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EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (ECA)

**TWELFTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON WOMEN
AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Nitra, Slovakia, 18-21 October 2004

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WPW 2002-2004 AND ITS
FUTURE FOCUS¹**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) has been a statutory body of FAO's European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) since its establishment in 1965. Its membership is open to all ECA Member Nations. The purpose of the WPW is to:

- encourage the exchange of information and experience with a view to promoting the role of women and the family in agriculture and rural development;
- promote and encourage professional development of rural women;
- cooperate with institutions and agencies striving for the integration of women in rural development; and
- formulate policy recommendations on matters pertaining to education, research, extension, training and other related fields within their areas of technical competence.

2. The FAO Regional Office for Europe (REU) services the WPW. The WPW "assists FAO Member Governments to undertake joint actions and cooperate in gender and development projects as well as to encourage and facilitate cooperation between international governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with this topic, and to make recommendations on all matters within its geographical competence".

3. The WPW is also the only FAO body in the European Region addressing specific issues faced by rural women and men, thus providing a link between Member Nations,

¹ This paper was prepared by Dr Celia Fernandez-Fontanillas as a background paper to the Session. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

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the Regional Office for Europe and the Gender and Development Service. One of its strengths is its organization as a broad network with a multidisciplinary approach representing a range of professions, institutions and organizations in which capacity building is the key element. It creates a unique platform in the FAO European Region for the exchange of knowledge and experiences focussing on gender and rural development issues.

4. Feedback from Member Nations shows that the WPW has contributed to putting gender issues on the agenda all over the Region, to addressing needs of rural men and women in the relevant policies, programmes and projects and has been successful in establishing new forms of cooperation and networking between the institutional and grass-roots levels in the Member Nations. The two principal aspects of the WPW that have been of particular benefit are: firstly the fact that the WPW is valued as a meeting place by rural women, researchers, practitioners and the policy-makers involved in rural development in the European Region. And secondly, that its mode of operation has facilitated participation and has engendered sensitivity and awareness of issues pertinent to rural women.

5. The WPW views networking as an instrument that facilitates the process of exchange and learning that will bring the status and importance of rural woman to the attention of decision makers and contribute to achieving equity in work and living opportunities.

6. Since 1980, eleven biennial sessions have been held. These sessions provide a forum for making policy recommendations and decisions, evaluating existing activities and determining the future orientation of the WPW. The focal themes of the sessions are chosen from the suggestions given from participants and relate to the priority needs of Member Nations. Inputs and discussions on pertinent aspects have led to the formulation of recommendations for future development.

7. The Board of the WPW meets once a year and acts as an advisory committee between the sessions. Today it comprises seven members. In cooperation with and assisted by REU, it develops a plan of activities for a given biennium. These activities include regular meetings, workshops, sessions, seminars, projects, studies and technical consultations. From 1982 to 1988 activities and programmes focused on pluractivities and extension in agriculture and rural development. In 1988, the orientation shifted to community development and in 1990, to rural development through entrepreneurship. As of 1997 the application of FAO's socio-economic and gender analysis (SEAGA) methodology is reflected in the work of the WPW, which means that the activities have been shifted to the approach for including participatory and gender dimensions in rural development projects.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE WPW

8. The Eleventh Session of the WPW², held in Fribourg, Switzerland from 14 to 17 October 2002, was hosted by the Government of Switzerland. The theme of the

² Since 1980, eleven WPW sessions have been held. The theme of the sessions is chosen by the WPW from suggestions by participants in various WPW activities, and relates to the priority needs of Member Nations. The past few sessions, for example, addressed themes such as: the environmental concepts for rural development (1996), challenges facing

Session was the Role of Women in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development. The Session was attended by 25 persons from fifteen countries, two organizations with observer status, and FAO.

9. The Session acknowledged the ripple effect of the activities of the WPW resulting in regional and subregional workshops, seminars, dissemination of methodologies and international exchanges of experiences (para. 11) and recommended that in future the WPW addresses in particular: raising the political awareness and interest among rural women and increasing their capacity in participation in decision-making, increasing rural women's and youth's opportunities for education and training (paras. 29 and 30).

10. The Session stressed that it was essential to turn gender awareness into gender action (para. 31). It also noted the diversified and multiple roles women play in agriculture and sustainable rural development (paras. 19 and 29).

11. The Session noted that gender relations should be seen in a wider socio-economic context of continuing change in agriculture and rural development and noted the need for improvement of infrastructure to enable women to participate actively in the changing socio-economic context (paras. 16 and 30). It also stressed the need to promote networking among rural women and rural women's organizations as such networks are essential in lobbying for rural women as well as for rural interests in general (paras. 14, 15 and 26).

12. The Session noted the need for comparable gender sensitive statistics, data collection and analysis throughout the Region (paras. 23 and 27). It also pointed to the need to revise and harmonize gender terminology (paras. 18 and 22).

III. REVIEW OF OTHER WPW ACTIVITIES IN THE 2002-2004 BIENNIUM

A. BOARD MEETINGS

13. The activities of the WPW for this biennium were planned on the basis of the recommendations of the previous session, by the Board in cooperation with REU and were organized and managed by REU. During the period two Board meetings were held in Rome, FAO Headquarters.

14. The work of the Board is based on the following objectives:

- to support rural development through initiating and promoting activities for rural women in order to increase their capabilities, effectiveness and self reliance in identifying and addressing political, social and economic issues, thus empowering them and to contributing to the socio-economic development of the country; and,
- to create awareness and influence policy makers and other authorities in addressing the critical issues of rural development.

B. FAO/ECA EXPERT MEETINGS ON GENDER AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

15. *The FAO/ECA Expert meetings on Gender and Rural Development are annual events and represent one of the main activities of the Working Party on Women .*

16th FAO/ECA WPW Expert Meeting on Gender and Rural Development, Lithuania, 8-12 September, 2003

16. The 16th FAO/ECA WPW Expert Meeting on Gender and Rural Development took place in Birštonas, Lithuania from 8 to 12 September 2003. The theme of the Expert Meeting was “Community Mobilization and Motivation for Participation in Rural Development”. It was organized jointly by the FAO Regional Office for Europe, the Lithuanian Ministry of Agriculture, the Chamber of Agriculture and the Lithuanian Farm Women’s Association.

17. The objectives were for participants to learn of and use different tools and methodologies to motivate and mobilize local communities, exchange information and experiences and draft action plans to assist the participants to mainstream a gender and participatory dimension into top-down and bottom-up interventions for rural development. In total, 23 persons from 14 countries attended.

17th FAO/ECA WPW Expert Meeting on Gender and Rural Development, Austria, 14-18 June, 2004

18. The Expert Meeting was hosted by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management. The theme of the Meeting was “Transborder Networking: An Approach for a Participatory and Gender Sensitive Rural Development”.

19. In total 26 persons from 14 countries attended. The co-facilitators/resources persons were Ms Guri Drottning Aarnes (Norway) and Mr Dezso Kovacs (Hungary).

20. The objectives were for the participants to gain knowledge and skills for transborder networking and partnership building that is gender-sensitive and participatory. As a result of the expert meeting, participants were able to do the following:

- exchange practical experiences and learn from best practices in the European region;
- use different methodologies, tools and approaches for networking and partnership building (i.e. how to reach new partners);
- identify and clarify the concepts and terminology relevant to the theme;
- developed follow-up activities to strengthen the transborder cooperation among the Member Nations on Rural Development projects.

21. It was noted by the Board at its last meeting that interest to participate in Expert Meetings among Member Nations has increased considerably over the past four years.

C. ECA SESSION

22. The European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) holds sessions every two years, at which the WPW reports its activities to its parent body. The last session was held from

1 to 2 March 2004 at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy. In order to increase awareness of the role rural women play in food safety and quality and how they contribute to this, the WPW prepared a document to address issues of food safety and quality in Europe from a gender perspective and presented it as an ECA INF paper at the 24th FAO Regional Conference for Europe, held in France this past May.

IV. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

23. In planning future activities, FAO, thus also the ECA and the WPW, need to make every effort to mainstream gender into agriculture and rural development and, in particular, in areas that call for immediate attention; i.e. food safety and quality, women's and men's equal and active participation in agriculture and rural development programmes and projects, equal access to decision-making, education, resources and services and information, equal employment benefits from agriculture and rural development for both men and women and similar.

24. The WPW, as an advisory FAO body, will continue to work on the issues pertinent to sustainable rural development, including that of food safety and quality in the Region following its strategy presented at the last ECA Session in March 2004. The strategy, developed among others along the lines of the long-term priorities endorsed by the 22nd Regional Conference for Europe³ and FAO's Gender and Development Plan of Action (GAD PoA) for 2002-2007⁴, provides a framework for assisting Member Nations as follows:

- providing support to the formulation of gender-sensitive rural development policies, including diversification of rural activities and generation of alternative income, local and national capacity building and institution strengthening, with special attention to gender issues;
- providing support to the development of gender-sensitive policies for effective land administration and management to facilitate rural development;
- promoting regional cooperation in the collection, dissemination and use of gender-disaggregated data (quantitative and qualitative) and information for policy planning, and in the use of the Socioeconomic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) methodology and its adaptation to the national context;
- providing support to the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national action plans to promote gender mainstreaming in institutions and development programmes and projects;
- monitoring processes such as the ageing of the population, the age-related feminization of agricultural activities and out migration of youth and its impacts on food safety and quality; and,
- providing support in strengthening the capacities of rural public institutions, private sector and civil society organizations at all levels to design and implement

³ The priorities identified were:

- Poverty reduction through support to sustainable rural livelihoods and food security;
- Food safety and quality;
- Sustainable management of natural resources;
- Institution and capacity building to support the process of transition to market economies in the rural sector.

⁴ The objectives of FAO GAD PoA are to promote gender equality in:

- Access to sufficient, safe and nutritionally adequate food;
- Access to control over and management of natural resources, and agricultural support services;
- Participation in policy and decision-making processes at all levels in the agricultural and rural sector; and
- Opportunities for on and off-farm employment in rural areas.

gender-sensitive policies and strategies that improve the quality of life of rural populations.

25. ECA's further support to the above strategy will help to empower rural women to overcome the existing gender inequalities at household and community level as well as in society in general, and to face the challenges of new initiatives in rural areas, resulting in new forms of pluriactivity, means and measures to protect nature and the landscape, food supplies, measures on food safety and quality and newly emerging social relations and similar.

26. The planning of the WPW's future activities will take into consideration and follow closely the strategies and work programmes adopted for the implementation of the GAD PoA in Europe and the GAD/WID Programme in the FAO European Region. This will contribute to a more efficient pursuance of the goal of the advancement of rural women and will provide a higher visibility of the WPW and ensure a higher level of coherence as activities will be linked together and reinforced in working towards a common goal.

WORKPLAN FOR 2004-2005

27. In future and in accordance with its strategy (until 2007), the WPW intends to address, within the above-mentioned context, the specific and common needs and problems of rural women in the different sub-regions of Europe as specified by at last WPW Sessions (Austria, 2000 and Switzerland, 2002), Expert meetings (Finland, 2002, Lithuania, 2003 and Austria, 2004) and other meetings, workshops and seminars in which the WPW has participated.

28. Proposed future major activities include:

- WPW Board Meeting, 1st week of February 2005 (tentative date), FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy;
- WPW Board Meeting, 1st week of February 2006 (tentative date), FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy;
- 18th Expert Meeting on Gender and Rural Development (country to be determined, June 2005);
- 13th WPW Session (Slovenia, early 2006, prior to the ECA Session);
- 19th Expert Meeting informally expressed interest to host the event on Gender and Rural Development (country to be determined, June 2006);
- International Workshop on Gender-disaggregated Data (Norway has been identified as a possible host country, 2005).

29. The WPW intends to address some activities focussing on rural food safety and quality from a gender perspective (e.g. meeting of researchers) depending on the availability of funding.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

30. The FAO/ECA WPW at its 11th Session issued a statement on emerging issues concerning the role of women in sustainable agriculture and rural development, as follows:

“The ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development is aware of the crucial impacts globalization is having on rural areas, in particular with a view to ensuring sustainability of future development. To guarantee the sustainability of

rural areas, a multifunctional agriculture and diversified rural economy are needed. The full involvement of rural women in the development processes is essential.

Women's contribution and the multiple roles they play in agriculture and the rural sector must be economically and socially recognized. It is vital to adapt the institutional frameworks to enable rural women to take a more active part in decision-making processes.

Women's active participation in rural development will enable them to take the necessary actions to meet their interests and needs, which will benefit the entire rural society. In the future it is vital for rural areas that public and private institutions and organizations, together with women's networks, lobby for their interests in political arenas.

The implications of social and economic restructuring in rural areas and on farms for both women and men need to be further investigated. It is important to give a higher priority to rural development policies and to approach them from a long term perspective to enhance the generation of job and income opportunities for both rural women and men.”

31. To facilitate the fulfilment of the above-mentioned statement it is essential to go beyond “gender awareness” and translate it into “gender action”. In order to reach this goal, the WPW developed the following recommendations for the attention of the ECA and 24th Regional Conference for Europe:

- strengthening gender mainstreaming into rural issues through gender budgeting and capacity building in Member Nations and in all international bodies, documents/surveys with the aim of providing equal opportunities for rural women and men;
- developing gender sensitive legislation that will ensure an equitable access to resources such as education and training, land and credit;
- increasing rural women's participation in decision making processes at all levels to ensure at least a 40 percent representation of women;
- promoting development of a quantitative and qualitative database on rural and farm women and its analysis for a better recognition of women's vital social and economic contribution to rural society and in order to develop more gender-sensitive rural development and agriculture policies;
- developing gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation of agriculture and rural development programmes to ensure a better involvement of rural women in rural development processes;
- supporting NGOs and networks that pursue the advancement of rural women in order to facilitate an exchange of experiences which will promote a multiple effect;
- fostering cooperation between countries in the Region for the exchange of knowledge on gender and rural development issues; and,
- elaborating guidelines for the preparation of the national action plans for mainstreaming gender in agriculture and rural development.

32. Further, the WPW strongly supports the recommendations given by the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit (WFS, 1996)⁵ with the view to ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women.

⁵ Recommendations given by the WFS, 1996:

- Give priority to the creation of an enabling political, social and economic environment for women.
- Support and implement commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), ensuring that a gender perspective is mainstreamed in all policies.

33. The WPW also supports the “Message from Rome to Johannesburg” a political declaration promoting equality among men and women that resulted from the side event on rural women organized within the framework of the WFS: fyl. The declaration in particular highlights the following:

- to enhance the status of rural women and promote gender equality in agriculture and rural development actions are needed in two key areas: 1) the equal access to and control of natural and productive resources; and 2) the empowerment and full participation of rural women as agents for change in policy making at all levels and throughout development activities;
- to develop legislative frameworks, policies and strategies that shape an enabling environment for the empowerment and advancement of rural women, including training and access to production-related services; and,
- to reiterate the commitment for the creation and reinforcement of information networks and communication channels amongst rural women and between rural women and government planning institutions. These networks can facilitate the collection, documentation and dissemination of good examples and practices in gender sensitive and sustainable agricultural and rural development, which can serve as models for other undertakings.”

34. The WPW requests Member Nations full support to the implementation of the above-mentioned measures in the European Region and to the WPW’s workplan, developed together with REU, for the next biennium. The workplan intends to address the above-mentioned recommendations through the future planned activities, depending on availability of funding and with the adequate organizational support of FAO.

35. In conclusion, the WPW’s framework and work plan aim to strengthen the full involvement of rural women and their families in the priority areas defined by the Regional Conference for Europe which will benefit the development of rural areas throughout the European Region.

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- Promote women’s full participation in the economy and, for this purpose, introduce and enforce gender-sensitive legislation providing women with secure and equal access to and control over productive resources, including credit, land and water.
 - Ensure that institutions provide equal access for women.
 - Provide equal gender opportunities for education and training in food production, processing and marketing.
 - Tailor extension and technical services to women producers and increase the number of women advisors and agents.
 - Improve the collection, dissemination and use of gender-disaggregated data in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development.
 - Focus research efforts on the division of labour and on income access and control within the household.
 - Gather information on women’s traditional knowledge and skills in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and natural resource management.