



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS

FAO ACTION FOR **EGALITARIAN** **AGRICULTURAL** **DEVELOPMENT**

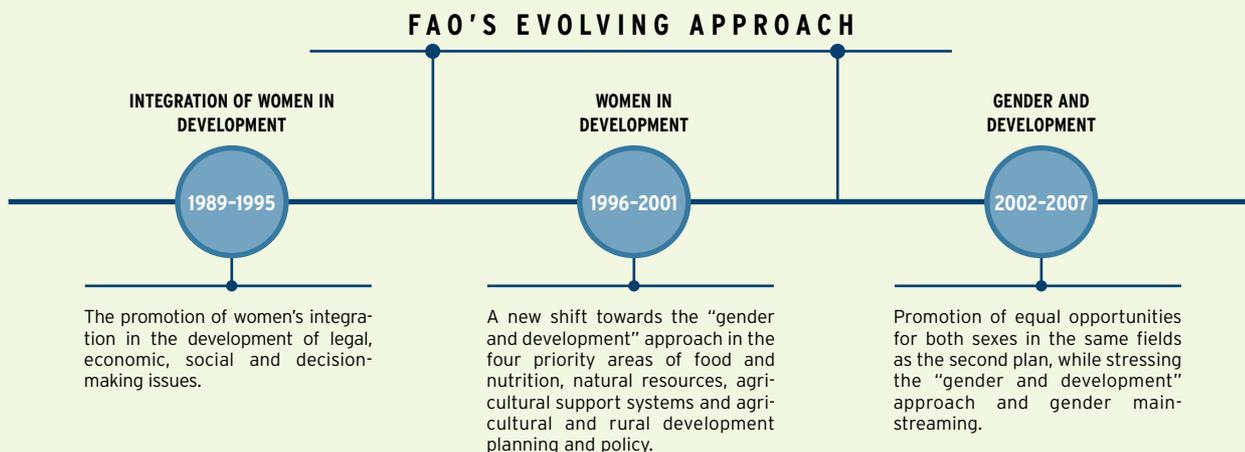


FAO ACTION IN FAVOUR OF RURAL WOMEN: PROGRESS IN GENDER EQUALITY

THE PRINCIPLE of gender equality is an integral part of FAO's efforts to achieve poverty reduction, food security, sustainable development, and a hunger-free world. The application of this principle implies systematic gender mainstreaming in all pertinent fields of the FAO mandate – agriculture, forestry, fisheries, rural development, nutrition – and on all fronts, most especially policy, legislation, and rural and agricultural development projects and programmes. Increased autonomy for rural women is another recognized essential strategy.

Concretely, FAO has identified two major areas of action to ensure equitable, sustainable and more effective agricultural and rural development interventions. The focus is on:

- recognizing **the contribution of women** to food productivity and food security;
- promoting equal access for men and women and removing the obstacles to women's and men's equal participation in and enjoyment of the benefits of the development process.



EMPHASIS ON WOMEN OR ON GENDER?

FAO'S INITIALLY narrower focus on rural women's role in the household evolved over time to a better understanding and recognition of women as stakeholders in agricultural and rural development, including their myriad and rightful roles as farmers.

FAO's action plans for women began to be systematically implemented in 1989. The preferred approach for coordinated action evolved as the years went by, shifting from an exclusive focus on rural women to recognition of their contribution to and major role in rural and agricultural development. There was growing interest in gender power relations, the search for equitable participation for both

sexes in development, and the opportunity for all to enjoy its benefits, as outlined in the above graph on FAO's evolving approach. The shift from the deliberate approach of women in development to the current gender and development emphasis also mirrored a concern to avoid sidelining women by mainstreaming them into the broader development context.

Some contest this trend, however, countering that the gender approach is all too often confined to simple women-centred action. Admittedly, many gender-based initiatives do focus on women, but women's interests and needs have also often been left out of the equation. This is why the most flagrant

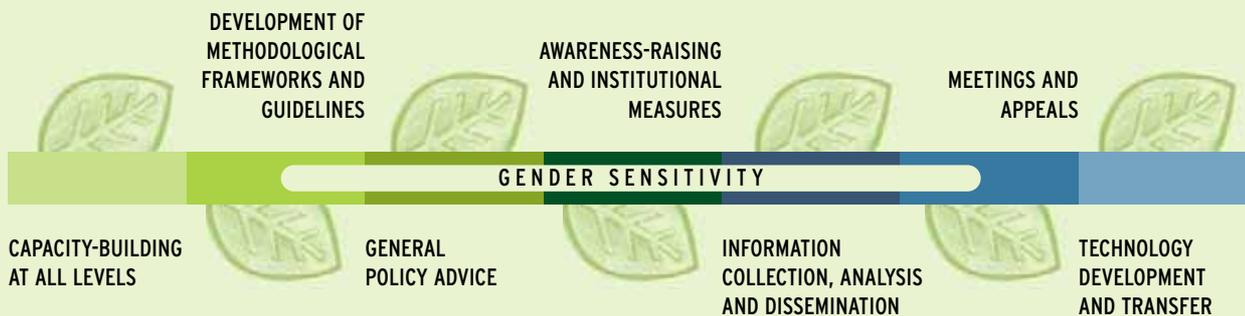
inequalities need to be analysed and rectified. The inequalities that need to be addressed, if men and women are to meet on an equal footing, are not solely gender-based but also concern age, ethnic origin and the like.

This fact sheet addresses FAO's action in favour of rural women in terms of gender parity, using gender analysis for a better understanding of the living conditions of all rural people. This analysis concerns not only the fields of FAO, but also such overweening new topics as the threat of HIV/AIDS, the impact of globalization on small farmers and the introduction of new information and communication technology.





SEVEN FAO INTERVENTION MODALITIES



OPERATIONAL FAO PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

FAO PROVIDES CONCRETE ASSISTANCE to member countries through initiatives that directly or indirectly target rural women. Encouragement of the gender equality principle and of ecological, social and economic considerations are constant features of the FAO approach.

FAO SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR FOOD SECURITY (SPFS)

The Programme, operational in 100 countries, aims to enhance food security in low-income, food-deficit countries. The various components and phases of the Programme give specific consideration to the needs of vulnerable populations, including women. Women's participation in the various programme components is estimated at 30 percent for water management and intensified agricultural production, 50 percent for the analysis of food safety constraints and how to address them, and 70 percent for the diversification of production systems.

www.fao.org/spfs

THE TELEFOOD PROGRAMME

TELEFOOD helps to fight world hunger by mounting a campaign for cultural and sporting events, and small, independent projects in the

fields of agriculture and fisheries. Some 35 percent of these projects are women-centred, providing inputs, seeds and tools to women's associations and cooperatives.

www.fao.org/food/english

TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME (TCP)

TCP is an FAO instrument for rapid technical assistance to member countries. A number of TCP projects have led to gender mainstreaming of their social and economic development plans (Algeria, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic), of agricultural planning (Costa Rica) and national capacity-building for gender analysis (Cambodia, Madagascar).

www.fao.org/tc/tcd/tcdt

SOCIOECONOMIC AND GENDER ANALYSIS PROGRAMME (SEAGA)

SEAGA is the main FAO instrument for gender mainstreaming into FAO member country development interventions. Training workshops for trainers are held on a regular basis to encourage the dissemination of gender analysis at all levels, including that of women farmers. Some 3 800 people in nearly 80 countries have been trained by the SEAGA Programme.

www.fao.org/sd/seaga

THE LINKS PROJECT (BIODIVERSITY, GENDER, KNOWLEDGE)

The main aim of LINKS is to enhance both traditional rural community knowledge about natural resources, and institution-building in the area of gender sensitivity (Mozambique, Swaziland and the United Republic of Tanzania).

www.fao.org/sd/LINKS

FAO'S INTEGRATED SUPPORT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME (IP)

The Programme promotes interdisciplinary cooperation in rural and agricultural development programme planning and implementation in several southern African countries. Gender parity is an essential component in all Programme activities.

www.fao.org/sd/ip

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

FAO emergency operations are particularly attentive to women as key partners in post-conflict rehabilitation of the agricultural sector. A guide on gender mainstreaming into emergency operations has been published in cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP).

www.fao.org/sd/seaga/downloads/en/passportEng.pdf



RURAL WOMEN IN FOUR PRIORITY AREAS OF FAO INTERVENTION

ACCESS TO FOOD

WOMEN'S COMPELLING role in nutrition, food safety and food quality demands that interventions in this area concentrate primarily on women. The approach does take the social, economic and cultural context into account, however, and also involves the participation of men.

- ✎ Training for women farmers in the use of irrigation systems (Cambodia, Zambia), decision-making mechanisms, farm production and nutrition (Honduras, Nepal).
- ✎ Study on women-established links in food production systems in rural and urban areas of Thailand.
- ✎ Provision of low-cost technology such as pedal pumps (Bangladesh, India) and irrigation techniques (China, Kenya) within the South-South cooperation context.

ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT

SMALL FARMERS, including women, are easily excluded from such agricultural support services as extension, technology, agricultural inputs, credit and so forth. FAO recommends gender mainstreaming as a means of attenuating or removing legal, institutional, social, economic and behavioural barriers to equitable access for all rural people to both inputs and the benefits of development.

- ✎ Assistance to women's organizations in Myanmar to enhance livelihoods and food security through credit, technology and training.
- ✎ Case study on women as extension agents in Pakistan.
- ✎ Publication "Rural household and resources: a guide for extension workers"
- ✎ Assistance in the preparation of strategies to facilitate gender analysis in the provision of agricultural services in Ghana and Togo.
- ✎ Training in elementary accounting and numerical literacy for woman-owned small businesses in Guinea, boosting women's organizational and management skills.

ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES

FAO SUPPORTS MANY initiatives fostering access of disadvantaged groups to natural resources, especially land – an essential component of agricultural productivity and food security. Usage and custom often hinder women's access to land in developing countries, even where agrarian law sanctions their right to land.

- ✎ Support to agrarian reform in Nicaragua, especially legislative reforms concerning land access and opportunities for joint land title for spouses.
- ✎ Regional discussion workshops on women's access to land (Senegal, South Africa) and on the analysis of socio-economic and gender issues in on-farm water management for project staff of the Special Programme for Food Security.
- ✎ Compilation of case studies in Africa, Latin America and Asia on gender parity in land programmes.

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL RURAL PEOPLE in agricultural planning and policy is imperative for sustainable rural and agricultural development. FAO is making major efforts to strengthen the autonomy of women and their access to decision-making processes.

- ✎ Assistance to Costa Rica to train women farmers in management and negotiating techniques to in view of their participation in development strategy planning.
- ✎ Provision of training in several African and Eastern European countries on gender-disaggregated data to shed light on local living conditions – including those of women – and their place in statistics, policy and planning.
- ✎ Assistance for gender mainstreaming into national social and economic development plans (Algeria, Bulgaria, Guinea, Jordan, Madagascar, Slovenia and the Syrian Arab Republic).

RURAL WOMEN IN FAO EVENTS

RECENT KEY EVENTS...

- ✿ *World Food Summit*, November 1996. The Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the seven commitments of the WFS Action Plan stress the importance of the contribution of women and of gender equality.
www.fao.org/docrep/003/w36131f/w3613f00.htm
- ✿ The *World Food Day* theme for 16 October 1998 was "Women Feed the World".
- ✿ *High-level Consultation on Rural Women and Information*, October 1999. Action strategy on the role of information in gender parity and food security.
www.fao.org/sd/2003/peo7013

- ✿ *World Food Summit: five years later*, June 2002. Parallel event to Rural Women: Essential Partners in the Fight against Hunger and Poverty"

...AND ANNUAL APPEAL INITIATIVES

- ✿ *8 March*. United Nations International Women's Day. Multidisciplinary technical workshops are held to discuss issues crucial to rural women such as land, nutrition, microfinancing and water.
- ✿ *15 October. World Rural Women's Day*. This celebration affords countries in particular, an opportunity to discuss issues in connection with a specific theme.



RURAL WOMEN IN INFORMATION PRODUCED BY FAO

FAO produces a wide variety of information on rural women and gender parity, which serve as a vital tool for the fight against hunger. The FAO Web Site disseminates methodological guides, numerical data, discussion documents, survey findings, compendia of experiences, sensitivity-raising, etc.

- ✿ **WAICENT** site: access to FAO statistics, documents, publications and multimedia material, including material on rural women and gender aspects.
www.fao.org/waicent
- ✿ **SD Dimensions**: The Sustainable Development Department Web Site on new developments in projects, publications and surveys. It includes a theme-based browser concerning gender and rural women.
www.fao.org/sd
- ✿ **Gender and food security**: a gender-specific Web Site including sheets on nutrition, rural economics, the environment, extension and so forth, plus photos, exemplary practices and statistics.
www.fao.org/gender/GENDER.htm
- ✿ **Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA)**: access to SEAGA information and training material (handbooks and practical guides). www.fao.org/sd/seaga
- ✿ **HIV/AIDS AND FOOD SECURITY**: Web Site listing FAO activities and knowledge on HIV/AIDS and the link "agriculture, rural development and food security" and the "gender parity" dimension".
www.fao.org/hivaids
- ✿ **Dimitra**: information project on rural women's projects and associations in Africa and the Near East. Some 1 403 organizations are listed and nearly 2 750 projects in favour of rural women are represented.
www.fao.org/Dimitra
- ✿ **Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping (FIVIMS)**: the assessment of under-nutrition involves a variable concerning the incidence of gender parity.
www.fao.org/WAICENT/faoinfo/economic/giews/english/smiar.htm
- ✿ **FAOSTAT**: online databank on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food and nutrition. Indicators on economically active men and women working in agriculture are available. <http://apps.fao.org>

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