

Annex 17 – FAO’s work in Region Latin America and the Caribbean and gender issues

1. Introduction

1. The FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) is located in Santiago, Chile and covers 33 countries. There are also three Sub-Regional offices, one in Santiago for the Mercosur countries (SLS), one in Panama for Central America (SLM) and one in Barbados for the Caribbean.

2. In the Latin America and Caribbean region, the Evaluation visited four countries: Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Panama. In those countries, the mission included interviews and meetings with around 150 people including FAOR staff, project consultants and technical staff, officials from government and from UN agencies, local authorities and project beneficiaries.

3. In total, the mission assessed 41 projects, including national and regional initiatives. Further, the mission also assessed 23 Global Public Goods produced for the region, the reports of FAO Regional Conferences from 2002 to 2010, regional reports from the Latin American and the Caribbean Forest Commission (COFLAC), the Latin American and the Caribbean Livestock Development Commission (CODEGALAC) and the Action Plan of the Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean Without Hunger (ALCSH).

4. A large part of the information on FAO’s gender related work in the region beyond the countries visited was gathered from the final report of the former ESW regional expert, who had retired in late 2009 and had not been replaced.

2. Resources

5. During the Evaluability Assessment, 125 projects in the region were identified as GAD for a total budget slightly above USD 181 million. These initiatives represented 19% of the total budget of FAO GAD projects in the period, and 21% in terms of project numbers. Among these were 13 out of 44 UN Joint Programmes identified as GAD with FAO as participant. The great majority (107) were technical cooperation projects across most FAO technical areas, whereas virtually all emergency initiatives aimed at rehabilitation after natural disasters.

6. RLC was LTU for 12 projects, including TCPs, UNJPs and GCPs, for a total budget of USD 22 million, which represented 13% of RLC-led projects in the same period.

7. In PWB 2010/11, RLC was the only Decentralized Office that did not tag any of its Products and Services as gender sensitive. Only the Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean tagged 4 (7%) of its Products and Services as Gender Sensitive.

3. Relevance of FAO’s work in gender to national policies and to the regional mandate of the Organization

8. Since 2005-06, hunger in Latin America had been on the increase as a result of rising food prices. In 2007 there were approximately 6 million additional undernourished people, a sharp reversal after more than a decade of steady progress toward food and nutrition security goals. Eradicating hunger had been and still was the political banner of several governments

in the region, and their involvement in the 'Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger' (ALCSH¹) confirmed their commitment to this goal. One of the main goals of the Initiative was to include the Right to Food as a basic human right in the Constitutions of all countries in the region.

9. At the same time, as clearly discussed by FAO State of Food Insecurity in the World 2008, gender inequality affected access to sufficient food and impacted negatively on nutritional status. The poorest, landless and female-headed households were hit the hardest by food and nutrition insecurity. However, FAO's products in the framework of the ALSCH itself did not seem to have integrated a gender perspective: a rapid analysis of its main documents and bulletins showed that gender was never mentioned and women only to a limited extent.

10. The extent to which gender equality was given priority at national level varied greatly across countries. In some countries more than others, governments were strongly committed to gender equality and had launched programmes that included specific provisions for improving women's access to resources, assets and services, including land titles. In those cases, the national policy became the major driver for FAO to mainstream gender and social inclusion concerns in its work. The best example the Evaluation came across in this respect was Nicaragua: gender equality for rural women was a major governmental concern and the FAO Representation, taking advantage of the strong and well established Special Programme for Food Security, was making good progress in integrating a gender perspective throughout all its projects.

11. However, despite the level of political commitment, most ministries of agriculture did not have gender units capable of planning, designing and implementing gender sensitive agricultural policies, programmes and projects. Major weaknesses remained, including the lack of sex-disaggregated data and limited capacities and support by FAO in those areas.

12. Most countries had legislation favouring equal opportunities including gender equality, as well as governmental or para-governmental institutions mandated to promote gender equality. Those tended to be close partners of UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women, but relations with FAO were very limited if any at all. For example, all Central American countries participated in the UNIFEM regional initiative 'Economic Agenda for Women', which ended in 2010, through those institutions. This had led, in some cases, to dialogue with the civil society and to outlines for strategic actions in order to achieve economic autonomy for women facing the new phase of free trade agreements. FAO was not a partner, despite its global responsibility as an advisor on trade of agricultural products.

13. At the sub-regional level in Central America, the Agricultural Policy 2008-2013 of the Central American Council for Agriculture and Livestock (CAC) made explicit mention of attention to gender and rural women, among others: "*The promotion of gender, ethnic and age inclusion, and of social responsibility in business, will be key elements in the design of implementation instruments for the Policy.*" Also, in the Southern Cone, the 2010 Specialized Meeting on Family Farming of the MERCOSUR², which was strongly supported by IFAD and to which FAO provided technical advice, gave ample room to gender issues in its agenda.

14. In this context, RLC identified seven regional priorities and nine technical focus areas³, among which only the Rural Development technical area appeared to pay attention to Rural Women. That was supported through several relevant publications and technical

¹ Iniciativa para America Latina y el Caribe sin Hambre was a political initiative of the former President of Brazil; its implementation was supported by RLC and operated also with voluntary resources from various partners.

² Reunión Especializada sobre Agricultura Familiar en el MERCOSUR (REAF)

³ See www.rlc.fao.org, April 2011

documents produced also by projects in the region, that were available on the Web site. Beyond that technical area, the theme GAD/WID did not seem to be integrated as a perspective in any other area of work in the region.

15. Equally, the project aiming at developing a livestock development policy project in Central America adopted the neutral term 'producers' and did not include any reference to gender issues. FAO stated that the project's main aim was to call the attention of national governments to small farmers and family farming and that gender would have been 'too much', thus missing the opportunity to use the CAC policy as leverage for a more inclusive and equal approach.

16. FAO regional conferences from 2002 to 2010 gave attention to GAD/WID issues only as a side topic, with no integration of the theme in the regional priorities and strategies. The 27th Regional Conference in 2002 stated the significance of women's role on agro-forestry community management, and called attention to the role of rural women in the context of social and economic change; also the 2006 Conference report included a commitment to develop GAD food security programmes. The following conferences, however either did not ask for a report on the follow-up actions (2004) or the discussion on gender was reduced to less than a paragraph (2008). Neither were gender issues or women's participation mentioned in recent meetings of the Latin America and the Caribbean Livestock Development Commission (CODEGALAC) or of the Latin America and the Caribbean Forest Commission (COFLAC).

4. Effectiveness, impact and sustainability of projects

17. As mentioned above, the Evaluation assessed directly 41 projects: 20 had been identified as GAD and 21 were included in the analysis for comparison purposes. The analysis showed the following:

- 15 projects had integrated a GAD perspective, including six that had not been previously identified as GAD;
- 11 projects were considered non-GAD, eight of which that had been tagged as GAD during the evaluability assessment, including four in the animal health sector;
- 14 out of 21 non-GAD projects had integrated a GAD or WID perspective;
- 10 projects were re-classified as WID and included emergency initiatives, urban and peri-urban agriculture and two UNJPs in Panama;
- Four among the non-GAD projects and one GAD were considered missed opportunities, as gender should have been integrated in their design and implementation to enhance projects' effectiveness and sustainability.

Box 1. Revised qualifiers for projects assessed directly in Latin America

Evaluation qualifiers	GAD	WID	MO	Non GAD	Total
FAO qualifiers					
<i>Identified as GAD/WID</i>	9	2	1	8	20
<i>Not identified as GAD/WID</i>	6	8	4	3	21
Total	15	10	5	11	41
<i>Percentage within total</i>	37%	24%	12%	27%	

Source: Evaluation team

18. The Evaluation's findings were that some projects appropriately conceived food and nutrition security as an entry point to promote women's empowerment and their rights to land

ownership and other production resources. Examples of this were UNJP projects in Bolivia, GCPs in Nicaragua and one TCP in Dominican Republic. Other GAD projects included support to the agricultural census in Nicaragua, nutrition education in Dominican Republic and improvement of camelids breeding in the Andean. In those cases, women's practical and strategic needs were taken into account in project strategy and pursued. Where necessary, negotiations were facilitated by the projects at household and municipality level, to ensure that women would have access to the same resources as men.

19. Among the GAD projects was also the SPFS in Nicaragua, which has been implemented since 1999 in parallel with other SPFS projects in Honduras and Guatemala. Since 2006, El Salvador had a similar SPFS project, all within the coordination of a regional component. All these projects had included gender experts among their staff, although somewhat erratically until 2005 and more consistently since then. In Nicaragua, the project had contributed substantively to the drafting of the National Food Security and Nutrition Law, and fully mainstreamed into it the gender dimension of FSN.

20. At field level, the Evaluation found good evidence that women participants had improved their technical capacities on a wide range of productive activities; the project had developed the personal skills and capacities of a number of women, and had strengthened both self-respect and that of others for those who had become community promoters. Overall, family incomes and nutritional status seemed to have increased in a good number of cases, and those were ambitions shared by most women.

21. On the other hand, because of the focus on family welfare which fully respected traditional cultural values, many activities seemed to have also created much heavier workloads for women. For example, the task of becoming a promoter and community leader, which gave women a lot of visibility and opportunities to improve their personal skills, was a highly time-consuming task. It was not a paid position and only benefited women promoters through increased respect by people. Some women did not mind working more, as this had brought more production and income; however, there might be hidden costs attached, with an impact on their health and nutritional status. Thus, overall sustainability of the project might eventually be weakened.

22. Projects classified as WID had widespread women's participation as they offered income-generation opportunities and helped participants to meet their family responsibilities. In these cases, household level food security tended to improve, although sometimes at the cost of increased workload for women. Those projects rarely included support for women's organization or enhancing women's participation in decision making, and almost no attention was paid to gender-based violence. Even though the latter was beyond the mandate of FAO, those issues should be taken into account in the analysis of the social context of intervention. The nature of the emergency and rehabilitation projects, fast response and short duration, did not really offer many opportunities for developing capacities, let alone more complex empowerment processes.

23. In several cases, the Evaluation noted the absence of an analysis of the socio-cultural and resource-base context, as well as profiles of intended beneficiaries, in project designs and implementation. Unavoidably, problems such as limited or no access to water resources, poor educational levels, low organizational skills and lack of infrastructure and services to facilitate processing and marketing of products, emerged during project implementation and impacted negatively on results.

24. Decisions made by FAO Representatives or project directors were of great importance in ensuring that FAO projects integrated a gender perspective. This in turn depended on national policies, such as in the case of Nicaragua, and on the capacity and competence of individuals – FAO staff, project managers and directors - to integrate gender

issues in project implementation. Two project directors, one for a sub-regional project in Central America and one in Nicaragua, decided to modify radically the implementation strategy foreseen in the ProDoc to integrate a gender equality focus in the interventions. In the Dominican Republic, the same emergency project in two different administrative regions with two different coordinators achieved substantially different levels of women's participation and empowerment. In Bolivia, the mandatory target of 50% of women participants in all projects helped in developing an innovative partnership with a national women's association to achieve the goal. In Nicaragua, the decision by the FAO Representative to make the pursuit of gender equality one of the priorities of the Organization in the country was raising significantly the visibility of the Organization and improving the effectiveness of the projects.

25. The other side of the coin was that where FAO Representatives and project directors were either unaware or unable to take steps or seek professional advice to integrate a gender perspective in their projects, women would likely be excluded from benefits. However, in the absence of any accountability mechanism on gender issues within FAO, in particular at regional and country level, this had had no consequences so far on staff.

26. Another recurrent finding across all countries visited was that collaboration and partnerships with women's institutions, NGOs and UN agencies competent in gender and social rights, strongly enhanced the effectiveness and sustainability of FAO's projects. For example, some projects were operated directly by women's farmer organizations with agricultural know-how which had efficiently handled women's needs. They were also responsible for the cases of successful negotiation with men to facilitate women's access to and control of resources.

27. Collaboration with UN agencies took place through the Spanish funded Millennium Development Goal/Women's Equality Window that offered a good opportunity for FAO to contribute to broader initiatives wherein other UN agencies brought their knowledge and competence in the gender equality and human rights arenas. Of the six UNJP assessed directly by the Evaluation, four met the GAD profile. Two in Panama were considered WID, even though the respective ProDocs paid due attention to gender issues.

28. The UNJP examples ranged from Bolivia, where in one project FAO had asked and obtained the lead role for both the agricultural development and gender equality components, to the Dominican Republic where FAO was contributing specific technical knowledge on organic banana cultivation and exports, while UNFPA and UNAIDS supported capacity in such areas as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and women's rights. All these projects suffered from poor agreements among partners on objectives and strategies, diverging interests and perspectives of the UN members themselves and difficulties in coordination and harmonization of procedures and operations. An aggravating factor for FAO was that the project budgets did not contain provisions for FAO staff to provide backstopping from RLC or HQ, meaning that ESW could at best provide some advice at a distance. The first Bolivian UNJP suffered heavily from this limitation, as the FAOR did not have the skills and competence for ensuring a smooth implementation of the women's civil rights component. That threatened the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the initiative, although a few strategic decisions by all partners made in late 2010 seemed to be key steps for improving chances of success.

29. Nevertheless, the Evaluation considered that these UNJP projects paved the way to a different manner for the UN to work together and for each agency to contribute its specific comparative advantage. Through them, FAO could also develop better understanding of gender equality issues and could bring its broad experience and technical knowledge in agricultural and rural development to agencies that tended to have more experience with urban populations and rights-based approaches.

5. Portfolio and assessment of GPGs

30. The Evaluation identified 64 GAD/WID Global Public Goods (GPGs), including 22 related to meetings, workshops and training courses, produced or carried out by FAO with a focus on the region since 2002. Twenty GPGs were assessed in detail, and the average scoring on a six-point scale is reported in Box 2.

Box 2. *Assessment of FAO Global Public Goods for Latin America and the Caribbean: average scoring*

Criteria Type of products	Relevance of GAD to the topic (1-6)	Technical quality of GAD contents (1-6)	Innovativeness on GAD (1-6)	Potential impact as advocacy tool (1-6)	Potential impact as capacity development tool (1-6)	Links between GAD and social inclusion (1-6)	Number products
<i>Average scoring GAD GPG</i>	5.3	4.9	4.5	4.6	4.8	5.1	22

Source: Evaluation team

31. The great majority of the GPGs for the region were produced by the ESW regional officer posted in RLC. Their quality was assessed as satisfactory to good: they offered tools for planning and advocacy for public policy. Among others, 12 fact-sheets had a useful summarized diagnostic of rural women at a national level; however, they would need updating as they had been published between 2003 and 2005. The issues discussed were food security and nutrition, agriculture, farm labour, land tenure and land reform.

32. Further, one of the regional projects aimed at developing capacities in the area of policies for rural and agriculture development, the 'Proyecto Global de Cooperación Técnica para la Formación en Economía y Políticas Agrarias y de desarrollo rural/FODEPAL-GCP/RLA/175/SPA, made available in its website a number of publications analysing different sectors in a gender perspective. Sectors included natural resources management, rural development and food security, and one particular example was 'Forest resource management and gender equity guideline' issued in 2004.

33. Among the non-GAD products of RLC, of particular relevance to the region was the report 'Ayudando a Desarrollar Una Ganadería Sustentable En América Latina y el Caribe: Lecciones a Partir de Casos Exitosos', issued in 2008 by the RLC Livestock Health Production unit on successful experiences of sustainable livestock management, wherein women's participation appeared as being quite substantial to the livestock sector in the region.

6. GAD awareness and staff competence

34. In the visited countries, with some exceptions, the Evaluation found that competence in gender equality among FAO staff was weak and that knowledge of the GAD PoA and Strategic Objective K was limited. Very often, gender was considered synonymous with women, or women and other groups, such as youth. No efforts were made by FAO professional staff to look for or use available information at national and sub-regional level with sex-disaggregated data, to inform their outputs.

35. In the Sub-regional Office for Central America (SLM), a good number of officers had broad field experience, and the most experienced among them were well aware of the importance of gender issues in their respective areas of work. Nevertheless, they could count

only on their own capacity, as no support had been available since 2009 from RLC and no contacts had been developed with ESW since then.

36. For virtually all staff and consultants, any knowledge they had on gender mainstreaming was based on previous professional experience and exposure to training; some of them had made an effort to use some publications or tool available on ESW's Web site.

37. A positive exception was the FAO Representation in Nicaragua, where a gender expert had been recruited through the SPFS and had moved on gradually to be the FAOR gender specialist, providing advice to a large number of projects. She produced a leaflet on gender in FAO, and the FAOR had Gender as the 2010 theme for FAO in Nicaragua. The expert participated intensively in all gender inter-agency mechanisms, and the Organization's visibility on the theme had gone from zero to very high. The incumbent backstopped colleagues at different levels, developed a kit on gender for new project directors and organized an internal FAO Gender Committee to discuss and develop capacity on the theme. At the time of the Evaluation, there were plans for her to start participating in the selection panels of any/most new FAO staff to ensure that they had some understanding of gender issues.

38. There was no doubt that, apart from the incumbent's professional skills and competence, a key element for her good results was the support on visibility and institutional commitment that had been provided by the FAO Representative to the role. Project directors and technical staff were aware of the pertinence and significance of a GAD approach, although additional work was needed to introduce some field tools to enhance gender mainstreaming.

39. In Dominican Republic also, the FAO Representative had taken some initial steps towards improving the level of gender mainstreaming in the work of the Organization, namely by delegating to his Secretary, a sociologist with academic background in gender studies, participation in the Inter-agency thematic group on gender. Some more specific and possible actions were discussed with the Evaluation mission, including the formal integration of the GFP role in the ToR of the person concerned.

40. In mid March 2011, RLC organized a video-conference with all Spanish-speaking countries in the region to present the key findings of SOFA 2011. This event was well attended, most countries could connect and participate, and definitely contributed to raise attention about this important FAO's publication.

7. Relations with ESW and GFP's work

41. The FAO staff in the countries visited did not recall any direct significant interaction with ESW in HQ, apart from a mission on the occasion of the presentation of the GAD PoA, 2008-13 and a SEAGA training event for the SPFS projects in Central America. Until 2009, the ESW officer in RLC had backstopped projects in each country and was well known, but since her retirement, the country offices felt abandoned.

42. In the region, the appointment of a Gender Focal Point was not perceived as a necessary step. Only the FAOR in the Dominican Republic had a GFP, besides the office in Nicaragua with a gender expert. In SLM, the Land and Water officer unofficially plays the GFP role, but her time availability appeared limited.

8. Overall visibility and knowledge about FAO working in GAD among partners, including governments

43. In general, government and non-government partners recognized that FAO's strengths were its high quality technical normative tools and products in FNS and other technical areas of its mandate, and its capacity to provide technical assistance to small and medium farmers. At the same time, very few also among FAO staff, were aware of or had used the SEAGA tools or any other FAO gender-related GPG.

44. The positive experience of Nicaragua showed that, whenever FAO contributed at a professional level on gender, this was highly appreciated by all partners and relevant to meet national needs. Equally, in all other countries FAO was considered to be a potential key partner in tackling gender issues in rural areas, but totally absent from inter-agency work on the subject or very distant from any government institution mandated to work with women or on gender issues.

9. Conclusions

45. Rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean still faced major challenges such as full citizenship status, stable access to water and land for food security, production, conservation of genetic resources and employment opportunities. The food price crisis and the new regional trade agreements had a differential impact on poor women and men, and FAO should integrate these concerns in its work.

46. However, FAO's work on gender had not matched the high level policy commitments of some of its Member States. Also, as the implementing agency of the Initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger, FAO had missed an opportunity to raise gender issues in the regional political debate on food and nutrition security for all.

47. FAO's performance in GAD/WID initiatives in the region has been variable and depended to a large extent on the priority given to gender equality by national policies as well as on the competence in gender mainstreaming of FAO Representatives and project directors. The lack of accountability at corporate level on gender mainstreaming had also been a major cause of poor performance.

48. The quality of GPGs produced by the ESW regional officer in RLC was good but these were not well known, possibly due to inadequate dissemination strategies. The decision not to replace the Gender Expert in RLC had also affected negatively the quality of a number of national projects, including UNJPs.

49. Women's access to land and water was an area of concern for regional and sectoral policies, as the means to achieve Millennium Goals 1 and 3 under FAO's mandate. In order to reach these goals, strategic alliances and synergies between FAO and agencies such as IFAD, Inter-American Development Bank, IICA⁴, UN Economic and Social Commission for Latin America, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, World Bank, as well as with ministries of agriculture and women's institutions were strongly needed in each country.

10. Suggestions

50. All recommendations stemming from the discussion above formed the basis for the Evaluation's recommendations. Here one suggestion is formulated, of specific relevance to RLC.

4 Instituto Interamericano de cooperación para la Agricultura (Inter-american Institute for cooperation on agriculture)

Suggestion 1. To the Iniciativa Latino America sin Hambre

The Food Security and Nutrition Observatory (SAN) of the ALCSH should take into account women's contributions and promote their participation in such initiatives

At the sub-regional level, the agenda of the regular meetings for FAO Representatives and sub-regional project directors should include discussion and exchange of experiences on gender mainstreaming.

11. Quotes

UNDP Resident Representatives

“The UN has a limited capacity to mainstream gender; when we do not know how to handle an issue, we mainstream it; and we need to learn from previous lessons.”

“Mainstreaming is a good way to make concepts disappear from attention and loosen accountability”.

“The more we theorize about gender, the less effective we are in improving the status of women.”

Women participating in FAO's projects

“Taking part in the family garden project made me feel that I am not only a housewife.”

“We still get hit by our husbands, although the young women get it a little less.”