



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



©FAO/Benedicte Kurzen/NOOR

## ECONOMIC INCLUSION

# Rural Women's Economic Empowerment Facility

Closing the gender gap in agriculture  
to eliminate hunger and poverty

## The issue

Today, 767 million people live in extreme poverty and 54 percent of them are women. Many of these women experience significant additional challenges due to gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, evidence shows that women are more food insecure than men in every region of the world, particularly in Africa. Gender disparities in food security exist due to differential access to economic opportunities and resources. Achieving SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) is directly dependent on achieving SDG 5 (gender equality).

Women's roles in agriculture are crucial and expanding in many regions. In North Africa alone, the share of women active in agriculture rose from 30 percent in 1980 to 45 percent in 2015. In sub-Saharan Africa, women's participation in agriculture has always been high and is increasing due to the growth of commercial farming and male out-migration. In spite of their important role, women still face greater challenges than men in accessing and controlling productive resources, services and opportunities. They often have a limited and marginalized voice in decision-making and perform poorly paid jobs, lacking access to natural resources, rural services and legal or social protection. The resulting gender gap in agriculture, in turn, imposes high costs on rural development and the wellbeing of communities and households as a whole.

## The action

This facility aims to close the gender gap in agriculture by enhancing women's economic empowerment and their role in rural development. It focuses on expanding women's socio-economic opportunities, thereby contributing to hunger and poverty reduction. The programme combines four elements: (1) enhance capacities of FAO Members to design and implement gender-sensitive policies, strategies and programmes; (2) strengthen women's participation in producer organizations and cooperatives to boost their capacity for collective action; (3) enhance women's business skills and access to markets to increase their incomes; (4) improve women's access to and control over land and other productive resources and services to increase their productive potential.

## The issue in numbers



For every **100**  
men living in extreme poverty,  
there are 122 women



Almost **50%**  
of farm labour is performed by women,  
but they hold only 15% of farm land



**40** billion  
hours a year spent by sub-Saharan  
women and girls collecting water

## Programme targets



**5**  
national gender strategies for  
agriculture adopted



**50 000**  
female farmers trained in rural  
entrepreneurship



**1 000**  
rural communities address gender  
inequalities through social dialogue

## The budget



**USD 28** million



**4** years



**14** countries

## Expected results

- Enabling policy environment for the economic empowerment of rural women;
- Rural women's voices and participation enhanced in the decision-making processes of rural organizations;
- Income-generating capacity and productive potential of rural women improved.

## Geographic focus

The programme will support 14 countries in four regions:

- **Africa:** Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda
- **Asia Pacific:** Cambodia, India, Nepal
- **Europe and Central Asia:** Kyrgyzstan
- **Latin America:** Guatemala

## In partnership with

Partners include the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), UN Women, the International Labour Organization, Care USA, the International Food Policy Research Institute, government counterparts, producer organizations, the private sector (especially those working in value chains of high relevance to rural women, such as Twin Trading and the Nestlé Group), funding partners and researchers. South-South Cooperation will be a key mechanism.



### SDG contribution



## Women leading in agribusiness

Through the UN Joint Programme on accelerating progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP RWEE), FAO is partnering with IFAD, WFP and UN Women to realize lasting improvements in rural women's lives. Through capacity development and technical support, more than 44 000 rural women and 261 000 members of their households have benefitted since 2014 in sub-Saharan Africa (Ethiopia, Liberia, the Niger and Rwanda), Asia (Nepal and Kyrgyzstan) and Latin America (Guatemala). As a result, women have stepped up agricultural production, accessing credit and starting businesses, leading to improved nutrition for their families. In addition, JP RWEE assists governments in designing and implementing gender-sensitive agri-policies to ensure durable results.



## Why invest?

Investment to improve the social status of rural women and capitalize on their potential as producers is a powerful accelerator of agricultural growth. FAO's State of Food and Agriculture Report (2011) estimated that granting women equal access to agricultural inputs and resources could increase production substantially and contribute to food security and economic growth. Survey data indicate that when a woman is able to earn and control her own income, she has greater say over her own life and the lives of her children. Women invest a large part of their earnings in their families, ensuring food, healthcare and schooling. Investing in this programme is investing in women. They are critical to safeguarding and empowering the next generation and helping to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty.

### CONTACT:

Director, FAO Business Development and Resource Mobilization Division (PSR)  
PSR-Director@fao.org

FAO Strategic Programme Leader, Rural Poverty Reduction (SP3)  
SPL3@fao.org