

Annex 16 – FAO's work in the Europe and Central Asia Region and gender issues

1 Introduction

1. The FAO Regional Office for Europe (REU) is located in Budapest, Hungary, and covers 53 countries. The Sub-Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe (SEU) is also located in Budapest, while the Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia (SEC) is located in Ankara, Turkey. The analysis includes work by the three offices, REU, SEU and SEC.

2. The Evaluation team visited REU, SEC, Turkey and Armenia, the first of which was in conjunction with the FAO Gender Audit in October 2010. In total, the team reviewed eight projects, through field visits, interviews with project staff and stakeholders, and relevant project and evaluation documents.

3. The team met with approximately 50 people in the three countries including the staff at the FAO Representations, project staff and consultants, government officials, civil society partners and beneficiaries. The team also reviewed five Global Public Goods (GPGs) published by REU. Other documents reviewed included the reports of FAO's Regional Conferences for Europe.

2 Resources

4. During the Evaluability Assessment 30 projects implemented in the region were identified as GAD, two of which were within the emergency portfolio. Their total budget represented 2% of the total GAD projects identified, and 5% in terms of number of projects.

5. Among these there were four REU-led and two SEC-led GAD/WID projects, with a total budget slightly above USD 2.5 million, representing 0.3% of REU- and 19% of SEC-led projects in the evaluation period.

6. As for other regional offices, REU had not had gender sensitive products in the FAO PWB in the past nor had the office contributed to the GAD-PoA. In PWB 2010-11, with 41% of its products and services tagged as gender-sensitive, REU ranked second among the regional and sub-regional offices. Only one of these was linked to SO-K. SEU and SEC had respectively 8% and 18% of their products tagged as gender sensitive, though SEU had two products out of five linked to SO-K. It was however too early for the Evaluation to be able to assess the results of this new strong commitment to gender issues at country level.

7. At the end of 2010, a new Gender Focal Point was appointed and a Gender and Rural Development consultant was recruited in October 2010 for a period covering at least the entire year 2011. Also, a Junior Technical Officer on Gender was seconded by the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture at the end of 2010 for a two years' period.

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

8. The Region includes countries with highly different income levels, policy agendas and assistance requirements. One grouping represents post-Soviet states (CIS countries) and post-Eastern bloc countries in Central Europe which are middle income countries; others are Central Asian Republics which are high on poverty indices but which have rich natural resources, and Balkan countries many of which are accession countries to the European Union(EU).

9. Compared to the EU, FAO has a small profile in the region; however, for accession countries, FAO often is asked to provide policy advice on how to negotiate agreements or how to prepare agricultural and rural development policies for pre-pre accession to the EU. Other activities supported by FAO relate to new non-farm employment activities like agri-tourism, income diversification, the impact of migration on rural economies, and land consolidation and land rights. FAO's portfolio also includes a range of technical projects related to forestry, fisheries, land, food safety etc.

10. Most non-project gender-related activities take place in the context of the 'Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development',¹ an FAO statutory body established in the context of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) and whose secretary is the REU officer/regional gender focal point.

11. Until recently, FAO Regional Conferences for Europe gave relatively little attention to gender. The Twenty-Third conference in May 2002 made no mention of gender or women; the conference in May 2004 only "... took note of the offer by Austria to host the 17th FAO/ECA WPW Expert Meeting on Gender and Rural Development in June 2004", and made a short mention that "... although women account for 60 percent of agricultural production in developing countries, they still have unequal access to productive resources. FAO is striving to tackle this problem, devising specific indicators for appropriate policies."

12. The Twenty-fifth FAO Regional Conference for Europe in June 2006 made a mention that "... also in the Region, there were countries where women worked in, or were dependent on, agriculture and the rural sector, and were exposed to discrimination in different aspects"; the report of the Twenty-sixth FAO Regional Conference for Europe in June 2008 made no mention of women or gender at all,² while the Twenty-seventh FAO Regional Conference in May 2010 devoted several agenda points to gender, and "... emphasized that priority should be given to regional activities involving advocacy, policy support, capacity-building, knowledge management and neutral fora for discussion ...". It also "... welcomed the preparation of the four technical documents and the document on mainstreaming gender in rural development through ECA Working Party on Women and Family in Rural Development activities", and "... recommended to mainstream gender into rural policies, taking into account the role of women and their labour inputs into farms and households".

13. In addition, following a summary presentation from the FAO Gender Focal Point in the region, the ECA "... underlined the (i) importance of incorporating gender into farm support and rural development policies, programmes and projects; (ii) assistance to female rural entrepreneurs in developing products and services to market in order to diversify sources of rural populations' incomes; and (iii) improved access for women to land and other production inputs ..." Furthermore, the ECA "... considered that the issue of mainstreaming gender in rural development should be included as a standing item in future ECA meetings (...) and expected that FAO and other agencies and programmes of the United Nations provide guidance on this".

14. Thus, in the past no specific pressure was put on FAO to integrate a gender perspective in its work or to provide assistance specifically targeted to women, and the Organization did not push gender as an important agenda item. One reason given by REU

1 The Working Party On Women and the Family in Rural Development is a subsidiary body of the FAO European Commission on Agriculture (ECA), and was established in 1965 as a knowledge exchange network and think tank, providing policy recommendations to member countries. It has benefited from FAO financial support, coupled with some extra-budgetary contributions, mostly from multi donor trust funds.

2 However, during the ECA session of the Regional Conference the Status of the ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development was presented.

officers for the low numbers of gender-sensitive projects from Voluntary contributions was the apparent lack of demand from partner governments, particularly in post-socialist countries, as their perception was that gender issues were not anymore a concern. However, they also reported that at working levels issues related to gender, employment and social inclusion were seen as relevant. They also claimed that over the last years, gender had gained in importance, even though this had not yet become visible in FAO's technical work. They associated this development with changes in the international agenda and in the social environment of partner countries, rather with changes within FAO policies.

15. Some efforts towards more gender-sensitive approaches were made: the FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme for Central Asian countries stated in its Operational Framework (2008) that “*FTPP-supported assistance must be gender-sensitive in the identification, design and implementation phases, in line with FAO's Gender Plan of Action*”. Although existing documentation on activities under the FТПP was largely silent on gender aspects, a project submitted by the Rural Women's Department of the Ministry of Agriculture of Turkey on “Capacity development support to rural women on the socio-economic and gender aspects of sustainable rural development” was approved in 2010 under the programme. The objective of the project is to increase the capacity of rural women and women's organizations via training and awareness raising on a wide variety of subjects.

4 Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability of Projects

16. The Evaluation reviewed in detail 12 projects, eight of which had been identified as GAD and four were selected from the on-going portfolio for comparison purposes. This led to the revision of some of the gender qualifiers attached to each project.

Box 1. *Gender - sensitive assessment of projects in Europe and Central Asia: revised gender qualifiers*

Evaluation qualifiers	GAD	WID	MO	Non GAD	Total
FAO qualifiers					
<i>Identified as GAD/WID</i>	3	1	1	3	8
<i>Not identified as GAD/WID</i>	0	0	2	2	4
Total	3	1	3	5	12
<i>Percentage within total</i>	25%	8%	25%	42%	

Source: Evaluation team

17. The table above shows that projects that were gender-tagged had not been correctly identified. Three projects identified as GAD were in fact assessed as non-GAD, and three were assessed Missed Opportunities, one where formally gender had been acknowledged as an important issue but had not been properly implemented – a virtual extension and research information and communication network - and two where it had not been recognized as a relevant aspect, on fisheries and organic agriculture. These suggest that officers responsible for projects in the region should be supported in better understanding the concepts and practice of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

18. In Turkey,³ projects where gender was highlighted tended to be UNJPs. A number of projects could have provided an opportunity for a more pro-active gender-conscious approach

³ The country has a very low ranking on the UN's Gender Empowerment Measure: in 2009, it ranked 101 out of 109.

by FAO's project designers. The inclusion or not of a gender perspective seemed to depend on the FAO officers and their counterparts involved. Projects with very similar target groups – small farm enterprises – could include a gender aspect such as in the 'Development of public participation and improvement of socio-economic prosperity in mountain communities: Yunttagi Model and Phase II- TCP/TUR/3102 +3203' project. Others were completely silent on gender issues, such as the 'Enhancing Organic Farming in Turkey-UTF /TUR/052/TUR' project.

19. Armenia had a significant problem with male rural out-migration to other countries, often leaving women in charge of generating income for the family. This situation triggered a number of Telefood projects that provided limited relief and even development perspectives. However, larger projects also would require a more systematic integration of appropriate approaches tackling this major social change.

20. One reason for the low number of gender-relevant projects could be the TCP formulation process: technical officers in REU felt that they needed adequate training on gender to ensure the integration of a gender perspective into TCPs, and requested the re-instatement of a regional gender officer.

21. For most projects implemented in the region, apart from not being gender-sensitive, monitoring and reporting stopped at the activity and output level: this was reported for example for project 'Assistance to Brucellosis Control in Armenia Phase I- GCP/ARM/001/ITA', where gender was said to be a significant component of objectives, results and activities, and women were targeted with specific training sessions on Brucellosis prevention. In the case of this project, gender indicators related to the output level, without addressing outcomes and the impact.

5 Portfolio and assessment of GPGs

22. The Evaluability Assessment had identified 19 REU/SEC GPGs, five of which were reviewed for the purpose of the evaluation. Average scoring on a six-point scale is illustrated in Box 2.

Box 2. *Assessment of FAO Global Public Goods for Europe and Central Asia: 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>	5.2	3.4	2.8	3.4	2.2	3.0	5

23. The scoring shows a good level of relevance of gender issues to the topic, but inadequate quality and potential for all other criteria. Almost all of the GPGs assessed were in the context of the Working Party on Women and the Agricultural Family in Rural Development (WPW). The Working Party aims at establishing a knowledge network in the region, strengthening awareness on job diversification in rural areas, undertaking as well advocacy activities within governments and highlighting opportunities and roadmaps for potential activities with FAO or across the countries. Its purposes are: to promote the role of

rural women and their families in development processes; encourage the professional development of rural women; formulate policy recommendations regarding research, extension, training and education and to promote cooperation between institutions, agencies and organizations for the integration of rural women in development throughout Europe.

24. The Working Party is guided by a board, with members drawn from FAO/REU member countries. The board is supposed to meet every two years in a session, together with government representatives in order to comment and endorse topics and recommendations emerging from "experts' meetings". However, it appears that most WPW participants, including board members, do not represent official government positions, and as such cannot ensure follow-up to WPW meetings at government level.

25. The GPGs coming out of the WPW can thus be said to have the potential for raising awareness on gender issues and for pushing forward relevant items on the national agenda, but in effect there was limited buy-in by governments, and the WPW publications themselves were not widely advertised. In 2009 REU hired a consultant recommended by ESW to carry out a Needs Assessment and to develop a proposal for future activities of the Working Party.

26. This study recommended that the Working Party in the future should look into areas such as climate change and environment, elderly rural women, decent work in rural areas addressed through a gender perspective, sex- and age-disaggregated data generation and analysis, land reform and the role of trade unions in rural areas. However, it seemed that without strengthening the WPW institutional representation among member countries, and establishing a mechanism for acceptance of, and reporting on, follow-up at country level, the WPW remained at the level of an elaborate talk shop.

27. Following the recommendations of the Needs Assessment, REU was currently working on these issues by establishing a network of national gender focal points appointed by the Ministries of Agriculture. At the time of the Evaluation mission, REU envisaged to build this network by July 2011.

28. There were some efforts under way to include a gender dimension in FAO census methodology, which seemed to be welcomed in the region. For instance, in the technical assistance provided by FAO to Moldova for the agricultural census, a review of the census questionnaire was carried out to ensure that main gender-related questions were included (e.g. sex and age of the holder). The project 'Preparatory Assistance for the Census of Agriculture in Moldova (2009-2011)- TCP/MOL/3203' applies a gender mainstreaming perspective.

6 GAD awareness and competence among staff

29. Until 2004, there was a gender officer in REU, but the post was abolished due to lack of funds. Since then, a senior officer nominated as regional Gender Focal Point had been in charge of supporting the Working Party on Women and any other gender-relevant activity. However, these tasks were added on top of already existing tasks and without any previous technical training on gender issues. In 2009 a national Junior Technical Officer seconded by the Hungarian government supported the senior officer in his role of regional gender focal point.

30. Most technical officers indicated to the Evaluation that they had neither the time nor the skills to address gender in project preparation. Several technical officers, especially at senior level, highlighted the need to be trained in advocacy and awareness raising, in order to overcome cultural resistance to the inclusion of gender in technical assistance activities. Some officers who had received SEAGA training at HQ found the training not to be applicable to the relevant technical issues they were facing in the region.

7 Relation with ESW and GFP's work

31. The Gender Focal Point until 2010 had no terms of reference for this role, and also had no connection with other gender focal points in HQ. Also, technical officers in the regional office had no idea that there were gender focal points in HQ in the technical departments. A new Gender Focal Point was nominated at the end of 2010, who actively participates in the GFP network in HQ (via telephone conferences), and who has included more gender-related activities in his work plan (PEMS).

32. Positive examples existed of good collaboration between REU officers and ESW staff members, including the 2009 work on WPW and the process of strategy formulation and training plans required for the implementation of a programme dealing with land rights in Albania and Bosnia. However, there were also reports about ESW not being available for support on gender issues, for example in the context of gender-related land reform projects in Romania and Slovenia where REU officers requested technical assistance and were told by ESW management that the Division did not have the capacity to respond to their request.

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

33. In the European context, FAO is certainly not regarded as a gender champion. The inclusion of gender issues, when it happened, seemed to be the consequence more of individual initiatives and/or donor requirements, than a deliberate FAO policy.

34. FAO's limited recognition as a gender-competent agency may also reflect the lack of demand from partner governments. Gender issues do not appear frequently as a policy concern in the region; moreover, often these topics are handled by ministries other than ministries of agriculture, and FAO thus lacks specific institutional counterparts. In addition, many countries in the region do not have FAO representations, which would have facilitated a closer interaction and more immediate feedback.

35. However, recent developments point to a more prominent role to be played by FAO in the future. The 2010 Regional Conference for Europe called on FAO to invite the ECA WPW to improve its working methods and to include in its agenda all issues of special relevance to foster policy advice and the integration of women in rural development, such as social issues relating to non-agrarian economies, migratory patterns, demographic trends, land as collateral for non-agricultural investment and the influence of these factors on women's involvement in rural development and agriculture. The Conference also urged the countries in the region to participate actively in future sessions and activities for the ECA WPW.

9 Conclusions

36. Gender had not been a prominent element in REU's activities, due to lack of requests from Member States and insufficient action by FAO on this theme. FAO staff in the region were mostly unfamiliar with gender concepts and, in the absence of specific support or internal accountability mechanisms, any initiative in this area could only be at the level of committed and knowledgeable individuals. The abolition of the regional gender expert post contributed to poor performance.

37. The inclusion of gender issues in projects was driven more by external factors (UN Joint Programmes, donor requirements) and individual initiatives than by FAO programming priorities.

38. The Regional Conferences were largely silent on gender until 2010, when the Conference paid substantial and detailed attention to gender issues. Although drivers for integrating gender issues so far were mostly donors or joint programmes, the request emerging from the Conference should play a role in triggering more positive action.

39. The few positive examples resided mainly in the UNJP context. Collaboration with other UN agencies was successful in some instances, but some FAO staff also reported lack of responsiveness to requests for support.

40. All recommendations stemming from the discussion above formed the basis for the Evaluation's recommendations.