



EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (ECA)

**THIRTEENTH (SPECIAL) SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY
ON WOMEN AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Rome, Italy, 15 April 2009

**GENDER ISSUES IN RURAL AREAS IN EUROPE AND
ECA WPW ACTIVITIES**

Table of Contents

	Paragraphs
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 2
II. SELECTED ESW ACTIVITIES AND GENDER ISSUES IN RURAL AREAS IN EUROPE	3 - 7
A. GENDER ISSUES IN LAND REFORM AND IMPROVED ACCESS TO ASSETS	3
B. GENDER ASPECTS IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS	4 - 5
C. SEAGA	6 - 7
III. WPW ACTIVITIES	8 - 10
IV. WPW SELECTED PRIORITY AREAS IN THE CEE AND CENTRAL ASIA SUBREGIONS	11

This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of FAO's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies.
Most FAO meeting documents are available on the Internet at www.fao.org

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the 1990s transition and market reforms, a significant improvement in the standard of living and quality of life of rural populations in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Central Asia countries has been recorded. Nevertheless, rural women and men continue to face numerous difficulties and constraints to economic development such as the need for improved infrastructure and better access to inputs and to markets for farm products and rural services as well as the challenge of upgrading social services in rural areas. The disappearance of the centrally planned economy, continuing social and economic transition, European Union enlargement, Common Agricultural Policy-aligned reforms, globalization, and impacts of climate change have affected rural populations and, in particular, women. Since men and women continue to face different responsibilities and needs when it comes to ensuring food security and participating in income-earning activities, addressing gender issues in rural development remains therefore an issue of outstanding importance.

2. In the heterogeneous and diverse CEE and Central Asia subregions, the FAO European Commission on Agriculture's (ECA) Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) fills a gap with regard to the investigation of the potential consequences of current developments in rural areas for rural people and especially women. In this context, networking is a tool for raising awareness of the situation of rural women and for addressing the major constraints and challenges they face. Experience and lessons learned, reported and discussed during the recent WPW Expert Meetings (EMs) have provided an interesting and comprehensive account of the successful outcomes of implemented projects but also underlined the various types and intensity of constraints and difficulties rural people and particularly women still have to struggle with. The WPW provides a forum for such experience sharing and training at multiple levels of stakeholders in rural development.

II. SELECTED ESW ACTIVITIES AND GENDER ISSUES IN RURAL AREAS IN EUROPE

A. GENDER ISSUES IN LAND REFORM AND IMPROVED ACCESS TO ASSETS

3. FAO work on land reform and rural development as part of the monitoring of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) looks at respecting women's rights during reforms and ensuring women's access to land and assets, including legal rights (e.g. inheritance)¹. A number of countries in the CEE and Central Asia subregions may be interested in FAO experience in this field, in particular capacity-building projects in the advanced stages of land reform, including food security-oriented policies and support instruments for small farms.

¹ Rural Women's Access to Land and Property in Selected Countries, FAO, IFAD and ILC, Rome, 2004. This report explored, among other issues, the experiences of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

B. GENDER ASPECTS IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS ²

4. A number of recent FAO Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW, Economic and Social Development Department) publications address gender issues within the framework and context of impacts of climate change and sustainable agriculture and rural development, including energy resources, and, gender equity in agriculture in the light of economic globalization. In *Energy and Gender Issues in Rural Sustainable Development*, FAO promotes the view that increased access to energy sources in rural areas and the development of new bioenergy sources can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as well as to the improvement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

5. *Gender: The Missing Component in the Response to Climate Change* in turn analyses the gender dimension of climate change and policies enacted to mitigate impacts and adapt. Gender aspects appear to have been neglected so far, although clearly societies' resilience to climate change will depend on the capacity to react by specific social groups, including rural women. Women's share of greenhouse gas emissions appears to be lower since they depend on less-emission intensive technologies (but labour intensive), for example with regard to transport or livestock breeding. Women's adaptive capacity as managers of livelihood assets appears high, despite the fact that they are low (or non) income earners and poverty is feminized. Policy recommendations for mitigation and adaptation will be better targeted and effective if gender aspects are incorporated. While both the project experience reviewed and the analytical work on water management, deforestation implications, and risk management, in the above publications are based on experience and focus on Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries, the methodological approaches and training material may be of interest and applicable in the CEE and Central Asia subregions.

C. SEAGA

6. The Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA) that was established in 1994 supports the formulation of projects, programmes and policies for development that are more sustainable, equitable and efficient. Socio-economic and gender analysis is the identification of responsibilities, needs and priorities of different groups of people, taking into account variables such as age, wealth, religion, ethnicity, and looks at the role of, and relationships between men and women for a better understanding of their situation. SEAGA analyses these linkages at three levels: macro, intermediate: institutions and field: communities, households and individuals. It provides development workers with practical methods and tools to raise awareness of gender issues and is highly participatory, working through networks. SEAGA workshops and training of trainers are organized regularly throughout regions. SEAGA is in particular useful for mainstreaming gender issues into the project planning process.

7. A Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division Officer participated in the 21st ECA WPW Expert Meeting in Tirana in October 2006 ³ to present FAO's experience in mainstreaming gender and rural employment issues in a subregion that requires considerable support with regard to gender issues. One of the recommendations was to continue activities to collect, analyse and disseminate **gender disaggregated data and statistics**, including those on labour resources use and remuneration, as a base for gender-sensitive remuneration and social security policies. FAO applies a "household resource management approach" to analyse patterns

² For list of Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA) manuals and guides, see: <http://www.fao.org/sd/seaga>.

³ Out of the Shadows: Making Female Labour in Agriculture Visible – Women's labour input in agriculture and role in subsistence farms in South-East Europe and Central Asia. Realities and tools for legal and economic recognition.

of access, decision-making and relations in rural families and communities and this approach is promoted in project formulation. This method may be applicable in the CEE and Central Asia transition economies.

III. WPW ACTIVITIES IN THE EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA REGION

8. The WPW sessions, Summer Schools and EMs have covered a wide range of topics and have attracted the participation of experts from most of the CEE and Central Asian countries. Between 1982 and 1988 activities and programmes focused mainly on pluriactivity and extension in agriculture and for rural development. Since 1988, the orientation shifted to community development and from 1990 to rural development through support to entrepreneurship. From 1997, work on the application of FAO Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme methodology was included in the activities of the WPW ⁴. The SEAGA methodology, due to its relevance for the region, has to date remained a regular component of the EMs. Since 2000, EM themes have addressed youth in rural areas, food safety and product quality, agro- and rural tourism, diversification of jobs and microfinance to support rural small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and the development of products and services for rural markets and for exports outside the region ⁵.

9. The WPW, as an advisory FAO body, will continue to work on issues pertinent to sustainable rural development along the lines of the long-term priorities endorsed by the 26th Regional Conference for Europe and FAO's Gender and Development Plan of Action (GAD PoA) for 2008-2013. The WPW approach provides a framework for assisting Member States 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 for 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 SEAGA methodology and its adaptation to the national context;
- providing support to the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of 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 outmigration of youth and its impact on food safety and quality issues, and
- providing support to strengthen the capacities of rural public institutions and private sector and civil society organizations at all levels to devise and implement gender-sensitive policies and strategies that improve the quality of life of rural populations.

10. The WPW activities will also take into consideration the *global trends* that will have a major impact in the coming years on gender roles and relations in agriculture and food security. Focus on global trends and their gender aspects and development approach, as summarized

⁴ The availability of a number of SEAGA manuals in Russian language version is noted.

⁵ For a detailed overview and summary of WPW activities, see ECA 35/08/4 Status of the ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development on which this section is based.

ECA:WPW/09/3 Organization of WPW Activities and Communication, in turn provides a list of recent technical themes covered by the WPW.

below, was recommended both by the FAO GAD PoA 2002-2007 and FAO GAD PoA 2008-2013, thus:

- **Globalization:** Growing inequalities and marginalization of small farms and conflicts due to the development of large-scale farms, and access to resources. The majority of farmers who experience limited access to resources, markets, training and decision-making opportunities are women.
- **Rural population dynamics:**
 - *Rural-urban migrations.* Female/male migrations and repercussions on the rural population, farms and families; feminization/masculinization of agriculture and its poverty challenges for gender-based roles and division of labour; role of remittances in local economic development.
 - *Ageing of the rural population.* The impact on the composition of the rural labour force and the division of labour by age and sex, combined with outmigration.
- **HIV/AIDS:** Devastating impact on agricultural production and food security. Invaluable knowledge about indigenous farming methods and strategies for coping with food shortages are lost.
- **Increased pressure on natural resources:** Farming contributes to a significant degree to environmental degradation. Non-sustainable management and use of natural resources threatens rural livelihoods and their future sustainability. Increasing agricultural productivity in a sustainable manner is vital to achieving sustainable food security and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Women's vital contribution to managing biological resources should receive increased attention. Secure land tenure systems will provide access to land and other natural resources for the rural poor and allow them to accumulate assets and ensure household food security.
- **Disaster-related and complex emergencies (conflicts, man-made and natural disasters):** Emergencies affect women as household managers. Gender analysis can help the development of disaster mitigation and recovery strategies that address the needs of both women and families effectively.
- **Diseases (human, plant and animal):** Women's health and livelihoods are particularly at risk due to agriculture-related diseases (e.g. Avian Influenza). The epidemic diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis) continue to pose a threat to rural lives and livelihoods.
- **Information technology:** The technology revolution can accelerate progress towards gender equality, but it can also exacerbate existing inequalities. Rural women usually are at a disadvantage in making informed choices for example about what to produce or how to access markets. Lack of information also limits women's influence in communities and ability to participate in decision-making, and
- **Climate change and bio-energy:** Climate change exacerbates existing vulnerability and food insecurity. Since women and men are affected differently by the scarcity of resources, gender sensitive adaptation and mitigation approaches are needed.

IV. WPW SELECTED PRIORITY AREAS IN THE CEE AND CENTRAL ASIA SUBREGIONS

11. The WPW has identified the Western Balkan countries (thus Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and TFYR of Macedonia) and the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as priority areas ⁶. It is noted that women in the above

⁶ See ECA 35/08/4 Status of the ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development, paras 36 and 37.

groups of countries often have to face the traditional gender disparities and the specific problems of continuing socio-economic transition. Some of these are:

- Low living standards and poverty as a side effect of transition, unemployment and wars and disasters in some countries;
- Particularly high unemployment of women due to gender-based discrimination, combined with a significant gender-related pay gap, and a return to more traditional attitudes towards gender roles at some levels of society;
- Women entrepreneurs and farmers face limited access to assets (e.g. constraints to owning a property and starting a business, access to credit);
- Lack of economic and social recognition of women's work, and the double burden of earning an income and caretaking at home and looking after the household farm;
- Deteriorating health status both of women, men and children due to stress, depression and malnutrition in poverty-affected groups;
- Special needs of households headed by women following male outmigration and particular needs of single and widowed women and their families;
- Low level of women's bargaining power and negligible role in decision-making and political representation, combined with limited access for women to social networks and opportunities for education; decreasing literacy levels for girls in rural areas and reduction of reproductive health and social services for women.