



Gender Newsletter Asia Pacific

July 2019 - Issue #2

IN THIS ISSUE

Gender-responsive social protection: identifying policy actions critical to propel gender equality and transform women's lives

This year's 63rd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 to 22 March 2019, focusing on the priority theme, "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls". Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world attended the session.

CSW63's session responded to the precarious situations that women and girls continue to face globally. "Good social protection policy and well-planned infrastructure can be equalizers for women. However, the fact that 740 million women are working with little or no social protection nor the access to public services tells us that there is still an enormous gap in the way the women are supported.

This needs investment and policy change that deliberately supplies what is currently

missing for women," said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General, and UN Women Executive Director.

Social protection policies have the potential to play a critical role in transforming women's and girl's lives. Reducing inequality is particularly crucial for gender-based discrimination, which intersects with other forms of discrimination related to race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, migration, and location (including rural and remote areas). Women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination are further marginalized and disadvantaged.

Asia and the Pacific have continued to be the main engine of the global economy, accounting for more than 60 percent of worldwide growth and lifting more than 80 percent of its extreme poor out of poverty during 1990-2015.

Nevertheless, the region is also undergoing rapid economic transition, urbanization, and demographic shifts, while persistent and

Gender-responsive social protection

identifying policy actions critical to propel gender equality and transform women's lives
Page 1

Gender and livestock training

recognizing rural women's roles in agriculture in Mongolia
Page 3

From distress to empowerment

the inspiring journey of Mushitari
Page 4

Gender Mainstreaming in the organization

Page 5

Empowering women in rural Nepal

the story of Sagira
Page 6

Philippines

early action helps women in farming communities vulnerable to drought
Page 7

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), established in 1946, is the UN's largest gathering on gender equality and women's rights. It is also the single largest forum for the UN Member States, civil society organizations, and other international actors to build consensus, renew commitment, and agree on better policy solutions. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

emerging development challenges have the potential to exacerbate social inequalities and foster political instability. These challenges include increasing income inequalities, aging populations, vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change and disasters, and technological disruptions (automation and digitalization), which threaten to reverse hard-won development gains in the region.

Still, approximately 61 percent of the population in the Asia-Pacific region has no access to social protection at all. While noting that some countries are making progress in formalizing domestic workers, the majority of women in the area don't have access to paid maternity benefits, as per the minimal agreed requirements of international labor standards. Most countries in the region spend, on average, less than one-third of the global average on social protection, leaving the majority of the population without social security and contributing to rising inequalities in the region. These trends and issues call for the urgent and critical need to address inequality and increase social investment in this region.

Despite the progress of gender equality in some areas, such as reducing maternal mortality and achieving gender parity in primary school enrollment rates, the part still has a disproportionate share of women in the informal economy (more than 8 out of 10 working women are in vulnerable employment). Particularly in agriculture and rural sectors, they often have little or no entitlement to social protection and access to public services.

Furthermore, women and girls in this region bear an unequal share of unpaid care and domestic work, on average, four times more than men. This adversely affects their ability to move into higher quality jobs and opportunities as well as their likelihood to contribute to social security compared to other women and men.

Women and girls are affected by unacceptably high levels of gender-based violence and harmful practices, poor access to

to reproductive health services, and low levels of representation and participation in multiple areas of decision making. Women are also disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and disasters due to underlying gender inequality and socio-economic disadvantage, including unequal access to resources, opportunities, information, and services.

An essential dimension of the discussion focuses on how benefits and services can reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care and domestic work, calling for stronger laws, investments in gender-responsive infrastructure. These features include transport and urban planning, quality expansion of affordable public services, the care service extension, improvement in employment opportunities, working conditions, organizing and collective bargaining rights, and improving data and evidence.

The forum provided concrete recommendations on the way forward, to bring sustainable change in women's safety, health, paid work, education, leisure, and rest. This includes social protection benefits such as old-age pensions, child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support; quality public services such as health, education, and public safety; and sustainable infrastructure, including access to clean energy, safe drinking water, reliable designing of transport systems and urban spaces.

Ahead of CSW63, regional consultations with Ministers, gender equality experts, and civil society organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Asia-Pacific, Africa, and the Arab States were organized, to build consensus and action priorities towards the Commission's outcome and agreements.

The participants of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 63rd session of the CSW jointly examined the linkages of social protection systems, public services, and infrastructures to identify and agree on the following recommendations, with an emphasis on means of implementation, toward advancing the empowerment of all women and girls:

- Strengthening the policy and legislative frameworks to enhance interlinkages between systems of social protection public services, and sustainable infrastructure
- Supporting gender-responsive implementation of social protection

- Promoting quality gender-responsive public services
- Mainstreaming gender in foundation
- Developing measures to accelerate the deployment of comprehensive systems of social protection, public facilities, and sustainable infrastructure.

Addressing lifecycle risks and transitions, recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work, increasing access to services and support, and promoting women's and girls' voices and its agencies must be included in social protection policies and systems to achieve Gender Equality. If not, they risk exacerbating gender inequalities and discrimination. The extent to which social protection is gender-responsive however is as much a political decision as a technical one and is influenced by many factors including political regime type, the role of civil society, social structures and norms.

Heightened global attention on gender equality in recent years through legal reform, global movements on the gender pay gap and corporate walkouts are critical, as only 11 years remain to achieve the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals, including Gender Equality Goal 5. If the current slow pace of change continues, it will take a staggering 108 years to close the gender gap.

Gender and livestock training: recognizing rural women's roles in agriculture in Mongolia

In 2016 the agricultural sector, overwhelmingly engaged in pastoral livestock production, accounted for 12 percent of GDP and 30 percent of total employment of Mongolia. Rural women in Mongolia are heavily engaged in the agriculture sector. They contribute to livestock management as well as farming activities. Processing raw materials of livestock origin, mainly by women constitutes Mongolia's main industry and is one of the country's major sources of export earnings. Due to the increase of migration from rural area to urban cities for employment, rural households face problems caused of shortage of worker, such as lack of manpower to take care of livestock or lack of income from herding. These problems are faced by female-headed households severer.

FAO Mongolia successfully organized the training on

“Gender Analysis in Livestock Management and Interventions” in cooperation with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and Light Industry (MoFALI). The training took place from 20 to 22 May 2019 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The training was developed by the the Animal Production and Health Division (AGA), and the Social Policy and Rural Institutions Division, and carried out by technical officer from FAO headquarter and the regional FAO office (RAP).

The goal of the training was to improve participants' skills to apply principles of gender analysis in the livestock sector with emphasis on policy development, programme implementation and sharing understanding on gender related issues. More than 36 participants from all over the country including human resource managers, livestock officials, FAO officials and agricultural officers from the department of food and agriculture of 21 provinces. All participants received a Certification at the end of the 3 days training.

During the training, MoFALI, National Gender Committee and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) gave presentations on gender issues in Mongolia. MoFALI has highlighted the significance of the training for gender policy development in the agricultural sector. Mr. Vinod Ahuja, FAOR in Mongolia emphasized “Gender equality is considered a central component to the FAO's mandate to achieve food security for all by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and improving the lives of rural populations. FAO can achieve its goals only if it simultaneously works toward gender equality and supports women's diverse role in agriculture and rural development.”

International development discussions have increasingly recognized women's crucial role in agriculture, in Mongolia as well as globally, acknowledging the major contribution that rural women provide in achieving household food security and overall well-being. Moreover, the specific role of women in livestock farming is gaining recognition worldwide and its being supported by consistent research showing that empower women livestock keepers must be seen as a key step of any effort to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty. Gender equality is considered a central component to the FAO's mandate to achieve food security for all by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and improving the lives of rural populations. FAO can achieve its goals only if it simultaneously works toward gender equality and supports women's diverse role in agriculture and rural development.

From distress to empowerment: the inspiring journey of Mushtari

In Afghanistan, where women are not actively involved in social and economic affairs, the female labor force participation rate is only 26.8 percent, while that of men is 80.6 percent.

In spite of these odds, Mushtari Hesari has become a role model for other women who want to do something in their lives and contribute to the food security and sustainable livelihoods of their family.

Mushtari Hesari is a resident of Parwan province and a mother of four children. Ever since her husband fell from the building while working on a construction and cannot work due to backbone problems, she is the only breadwinner in the family.



She first began her community engagement with literacy training to women in her village. In 2014, she continued to work as a field trainer in three districts of Parwan province conducting many pieces of training in security-risky areas.

Not only that, she encouraged women to be a member in dairy cooperatives formed under the Integrated Dairy Schemes (IDS), training more than 600 women on hygienic milking, milk collection, production and market linkage, cattle management, and good agriculture practices. The Integrated Dairy Scheme (IDS) is launched by FAO Afghanistan, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) in five provinces of the country.

This project has been a great source of income for women contributing tremendously to the economic growth of the family. In Afghanistan, over 90% of rural communities are involved in agriculture and livestock to make a living, and at least 50% of these farmers are women.



This project aims to have farmers organized into a village, district, and provincial-level dairy cooperatives unions to provide them with training such as animal husbandry lessons, semen for creating hybrid cattle, and vaccinations for better income and output. They are also trained in hygienic milk production and marketing, helping them sell Afghan dairy products to a possibly skeptical public.

Farmers deliver milk to the milk collection centers weekly, also providing them with a stable source of income. Each village cooperative has a milk collection center which is linked to the district-level one. Right after the milk is brought in to the district center, it is cooled down in refrigerated rooms and then gets transported to provincial milk processing plants in refrigerated trucks. The plants, built with FAO support, have high-quality computerized equipment, refrigerated rooms, laboratories, and packaging equipment, and are run by trained staff who check milk quality to process it into pasteurized milk, yogurt, buttermilk, butter, Chaka (quark) and cheese. These facilities allow Afghan dairy products to be properly transported, treated, stored, and now hold a significant share of the new national dairy market.





Furthermore, Mushtari contributed to the formation of women Self Help Groups (SHGs) under the IDS project training over 1000 women with hygienic food processing, labeling, packaging, and market linkage. IDS Self Help Group (SHG) is a group of village-based financial intermediaries composed of 20-25 local women, creating avenues for the empowerment and promotion of women wellbeing by bringing them together. For example, vulnerable women would collect money in the group saving box based on their roles and regulations. Whenever they want to start their microenterprise, they would get easy access to loans with a small rate of interest. The aim of IDS in creating SHG groups is to build the financial capacity, and income generated activity in the community level.

Now that SHG member women have regular income from merchandizing vegetables and milk, they can fully support their families and send their children to school for a better future. Also, she has gained life skills that will help generate other income sources, Mushtari adds.

FOR INFORMATION

Ms. Freshta Ghani (FAO AF)

Knowledge and Communication Associate

Contact: Freshta.Ghani@fao.org

Gender Mainstreaming in the organization

FAO member countries are scaling up their commitment to gender equality and showing increased interests in interventions for rural women's empowerment. To respond to this demand, the Organization is revising its Gender Equality Policy and strengthening several mechanisms to support the integration of gender

into FAO's work. The gender team in HQ has already put in place several measures to this end.

To strengthen the GFP network, the counter-parting function, which established regional focal points in the HQ gender team, has been strengthened with terms of reference and the appointment of alternate focal points. The Gender Helpdesk functions have also been revised and expanded. Additionally, an updated gender capacity development plan (2019-2020) is being rolled out to provide more learning opportunities to the Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and other colleagues. Finally, in collaboration with the regional office, the gender team in HQ is supporting selected country offices to carry out their gender stock-taking exercise, a mandatory requirement under the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and a key instrument to support gender mainstreaming in planning and programming at the country level.

Increasing the accountability of senior managers, including FAOR, in gender work is an important way to ensure that the Organization delivers on its gender commitments. To kick-start, Dan Gustafson, Deputy Director-General Programmes, shared a message early this year with Assistant Director Generals, FAO Representatives, and GFPs to appreciate efforts made in 2018 and motivate them to continue and strengthen work on gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender objectives will soon be included in the PEMS of senior managers.

Finally the need to improve institutional oversight was highlighted in the results of the independent evaluation of FAO's work on gender 2012-2017, recently presented to the Programme Committee. While concrete follow up steps are being discussed, including to strengthen linkages between HQ, the regional offices and the field, measures to improve gender reporting in the Country Annual Reports and to address the results of country audits are already being established.

For further information, please contact, Nozomi.Ide@fao.org (Gender focal point for RAP) or Elizabeth.Koechlein@fao.org (Alternate RAP focal point)

Empowering women in rural Nepal: the story of Sagira



Rautahat– Ms Sagira Khatun belongs to a minority Muslim community in the Rautahat district, and a member of the Brahmsthan Rural Women Farmers Group of Yamuna Mai Rural Municipality. She is 45 years old, and she lives in a small mud hut with her husband and nine children. Her elder daughter, whose husband is currently in Malaysia as a migrant labour worker, also lives in the same house with her four children. Sagira’s family owns two buffalos and three goats, and a small patch of land covering an area of 0.16 hectares.

The women within this Muslim community often experience various forms of discrimination, and the negative impacts of social norms and practices such as domestic violence, son’s preference and restricted mobility.

However, Sagira was able to change her situation considerably with the help of the UN Joint Project on Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE), undertaken by FAO, UNWOMEN, WFP, and IFAD. In close collaboration with local relevant government institutions, the project has been supporting rural women groups with quality inputs, in the field training, joint production, and marketing of the vegetable produced in Rautahat district

Sagira has been engaged the Brahmsthan Rural Women Farmers Group since the initial stage of the JP RWEE in 2016. JP RWEE provided her with technical know-how through on site training, for example on nursery establishment and transplanting, harvesting and marketing and commercial vegetable farming.

Thanks to her participation, she was able to pass on her skills and knowledge to her family members, engaging her whole family in the cultivation of vegetables.

The family now grows cauliflowers, cabbage, chili, tomato, cucumber, eggplant, sponge gourd, bitter gourd, ladies finger, and bottle gourd on 0.43-hectares of leased land.

JP RWEE also provided leadership training to rural women. This allowed Sagira to enhance her leadership skills and to increase her confidence to voice her concerns during group meetings, empowering her to decide for herself.

Since 2006, there has been notable change in terms of livelihoods and income for Sagira and her family. The income generated from selling her produce increased 10 fold going from NPR 10,000 (USD 87.67) in 2016 to NPR 100,000 (USD 876.76) currently. Besides, an extra income of NPR 40,000.00 (USD 350.70) is generated from cereal production like rice and wheat, thanks to Sagira’s newly acquired knowledge and skills. Not only that, her husband, who used to work in India as a seasonal worker, is now working stably on their farm.

In the end, securing a reliable source of income of NPR 400,000.00 per annum (USD 3,507.07) also allowed her to engage more in the family decision making processes, which is uncommon in this community. The other women in her group also joined the marketing system facilitated by the project, after having realized that the empowering effects of generating an income of their own and contributing to family livelihoods.

Sagira expresses gratefulness to women’s economic empowerment through the interventions of the JP RWEE in Nepal.



FOR INFORMATION

Ms. Vidhu Prakash Kayastha (FAO NP)

Media and Communication Officer

Contact: Vidhu.Kayastha@fao.org

Philippines: Early action helps women in farming communities vulnerable to drought

As early as January 2019, farming communities in the municipalities of Pigkawayan in North Cotabato and Datu Saudi Ampatuan in Maguindanao, the southern island of Mindanao, the Philippines have started early action planning to prepare for El Niño.

El Niño is a period of prolonged drought, which affects the country from March and will likely last until August 2019.

El Niño conditions started developing in the last quarter of 2018. By February 2019, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) upgraded status from "El Niño Watch" to "El Niño," indicating that a weak El Niño is present.



The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) latest report as of May 2019 indicates that a total of 393,455 persons have already been affected, mostly in Mindanao. Reports of damage to agriculture amount to more than Php7.96 billion (USD 153.3 million), affecting 247,610 farmers. A total of 43 local government units have also declared under State of Calamity due to the dry spell.

When affected by El Niño, the Philippines' climate alternates between intense droughts and typhoons. As the climate changes, the Southern Oscillation increases in frequency and severity, and in turn increases the intensity of natural disasters.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with support from the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium, has been implementing an Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) project to protect the livelihood of rice farmers in selected vulnerable areas of



Mindanao against possible extreme dry conditions brought by El Niño. Through this project

FAO conducted planning workshops and activities with farmers, including women, in Pigkawayan and Datu Saudi Ampatuan, which are among the areas most vulnerable to the impacts of El Niño.

Disasters and climate change impacts and disrupt economic activities and livelihoods, ultimately threatening food security. Increasing the resilience of agricultural communities to these threats and crises is one of the priority areas of work for FAO in the Philippines. Such changes are testing the resilience of traditional methods of the country and being able to protect the population, especially their livelihoods, from these shocks is becoming increasingly challenging.

The EWEA project aims to safeguard the livelihood of rice farmers by providing irrigation systems, climate-resilient farm inputs and promoting diversification of livelihoods to include livestock farming and high-value commercial crops to prevent asset depletion and increase resilience.

The project has so far provided 1500 farmers, including women, with drought-resistant rice and corn seed varieties, garden tools, fertilizer, and plastic drums for water storage. Women cooperatives have also been trained on enhanced farming systems for vegetable production and primary livestock (goat and mallard ducks) production, which also covered preparedness planning to drought, as well as management and handling as an additional source of food and livelihood.

According to Badria Alon, President of Datu Saudi Ampatuan Women's Cooperative, the EWEA project of FAO has helped them a lot in terms of gaining knowledge and skills from different capacity building activities related to agriculture such as mallard duck and vegetable garden production. The women members now sell the eggs of the mallard ducks and the vegetables, and income from these

helped them support their children's school-related costs. The vegetables they have produced are also being used for the feeding program of four (4) elementary schools in Datu Saudi Ampatuan.

The EWEA project builds on the piloting of a drought EWEA system in the Philippines established by FAO in

February 2018 using the triangulation of various early warning indicators. FAO utilizes the EWEA system to generate and disseminate timely information on El Niño as part of its disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation initiatives. This helps ensure that enough lead time is provided to implement early actions on the ground to protect vulnerable farmers against the extreme weather conditions brought by El Niño.

For more information on El Niño, visit PAGASA's website - <http://bagong.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/climate/el-nino-la-nina/advisories>



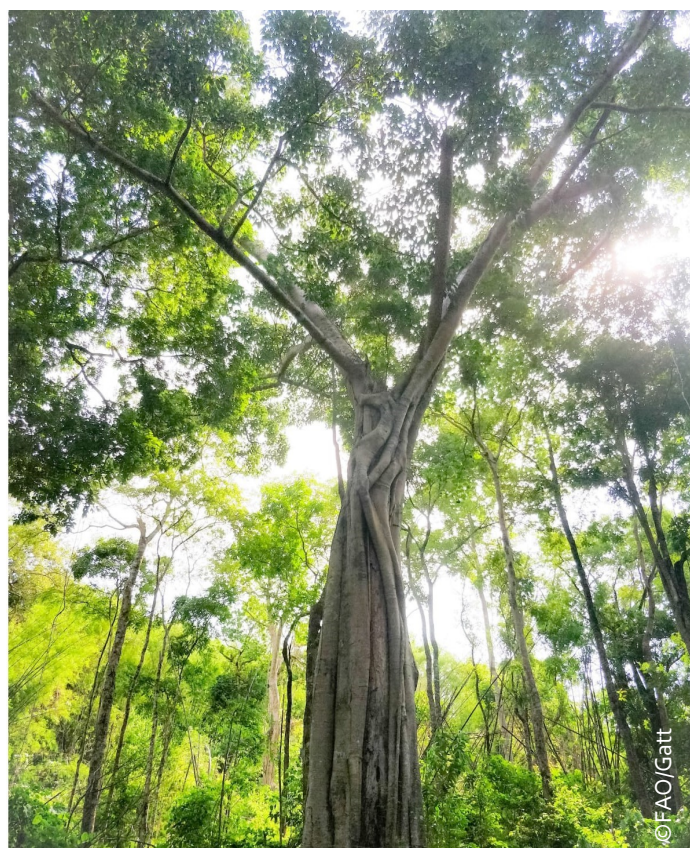
FAO Philippines helps farmers, including women, in communities affected by El Niño by providing them with agricultural inputs and vegetable and livestock production trainings as part of early action support to protect their livelihood and ensure food security and nutrition of their families.

FOR INFORMATION

Ms. Jaclyn Grey (FAO PH)

National Communications Specialist

Contact: Jaclyn.Grey@fao.org



GENDER NEWS

Regional office for Asia and the Pacific

39 Phra Arthit Road, Bangkok, Thailand

www.fao.org/asiapacific

For information:

[Clara Mi Young Park](#)

[Bettina Gatt](#)



Some rights reserved. This work is available under a [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/)