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Concept note

Regional Roundtable "Empowerment of rural women and implementation of SDG indicator 5.a.1 in the Western Balkans"

Organizers: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) regional projects „Legal Reform for Economic Development in the Western Balkans” and “Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA II)” and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)

Date: 5-6 October 2023

Time: 09:00–17:00 CET

Mode: Live

Venue: FAO HQ Rome

This joint event will showcase the good practices and lessons learned from ten years of GIZ and FAO collaboration in the Western Balkans region with a focus on women economic empowerment through equal tenure rights (SDG 5). It will also provide an opportunity for exchange, coordination and networking of the ministries of agriculture and national statistical offices from the Western Balkans to improve gender equality in land ownership and control through collection and usage of gender statistical data in developing national agriculture and rural development policies.

Background

In June 2021, a joint FAO-GIZ submission on [“Partnerships for gender equality in land ownership and control. Good Practices from the Western Balkans and beyond”](#) was selected by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) to feature in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) registry of Good Practices. This endorsement demonstrates the potential of this approach for strengthening gender equality in land ownership and control in the Western Balkans, in particular for its replication and scaling up in other regions.

Launched in 2013, the gender and land rights initiative in the Western Balkans aimed to address the disparities that exist between female and male land ownership in the region. The collaboration between these organizations has resulted in a range of practical and concrete results at the local and regional levels.

Women’s economic empowerment is essential in promoting equality between women and men and a precondition for sustainable development. Women’s economic empowerment can be achieved through equal access to and control over economic resources and opportunities and the elimination of structural gender inequalities. Women and men’s de jure access to land is regulated by the formal legal system (constitutions or laws) that grant gender equality in access to land but where laws for marriage, divorce and inheritance contradict these laws by discriminating against women and daughters.

Whilst women's land rights are vital to development, the reality remains that these rights are often unequally shared between men and women, and are routinely set aside, denied, or given insufficient protection and enforcement. Women have less access to land than men and are often restricted to so-called ‘secondary land rights’, meaning that they are able to hold



land rights only via male family members. Women thus risk losing entitlements in the case of divorce, widowhood or their husband's migration. Clear ownership rights allow for these rights to be transferred via the sale or lease of land, and facilitate borrowing on capital markets as land can be used as collateral.

In regards to the access to investments, subsidies, and thus to new income generating opportunities women in rural areas are disproportionately disadvantaged due to frequent non-compliance with formal criteria lack of property (agricultural land or real estate), lack of adequate information, insufficient education and a lack of specific advisory service offers.

Agricultural statistics include more than 50 different datasets which describe agricultural land use, production of crop and animal products, farm structures, prices, economic inputs and outputs and the impact of agriculture on the environment, health and wellbeing. The statistical domains have been developed over time with many changes since the 1950s. Despite streamlining and integration efforts, concepts, definitions and legislation have not been fully harmonised and thus the cross-domain coherence is not optimal. Comparable agricultural statistics from all Member States, as well as EU candidate countries are important in determining the development of agricultural and rural development policies.

GIZ and FAO collaborate together to support the national statistical systems in the Western Balkan countries in developing the most appropriate data collection vehicle for collecting data for SDG indicator 5.a.1 following the internationally recommended methodology and formulate an action plan for regular data collection and reporting on SDG indicator 5.a.1.

Objectives of the event

- Discuss the challenges of rural women in the Western Balkans.
- Discuss the challenges of statistical data availability and accuracy in the process of design and implementation of agriculture and rural development policy measures.
- Present the developed modules for SDG 5.a.1 implementation in the Western Balkans.
- Identify applicable modes of effective and efficient cooperation between the statistical offices and Ministries of agriculture.

Audience

Stakeholders from the Western Balkans, gender statistical experts from the National Statistical Offices, Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Easter Europe (SWG RRD) and government counterparts in the ministries of agriculture responsible for developing agriculture and rural development policies.

Expected outcomes

The event will offer a new understanding of how regional cooperation among national actors and development partners can support the achievement of the SDG 5.a.1. targets. The event will promote the exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices to strengthen women's ownership and control of land; and the lessons learned will serve as a model case of unified regional approach towards developing modules and starting with the implementation of SDG 5.a.1.