

GOAL 3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

- 4: Reduce child mortality
5: Improve maternal health
6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7: Ensure environmental sustainability
8: Develop a global partnership for development

FAO recognizes the importance of promoting the full and equitable participation of rural women and men in efforts to improve food security, reduce poverty, and fuel social and economic development.

The Organization champions the elimination of all obstacles that prevent the equal participation of rural women in decision making processes; and seeks to promote decent employment opportunities and access to and control of resources and opportunities for both rural women and men. FAO concentrates its efforts on building rural women's capacity to be equal partners in development efforts, and fostering an environment that is conducive to social and economic equality. FAO recognises that without rural women's economic and

social empowerment and gender equality, food security will not be achieved.

The current global social, economic and environmental realities imply that rural men and women face increasing challenges that threaten their well being. The recent food and economic crises as well as the changing climate, have increased rural people's vulnerability, further endangering their ability to secure their livelihoods and sustainable access to food.

WHAT FAO IS DOING

To promote gender equality – a state in which all people enjoy equal rights, opportunities and rewards, regardless of whether they were born female or male – and the empowerment of women, FAO has targeted the following three key areas:

Knowledge generation and dissemination: FAO carries out research and analysis to understand the social and economic determinants of food security and the role men and women play. Some focus areas include the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data to examine and develop targeted intervention on the vital role rural men and women play in ensuring food security, especially at the household level; analyses of emerging challenges in agriculture and the impact on men and women farmers.

Capacity development: FAO builds technical capacity among member countries including governments, research and academic institutions and civil society organizations to enable practitioners to apply sound knowledge and techniques in address gender issues in policy and programme development. Specifically, FAO:

- works directly with rural women and men to strengthen their agricultural and livelihoods skills;
- develops and enhances the capacities of governments and other institutions to collect and analyse agricultural and rural development data, disaggregated by age and sex. To this end, FAO has developed tool kits, guidelines and training programmes for the production

and analysis of sex disaggregated data to inform policy and development specialists.

- develops methodologies and toolkits to enhance fairer and gender-equitable access to decent rural employment for the youth.

Policy dialogue and partnerships:

FAO engages with policy makers at local and international levels across disciplines and sectors to foster a shared vision and understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, FAO:

- works together with member countries to identify and remove obstacles to women's equal participation and decision-making;
- collaborates with the UN system's Delivering as One initiative;
- provides research based policy advice and support to member countries to formulate and plan gender-sensitive national and regional agricultural policies;
- engages in partnership with other UN agencies and organizations to create synergy and pursue common goals;
- collaborates with local, national and international organisations to research topics of common interest and provides targeted capacity building;
- links rural women and men through an information and communication network, which shares good practices that highlight women's roles. This information is disseminated through a newsletter that reaches over 10 000 rural organizations mainly in Africa (www.fao.org/dimitra).

Key facts

Women provide up to 90 percent of the labour used in rice cultivation in Southeast Asia (International Alliance against Hunger 2009).

Women make up 51 percent of the agricultural labour force worldwide (International Alliance against Hunger 2009).

Women have the least access to the means for increasing output and yields, and for moving from subsistence farming to higher-value, market-oriented production (FAO gender Web site).

Less than 10 percent of farmers in India, Nepal and Thailand own land (IFAD 2008).

A study of farm credit schemes in Africa found that women's share of loans was just 10 percent (FAO gender Web site).

In sub-Saharan Africa, agricultural productivity can increase by up to 20 percent if women's access to resources such as land, seed and fertilizer is equal to men's (Africa Commission Facts and Figures).

Selected projects

West Bank and Gaza Strip: an FAO project worked with over 500 low-income women farmers to embark on entrepreneurial activities in agriculture. The project assisted the women in establishing backyard vegetable gardens and cottage industries, and provided them with small-scale livestock. Through these skills and activities the women were able to improve their household food security and income.

East Africa: in recognizing that access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) is an effective means for reducing inequalities and poverty, FAO established 10

community knowledge centres in arid rural areas of East Africa (Kenya, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda). Through these centres community members have access to and share information on new technologies for farming and livestock keeping; coping strategies for addressing environmental challenges and climate change. Through the centres the communities also have access to information on markets, health and HIV and AIDS and gender. The centres are run by members from the community.

Syria: FAO worked with the Government of Syria to address the high percentage

of forest fires caused by human activities, mainly routine agricultural tasks conducted by women, such as burning of orchard refuse. The project trained villagers to develop better watershed and land-use management techniques, like water harvesting and maintenance of fire breaks. Villagers also learned to produce organic fertilizer to replenish the soil by making compost out of small branches, twigs and bio-degradable plants and fibres. The project also trained villagers in the collection, storage and marketing of non-wood forest products like mushrooms and aromatic plants.



Sorting maize seed.
©FAO/Giuseppe Bizzarri



Working in the rice paddy.
©FAO/Hoang Dinh Nam

Recent resources

Bridging the gap: FAO's programme for gender equality in agriculture and rural development, 2009;

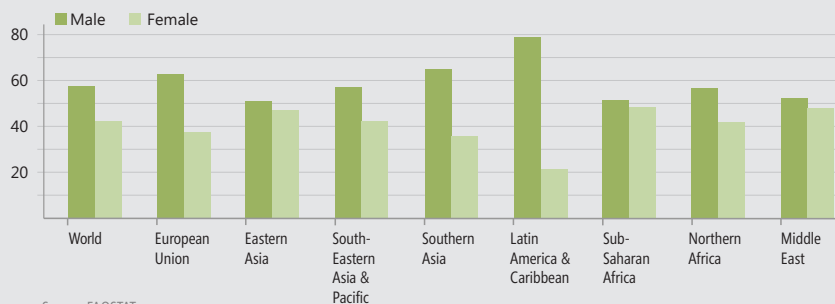
Gender equity in agriculture and rural development, 2009;

Gender in agriculture sourcebook, a joint FAO publication with the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2008.

SOFA, The State of Food and Agriculture (To be published in 2011) Women feed the world: addressing gender inequality to achieve agricultural development and food security

For more information, see the FAO gender website: <http://www.fao.org/gender>

Percentage of women and men that are economically active in agriculture, by region (2010 estimate)



Source: FAOSTAT