lanka has embarked in an exercise to take stock of its gender work and review some of the major ongoing projects. Under the leadership of the FAO Representative, Nina Brandstrup, and the country office Gender Focal Point, Nalin Munasinghe, a gender consultant is working towards the development of gender action plans for the projects and a stocktaking and capacity needs assessment report, which will be the basis for future programming and capacity development efforts.

As the Ministry of Irrigation and Agriculture (MIA) is currently working on the new agriculture sector policy, FAO is also discussing with MIA ways to promote better understanding of gender issues in the agricultural sector as a basis for evidence-based policy making and programme design and implementation.



@FAO Sri Lanka
MIA Gender Focal Point, L. U. N.
Sumanasekara, Rajkumar Nagaraja, Gender Consultant, and Clara M. Park, Regional Gender Officer, visit the food hut run by women at MIA

AROUND THE REGION

FAO presents on SDG5: Sex-disaggregated data for access to land

FAO, together with UNDP and UNEP, led a panel discussion on "Gender Issues, Data Gaps, and Measurement Requirements for Reviewing Environment and Agricultural-related SDGs" at a workshop on **Sex-disaggregated data for the SDG indicators in Asia and the Pacific: What and how?** The workshop was held at ESCAP, 25-27 May 2016, under the auspices of the Working Group on Gender Statistics, Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of

Women of the Regional Coordination Mechanism.

The FAO-UNDP-UNEP session focused on three areas in which environmental and gender concerns intersect: climate change; land ownership and agriculture; and disaster response and relief. Each of these areas comprises a different facet of that intersection, with different challenges around data disaggregation.

More generally the workshop aimed to advance the production and dissemination of gender-sensitive statistics in Asia and the Pacific in support of evidence-based planning and policy-making by governments and other stakeholders to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), with a focus on sex-disaggregation of data for the global monitoring framework and the list of indicators for the SDGs.

The 3-day workshop brought together experts in policy analysis and statistics from Asia and the Pacific.

To request a copy of the presentation, contact: Lois.Archimbaud@fao.org



Empowering women through agriculture and improved food and nutrition security in Afghanistan



@FAO Afghanistan
Drip irrigation demonstration for women in the Women Technology Transfer Center of Kabul

In Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world, women are the most vulnerable and continue to face a great number of difficulties and challenges. They are often excluded and/or inadequately supported in agriculture interventions due to traditional and cultural barriers despite their crucial role in producing food and feeding their families.

Through various projects, FAO assisted women in having access to agriculture assets, information, technologies and nutrition education. In turn, women's ability to increase productivity and contribute to improved diets of young children and family members was facilitated. In addition, interventions such as establishing backyard kitchen gardens with better variety of vegetables and raising small livestock have supported household food security.

FAO's project have also introduced food processing, packaging and marketing enabling targeting women to generate income in order to send their children to schools and cover the cost of health expenses.

With the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MAIL), women groups' production has reached the local markets following the provision of knowledge on business and marketing to women.

Considering the lack of agriculture training centers for women and limited women agriculture extension services available in the country, women technology transfer centers were established in each target region and in Kabul city. These centers, with agriculture extension stations, helped to organize regularly agriculture trainings and agriculture production demonstrations. In addition, the food processing units were set in these centers that allowed women groups to use their products to process and package in appropriate and hygienic manner.



@FAO Afghanistan

A number of women were trained in agriculture, and noticeably many households have started establishing backyard gardens with help and support from women groups. The trainings and access to appropriate technologies and the sharing of regular information empowered the targeted women to be productive contributor of agriculture sector

development. Indeed, the lack of trainings and education of the targeted women previous to the projects impeded them to engage in improving livelihoods activities.

Women technology transfer and training centers are a powerful tool to empower women and improve their living conditions. The lessons learned and experience generated from community and household interventions helped in developing a national women in agriculture strategy within the MAIL. The strategy was successfully finalized and funding from different partners were mobilized by the MAIL, which allowed to continue supporting women technology transfer and training centers. The national women in agriculture strategy was introduced to the First Lady of Afghanistan and high political support and commitment was received, resulting in an increase of the national budget for supporting women empowerment in agriculture.

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Coastal women contribute to strengthening community resilience in the Philippines

As in many parts of the Philippines, women from the coastal towns of Region IV-B (MIMAROPA) play a major role in the fishery value chain, including selling, drying and processing of fish and aquaculture. They also repair fishing nets and boats and bear the burden of having to find alternative livelihood opportunities when fishing yields decline. Women perform all these tasks while attending to domestic chores and their children's wellbeing.

alternative livelihood activities to reduce economic pressures leading to unsustainable fishing practices.

Six livelihood projects were identified by participating women associations based on available skillsets in their communities and access to markets. These include three projects on garments production, two on crab fattening and one on cashew nut processing. This, they say, will allow them to significantly contribute to their households' income while performing domestic functions and acting as primary caregivers of their families.

In selected municipalities in the region, FAO also provided assistance in the formulation of project designs on mariculture development and finfish culture in fish cages. Additionally, FAO supported livelihood activities through input assistance and capacity-building.

In communities engaged in garments production, FAO provided women's associations with sewing machines, fabric and other start-up materials. Some of them have since been contracted by local schools to produce uniforms for students. In some communities, FAO provided tools for cashew nut processing, which added significant value to the whole, unpeeled cashew nuts that they currently sell.

Complementing conservation efforts with alternative livelihood activities

According to FAO Representative in the Philippines José Luis Fernández, "Without simultaneously addressing

coastal resource management and the food and income requirements of communities, marine habitats will continue to suffer from illegal and unsustainable practices. Indeed, while marine conservation efforts are of paramount consideration, fisher families need to be able to put food on their tables, have the means to send their children to school and provide for other needs."

FAO worked with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and municipal local government units in developing and implementing long-term community based fisheries improvement plans (FIPs) to sustain economic and environmental benefits derived from municipal



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The Binudac Women's Association in together with local government representatives of Culion, Palawan show the Fisheries Improvement Plan (FIP) that was formulated with technical assistance from FAO. As part of the community's adoption of the FIP, women are now producing garments using the sewing machine and start-up materials they received through the project.

In the Calamian groups of islands, women are also taking on a unique and crucial responsibility in strengthening the resilience of their communities to threats and crises.

Through an FAO project supported by the Government of Italy, more than 2 000 women from 11 coastal towns actively engaged in community consultations and workshops where they expressed their commitment to venture into



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fisheries. The FIPs articulate practical strategies for rehabilitation, conservation and protection based on the results of consultations and assessments conducted in participating local communities. Through the FIPs, FAO sought to improve capacities of both women and men to restore, rehabilitate and protect fisheries resources and provide other means of support to vulnerable households. Because of available alternative livelihood opportunities, fisherfolk from the 11 beneficiary towns have unanimously

expressed support for the declaration of monthly closed periods for rabbitfish fishing to protect the spawning populations of the species. Rabbitfish was previously harvested by coastal families primarily for sustenance, but fishing pressure has significantly increased over the last decade with the growing demand for *danggit* (dried salted fish) and *lamayo* (marinated fish). These delicacies have been commanding market prices of up to USD 8.43 per kilogram. Owing to its early maturity and spawning age, the species has so far withstood adverse conditions but is now at risk of reaching critical point. However, with alternative income sources, fisher households can now afford to abide by closed-fishing seasons, participate in the implementation of plans to improve fishing practices and conserve marine protected areas.

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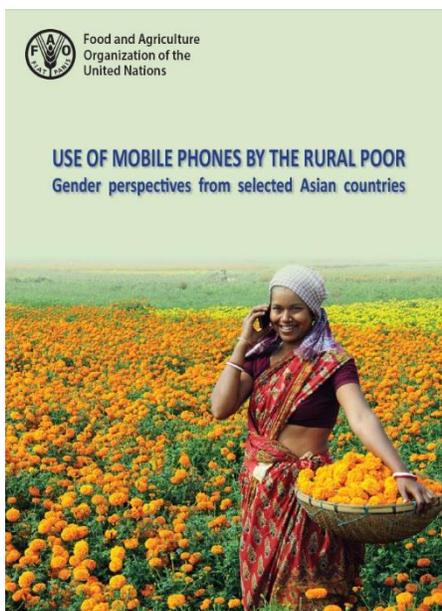
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NEW PUBLICATIONS

Use of Mobile Phones by the Rural Poor: Gender perspectives from selected Asian countries

A new publication sheds light on gender-differentiated use of mobile phones.



Mobile phones have by and large become a normal facet of modern life. With close to 7 billion mobile cellular subscriptions worldwide, mobile phones have become both an instrument and an object of research in relation to their use in rural development initiatives. Mobile phones have great potential to positively contribute in various ways to rural development, from reducing information asymmetry, to improving functional networks, to increasing access to services and finance. Yet a digital gender divide exists. When contrasted with the fact that women comprise 43% of the world's agricultural labor force, this digital gender divide can inhibit rural development. The answers to questions regarding differential access and use of information and communication technologies are mostly inconclusive. The two studies

in this report explore these issues further using empirical quantitative surveys as well as qualitative fieldwork from a cross-section of developing economies in South and South-East Asia.

The report can be downloaded [here](#).

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UPCOMING EVENTS

RAP GFP Webinar on SDGs

RAP is organizing a series of webinars targeted at GFPs in Country Offices. Other staff members are also welcome to join.

The first webinar will focus on **Sex-Disaggregated Data for the Sustainable Development Goals: FAO Experience and Perspective**.



Following a short overview of the SDGs, the session will zoom into the indicators that FAO is a custodian agency for, their gender dimension and opportunities and challenges for monitoring.

The dates will be announced shortly. To express your interest in participating as well as suggest additional potential topics of interest, please write to:

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Bangladesh promotes gender equality in forestry, environment and climate change at the policy and institutional levels

Gender at the heart of Bangladesh's first Country Investment Plan



Gender equality is a priority of the USAID-supported project "Strengthening the Climate Change (EFCC) Capacities of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and its Agencies" project implemented by FAO Bangladesh. The project gender strategy focuses on ensuring gender mainstreaming in the Country Investment Plan (CIP) for the environment, forestry and climate change sectors; building capacities in the MoEF and its agencies in gender sensitive policy and programme development; and improving gender balance within these government agencies.

The development of Bangladesh's first CIP was an opportunity to review policies with a 'gender lens'. To this end, in March this year, a **consultative workshop to develop a gender-sensitive CIP** took place with the involvement of project's stakeholders. As a result, an approach to mainstreaming gender within the CIP draft was endorsed by the participants.

The draft CIP proposes gender as part of the design process of all programmes and sub-programmes. It has also earmarked a **dedicated sub-programme for investments aiming to narrow gender gaps**, and identified a number of programmes where gender equality is a top priority, such as biodiversity and development of forest producer organizations.

Taking MoEF's Gender Action Plan for the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan as a key reference document, participants in the workshop also recommended additional areas where gender should be addressed as well as an explicit focus on institutional support to strengthen capacities in gender sensitive policy and programming in these areas.

A **training workshop on mainstreaming gender in investment planning** complemented the consultation. The workshop helped around 40 participants across government agencies to become more familiar with gender and women's empowerment in the environment, forestry and climate change areas within the context of investment planning.

Support from the FAO representation's gender focal point and FAO's focal point and government gender focal point in the Economic Relations Department of the Planning Commission, Ms. Sultana Afroz, were key to making these milestones possible.

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