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للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

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pour  
l'alimentation  
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l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## 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

#### EXTRACTS FROM THE DOCUMENT 'NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND SURVEY 2009: PRESENT STATUS, OPTIONS AND FUTURE FAO ACTIVITIES AND COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN GENDER IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ECA WPW'

## CONTENTS

### Executive Summary

- 1.7 Recommendations for future areas of work
- 1.9 Recommendations for format of meetings
- 1.9.1 Statutory Body Status
- 1.9.2 Annual Expert Meetings
- 1.9.3 Recommendations for Board Activities

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

“...This report is a Needs Assessment with Recommendations for Activities for the FAO ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW). The findings are based on a survey conducted among Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Foundations, Universities and Research Institutes, NGOs and independent expert consultants, who have taken part in WPW activities over the past four years. Although the WPW faces many constraints in terms of financing and staffing, it has nonetheless made some valuable contributions to gender-focussed rural development in the European, Central Eastern European (CEE) and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries since its inception in 1965. It now faces a challenge in terms of defining its future orientation and areas of work, in light of the constraints faced. Over the past number of years the WPW, through its Sessions and Expert Meetings, has built-up a level of expertise on gender issues in the focus regions, and it is crucial that the WPW find ways to capitalize on this expertise. The WPW has impressed upon Ministries of Agriculture and other policymakers in the region the importance of recognizing and targeting gender inequalities in rural development, both on-farm and off-farm. Through its Expert Meetings especially, it has provided a forum for Ministries, NGOs, Research Institutes and Universities, and United Nations partners to network and exchange valuable experiences and practices in gender-focussed rural development. In this sense it plays an important role as a dynamic knowledge network.

Given that there are other National, International and United Nations gender-related Programmes and Projects operating in the CEE and CIS region, it is important for WPW not to repeat the work of other organizations, but rather to complement and, where appropriate, collaborate with other organizations. The WPW must also consider finding ways to secure funding and to reach out to more groups representing rural women, especially in the CEE and CIS countries. The Working Party on Women has worked over the years and built for itself a niche and position where it is a recognized forum to exchange and transfer experience from Western European and Central Eastern European (CEE) and former Soviet Union (CIS) countries. The fora that offer such opportunity are rare in the CEE and CIS region and this achieved position should not be neglected or wasted...”

### 1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE AREAS OF WORK

“...Thematic areas of focus for future WPW Expert Meetings:

#### ➤ **Climate Change and Environment**

According to the Committee on the Status of Women 2001, in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, although women’s educational level is generally high, their knowledge of health issues is good and they form the majority in medical and health-related professions, for example, they continue to be unaware of environmental issues. There is a lack of understanding also on the part of many policymakers of the gender-dimensions of climate change, which has been neglected by international climate change policymakers until recently (ibid). Women are still absent from the climate change and natural resource-related decision-making processes at all levels. A focus on technical solutions has largely ignored social and political factors. The successful implementation of climate change policies and projects requires an understanding of the gender-based roles and relationships vis-à-vis natural resources, as well as the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change and the different risks and vulnerabilities of women and men. This includes the structural constraints that curtail women’s access, control and ownership over assets.

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<sup>1</sup> The material has been extracted, for ease of reference, from the document ‘Needs Assessment and Survey 2009. Present Status, Options and Future FAO Activities and Cooperation with Stakeholders in Gender in Rural Development in Europe and Central Asia. Recommendations for the FAO ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development’. This document has been prepared by a Consultant for the WPW in March 2009 on the basis of a survey and needs assessment.

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This should be a key target area of the WPW, with FAO's support, over the coming years. An Expert Meeting on the Gender and Rural Dimensions of Climate Change, with exchange of experiences and perspectives of rural women, NGOs, Government Ministries, International Organizations and institutions from the WPW Member States, could add a crucial gender dimension to the climate change debate, which would be particularly useful for agricultural and rural policy design in the CEE and Central Asia sub-regions.

Improving natural resource management practices and protecting the environment require reducing poverty and achieving livelihood and food security among rural women and men. The following are some of the key gender issues in natural resource management interventions, for example, that the Expert Meeting could explore: Rural women and men have different roles, responsibilities and knowledge in managing natural resources; Gender differences exist in rights and access to natural resources, including land, trees, water and animals; and Access to new technology, information, and training related to natural resource management remains highly gendered, with most of the related initiatives targeting men.

➤ **Elderly Rural Women in the Region**

One result of limited options for developing a secure rural livelihood is that the most skilled and entrepreneurial residents leave the countryside. Therefore, unemployment is triggering the outmigration of young rural adults, which results in the well-documented ageing of rural and farming populations in many CEE and CIS areas. The ageing population comprises more women than men, reflecting an overall development in European, CEE and Central Asia regions. This is because women have a higher life expectancy and, in CEE and CIS, women of this generation migrate less out of rural areas. In the Romanian countryside, for example, in the year 2000, women over 60 comprised one-quarter of the rural population. Another factor contributing to the ageing of the rural population in the region is the decreasing birth rate. Finally, food security has become an issue for the elderly, as they may not be receiving the help they need to cover basic needs. This is often as a result of the break up of traditional family patterns and safety nets, as well as poor social services in rural areas, which aggravates insecurity, including food insecurity, for the elderly rural population.

It was noted during the 19th Expert Meeting (Hungary 2006) that bringing women that lost jobs in former cooperative farms and state enterprises back into the labour market is key for rural development in stagnating areas, if only to prevent their further degradation and loss of infrastructure. This will require extensive and expensive vocational training skills, taking into account the women's obsolete professions, often low formal education and practical training skills in demand in a market economy, the target group being women over 50 years old. The WPW should consider holding an Expert Meeting on this issue, and explore options for supporting and building capacity among rural women in the region. This Expert Meeting could be carried out in conjunction with the International Labour Organization and partners (Employment Federations and Trade Unions, for example), and could be carried out under the present FAO/ILO collaborations in the Agriculture and Decent Work Initiative.

➤ **Decent Work in Rural Areas, a gendered-perspective**

Decent work is captured in four strategic objectives: fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards; employment and income opportunities; social protection and social security; and social dialogue and tripartism. These objectives hold for all workers, women and men, in both formal and informal economies; in wage employment or working on their own account; in the fields, factories and offices; in their home or in the community. The ILO provides support through integrated decent work country programmes developed in coordination with ILO constituents. They define the priorities and targets within national development frameworks and aim to tackle major decent work deficits through efficient programmes that embrace each of the strategic objectives.

An Expert Meeting examining decent work options in the CIS and CEE rural areas from a gendered perspective could use the already established working relationship between ILO and FAO (the EM could be co-organized). As mentioned previously, it is recommended that the WPW continue to work on rural development issues and options off-farm as well as on-farm, and that it continue to look at the gender dimensions of rural employment and income diversification. An Expert Meeting focusing on Decent Work could be very useful in this respect.

➤ **The Role of Trade Unions in Rural Areas in the CEE and CIS**

The International Labour Organization's tripartite structure might be one model that the WPW can learn from, whereby Government, Employers Federations and Workers' Organizations come together to discuss labour issues and find ways to move forward together. The WPW could potentially extend its reach to more rural women around the CEE and CIS region through linking trade unions operating in the region. The huge potential for the WPW and participants, especially rural women's associations, to collaborate with trade unions should not be overlooked. By inviting trade unions into the WPW structure, and to the Expert Meetings, the support-base and scope of the WPW in the CEE and CIS regions in particular could widen significantly.

A list of potential partners in the region includes trade unions which are affiliated to the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF), which in turn is a key ILO partner. Many of the gender-related, food security, environment and rural development concerns of the WPW are shared by the IUF-affiliated Agricultural and Workers' Unions in the region, the IUF itself also having a gender focus. The unions may also have resources to send representatives to the Expert Meetings, and would be knowledgeable on the practical and legal implications of the ILO Decent Work Programme.

➤ **Land Reform**

An example of activities could be a project that would start with research and analysis of the role and situation of women in land reform in CIS countries, a subject so far relatively under-investigated and, more important, not on the agenda of national Ministries of Agriculture. One could envisage the WPW approaching the Czech Ministry of Agriculture Trust Fund or another donor from EU New Member States to co-finance a seminar or Expert Meeting on the subject for selected CIS countries, that would as an output formulate project ideas for submission to multi- and bilateral donors..."

➤ **Gender Disaggregated Data Campaign**

"...The gender imbalance in data collection and analysis, especially by government ministries, is a recurring problem, which has been noted on several occasions by the WPW in the past. For example, at the 18th Expert Meeting (Poland, 2005), the *'limited availability of gender-specific data and policies'* was criticized by participants, and that (in relation to agro-tourism, for example) *'there appears to be broad recognition of the leading role of women entrepreneurs in rural and agro tourism development but the policy issue of designing and implementing specific gender-focused projects and instruments remains controversial, among other reasons due the lack of appropriate data and statistics'* (WPW 18th Expert Meeting Report, 2005, p. 6)..."

➤ **Knowledge Dissemination and Website**

"...The WPW has developed a level of technical expertise on the issues discussed and debated in the Expert Meetings and Sessions of the past number of years, and specialized, high-quality papers have been presented therein. In order to strengthen the role of WPW as a dynamic knowledge network, it is recommended that a specific WPW website, containing thematically organized papers and presentations from Expert Meetings and links to partners, be developed.

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One such model the WPW could emulate is the Dimitra website<sup>2</sup>. Dimitra has been a FAO project since 1998, and the projects main aim is to improve the living conditions of rural populations, especially women. The Objectives of Dimitra are to consolidate and extend the network of rural womens' groups in Africa, promote information exchange by strengthening information and communication skills, and update and disseminate information on gender and rural development issues. It has an extensive and well-designed website with links to partners and a database.

Developing a website containing position papers and the central objectives of the WPW would be an effective way for the WPW to deliver its message to policymakers and others (potential partners, donors, universities, etc.). This will need to be updated regularly by a webmaster. The WPW is currently lacking a stand-alone, well-designed website, and it is highly recommended that one be created..."

## **1.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FORMAT OF MEETINGS**

### **"...1.9.1 Statutory Body Status**

The WPW, at present, has FAO statutory body status. This status has both advantages and disadvantages for the WPW. As a statutory body of FAO, WPW holds influence and credence in national ministries of agriculture. Invitations to WPW activities are sent out to Member States' ministries of agriculture who designate participants to attend WPW Sessions and Expert Meetings. Addressing gender issues at ministerial level gives WPW a high status. In many countries, gender equality issues are typically considered as relevant to ministries other than agriculture (such as social affairs, or equality or women's affairs). However, countries in Central Asia and CEE are becoming aware of issues related to empowering minorities and excluded groups. Gender related issues are gradually seen as key for future activities. Placing the issue of gender on the agenda in ministries of agriculture is less difficult with the weight of FAO behind WPW. A review of the participants' lists over the past number of years reveals a large number of government ministries attending Expert Meetings.

There are also disadvantages to statutory body status, in particular related to the formal structure of the WPW, and resources spent on obligatory Sessions, for example. The Sessions provide a forum for making policy recommendations and decisions, evaluating existing activities and determining the future orientation of the WPW. But there has been a decline in the number of Member States representatives attending these sessions in recent years, arguably indicative of a lack of interest on the part of the representatives in the Sessions, or a lack of sufficient financial and staffing resources available to potential representatives. By revoking FAO statutory body status, the WPW would free itself of the obligation of holding Sessions, and could focus instead on the more important Expert Meetings. The Expert Meetings are the only such regular activity on gender that FAO has in Europe, although FAO examines and incorporates gender issues as part of its rural development projects.

### **1.9.2 Annual Expert Meetings**

According to the findings of surveys conducted in 2004 and February 2009, participants of WPW activities find the Expert Meetings to be the most useful and important of WPW activities, and the one that they are most interested in participating in. At present, beyond a formal invitation, WPW is not in a financial position to be able to cover costs for participants or for presenters to attend the Expert Meetings, since these enjoy FAO statutory body format.

The Expert Meetings are the activity with the most value-added, in terms of the potential for participants to share knowledge, make connections and learn from high-quality presentations. By giving-up statutory body status, the WPW would free-up resources to focus on attracting more participants to the Expert Meetings and to strengthen its network, activities which it does well. The forum provided by the Sessions for making policy recommendations and decisions,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/dimitra/en/>

evaluating existing activities and determining the future orientation of the WPW could also be absorbed by the annual Expert Meetings.

### **1.9.3 Recommendations for Board Activities**

The Board of the WPW, as active as competent as so far, will require support from the FAO technical divisions and REU and SEU to identify and formulate and implement projects and activities that are proposed by the Board but technical capacity is needed to turn these into fully-fledged projects and activities. The Board should look at the outcomes of the EM and consider ways of following-up on the recommendations emerging from the EMs. In particular, the Board could use its extensive networks and knowledge of national and international programmes on gender and rural development in Europe and the Central Asia and CEE sub-regions to develop a list of potential partners for the WPW to work with in the future. This list should provide institutions, names, ideas and connections which the Board members may have with EU projects and NGO projects, for example, as well as ideas for training and capacity-building among WPW participants and partners. In this way, the Board members could develop contacts, guidance and ideas for future WPW work...”