

A stylized illustration in shades of orange and red. It depicts several figures, likely women, engaged in agricultural activities. One figure on the left is bent over, possibly working in a field. Another figure on the right is sitting or kneeling, looking towards the left. A smaller figure is visible in the background. The background features abstract, flowing lines that suggest a landscape or agricultural setting.

Breaking ground:

present and future perspectives for women in agriculture



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Breaking ground:
present and future perspectives
for rural women in agriculture

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Foreword

Across the developing world, rural women are among the poorest and most disadvantaged groups. They face gender-based discrimination, which is reflected in inequalities in their rights and in their access to resources – especially land, technology and social services, including education and health. Their voices in public life are seldom heard, as women are under-represented in decision-making at all levels. The international community has recognized that accelerated rural development and gender equality are essential in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and other agencies are working for gender equality and women’s empowerment as essential instruments for rural poverty reduction, and as issues of fundamental human rights (Hartl, 2004).

The situation of rural women has been on the agenda of international conferences for decades and is highlighted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), and in the World Food Summit Plan of Action (1996). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, is considered as the international bill of rights for women. It comprehensively covers civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights. It is the only human rights treaty that deals specifically with rural women. In its Article 14, the Convention affirms the rights of rural women to equal access to resources and basic social services. It also stresses that women should participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning and in all community activities.



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This includes their active participation in policy development and decision-making affecting their lives (Hartl, 2004).

This collection of papers offers an appraisal of the role of rural women in ensuring food security in five geographical regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Near East. To understand the relationship between gender, rural poverty and food insecurity, an analysis has been made, in each region, of the specific roles and responsibilities of rural women in relation to food security, as producers (of agricultural goods or wage labourers) and consumers in their responsibility to acquire food for the household, through production or through trade.

The Rome Declaration of the World Food Summit of 1996 recognized that the right to development and the full and equal participation of men and women are essential for achieving sustainable food security for all. Similarly, the title of this publication, *Breaking Ground: Present and Future Perspectives for Rural Women in Agriculture*, suggests that the link between rural women and food security is increasingly recognized as important.

Recent studies indicate that rural women carry much of the burden and social cost of globalization. This is because, in recent decades, major economic changes have weighed heavily on traditional life in the countryside, and rural women have assumed different production responsibilities and activities in the changing context of globalization. However, the same aim remains: to change women's status from one of having little recognition for their labour, production, business, family, social and political activities to one of being both participant and income-generator seeking equality of opportunity with men.

In their homes, rural women have devised many coping strategies to feed their families. They cultivate home vegetable gardens, gather and process food, migrate to cities to take up wage labour and send home remittances. Still, as this collection of studies indicates, their employment is precarious, poorly paid and limited in training opportunities, and their work often goes unrecognized in the official statistics.

The current publication illustrates that agricultural and rural development programmes and policies need to change to reflect the current situation and to improve it. No longer should there be gender-based restrictions, such as inequality of

access to public services, technical assistance, land tenure, credit and training programmes or the massive contradiction of granting men land but having it worked by women.

In an attempt to address the above-mentioned problems FAO, under its Plan of Action for Gender and Development (2002–2007), seeks to mainstream gender into its agricultural and rural development policies, programmes and projects. FAO also promotes the integration of Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) into an increasing number of projects, notably those of the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). The achievement of food security and the accomplishment of the region's priority objectives require the active participation of rural women in decision-making.

To this end this publication illustrates that poverty can be reduced, first, through the education of rural women, and then through increasing their access to all productive resources (land, credit, extension) including knowledge. In all regions there is ample illustration of the link between rural women's education and improved food security. Moreover, rural women's representative organizations need to be strengthened to boost their capacity to negotiate, and to give them a voice so they can engage in the creation of a better future in each region.

Clearly rural women play a major role in agriculture and food security around the world. Their increased involvement in both subsistence and commercial agriculture is evident, and the impoverishment of various parts of the world, which have been marginalized by fierce international economic competition and rigorous structural adjustment, would have produced more severe consequences if the women had not stepped up their production efforts in agriculture and the informal economy.

We consider this publication to be an important contribution to the debate on one of the key challenges facing agricultural and rural development. Part of this challenge is to ensure that women, who are instrumental in increasing food security around the world, can be fully recompensed and recognized for their efforts.

References

Hartl, M. 2004. *Rural Women's access to land and property in selected countries*, FAO.

Preface

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the CEDAW Convention, a decade after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Rome World Food Summit Plan of Action (1996), to what extent can we say that the status of rural women has been advanced and the equality of women and men improved? This publication attempts to provide some insights into this question.

Gender equality is a universal goal which is embedded in many international instruments such as the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979). The Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which provided strategic objectives and actions in a many areas. The Millennium Declaration adopted by Heads of State at the Millennium Summit in 2000 reaffirmed the primacy of poverty alleviation and gender equality as development goals.

Agriculture is an important component of the economy of many developing countries as it significantly contributes to domestic production and employment. It is also of key relevance because of its contribution to ensuring food security, which remains one major concern in many developing countries and especially least developed countries (LDCs). Women and men are not equally represented in the various agricultural sectors, such as livestock or export crops. Since these sectors are differently affected by trade liberalisation, the consequences for women and men are not the same. Existing gender gaps may increase or shrink. On the other hand, since women and men often have different education, income, living circumstances and abilities, their capacity to respond to policy changes varies as well. It is therefore important to analyse these potential impacts (UNCTAD, 2004).



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The paucity of gender related statistics in agriculture continues to be one of the major impediments to generating in-depth analysis of the gender dimension in agriculture. Within the last decades, an increasing body of literature on gender and the economic impacts of gender inequality on agriculture has been emerging. Researchers, UN agencies and NGOs have undertaken several studies to examine the gender equity implications on the economy and especially in agriculture. Nevertheless, limited empirical information has been generated on both women's involvement in trade expansion and the impact of agricultural trade liberalisation on women's performance in the agricultural and rural sector, as well as on the impact on women wellbeing and food security (UNCTAD, 2004); (SOFA, 2002).

As a recent study on trade and gender states, that “despite the multiple initiatives undertaken during the last 30 years toward empowering women in the economic, social and political spheres, women's participation in public decision-making structures is still very low. In agriculture, women's participation in decision-making is even more restricted, due to the lack of recognition of their role as farmers on their own right. Both farmer's organization and agricultural planning institutions have very few women in decision-making positions and usually agricultural policies do not integrate women's concerns and female related factors associated with agriculture and rural development. The lack of gender considerations in domestic agricultural policies – which also leaves aside factors associated to social reproduction and women's contribution to the rural economy – is also reflected in the formulation of trade policies and domestic related measures.” (UNCTAD, 2004)

Traditional social safety nets in rural areas tend to disappear with the integration of developing countries' agriculture into the global economy. This increases the vulnerability of rural families and women in particular given the additional burden they face, with the migration of their male relatives resulting from the slow death of the family farm and the gradual foray into export-oriented agriculture.

Broad similarities and differences in the issues that face men and women especially have been observed between and within regions. Even though there are regional differences, certain key issues can be identified as significant in understanding why food security problems should be addressed from a gender perspective.

A gender approach requires that we look at rural women's differential access to productive resources such as land, water, credit and knowledge. This analysis, as mentioned above, inevitably leads us to the conclusion that women face increased food insecurity and lower agricultural productivity parallel to lacking the means of participating in the decision making processes that affect their lives. Because women, in comparison to men, face and live under evidently unequal socio-economic and political conditions, this volume adopts a more direct look at women's condition and situation, aiming to discern their roles in agriculture with a view to their present and future perspectives.

The most important challenges facing rural women today are poverty reduction, achieving food security, and increasing rural productivity. To achieve these goals entails improving women's access to and ownership of resources (material, human, and those related to knowledge).

In all the regions surveyed, evidence was found of some key findings highlighted below:

- ▶ Rural women's work suffers from economic invisibility because their productive activities are linked to their domestic responsibilities. Moreover, although they engage in market-oriented agricultural activities, they tend to be primarily responsible for subsistence farming. Standard labour force definitions, validated by cultural perceptions, categorize 'housewives' as economically inactive, a label further corroborated by the fact that production aimed at household consumption does not reach the monetized market economy, and is often overlooked in systems of national accounts. Undervaluation of female labour and production distorts information relating to the agricultural sector, and undermines the quality of policy formulation and planning and programme development for food security.
- ▶ In all regions rural women are consistently disadvantaged in their access to productive assets. There are also pronounced gender gaps in land ownership. Land is the most important asset in any agricultural system, and women formally own a fraction of agricultural land worldwide. Moreover, in many regions rural women are the majority of farm workers, as wage workers or land users. In the latter case, the



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lack of formal ownership hinders investment, by preventing women from using land as collateral to access credit markets.

- ▶ Issues of social capital are highlighted in the case of rural women, as their networks and organizations often fail to link female producers with markets. Resources and services offered by organizations such as cooperatives, water user associations and credit unions, are often accessed through a male relation acting as intermediary. Thus, the specific needs of women in relation to their productive role are likely to be overlooked.
- ▶ Women's agricultural activities are characterized by low levels of mechanization and use of technology because of limited financial capital at their disposal for investment. This translates directly into lower productivity, lower incomes, and fewer means to expand these same agricultural activities. These characteristics cause farming women to fall outside the target groups of many development interventions, which tend to support market-oriented, economically profitable, larger-scale agricultural activities.
- ▶ Gaps in educational levels, between rural women and rural men, urban men and urban women, continue to undermine rural women's capabilities and opportunities. These gaps result from the low priority given to women's human capital in resource allocation, from the household level to national policies. This continues despite the repeated demonstration that the education of girls translates effectively and quickly into better levels of food consumption, health status and nutritional status for present and future generations. Moreover, increased levels of education enhance women's productive capacities, impacting directly on both household and national-level food security.
- ▶ The impact of HIV/AIDS on rural households dramatically illustrates the key role women play in ensuring food security, in as much as the burden of HIV/AIDS rests disproportionately on their shoulders. The workload of women of all generations, as caregivers, is multiplied as the sick and dying are nursed and orphans are brought into the family. Financial resources are drained by

medical and funeral expenses and the increased cost of absorbing additional family members. Household income falls, as production plummets, with the illness and death of adults in their prime years. At the death of the husband, inheritance laws and customs may lead surviving wives into destitution. Immediate survival strategies involve a negative payoff in terms of human capital, which is borne by the next generation, as children are included in the intra and extra-household labour force at the expense of their education.

All these issues offer some understanding as to why rural women are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. The exchange value of resources commanded by women; their time, labour, productive assets, networks, are significantly lower than for men. Women are disadvantaged in relation to men when securing food on a regular basis, and when countering the effects of shocks and variations in food supplies, as they control assets of lesser market value upon which to count as a buffer. Landless rural workers are recognized as the most vulnerable section of the rural population, and women in this category are particularly so.

If there was equality of access, for women and for men, to all resources necessary for agricultural production, how would this impact food security? No region illustrates these conditions. However, analysis of the issues pertaining to rural women as producers and as consumers, favourably indicate that for food security, when given the same inputs as men, women's productivity increases dramatically. Women's education has a direct effect on reduction of child malnutrition, as their income has a more direct impact on the household economy than does a man's.

Assumptions about homogeneity of interests in the rural population conceal factors such as ethnicity, caste, class, age, and the way these shape disparity in access to benefits. In rural households, gender-based differences in access to resources remain hidden. Furthermore, gender is interwoven with other status-conveying criteria including age, ethnicity and caste. As long as these different and sometimes conflicting interests are not taken into account, policies and programmes will fail to address the specific relations between rural poverty and agricultural development.

Gender-specific data on rural women's unpaid and paid labour is the basis for formulating appropriate household-level food security policies. Analysis of the impact



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of trade policies on rural women is particularly relevant, because of the direct impact on food security caused by economic policies affecting women's entitlements.

Agricultural policies, and corresponding budget allocations, must be reviewed from a gender perspective. Gender analysis of national legal frameworks, both formal and customary, are necessary for establishing a legal base for women to legitimately claim assets to enhance their capacities as producers and reduce their vulnerability as consumers.

The importance of women in ensuring food security and the gender-specific obstacles that must be removed have been highlighted in several international conferences and international mechanisms for monitoring implementation of commitments have been designed accordingly. However, as long as issues of integration of small-scale production units into the globalized economy are not addressed, rural women will continue to be marginalized. The need for participatory policy development for the agricultural sector has been identified in the context of a rights-based approach. However, the commercial relevance of this must be demonstrated so that the needs of marginalized farmers can be included into mainstream economic policies.

Development agencies must mainstream gender issues into their programme and project objectives as well as include the promotion of household food security to ensure that the future perspectives for rural women are as bright as those proposed for men and for the rest of the society where they live, labour and contribute.

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Chapter on Agriculture.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADB	Asia Development Bank
AID	Dominican Institute of Agriculture
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
AWU	Annual work unit
BOL	Bolivia
BSE	Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
BSF	Belgian Survival Fund
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CLOC	The Latin American Alliance of Peasant Farmer Organizations
CONAMU	Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres (Ecuador)
COS	Costa Rica
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EAP	Economically active population
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
ENDS	Environmental Data Service
ENIGFAM	Encuesta de Ingresos y Gastos Familiares
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ESU	European standard unit
EU	European Union
FAMA	International media production and publishing company
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO-RAP	FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
FINCA	The Foundation for International Community Assistance
FISE	Emergency Social Investment Fund (Ecuador)
FIVIMS	Food insecurity and vulnerability information and mapping system
FLACSO	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Chile)
FOWODE	Forum for Women in Democracy
FTPP	Forest Trees and People Programme
FWCW	Fourth World Conference on Women
GAD	Gender and Development
GATT	The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade



Abbreviations and acronyms

GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCP	Global Competitiveness Programme
GDI	Gender-related development index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPI	Gender parity index
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German technical cooperation programme)
HDR	Human Development Report
HIPC	Heavily indebted poor countries
ICT	Information and communication technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IHF	International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights
IICA	Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura (Argentina)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INCRA	National Institute of Land Settlement and Reform (Brazil)
INEC	El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (Ecuador)
INTA	Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (Argentina)
IPGRI	International Plant Genetic Resources Institute
ISPA	Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession
km	Kilometre
LDC	Least developed countries
LEADER	One of four initiatives financed by the European Union for rural development
LIFDCs	Low-income food-deficit countries
m	Metre
MAD	Ministry of Agriculture and Development, Brazil
MDGS	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MMR	Maternal mortality ratios
MOALR	Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (Egypt)
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NERC	National Environment Research Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PHARE	Phare programme is one of the three pre-accession instruments financed by the European Union to assist applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union.
PIN	Per capita production index

POA	Plan of Action
PRA	Participatory rapid assessment
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRIE	El Proyecto Regional de Indicadores Educativos (Regional Education Indicators Project)
PROMUDEH	Ministerio de Promoción de la Mujer y del Desarrollo Humano, Peru
RNE	Regional Office for the Near East
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SAPARD	Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
SEAGA	Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Programme
SEARPI	Service for water channeling and regulation of the Pirai river – Bolivia
SERNAM	Chile's National Office for Women
SNA	System of National Accounts (Chile)
SOFA	State of Food and Agriculture (FAO)
SPFS	Special Programme for Food Security (FAO)
TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme (FAO)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	The joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UWESO	Ugandan Women's Efforts to Save Orphans
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	Women in Development
Dunum	Equivalent to 1 000 m ²
Feddan	0.42 hectare

The image features a stylized, monochromatic illustration of the African continent on a globe. The globe is rendered in shades of gray, with the continent of Africa highlighted in a darker tone. A prominent red horizontal band crosses the middle of the globe. Below the globe, a wheat stalk is depicted in a similar monochromatic style, with its grain heads and stalks clearly visible. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a focus on the African region.

The African region



The African region¹

Food security, a major concern



Woman vendor at the vegetable market. Because of the flood, the market had very few vegetables for sale. (A. Proto, 1998)

Africa is largely agricultural based and around 61 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is classified as such. Notwithstanding the importance of agriculture and in spite of abundant natural resources, the average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in constant prices was lower at the end of the 1990s than in 1970 (World Bank, 2000). Income inequality is high in the region and about 16 percent of the population lives in countries with an average GDP per capita of less than US\$200 per year, 36 percent in countries with GDP per capita less than US\$300 and 75 percent live in countries with GDP per capita of less than US\$400 (Dixon, Gulliver and Gibbon, 2001). Africa is the only developing region where crop output and yield growth lag seriously behind population growth (Savadogo, Reardon and Pietola, 1994). The region imports one-third of its food grains and nine of its ten largest countries are net importers of food (Gladwin, Thomson, Peterson and Anderson, 2001).

Food insecurity is a major concern of both national and international communities. The World Food Summit Plan of Action states: “*unless national*

¹This chapter is based on the work of Dr Ivy Drafor, FAO consultant.

governments and the international community address the multifaceted causes underlying food insecurity, the number of hungry and malnourished people will remain very high in developing countries, particularly in Africa south of the Sahara, and sustainable food security will not be achieved” (WFS, 1997). The Plan of Action is part of an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries and to reduce the number of undernourished people by half by the year 2015.

Food security is an income as well as a production issue as it also relates to poverty (Schuh, 1997). In sub-Saharan Africa, close to 300 million people were living in absolute poverty in 1999 and the poverty rate had not declined at all in the ten years prior to that (UN, 2002b). A total of 46.4 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa live below the poverty line. This percentage is projected to increase by 40 percent at which stage Africa will account for 27 percent of the developing world’s poor. It is the rural poor who make up more than 75 percent of the poor in many sub-Saharan and South Asian countries and studies on rural poverty identify small farmers, the landless, women, nomadic pastoralists, artisanal fishers, indigenous ethnic groups and displaced people as the most vulnerable groups in the rural sector (WFS, 1997).

Table 1.1
Population living on less than US\$1 a day
in selected African countries

Country	%	Country	%
Botswana	23.5	Mauritania	28.6
Burkina Faso	61.2	Mozambique	37.9
Burundi	58.4	Namibia	34.9
Cameroon	33.4	Niger	61.4
Central African Republic	66.6	Nigeria	70.2
Côte d'Ivoire	12.3	Rwanda	35.7
Ethiopia	81.9	Senegal	26.3
Gambia	59.3	Sierra Leone	57.0
Ghana	44.8	South Africa	<2
Kenya	23.0	Tanzania	19.9
Lesotho	43.1	Uganda	82.2
Madagascar	49.1	Zambia	63.7
Malawi	41.7	Zimbabwe	36.0
Mali	72.8		

Source UNDP 2003; figures: 1990–2001.

Income is one of the key determinants of household food consumption (Brown *et al.*, 1995). This is why food security is affected by household incomes, economic assets and prices, demographic factors such as household size, gender and age composition and sociocultural factors such as health and sanitation status, educational level, cultural norms and food consumption habits (Anarfi, 2000). Therefore food security for a growing population cannot be achieved without addressing the underlying issue of rural poverty.



Food security, a major concern

In Africa, evidence suggests that men spend a higher proportion of their incremental income on goods for personal use, while women are more likely to purchase goods for their children and for general household consumption. A positive nutritional outcome is associated with increasing women's incomes, as households where women control a larger share of the income, are more likely to meet calorie requirements. Poverty is therefore a major threat to the food security both of the family and of particular individuals within the family (Brown, *et al.*, 1995). Inequalities between men and women serve to generate and perpetuate poverty both within and between generations. To address this issue gender biases need to be removed at every level (UNDP, 1999).

Both rural women and men are active agents in agricultural and rural development, though programmes that provide agricultural support systems to farmers mostly ignore women. Moreover, agricultural and rural development policy and planning do not adequately reflect and address the different roles and needs of rural women and men. Changes are taking place, but the effectiveness of development policies can only be achieved with accurate, systematic statistics on rural women and men producers (FAO, 2001a). Although problems, such as gender biases in food consumption or in-house health care, seem to have been overstated, education and the control of productive assets remain real issues (UN, 1996a; Marcoux, 1997).

Most African countries neglect the agricultural sector and government interventions have done little to address the plight of rural women. Few women participate in national and regional policy-making, and they are invisible in national statistics. Their low participation in extension services means that issues of most concern to women in the design and implementation of many development policies and programmes are neglected (FAO, 1996). Projects intending to increase agricultural productivity need to ensure that the distinct needs, labour constraints, knowledge and decision-making roles of women and men are analysed and addressed (IFAD, 2000).

This chapter considers the state of rural African women and their role in ensuring food security. It discusses female-headed households and their access to productive resources and looks at regional trends, women's contribution to agricultural production as well as their participation in other economic activities. Global trends are discussed such as the impact of land degradation, HIV/AIDS and

its effects on agricultural labour for rural women, natural and human-induced disasters and the feminization of poverty. Changes in the policy environment are presented in relation to rural women, the need for their involvement in planning and decision-making at all levels and the policy support required to enhance agricultural productivity and food security. Finally, recommendations are suggested to strengthen rural women's situation and their efforts to ensure food security.

Rural women and food security – present circumstances

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their needs for an active and healthy life (WFS, 1997). Undoubtedly, if food is in the market but people have no money to buy it, it is not accessible (Wide Bulletin, 2000). Africa continues to suffer from food insecurity because of wars, unrest, poverty and generally low agricultural productivity. As stated by Elbadawi (1999), sub-Saharan Africa remains one of the most politically unstable regions in the world.

Rural women use different survival strategies to ensure household food security. These include, reducing their own consumption during lean seasons, but maintaining that of their children, and working as casual hired labour on larger farms (i.e. farms owned by others). They also engage in other income-generating activities while continuing their farming activities and household tasks (IFAD, 2000; FAO, 1996).

Rural women play a vital role in addressing household food security and nutrition and are involved in much of agricultural and livestock development. They have proven to be the driving force in achieving project objectives and reducing poverty. Therefore, improving the economic status of the poor is largely concerned with enabling women to fully realize their socio-economic potential and improve the quality of their lives (IFAD, 2000).

The nature of African agriculture

Since sub-Saharan Africa's independence, agricultural development has been slow, and the gap between population growth and agricultural production has increased significantly. Regional food imports are widespread, though not enough to achieve the populations' recommended daily calorie intake. While food imports increased, agricultural exports declined, especially in the late 1980s. Compounding these problems, the increasing population led to pressure on agricultural land leading to greater use of less fertile land with the resulting decreases in productivity and household income. Men began to migrate into cities and women sought off-farm income-earning opportunities (World Bank, 1992).

Economic performance across the African region has been varied. Countries such

Table 1.2
Net production growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa*

Year	Agriculture	Crops	Cereals	Roots and tubers	Livestock	Non-food
1992–96	3.9	4.4	5.8	2.4	2.6	3.7
1997	0.5	0.2	-4.2	2.0	1.4	0.3
1998	3.7	4.1	4.1	5.5	2.6	3.9
1999	1.9	1.8	-0.6	4.2	2.5	2.5
2000	-0.3	-1.0	-3.2	0.5	1.4	-0.3
2001**	0.8	0.9	2.4	0.7	0.5	0.6

*Excluding South Africa; **preliminary. Source: FAO, 2002.

as Cameroon, Ghana, Mozambique and Uganda expect continued growth, which is the result of macro-economic and structural reforms, while in many other countries economic growth, especially in the agricultural sector, continues to be hampered by past, ongoing or new conflicts. Table 1.2 shows the net production growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa from 1991 to 2001. After 1998, non-food production products experienced negative growth, which may have been the result of conflict situations.

Several countries are more dependent on agriculture while others have demonstrated a healthy performance in this sector over several decades. Agriculture accounts for more than half the gross domestic product of Burundi, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda, though only 10 percent or less in Botswana and Lesotho. Agriculture in Africa is significantly heterogeneous, varying from extensive slash-

and-burn in the tropical rain forest to irrigated agriculture and pastoralism in drier parts; women are found to play a major part in all these systems (Maxwell, 1998).

In Africa, renewable water resources vary considerably from one country to another and household water use may average 47 litres per person per day. In many communities, water supplies are limited and water-use decisions involve difficult choices. Various users and categories have different needs, priorities and expectations (Rathgeber, 2003). Rural areas lag far behind, and the rural-urban gap in terms of access to safe water is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, where only 45 percent of the rural population has access, against 83 percent for their urban counterparts (Vandemoortele, 2002).

Burundi, Kenya and Rwanda are particularly affected by low unit water supplies of under 10 m³. Effective agricultural production requires water to be available at the right place and time to be relevant to a community (Marcoux, 1998). In the face of the increasing global water shortage, resource economists recommend raising water prices for all uses (including domestic) to encourage efficient water use. This increase may have negative implications for the poor, leading to hardship if they are unable to pay the higher price. Often domestic water supply programmes overlook rural women's productive use of water for irrigation, livestock and other enterprises (Quisumbing and Meinzen-Dick, 2001). An examination of women's participation in the utilization and management of water resources in the broader context of the social construction of gender roles in different regions needs to be undertaken, as women are under-represented in water management at all levels (Rathgeber, 2003).

The agriculturally economic active population and the roles of men and women

Statistics on the economically active population are of limited value when reviewing women's economic involvement in agriculture, food production and processing, as conventional definitions of the labour force underestimate women's work. Some figures for Africa indicate that women represent only 42 percent of the economically active population involved in agriculture, because of the tendency to register women farmers as 'housewives' (FAO, 1996).

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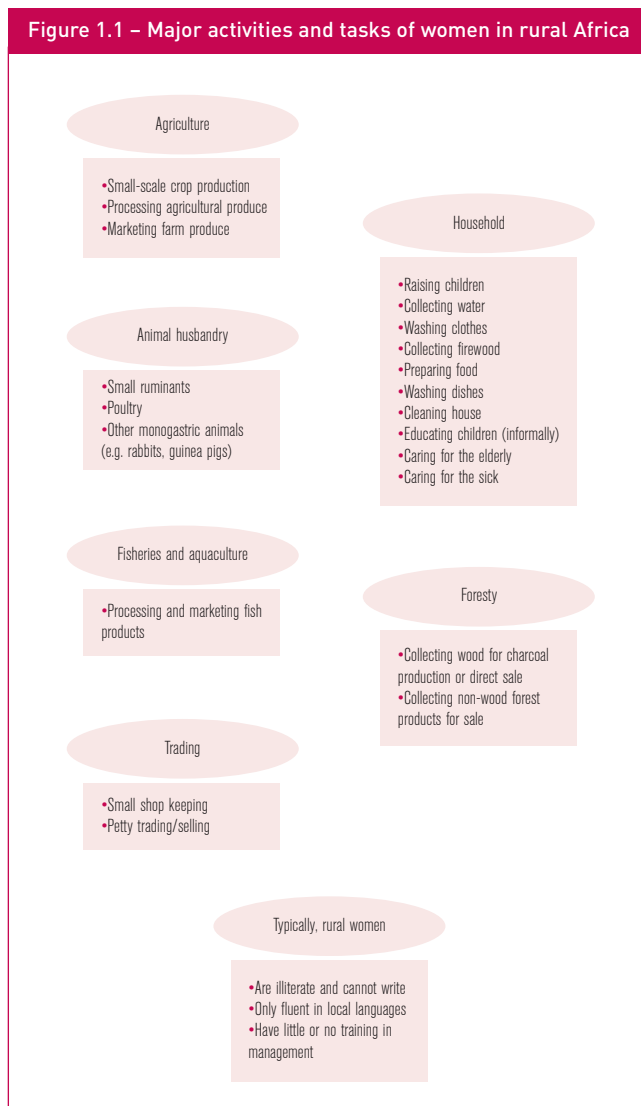
Even so, the percentage of women in the labour force engaged in agriculture is higher than that of men in most countries (World Bank, 2001). The percentage of the active female population working in agriculture attains 98 percent in Burundi, 96 percent in Malawi, 93 percent in Burkina Faso, 87 percent in Angola and 92 percent in Mali and Tanzania. Though this percentage is lower in a few countries: Botswana 3 percent, Kenya 25 percent and South Africa 16 percent (World Bank, 2001).

The division of labour between women and men in agricultural production varies considerably between regions and communities. Usually men are responsible for

highly mechanized large-scale cash cropping, while women take care of household food production and small-scale cultivation of cash crops, requiring lower levels of technology (FAO, 2001a).

Most women in rural Africa are over-burdened with a wide range of activities and agricultural tasks: animal husbandry, the household and sometimes fisheries and aquaculture (Guèye, 2001); much of this work may be unpaid labour and is characterized by low productivity; limited access to credit; land; training and limited use of technology (FAO, 1996).

Gender-specific roles and responsibilities are conditioned by household structure, access to resources, and the specific impacts of the global economy (FAO, 1997). Figure 1.1 gives an overview of the major activities undertaken by rural women in Africa. Being primarily responsible for food production, they fetch water for domestic use and small-scale irrigation; market agricultural produce; care for children, the aged and the sick and undertake minor trading for additional income. They are also involved in processing and marketing of fish products and collection of wood for charcoal production or direct sales.



Adapted from: Guèye, 2001

In the past, household units – men, women and children together – were responsible for the foodstuffs needed to maintain their families. A division of labour existed, but everybody worked for the direct survival of the family. With the introduction of cash crops, men's main responsibility shifted to their production, often with considerable labour contributions from women. Commercial crop production was partly induced by the growing need for cash, necessary for survival in increasingly monetized societies. The introduction of cash crops weakened the traditional gender-based division of intra-household rights and obligations, and farmwomen increasingly undertook tasks previously done by men (Saito, *et al.*, 1994). All this further increased women's responsibility to provide for family food requirements.

The synthesis report on women, agriculture and rural development in Africa, prepared by FAO for the Fourth World Conference on Women and a World Bank report, states that women in sub-Saharan Africa contribute 60 to 80 percent of food-producing labour for household consumption and for sale. Women's contributions to the production of food crops range from 30 percent in the Sudan to 80 percent in the Congo (World Bank, 2001; FAO, 1995). Table 1.3 provides information on women's contribution to agriculture in selected countries.



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Table 1.3
Women's labour contribution and role in agriculture in selected African countries

Benin	70 percent of the female population live in rural areas, where they carry out 69 percent of agricultural work and furnish up to 44 percent of work necessary for household subsistence.
Burkina Faso	Women constitute 48 percent of labourers in the agricultural sector.
Democratic Republic of Congo	Women account for 84 percent of those economically active in agriculture and produce more than 80 percent of food crops.
Mauritania	The proportion of agricultural work carried out by men and women is 65 and 79 percent, respectively.
Morocco	Approximately 72 percent of the female population participates in agricultural activities, with greater involvement in animal and less in vegetable production.
Namibia	Women account for 59 percent of those engaged in skilled and subsistence agriculture work, and women continue to shoulder the primary responsibility for food production and preparation.
Sudan	In the traditional sector, women constitute 80 percent of farmers. Women farmers represent approximately 49 percent of farmers in the irrigated sector. Women produce 30 percent of the food.
Tanzania	92 percent of rural women, defined as economically active, are engaged in agriculture and produce a substantial share of the food crops for both household consumption and export.
Zimbabwe	Women constitute 61 percent of farmers in communal areas and comprise at least 70 percent of the labour force.

Source: World Bank, 2001; FAO, 1995.

Rural women make up a considerable portion of the agricultural labour force employed in the informal sector, which accounts for a substantial share of the GDP throughout sub-Saharan Africa. However, customary laws affect the labour rights of African rural women workers. Under customary legal systems, women must provide unpaid and unprotected labour for certain tasks in their husband's fields and work required within the household. Women and men play varied roles in rural agriculture with a gender division of labour; mainly men cultivate cash crops, while women cultivate food crops and/or locally traded crops (Cotula, 2002).

Inequality in resource distribution, which includes the food that is consumed in the household, results in women generally being poorer than men. Therefore, understanding the resource allocation among household members is essential for predicting the outcome of a policy. A person's bargaining power within the family depends not only on asset ownership, but on access to employment, access to communal resources, traditional social support systems, support from NGOs and the state, social norms, and perceptions (IFPRI, 1997).

Rural female-headed households

Today women are the majority of smallholder farmers; they provide most labour and the day-to-day management of their small-scale farms. Women head about 30 percent of rural households in sub-Saharan Africa; in some regions, this share is 60 percent (Akello, 1999; FAO, 1997b). Factors that increase the number of female-headed households include wars; male migration for jobs; changing marriage, bridewealth and dowry arrangements (FAO, 2001c).

Saito *et al.*, classify female-headed households into three groups: i) autonomous households recognized and accepted as headed de jure by women, mostly widows or single women; ii) households headed de facto by wives during the male head's absence for various periods of time, the degree of autonomy and independence of action of these female heads vary with ethnic mores and personal circumstances and whether remittances are received or not; and iii) polygamous households, where co-wives head economic subunits (of themselves and their children) within the household (Saito, *et al.*, 1994). Further investigation is required of the relationship between the economic status of female-headed households, and whether or not the household receives remittances. In some countries, such as Cape Verde, it was found that remittances improved the economic situation of some female-headed households.

In parts of sub-Saharan Africa, male rural-urban migration has been greater than for females, leaving women behind to assume responsibility for farming activities. Migration has contributed to the rise in female-headed households, thus challenging gender-based roles in rural areas, as women assume traditionally male activities. Other factors contributing to the rise in female-headed households include family disintegration, international migration, war and internal displacements (FAO, 2001a; Buvinic and Gupta, 1997).

In Guinea, the economically active rural labour-force aged 20 to 49 is now predominantly female (FAO, 1995a), which may be the result of the high rate of male migration to urban areas and death from HIV/AIDS. Increasing male out-migration from rural areas means that women are increasingly responsible, not only for the family food supply, but for national food security. Alternatively, rural women, especially younger women, migrate to urban areas for work to earn additional income before marrying and to learn skills including batik making,

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Farmers meet to plan for the next cropping season. (A. Conti, 1994)

hairdressing and dressmaking. Some young women return to the rural areas while others remain in the cities.

In Sahelian countries female-headed households are under-estimated, because the wives of migrants remain under the authority of the head of the extended family and widows marry their husband's brother or acknowledge their eldest son as head of household. A World Bank study states that about 26 percent of male heads of household were absent (World Bank, 1995); as a result, de facto female heads of household are deprived of resources and revenues

earmarked for heads of households.

Female-headed households tend to be smaller than male-headed households with fewer family members available for farm work and other income-generating activities (Ellis, 2000). To cope, women reduce the crop area under cultivation or change to less labour-intensive crops, some with a lower nutritional value such as cassava. Use of child labour is more common in female than in male-headed households, which reduces children's educational level and learning opportunities. Female heads of households face acute time constraints because of domestic responsibilities, farm and off-farm activities. Women spend up to five hours a day collecting fuelwood and water, and up to four hours preparing food, leaving little time for child care or other productive tasks (IFAD, 2000a). To alleviate labour constraints intra-household labour is reallocated, children may be taken out of school when HIV/AIDS has led to the loss of an adult family member (UNAIDS, 1999).

Table 1.4 shows female-headed households and total fertility rate of women in selected African countries. In most countries births per woman are decreasing, which may be ascribed to improvement in their education levels. The percentage of female-headed households is quite high in Botswana (47 percent); Namibia (39 percent); Cape Verde (38 percent); Ghana (37 percent) and in Kenya (33 percent).

Table 1.4
Women-headed households and total fertility rate in selected countries in Africa

Country	Female-headed households %	Total fertility rate (Births per woman)		Country	Female-headed households %	Total fertility rate (Births per woman)	
		1991/1997	1990-1995 2000-2005			1991/1997	1990-1995 2000-2005
Benin	18	6.5	5.7	Mali	8	7.0	7.0
Botswana	47	4.9	3.9	Mauritius	18	2.3	1.9
Burkina Faso	7	7.1	6.8	Morocco	15	3.9	3.0
Burundi	25	6.8	6.8	Namibia	39	5.8	4.9
Cameroon	18	5.7	4.7	Niger	10	8.0	8.0
Cape Verde	38	3.9	3.2	Nigeria	14	6.4	5.4
Central African Rep	21	5.6	4.9	Randa	25	6.7	5.8
Cote d'Ivoire	15	5.7	4.6	Senegal	18	6.1	5.1
Ghana	37	5.3	4.2	Sierra Leone	11	6.5	6.5
Guinea	7	6.4	5.8	Sudan	13	5.3	4.5
Kenya	33	5.4	4.2	South Africa	-	3.3	2.9
Lesotho	23	5.0	4.5	Tanzania	22	5.9	5.0
Liberia	19	6.8	6.8	Uganda	29	7.1	7.1
Madagascar	22	6.2	5.7	Zambia	17	6.3	5.7
Malawi	26	7.2	6.3	Zimbabwe	33	5.5	4.5

Source: UNDP, 2001

Often greater obstacles are faced by female-headed households in meeting household needs than by male-headed households, because women have lower economic and social status and fewer opportunities (FAO, 2001a). Female-headed households have limited access to and control over water, credit and social services. Poor rural female-headed households do not own land or the resources to earn enough for themselves and their children. Access to credit is restricted as loans may require the signature of the partner or land as collateral (FAO, 2001c).

Wives in polygamous families must ensure their children receive sufficient food per day. In Burkina Faso, where at least half of the men in a study area have more than one wife, women are primarily responsible for the feeding, schooling and health care of their children. Where the man has a lower income, responsibilities for child care, including school fees and clothing, transfer almost entirely to the woman (Tsikata, 2000).

Access to agricultural productive resources

Women are often disadvantaged in terms of access to assets, information and formal decision-making (IFAD, 2000; FAO, 2001a). Women's unequal access to resources is rooted in cultural and social institutions as much as in economic processes (Coelho and Coffey, 1996). In sub-Saharan Africa, more women than men are too poor to buy inputs such as fertilizer. Moreover, financial institutions do not consider women creditworthy (Rathgeber, 2003).

Access to land

Rights to land and houses convey status and power within the community, yet these resources are unequally distributed between men and women (Quisumbing and Meinzen-Dick, 2001). In sub-Saharan Africa, where women are primarily responsible for food production, land rights are generally limited to user rights. In various parts of

Box 1.1 WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS IN BURKINA FASO AND KENYA

In Burkina Faso, legislation does not formally discriminate against women. However, in rural areas customary law is applied. For example, under Mossi customary law, landownership belongs to the ancestors; the chief allocates land (*chef de terre*) and only men can be chiefs. Women do not have direct land rights, but access land through husbands and male relatives. A widow may marry a younger brother of the deceased husband or remain as widow with the in-law family, in which case she maintains access to her husband's family land. Women may borrow land from people outside the family, although they have no secure tenure and their use rights are limited particularly with the cultivation of perennial crop farms.

Under Kenya's Law of Succession Act 1972, female and male children have the same succession rights and widows have life interest in the estate, which they lose upon remarriage. However, inheritance of agricultural lands, crops and livestock continues to be governed by customary law (Section 33), according to which wives and daughters do not inherit family property. In rural areas, it is widespread practice for fathers to leave land to their sons, in the expectation their daughter's husband will care for them. Overall, women's land rights in Kenya are severely limited.

Source: Cotula, 2002

the region, women still lack independent rights to own or manage property. In most countries, legislation does not discriminate against women, although customary laws and traditions are severely limiting.

In much of sub-Saharan Africa, women mainly obtain land rights through their husband as long as the marriage endures. They often lose these rights when divorced or widowed (Tsikata, 2000; World Bank, 2000a; and Brown, *et al.*, 1995). As men primarily own and control land, women may acquire the rights to land through their father. However, women's productivity often remains low

because they may not have the right to make decisions on agricultural practices or are unable to obtain credit without land rights (Quisumbing and Meinzen-Dick, 2001), thus eliminating incentives to invest in the productive resources they use. These rural women do not have the security of returns on their investments (e.g. labour); Box 1.1 illustrates the severe limitations to landownership faced by women in Burkina Faso and Kenya.

Limited land rights increase women's vulnerability, especially during famines. Alternatively, direct access to land minimizes a woman's risk of impoverishment and improves the physical well-being and prospects of her children. Direct access to land is particularly relevant to women in female-headed households as it facilitates access to agricultural support services, as many development specialist programmes seek only heads of households with secure tenure. Rural women claim that secure land rights increase their social and political status, improve their sense of self-esteem, confidence, security and dignity (Crowley, 2001).

Effective access to, use and management of productive inputs, income and wealth are essential for women to realize their economic potential and to provide women the incentive to invest their labour and financial resources. However, land systems and registration acts constrain women's right to own land. In Kenya for example, a daughter may have the right to use her father's land but she cannot own it. In Cameroon, where laws have changed to give women the right to own land, cumbersome administrative procedures may block their ownership (World Bank, 1992a).

Agricultural development and related services

Farm level research and appropriate technology

Improved technology is recognized as crucial to increasing agricultural productivity, and accelerating rural economic growth (Huvio, 1998). Women's work, especially in rural areas, is strenuous and time consuming and the need for labour-saving and income-generating technologies is acute. Years of research and development experience show that technology is not gender neutral. Most research and development programmes, from the 1970s through the mid-1990s, only partly recognized women's contribution to the development process (Paris, *et al.*, 2001).



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Appropriate technology needs to be adopted to help the farming community maintain production levels and respond to increasing demands. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa cereal yields are the lowest in the world, farm sizes are decreasing and traditional soil restoration methods are less feasible; however, the agricultural sector is expected to produce food for the growing rural and urban populations and to provide raw materials for the industrial sector. Future agricultural development will have to rely increasingly on securing higher yields (Saito, *et al.*, 1994).

Women farmers face multiple constraints to obtaining improved seeds, new crop varieties, knowledge of improved cropping systems and other forms of technology. The lack of, or limited access to, appropriate technology is related to widespread poverty among rural women, as most of their productive activities are not market oriented. The absence of legal rights to land limits women's access to credit and membership to farmers' organizations, further restricting access to inputs, services and credit (Cotula, 2002; Quisumbing and Meinzen-Dick, 2001; and Tsikata, 2000).

Although technological change can generate major social and economic benefits, it can also increase costs; for example, rural households in Asia need more cash to cover costs for new technological inputs, forcing women to work as agricultural labourers. At the same time, women's wage-earning opportunities are reduced by mechanization (FAO, 1996b).

In the past, agricultural research, technical training and extension programmes primarily targeted men (FAO, 1996b). For this reason, technologies and tools introduced to communities to improve productivity were often based on rural men's needs and perceptions, which can substantially differ from those of women farmers. FAO and other agencies realized that more equitable and sustainable technologies should be developed to respond to gender-differentiated needs and priorities to improve food security for all, both at the household and national levels.

Rural women are well informed about traditional technologies, although they may generally have little access to the benefits of modern technology. This is partly because they are excluded from the process of setting research priorities and the generation and dissemination of new technologies. Technological development on its own, without inputs and suggestions from women and men farmers, cannot ensure the sustainable improvement of agricultural production. Research on the gender-related impact of

technological change, in all areas of agriculture, shows that development of new or improved technologies must consider intra-household divisions of labour, income and access to land to assess possible impacts fully. Women's involvement in research, policy-making and planning is essential to ensure that the most productive use of resources meets present and future food-security demands from the household to the global level (Huvio, 1998).

Rural women have yet to obtain significant access to improved inputs. Overall, Africa's women farmers have been unable to benefit from the introduction of new technologies. These were too expensive, difficult to maintain, inefficient to use and inappropriate for crops grown by women farmers or harmful to women's health and safety (Jazairy, *et al.*, 1992). Rural women have a great need for economically accessible labour and energy-saving technologies, which means developing an understanding of their specific farming roles and constraints (World Bank, 1992).

Educational programmes

Over the past 20 years, life expectancy increased 20 percent faster for women than for men. Gaps in educational attainment are closing, which increases women's capabilities and expands their opportunities to exercise choices. This results in improved food and nutritional security for the household, society and nation (Quisumbing and Meinzen-Dick, 2001). Significant differences remain between male and female adult literacy rates across Africa as shown in Table 1.5. The rate for female literacy is below 20 percent in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger; placing them in a disadvantaged position to obtain information on new farm technology, to participate in planning and decision-making forums and to create new income-generating opportunities. However, literacy rates among females are significantly higher in Botswana; Congo; Lesotho; Mauritius; South Africa and Zimbabwe.

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Table 1.5
Adult literacy rate by gender in African countries

Country	Adult literacy rate		Country	Adult literacy rate	
	Female	Male		Female	Male
Benin	24.6	53.5	Mali	16.6	36.7
Botswana	80.6	75.3	Mauritania	30.7	51.1
Burkina Faso	14.9	34.9	Mauritius	81.7	88.0
Burundi	42.0	56.9	Mozambique	30.0	61.2
Cameroon	65.1	79.9	Namibia	81.9	83.4
Central African Rep	36.6	60.8	Niger	8.9	24.4
Congo	75.9	88.2	Nigeria	57.7	73.3
Congo, Dem. Rep.	51.8	74.2	Rwanda	61.9	74.5
Cote d'Ivoire	38.4	60.3	Senegal	28.7	48.1
Ethiopia	32.4	48.1	Sudan	47.7	70.0
Gambia	30.9	45.0	South Africa	85	86.3
Ghana	64.5	81.1	Swaziland	79.4	81.3
Guinea-Bissau	24.7	55.2	Tanzania	67.9	84.5
Kenya	77.3	89.5	Togo	44.0	73.4
Lesotho	93.9	73.3	Uganda	58.0	78.1
Madagascar	60.6	74.2	Zambia	72.7	85.8
Malawi	47.6	75.0	Zimbabwe	85.5	93.3

Source: UNDP, 2003

Almost all regions have made progress in achieving universal primary education, but the lowest net enrollment ratios are recorded for sub-Saharan Africa, which is making slow progress. Gender inequalities at all levels of education continue to hinder economic development and social equity. This gap is important because countries that recognize women's rights acknowledge our common human dignity and double their capacities, benefiting from the energies and insights of the other half of their population (UN, 2002b). The world is not on track to achieve the Third Millennium Development Goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005²; at the current rate, that target will not be met until 2025. Gender discrimination in primary school enrollment is a concern particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (Vandemoortele, 2002). Gender disaggregated data from the formal school system indicate an increasing female school dropout rate the higher the educational level (GTZ, 1997).

² Faster progress was made toward gender equality in secondary and tertiary education, but it was not enough to close the gender gap by the agreed date.

Extension and training

In many developing countries today, gender concerns are of low priority in the planning and implementation of extension policies and programmes. Women farmers are rarely reached by extension services, and there has been little technical information to improve the productivity of women's agricultural activities. Another constraint to women's access to extension in agriculture and livestock is the general perception that women are primarily 'housewives', rather than decision-making farmers. Thus, extension services focus on male 'farmers' who are expected to direct the work of female 'family labour' (Jazairy, *et al.*, 1992).


Women's full role in production-related activities needs to be brought into the mainstream of extension services and training. A number of changes have been made over the last five years in the extension system. One is the farmer field-school approach, which has a high adoption rate in Kenya and Uganda. Under the farmer field-school system, the establishment of women's groups is encouraged and sometimes solely women make up the schools. These efforts need to be extended to other parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

Agricultural extension agents are an important source of information for all farmers, particularly women, given their generally lower levels of education. Despite the long tradition of female farming in sub-Saharan Africa, male farmers have more contact with extension services. Few women are agricultural extension agents and agricultural research and extension institutions rarely seek the expertise of local women farmers. The number of female agricultural extension agents needs to be increased particularly in societies where interaction of female farmers with male agricultural extension agents is culturally unacceptable. Agricultural extension agents will need training or retraining in order to be relevant to female farmers (Brown, *et al.*, 1995). According to Quisumbing, *et al.* (1995), yields on women's plots could increase with improved education, experience and inputs (see Box 1.2).

Box 1.2 IMPACT OF EQUAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Kenyan women farmers could increase their yields by 9 to 24 percent if they had the same experience, education and inputs as men. In Kenya, yields could increase by 24 percent if all women farmers had primary schooling.

Source: Quisumbing, *et al.*, 1995



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The effort to empower women both socially and economically is most effective when supported by skills, management and leadership training along with literacy programmes. Women's response to training opportunities has often exceeded expectations in IFAD-supported projects. Training for income generation has drawn the greatest participation and proved most effective when directed at activities chosen by women and that have adequate market opportunities (IFAD, 2000).

When women overcome constraints and gain access to new technologies, they are equally or more likely to be innovators than men. In Zambia, a study revealed that wealthier farm households headed by women are more likely to adopt improved maize varieties than those headed by men (Brown, *et al.*, 1995). As women have a lower risk threshold, because of their vulnerable state related to their productive and reproductive responsibilities, more research would help to understand the particular conditions under which rural women will negotiate their risk aversion and embrace innovation.

Credit

Financial reforms have not targeted women, but have improved the rural financial market for the poor in general (Tsikata, 2000). Socio-cultural constraints and stereotypes of non-creditworthiness exclude women from formal sources of credit: banks, cooperatives and credit unions. An analysis of credit schemes in Kenya; Malawi; Sierra Leone; Zambia and Zimbabwe found that women had received less than 10 percent of credit directed to smallholders and 1 percent of the total credit to agriculture (Du Guerny, 1996).

Often agricultural loans require land title or cattle as collateral, which many farm households do not have (Du Guerny, 1996). In particular, the constraints women face to owning land means they are unable to use it as collateral for credit, which is critical for the timely purchase of inputs such as improved seed varieties and fertilizer. The absence of credit limits women's adoption of new technology, the hiring of labour when required, the growing of crops needing large outlays of cash, the purchase of their own land where they can legally, or to purchase capital goods (Brown, *et al.*, 1995). This creates a negative cycle; without land, farmers cannot obtain credit and without credit, they cannot obtain land.

Some credit programmes have been directed towards women caring for orphans,

such as the Ugandan Women's Efforts to Save Orphans (UWESO), which has successfully reached a number of women in Uganda (see Box 1.3).

Farmers associations

Participation in rural organizations such as peasants' associations, agricultural labour unions, cooperatives and project beneficiary committees increases rural men and women's access to productive resources, information, training and commercial networks. Membership in these organizations allows people to present their interests to government authorities and project management. Though no law prohibits female membership, women's access to these organizations is often severely limited because membership is based on the criteria of landownership and/or status as head-of-household (Jazairy, *et al.*, 1992; FAO, 1990) or allows for only one member from each agricultural household.

It is important to tackle the challenges of consolidating grassroots organizations as a means to providing women a voice. FAO reports:

'There is evidence that associations organized at the grassroots level are more effective than those created for a particular project. Women's groups at both grassroots and national levels have been effective in promoting the integration of gender issues into mainstream development activities and the participation of women in decision-making. However, women's groups, at all levels, are faced with problems of inadequate training and skills and insufficient financial resources' (FAO, 1990).

Box 1.3 UGANDAN WOMEN'S EFFORTS TO SAVE ORPHANS (UWESO)

When Selina Anyodo was widowed, she assumed the sole responsibility for the care of her seven children. As she had no means of earning a living, Selina began to work in other people's kitchen gardens, which enabled her to feed her children only once a day. She was still unable to clothe the children properly or send them to school. Selina was encouraged to join the Ugandan Women's Efforts to Save Orphans (UWESO) savings and credit scheme.

She was given a small loan to start a business, and she bought vegetables from her neighbours to sell in the local market. With the profits, she bought seeds and fertilizers, began growing her own produce and diversified her activities by buying a goat. She now has a steady income and a healthy savings account in the local bank. She is able to feed her children three solid meals a day; she built a bathing area and hygienic drying rack for her dishes. She has many plans and hopes for the future.

The UWESO Savings and Credit Scheme began in April 1996 and targets families caring for orphans. Women are a primary focus as on average they care for six children. Clusters of women are trained for at least eight weeks in group solidarity, leadership skills, business management, marketing, savings and credit management. Four thousand loans have been provided to 1 875 people, 87 percent are women. The scheme is supported by the Belgian Survival Fund under its joint programme with IFAD.

Source: IFAD, 2000



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Information

In this era of tremendous advancement in information and communication technologies (ICT), rural areas remain outside mainstream information channels and most new technologies are beyond the reach of rural women. Furthermore, sex-disaggregated data are scarce and policy-makers and development agencies are unable to understand women's conditions and reflect their needs in development efforts.

FAO actively participated in the international effort to document, develop and disseminate information and data on the roles and responsibilities of rural women in agricultural production, food security and rural development (FAO, 1999a). The Organization promoted the development of global databases, methodologies and analysis in FAOSTAT, which is available on the internet. FAOSTAT information is based on national data provided by member countries, obtained from their agricultural censuses and annual surveys of agricultural production. Moreover, FAO has established the food insecurity and vulnerability information and mapping system (FIVIMS) to raise awareness and integrate complementary information about food security issues and to improve the quality of food security-related data and analysis.

One of the objectives addressed by the World Food Summit was to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women. Hereto the Summit recommended increased efforts to improve the collection, dissemination and use of gender-disaggregated data in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development. This corresponds with the increasing demand for gender-specific statistics at the national and regional levels, from researchers, academics, women's groups and non-governmental organizations. All are interested in addressing various socio-economic development issues and participating more actively in decision-making on such topics.

Information technology can also be used to organize information and to empower rural women by increasing their access to information, thus leveling gender and class-based inequalities generated by differential access to information. For effective gender mainstreaming, both men and women need information on women's rights in relation to natural and human resources. Poor women need access to project information to reduce the possibility that wealthier groups (of men or women), connected to the local elite, take control of the benefits of a rural project (IFAD, 2000). This information can be provided through extension service delivery,

education and the use of radio. FAO has undertaken several initiatives to empower women through ICT, in particular using rural radio in Benin, Congo, Mali and Niger (FAO, 2000a).

Rural women's work as entrepreneurs and off-farm income activities

In addition to the active role rural women play in food production, most post-harvest activities are the responsibility of women and children. Food processing, storage and preservation of agricultural produce are nearly exclusively undertaken by women. They transport agricultural produce from the fields to the homestead and market centres on their heads, since most farms are inaccessible to vehicles. Besides, women play a major role in the marketing of agricultural produce (Anarfi, 2000) in its largest sense, as demonstrated in Figure 1.1.

Some programmes have trained women in entrepreneurial skills and

income-generation activities, for example, a FAO project provided training to several women in management, soap manufacture and masonry (Box 1.4).

Although cash crop production such as cocoa, coffee and sheanuts has long been seen as the domain of men, women do play a role in these enterprises. Their participation is significant and it is estimated that 30 percent of cocoa farmers are women. Besides, most male cocoa farmers have a wife or wives who cater to their food needs and make other contributions promoting the success of the enterprise (Anarfi, 2000).


While home-based micro-enterprises may not be profitable enough to improve income levels significantly, they diversify income sources and reduce vulnerability. They build confidence for trading in markets, support credit repayment and

Box 1.4 REVOLVING FUND FOR WOMEN'S GROUPS IN MALI

Incomes generated through the formation of women's groups, resulted in increasing the livelihood potential of rural women. In Kayes, a semi-arid district in north Mali, an FAO project supported women in 50 villages. These women did not own land and could not obtain credit without collateral. The project established a revolving fund to enable them to buy seed, fertilizer, water pumps for irrigation and mills to grind millet and sorghum.

More than 900 villagers received training in management, tree cultivation, reforestation, soap manufacture and masonry. Some women created home and market gardens that provide them with additional income to buy essential ingredients for the diets of their families, others have established nurseries for banana, lemon, neem and eucalyptus trees.

Source: FAO, 1997b



Rural women and food security – present circumstances

contribute to the family cash flow. However, these operations require significantly higher levels of education, business skills, group organization, time and mobility (IFAD, 2000). Some organizations such as IFAD have therefore developed an integrated package combining financial and non-financial services, skills training in management and marketing, credit and organizational assistance for women.

Livestock activities

Livestock provides a high share of household income among poorer and landless families, in particular women. Purchasing livestock is often women's preferred use of credit, for both income and security, as livestock provides food, cash, draft power, fertilizer and gains value through reproduction. Still, women's right to animals varies with culture, class and type of animal. Buying and raising small livestock is more affordable to rural women, though profits are generally low. Women's ownership of larger animals such as cattle and donkeys is limited due to the cost involved in acquiring them (Miller, 2001) and sociocultural norms, which sometimes prevent women from working with draught animals.

Women devote a large amount of time, labour and expertise to agricultural and livestock production. In almost all regions, women have significant responsibilities in the care and management of livestock and the processing of livestock products.

Global and regional trends

Structural adjustment programme and related policies

Structural adjustment programmes (SAP) and market-oriented economic reforms have special implications for the agricultural sector and rural populations. The broad design of a SAP generally aims to remove urban bias and can sometimes bring better prices to agricultural producers, provide incentives for increasing production, particularly of internally tradable and export-oriented crops. These price changes are accompanied by higher prices for inputs caused by the removal of state subsidies and the indirect taxation of imported inputs via currency devaluation. The matrix of changes in production, consumption and incentives causes re-allocation of resources between sectors, crops and products and within the household (Coelho and Coffey, 1996).

Overall the SAP and market reforms did not achieve their intended re-allocations sometimes failing to take gender factors into account, both at the intra-household level and in the broader economy. It should be recognized that farm-household production decisions on crop choice result from intra-household decision-making, determined by the nature of incentives offered to women and men and the gendered resource allocation in the household (Coelho and Coffey, 1996).

Women farmers in Togo, for example, feel marginalized under rural development policies applied under the structural adjustment programme. These policies do not make any differentiation of gender-specific factors in agricultural production and do not take into account the constraints of customs and social rules limiting women's activities (Kantchati, 2000).

The negative impacts may stem from the fact that the SAP and market reform



Fish vendor in
the market at Akosombo.
(Peyton Johnson, 1969)

policies aim to allocate resources from the non-traded to the traded sector through price incentives for traded commodities. The success of this attempt depends on the extent to which female labour is mobile across these sectors.

Other fundamental components of the SAP directly affected the livelihood of women. The removal of subsidies required by the SAP was largely borne by women, thus increasing their unpaid workload (Tsikata, 2000).

Globalization

Many African countries are rather weakly connected to the modern global economy. Though international commodity markets continue to expand, Africa's sales into those markets are reducing. Surprisingly, Africa's total volume of exported agricultural

products such as coffee, palm oil and sugar is less today than it was 30-years ago (Paarlberg, 2002). Globalization, together with trade liberalization policies, has favoured large-scale commercial farming and export cash cropping over household subsistence production. Globalization poses particular risks to small-scale farmers who form the backbone of agriculture in many developing countries. Small-scale production systems are thrown off balance by liberalization of trade, privatization of resources and services, structural adjustment policies, new marketing forces, modernization of agriculture and other socio-economic factors. In addition, small farmers compete



Fishmongers busy boning and salting fish. FAO, 1998.

against cheap imports, much of which are unfairly subsidized (IFPRI, 2001) and produced with more cost-efficient methods.

As a result of gender inequalities and discrimination, women may be more negatively affected by globalization and liberalization processes than men, especially in rural areas. According to FAO's Gender and Development Plan for Action 2002–2007, opening up local markets to less expensive imports and the removal of agricultural subsidies have adversely affected female farmers in particular. They have found it increasingly difficult to reap the fruits of liberalization, which may result from difficult access to agricultural inputs (FAO, 2001a). More than men, rural

women lack training, investment and access to information, which prevents them from being able to compete on the 'global' market. Globalization has contributed to the feminization of agriculture because men leave rural areas in search of paid employment increasing the number of female-headed households (FAO, 2000a).

Long-term development trends suggest that progressive industrialization of agriculture is associated with a decrease in the populations involved in food production. The rapid pace of globalization accelerates the monetization of subsistence producers; farmers are faced with increasing demands for cash and declining earnings from conventional products following the commercialization of agriculture.

The reallocation of resources during adjustment from the non-tradable to the tradable sector was expected to raise incomes in the export-oriented sectors, however evidence indicates that in some regions women, being mainly responsible for the production of non-tradable goods, have not been able to reap the benefits of trade liberalization. Market liberalization resulted in the breakdown of local marketing cooperatives, which women would have preferred and thus resulted in a decline in marketed food production by women (FAO, 2001d).

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS was originally perceived and dealt with largely as an urban problem, but evidence shows that HIV incidence tends to rise faster in the rural areas of most developing countries than in urban settings. HIV-infected urban dwellers often return to their village during later stages of their sickness, thus introducing/increasing HIV/AIDS in rural areas. Moreover, rural households provide most of the care for AIDS patients (FAO, 2001). A UNAIDS document shows that rural subsistence households are affected more acutely than urban families (UNAIDS, 1999). HIV/AIDS is perceived as a pandemic challenging the basis of agricultural production and food security in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, which adds to the problems of the rural poor, especially women, who have limited rights to land and restricted access to resources.

Of the 36.1 million people estimated to have been infected by HIV worldwide in 2000, some 25.3 million or 70 percent lived in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2001, there were 16 countries in the region with more than one-tenth of their adult population infected



The national Ugandan AIDS support group, TASO, whose motto is Living Positively with AIDS, honours the memory of deceased friends by quilting their names on banners. The banners are raised during TASO festivities, held to buoy the spirits of people with AIDS and their families. Such quilts have been created in numerous countries as memorials to victims of AIDS. (K. Dunn, 1994)

with the virus. Deaths from HIV/AIDS in the African region increased from 2.2 million in 1999 to 2.4 million in 2000, and created some 12.1 million orphans (FAO, 2001). In some countries, where effective prevention is achieved, the rate of infection is stabilizing.

According to FAO estimates, two person-years of labour are lost in an AIDS-afflicted household by the time one person dies from the disease. In Kenya, a study showed that between 48 to 78 percent of household income is lost

when one person has died of AIDS (Villarreal, 2001). The population groups most at risk are those situated along truck routes to rural areas and near large infrastructure projects. Overall, most of those infected with HIV are rural dwellers and women are relatively worse affected (FAO, 2001).

Studies in Africa show that teenage girls are five to six times more likely to be infected by the HIV virus than boys their age. The HIV infection rate among educated women fell by almost half in the 1990s, whereas there was no significant decrease for women without formal schooling (UNAIDS, 2000). Customarily, in most rural African societies, women are not supposed to be concerned with their husband's sexual behaviour outside marriage and there is little discussion of sex between spouses or generations (Anarfi, 2000).

Women have limited access to productive resources as land, credit, knowledge, training and technology. When a husband dies, a wife may lose whatever access has been gained through the man and her livelihood and that of the children may be threatened (Villarreal, 2001; Du Guerny, 1998). Rural households suffer loss of productive labour, income, food reserves and reduced nutrition. Savings and assets are diverted to meet health care and funeral costs thus reducing children's educational opportunities (Box 1.5) (UNAIDS, 1999). Moreover, labour shortages are particularly severe in agriculture as production is seasonal and timing crucial (FAO, 2001; ILO, 2000).

FAO estimated that in the 25 most affected African countries, seven million

agricultural workers died of AIDS between 1985 and 2000, 16 million more could die within the next 20 years. According to FAO and UNAIDS studies, agricultural output of small-scale farmers in some parts of Zimbabwe may have fallen by as much as 50 percent over the past five years, mainly as a result of AIDS (FAO, 2001; UNAIDS, 1999). Up to 26 percent of the agricultural labour force could be lost in countries of sub-Saharan Africa because of AIDS by the year 2020. Since the disease mainly affects people aged 15–49, who are economically the most productive members of society, HIV/AIDS is a problem of economic and social importance (Villarreal, 2001).

As the agricultural labour force decreases because of AIDS, some land remains fallow and household output declines. Less time may be devoted to weeding, mulching, pruning and clearing land. As a coping strategy, farmers may shift to less labour-intensive crops. In Namibia and Uganda, often livestock is sold to support the sick and to pay for funeral expenses, which reduces household savings and increases vulnerability to new shocks. Moreover, this jeopardizes the livestock industry and long-term food security and survival options, as is already the case in Namibia. The drop in livestock numbers also has soil fertility implications (FAO, 2001).

In line with their traditional roles, women farmers take care of family members afflicted with the disease and their time to engage in agricultural activities is significantly reduced (Du Guerny, 1998). Because women play a vital role in ensuring household food security and child education, children are taken out of school to help the family cope (Du Guerny, 1998). Where land tenure and inheritance traditions favour male inheritance a woman who survives her husband may find her farming activities severely curtailed (Anarfi, 2000).

In many cases diverse coping strategies have been adopted to meet cash and food requirements. In rural Zambia, some households resorted to undertaking a range of income-generating activities such as selling firewood and livestock, tailoring and petty trade. Some household members migrate to urban areas in search of employment so they can send remittances to their rural area. Children as young as ten years old went to work for an income. In Malawi, households worked as casual labour on other farms and young



District of Kibaha,
Masai women in Magindi
village returning from milking.

girls resorted to sex work to fulfill short-term income needs (UNAIDS, 1999).

Other impacts of HIV/AIDS include ‘tuberization’ of agricultural production as a result of the change to less labour-intensive crops of lower nutritional value. Fewer cash crops are produced, thus further reducing household income, while medical fees and funeral costs are extremely high (Villarreal, 2001; ILO, 2000). Food consumption falls while spending on health care increases. There is a reduction in the transmission of knowledge between generations and social safety nets weaken. A study in Kenya revealed only 7 percent of agricultural households headed by orphans had adequate knowledge of agricultural production (Villarreal, 2001). Box 1.5 provides a summary of the effects of HIV/AIDS on agriculture and food security.

Box 1.5 SUMMARY OF THE EFFECTS OF HIV/AIDS ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

- ❖ Loss of agricultural labour, as two person-years of labour are lost when one person dies in a household, decreasing productivity, especially in farming systems where there is a low level of mechanization.
- ❖ Rural dwellers at risk as:
 - rural people are less likely to know how to protect themselves because of poorer access to information and health services;
 - AIDS infected urban dwellers return to their rural homes when they fall ill;
 - time spent on agricultural labour shifts to caring for AIDS patients;
- ❖ Change to less labour-intensive farming systems, growing crops with low nutritional value such as tubers; food consumption decreases;
- ❖ High medical and funeral costs impoverish affected households, reducing their ability to produce and purchase food, thereby placing children’s educational opportunities at risk;
- ❖ Loss of the transmission of agricultural indigenous knowledge between generations;
- ❖ Further exposure to HIV/AIDS through impoverishment and unhealthy coping strategies by women and more children resort to living on the streets.

Source: Villarreal, 2001; UNAIDS, 1999.

Human-induced and natural disasters

Late in 2000, armed conflict left 24 million people in 28 developing and transition

The African region

chapter 1

countries and territories, in need of food and other humanitarian assistance. Nearly 80 percent were in sub-Saharan Africa and women and children represented 70 to 80 percent of refugees and internally displaced people uprooted by violence. The impact of war on food security is profound and conflict-induced losses of agricultural output in Africa totaled US\$22 billion between 1990 and 1997. In almost all affected countries, the majority of the workforce depends on agriculture as a livelihood (Messer and Cohen, 2001).

The ability of national governments to preserve internal peace is crucial for agricultural and rural development. Recently, 13 of the 20 most violent conflicts were in African nations (Paarlberg, 2002). Protracted civil wars are one of the most devastating shocks affecting the African continent. Avoiding political instability, especially civil wars, increases the possibility of international and regional support for national reform programmes. Understanding the political economy and avoiding civil strife and ethnic conflicts is pertinent to the establishment of a development strategy for sub-Saharan Africa (Elbadawi, 1999).

Gender issues underlying humanitarian interventions, whether armed conflict or natural disaster, have been summed up in the World Food Programme Gender Policy (2002):

“Acute or chronic humanitarian crises and poverty tend to accentuate gender gaps because means are limited and women are discriminated against and are expected to make a sacrifice by eating less. In situations of conflict and displacement, often women are exposed to new risks such as physical violence and sexual abuse. In addition, a large portion of households end up headed by women during these crises, with the women burdened with additional tasks owing to their husbands’ and sons’ military recruitment, disappearance, disablement or death. In humanitarian crises, there is the risk that food will not fully reach the beneficiary households if distributed to community leaders, who may allocate it based on political or social considerations. This is the case when food is distributed to the husbands in polygamous family arrangements, even though there are various household units consisting of women and their minor or elderly dependents. Nevertheless, situations of crisis have offered opportunities for change that have proven advantageous for implementing new means of improving women’s access to and control over food, such as issuing the household ration card in women’s names.”



Farmers queuing for free seed in aftermath of civil war.
(G. Diana, 1994)

Breaking ground:
present and future perspectives for women in agriculture

Environmental degradation

Environmental degradation is a global phenomenon. However, the impact is felt more among the poorer segments of the rural population. Rural poverty and the degradation of the environment are mutually reinforced when people's survival is at stake; increasingly they are forced to farm marginal soils, reduce fallow periods, cut vital forests, overstock fragile rangelands and over-fish rivers, lakes and coastal waters (Jazairy, *et al.*, 1992).

In Africa the following forms of environmental degradation are observed:

- Forest degradation, including deforestation, is the most widespread environmental problem in the African region, as a result of fuelwood collection and the land requirements of shifting cultivation. In some countries overgrazing is a major cause.
- Land degradation is directly caused by inappropriate land use and unsuitable land management practices such as cultivation of steep slopes without soil conservation measures. These slopes are cultivated because the landless poor need food. Farmers who lack security of tenure may not take soil conservation measures.
- Soil degradation through pollution and over exploitation usually results in loss of soil fertility. Soil erosion caused by rain, streams or floods, is widespread in Africa and may lead to desertification in arid zones. Wind erosion is prevalent in most Sahelian countries such as Chad.
- Chemical degradation of agricultural resources also causes increasing concern, and
- Water pollution is often caused by the industrial sector waste disposal systems, and agricultural chemicals (Marcoux, 1998).

Growth in the agricultural sector cannot be sustained unless environmentally sound farming practices are introduced on a large scale. Environmental degradation directly impacts household food security. Where soil fertility has been drastically reduced as a result of over-cropping; deforestation; overgrazing and erosion; or where there is a lack of fuelwood and potable water, women are often forced to change the dietary practices and standards of their families. Sometimes this means reducing the number of hot meals per day, substantially lowering family levels of nutrition, as some staple foods cannot be digested without prolonged cooking (Roca, 1994).

Chad, Rwanda and Sierra Leone indicated the need to recognize the role of women in improving the environment and population planning, as these two problems are interrelated. They mentioned that measures need to be established to sensitize women and encourage their involvement in environmental and development activities. Programmes listed include literacy and educational activities in the environmental sector such as sensitizing women to the rational management of freshwater and energy resources, hygienic practices, and good sanitation (Marcoux, 1998).

Complex relations exist between poverty, land degradation, high birth rates and food insecurity. Poor smallholders, who are tilling land in the most ecologically fragile regions, need to maintain high birth rates to satisfy the labour demand for household subsistence on lands with diminishing returns. More children result in a higher demand for food, causing additional pressure on the land, which in turn requires increased labour. Because women farmers do not have access to modern, labour-saving or environmentally sound farming techniques, increasingly intensive and time-consuming work is required on their plots, which are often more susceptible to erosion, desertification and other forms of land degradation (Roca, 1994).

Secure access rights to land and pastures are critical in motivating investment for conservation. Women's lack of secure landownership and tenure reduces the likelihood they will adopt environmentally sustainable agricultural practices if these require additional financial or labour inputs. Besides, insecure land tenure reduces women's access to credit, which may be used to rehabilitate eroded soils or to implement labour-saving technologies. On the other hand, increased productivity results in reduced labour needs, which would allow for a lower birth rate, positively influencing the food security situation.

The challenge is the sustainable intensification of agricultural production to improve livelihoods, while safeguarding ecosystems, watersheds and biodiversity. To this end technologies should be promoted that would reduce agriculture-related environmental degradation on vulnerable and food insecure households. Furthermore, there is a need to address the biosecurity risks associated with the exchange of agricultural inputs and products for expanded international trade (FAO, 2001b). Clearly, improvement of crop production in the twenty-first century requires a combination of environmental conservation and increased productivity (Thomson, 2001).



Policy environment and requirements

Unless higher priority is given by governments everywhere to problems of food security and nutrition, the human misery and economic waste embodied in food insecurity and malnutrition will continue at all levels. The cycle of complacency on the part of decision-makers needs to be broken, to realize the goal of reducing the number of food insecure people by half by 2015, as agreed by 187 countries at the World Food Summit in 1996, and the World Food Summit +5 in 2001.

Both opportunities and challenges for Africa are considerable. Opportunities may be created through the development of Africa's human and natural resources, consolidation of democracy and commitment to self-reliance, which is reflected in the



Rural women going to
work in the fields.
(G. Diana, 1997)

New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) (UN, 2002b). Improved governance at the national level has a significant impact on reducing hunger and is of highest priority in developing regions where hunger is not yet under control. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of hungry people increases every year. As such, improved global governance, though necessary, is not an efficient answer to the distinctive problems of human malnutrition. Because of the weak connections African countries have to the global economy, stronger international governance of global markets and investments is unlikely to have a great impact on hunger in the region (Paarlberg, 2002).

Between 1971 and 1991, public spending on agricultural research and development in Africa increased only minimally in comparison to increases in other parts of the developing world. Strengthening public agricultural research investment by national governments helps to take improved technology to rural farm communities and may result in increased farm labour productivity and farm incomes, as reported in success stories from Asian countries (Paarlberg, 2002).

Policy issues on gender and affirmative action concerning women are being addressed in global and national media following their endorsement at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. Organizations, such as the United Nations, FAO have worked to address the issue of rural women and aided in improving policies to decrease gender disparity.

This has been accomplished through meetings such as the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (1979); the adoption in 1993 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action; the World Conference on Human Rights and International Conference on Population and Development (1994); and the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and the Summit for Economic Advancement of Rural Women by IFAD (1991).

Follow-up on plans of action derived from institutional policies, as well as monitoring of commitments to international instruments, will ensure these policies attain their objectives.

Changes in the policy environment

Programmes have been launched to reduce the number of the hungry: the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) initially targeted low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDC), but was adopted by other developing countries. In September 2000 at the Millennium Summit, the United Nations adopted a set of eight millennium development goals (MDGs); one is to halve the amount of those suffering from hunger between 1990 and 2015. The SPFS advocated with donors and governments of developing countries the importance of focusing development efforts on small farmers. These agencies recognized the role of the small farmer in agricultural production, food security, poverty reduction and the sustainable use of natural resources (FAO, 2003).

In past years, programmes targeting women as beneficiaries concentrated on their reproductive role and on home economics. There have been small, dispersed, 'women specific' projects or project components focusing on women's productive role in agriculture, but these have remained isolated from national agricultural planning and policies. More recently, international organizations and national governments have begun to promote awareness of women's issues, including those of rural women



Policy environment and requirements

and encouraged research on their agricultural and other roles. These organizations served as advocates for change in national policies and legislation affecting women's rights to land, inheritance, employment conditions and wage rates (FAO, 1996).

In many countries, constitutions state equality before the law as one of the foundations of the legal system. International conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995; the follow-up Special Sessions of the General Assembly (Beijing +5 and +10), and the specific reference to women in the millennium development goals, have played an important role in promoting women's legal rights and helping non-governmental and advocacy groups in countries make their national governments accountable. However, if women are poor and uneducated, they may be unaware of the provisions of the law (UN, 2002c; Quisumbing and Meinzen-Dick, 2001).

National women's associations are an important step in ensuring that women's needs and constraints are included on the national policy agenda (FAO, 1996). In many African countries Ministries of Gender, of Women's Rights and of Women's Affairs have been strengthened or set up to directly address and promote issues of particular concern to women.

The direct impact of these development programmes on rural women is often negligible because of their urban bias, they are frequently situated within social ministries such as health and education and lack influence in the technical ministries. Furthermore, they are often isolated from the planning ministries; with the effect that adequate attention cannot be given women's needs in the development of national strategies and plans (FAO, 1996). Lack of coordination among the different associations has led to duplication of effort and reduced efficiency. Besides, they lack financial and other forms of support from the government and major ministries.

Participatory research was conducted in several African countries to diagnose the state of rural women, identify their constraints and determine their needs. Gender analysis training programmes were undertaken by government officials and agricultural extension agents and women in development (WID) units were created in Ministries of Agriculture. Some male and female extension agents were trained in communication skills, participatory development, gender analysis and household food

security so they could effectively provide extension services to rural women (FAO, 1996). To promote sustainable agriculture, rural development and food security for all people, FAO plans to further its mission to ensure that women, as well as men, have the support and access to resources they need to pursue sustainable livelihoods and an improved quality of life (FAO, 1997).

FAO, IFAD and other organizations, adopted the Gender and Development approach in 1992, to examine gender roles and relationships rather than women alone. For IFAD, gender mainstreaming at the project level means ensuring that the specific roles, needs and constraints of women and men are taken into account at all stages of design and implementation. Sixteen out of 17 of IFAD's projects concerning women only are in countries where sociocultural norms limit the interaction between men and women, though the disadvantage of designing separate activities was fully recognized (IFAD, 2000).

Appropriate policy support for rural women

An appropriate policy environment is needed to improve rural women's living standards and enhance food security. Efforts have been made by different organizations to improve the policy environment and promote the welfare of rural women, which need to be strengthened and enforced. For example, FAO's Gender and Development Service (then Women in Development Service) organized a workshop in 1997 to evaluate experiences in gender sensitive participatory rural appraisal. The aim was to assure women a voice in cultures where men dominate decision-making, train extension staff to work with rural people and to establish mechanisms for needs-based planning processes. Pilot projects were launched in Namibia, Nepal and Tanzania, with the support of the Government of Norway, to improve channels of communication between men and women farmers, extension staff, and policy-makers by using participatory approaches and consultative processes (FAO, 1998). Nonetheless, various forms of discrimination and inequality still exist in relation to women's access to agricultural productive resources and services and their participation in planning and policy-making.



Policy environment and requirements

The founder of the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) in Uganda once said:

“When women own and control land, there will be more food in each household and more crops for export since most farm work is done by them. They will be protected from eviction when they are widowed or divorced. The current system discriminates against women, which violates the equality provisions of our constitution” (Women’s Action, 2000).

According to Crowley (2001), enhancing women’s land rights requires that the issue becomes a political priority and a legal possibility, as well as an administrative viability, a social acceptability and a moral legitimacy.

First recognized in 1995 in Beijing, gender mainstreaming is now a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. This involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities at all levels (policy, development, research, advocacy and dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes). Gender mainstreaming requires that an effort be made to broaden women’s equitable participation at all levels of decision-making. Gender mainstreaming strongly supports the empowerment of women, including efforts towards raising awareness, confidence building, expansion of available choices and increased access to and control over resources and actions (UN, 2000).

The demand for gender-specific information is growing and this demand arises from various data-users including policy analysts, researchers, academics, rural planners and business people (Akello, 1999). Gender disaggregated information is essential if appropriate policy recommendations are to be made (FAO, 2000a).

Planning and decision-making

Gender parity in political power, as reflected by representation in parliaments, is still far from realized. No country has reached parity and only 13 countries have achieved or exceeded the 30 percent target called for by the Economic and Social Council in 1990 (UN, 2002b; UNDP 2003). In the African region, only Mozambique and South Africa have attained the 30 percent of seats in parliament held by women, followed by the Seychelles (29 percent), Namibia and Rwanda (26 percent each) (UNDP, 2003).

A study in Lira district in Uganda revealed that although opportunities existed for women to participate in local leadership, they were not well equipped for these roles because of cultural and societal limitations. Women said they lacked the support and consent of men, at the household and community levels, to help them participate in local leadership. As a result, a sensitization programme was introduced to promote leadership roles, which led to increased participation of women in the constitution drafting process (FAO, 2000).

Despite improvements in the human capital of women, in sub-Saharan Africa their educational levels are still low. Investment in rural women's education will help empower them to take up leadership positions in their communities.

The role of NGOs

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Vision 2020 Conference revealed the importance of bringing new perspectives to the issue of food security by engaging different stakeholders in dialogue over social inequities and opportunities for partnerships (IFPRI, 2001). NGOs play an important role in this dialogue, complementing and supplementing national governments. Paarlberg (2002) stated that, in the area of rural poverty reduction and food security, NGOs have performed best when they were in partnership with governments, rather than trying to replace them. NGO participation can help governments target public investments more effectively towards the poor.



Conclusions and lessons learned

Sub-Saharan Africa faces widespread poverty and malnutrition, extensive national food deficits, and high and increasing dependence on food imports and concessionary aid (Hazell, 2001). Meeting the world's future food needs will depend increasingly on women's capabilities and resources. In many developing countries, women are responsible for generating food security for their families, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Women process, purchase, prepare food and play a significant role in national agricultural production, producing both food and cash crops, using different survival strategies to ensure household food security and to alleviate rural poverty. Women provide the bulk of agricultural labour, undertake the reproduction and care of children, manage the home and engage in income-generating activities to enhance household welfare. As traditional caregivers, they provide care for people infected with HIV/AIDS, reducing the time invested in productive activities and leisure. The number of female-headed households is increasing because of family breakdown and the rise in male migration to urban areas in search of income.

Rural women have limited access to and control over agricultural productive resources and lack appropriate policy support. The mechanisms established to improve the productivity of rural women often lack financial support and coordination with other institutions and ministries. Because of higher illiteracy rates among women in Africa, they remain ill informed of their rights and of any possibly available assistance. Moreover, customary laws and traditions hamper enforcement of certain laws and policies. Attention to gender differences regarding property rights can improve the outcome of natural resource management policies and projects in terms of efficiency, environmental sustainability, equity, and empowerment of resource users (IFPRI, 1997). A gender-based differentiation for allocation of labour and resources must be taken into account if technologies are to be developed, targeted and transferred appropriately (FAO, 2000a).

Gender-disaggregated agricultural statistical data are a critical prerequisite for any changes in current policy, planning and research activities and for improving the planning capacities in the framework of gender mainstreaming. Although available data provide sufficient evidence that women produce the bulk of food in most African countries, there are significant data gaps on rural women's roles, their agricultural and non-agricultural activities, and their needs related to food production and processing; while qualitative analyses abound, quantitative information is lacking.

Women are major contributors to agricultural production and play a prime role in ensuring food security and adequate nutritional levels of their household members. However, they could achieve much more in food production, provision and utilization if agricultural researchers, plant scientists, extension staff and policy-makers would provide an enabling environment for playing these roles effectively (Brown, *et al.*, 1995).

Regardless of the fact that projects need to concentrate attention on rural women's roles in agricultural production, reports show that projects targeting rural women are more successful if they seek to address both productive and reproductive roles and needs (FAO, 1996). While research exists on food security and reproductive health as separate issues, researchers have paid little attention to the relationship between the two. The dual roles of women in producing and preparing food, as well as in bearing and rearing children, underscore the need for better understanding of the relationship between reproductive health and household food security (UN, 2000a).

To support rural women in Africa who are working to improve food security, attention should be focused on female-headed households and policies developed to raise their living standards. This will have the dual beneficial effect of reducing gender inequalities in terms of improved income and reduced poverty as well as increasing food security (Ellis, 2000). Policy formulation should ensure the promotion of agricultural productivity but at the same time aim to protect the welfare of small-scale food farmers.



Recommendations

In studying women's role in food security in the Africa region, it was found that national governments and other organizations are increasingly aware of the plight of rural women. The following action-oriented recommendations are therefore to promote women's welfare, increase women's agricultural productivity and income levels, which should result in increased availability of food at all levels.

Improving access to natural and agricultural productive resources and services

- Rural women need secure access to **land**. This must be beyond customary systems that regulate access based on membership of a lineage, community or household. Measures to increase women's control over land are important strategies that will lead to the empowerment of rural women, will improve their participation in the decision-making process concerning food production and improve their access to credit. To this end joint titling of land might be encouraged to improve a rural woman's rights to claim a fair share of land acquired through her husband in the event of death, divorce or separation. Policies covering civil and customary laws should be established to protect a woman's right to land where husbands have more than one wife. These rights should be protected in the event of death, divorce or separation.
- Efforts should focus on increasing the **representation** of rural women in **water resource management programmes and decision-making fora**. As indicated by Rathgeber (2003), targeted efforts should identify potential women leaders in rural communities. They should be provided with the training and skills to facilitate their active membership in water user associations.
- Rural women's needs should be incorporated in **agricultural extension** delivery. Training for agriculture extension staff should include techniques on effectively communicating with women farmers. To this end more female extension staff are needed, especially in communities where cultural norms do not permit interaction between women and men. Short-term training programmes could be designed for existing extension staff to strengthen skills working with women farmers. This training would enhance their knowledge of agricultural extension delivery

methods, and further the trainees' understanding of women's productive and reproductive activities resulting in a more holistic approach. Besides women farmers could be trained to become extension agents using methodologies such as farmer field schools. Such an approach can be cost effective in extension delivery and increase the confidence of other farmers in the source of and information received.

- Bottlenecks must be removed to ease rural women's **access to credit**. These include collateral requirements in forms not readily available to women, i.e. land should not be used as collateral for obtaining credit for women farmers. The current requirement that a husband co-sign a wife's credit application should be revised to allow women direct access to credit facilities. Women will then be able to engage in the timely purchase of agricultural inputs, facilitating their participation in income-generating activities.
- **Formal and informal education** opportunities for rural women demand the attention of national governments, international institutions and non-governmental organizations. The education level of rural women in Africa has been a basis for discrimination and limits their participation in planning and decision-making. It has further contributed to ignorance of their rights and provisions of the law. Efforts should be made to increase school enrollment of girls and informal educational systems need to be established to expand the knowledge of rural women and men on provisions of the law.
- Both rural women and men need to be involved in the development of **agricultural technology**. Given rural women's role in food production, their exclusion from setting priorities for technology generation has implications for food security at the household and national level. Besides, incorporating the views of rural women and men in the development of new technology will increase adoption levels. Furthermore, the gender-differential impact of new technologies should be analysed to avoid any negative impact on rural women; often the household head is assumed to be male and the needs of female-headed households may not be addressed.
- Labour-saving technologies are critical for rural women. Labour shortages are on the increase due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, increased male migration to urban



Recommendations

areas and the combination of household, agriculture and non-agricultural tasks. Labour-saving technologies will allow women to explore off-farm and non-farm income-generating opportunities, allowing them to improve household food and nutrition security. These new technologies should be developed with a good understanding of the income, resources and time constraints rural women face in Africa. They should aim to improve rural women's access to water and reduce time spent on water collection. Cost-effective energy sources need to be developed for processing agricultural produce and for cooking, which will reduce time spent on collecting fuelwood and at the same time will protect the environment.

- Appropriate technology for poor rural women and men should lead to packages combining traditional and modern ideas. It should be simple to use, but should be amenable to upgrading to avoid confining the rural poor in a low-level technology trap (Jazairy, *et al.*, 1992).
- Rural women in war-torn countries, such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, need **starter packs** in the form of farm tools, fertilizer and seed. With their vital role in food production and the difficulty they face in replacing farm tools and personal effects, governments, NGOs and international organizations need to jump-start their survival mechanisms and help them pick up where they left off.

Appropriate policy and institutional support

- Good coordination is required among the different agencies and institutions involved in promoting increased productivity among rural women. Improved coordination and sharing of information among the different organizations will ensure greater efficiency and reduce duplication of effort.
- Policy-makers and government agencies need to be provided with information on rural women. More needs to be known about farmers (men and women) and their needs and priorities to allow for the formulation of effective, sustainable development interventions. Akello (1999) affirmed that this information could be gained from studies on the sociocultural environment of rural communities and critical national and global trends.
- Furthermore, data on different agricultural activities, such as the economically active population and labour provision in agriculture, must be timely and reliable. Relevant

variables should be integrated as far as possible into existing data collection exercises, supported by training on collection, processing and dissemination of gender-disaggregated agricultural data. Time-use surveys in particular can capture important aspects of women's production activities and constraints. Data collection interviewers should address women directly when information about their activities is sought.

- Women's improved access to information and communication technologies will enhance their decision-making capacities for increased farm productivity and effective marketing of farm produce. Support for rural radio broadcasting at times when women are likely to listen will be beneficial.
- Empowerment of rural women will enable them to take up leadership roles in their communities. Although women play vital roles in economic development in many African nations, their representation in leadership positions is limited. They should be encouraged to participate in planning and decision-making of programmes from the initial stages onwards and should be well represented at national fora. Participation in political arenas leads to women being heard at the highest levels of policy formulation. Formation of rural women's groups and strengthening of those existing will enhance this process.
- Planners in Africa need to ensure that both men and women have a voice in planning exercises and that their needs are recognized (FAO, 2000b). Women's skills need to be enhanced to ensure their active participation in the development process. This will be accomplished through changing perceptions by increasing the awareness of both men and women (Quisumbing and Meinzen-Dick, 2001). Efforts should be made to include rural women in support programmes to ensure that they have decision-making rights over assets, productive resources and services in their communities.
- General awareness-raising and sensitization is needed concerning the economic participation of men and women in agriculture, and the critical role women play in ensuring food security at the household and national levels, to reinforce recognition of the need for appropriate policy and institutional support. Social and cultural institutions need to create an environment where women may realize their full potential. This will require a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach to the empowerment of women.

The role of government

- Governments in the African region should work towards ensuring peace and reducing conflict, which is crucial for agricultural and rural development. Conflict and political unrest often lead to the destruction of public infrastructure, displacement of people and interruption of agricultural productive activities. Peace building, together with the improvement of rural infrastructure will enhance the ability of rural women and men to produce and market their food production.
- Gender-sensitive government mechanisms should be strengthened to address rural women's issues. The provisions of laws relating to women's rights should be enforced. Furthermore, rural women need to be informed of their rights and the existing mechanisms for enforcement and assistance.
- Land reforms are needed to improve rural women's access to land. Secure land rights enhance credit worthiness, allowing women to purchase agricultural inputs and to adopt improved farm practices for increased farm productivity. Land reforms will raise the social standing of rural women and empower them to participate in planning and other policy fora; land reform is critical for poverty alleviation.
- Gender-sensitive rural infrastructure programmes are needed: good roads and improved transportation and communication systems. Social infrastructure is also required including health care facilities, cultural, business and information centres (on legal rights, market information). Counseling centres would contribute to rural women's empowerment by offering them greater accessibility to information on marketing, health care, education and networking, as stated by Quisumbing and Meinzen-Dick (2001). Provision of health care facilities in rural areas will result in meeting some of the Millennium Development Goals such as reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.

Off-farm work and income-generating activities

- Opportunities for off-farm and non-farm activities should be explored and encouraged for rural women, as their ability to earn additional income will have a positive impact on household consumption. As noted above, women often spend their additional income on their children and on household food and nutritional

security. Technical and management training could be provided and small grants, credit schemes and starter packs could be made available to women who demonstrate entrepreneurial qualities to help them start their own business.

Further recommendations

- Considering the negative impacts of structural adjustment programmes and market reform policies on rural women in Africa, a thorough assessment is required to evaluate the gender impacts of the current heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative, national poverty reduction strategies and other policies. These programmes require (i) a thorough analysis of gender-differentiated impact on rural agricultural producers, (ii) an agenda for ensuring food security at the household and national levels and (iii) a confirmation of their positive impact on rural women.
- Much has been done to bring the HIV/AIDS epidemic under control in selected African countries. However, projections indicate that the disease will continue to pose a serious threat to agricultural production and food security until at least 2010. A robust political agenda is required to both limit the spread of the disease and to enhance livelihood opportunities for people with the disease. Actions must be gender-sensitive, as women are most vulnerable and affected. The policy approach must be multisectoral and its implementation should be community based.
- Rural women should be encouraged to participate in rural organizations and professional associations so that they might transcend individual isolation and collectively articulate and express their needs. This will increase women's social capital, improve their social status and enable their access to resources and enhance their opportunities to obtain credit.



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The African region

chapter 1

Breaking ground:
present and future perspectives for women in agriculture



Asia and the Pacific



Asia and the Pacific

Conditions and perspectives³



Woman vendor at
Suva market.
(P. Behlen-Dexter, 1998)

In spite of economic growth and improved human development, in the twenty-first century the Asia-Pacific region remains critically challenged by food security. Significantly, the availability, access to and stability of food continues to be a key issue. Moreover, increased population pressures, environmental degradation and emerging regional trends beg the question, ‘Can the world [including the Asia-Pacific region] produce enough food at reasonable prices, provide access to food by the poor, and not destroy the environment in the process?’ (Falcon, 1996).

It is known that across the Asia-Pacific region rural women play essential roles ensuring food security, through their activities in food production and providing economic access to available food and nutritional security for household members, both in normal and stressful times. Notwithstanding these activities their roles are generally constrained, undervalued (Laier, Davies, *et al.* 1996) and usually executed in the face of enormous social, cultural and economic constraints (Quisumbing, Brown, *et al.* 1995).

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At the local level, food security depends on the capacity of individuals and households to produce buy and use food of sufficient quantity and quality throughout life cycles and seasons. Understanding the status and different roles of women and men in the household is essential to comprehending the different strategies households pursue to control access to resources and promote food security. The majority of households and communities in Asia manage their rural production systems based on clear gender divisions of labour that affect the achievement of food security.

A lack of awareness and appreciation of the productive roles of rural women in many developing Asian countries is the result of historical undervaluation of their contribution. This has resulted in enduring discrimination in women's access to resources and opportunities in education and health. In the Pacific Islands, the semi-subsistence and communal nature of local economies, in which women and girls play an integral role in family production and resource management systems, has traditionally provided the foundations for family food security, ensuring the production of food and essential items for family use.

Until today, development and academic communities have paid scant attention to the state of rural women. Sachs noted that 'feminist theorists, as well as rural social theorists, remain inattentive to rural women's concerns; their urban-focused, theoretical work inadequately addresses the context of rural women's lives' (Sachs, 1996). Given the role of women in achieving food security for their families, meeting the world's food needs in the year 2020 will depend increasingly on the capabilities and resources of women (Brown, Feldstein, Haddad, Pena and Quisumbing, 1995). In this context, it is essential that a study be made of rural women in the Asia-Pacific region, to identify opportunities to integrate gender dimensions in all aspects of agricultural and rural development.

Sustainable food security can only be achieved with the full participation of women as equal partners. It is therefore essential to understand their roles and responsibilities in the household, community and local economy, as well as the range of constraints and inequalities they face on a daily basis. However, a critical impediment is the absence of sex-disaggregated data on urban-rural and gender-differences, on women's multiple roles in agriculture (at the household, community and national level) and factors affecting their participation. Because of this scarcity of pertinent data, the following presentation and analysis draws heavily on available macro data and local case studies.



Differences and dilemmas



A woman drawing drinking-water from a village pump in northern India. In the background is a public toilet. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) is helping many developing countries pipe water directly to their rural communities.

(J. Isaac, 1986)

The countries making up the Asia-Pacific Region are diverse showing a broad variety in their geography, culture, religion and political systems, economic performance and social development. The region includes two of the most populous countries in the world and the world's smallest states. It contains the second largest economy on the globe, as well as some of the smallest; some countries are at the pinnacle of economic development, others are nomadic or agrarian (ADB, 2001). Differences in religion, culture and traditions vary significantly between East Asia, South Asia and the Pacific and Oceanic countries, influencing gender bias in both discriminatory and affirmative ways. These differences are further accentuated by ethnic diversity and linguistic distinctions that contribute to a rising sense of cultural uniqueness, and shape politics and civil conflicts in new ways.

The twenty-plus island countries in the South Pacific are characterized by significant differences in physical size, degree of isolation, resource endowment, stage of development (Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are least developed countries) and cultural background. All face the physical disadvantage of being remote, small and dispersed; at the same time there are few opportunities for realizing economies of scale. Agriculture has been the main source of livelihood security across the Pacific Islands, with semi-subsistence farming being the principle form of production. Food security has emerged as a serious development concern where a focus on economic production, backed by spiraling population growth and accelerated urban drift, may upset the fine balance maintained by family-based semi-subsistence systems.

Over the past two decades unprecedented economic and agricultural growth have transformed the Asia-Pacific region, accompanied in many places by impressive social gains and improvements in living conditions. In addition to favourable economic performance, lowered population pressures have played an important part in social transformation. Despite impressive gains, extreme inequities persist in terms of economic prosperity and food security between and within, countries and between rural and urban areas.

Initially unbridled enthusiasm for globalization across the region was later tempered by the realities of internal vulnerabilities, notably the lack of safety nets for the working and rural poor at times of economic crisis. In spite of the recent crisis, it was realized that globalization cannot be circumvented, but must be properly managed to benefit the wider population rather than enrich the few. The current reality is that regional economic integration – formal and informal – continues to exert an impact on household food security in Asia and the Pacific.

A household's access to 'food basket' commodities depends on economic and social circumstances beyond their local farming system. For example, labour migration and overseas remittances strongly affect household food security in many rural Asian communities. Similarly, aid and remittances play a major role in the relatively small economies of the South Pacific. For instance, in several Pacific Island countries aid per capita is amongst the highest in the world and in many cases, remittances exceed export earnings.

The economic transformation accompanied a steady reduction in the relative share of agriculture to the gross domestic product (GDP) across the region. This reduction was striking in some countries, in Thailand the contribution of agriculture to GDP fell from 23.2 percent in 1980 to 9.1 percent in 2000; it was not uniform as illustrated in Table 2.1. Although the relative share of agriculture in the economy decreased in Asia-Pacific as a whole, agriculture continues to make an important contribution to the economy and by extension to food security and poverty alleviation in many individual countries. In 2000, agriculture accounted for 59.9 percent of the



Woman watering a communal garden. Home and communal gardens grow the quality vegetables that, once properly prepared to local taste, are the long-term solution to the problem of vitamin A deficiency in rural Viet Nam. *(Peyton Johnson, 1992)*



Differences and dilemmas

GDP of Myanmar and Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal and Uzbekistan each derived more than a third of their GDP from agriculture, while this sector contributed a quarter or more to the GDP of Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vietnam. It is noteworthy that China and India – the two most populous countries in the region – continue to derive a significant portion of their GDP from agriculture, 15.9 percent and 25.3 percent respectively.

In the health sector, the spread of HIV/AIDS in many parts of rural Asia has

served as a wakeup call for action, overtaking the traditional stance of silence and denial, at the same time nutritional deficiencies among women and children in South Asia is seen as a major crisis in the making.



Portrait of village children.
(G. Bizzarri, 1996)

Most countries that are substantially dependent on agriculture are low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs). The paradox seems to be that countries that are dependent on agriculture lag behind in improving food security. These data suggest that where countries are highly reliant on the agriculture sector, rural populations, including women, may face

the highest risk of food insecurity and low incomes.

Economic structural transformation, marked by decreasing reliance on agriculture, has several implications for the economic role of rural women and food security. First, fundamental changes in national economic systems and the agricultural sector result in loss of livelihood opportunities. Second, subsistence food production to satisfy household food needs may be unsustainable and households become increasingly dependent on the cash economy to access food. Third, displaced rural women need viable livelihood alternatives within the rural production system to provide an economic return on their labour. Finally, as agriculture production becomes

Table 2.1
Contribution (percent) of the agriculture sector to GDP in selected
countries in the Asia-Pacific region

Asia region	Low-income food-deficit country	1980	1990	2000
Bangladesh	Yes	41.2	29.4	24.6
Bhutan	Yes	56.7	43.2	33.2
Cambodia	Yes	...	56.6	37.1
China, PRC	Yes	30.1	27	15.9
India	Yes	38.1	31	25.3
Indonesia	Yes	24.8	19.4	16.9
Kazakhstan	Yes	26.0	41.8	8.6
Korea, DPR	Yes	...	...	...
Korea, Republic of		...	...	...
Lao, PDR	Yes	...	61.2	53.2
Malaysia			15.2	8.6
Mongolia	Yes	13.6	15.2	33.4
Maldives	Yes	...	...	9.5
Myanmar		46.5	57.3	59.9
Nepal	Yes	61.8	51.6	39.8
Pakistan	Yes	29.6	26	26.3
Philippines	Yes	25.1	21.9	15.9
Sri Lanka	Yes	26.2	22.9	19.4
Tajikistan	Yes	...	27.1	27.4
Thailand		23.2	12.5	9.1
Uzbekistan	Yes	...	33.1	34.9
Vietnam		50	38.7	24.3
Southwest Pacific region	Low-income food-deficit country	1980	1990	2000
Cook Islands		...	21.2	16.6
Fiji Islands		22.1	...	18.4
Kiribati	Yes	31.5	18.6	...
Marshall Islands		...	13.9	13.5
Papua New Guinea	Yes	33.1	29	28.7
Salomon Islands		...	...	22.1
Tonga		38.5	35.1	28.5
Vanuatu	Yes	...	20.7	15.8
Western Samoa	Yes	...	...	16.2

Source: Asian Development Bank, Key Indicators of Developing Asian and Pacific Countries (Table 13: Sectoral share of GDP), 2001. FAO, Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries: <http://apps.fao.org/notes/876-e.htm>



Differences and dilemmas

more competitive amidst increased global economic connections, rural women with limited skills and a low level of education face greater risk of economic vulnerability.

Development in the Asia-Pacific Region focused attention on fast-growing urban centres, while recent reports estimate that the number of rural Asians is unlikely to decline. The Asia Development Bank estimated there are likely to be 2.2 billion rural Asians by the year 2020. This rural population will have reduced access to health and education, and a lower level of general well-being (ADB, 2000). Aging and a changing gender balance in rural areas – intensified as men and the young are pulled to urban centres in search of better opportunities – are likely to further complicate rural population patterns.

Uneven development in the region – largely at the expense of rural areas – has amplified the difficulties facing the majority of rural men and women who continue to act as rural producers on family farms and subsistence agriculture, and who play a vital role in export-driven agriculture production. Although parts of rural Asia and the Pacific have undergone unprecedented technological and economic transformation, the resulting economic growth has not translated into improved welfare for most rural residents. Mainly this is a result of the general lack of supportive institutions, particularly health and education services, and inadequate attention to improvements in rural infrastructure. At the same time, the significant contributions of women to rural production and food security have generally been ignored in agricultural and rural development-sector reform strategies and budgetary allocations.

Challenges to equality

Achievements in gender equality differ considerably throughout Asia and the Pacific, reflecting the overwhelming diversity in economic and human development indicators both between and within countries. Within the Region's complex resource environment, and amid the debate on trade versus self-sufficiency in food for enhanced food security, gender equity is marked by enormous disparity as illustrated in the human and gender development index rankings in Table 2.2. In particular, countries in South Asia (such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan), which are predominantly represented among low-income food-deficit countries, are notable for their poor performance in both human and gender-related development indicators. As expected, countries at the other end of the development continuum such as Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand score very well on these indicators.

Furthermore, the progress achieved by a large number of urban women across Asia disguises the low human development indicators and extreme gender inequality among rural women in many parts of the continent, especially South Asia. Rural women continue to struggle under the dual responsibilities of economic production and domestic labour. Most are confronted by poverty, illiteracy, high health risks, inadequate access to productive resources and denial of market access in the profitable food sectors. It has been observed that 'for many, being female and living in rural Asia is doubly discriminatory' (Bloom, Craig, *et al.*, 2001).

In general, the state of rural women across Asia is shaped more by customary law and social sanctions than by the norms of equality, which are subscribed to in the global arena. The relative gender equity gains of women in East Asia – particularly in comparison to South Asia – can be attributed to social norms of equality fostered by political philosophy, ethnic culture and educational achievements. Yet the visible presence of women in the public realm in East Asia tends to mask hidden inequalities in their struggle to provide for their families.



Women rice harvesters going to work on a supplementary pollination operation.
(G. Bizzarri, 1996)

While most Pacific Island countries (such as the Cook Islands, Fiji and Palau) have significantly progressed in the area of human development indicators, others such as Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu lag behind. Gender equality, differences between women and men in the Pacific Island countries are generally less pronounced than in Asia; because of the complexity of gender relations in the Pacific; however, care should be taken when generalizing

indices. It is noteworthy that women generally outscore men in the human development index (indicated by a score of more than 100 in the gender ratio column) in some Pacific Island countries. The differences between women in Asia and the Pacific Islands may be related to the fact that rural and urban communities in the Pacific are more homogenous than in Asia. In general, women in urban and rural parts of the Pacific Islands have similar employment options and choices. In addition, where major urban areas are developing in Pacific countries such as Fiji, New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea, strong networks have emerged, linking people in towns with those remaining in rural areas.

Neglect of the agriculture sector in many countries throughout Asia and the Pacific has made agriculture the career of last resort for men and women with other more profitable options. As a result, those with fewer options – generally poor, illiterate rural women – are compelled to take on a major role in the agriculture sector, resulting in the ‘feminization of farming’. Bangladesh, China and India have sought to generate employment in small-scale rural industries, micro-enterprises, town and village enterprises, as capable young women and men have been lured away from agriculture, intensifying this trend. At the same time, internal migration has acted as a pull factor, drawing younger people to urban areas in search of more lucrative opportunities and leaving the elderly, particularly older women, behind as the principal farmers. This contributes to the ‘greying’ of farming as witnessed in

Table 2.2
Human and gender development in selected Asia-Pacific countriesⁱ

Asia	Human development index ⁱⁱ : rank	Gender-related development index ⁱⁱⁱ : rank
Bangladesh	Low	121
Bhutan	Low	...
Cambodia	Medium	109
China, PRC	Medium	76
India	Medium	105
Indonesia	Medium	92
Japan	High	11
Kazakhstan	Medium	...
Korea, Republic of	High	29
Lao, PDR	Low	119
Malaysia	Medium	55
Maldives	Medium	69
Mongolia	Medium	104
Myanmar	Medium	107
Nepal	Low	120
Pakistan	Low	117
Philippines	Medium	62
Sri Lanka	Medium	70
Tajikistan	Medium	93
Thailand	Medium	58
Uzbekistan	Medium	86
Vietnam	Medium	89
Southwest Pacific		
Australia	High	2
Fiji Islands	Medium	63
New Zealand	High	17
Papua New Guinea	Medium	110
Samoa (Western)	Medium	...
Vanuatu	Medium	...
	Low GDI	

ⁱ HDI and GDI data are unavailable for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu.

ⁱⁱ The Human Development Index (HDI) measures average achievements in three basic areas: a) a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy); b) knowledge (measured by adult literacy rate and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio); and c) a decent standard of living, measured by GDP per capita (purchasing power parity in US\$).

ⁱⁱⁱ The Gender-related Development (GDI) Index adjusts the average achievements measured by the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women in the same areas.

Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 2001, pp. 212–213, 241–242.



Challenges to equality

China. Overall, the state of women in Asia can be summed up as a 'duality', characterized by the co-existence of gender equality gains and gaps, set in the context of the economic dualism of new prosperity and persistent abject poverty.

A macro analysis of women throughout Asia and the Pacific depicts a scenario of diversity, characterized by disparity in women's economic achievements, political participation, educational advancement and social expression. This regional diversity and the prevailing urban-rural duality are a reflection of differences in national priorities for the advancement of rural women, as well as differing resource commitments for interventions to support gender parity in development. Overall, the central challenges to equity in the region are the:

- achievement of gender equality gains for women in agriculture and rural communities that match the gains made in urban areas;
- creation of opportunities for rural women so they can become the principal agents in poverty eradication for food security in the context of the declining importance of agriculture within national economies;
- achievement of household food security with gender equality within the nexus of current intra-household economic and social realities;
- prevention of further marginalization of rural women in the context of the accelerated pace of global economic integration and the commercialization of the agriculture sector; and
- empowerment of rural women with the capacity to function effectively in a complex world shaped by new technologies in the agriculture and information sectors.

Women in the agriculture sector

In developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, women make up a substantial portion of the agricultural labour force, yet there is no systematic body of relevant data and information on their roles and contributions. The increased number of micro-level gender studies throughout the region is a positive development, balancing the limited availability of macro-level data. A renewed focus on farming systems has given rise to several studies of gender roles in specific agro-zones or locations, and the remarkable growth in participatory rural appraisal has provided qualitative data on the contribution of rural women to local production. However, these studies were produced independently of each other and by researchers with varying skills and expertise. As a result, they differ in quality, reliability and accuracy, and it is difficult to generalize and extrapolate local findings to a broader national situation. In this context, this section will present a synthesis of the existing aggregate data on the participation of women in the labour force and agriculture sector, illustrated by available case studies on women's involvement in various types of productive work in the food and agriculture sectors.

The macro data presented in Table 2.3 illustrates female participation in economic activity throughout Asia and the Pacific, and the relative share of the male and female labour force participation in agriculture. This data indicates that in South Asian countries such as Bangladesh; Bhutan; India; Nepal and Pakistan, a high percentage – more than 60 percent and up to 98 percent – of women are employed in the agriculture sector. Indeed, more women than men are employed in agriculture in each of these countries.

In Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam women contribute substantially to the agriculture sector. For instance, among the economically active population, women's participation in the agriculture sector in Cambodia is 78 percent, and 81 percent in Lao PDR. Indeed, the data show that in most Asian countries, a larger number of women than men are



Women in the agriculture sector

employed in agriculture as a percentage of the economically active population. This finding is significant given that the data for the economically active population in agriculture in Table 2.3 excludes rural women's unpaid work in farm and family economies. As a result, it is reasonable to believe that a considerable proportion of women's contribution to agricultural labour throughout the region is invisible in these statistics. If unpaid work were included, the figures for female employment in agriculture would be higher.

While a higher percentage of Pacific Island women are employed in the service sector than in agriculture, Table 2.3 shows that a significant number of women throughout the Pacific are engaged in various agricultural activities, ranging from lows of 1 to 3 percent in the atoll countries of Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands (where there is an acute shortage of arable land) to highs of 80 percent in Vanuatu and 84 percent in Papua New Guinea, where the share of women employed in agriculture exceeds that of men (UNDP, 1999). Although the data in Table 2.3 display significant differences in the share of women employed in agriculture as a portion of the economically active population in the Pacific, other existing studies demonstrate that women and girls play an integral role in family production and resource management systems throughout the Pacific.

Moreover, the use of different definitions and periods in data collection together with an overall scarcity of data, make it difficult to generalize the contribution of these women to the agricultural workforce. In addition, gender roles in some Pacific Island countries – such as Tonga where cultural mores dictate that agriculture is male work – discourage the formal participation of women in this sector.

Even within the constraints of insufficient data, it is clear that with few exceptions, women across the Asia-Pacific region are major players in the labour force, and make a substantial contribution to the agriculture sector. The data illustrate that countries with low and medium achievements in the areas of human development and gender, which tend to be low-income food-deficit countries, have a larger share of women in agriculture. In general, these findings and observations support the notion that the feminization of farming is taking place in many countries throughout the region.

Table 2.3 also presents the female adult literacy rate and shows the female literacy rate as a percentage to highlight gender differences. Given that the literacy data presented is not disaggregated by place of residency (urban versus rural), it is reasonable to assume that adult literacy among rural women is even lower. For instance, in Bangladesh, the adult literacy rate for rural women is just 36.2 percent, compared to 60 percent for urban women, and to 56.1 percent for rural men and 75.4 percent for urban men (Pal, 2001).



A group of women working at sewing machines to produce articles of clothing. The sewing industry is one of a number of rural activities supported by United Nations loans.

The state of women's education in the Pacific region countries is illustrated by Table 2.3, which gives data on the gender ratio of adult literacy. The data from Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands – which is particularly poor for female adult literacy – confirms that women there have had less access to education than men over a long period (UNDP, 1999). Low literacy levels prevent women accessing information and technology, and influences their ability to participate in decision-making at the family, community and national level, thus affecting their capacity to work for change. The relationship between low literacy rates and the high participation of women in agriculture in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands warrants further study.

With the exception of developed countries and a few developing countries such as the Maldives, Malaysia and some Pacific Island countries, this analysis shows that the vast majority of rural women lag far behind men in literacy. Specifically, Bangladesh; India; Lao PDR; Nepal; Pakistan and Papua New Guinea reveal particularly low adult literacy rates for rural women. In the context of the feminization of farming, no progress has been made in improving female literacy, which has serious implications for the future of the agriculture sector and food security across the region, because it depends on female labour with little or no formal

Table 2.3
Gender patterns in education and economic activity in selected Asia-Pacific countries

Asia	Low-income food-deficit country	Female adult literacy rate (age 15 and above)		Female economic activity rate (age 15 and above)		Economically active in agriculture as a percent of total population	
		Rate (%) 1999	As % of male rate 1999	Rate (%) 1999	As % of male rate 1999	Female 1990-99	Male 1990-99
Bangladesh	Yes	29.3	57	65.8	76	78	54
Bhutan	Yes	...	...	58.0	65	98 ^a	92 ^a
Cambodia	Yes	...	...	81.5	96	78 ^a	69 ^a
China, PRC	Yes	75.5	83	73.0	86	76 ^a	69 ^a
India	Yes	44.5	66	42.0	50	74 ^a	59 ^a
Indonesia	Yes	81.3	89	55.0	67	42	41
Japan		...	...	51.1	67	6 ^u	5 ^u
Kazakhstan	Yes	...	...	60.6	...	...	...
Korea, Republic of		96.2	97	53.0	63	...	...
Lao, PDR	Yes	31.7	50	74.6	84	81 ^a	76 ^a
Malaysia		82.8	91	47.9	60	15	21
Maldives	Yes	96.2	100	65.9	79	28 ^a	35
Mongolia	Yes	52.1	72	73.2	87	30 ^a	34 ^a
Myanmar		80.1	90	65.8	75	70 ^a	78 ^a
Nepal	Yes	22.8	39	56.9	67	98 ^a	91 ^a
Pakistan	Yes	30.0	51	35.0	41	66	41
Philippines	Yes	94.9	100	49.4	61	27	47
Sri Lanka	Yes	88.6	94	42.4	55	49	38
Tajikistan	Yes	98.7	99	57.1	...	45 ^a	37 ^a
Thailand		93.5	96	72.9	84	50	52
Uzbekistan	Yes	84.0	90	62.0	...	35 ^a	34 ^a
Vietnam		91.0	95	73.5	90	70	71
Southwest Pacific							
Australia		...	...	55.6	76	4 ^u	6 ^u
Cook Islands		...	...	...	...	6	15
Fiji Islands		90.5	96	35.4	44	28	47
Kiribati	Yes	...	...	...	...	1	10
Marshall Islands		...	...	...	...	3	28
New Zealand		...	...	56.9	78	6 ^u	11 ^u
Papua New Guinea	Yes	56.0	78	67.0	78	84	71
Western Samoa	Yes	78.8	97	...	...	67	73
Solomon Islands		...	...	...	...	85	87
Tuvalu	Yes	...	...	...	...	34	45
Vanuatu	Yes	...	...	...	...	80	69



Columns 2 and 3: Adult literacy is used as an indicator of female educational achievement since alternative data are unavailable for all countries listed.

Columns 4 and 5: calculated based on data on the economically active population and total population from ILO (1996). The percentage shares of employment by economic activity may not equal 100 because of rounding or the omission of activities not classified. For detailed notes on data, see ILO (1996 and 1999).

Columns 6 and 7: **u** indicates use of UNDP data. **a** indicates use of ADB data. Refers to 1990 or the nearest reference year. Figures for Cook Islands; Fiji; Kiribati; Marshall Islands; Nauru; Papua New Guinea; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu and Vanuatu refer to the economically active population as a percent of the total population over 15 years.

Source: Column 1: FAO LIFDC data; columns 2 and 3: UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) 2001, Table 23; columns 4 and 5: UNDP HDR 2001, Table 24; columns 6 and 7: UNDP HDR 2001 Table 24 and Asian Development Bank, 2002. Key Indicators of Developing Asian and Pacific Countries: Table 5 and Table 7.



Women in the agriculture sector

education. While poorly educated rural women are more likely to encounter the adverse effects of structural changes in the economy, particularly in the agriculture sector oriented to the competitive global market, they are less likely to be able to respond positively. These shortfalls in rural female literacy, along with the feminization of farming, mean that rural women's skills and knowledge must be improved to ensure their technological and economic empowerment and, at the same time, provide support to agricultural development and food security.

Rural women's work

Rural women throughout the Asia-Pacific region make a crucial contribution to household production and food security. While the exact nature of this contribution varies across countries, it is clear that the majority of rural women have taken on an increasing share of household labour and that their lives are characterized by mounting drudgery. A variety of studies, produced in different countries in the

region, provide important findings on gender roles with guidance for policies and interventions to improve the productivity of rural households. However, no systematic synthesis has been made of findings, which hinders efforts to construct a realistic scenario of rural women's roles in household food security. Although a general pattern of gender roles emerges from these studies indicating both rural men and women in Asia and the Pacific contribute to production. However, gender roles vary within and between countries by agro-ecological and farming systems, crops grown, linkage to livestock and fish production, and opportunities for the off-farm occupation of family members.



Women farmers transplanting rice in a trial field belonging to the Directorate of Rice Research in Hyderabad.
(G. Bizzarri, 1996.)

The approach used is to synthesize existing information from various sources and to develop a conceptual view illustrating the diversity of rural women's contributions, the constant drudgery and constraints they face accessing resources within the household and community. The role of rural women in household production covers production on the farm, in the home, off-farm and in the community; they contribute labour and management and local and traditional knowledge and expertise. The community and

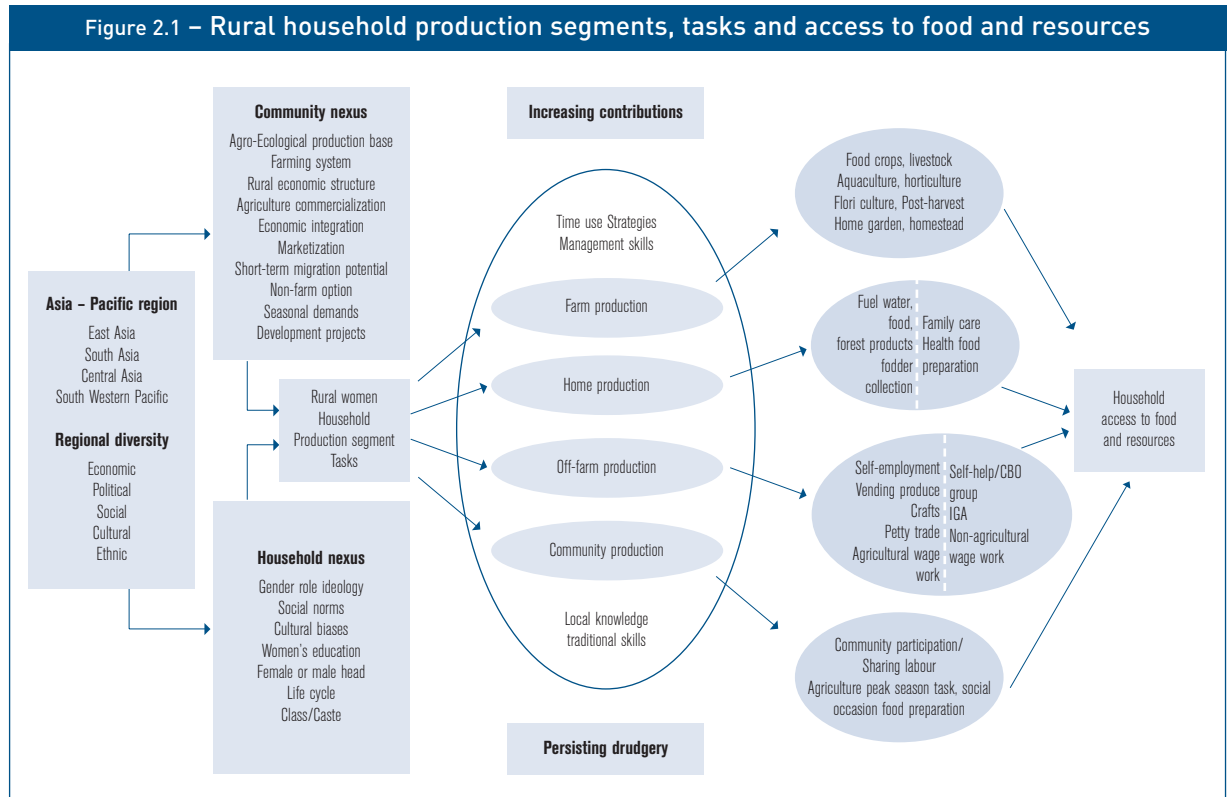
household factors that affect women's roles and responsibilities and govern their access to food and resources are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Rural women's work, and their economic and social contributions, can be grouped under two broad categories – those in the community and those in the household. In most countries, rural women contribute actively to community production improving social linkages and kinship relationships, and facilitating resource exchange at times of need. In the household nexus, ideology of gender roles is shaped by tradition and founded on cultural and religious tenets that determine how rural women participate in household production.

The contributions made by women in the household are increasingly affected by changes that are external to the household. For instance, rural poverty has acted as a push factor while new economic opportunities outside the household have encouraged rural women to cross existing gender role boundaries and participate in the economy outside the household. For instance, recent developments in agricultural diversification, accompanied by commercialization and market trends, have generated opportunities for off-farm paid work, even though a low educational level, inadequate training and social immobility prevent rural women in many places from responding to these opportunities. Even as short-term internal migration is induced by economics and the seasonal aspects of agriculture may cause new work patterns for rural women, gender roles in household production remain fixed



Mother washing her small child at road side.
(Asupi, 1993)



Source: Adapted from:
FAO, 2000.
Balakrishnan; R. Widening
gaps in technology
development and technology
transfer in support of rural
women. In *Human resources;
Agricultural and rural
development*. Pg. 89

Increasing economic contributions

In the Asia-Pacific region, rural women's work patterns are marked by change, continuity, flexibility and rigidity (Gurung, 1999). Change and flexibility is characterized by women taking on new production roles on-farm, off-farm and in the community to ensure family access to food and resources. Continuity and rigidity relates to social norms defining gender roles and dictate that rural women and girls should be responsible for home production in rural households. Intra-household decisions on allocation of labour are often biased and relegate domestic tasks to women and girls. Faced with economic pressures, gender roles may become flexible enabling women to take on work traditionally regarded as male. Meanwhile, the rigidity of gender roles means that men do not perform household tasks.

South Asia

In Bangladesh, participation in economic activities varies considerably according to gender, type of activity and place of residence. Rural women have traditionally played an important role in income-generating activities such as post-harvest; cow fattening and milking; goat farming; backyard poultry rearing; pisciculture; agriculture; horticulture; food processing; cane and bamboo works; silk reeling; handloom; garment-making; fishnet-making; coir production and handicrafts. A significant number of rural women, particularly from extremely poor landless households, are engaged in activities such as construction, earthwork and field-based agricultural work, which have traditionally fallen within the men's domain.

Unpaid family workers, among whom women are disproportionately represented, are a major source of labour in the agriculture sector in Bangladesh (Pal, 2001). One study on the intra-household organization of rice production (based on a relatively small sample) indicates that the extent to which male and female household members are involved in irrigated agriculture and irrigation management is related to the amount of land owned by the household and their religion. Female family labour plays a more important role in rice production than male family labour; the study notes differences between households in different economic categories. For instance, a higher percentage of female labourers from middle-class households are involved in rice production (mostly transplanting and crop processing tasks) compared to marginal farmer households. In the middle strata, women in Hindu male-headed households contribute 54 percent of all labour in rice production, compared to 31 percent in Muslim male-headed households.

When comparing task allocations, a changing pattern emerges. Apart from the traditional crop processing tasks, women in the family make seedbeds, uproot and transplant seedlings, apply fertilizer, weed and harvest, which are all traditional male activities. Some 40–50 percent of field irrigation and non-farm water management is also carried out by women, almost equal to the contribution of male family labour (Jordans, Zwarteveen, 1997).

In India, according to the National Sample Survey Organization, the national work participation for rural women is 22 percent. However, as shown in Figure 2.2, this national average masks significant regional variations among states because of



Women in the agriculture sector

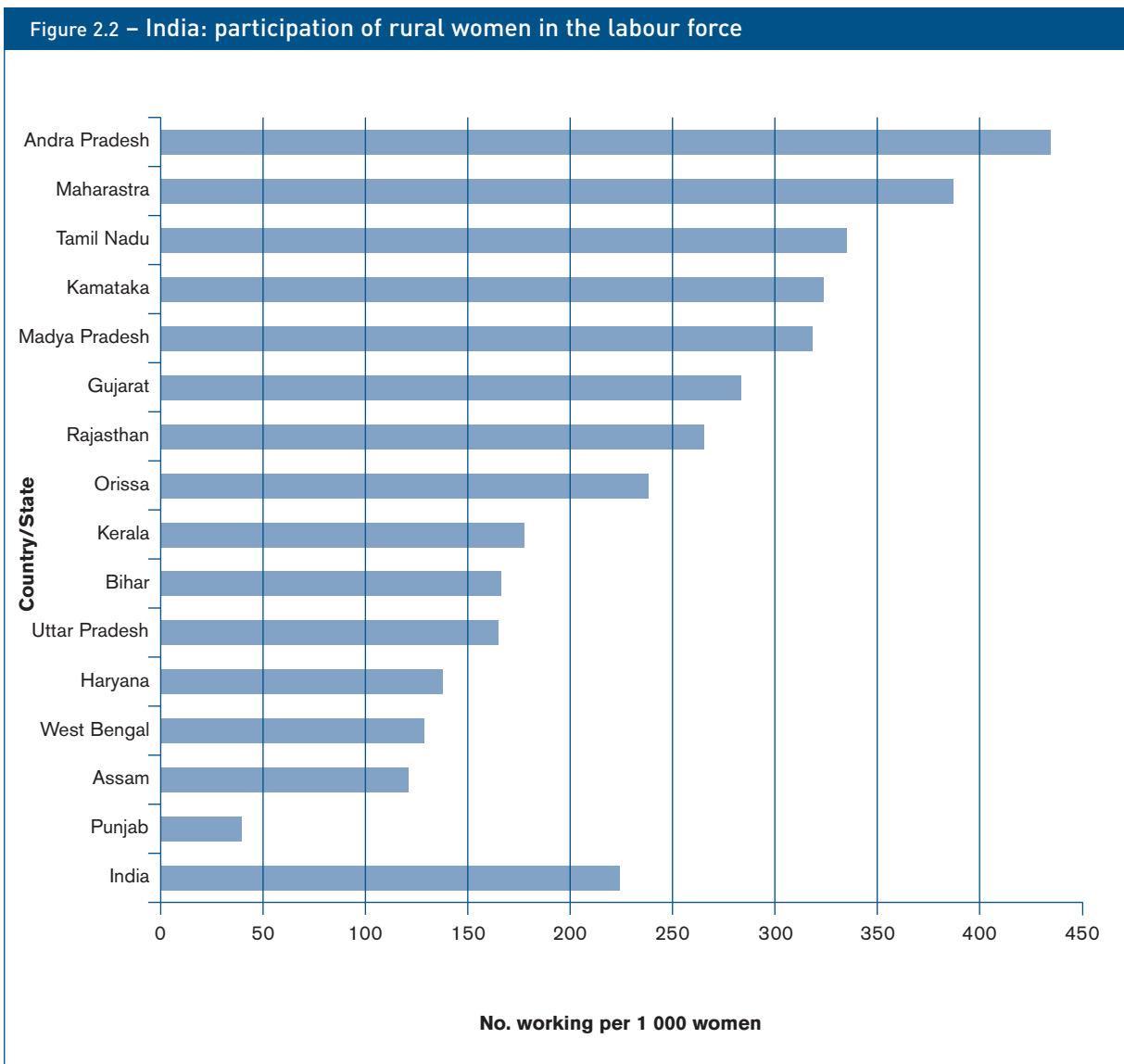
diversity among population groups, agro-ecological systems, and the social and economic organization of production. The level of mechanization in the agricultural sector helps explain the variations in women's participation in the rural labour force. For instance, in Punjab, where the Green Revolution ushered in prosperity and agriculture is highly mechanized, the work participation of rural women is the lowest. In comparison, Andhra Pradesh, which depends on women for labour-intensive crops such as cotton and groundnut, which are grown in dry conditions, show the highest level participation rate for rural women.

Social customs, traditions and cultural considerations affect the type of work performed by men and women in India. A study undertaken by IFAD in the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh in 1997 recognized male-female sharing of domestic and productive work. It was found that both women and men work in agriculture, collect and sell non-timber forest products during certain months of the year and engage in wage labour. However, this equality in work activities was not reflected in decision-making concerning income allocation in which men played a dominant role (IFAD, 1997). Another study, which covered three ecologically distinct and fragile regions in India, concluded that while agriculture is a household enterprise, social norms demarcate the division of labour based on sex and age. In general, land preparation and ploughing are seen as the responsibility of men, transplanting and weeding are regarded as women's jobs, while harvesting and post-harvesting are performed by both women and men. In certain areas, at times of heavy labour demand, women undertake some of the heavier traditional male activities such as land preparation. In the case of little-millet cultivation in the Kolli Hills, women are responsible for most agronomic practices and post-harvest operations including seed storage, supply and exchange (Rengalakshmi, *et al.*, 2002).

In the Maldives, socio-economic changes reinforced the segregation of tasks between the sexes and exacerbated inequalities. Traditionally men were engaged in fishing and women in small-scale fish processing, the resulting product, known as 'Maldives fish', was recognized as a delicacy in countries like Sri Lanka and exported widely. At the time when 'Maldives fish' formed the country's main merchandise export, the participation of women in the labour force was greater than 50 percent, which was one of the highest rates in the developing world. Since then, modernization

of the fishing industry has created opportunities for fishers, allowing them to increase their catch and sell it directly to collection vessels, which export it frozen or provide canning factories for processing. As a result women are less engaged in fish processing; their participation fell to 21 percent in 1985 and 19 percent in 1996 (Dayal, 2001). At the same time, women became increasingly involved in subsistence agriculture, practiced as home gardens on small plots, and seed selection (Kanvinde, 1999).

Source: Menon-Sen, Kumar, 2001.





Women in the agriculture sector

In Nepal, about 40 percent of women are economically active. Most are employed in the agriculture sector, most work as unpaid family labourers in subsistence agriculture, which is characterized by low technology and primitive farming practices. Indeed, with more men moving out of farming, agriculture is becoming increasingly feminized (Acharya, Acharya and Sharma, 1999). In addition to a culturally-based division of labour, women's work load has increased because of i) factors related to geography and infrastructure; ii) out-migration; and iii) new activities promoted through development projects (IFAD, 1997).

Significant changes in the traditional agro-pastoral economy and increases in non-agricultural activities have created formal and informal employment opportunities in the export-led industrial market, which relies heavily on low-wage female labour. This is in response to a mix of basic survival needs and new desires generated by increased exposure to the world beyond the village. A nationwide study identified three resource development strategies adopted by rural families: family farm economy, local market economy and short-term migration. About 67 percent of women participate in the family farm economy, 59 percent in the local market economy, while 75 percent engage in short-term migration. It should be noted that the strategy adopted by women varied according to busy and slack agriculture periods (Shtrii Shakti, 1995).

In Pakistan, women are key players in the agriculture sector, which employs almost 12 million women in the production of crops, vegetables and livestock. The cotton crop, which accounts for half of national export earnings, depends heavily on female labour. Women are exclusively responsible for cotton picking, thus exposing themselves to health hazards arising from intensive pesticide use (Bari, 2000). One study on gender in Pakistan found overwhelming evidence of a division of labour based on gender and family status in which men are responsible for 'market' work: farming, herding and other income-generating activities, and women for home production activities (Fafchamps, Quisumbing, 1999).

Since the days when women from Southern India were recruited to satisfy the labour demands of colonial plantations in Sri Lanka, becoming the first wage earners in the country, women have continued to play an important role in the agriculture sector. In 1997, around 42 percent of working women in Sri Lanka were engaged in

agricultural activities. Gender roles in *Chena* (slash and burn), rice paddies and home gardens vary according to the production process. Men are extensively engaged in land preparation, sowing, application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and marketing, while women are involved in transplanting, post-harvesting and household level processing of home garden produce (M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, 1999). Despite the contribution of women to the sector, their role is seen as secondary to that of men. As a result, women farmers in Sri Lanka are normally seen as farmers' wives rather than economic producers in their own right. The failure to develop local industries in the rural sector has further limited women's access to off-farm employment opportunities (Jayaweera, 1999).

East Asia

In China, variations in agro-ecological characteristics and livelihood options result in variability in the state of rural women. The pace of economic growth and the move towards a market-based economy have both positively and negatively influenced rural women's lives throughout the country. Some rural women benefited from these new economic opportunities, while others have encountered new challenges and greater struggle in their daily lives.

An IFAD study found that rural women in China spent more time in their reproductive role (56.7 percent) than in their productive role (43.3 percent). It should be noted that use of time varied among the provinces studied by age and education. Women over 50 spend most of their day on housework, as physical labour in the fields is considered too taxing. Middle-aged women play a key role in the home and share crop and livestock activities with men. As in many places, younger women often prefer alternatives to farming whenever possible. The study also recognized seasonal differences in time use patterns in rural areas. For example, women might work from 8 to 10 hours in the fields during the busiest agricultural season, while they engage in green house production and other income-generating activities during less busy periods (IFAD, 1995).

A case study in the mountainous Yunnan Province found that women perform 80 percent of agricultural work and are involved in all activities (including cultivation and crop management, harvesting and marketing) with the exception of ploughing.



Women in the agriculture sector

Once again, the involvement of women in agriculture appeared to be determined by their place in the family. Younger women and middle-aged women are responsible for most agriculture and forestry activities, such as collecting fuelwood, non-timber products and pine leaves for barnyard manure, from November to January, during the slacker farming season. Women older than 60 do not take part in agricultural activities, while girl children help with household chores and look after their younger sisters or brothers. Boy children's activities are less structured (Jieru, 1999).

A third study from a different province in China found women are not habitually excluded from off-farm employment opportunities and economic development does not uniformly increase gender inequalities in Chinese households. It was observed that, although men are more likely than women to be employed off-farm, women's off-farm work opportunities improve significantly when local and regional commercialization creates a shortage of male workers and compels employers to hire women. It was further noted that the relative size of contributions to household income for male and female non-farm workers narrows incrementally with increased commercialization. At the same time, women left to perform agricultural work are more likely to become heads of household. This position brings greater household decision-making power to female family members (Matthews and Nee, 2000).

In Mongolia, nomadic households play a role in both productive and reproductive economies, and household rights and responsibilities are differentiated by gender. Traditional nomadic herding maintains clear distinctions between men's and women's work, although this is marked by a mix of cooperation and specialization. Privatization has blurred distinctions between men's and women's work and more women and boys take on work traditionally perceived to be a man's. It has also provided opportunities to increase herd size and expand milk processing, traditionally the work of women in the *ger*, which in turn has resulted in more work for women. While the volume of productive work both paid and unpaid, considered women's responsibility has increased, a few traditional work divisions are strictly maintained. As a result there is flexibility in a number of work activities, where women and boys take on men's work, and continuing rigidity in others, where women's tasks remain theirs alone despite an increase in workload; overall women's workload has intensified (UNIFEM, 2001).

South-East Asia

Women in Cambodia play a leading role in the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors. According to the Cambodia Human Development Report, 55 percent of the labour force in agriculture, forestry and fisheries is made up of women, compared to only 45 percent of men (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2000). The organization of labour appears to be centered on household availability of exchange and hired labour. In this way, men and women share many farm activities, such as carrying water and fuelwood and tending livestock (Gray and Wouters, 1999).

In Indonesia, women are the mainstay of rural households and provide family and farm labour. Agriculture accounts for the highest share of rural employment, with around 63 women per 100 men working in agriculture. Since most rural households control small amounts of land, or have no land at all, rural women often seek to supplement household income and food security through off-farm employment in small and medium enterprises; some of these are linked to agricultural production (Mugniesyah, 2002). In Lao PDR, studies show that women and girls perform 50 to 70 percent of agriculture and productive tasks in addition to household activities. Women farmers mostly produce for household consumption and rural women obtain as much as 30 percent of the family diet and household needs from foraging (UNICEF, 1996). Gender roles and the involvement of women household members in decision-making processes concerning agriculture and aquaculture vary by region and ethnic group (Murray, Kesone, 1998).

Malaysia, one of the South-East Asian success stories, has experienced a fundamental shift in its employment patterns over the past 15 years. In Malaysia, agro-forestry, livestock and fishing were once major sources of employment for women. In 1995, these sectors employed only 15.9 percent of female workers and 20.3 percent of male workers. Malaysian women took advantage of the economic transformation to move into relatively better-paid opportunities in other sectors. Today, the manufacturing sector is the single largest employer of women, followed by community, public, social services, trade and agriculture (Ahmad, 1998). In comparison, the majority of working women in the Philippines – more than 50 percent in 1997 – continue to work in the agricultural sector. Women dominate the rural informal employment market (APEC North-South Institute, 1999); data from



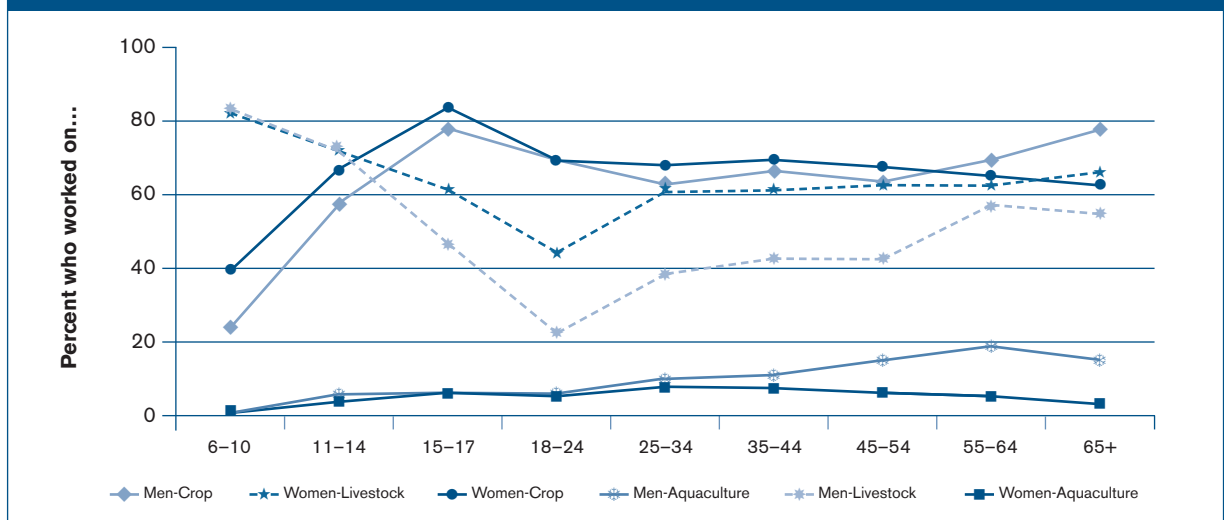
Women in the agriculture sector

five rice-growing villages indicate that women work as much as men in both farm and non-farm activities (Estudillo, Quisumbing, *et al.*, 2001).

In Thailand, women play a major role in rural systems of production and income generation, about 40 percent worked in agriculture in 1995. All members of small-holder households, regardless of age and sex, play a role in agricultural production. Though participation of rural women in the labour force is highest – approximately 80 percent – among older age groups (30–34, 35–39, and 40–49 years) (Thonguthai, Thomson and Bhonsung, 1998). As opportunities for wage and self-employment outside rural households have increased with economic transformation, participation of rural women in the economy has begun to resemble that of urban women. A study in one Bangkok neighbourhood confirmed the importance of women in marketing agriculture produce; a survey of ten agricultural produce markets indicated that about 80 percent of fruit and vegetable stalls were owned by women (Korsieporn, 2000).

In Vietnam, data from the recent Vietnam Living Standards Survey demonstrated the extensive participation of women in the agriculture sector. As illustrated in Figure 2.3, the data show how the contribution of rural women exceeds that of rural men in livestock production, and is comparable to men in crop

Figure 2.3
Vietnam: participation of the labour force in crop production, livestock maintenance and aquaculture



Source: Desai, 2001

production. The survey data further reveal that in the five-year period between 1992–1993 and 1997–1998, wage employment increased from 26 to 32 percent among male and female adults in the 18 to 64 age group. Moreover, most of this increase occurred for women in rural areas, with no change in urban areas. Another recent study corroborates these findings on women's contributions to rural production systems and reiterates the major role of women in livestock rearing. It found that women's labour accounted for an average of 69 percent of a household's total labour (Desai, 2001).

In Southeast Asia countries, such as Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, women normally play an important role in processing and marketing fish. Although, in many parts of South Asia, notably Bangladesh and India, purdah and other cultural norms have traditionally restricted women's movement and limited their participation in fish harvesting. In Bali, women are active in fish marketing, but in South Sulawesi men completely control this activity (Felsing, Brugere, Kusakabe and Kelkar, 2000).

Pacific Islands

In the countries of the Pacific Islands, smallholders represent the major production unit, producing goods for use in the home, exchange, and sale in domestic and export markets. Traditionally, women and girls assume primary responsibility for food production and family food security by growing crops in homestead gardens, rearing small livestock, producing handicrafts and engaging in other value-added activities, such as copra making, fish drying, weaving, coconut oil production, preparation of traditional medicines, planting materials and seeds, while men engage in cash cropping. Over time, as cash cropping became more important because of its economic value and contribution to national development, the types of agricultural work performed by women have remained associated with food security and are regarded as less important in the emerging economic model.

While some reports indicate that agricultural production may be declining in the Pacific, the limited available data show women's role in agriculture is increasing throughout the entire production and post-production chain. The most up-to-date data on women and men's work in the family smallholder system is from the 1999 Samoa Agricultural Survey, which indicates that women of all ages are engaged in farm management, production and marketing. For instance, the survey shows that the



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overwhelming majority of farm operators are male (17 993) as opposed to female (185), that two out of every five farm labourers are female, that women are responsible for almost half of agricultural trading, and that women outnumber men in handicraft production by a ratio of nine to one. Given the similarities with neighbouring countries, this data set reinforces the view that sharing tasks by gender is the norm in family systems throughout the Pacific Islands.

The Samoa Agricultural Census further reflects the role of women in waged agricultural employment, and indicates new trends for women's involvement in part-time farming. Women in part-time employment spend an average of 58 hours per month in agriculture, close to the time recorded for agricultural workers (63 hours) and more than part-time male workers (53 hours). Women in full-time waged employment spend roughly 8 hours per week working in agriculture, in addition to their full-time job. These trends were also observed in the neighbouring Pacific Island nations and may reflect a loss of confidence in agriculture, a desire to spread risk, a need to supplement income because of the increased cost of living and/or the low level of regular or specialized input required. High levels of female participation in part-time agricultural work reflect unique local factors. In Samoa they are probably linked to a shortage of agricultural labour caused by migration, while in Tuvalu they indicate an absence of men who are employed on seagoing vessels.

Available studies indicate that women in Fiji and Samoa play a significant role in the dairy industry, and women in Vanuatu are involved alongside men in pasture establishment, weeding and fencing on 73 percent of cattle smallholdings. Studies on Fiji showed that, among inhabitants of the same village, women recognize and use more plants, which can be explained by their multiple family and community responsibilities (Lechte, 1998).

Deteriorating economic conditions in Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu stimulated a marked increase in informal trading by women, particularly in agricultural goods such as crops, marine goods, livestock, handicrafts and cooked foods, which augurs well for family food security. A random sample from the Solomon Islands shows that some 66 percent of women (two out of every three) are engaged in informal trade, compared to 70 percent in Samoa. The survey stressed the

importance of income from informal trading in these countries where it represented the only income for as much as 70 percent of families in the Fiji sample, 33 percent in the Solomon Islands and 24 percent in Samoa.

As an essential part of local economies in the Pacific Islands, deep-sea fishing was the traditional domain of men, while women and girls gleaned the reef and inshore lagoons for marine foods. Recently, increasing global demand for marine products, new technology (in the aquaculture and seaweed industries), depleting fish stocks and the need to earn cash has initiated changes in the traditional gender divisions of labour. As a result, women are more involved in fishing, particularly in atoll communities such as Kiribati where marine products have become key export goods.

These snapshots of the lives of rural women in various Asian and Pacific Island countries illustrate the crucial role women of all ages play in food production and food security. The extensive and diverse responsibilities of these women in local agricultural and non-farm production systems are a factor of the community and household nexus in which they function, as well as national and global factors beyond their control.

Persisting household drudgery

It is a social reality throughout the Asia-Pacific region that rural women work long hours and suffer drudgery in their daily existence. Moreover, poor women pursue a number of survival strategies to earn enough cash to feed and maintain their families – one facet is the inordinate extension of working hours inside and outside the home. A review of available case studies provides evidence that suggests poor access to basic services, such as water and sanitation and the need to search for fuel and food supplements extends and intensifies a rural woman's typical day. A case study on mountain women in Darjeeling, India, indicated increased difficulty finding fuelwood in the forest following deforestation, and the resultant increase in women's workload and corresponding toll on their health (Gurung, 1999).

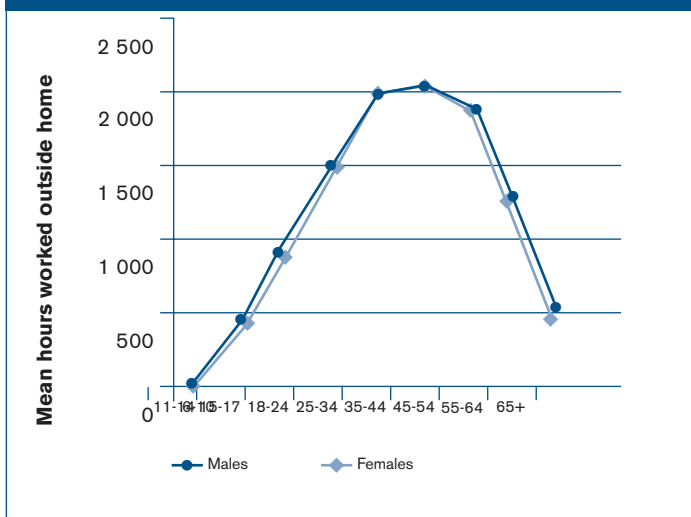
Similarly, women in Nepal assume the double burden of working for the family and on the farm (Acharya, Acharya and Sharma 1999). A recent IFAD study found women in Nepalese hill districts faced heavy workloads and a high level of physical vulnerability, albeit with differences between classes and castes, they worked around

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16 hours per day, compared to 9 to 10 hours for men. In addition to being overworked, the study found that many of these women were also hungry (IFAD, 1999).

In Pakistan, the plight of many rural women and girls is little different, their responsibilities include fetching water, food preparation, agricultural and other household duties that are physically demanding and rob girls of the opportunity to study (Bari, 2000). At the same time, the 'invisibility' of women as farmers means that little attention is paid to perilous aspects of their work such as the detrimental health effects of pesticides on Pakistani cotton pickers who are exclusively female (Nathan, *et al.*, 1999).

Figure 2.4
Vietnam: hours worked in income-generation in the past year



Source: Desai, 2001

yet available (UNIFEM, 2001).

In Vietnam relatively few differences are found in the amount of time men and women spend on income-generating activities (see the Vietnam Living Standard Survey for 1997–1998 as shown in Figure 2.4). Women spend almost twice as much time as men on household work (as shown in Figure 2.5). Consequently, the total number of hours worked by women is consistently greater than that of men at each point in the life cycle (Desai, 2001).

In the Pacific Island countries, households balance the amount of time spent on subsistence farming and cash cropping with social obligations, domestic duties, and

off-farm business and employment commitments. A comparison of women's and men's domestic work in Samoa reveals an interesting pattern whereby young men, between the ages of 10 and 24 years, appear to spend more time cooking than women. However, because women continue to play a predominant role in child care and washing, traditional female domains, it is likely that they continue to face drudgery.

The drudgery of rural women's work raises considerations of gender equality concerning rural women and their efforts to improve household food security. Time is the key resource in strategies pursued by women in accessing food and livelihood commodities; most rural women in Asia and the Pacific do not have enough time.

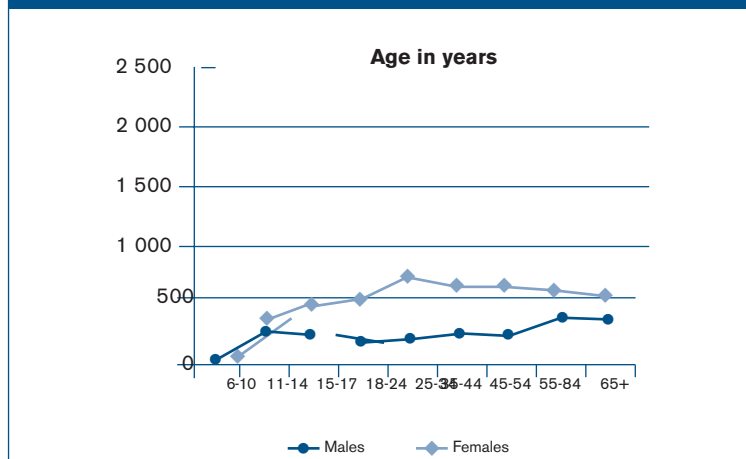
Moreover, a heavy work burden leaves them little time to participate in capacity improvement interventions, even if they are available. According to an assessment by the World Bank, women in developing countries generally work longer hours than men and bear a disproportionate share of the responsibilities and time for household maintenance and care activities.

The amount of time devoted to such responsibilities frequently means that women have fewer opportunities than men to participate in market-based work or to earn income independently. In turn their bargaining

and decision-making power within the household is affected, and they have less free time for rest and personal care (World Bank, 2001). In recognition of these challenges, the World Bank and others proposed a range of gender-responsive actions to reduce the burden on women's time. In Cambodia interventions were proposed to improve physical infrastructure to reduce women's travel time, and develop user-groups as a means to reduce the time spent by women gathering water and fuel and on water resource management (World Bank, 2002).

As agricultural diversification continues to shift labour-intensive activities into the domain of rural women, it is increasingly important to understand the effects of

Figure 2.5
Vietnam: hours worked in household maintenance activities in the past year



Source: Desai, 2001.



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women's increased work burden on the well-being of rural households, and to ensure that interventions seeking to empower women also focus on providing for their practical needs to reduce household drudgery. The work burden of rural women should be reviewed in the context of the emerging discourse on work intensity and its gendered effects on well-being, which have implications for intra-household 'bargaining' and the gender division of labour.

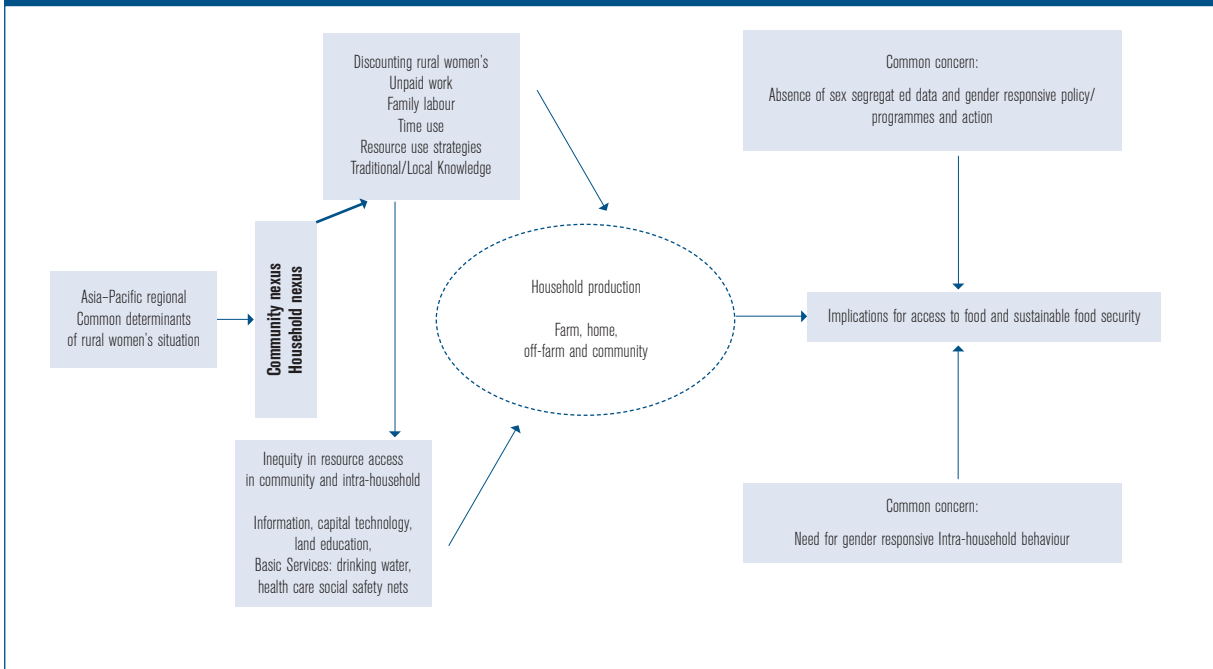
According to Jackson and Palmer-Jones, the 'justification for the emphasis on physical arduousness in the continuing context of absolute poverty, in both agriculture and natural resource-based livelihoods, testifies to the poverty of these populations' (Jackson and Palmer-Jones, 1998). Given this situation, correcting rural neglect, as manifested in working women's inadequate access to water, fuelwood, sanitation and health resources, should be an important priority on the gender equality manifesto.

Persisting indifference

An analytical review of rural women throughout the Asia-Pacific region identifies two common determinants: the persisting undervaluation of rural women's work by the community and the household and unequal access to resources as shown in Figure 2.6. As a result of the indifference to rural women's work, at both the household and community level, women's contributions to agricultural and household production is routinely discounted and/or ignored. Combined social ignorance and economic indifference lead to both explicit and implicit inequity in women's access to various resources, necessary to support and improve their contributions in a range of activities.

Entrenched attitudes further undervalue the worth of women within the household, resulting in gender bias that spill over into community interactions and the policy arena. The limited availability of data on rural women's work, coupled with a lack of attention to and value of unpaid work in the agriculture and rural development sector, further perpetuates this situation. This results in sector policies and development strategies that ignore rural women and ultimately obstruct efforts to promote agricultural development and enhance food security.

Figure 2.6
Common determinants, rural women in the Asia-Pacific region



Source: R. Balakrishnan

Unpaid work – social ignorance and economic indifference

A persistent challenge to complete understanding of the state of rural women in Asia and the Pacific is the general absence of systematically gathered and objectively analysed reliable data. In particular, the undercounting of women in production, in agriculture and income-generation and in the rural economy is a common weakness of available macro statistics in the region.

In Bangladesh, for example, women account for 83.2 percent of the 42.5 percent of unpaid family helpers in rural areas (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1996). In Cambodia, women account for 66 percent of unpaid family workers in the labour force over 15 years of age.

In India, national statistics classified 22 percent of rural women as workers in 1997. However, national data collection agencies recognized the serious under-

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present and future perspectives for women in agriculture



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counting of women's contribution as workers, and the National Sample Survey estimated that at least 17 percent of rural women and nearly 6 percent of urban women were incorrectly recorded as 'non-workers'. As a result of the prevailing, erroneous social perception of what constitutes work, the majority of rural women workers are invisible to national statistics, which fail to recognize unpaid work in the household, on family land or in family enterprises, such as cooking, cleaning, care of children and the elderly, the collection of water, fuel and fodder (Menon-Sen and Kumar, 2001).

This statistical invisibility is illustrated in Pakistan where only 15 percent of women are registered in the Labour Force Survey, even though the 1980 Agricultural Census estimated that 73 percent of women in agricultural households were economically active. The 1990/91 Labour Force Survey reported a female economic activity rate of 7 percent using the conventional questionnaire. This rate increased to 31 percent when respondents were questioned about specific activities: transplanting rice, picking cotton, grinding, drying seeds and tending livestock. In countries with Pakistan's cultural norms, where women's waged work seems to threaten the male ego and identity, women are insufficiently remunerated for their considerable contributions to multiple home-based economic activities (Bari, 2000).

In the Philippines, excessive undercounting of women in the rural workforce largely results from confusion and ambiguity in the definitions of 'productive work', 'housework' and 'the worker'. The main reason for women's work being excluded from the calculation of the gross national product is that much is subsistence and carried out within the family (APEC North-South Institute, 1999). In other countries, changes in the rural economy fundamentally affected the type of work performed by women, which is reflected in national employment statistics. In the Maldives, the development of an export-oriented fishing industry deprived women of opportunities to work for a cash income, causing them to become invisible unpaid family labourers (Dayal, 2001).

Although statistics indicate that women play a vital role in the economies of Pacific Island countries, women in several of these countries struggle to have a say in the management of community fisheries because their informal day-to-day fishing activities are not recognized as work by governments, industry and banks. As a result, they may not be able to take out loans to develop small businesses, are less likely to

receive skills training in manufacturing positions, and are less likely to receive valuable information about conservation practices (Robinson, 2000).

Summarizing the findings of studies on mountain women in the Hindu-Kush area of the Himalayas, Gurung asserts that 'suffering from the myopia of labeling women's subsistence work 'domestic' and therefore trivial, development planners have not, until recently, recognized the critical contribution of women's work to agriculture production and the very survival of the family' (Gurung, 1999). As a result of this short-sightedness, the enormous role and contribution of rural women in unpaid work throughout the Asia and Pacific region continues to be ignored in economic analyses and undervalued in society. Because their contribution to agriculture and food security is held in such low esteem, few if any supportive measures are locally available to improve women's situation and reduce hardships that cause inequities in their access to resources.

At the same time, the general lack of national economic analyses, that consider the distinct contribution of working women, gives rise to gender-blind policies and programmes that have a negative effect upon national productivity. In this context, ambiguities in work definitions must be clarified so that the contributions of currently invisible women workers are no longer concealed. Indeed, the case of home-based workers demonstrates the need for improved informal sector statistics, as well as a better understanding of the impact of policies on the informal sector, and the contribution of the informal sector to national economies (Chen, Sebstad and Connell, 1999).

Facets of inequity in rural women's access to resources

A recent World Bank study highlighted the double disadvantage poor women confront in accessing resources – they are poor and women (World Bank, 2001). Examples are not difficult to find in rural areas of the Asia-Pacific region, where inequality in access to resources is intensified by persistent neglect of available services and infrastructure. Traditional perceptions and attitudes perpetuate gender bias and discriminate against rural women's access to community and household resources.

At the same time, degradation of natural resources threatens women's access to subsistence livelihood resources in rural areas. Another growing concern is that the forces of globalization could further marginalize rural women and result in greater inequity in access to resources. New and emerging technologies in both the agriculture and information sectors may well bypass poorly educated rural women.

Access to land

Rural women's access to land – as owners and users – presents a mixed picture of conflict between legal rights and customary laws, as well as inheritance of property directed by family priorities and personal practices (Agarwal, 1994; Bari, 2000; Tinker, 1999; Meinzen-Dick, Brown, Feldstein and Quisumbing, 1997). In Sumatra the inheritance system is evolving from strictly matrilineal to more egalitarian, in which sons and daughters inherit the type of land that is more relevant to their respective work.

Although a gender bias is non-existent or small in land inheritance, daughters tend to be disadvantaged with respect to schooling (Quisumbing and Otsuka, 2001). An egalitarian trade in resources may prevail in certain societies, though most often land laws, or implementation of land laws are biased against women. In the rural context, lack of ownership or direct lease rights to land may further prevent women from accessing resources such as irrigation and credit (Mehra, 1995; Agarwal, 1994).

Throughout the Pacific Islands, family members hold the majority of land in customary tenure under the protection of the family head. Rights to land may be passed on through patrilineal or matrilineal lines. For many reasons women have difficulty activating their rights. Specifically, the customary belief is that women do

not need land because agriculture is male work and women are protected by the family support systems. In addition, there is the fear that land given to women is lost when they marry.

Recently these and other social customs have been formalized into legal rights that discriminate against women. For example, the codification of customary laws into legal laws in Kiribati in the Lands Code (Native Lands Ordinance Cap. 61, Part IX: Section 11-ii) stipulates that in the distribution of an estate between sons and daughters, the share to the eldest son should exceed that of his brothers, and the share to sons should exceed that of daughters.

Access to credit

The provision of micro-credit – usually collateral-free and group-guaranteed – has provided an important source of capital for rural men and women in the Asia-Pacific region. High economic rates of return have been attributed to the excellent repayment performance of rural women. The group-based micro-credit and micro-finance approach have served the short-term credit needs of rural households well, improving cash flows where petty trade opportunities have been available (Zeller, Sharma, Ahmed and Rashid, 2001).

However, clear differences prevail among the different kinds of micro-finance programmes pursued in terms of the approach, particularly the commitment to build the capacity of rural women to become self-reliant producers and confident credit-holders in their individual rights (United Nations DAW/UNIFEM, 2001). The repayment terms dictated by micro-credit (compulsory weekly repayments plus a contribution to savings) and interest rates are not suited to the needs of agriculture households, which do not normally have a weekly cash flow given their reliance on longer-term agriculture production and livestock-rearing cycles. It has happened that the women-centered credit model may have pressed rural women to pursue additional, alternative income-generating strategies to keep up with repayment schedules, thereby sometimes causing an increase in their workload.

Recent studies have further questioned the assumption that micro-credit is an effective instrument for women's empowerment by indicating that, in some cases, women serve as a front to access credit for men in the household, and thus lack direct



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control over the credit obtained in their name. In short, it has been suggested that a preoccupation with performance – measured primarily in terms of high repayment rates – has impacted the incentives of those who grant and recover credit, resulting in less attention being paid to whether and how women can have meaningful control over their own investment activities (Goetz and Gupta, 1996).

In the Pacific Islands, women tend to experience difficulties obtaining credit through commercial banks given their lack of collateral and the small size of loans requested. The fact that banks are normally located in urban areas, coupled with a lack of knowledge about banking procedures, further impedes female access to capital. In this context, many women's groups have developed savings and loans schemes where members make regular deposits and have the option of borrowing at reasonable interest rates. However, major constraints associated with these schemes include management weaknesses as well as the high cost of running small schemes and making them available to rural areas (Fairbairn-Dunlop and Struthers, 1997).

A study of women and food production in Fiji, the Marshall Islands Samoa, the Solomon Islands and the Pacific Islands found the quality of home gardens depended on land availability, amount of land, soils, women's access to planting materials, training, labour availability and knowledge of pests and diseases. On some atolls, problems of poor soils and garden washout from rain and sea spray also presented difficulties. In each of the countries studied, women with the most successful gardens belonged to dual-income or high-status families, which suggest that training alone might be insufficient to achieve family food security (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1997).

Environmental resources

Natural resource degradation directly affects rural women's productivity and access to livelihood alternatives. Most studies to date have focused on the impact of forest and coastal resource degradation on women's access to resources. There is limited information on the impact of soil and water resource degradation on female work patterns. One study illustrated how the livelihoods of indigenous communities in Northern Sarawak, Malaysia, traditionally based on hunting, gathering and shifting agriculture, are threatened by logging, deforestation and changes in government policies regarding indigenous lands. This has led to severe soil erosion, deterioration in the

quality of river water, reduction in biodiversity and a decline in fish and wildlife populations. As a result, the search for alternative livelihoods induced male migration, leaving women behind to cope with a declining resource base (Heyzer, 1996).

Gender inequalities in accessing environmental resources, command over labour, capacity to diversify livelihood strategies and decision-making processes cause significant differences in how men and women experience poverty and environmental changes (Masika and Joekes, 1997). Analysing regional variations and temporal shifts in rural India over a 30-year period, Agarwal concluded natural resource degradation, privatization and appropriation of natural resources by the state resulted in particularly adverse implications for female members of rural households (Agarwal, 1997).

In northern Pakistan forest cover was dramatically reduced in recent years at the same time as agricultural productivity rose significantly with an increase in livestock farming. At the same time, women's agricultural workload increased while men spent more time in income-generating activities, enabling them to monopolize the community's access to the monetary economy, while women were left powerless (Joekes, 1995).

In Nepal, a study examined rural women's workload in the context of available environmental goods collection over the past two decades. It found that while all household members spent less time collecting various local resources, such as water and wood, the amount of time women spent on collection fell most, while their share of total collection time also decreased. Given the large amount of time women in the region spend on collection, and the burden it entails, this finding suggests a positive trend that may be due to increased availability of local environmental resources. For instance each site studied had installed at least one water tap, while some noted an improvement in their community forest during the 14-year period in question (Cooke, 2000).

Community organizations

The development of women's groups has been promoted as a means to expand women's access to information, increase their bargaining power and create opportunities for collective action to access economic inputs. In reality, however, persisting gender bias, deep-seated community dynamics and women's time constraints prevent them from actively participating in these groups, which were intended to bring about social capital benefits and female empowerment.



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The widespread transfer of responsibility for irrigation management from the state to communities or local user groups has ignored the implications of intra-community power differences on the effectiveness and equity of water management. Gender is a recurrent source of such differences. Despite the rhetoric, regarding women's participation, a review of evidence from South Asia has shown that female participation is minimal in water users groups, in part because the formal and informal membership criteria excluded women (Meinzen-Dick and Zwartveen, 1998).

Many factors were identified as constraints to women's participation in formal institutions for environmental management. These included rules, norms, perceptions, entrenched territorial claims, the household and women's economic and social endowments (Agarwal, 2000). Women having the primary responsibility for both domestic and farm work have extremely full days and are unlikely to have time to attend meetings. Some women in rural areas may not have connections to male-dominated and government hierarchies. A food-for-work programme in Cambodia found women without husbands, and those who were poor, were isolated from other villagers because of the amount of time they spend working alone, foraging for food, hauling water and caring for the home (WFP, 2001).

Access to education and skills development

Gender differences in access to education are a key facet of inequality affecting rural women's access to other resources. Many studies, carried out in different parts of the world, documented the importance of women's education for children's education and nutrition; education is critical to female empowerment. Women need at least a basic education if they are to develop the skills needed to participate in knowledge-intensive economic activities.

Women without access to basic education will likely be excluded from new opportunities and, where long-standing gender gaps in education persist, are at increased risk of falling behind men in their ability to participate in development (King and Alderman, 2001). Across Asia studies have documented women's unequal participation in education and training. A study carried out in 25 villages in Pakistan found that a number of serious supply-side constraints (inadequate primary schools for girls close to villages, lack of female teachers) deny girls access to primary education (Sawada and Lokshin, 2001).

Similarly, in southern India, research identified a number of factors that keep poor boys and girls out of the classroom – including poverty, the opportunity cost of children’s labour and entrenched social and cultural norms that give rise to inequality of caste, class and gender (Subrahmanian, 1997). A survey undertaken by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation found that the time allocated to unpaid work was the major barrier to women improving their skills and training (APEC North-South Institute, 1999).

Technology development and dissemination programmes in developing countries have not adequately addressed the household drudgery associated with different production activities. In particular, these programmes failed to recognize rural women’s demand for technology to improve their productivity. In Nepal, little effort was given to the need to develop and diffuse new and improved agricultural tools tailored to women farmers, even though national policies and programmes sought to promote women’s empowerment (Guatam, 1999).

In Bangladesh, a participatory assessment of the intrahousehold impact of modern agricultural technologies identified several reasons why poor women fail to utilize knowledge of new technologies including unfavourable land tenure, the gender division of workspace that is validated by *pardah* and limited size of household plots (Naved, 2000).

In the livestock sector, most technical solutions – including those directed at women – have ignored women’s needs, while improvements to the production system have generally increased their workloads. In the future, appropriate technologies should be designed to take into account women’s workload and the potential impact technology might have on their status and economic control over resources and property (Niamer-Fuller, 1994). As M.S. Swaminathan, a renowned Indian scientist emphasized ‘if women are empowered with technological information and skills, all the members of the family will benefit.’ (UNDP, 2001).

New technologies

One major finding of the recently completed Asia-Pacific Gender Science and Technology Project in Kiribati, Fiji and Samoa, which focused on biotechnology, the environment, water, energy and information technology, was that women’s main access to technology is through women’s NGOs that rely on donor funding (Ecowomen Fiji, Wainimate and research institutes affiliated to the University of the South Pacific).



Women in the agriculture sector

Agricultural research and extension services still direct their attention to export crops and men. Rural infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific should increase access to off-farm employment opportunities and facilitate the adoption by farmers of new technologies and information and support services (Nathan, *et al.*, 1999).

Feminization of rural poverty

An IFAD assessment recognized the feminization of rural poverty in Asia and noted two key dimensions. Notably, women-headed households in the region are usually poorer than those headed by men, and poverty is more severe and binding for women, as it is more difficult for them and their children to escape (IFAD, 1999). According to this study, female-headed households represent a significant proportion of households in Cambodia (35 percent of household are female-headed), Bangladesh and Nepal, where female-headed households make up 16 percent of landless and marginal households.

In Cambodia, the migration of men and grown children has had positive and negative consequences. Some men and children who work away from the village may send money home, significantly improving the family's standard of living. On the other hand, wives whose husbands leave for long periods may suffer some of the same deprivations as poor women without husbands. For instance, a study by the World Food Programme showed that women in households where no men are present have inadequate access to decision-making networks, knowledge and assets such as rice and labour (WFP, 2001). Similarly, the Vietnam Living Standard Survey identified labour shortages in female-headed households as an important resource constraint in expanding economic assets and agriculture productivity. In the rural areas of Vietnam median profits of female-operated enterprises are 84 percent of those of men (Desai, 2001).

Specific hardships faced by women in the Pacific Islands include shortage of family labour because of migration and children at school, the reluctance of youth to perform agricultural work and trends in seasonal male labour. In Kiribati and Tuvalu, men are engaged in waged-employment on sea vessels for long periods. At the same time, family support systems, that have traditionally protected women from negative changes in the economy, are being eroded. An increasing number of marriages are breaking up, and the

number of unmarried pregnancies is increasing, all of which contribute to an increase in female-headed households. In short, such factors mean that throughout the Pacific Islands today women, as a group are most vulnerable to poverty.

Resources and sustainable food security

The various facets of resource-access inequity faced by women are shown in Table 2.4. This matrix illustrates the nexus of inequity and its relationship to sustainable food security across a range of production segments. Major food security risks include limited incentives to improve land and productivity, inadequate opportunities and restricted capacity to diversify income sources. As women have no time to improve agriculture production, this also means poor nutritional gains for rural households and uncertain access to food at times of family crisis and crop loss. These factors have major implications for the availability of sufficient food to ensure national food security.

Table 2.4
Rural women resource access inequity matrix

Production segment	Resource domain	Access problem	Inequity nexus	Risks to the achievement of sustainable food security
Farm production	Land	Lack of ownership and access to land Uncertain access to productive land	No legal land rights Customary laws and local practices Poor implementation of land law legislation granting equal access Women's reluctance to exert land law rights and ownership responsibilities Privatization of common property	Lack of incentives to improve land and productivity in the agriculture sector with implications for the availability of food and national food security
	Forest resources	No access to non-temperate forest resources Lack of access to pasture space and fodder for livestock	Forest preservation measures Change in community resource use due to privatization	Lack of means to diversify income and access to food
	Soil and water	Absence of good land with fertile soil No access to irrigation and water for production	Degraded soil quality on the limited land available for subsistence production and inability to negotiate access to fertile land Poor quality of water and lack of participation in water user groups Inability to articulate need and demands within water user groups	Lack of incentives to improve land and productivity in the agriculture sector with implications for the availability of food and national food security

Women in the agriculture sector

Production segment	Resource domain	Access problem	Inequity nexus	Risks to the achievement of sustainable food security
Farm, home & off-farm production	Technology	<p>Lack of access to technology suited to production activities carried out by women</p> <p>No access to household technology</p> <p>Lack of technology to scale up production and improve quality</p> <p>No access to current technologies, production methods and technical information</p>	<p>Past and ongoing neglect of women's needs and roles in technology development</p> <p>Displacement of women by mechanization, given lower female skills and education and gender bias that favours men</p> <p>Assumption that technology for household tasks is synonymous with female domestication</p> <p>Neglect of women's home production technology needs</p> <p>Weak and insufficient technology training programmes for women</p> <p>Women's lack of time and education to take advantage of skills training and technology transfer programmes</p>	<p>Limited means to diversify income and access to food</p> <p>Lack of incentives to improve productivity in the agriculture sector with implications for the availability of food and national food security</p>
	Labour	<p>Absence of available labour for agriculture technologies</p> <p>No labour for domestic tasks</p>	<p>Increased number of female-headed households due to male migration</p> <p>Lack of male labour and small family size in female-headed households</p> <p>Change in family structure and kinship networks</p>	<p>Few available means to diversify incomes and access to food</p> <p>Lack of incentives to improve productivity in the agriculture sector with implications for the availability of food and national food security</p>
	Credit	<p>Lack of access to formal credit for agricultural production and for establishing and scaling up enterprises</p>	<p>Poorly-developed agriculture banking and rural credit systems</p> <p>Lack of traditional forms of collateral (e.g. land or house) mean women perceived as unreliable clients for sizeable credit</p> <p>Men considered head of household for official credit transactions</p>	<p>Few available means to diversify incomes and access to food</p> <p>Lack of incentives to improve productivity in the agriculture sector with implications for the availability of food and national food security</p>
	<p>Agriculture support services</p> <p>Institutional resources</p>	<p>Lack of access to inputs for agriculture production and off-farm production</p> <p>Lack of off-farm labour employment</p> <p>Lack of access to development organizations and government agencies</p>	<p>Poor agriculture support delivery system</p> <p>Lack of appropriate information and outreach to rural women</p> <p>Traditional bias ignores roles of women in agriculture and therefore the need for gender-sensitive farm sector extension programmes</p> <p>Limited education and lack of understanding about public sector and programmes among women</p> <p>Inadequate investment in rural employment programmes</p> <p>Women's lack of education and appropriate skills to take advantage of new economic opportunities</p>	<p>Few available means to diversify incomes and access to food</p> <p>Lack of incentives to improve productivity in the agriculture sector with implications for the availability of food and national food security</p>

Asia and the Pacific

chapter 2

Production segment	Resource domain	Access problem	Inequity nexus	Risks to the achievement of sustainable food security
			<p>Traditional marginalization of women by public sector institutions</p> <p>Women's inadequate knowledge of public sector agencies and services</p> <p>Women's lack of ability to deal with public sector development agencies</p>	
	Market and commercial linkages	Limited access to reliable markets Insufficient links with urban commercial centres	<p>Poor market infrastructure and limited market information services in rural areas</p> <p>Economic and social organizations that use the productive resources of rural producers, while ignoring female producers</p> <p>Global economic linkages</p>	<p>Lack of means to diversify income and access to food</p> <p>Lack of incentives to improve productivity in the agriculture sector with implications for the availability of food and national food security</p>
Home production	Drinking water, sanitation, health care and child care services	Lack of access to basic services to manage family care responsibilities	<p>Poor service infrastructure in rural areas</p> <p>Traditional assumptions that women need little and are used to managing difficult tasks</p> <p>Lack of roads and transportation routes linking rural communities to service centres</p>	<p>Women's inadequate time and efforts to improve agricultural production with implications for the availability of food and national food security</p> <p>Poor nutritional gains for rural households</p>
Community production	Formal safety nets	Lack of access to cash or supportive services at times of family crises Access to community organizations Access to family networks	<p>Past and current neglect of appropriate crop/livestock and personal/medical insurance or cash transfer for rural communities.</p> <p>Lack of expertise to deal with externally organized community organizations</p> <p>Men dominating the deliberations of community organizations assuming leadership positions</p> <p>Women following tradition not effectively articulating their need for resources</p> <p>Women's lack of time and expertise as barriers to active involvement</p> <p>Breakdown in extended family system and traditional kinship networks.</p>	<p>Uncertain access to food among rural families at times of family crisis and crop loss</p> <p>Lack of means to diversify income and access to food</p>



Regional trends

A number of recent developments in the social, economic and technological arena – including economic integration, commercialization, urbanization and globalization, advances in agriculture and information technologies, political instability, civil war, HIV/AIDS, natural disasters – have significantly affected rural women across the Asia and the Pacific region, including family health, agricultural productivity and economic well-being. Few systematic studies have examined the impact of these trends on rural women. It seems reasonable to suggest that economic integration and advances in agriculture and information technologies present both opportunities and threats to rural women's livelihoods and work, while political instability, natural disasters and HIV/AIDS exert significant additional pressure on rural women.

Economic crisis of the 1990s

The economic crisis in Southeast Asia brought about a substantial increase in poverty in urban areas. Although the effects on rural areas and agriculture were not as great as initially feared, they were extensive and given the significant variation between and within countries, some rural areas suffered seriously. In general, the rural poor were adversely affected by crisis-induced government cutbacks in rural expenditures, reduced remittances and the return of unemployed urban workers who increased demands on rural household incomes (Hooke, Warr, Shaw, Forde and Brassard, 1999).

However, no systematic study was undertaken to analyse the impact of the Asian economic crisis on rural women, largely because the crisis was seen as an urban phenomenon. At the global level, the failure to consider important aspects of gender relations (including women's unpaid reproductive work and intra-household allocation) was seen to lead to an inaccurate evaluation of the impact of economic liberalization on women both inside and outside the labour market (Fontana, Joeques and Masika, 1998). This begs the question of whether and how rural women's livelihood strategies might have cushioned the impact of the economic crisis in rural Asia.

Globalization

Economic integration can take place within national borders as well as between countries and may or may not be linked to accelerated trends in economic globalization. Rural production can move from subsistence agriculture to the cash economy with or without access to global markets; however the demand for agricultural commodities in the global market acts as a force that can influence production and exert an impact on rural women. Differences depend on the scale and type of the farming enterprise (UN General Assembly, 1999).

Demand for cash can drive the commercialization of subsistence production as women take steps to sell their homegrown produce, small livestock and home-produced foodstuffs in local markets and urban centres. Such homegrown enterprises are likely to face competition from industrially processed food products.

It would be easy to trace the direct impact of global market demand for agricultural produce on land holdings of a certain size, including contract farming taken on by farm households or agriculture processing enterprises requiring a certain standard of education and skills. In these production systems, that aim to capture a share of the global agricultural market, women with basic skills and education are able to increase their economic opportunities.

However, an inadequate understanding of formal labour contract processes and rules, places women at risk of exploitation. At the same time, global consumer changes in taste and demand have increased the economic risks to rural women involved in these kinds of contract agriculture enterprises (United Nations DAW/UNIFEM, 2001).

In addition social programmes, with restrictions on micro-credit loans, set by global financing agencies, often pose problems for rural women. The impact on micro-credit programmes is unclear, as financial markets integrate at the global level and formal credit organizations are promoted as a means to improve agricultural productivity and rural enterprises.

New technologies

Biotechnology has emerged as a significant new force in Asia and the Pacific. Marked by strong ideological differences between the non-governmental sector



Regional trends

(mostly against) and the scientific community and private sector (in favour), the debate about the benefits and hazards of biotechnology continues unabated. The extent to which modern biotechnology will contribute to the achievement of food security for all is still an open question (Pinstrup-Andersen, Pandya-Lorch and Rosengrant, 1999).

In this context, most governments in the region appear to be following a 'watch, wait and see' approach. There is a general absence of information on the extent to which women farmers in the region know and understand the potential opportunities and risks of the new biotechnology-driven agricultural revolution. Given the low educational attainments of women throughout the region, and the highly sophisticated organization of production likely to be required in biotechnology-based agriculture, it seems reasonable to speculate that the majority of rural women would be further marginalized by such developments.

The potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve women's access to information and knowledge, enhance education and learning, and accelerate technology transfer has been recognized by many in the Asia-Pacific region. In several countries radio and television are used extensively to inform and educate rural women about health, nutrition and agriculture. Some success stories concerning the use of new ICTs to empower women – such as the Grameen communication network in Bangladesh, ICT programmes in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Orissa, and telemarketing for rural employment generation in Malaysia – are cited as examples of the potential of new information technologies.

Despite the potential, the threat of an increased 'digital divide' that would increase knowledge and education gaps between urban and rural communities is real. Already internet access is variable, including the availability and quality of relevant language content both between and within countries. In the Pacific Islands, women's access to and use of information technology is largely confined to urban areas, and is generally limited, compared to most Asian countries (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001).

There are a number of barriers to the increased use of ICTs for the empowerment of rural women, including inadequate infrastructure, high costs and limited capacity; all are more acute in rural areas (Atkin, 1998). The extent to which ICTs can transcend the traditional male bias in extension delivery is as yet untested. Certainly,

opportunities exist to use ICTs to educate and empower a large number of rural women and men provided that user-friendly and gender-sensitive information materials are developed, and development staff are well trained and gender-sensitive.

Political instability and conflict

Rising levels of political instability and increased conflict throughout Asia and the Pacific have intensified pressure on many rural producers. The impact of conflict on agriculture and food production in Afghanistan, East Timor and Sri Lanka is widely known. However, less has been written about the effects of civil war and ethnic tensions in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands in the Pacific. For women, political instability and conflict resulted in increased agricultural work as men were drawn into the conflict. Even in peaceful countries, landmines provide an enduring remainder of past conflicts and constitute a real danger for rural communities. In Cambodia and Lao PDR, the number of abandoned ordnances is so great that farmers are forced to abandon productive land.

Demographic pressure

Population pressures have a serious impact on rural households in many parts of Asia and the Pacific, with particular implications for women's work, livelihood strategies and care-giving activities. The population of the Pacific Islands doubles every 30 years, placing considerable stress on natural resources and food security. Rapid urban drift – predominantly young men – results in an acute shortage of agricultural labour causing an increase in urban population densities. On the Marshall Islands, for example, more than 9 000 people live on Ebeye Island, which is less than 0.5 km². Very high densities exist in the urban centres of South Tarawa (Kiribati), Majuro (Marshall Islands) and Funafuti (Tuvalu), intensifying pressures on the availability of land for home gardens, clean water supply, while resulting in very high unemployment levels and increased vulnerability to poverty.

HIV/AIDS

Similarly, the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural populations and food security is a growing concern in many parts of the region, not least in the Mekong Basin



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countries. HIV/AIDS is highly prevalent throughout the Mekong countries, particularly in Myanmar and Thailand (Bain, 1998). The spread of HIV/AIDS is linked to an increasingly mobile population, moving in search of new work opportunities created by increased economic integration, unprecedented growth, and the move from a centrally-planned to a market economy. The uneven nature of economic development has resulted in imbalances between rural and urban areas and agricultural and industrial. In most places, the health and education systems are inadequate for the needs of these new urban residents. Anecdotal and observational information further indicates that the movement of urban immigrants infected with HIV/AIDS back to their rural villages, is likely to increase the demands on rural women as income-earners and caregivers.

Natural disasters

The Asia-Pacific region is known for its vulnerability to natural disasters such as flooding, drought, typhoons and earthquakes. An increasing incidence of natural disasters resulted in a serious loss of property and agricultural assets, which has threatened agricultural production and intensified vulnerability leading to food shocks and food insecurity (Ninno, Dorosh, Smith and Roy, 2001; FAO-RAP, 2001; O'Brien, 2001).

Various case studies and stories suggest gender is a highly significant factor in the construction of social vulnerability to risk, as well as responses to hazards and disasters. Men and women clearly have different coping strategies during a disaster cycle. During the cyclone of 1991 in Bangladesh, a greater number of casualties were reported among women, who failed to receive warning signals largely because of socially imposed constraints on their mobility and their responsibility for the care of children and livestock.

Similarly, women suffered more during the post-disaster period, experiencing a sharp increase in workloads resulting from their multiple roles. At the same time, many of their traditional income-generating activities, home gardens and livestock, disappeared and women (unlike men) were unable to look for work outside the home (UN Economic and Social Council, 2002). In this context, gender-responsive institutional changes and collective action strategies are needed in disaster

management to balance women's vulnerability to disaster with their proven capabilities to cope under difficult conditions (D'Cuhana, 2001).

While some case studies and empirical findings show the impact of recent trends in globalization, technology advances, HIV/AIDS in the region, the overall impact of these developments on rural households, in particular women, has not been studied systematically. In the future it is essential that gender analysis in rural areas be anchored in the context of macro trends in order to develop efficient interventions that support rural women in the effective management of these forces for change.



Conclusions

Across the Asia-Pacific region, rural women's contribution to the agriculture sector and rural production is marked by considerable diversity, and influenced by factors that are particular to the specific community and household in question. The general situation is characterized by patterns of change and continuity, flexibility and rigidity. Mounting economic pressure compelled many women to modify their roles and to perform a range of tasks not normally associated with them.

Despite these new responsibilities in the economic sphere, women largely continue to maintain their traditional gender roles in the domestic sphere; men's roles have not adapted in the same way. Women have taken on a greater share of traditionally male activities, but the rigid boundaries of social norms are maintained for men. This has given rise to an increasing workload for women and the responsibility for physically demanding activities with poor returns for their efforts.

In the context of the increased and onerous workloads for rural women, the effect of persisting gender inequities in access to productive resources is increasingly significant and has been associated with the rising risk of food insecurity. Lack of attention to women's work and drudgery, and inequitable access to resources, are embedded in gender bias and passed on through cultural conditioning and social norms at both the household and community level. Reflected in intra-household behaviour, bias spills over into the policy arena, contributing to unrelenting gender inequality.

Regional trends in economic integration, environmental degradation, migration, technology, and continuing vulnerability to natural disasters has a significant impact on the different contexts within which rural women operate. However, the nature of the opportunities and threats, to rural women – and by extension to agricultural production and food security – have not yet been systematically studied, analysed and quantified in a way that would support policy and programme formulation.

Recommendations

In reviewing the situation of rural women across the Asia-Pacific region it is seen that the contribution of agriculture as a proportion of national economies has declined, but rural women's role in farm and family economies has increased significantly. Despite this, the enormous contribution of rural women to agriculture and rural economies is neither widely nor formally recognized at the local or national level.

Because of this lack of awareness, or appreciation of their contribution and roles, efforts to support agricultural development and food security tend to ignore women's resource needs and the constraints they face in fulfilling their productive roles. At the same time, new regional trends and external forces are fundamentally changing the circumstances in which rural women operate, and presenting opportunities and threats to their future livelihoods.

The following recommendations, therefore, seek to focus attention on rural women in agricultural development and food security, and the need to strengthen policy and programme interventions to improve their overall well-being.

Improved information and data

Sex-disaggregated data and gender-differentiated information should be collected for all aspects of agriculture and rural development in the region. This should allow a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances and roles of rural women as compared with men and urban populations. A database such as this would facilitate development of gender-specific human resource and activity databases, which could be analysed and compared within and across countries.

It is essential to improve awareness among national governments of the importance of sex-disaggregated data, and build the capacity of national agencies to gather, manage and analyse the information. In countries, where national sample surveys or others already collect sex-disaggregated information, systematic analysis of this data should be made to provide an in-depth understanding of the situation of



Recommendations

rural women. Advances in information technology, and sophisticated data management systems, should be exploited to compile relevant, needs-based and user-friendly information resources, which could then be made available to policy-makers, programme managers and advocacy groups.

Integration of gender in agricultural and rural development planning

In the Asia-Pacific region, the benefits of using available sex-disaggregated data in agricultural and rural development planning are still not widely understood. Inadequate efforts to use available data in planning processes highlights the need for capacity building within agencies involved in formulation of agricultural and rural development policies and programmes. These efforts should focus on the integration of gender and gender-differentiated indicators throughout the various phases of the programme and project cycle.

Valuation of unpaid work

The importance of women's unpaid work in the home and farm production systems should be clearly recognized by national governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations and academic institutions. This means that the accurate valuation of this work should be agreed upon. The household production model for farm family production offers one approach to quantify unpaid work inputs in terms of food security. Concerted efforts will be required to convince different stakeholders, including rural women, to recognize and reward unpaid work in agricultural and rural production.

Enhanced access to education and information

Increased resources and intensified efforts are required at the national level to substantially improve formal education for girls, enhance female adult literacy and empower rural women with entitlement of knowledge and information. The potential of new information and communication technologies to reduce the educational disadvantage faced by older rural women, through development and dissemination of

needs-based information in appropriate formats and accessible mediums should be explored.

Reduced household drudgery

Persisting, traditional views of the worthlessness of women's unpaid work must be challenged if drudgery is to be reduced. Basic services should be expanded in rural areas to support women's many roles in the home, within the community and on the farm. Appropriate technologies should be developed to reduce the amount of time women spend on daily household tasks.

Technology development and training

Given their local knowledge and multiple roles, rural women should be fully involved in the development process of female-oriented technologies. In-depth assessments of the roles and constraints faced by rural women in different circumstances should be undertaken to guide development and application of such technologies. Training should build the capacity of rural women according to their multi-faceted production tasks, and new information and communication technologies should be harnessed to improve rural women's access to technical information and public sector support services.

Gender and regional trends

Systematic studies should be carried out to identify and evaluate the impact of significant regional developments and trends – including economic integration, new technologies, HIV/AIDS, political and civil instability and natural disasters – on rural women's roles, work, access to resources and livelihoods. These studies should be considered by policy-makers in the development of sectoral policies and programmes so that new opportunities that become available to rural women can be leveraged, while potential negative effects are minimized.



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Europe



Europe⁴

Transition, trends and transformation

Women in Europe undoubtedly contribute to food security in a variety of ways. They may be directly involved in food production, engaged in the management of natural resources and/or occupied in off-farm income-generating activities to purchase food. In many cases, they are primarily responsible for the preparation of sufficient and nutritious family meals.



Italian chicken processing plant. (R. Faidutti, 1995)

In spite of their obvious contributions, during this period of agricultural and rural transition they seem more vulnerable, as relatively more women than men are poor, have low incomes and are unemployed, or employed below their level of education. Traditional gender roles continue to burden women as domestic work is still defined by many as women's work, so

they are discriminated against in the labour market.

At the same time, agricultural and rural transformations provide women new opportunities to improve their livelihoods, their places in the farm family and as agricultural professionals in their rural communities, allowing them to contribute

⁴This chapter is based on the work of Ms Sabine de Rooij and Ms Bettina Bock, Wageningen University.

significantly to agricultural and rural innovation. To strengthen this trend and to secure present and future access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for all, women's empowerment needs to be achieved through the removal of the specific obstacles that hamper the deployment of their full potential. To this end, agricultural and rural development policies and strategies need to be developed to broaden women's resource base, then legislation and institutions could provide the civil and political mechanisms to guarantee equal access to resources and opportunities for both women and men.

The outline that follows covers the countries of Western Europe, the European Union (EU)–15 countries⁵; for Central and Eastern Europe⁶, the accession and applicant countries, Balkan states and CIS countries⁷, including the South Caucasus, which is followed by the Central Asian Republics. The outline includes an examination of recent socio-economic trends in agriculture and rural areas and an analysis is provided of the implications for rural and farming women. Special attention is given to issues related to employment and unemployment, as key to rural women's economic security and consequent food security. There are sections on the constraints limiting women's access to resources, a discussion of violence against women, their role at the decision-making level and, in conclusion, policy recommendations are given.



Elderly Turkish women in the village of Lapathos, which has a mixed community of Greek and Turkish Cypriot families in the district.
(J. Ciganovic, 1970)

⁵ An analysis of Western Europe is based on data from the European Union, therefore it focuses on the EU-15 countries: Austria; Belgium; Denmark; Finland; France; Greece; Germany; Spain; Ireland; Italy; Luxembourg; The Netherlands; Portugal; Sweden and the United Kingdom.

⁶ The Central and Eastern European region is presently undergoing political transformation, as several countries are gradually integrating into the European Union. In this study, the term 'Central and Eastern Europe' will include the following sub-groups of countries: accession countries, integrating into the European Union in 2004: Cyprus; Czech Republic; Estonia; Hungary; Latvia; Lithuania; Malta; Poland; Slovakia and Slovenia.

Applicant countries: Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

Balkan States: Albania; Bosnia-Herzegovina; Croatia; Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Serbia and Montenegro.

⁷ The CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) include Armenia; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kirgizstan; Ukraine; Moldova; Russia; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



Western Europe

Overview of the agricultural sector in EU–15 countries

At the turn of this century, European agriculture was undergoing rapid change and insecurity, resulting from the globalization of food production and ongoing trade liberalization. This increased competition between farmers and, while food prices fell, production costs escalated because of stringent environmental regulations. Many farmers saw their incomes fall, even though production subsidies may still function as a safety net, their continuation is very much under discussion. In the midst of the above-mentioned changes, many farm families are doubtful as to whether they can maintain their farm in the future.

Recent evolution of the agricultural sector

Number of farms

Variations exist in the number and size of farms and farm sectors among the different countries. Generally speaking one main trend in agriculture is the continuous decrease in the number of farms, which is especially true for smaller farms. On the other hand, the average size of the remaining farms is increasing.

A comparison of the number of farms in the six Member States of the EU–6 in 1967 and 1997 revealed that over a period of 30 years 42 percent of farms had closed down (Eurostat, Statistics in Focus, Theme 5, 1/2000); smaller farms appear to be more vulnerable than the larger. In the category of smallholdings (< 5 ha) more than a third of the farms (37 percent) vanished in this period, and in the medium group (5–20 ha) nearly two-thirds (63 percent). The contrast with larger farms (> 20 ha) is considerable as their number decreased by less than one-tenth (6 percent). These figures do not reveal the flow

between categories. Some small and medium farms moved to the category of medium and large farms, but this does not alter the main trend.

Farm income

Another important development is the variability of farm income and its regular decrease in many EU-15 countries since 1995. This fall has been quite dramatic in some countries, such as the UK, whereas in others the average income level seems to be recovering, which may be linked to a drop in farm labour. Recent figures demonstrate that farm income varies from one year to the next making farm income insecure.

Farms are lost because of shortage and income insecurity. Farming families may decide to sell the farm and move, or fewer sons and daughters take over from their parents. This last is linked to the enormous costs involved in farm succession, because of government taxes on inheritance and the cost involved if one heir were to buy out the share of the others. For these and other reasons in general the future of the agricultural sector is insecure.

This is especially true in Southern and Eastern Europe because of the ageing of farm holders. Over the past decade the percentage of young farm managers fell from an average 8.9 to 7.8 percent, and there is significant variation among all countries and regions. In 1997, for example, 19 percent of German Bavarian farm managers were below the age of 35 against only 3 percent in Lazio, southern Italy (Eurostat, Statistics in Focus, theme 5, 7/2002). Usually, in comparison with elderly farmers, young farm holders tend to manage relatively larger farms and to specialize in more intensive, high value-added farm production (Van der Ploeg, 1999).

Farm strategies

Several new trends indicate ongoing changes in farm production methods, production activities and farm household strategies. In recent years, organic agricultural production has grown steadily throughout Europe and may be expected to continue. The same may be assumed for high-quality production and the introduction of new economic activities



Women at work in a field on the Tirana plain.
(P. del Piero, 1990)



Western Europe

on the farm. The latter may well have been witnessed at the beginning of the nineties (Van der Ploeg, and Ettema, 1990; Bryden, *et al.*, 1992).

A considerable proportion of farm households are developing new income sources, on and off the farm. This is because income from primary production alone is either too small or too insecure to cover farm and household expenses and to guarantee farm survival. In both strategies women have an important role because in many countries such as Ireland, Scotland, Spain and Sweden, women are most often the ones looking for a job off the farm (Bock, 2001; 2002). Women take the lead in many new on-farm-activities such as agri-tourism, direct sales and transformation of farm products. In developing these initiatives they bring in income and play an important role in restructuring the agricultural sector (Bock, 2002).

Employment in agriculture

Declining numbers of farms, and replacement of labour with machinery, means that the number of people employed in the agricultural sector has fallen considerably and

persistently. In fact, a total of 49 percent of the agricultural labour force was lost between 1975 and 1999, whereas it increased by more than half in the service sector. The effect of this decrease in agricultural labour varies between countries. A smaller proportion of the population is active in agriculture in northern European countries as compared with southern Europe, Central and Eastern European and the CIS countries. Only 1.5 percent of the economically active population in the United Kingdom worked in agriculture in 2000, compared to 17 percent in Greece.



Farmers discussing the problem of weeding maize.
(C. Grace, 1994)

In most countries, the loss of agricultural labour is higher in the category of family labour than in non-family labour; more work is done by hired labour on a seasonal basis. Most farm work continues to be carried out by family members; figures vary between 65 percent in the United Kingdom and 94 percent in Finland.

Various factors have caused the higher rate of unemployment in rural areas. Many traditional rural employment sectors are threatened by changes in the global economy,

which is true for agriculture, fisheries and forestry; as a result many traditional rural jobs are lost. At the same time new sectors gain importance, especially services and information and communication technology (ICT), which provide new employment opportunities in rural areas. Many rural inhabitants are unable to meet the educational preconditions these jobs require; compared to urban areas the rural educational level tends to be lower. However, some rural regions, Ireland and Scotland, have prospered as a result of the changing rural economy, as they lean towards the new service and high-tech sectors. In Scotland, women especially are reported to be entering these new jobs, as their professional competencies are more in line with these new jobs than those of men (Rural Development Committee 2001).



Farmer selling her produce in the local market.

In some of the most remote rural regions, lost opportunities in the traditional rural sectors are not replaced by new opportunities. Therefore, it is increasingly difficult for people in these areas to make a living and they leave the area in search of employment elsewhere. This may result in a downward trend in the quality of life in the area as a whole; with a smaller and less affluent population various services and facilities are endangered, to the point that schools and shops are unable to continue.

An important factor is the tendency of most European governments to economize on public facilities. As a result, life in remote areas is more difficult and less attractive, especially for young people and young families. Although statistics are still lacking, research indicates that young peoples' emigration often begins with girls leaving the area (Ní Laoire, 2001; Gidakou, 1999; Dahlström, 1996; Högbäck, 1999).

Another effect of the out-migration of the young is the ageing of the rural population, which is seen in various European countries. Gentrification of rural areas is another factor, as affluent elderly people acquire property in rural districts pushing up real estate prices. This may contribute to the ageing of rural areas and outflow of the younger generation, who are unable to afford living in these areas.

European common agricultural policy (CAP)

Ideas concerning the future development of European agriculture have changed rapidly

over the past years. This is because of the negative effect of the sector's ongoing modernization. Besides overproduction, pollution of the environment and loss of biodiversity, various crises related to food production such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), dioxin in milk and the dramatic effect of wide-spread animal pathologies, such as foot-and-mouth disease, have demonstrated the risks and weaknesses of the modern agricultural production system, and further highlight the negative effects on the quality of life in rural societies.



Farming couple ploughing with two oxen, village of Guri i Bardhe, Albania. (C. Grace, 1994)

In the past 11 years, the European Union's common agricultural policy has undergone several reforms. The CAP-reforms in 1992 (MacSharry Reforms) resulted in a decline in price support and the introduction of direct payments; compensation for the setting aside of land; a premium for stocking densities below a threshold level; encouragement of environmentally-friendly farming, afforestation and early retirement of farmers. In the following GATT Uruguay Round, price support structures were changed again and export subsidies, import tariffs and internal support reduced.

The CAP reform of 1999, under Agenda 2000, included new policy guidelines for EU countries and paved the way for accession countries (CEC, 2002b; EC, 2000b). Reform sought to address issues of rural development through strengthening the economic and social structures of rural areas. The intention was to develop new sources of income and employment using the endogenous potential of these areas

to create sustainable rural livelihoods and secure a populated countryside.

Cornerstones of Agenda 2000 and the 1999 CAP were twofold: its multi-sectoral approach and the attempt to achieve multi-functional farming. The former implies expansion of the rural economy through creation of new employment and income opportunities. The latter refers to a broadening and diversification of farm activities. These would include nature and landscape conservation; production; preservation of cultural heritage; creation of added value: on-farm processing; production of regionally specific foodstuffs; farm-gate selling and the creation of new forms of cooperation and non-agricultural on-farm activities.

In June 2003, EU farm ministers adopted a fundamental reform of the CAP. The

new CAP, in force 2004–2005, aims to help EU farmers become more market-oriented, through decoupling agricultural subsidies from volumes of production and provision of incentives that would encourage a greater respect of the environment, food safety and promote animal welfare standards. Direct payments to large farms will be reduced, which should increase the availability of funds for the environment, or animal welfare programmes.

The reformed CAP is in line with the overall objectives of Agenda 2000, however, it may be predicted that subjecting the agricultural sector to unmediated market forces will at best accentuate income insecurity in rural households, and at worse profoundly modify the panorama of EU agricultural production.



Woman preparing traditional cheese.
(C. Grace, 1994)

Rural women and food security in the EU–15 countries

General characteristics of female employment and unemployment

Statistics offer limited information on how and where women work as they focus on the formal labour market, i.e. on women with regular jobs or regular enterprises and on officially unemployed women. Women working in the black or grey labour market, as home workers, remain invisible to statistics (Armas, 1999). The same is true for women in unpaid work such as family workers or volunteers, and numerous women who would like to have a job or work more hours, but see no point in formally registering as unemployed.

The conclusion is that statistics undervalue rural women's work, while undervaluing the extent of unemployment and underemployment of women in rural areas (Braithwaite, 1994; European Commission, 2000). However, statistics may help provide a general view of disparities between men and women and the differences between countries and regions.

Since the beginning of the nineties the employment of women has improved and, in most EU–15 states, female employment levels have increased, while their unemployment level has decreased. The difference between EU–15 countries has remained the same; the Nordic countries have realized nearly equal employment of men and women, while the southern countries have lagged behind.

The disproportionate representation of women in part-time employment, in certain sectors and specific professions, remains unchanged. Part-time work is prominent in mid-Europe, especially in The Netherlands. In many countries, with the exception of southern Europe, part-time work has been the most important means of increasing the employment rates of women, most certainly among working mothers.

Women often prefer part-time employment as it helps them to reconcile work and the raising of small children. However, part-time employment does not necessarily ensure economic independency. The over-representation of women in part-time jobs is a significant factor explaining the huge and persisting income gap between men and women throughout Europe as well as women's over-representation among low-waged employees (Clarke, 2001; Eurostat, 2000a).

Job segregation is also an important reason for income-disparities, resulting in women being over represented in the service sector and lower paid occupations. Taking into account differences in education and jobs, an income gap of 15 percent between women and men remains unexplained, indicating that gender discrimination in the labour market still plays an important role (Benassi, 1999).

Characteristics of female rural employment

When differentiating between urban and rural areas it becomes clear that, at least for the EU-15 countries, the rural dimension generally exacerbates women's employment situation. This is especially true in the most remote rural areas, where population density is low and the labour market is dominated by agriculture (Overbeek, *et al.*, 1998; Weise, *et al.*, 2001; Braithwaite, 1996). This is not surprising as it is in these areas that the employment situation is the most problematic (Terluin and Post, 2000).

Self-employed women tend to be concentrated in the service sector, which is probably true in urban and rural areas. However, as there is little statistical information on self-employment in rural areas this would be hard to prove. Business ventures have been started by a growing number of rural and farm women, mostly in the service sector or directly linked to it, for example agri-tourism (Bock, 1994; Sawicka, 1999). Specifically this sector has attracted women and seems to offer good opportunities



Albanian farm woman tilling the ground with a traditional hoe.
(C. Grace, 1994)

(Overbeek, *et al.*, 1998). Recently, it has become the most important growth sector and it is expected that growth in employment will continue (Terluin and Post, 2000).

Although the number of farms has fallen, and agriculture has lost importance as an employment sector, a considerable number of rural women continue to work in agriculture and on farms. This situation differs considerably between countries. In Belgium, Luxembourg, Sweden and the United Kingdom, only 1 percent of the female economically active population was employed in the agricultural sector in 2000, compared to 19 percent in Greece and 14 percent in Portugal. Figures for other EU-15 countries vary between 2 and 6 percent (Eurostat). The share of women in the total agricultural labour force has remained stable, constituting about a third of the total population who are economically active in agriculture, with a peak of 51 percent in Portugal, and low of 12 percent in Ireland. The percentage of women is higher when employment in agricultural holdings is taken into account. In this case, all workers employed on the agricultural holdings are accounted for, including those who work part-time, who are unpaid or in multiple jobs, among these are many women.

The volume of work that women carry out on farms, as measured in annual work units (AWU), has remained stable. On average, about a third of the total amount of work on farms is still done by women (Eurostat). Farmwomen's on-farm circumstances have changed considerably and, although the majority of women working on farms are family members, recently the number of female paid farm workers has increased. This is also true for the number of women who are farm managers or co-entrepreneurs. In 1997, around 80 percent of spouses working on farms were women, compared to 19 percent farm managers, 32 percent of other family members and 23 percent of permanent employees (Fremont, 2001).

Co-entrepreneurship is an option for many women in a number of countries such as France, Ireland and The Netherlands, where in 1999 only 4 percent of farms were managed by a single female farm-head; however, 22 percent of farms had a female co-farm head. This important development began in the early nineties and was stimulated by tax-relief; note that not all these women participate in farm management on an equal basis to men.



Farmer leading her cow
past a stack of hay.
(C. Grace, 1994)

Other incentives that have changed farm management structure are related to access to subsidies. To make use of these, a full-time working farm-head must be appointed, which may explain the high number of female farm-heads in southern Europe. Being farm-head considerably changes women's legal situation, they gain official access to and control over farm production resources such as land and machinery. Usually, most of these women share farm management with their husbands, particularly when important decisions are taken and, when their husband is working off the farm, they may be responsible for the day-to-day management (Bock,1994).



Woman in
her home garden.
(R. Faidutti, 1998)

Single female farm-heads are most often found on smaller farms, 82 percent of farms managed by women are less than 8 ESU, compared to 68 percent of farms managed by men, and farms specialized in oil-seeds (Fremont, 2001), which partly explains the relative concentration of (single) female farm-heads in southern Europe. On the other hand, female co-entrepreneurship is more common on larger farms (Bock and De Rooij, 2000).

Most women and men work part-time on farms. In 1997, a total of 88 percent of women worked on farms, family workers plus permanent employees worked part-time, of which 54 percent worked less than 0.25 AWU. Of all men working on farms 73 percent work part-time, of which 43 percent work less than 0.25 AWU (Fremont, 2001). Time spent working seems to be closely linked to work status. Generally male and female farm managers work full-time on the farm although, in comparison with women farm managers, male managers work more often on a full-time basis.

The volume of farm-work carried out by women seems to be related to farm size. Statistics from The Netherlands clearly reveal that the larger the farm the less women are involved in farm work (Bock and De Rooij, 2000). The tendency towards farm enlargement might imply masculinization of farming as a whole. At the same time other factors boost women's integration into agriculture, as there are an increasing number of female successors, female farm-heads and women's growing involvement in new on-farm activities such as agri-tourism, on-farm processing and direct sales (EC, 2000a).

These new activities enhance women's involvement on the farm with respect to the amount of on-farm labour, farm income and women's direct and indirect influence on

farm-management, even if there is a decrease in their participation in work related to primary production (Bock, 1994; De Rooij, *et al.*, 1995; O'Hara, 1998a). In The Netherlands research demonstrates that diversification implies improvement in the quality of work farm women are involved in.

Levels of training among farm women

Research in a number of EU-15 states reveals a notable difference in the educational level of male and female farm-heads. On average, men have full agricultural training more often than female farm-heads; this situation seems to be improving in some countries (Fremont, 2001). This finding is hardly surprising, noting the types of professional education chosen by girls and boys, although it is true that gender-related differences in educational level have nearly disappeared.

Today girls tend to be better educated than boys and there are indications that this is especially the case in rural areas (O'Hara, 1998a). However, the gender gap in professional education related to agriculture is persistent and significant, especially in vocational programmes (Dunne, 2001). In the academic world, technical and production related agricultural sub-disciplines are dominated by male professors and male students (Bock and De Rooij, 2000).

From the statistical analysis it may be concluded that, in general, European rural women are less fortunate in realizing satisfying working conditions in comparison with rural men and urban women (Little, 1991; EC, 2000d). There is a higher probability that women will be unemployed or underemployed and work more often in part-time and poorly paid jobs. Their employment situation is precarious because they usually have temporary or no contract work as home workers or as unpaid family workers (Armas, 1999). Moreover, rural women are less successful at finding a job at their education level, even though in many regions, as noted above, young women are better educated than men (Dahlström, 1996; Ni Laoire, 2001; O'Hara, 1998a; Momsen, *et al.*, 1999; Rangelova, 1999).

Little seems to have changed since 1994, though there has been a change in the participation rate of rural women in the labour market, which increased, while



Flowers on sale outside the covered market of Fehérvári út, Hungary. (R. Faidutti, 1998)



Western Europe

unemployment of rural women decreased in many regions. One reason is that the education level of women is rapidly rising, especially among young women (Eurostat). Although this is true both for urban and rural areas, the average educational level of rural women still seems to be lower, especially in southern Europe.

Among other reasons, increased participation of rural women in the formal labour market is caused by the fact that there is less call for farm labour, while the need for off-farm income has increased.

The precariousness of rural women's employment seriously affects their income, although not many statistics are available to explain the difference between urban and rural areas, or to demonstrate the specific significance this might have for rural women. Overall, women have a higher risk of poverty compared with men, because of differences in employment and wage levels. Other factors that increase the poverty risk of women are being a single mother or a pensioned widow living alone (Mejer and Sierman, 2000).

Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Main issues in an agricultural sector in transition

Agriculture in transition economies

Agriculture is relatively more important in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS than in Western Europe. In the 12 accession countries, plus Bulgaria and Romania, agricultural land occupies over half of the total area (54.2 percent), whereas in the EU-15 this is only 40.2 percent.

The difference is greater in the area of agricultural employment. In the accession countries plus Romania and Bulgaria, 22.1 percent of total employment is in agriculture, in the EU-15 it is 4.3 percent (EC, 2002). There is much variation between countries, as is true for the EU-15 zone, in Romania 45.2 percent of the economically active population (EAP) works in agriculture, in Malta only 1.6 percent. Further differences relate to the share of agriculture in the gross domestic product (GDP). In the EU-15 zone, agriculture contributed 2 percent in 2000, in the accession countries plus Romania and Bulgaria it was 5 percent.

Eastwards, this figure rose to 31 percent in the Caucasus (World Bank, 2000b). Again, between regions, there are considerable variations and in the EU-15, Greece and Luxembourg are at the extremes with a share of 0.7 and 7 percent respectively to the GDP, whereas Bulgarian and Romanian agriculture provides by far the highest share to the GDP (14.5 and 12.6 percent respectively) and Malta is at the bottom of the list with 2.3 percent.

Decreased food production

One result of transition-related economic and political transformation was a substantial drop in agricultural output. Agricultural exports to the EU-15 fell, and



Central and Eastern Europe, and the CIS

food imports from the EU-5 increased because of changing food patterns. Since mid-1990, there has been an improvement in agricultural output mostly in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, although 1989 production levels have not been achieved, and remain far below EU-15 levels. Progress has been made in crop production, especially fruit and vegetables. Livestock production, specifically milk and beef, is still declining in many countries (World Bank, 2000b; Van Depoele, 2001). In most countries, with the exception of Hungary and Poland, modernization of the food industry needs to be undertaken. A lack of foreign investment is given as one of the main reasons for the postponement of modernization.



Seasonal farm worker gathering grapes for the wine harvest.
(R. Faidutti, 1998)

Agriculture and the environment

Groundwater pollution and soil contamination is a common problem in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS. Although not the main polluter, agriculture contributes substantially to environmental deterioration. In some areas agriculture is responsible for 80 percent of nitrogen and 40 percent of phosphorus loading in surface waters. In Hungary, agriculture uses some 13 percent of all water consumed and is the main source of water pollution (Karl, *et al.*, 2000). It is known that pesticides and fertilizers are the primary polluters of the Danube and, in the Russian Federation alone 50 to 100 000 tonnes of obsolete pesticides are being stored (Committee on the Status of Women, 2001).

In the nineties, agricultural pressure on the environment decreased because of a fall in production and reduction in fertilizer subsidies (Karl, *et al.*, 2000). The use of nitrate fertilizers fell even below the OECD average. Lately, fertilizer use is on the rise (World Bank, 2000b) and large-scale farm enterprises are the main polluters because subsistence farms, and small family farms, have little or no money to spend on fertilizers and other agrochemicals.

In Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, even though 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, they continue to be unaware of environmental issues (Committee on the Status of Women, 2001).

Heterogeneous farm structures

In the initial stage of transition, it was assumed that – as in China – private family farming would become the dominant farming structure (Meurs, 2001). But after ten years of transition, diversity in farm structure typifies agriculture in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS. Large-scale, centrally managed and controlled farm enterprises operate beside family holdings of different sizes. This mainly depends on how privatization was undertaken, in some countries people received land, and in others their entitlement to land was turned into shares (Swain, 2000). Policies either favoured family farms or collective farms and cooperatives and pre-reform characteristics influenced these policy choices (World Bank, 2000b; Swinnen, *et al.*, 2001).

Large-scale farms are market-oriented, whereas the majority of family holdings are small-scale subsistence farms, with surpluses sold on local markets. In Hungary, more than 70 percent of the family holdings utilize less than 1 hectare, together they farm less than 8 percent of total productive land used by farm family holdings (Laczka, 2000). In Poland, in 1998, more than one million people farmed land of less than 1 hectare (Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1998).

Fragmentation of land is common on family-operated farms and seriously impedes rural development. In Romania the average size of private individual farms is 2.3 hectares spread over six to ten parcels, and accounts for 62 percent of agricultural land (Riddell and Rembold, 2000). In Poland, 20 percent of private farms have six or more plots. On around 4 percent of farms the distance between individual plots is more than 10 km (Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1998).

Uncertain property rights are another hindrance to farm development. Other major obstacles include a badly functioning land market because of the ongoing restitution process; lack of legislation to regulate the land market; shortage of credit; obsolete technology and under-mechanization.

Other constraints to rural development include difficult access to markets because of the absence of institutional support such as credit institutions, or reliable associations connecting farmers to suppliers; processors; distribution and marketing organizations (cooperatives, associations or market chain-organizations). The same can be said of training institutions for business and management. Additional



Four hundred seasonal workers arrive at a vineyard to gather grapes for the wine harvest. Fifty hectares of vineyards were privatized by the Henkel Company, a famous producer of Champagne (Henkel Troken) and Chardonnay wine.

problems cited are inferior product quality, low productivity and yields, poor farming skills and difficult access to services and inputs (Van Depoele, 2001, Swinnen, *et al.*, 2001; World Bank, 2000b).

It is interesting to note that small plots are used intensively and average yields may be much higher than on larger farms. The World Bank reports that in former Soviet countries a difference was found in family income, well-being and view of the future, between people who started to farm their own plot of land and rural residents who remained workers on a cooperative. The latter group had lower incomes, were less satisfied with their well-being and less optimistic about the future (World Bank, 2000b). Thus, diversity in farm structure goes together with new social divisions in rural areas.



This Bosnian widow was leased land from the municipalities free of charge and received seed from the Emergency Programme, which was implemented in cooperation with the local authorities at Canton level. The beneficiaries reimbursed 1 kg of produce to the municipalities for every kilo of seed received.
(FAO, 1995.)

Pluri-activity

Because of small farm size and the low farm incomes, the majority of farming households involve both men and women in generating additional income through other sources. A FAO pilot study in Bulgaria found that most farming households had two or more sources of income. Agricultural income was the main source for the majority and wages, pensions, leased land and social relief were vital and substantial (Fotev, *et al.*, 2001). It is predicted that this pattern will be a persistent feature of Bulgarian family farming (Meurs,

1999).

In Poland, an estimated 60 percent of the rural population is involved in farming, which is the main occupation for 20 percent and the only source of income for 10 percent (Sztanderska and Piotrowskis, 1999, cited in Swinnen, *et al.*, 2001). Other data on Poland revealed that the importance of pluri-activity decreases as farm size increases. Only 14 percent of subsistence farms, up to 5 hectares, generated their main income from farming, off-farm income and pensions contributed more (32 percent and 31 percent respectively). For the majority of market-oriented farms larger than 10 hectares, the situation was reversed and 83 percent derived their main income from agriculture (Wicki, 2001). In Romania the share of pluri-active rural households is considerable and rising.

Emerging opportunities

Changing consumer demand in the region may present new opportunities for the agricultural sector. Certain consumer groups are able to buy up-market, high value-added food products, such as yoghurts and desserts, which may represent a market niche. In this regard, it is expected that organic food production will be a growth market on which producers can rely. To this end, some organic farmers' groups have been set up in Poland, Hungary and Romania (Laczó, 2001; Leonte and Alexandri, 2001).

Engagement in new cooperative activities may be another strategy to generate extra income. So far, many farmers are unwilling to do this, because of past negative experiences, as distrust of cooperatives is still widespread among farmers. This distrust is considered a barrier to agricultural and rural development (Karaczun, 2000). Nevertheless, this attitude may be changing. Recently new forms of cooperative agriculture have emerged and in several countries, for example the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary, farmers have initiated new cooperatives, producer groups and other associations (farmer circles, societies and village clubs). Members are mostly the formal proprietors, owners or farm users (Millns, 2001). Where cooperatives already existed and have been transformed (Slovenia) they now exhibit strong market positions, but new cooperatives are developing more slowly.

Broadening on-farm activities to include others, such as agri-tourism, may provide family farms with opportunities to generate income. Unfortunately, it is noted that local people do not benefit from new opportunities in rural tourism, as they often lack the specific knowledge, capital and attitudes, so it is mostly entrepreneurs from outside who profit from this niche at the expense of the locals (Kovács, 1998). Rural women are reported to be active running restaurants, shops, catering services and small-scale production, but in Poland these activities are considered typically female (Tryfan, 1993, in Bak, *et al.*, 2000). In Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia and Poland women are active in rural tourism (Verbole, 1999). An obstacle to women's participation may be that they are not formally registered as farm (co-) owner or partner in the new activity (Giovarelli and Duncan 1999).

Perceptions of the roles of women and men are still stereotyped, and in Poland



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women are generally perceived to be less creative than men, neither motivated nor prepared to take risks to the same degree as men. The survey indicates Polish rural women are anxious to improve their families' living conditions, and economic need motivates women to undertake new activities (Strykowska, in Bak, *et al.*, 2000). Other barriers, faced by potential female entrepreneurs, include lack of capital, or access to inexpensive credit, complicated procedures for obtaining credit, organizational and marketing limitations. The study also noted psychological barriers such as poor self-image and low self-esteem prevent the taking up of new initiatives (Bak, *et al.*, 2000).

It is expected that accession to the EU of countries from Central and Eastern Europe will have far-reaching consequences for the agricultural sectors of both regions. Along with the risks involved, in the process of accession, new opportunities will emerge, including those involving gender and equality (O'Hara, 1998b; European Commission Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development,

Box 3.1 SAPARD FUND

A special euro 520 million fund, Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD) was created together with other pre-accession instruments such as PHARE and ISPA, to provide accession and applicant countries support in the process of adjustment and accession. SAPARD is related to the common agricultural policy, to structural adjustment in agricultural and rural areas and provides for a variety of activities and services. These include land improvement and re-parceling, setting-up producer groups, investment in agricultural holdings, promotion of production methods that protect the environment and conserve rural heritage, diversification of economic activities and development of alternative sources of income, farm relief services and farm management services, food quality and consumer protection, veterinary and plant health controls, vocational training, technical assistance, management of water resources for agriculture and improvement of rural infrastructure. The most important aims are improvement of market efficiency, quality, veterinary and health standards and creation of new jobs in rural areas (Van Depoele, 2001).

In accordance with the EU policies on gender equality, the SAPARD Programme ensures equal access to women and men. Their share in the programme is monitored regularly.

Socio-economic evolution of rural areas

Inequality between social groups is one feature of transition, as gender; ethnicity; age; health; class; marital status and place of living may all be divisive. After transition, rising unemployment and wage disparities were factors that contributed to increasing income inequalities; the gap between poor and rich widened to varying degrees in the different countries. Income inequalities rose to a very high level in several countries of the former Soviet Union. In some countries the income gap is closing (Estonia, Lithuania, Russia); in others it continues to expand slowly (Czech Republic, Hungary). It has been observed that falling incomes and greater income disparity affect food consumption among the various groups (UNDP 1999).

Research in Hungary revealed class differences are also developing in rural areas. Where the *nouveau riches*, many former managers of cooperatives, live next to the unemployed or the elderly who live on social benefits, disability payments or low pensions (Kovács and Váradi, 1999; Momsen, 1999) and ethnic differences may seem more pronounced. The Roma-people are among the poorest in the region and, after transition in Hungary, Roma villages appeared in many rural regions (Kovách, 2002); most are employed in agriculture. It has been observed that the poor stratum of rural society disproportionately includes the elderly, single parents, the disabled and women; all of these categories may overlap.

Growing rural-urban disparities

It is forecast that regional and rural-urban disparities, for income, employment and investment, will increase in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, together with inequalities between the various social groups (Bachtler, *et al.*, 2000). Some influencing factors are the presence and nature of endogenous development potentials; willingness to invest; quality of infrastructure; alternative employment opportunities; proximity to borders; population mobility; educational levels and skills; age; cultural habits and gender roles.

In general, rural social services, health, schooling and housing lag behind other areas; roads are bad and there is little access to information and communication. In a number of countries in the region, rural infrastructure has improved because of support from the

private sector and local municipalities. This is the case in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Baltic States⁸, with the exception of some remote, under-developed areas, and in the CIS countries, rural infrastructure remains problematic (World Bank, 2000b).

Poor infrastructure goes together with a rather specialized, limited local economy and labour market. Job opportunities are scarce and people have limited means to start farming. A serious constraint to involvement in better opportunities for people employed in agriculture is their low or specialized educational level linked to agriculture. On average, rural educational levels are observed to be below the national average and there are few training and re-training opportunities for rural people wanting to start or manage a business or farm (Swinnen, *et al.*, 2001; Bak, *et al.*, 2000; Karaczun, 2000). An additional barrier to rural development seems to be a lack of tradition in collective governance (Karaczun, 2000).

Further disparities are linked to deterioration in living conditions, and the problems rural people experience adapting to new conditions, together with feelings of helplessness; mental depression; cardiovascular disorders; higher death and suicide rates (Bak, *et al.*, 2000; UNICEF, 1999).

Increasing rural poverty

One of the negative consequences of transition has been the dramatic rise in urban and rural poverty. According to estimates in 1998, a fifth of the population in accession, applicant and CIS countries had less than US\$2.15 per day to spend, ten years before this was true for about 4 percent of the people (World Bank, 2000a).

Initially, urban poverty seemed higher than rural and led to urban-rural migration, as the unemployed, and the elderly who had rural family connections, moved. After some years, this trend was reversed and rural poverty increased (Katsiaouni and Gorniak, 2001). According to the World Bank, rural poverty rates are generally high in the region (World Bank, 2000a). The incidence of rural poverty is as high as, or higher, than urban poverty in 15 of the 20 transition countries, for which such data are available. It is relatively high in Macedonia, Poland, Romania; in the Czech Republic and Slovenia it is very low. The

⁸ Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.

incidence and degree of rural poverty tends to vary within countries, it is found that where private agriculture was largely maintained, poverty is concentrated in the former state-farm operated areas.

Particularly in agriculture, rural impoverishment is rooted in low incomes; high levels of long-term rural unemployment; lack of new employment opportunities; collapse of state-funded services; rising inflation, lack of capital for investment and to start new firms (Swinnen, *et al.*, 2001). Lack of capital is the result of foreign investors' preference for urban areas (Kulcsar and Brown, 2000). In the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, increasing rural poverty is seen to be related to the non-payment or delayed payment of wages, pensions and social benefits.

It is true that certain social groups run a greater risk of poverty than others. IFAD's paper on the strategic programme for the Central and Eastern European region and CIS countries, stated that rural poverty is found to be most severe and widespread among farmers in upland and mountainous areas; rural wage earners; the elderly and ethnic minorities; women are mentioned as a social group particularly at risk (IFAD, 2002).

Other publications add migrants and refugees, the disabled and children (UNDP, 1999) and those whose wages or pensions remain unpaid. People are more vulnerable to poverty when there is unemployment; there is only one income-earner in the household; more children than average; poor education and wage arrears (World Bank, 2000b).

In addition, it has been observed that the fall in the real value of pensions is relatively higher than the fall in real wages. In the Russian Federation, in 1997, the average pension was 34 percent of the average wage, and delays in payment were greater than for wage arrears (UNDP, 1999). Another cause of growing rural poverty is the decline in agricultural production and slow recovery.

Rising food costs, and deteriorating dietary and nutritional patterns

Households in the region spend a large share of their budget on foodstuffs (44.8 percent), more than the average consumer in the EU-15 zone (17.4 percent). In Bulgaria and Romania consumers exceed this average achieving 53.5 percent and 58 percent respectively. Cyprus is the only country that spends about the same as the EU-15 on foodstuffs (18.6 percent). In Slovenia food expenditure is relatively low for the region (24 percent), whereas Portugal is an exception in the EU-15; consumers

spend more than a quarter of their budget on food (27 percent). A similar pattern is observed in Greece (21.3 percent) and households in The Netherlands rank lowest with 14.8 percent. (Van Depoele, 2001; Swinnen, *et al.*, 2001; European Commission, 2002).

In countries of the former Soviet Union, the share of the average income spent on food increased following transition, when household incomes fell and food prices rose. In Armenia, food prices rose nearly 24 000 percent between 1991 and 1997, and prices for non-food products increased by 7 800 percent (UNDP, 1999). Food consumption declined and malnutrition is an increasing problem in many countries and in Poland, 60 percent of children suffer from some form of under-nourishment. There has been a reduction in the consumption of milk, meat and vegetables, and lower quality, cheaper food is bought instead. Iron deficiency seems to be common in the region and iodine deficiencies are re-emerging (World Bank, 2000b).

Rural employment/unemployment

In the 1990s differences in employment opportunities caused increasing differentiation and relative inequality between rural and urban populations. On average, rural unemployment is higher in regions where state ownership was common (Sawicka, 2000; Majerova, 1999; Frenkel, 2000) affecting rural social groups unevenly. In Hungary, for example, where rural unemployment is high, household incomes of manual workers in agriculture and the self-employed are among the lowest.

A rural underclass seems to have come into existence, to which many Roma-people belong, as they are unable to generate income through legal employment and the receipt of benefits. A quarter of the Roma population do not have access to land for household food production, and the illegal economy may present itself as a means of survival (Kovach, 2002).

In Poland, the highest unemployment rate in rural areas is to be found among non-farming rural people, the opposite is found among the farming population where unemployment seems relatively low and less than the average (9.9 percent vs 10.6 percent end 1998). Research showed however that hidden unemployment is an issue. According to Sawicka, four out of ten working on their own farm may be termed unemployed. The main cause is said to be inadequate education as there is a lack of vocational

qualifications; other influences are resistance to commuting or migration (Sawicka 1999). Women's specific employment and/or unemployment situation will be discussed below under 'Female employment and discrimination'.

The elderly in rural areas

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 out migration of young rural adults, (Behrens, 2000; Eurostat, 2002; Karaczun, 2000; Majerova, 1999; Rangelova, 1999), which results in the ageing of rural and farming populations in many Central and Eastern Europe rural areas (Majerova, 1999; Kulcsar and Brown, 2000).

The ageing population comprises more women than men, reflecting an overall development in Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS. This is because women have a higher life expectancy and, in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, women of this generation migrate less out of rural areas. In the Romanian countryside, women over 60 comprise one-quarter of the rural population (UNDP, 2000a). In Lithuania, research in 1998 showed that 33 percent of rural women were pensioners, while male pensioners made up 17 percent of the male rural population. Around 60 percent of farmers were more than 60 years old (UN, 2002). Another factor contributing to the ageing of the rural population in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS is the decreasing birth rate (Kulcsár and Brown, 2000), which is low when compared to Western Europe.

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 because of the break up of traditional family patterns and safety nets, in conjunction with poor social services in rural areas, which aggravates insecurity, including food insecurity, for the elderly rural population.

Differences in quality of education

Economic and political transformations influence education in a variety of ways. It is clear that reduction in public expenses, including education, had a negative effect on both quality and performance (UNDP, 1999), access and enrolment rates have changed, but

to a lesser degree and sometimes positively, as serious signs of a systematic gender gap are absent at the level of basic and lower secondary school. In some countries in Central Asia, the enrolment of girls in education seems lower than that of boys, especially in rural areas, although the higher share of girls in secondary school has been maintained (UNICEF, 1999). In some countries girls' net secondary enrolment ratio has declined, this tendency was seen in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Romania and Russia.

In countries where women had a high share of enrolment in tertiary education, their share has grown since 1989; Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia are examples. Where their share was lower the trend has reversed, as in Azerbaijan (UNICEF, 1999). Overall, vocational and technical schooling have been negatively affected by the closing of enterprise-linked schools, higher drop-out rates and a reorientation towards schools that fit the new requirements of the market economy. This latter case has been observed in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia (Micklewright, 2000). Girls were affected less than boys, who predominate in this type of education (UNICEF, 1999).

In many countries, dropout rates seem to be higher in rural areas and school attendance is lower (Slovakia, Poland). Although the quality of schools generally deteriorated in the region after transition, disparities between rural and urban schools were accentuated. Overcrowding of classes is caused by the closure of other schools; insufficient supply of learning materials; schools in poor condition and insufficient teaching staff. The partial privatization of education implies that parents must now contribute more than before to the cost of schooling.

Lack of transport to schools, or its cost if available, hamper school attendance and encourage premature dropout (Bulgaria). Girls might be at a disadvantage as poor families, who cannot afford transport costs for all their children, might favour their sons because of traditional values. Daughters are kept at home to help in the household, or on the farm, as observed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Involvement in family agriculture is another reason why rural children stop attending school (Bulgaria); this is sometimes, but not always, temporary (IHF, 2000). In Lithuania it was found that disparities in quality of education reduced work possibilities for graduates of secondary schools (IHF, 2000).

Rural women and food security in Central and Eastern Europe, and the CIS

Female employment and discrimination

Before transition, gender segregation in the region's labour market was more or less a non-issue. Attention was focused on the high rate of women in employment and on labour conditions geared to women's responsibilities in the home. These were highlighted as gains of socialism and proof of gender equality. However, despite gender-sensitive policies, there was a clear and asymmetric gender division of labour and a gender wage-gap. Moreover, traditional gender roles in the family were not discussed during the state-socialist era.

Today, the labour market still reflects this legacy, although changes are taking place, and on the whole fewer women than men are employed. Also, compared with men, women's employment is spread over fewer sectors and positions. Some sectors such as education, health and services are strongly feminized, while these sectors absorb a significant share of the total female labour-force, the average wage and status of these jobs is low. Women are more numerous in low skilled and low paid positions and men outnumber women in the higher paid, more influential supervisory and management positions. (UNICEF, 1999; UNDP, 2000b).

There is some evidence that the gender segregation of occupations has declined over the past decade. At the same time, new forms of segregation may be emerging (UNICEF, 1999), as men replace women in trade and other sectors. The share of women in agriculture and industry has declined in most, but not all, countries and women's share in the service sector has increased, where they are now a majority.

In the early years of transition, it seems that the majority of people did not change occupations and there was not much difference between women and men in this respect, although, more women than men tended to move down the career ladder. In other words, more men than women moved up; the tendency is clear, but the differences are relatively insignificant for a few countries (Bulgaria, Russia) (UNDP, 2000b).

So far the private sector has predominantly attracted men. This is because women currently lack the required qualifications and knowledge for these new jobs, and there are few opportunities for training and re-training. Where women are re-trained, as in Belarus, it is for specific skills such as book-keepers, secretaries, sewing

machine operators. Women re-enter jobs with lower professional and social status. It also appears that a specific group of women participates in retraining programmes. Research, showed that two-thirds of women entering such programmes in Belarus were former engineers, technical workers, scientists and professionals in the arts.

In Estonia, the group aged between 20 and 39 years with a higher education, and those working as specialists, who are well paid, are over-represented in further adult education programmes. It seems that the unemployed have a lower participation rate in these programmes and express less need to get involved (Vöörman, 1998). In Slovenia access to education and re-training seems especially difficult after maternity leave. In particular, education and training for intensive and skilled positions, such as those in the computer industry and electronics, seem difficult to enter. Reasons include loss of a contract after pregnancy and scarcity of new jobs (IHF, 2000), which seems widespread throughout the region. It is recorded that women are discriminated against in the private sector, where they are refused jobs because they are, or may become, mothers. It is known that during application procedures women are questioned on this subject, while men are not.

Certainly women face a gender bias in the labour market and in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia discrimination practices have been reported when applying for a job. In Poland it was found that marriage status – an indicator of children – was a serious obstacle to women finding work, which for men was not the case. Private employers seem to consider women expensive, high risk employees. This is because of the costs involved in maternity leave, during which, in many countries, women's jobs are protected by law. Therefore, employers often prefer male or young women above other female applicants, which may explain why women favour employment in the public sector.

Women in the agricultural sector

With the exception of Romania, Slovenia and Poland, more men than women are employed in the agricultural sector, in the latter two countries their share is equal, and in Romania, women outnumber men. In some countries, women's agricultural employment has increased over the past decade, as in Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia; this trend is reversed in the other countries. Men's employment in agriculture

shows the same trend, except for Lithuania where there was a slight decrease.

A considerable number of women work in agriculture, either as employees or as farm-heads, co-farm-heads or unpaid family workers and research, shows that in farming households nearly two-thirds of women were involved in agriculture. Increasingly women are active outside agriculture, including participation in small and medium enterprises (Sawicka, 1999).

Comparable data on female farm-heads are lacking in the transition countries and only dispersed data could be traced. In a paper, submitted by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office at a conference on European Statisticians in 2001, it was found that nearly 25 percent of family-farm holders were female (Agricultural Census, 2000). The average age of these women appeared to be 60 and was higher than that for men in this position (53 years) (Laczka, 2001). In Romania, 1998 data reveal that 34 percent of members in agricultural holdings and cooperatives are female (UNDP, 2000a). Data from the Czech Republic give the same picture and men outnumber women, both in agricultural self-employment and as having employees. It is well known that after privatization and restructuring many former managers of collective farms became the new owners of the farm enterprises. It is also known that the majority of former managers were men. Subsequently, the current farm heads of these large-scale farm enterprises – cooperatives, liability companies – are predominantly male.

Self-employment increased after transition but involves more men than women (Eurostat). In Bulgaria, women made up 27 percent of the self-employed in 2000 and in Kazakhstan, in 1997, an estimated 38 percent of the self-employed were women (UN, 2002) and more women became entrepreneurs, including rural women (Momsen, 1999; Sawicka, 2000; Majerova, 1999) and evidence suggests that about one-quarter of new businesses were set up by women (UNICEF, 1999), most are small and women work on their own.

It has been noted that women tend to start different types of businesses than men do. Research, carried out in Hungary, shows that women's businesses were less varied, as they mostly run food or flower shops, restaurants or cafes. Men run hardware or farm supply outlets, cyber-cafes or work as carpenters, electricians, etc. (Momsen, *et al.*, 1999). In Azerbaijan, only 7 percent of female respondents were registered as managers of small enterprises and an overwhelming majority of women (86 percent)

did not want their own business. The principal reasons given were lack of starting capital, they were unable to find an appropriate sphere of activity, difficulties related to registration, fear, no self-confidence and no knowledge of how to set up or run a private business.

Women are in the minority as employers, where in Latvia they comprised 30 percent in 1999 and in Romania 25 percent (UN, 2002; UNDP, 2000a). As stated above, on average, men are more often self-employed than women. It is found that the proportion of women is highest in countries where family farming is important, as in Romania, where 90 percent of self-employment is in agriculture and women outnumber men (45 percent vs 35 percent). In Slovakia, the degree of self-employment is low, but women's share is lowest (4 percent). Note that these statistics must be handled with care, as many enterprises run jointly by husband and wife are officially registered under the man's name. On the other hand, male-run businesses may formally have a female entrepreneur for taxation purposes.

Women's employment seems, on average, to be less stable, even in comparison with the past. More often they are engaged on seasonal or short-term contracts and more women than men work at part-time jobs. In some countries part-time jobs are slowly on the increase, in others they are stagnant or decreasing. Although such jobs may be advantageous to women, considering the increased time they need for their responsibilities in the home, they generate less income.

Double employment

Driven by economic necessity increasing numbers of people work at more than one job, some combine full-time jobs with part-time, others have different part-time jobs. In Romania research shows that about three-fifths of all people with a second job are rural men aged 35 to 49 with a high school or vocational school education. Women with second jobs were of the same age and had finished high school. Both men and women are employees in their main job (UNDP, 2000a).

A Hungarian study described some rural women with second jobs; these women wageworkers compensate their low wages with illegal work in horticulture. After their night shift, or before their afternoon shift, they worked five to seven hours as day-

labourers. In particular divorced women and those with more children had second jobs (Kovács and Váradi, 1999).

Female unemployment

After transition, unemployment and job insecurity were new phenomena for both women and men. Initially, women lost their jobs at a higher rate than men, but in some countries this was reversed, as in Hungary. Today, it is contested as to whether general unemployment levels throughout the region continue to be disproportionate between women and men. Most authors state that – as at the initial period of transition – women remain worse off, though regional differences may occur.

One problem is that statistics are not always reliable; they are incomplete or not comparable, because different definitions have been used. For instance, women on pregnancy or maternity leave may or may not be included as employed. On the other hand, many rural women working on family or subsistence farms are registered as unemployed, although they work all day. The same goes for the growing number of housewives that remain outside the formal labour market. They work in their kitchen gardens, plots or farms, or on their own and are not always accounted for in labour statistics. Yet, they contribute substantially to household income and food security.

UNICEF reports (1999) that in this region, since 1989, some 13 percent of jobs that were available before transition have been lost. Of these more than half were women's jobs, and more women than men have been registered as unemployed. UNICEF states that across the region female unemployment ranges from 5 to 15 percent, reaching 33 percent among younger women, notwithstanding the fact that women's education level is, on average, higher than that of men (UNICEF, 1999; IHF, 2000). Further studies report that women's unemployment is estimated at a higher rate than men's (UNDP, 1999).

In some countries the gender gap has increased, in others it has declined or rates are nearly equal. In Moldova, for example, the unemployment rate for women in 1998 was 17.8 percent and for men 10.2 percent. The rate for women increased disproportionately after 1994 when the unemployment rate was 8.9 percent. In



Rural woman in Van province, Turkey, receiving an allocation of sheep, which she will then fatten. This is her only source of income.
(A. Sipal, 1998)

Romania, the number of unemployed women remained higher than that of men for the period 1991–1998. The biggest gap was recorded in 1993 (4.8 percent), thereafter diminishing to 0.3 percent in 1998. In Belarus there was a drop in disparity between unemployment levels for women and men over the past years. However, in 1998 there were twice as many unemployed women in the economically active population.

Young people were especially vulnerable to unemployment in Romania; young women were most affected 19.7 percent vs 17.3 percent for young men (UNDP, 2000a). Unemployment seems to have affected women unevenly, for example in Belarus, women with a higher education were affected by high unemployment, and in Estonia rural-urban differences developed and, during the mid-1990s, rural women's employment rates were lower (UNDP, 2000c) than for urban areas. It was found that younger and older women had difficulties accessing the formal labour market. However, reverse trends were noted:



This Bosnian widow was allocated land by the municipalities free of charge. She received seed from the FAO Emergency Programme, which was implemented in cooperation with the local authorities at Canton level. The beneficiaries reimbursed 1 kilo of produce to the municipalities for every kilo of seed received.

(FAO, 1995.)

the Labour Survey 2000 in Estonia revealed that for the first time in the past decade, the female unemployment rate (14.1 percent) was lower than for men (15.3 percent). Note that women make-up a higher proportion of the long-term unemployed and are more often employed on a temporary basis.

In Hungary, unemployment affected men more than women. Men worked in the economic sectors and were most severely affected by economic reforms. Some authors state that women were better prepared than men to accept low-wage or part-time jobs (Morell, 1999). Over the past years women's comparative advantage has declined, because men's unemployment is shrinking faster, falling from 13.2 percent in 1993 to 8.6 percent in 1998; for women this was 7.8 percent and 7 percent. (Figures pertain to potential economically active male and female populations) (IHF, 2000).

Overall, regardless of education level, women's long-term unemployment is rising, and is comparable with or higher than that of men (UNDP, 1999). It appears that more women than men belong to the long-term unemployed, which means they are excluded from official unemployment registers, and are not eligible for unemployment compensation.

Over the past decade increasing numbers of women have not registered themselves as officially seeking work. This is linked to a lack of employment opportunities, women's

increased work burden in the household and on family plots, and the greater burden placed on traditional roles (UNDP, 1999). One effect is that women may benefit less from pensions and, as in Western Europe, women tend to be over-represented in part-time employment (Olsson, 2000; Eurostat), the wage gender gap is observed in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS countries (UNECE, 2000).

It has been observed that rural women are often more vulnerable to unemployment than urban women and rural men. Polish women belong to the group of rural inhabitants having the highest unemployment rate, i.e. non-farming rural people, appeared more often to be unemployed than the average (20.1 percent vs 14.1 percent). The same can be said for the farming population in Poland, as women in this group are more often unemployed than men (11.6 percent vs 8.7 percent).

The high unemployment rates for women, including rural women, are caused by many interrelated factors. One is the closing down of state-owned enterprises; among these are state-farms, which used to employ many women. At the same time, alternative employment for women is scarce. In many rural areas this is an issue, as is the lack of re-training and re-education opportunities, especially for women (IFAD, 2002).

Because of the closing down of state-enterprises and farms, women have lost the child care support provided, which substantially alleviated their work at home. Because the newly private services are too expensive for most households, women are more restricted when they look for a job. Most household work continues to be seen as women's responsibility and men's contribution is minimal. Over the past decade, the pressure on women to become housewives and mothers was stronger than the influence of any discussion of traditional gender divisions of labour in the household. The result is that more women find it too difficult to combine a full-time job with work in the household.

A growing number of women decided to leave the formal labour market because part-time jobs were scarce. In Bulgaria, more rural women left the formal labour market after transition than men. As women lost their incomes they worked in their households and more intensively on their agricultural plots (Meurs, 1999). The importance of these plots has been observed in other countries, as in rural areas, women produce food on plots or on their farms for household food consumption or (partly) for sale or to generate income outside the formal labour market.



Central and Eastern Europe, and the CIS

In the Czech Republic, the position of rural women is weaker than that of urban women, they are more often unemployed and have more difficulty finding a new job. On average, rural women are older and have a lower educational level (Majerova, 1999). They are not mobile because they are tied to their household plots, which offer household security when other household members have lost jobs or the cost of living has increased.

Poverty

Women make up a large proportion of the rural poor (IFAD, 2002). In Lithuania, where the average per capita income in rural areas is lower than in urban (US\$150 vs



A little girl at a fountain.
(U. Piazzi, 1969)

US\$100), more than one-third of the rural employed earn between US\$50–US\$100, mostly rural women earn less than US\$50. Reasons rural women may not be employed include a low educational level, a heavy work load, traditional values and employers' bias against women.

Moreover, there is a higher probability that a woman will become the only adult in the household who is providing an income. This is because women tend to live longer and many marriages end in divorce. In the 15 countries in the region, men lived on average 8.4 years less than women in 1999 (UN, 2002). Reasons given are that men are more often violent and commit suicide and frequently succumb to alcoholism and smoking. The high divorce rates, which are among the highest in the world, combined with the habit of allocating children to the mother after divorce, increase women's insecurity.

Generally, divorce rates varied in 1997 from 3.3 percent and 7.3 percent in Bosnia-Herzegovina and FYR Macedonia, to 53 percent in Hungary, 56 percent in the Czech Republic up to 63 percent in Latvia and 68 percent in Belarus (UNICEF, 1999). Moreover, many men do not support their former family financially and women remarry less than men. The result is a substantial number of female-headed households, ranging from 16 percent in Estonia, to 44 percent in Slovenia (UN, 2002).

Because of women's higher unemployment rates, fewer opportunities of finding a job, lower wages and their limited availability for full employment because of the high work load in the home, women (and their children) run a higher risk of poverty.

Elderly women are particular at risk because of their higher life expectancy and lower degree of mobility, and therefore make up the majority of the rural elderly. As has already been stated pensioners, especially women, have low incomes because on average they earned lower wages and their pension age is earlier.

Emerging differences

An important trend is the growing difference between women. Age; ethnicity; dwelling place; number of children; educational level; marital status and employment status influence the standard of living and opportunities and constrain improvement. Emerging differences between rural women are described in a Hungarian study (Kovács and Váradi, 1999). The most vulnerable women are mothers with many children; single parents and widows; the elderly; disabled; women belonging to ethnic minorities and rural women.

Women waged workers appeared to be worse off than small-scale farmers or horticulturist entrepreneurs; the latter group is the most prosperous. Factors supporting the success of the horticulturists include the fact that property became available after agricultural restructuring and privatization. Other factors include their knowledge; skills; having an entrepreneurial mentality; their strong networks and access to markets. The same authors observed during research (1997) that class differences appear between well-to-do rural housewives, who do not need a job, and working class women (Kulcsár and Brown, 2000).

Another study carried out in Hungary, showed the rise of rural female entrepreneurs in two different border areas. Driven by economic necessity, they filled specific economic niches in the community. Their less successful neighbours envy them, thus creating, according to the authors, 'new divisions within the community' (Momsen, *et al.*, 1999).

Access to resources

No systematic and comparable data are available on rural and farming women's access to resources. Scattered information indicates that women in the region are



Manually harvesting FAO-supplied wheat at Banovici.
(C. Grace, 1995)



Woman producing
local handicrafts.
(R. Faidutti, 1998)

discriminated against and have less access than men to a whole range of resources, varying from house-ownership to land, credit and training or agricultural extension.

Land

Sex-disaggregated data on land rights and land use in the region are scarce. Dispersed information stresses women's more difficult position with respect to land rights, access to the land market and control over land. In Bulgaria, research on 1 200 farming men and women showed that land was mostly registered as the property of the man. Twice as many men as women were landowners and more men than women

expected to become landowners after land reform is completed. It is noted that men own relatively more land than women (Fotev, *et al.*, 2001).

In Turkey, because of the inheritance patterns, it is unrealistic to expect women to be entitled to land ownership (Unaldi, 1999). The same is true for Uzbekistan, although women and men formally have equal rights, under customary law women may not inherit agricultural land. It is known that managers of collective farms in Uzbekistan allocated less land to families without sons. In Russia, the law encourages women's access to land through individually issued land share certificates. It fails, however, to protect these rights once individual shares are converted into peasant-farm enterprises. Russian law provides that peasant farms are held under joint ownership. It does not require that all members of a farm family list their names on the application to register the farm, as it is normally registered in the name of the head of household (Giovarelli and Duncan, 1999).

Albanian legislation does not discriminate against women in terms of ownership. However, during the privatization process, most land allotted was assigned to the (usually male) head of household. In Azerbaijan, despite equal rights for men and women to inherit or distribute property, research showed that in 90 percent of the privatization cases, men became the owners. In Kirgizstan women can own land and formal inheritance laws do not discriminate against women. However, the prevailing traditional law allocates land and other property to men.

Although women's right to land was improved in 1998, there are many obstacles.

These include cultural stereotypes; society's negative view of women inheriting property; women's poor knowledge of their rights; lack of motivation and experience in the market economy; the rule that economic partnerships are established only between men and a privatization process that favours men.

In a paper presented to a conference on women's rural development issues (1999) Giovarelli and Duncan list potential legal obstacles – laws or absence of legislation – concerning women's participation in the disposition of land and ownership use in Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries:

- In some countries, laws allocate land rights or land management rights only to the head of household. In such cases women have no independent legal access to land and land-use decisions.
- Women with legal rights to land may not have their names registered on the legal documents, making their legal rights uncertain.
- Although for land transactions (lease, sale, mortgage), both spouses must legally give their consent when land is held in common ownership, formal written consent is not always required, which weakens women's control of land transactions.
- In the event of divorce, farmwomen risk being worse off. This is the case when the marriage contract contains provisions whereby property used by one spouse for occupational needs is excluded from the common property. When the farm is considered the husband's business, the woman's labour input remains unpaid, and she may be left without capital assets when a ruling determines that members of a farm cannot leave the farm with land and property in-kind. When property is divided, according to use by spouses during their marriage, women may be left with the less valuable property, without machinery, since women predominantly do the manual farm labour.
- Although in most countries, women and men legally have the same right to inherit, others have no formal inheritance laws, and thus follow customary law. In countries where Islamic law is followed, daughters may only inherit half as much as sons. In other countries, farming women may find it difficult to continue



Harvesting maize cobs for human consumption. Family members participate in this small family enterprise. (R. Faidutti, 2000)

farming when their husband dies. Since the children are entitled to half the property – females and males get equal shares – the widow may be left with too small a plot to ensure her basic needs.

Credit

Access to credit is a main obstacle for almost all rural and farming people in the region and high interest rates are a problem for all. Additional problems for farming people include the unfinished privatization process, insecurity of land titles and problematic land structure causing banks to be hesitant to accept land as collateral. In addition, both male and female farmers lack sufficient information and skills to submit an application for credit, although women seem to have even less chance of obtaining credit.

Bulgarian research, carried out on 1 200 farming households in 120 villages on people who had received credit, revealed that twice as many were men. Nearly one-third, 31 percent, worked with credit against only 17 percent of women (Fotev, *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, in Turkey, it is reported that women's membership to agricultural credit cooperatives is rare. The few female members appear to be widows without grownup sons, who do not participate in meetings and other activities. Their contact with the cooperative is established through a male relative or the *mubtar* (Unaldi, 1999).

The extra obstacles women face are manifold. One problem is that women often apply for small amounts of money, which banks are not keen to grant, and women's low management skills are to their disadvantage. Another obstacle is that their businesses are often unregistered or registered in someone else's name. Certainly one problem is the lack of access to land, and other property, to use as security for loans (UNDP, 1999). This is linked to the application of customary or religious law over formal rules, inadequacy of regulations and traditional stereotypes.

Extension services and technology

Constraints faced by women accessing basic resources such as land and credit affect their access to extension services and technological development. Turkish research showed that women's access to agricultural extension appeared limited, as extension

has traditionally been provided to male heads of households, who failed to pass their new knowledge and skills to their wives and daughters. Many women, therefore, continued to use old methods and face a knowledge gap. As a consequence, their productivity level is lower than necessary and their work burden high (Unaldi, 1999).

Violence against women

Domestic violence against women, rape, forced prostitution and trafficking of women is widespread in the region. Information from involved actors, such as women NGOs, police and surveys, indicate that violence against women has grown over the past decade in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS. Social and economic hardship after transition, wars and armed conflict in the region, contribute substantially to this trend.

Women and armed conflict

It is estimated that during the 1992–1995 conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 20 000 to 50 000 women were raped as part of a deliberate pattern of abuse (UNICEF, 1999). Threats to women's security are linked to large population movements that occur in conflict-torn areas. Moreover, the interruption of agricultural production and destruction of infrastructure and equipment have directly resulted in widespread food insecurity.

Domestic violence

Rural women may be more vulnerable to domestic violence than urban women. Research indicates that poverty and low incomes, unemployment and lack of alternative job opportunities; low education and patriarchal traditions are related to violence against women.

Research in Albania found one in five women reported they had been forced into sexual relationships. Rural women reported the incidence of physical violence in intimate relationships with men more often than urban women (46 percent vs 36 percent). The increase in sexual violence appeared to be higher in rural areas



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(28 percent vs 16 percent). It was reported that women's degree of economic dependence impacted the incidence of maltreatment as one-third of women employed outside the home reported abuse (35 percent), and more than half of women working at home (53 percent of unemployed, 56 percent of housewives). Female agricultural workers were abused to a higher degree (58 percent) and said they were unable to leave the violent relationship.

One result is that victims may accept violence as 'normal', be ashamed or afraid and therefore seek to conceal it, meaning domestic violence remains largely invisible and, after transition, domestic violence seems more widespread. Alcoholism among men, one of the triggers of domestic violence, has become a great social problem, along with deteriorating living conditions and lack of future prospects, which has made men insecure and more aggressive. At the same time, it is more difficult for

Box 3.2 WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Women's protection in armed conflict and their central position to conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace building are of increasing concern to the international community. The UN Security Council passed a resolution on Women, Peace and Security in 2000, however, the deliberate killing, rape, mutilation, forced displacement, abduction, trafficking and torture of women and girls continue unabated in contemporary armed conflicts.

As soldiers, refugees, survivors of landmine incidents and sexual violence, women experience conflict in a different way to men, and are often most affected by the violence and economic instability associated with armed conflict. Whether it is at home, in flight or in camps for displaced people, women are threatened by rape, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexual humiliation and mutilation.

However, when peace is negotiated and societies are reconstructed after war, women are grossly underrepresented. For example, no Bosnian women were present at the Dayton Peace negotiations in 1995. And though the war in Tajikistan has left a population of 25 000 widows to head their families and lead the reconstruction of their communities, only one woman sits on the 26-person National Reconciliation Commission. It is crucial that women be active and respected participants in peace-building and reconstruction.

Source: UNIFEM (www.unifem.org)

women to escape a violent home situation as the weakening economic situation makes them dependent on men, and the law does not deal correctly with domestic violence. It does not help that women are often ignorant of their human rights.

For example, several surveys, in Azerbaijan and Belarus, show that the largest threat of violence against women comes from husbands, fathers, friends or people close to them (UN, 2002). In Kirgizstan, recent research revealed that out of 1 000 female respondents, 89.2 percent had been abused by their husbands, partners, relatives or children. Among the abused women, 65 percent had special secondary and university education, only one-quarter sought formal help. Those who did not feared the publicity, increased violence and did not trust the police or other helpers. Another reason is the inability to report family abuse, as interference in family life is considered taboo, and formal helpers are not trained to handle domestic violence.

Bulgarian research carried out on 1 200 farming men and women revealed a significant incidence of domestic violence. However, both women and men said they were against state and public interference in such cases. According to Bulgarian legislature, interference is only necessary in very severe cases (Fotev, *et al.*, 2001). Lately, domestic violence is discussed more as women's awareness has increased, although this is more the case in urban than in rural areas.

Trafficking in women

In the 1990s, trafficking in women, as domestic or sexual workers, increased in the region and is of great concern. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights reports increased trafficking of women in almost all countries in this region (IHF, 2000). Women are trafficked mainly to Western Europe, estimated at some 120 000 women and girls each year, other countries in Central and Eastern Europe also may be their destination. NGOs estimate that only in Albania some 30 000 women currently work abroad as prostitutes.

Traffickers usually choose girls and women from poor families, implying that girls and women from rural areas run a relative high risk of being trafficked. Reliable data are lacking, but the main causes seem to be poverty and a lack of future prospects for many unemployed women and their families. Trafficking is one of the causes of the growing number of women infected with HIV/AIDS.



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The growing threat of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is increasing at an alarming rate in the region, particularly in the CIS, which has the fastest-growing epidemic in the world. Poverty is a major facilitating factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS, and women have been identified as a vulnerable group. Furthermore, fewer or no HIV testing facilities, inadequate HIV surveillance mechanisms, leads to under-reporting of HIV rates, poor overall health infrastructure and more restricted access to healthcare facilities contribute to increased vulnerability to the epidemic in rural areas (UNAIDS, 2002a).

**Box 3.3 HIV/AIDS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE,
AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES**

Approximately one million people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia live with HIV/AIDS (more than double the 420 000 at the end of 1999). An estimated 250 000 new HIV infections occurred in 2001. Given the high level of other sexually transmitted infections, and the high rate of injected-drug use among young people, the epidemic seems set to grow considerably. As recently as 1994, no country in this region reported more than a few HIV infections. A year later, the first HIV outbreak occurred in Belarus and Ukraine. The epidemic then took off in other countries of the region.

The Russian Federation is at the forefront of this region's epidemic. New cases of HIV have almost doubled annually for several years. In Uzbekistan, more HIV cases were reported in 2002 alone, compared to all the previous decade. Ukraine remains the most affected country in this region – and for Europe – with an estimated adult HIV prevalence rate of 1 percent.

The vast majority of reported HIV infections are among young people – those who inject drugs. It is estimated that up to 1 percent of the population of countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States uses injected drugs, placing these people and their sexual partners at high risk of infection. Outbreaks of HIV-related to injected drug use have been reported in several Central Asian republics. In the Russian Federation, and in many Central Asian republics, the wave of injected drug use is closely correlated with socio-economic upheavals.

For example, the living standards of tens of millions of people have plummeted, amid rising unemployment and poverty. The rigid social controls of the past have been eroded, and new common norms and values have not been established. Unprecedented numbers of young people have not completed their secondary schooling; in some countries public health and other services have deteriorated badly. Another factor causing increased drug use is the four-fold increase in world production of heroin in the past decade, along with the opening of new trafficking routes across Central Asia.

The proportion of sexually transmitted HIV infections is increasing, and more people (mostly women), appear to be contracting HIV through sexual transmission, while more pregnant women are testing positive for HIV – suggesting the epidemic's transfer to the wider population. There is evidence that young people in several countries are sexually active at an earlier age and that premarital sex is increasing, yet, awareness and knowledge of HIV/AIDS remain dismal in many places. According to a 2001 survey in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, one-third of young women (aged 15-24) had never heard of AIDS; a mere 10 percent of teenage girls in Tajikistan had heard of HIV/AIDS; in Ukraine, which has the highest HIV prevalence rate in Europe, only 9 percent of adolescent girls were aware of HIV prevention methods. In the psychological and socio-economic aftermath of the Balkans conflicts, young people are now more vulnerable to HIV, as high-risk behaviours are on the rise. Although improving in some places, levels of condom use remain low.

Source: UNAIDS 2002b and 2003.



Gender issues and agricultural policies

Rural women in the EU-15 countries in the accession, applicant and CIS countries and Balkan states, face different situations in relation to food security. In effect, the agricultural sector in each region faces its own set of challenges. The EU-15 countries are attempting to achieve a balance between agriculture and environmental quality, nature conservation, food safety, farm diversification and human development, whereas the accession, applicant, Balkan and CIS countries, are engaged in privatization and structural reform of agriculture and food systems (Verbole, 2002).

It has been demonstrated that rural women in both regions face similar difficulties in the cumulative burden of reproductive and productive work. This translates more or less directly onto the labour market as persistent wage gaps in relation to men, reduced opportunities for career advancement, training and re-training, over-representation of women in precarious labour conditions (part-time, temporary) and in the informal/illegal labour market. Women's labour in rural areas is consistently under-reported and official ownership and management of farms, usually male, hides the real contribution of women to these enterprises.



Farmer displays peppers on the wall, that are drying in the sun.

(R. Faidutti, 1998)

In some countries, specific discrimination against girls and women has been reported in education and land rights. Violence against women, whether through domestic violence, trafficking or armed conflict, also contributes towards further marginalization of women and of rural women in particular. Therefore, bringing gender issues to the forefront of the rural agenda will depend largely on the presence of women in decision-making positions.

Women's participation in politics

Research has demonstrated the low involvement of women in public decision-making and formal politics in general. On average, women are less well represented in parliaments and governments, certainly at the ministerial and sub-ministerial level. Among civil servants, at the highest or second highest-level, women are a minority (Council of the European Union, 1999). For example, in Spain 4 percent of the highest level civil servants are women, as compared with 19 percent in Portugal; among the second highest level civil servants, 6 percent, are women in Finland and 32 percent in Sweden.

Women in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS are under-represented in public life, including politics. Currently their political participation and influence is low. Moreover, many women who are present in parliaments or governments are hardly visible or proactive as prejudices and stereotypes continue to undermine women's political influence.

After transition the number of women in politics rapidly fell. The quota-system existing in a few accession, applicant, Balkan and CIS countries, that ensured a minimum of female representatives, disappeared, although it must be noted, in Slovenia, female quotas in politics appeared after transition. Women's high and increased workload in the home, coupled with their labour activities, limits their opportunity of becoming active in the public sphere (IHF, 2000).

Over time the situation has generally improved. The presence of women in parliament has increased in the majority of EU-15 countries; however representation of women at the ministerial and sub-ministerial level increased only slightly (Inter-parliamentary Union, UN). Women's participation and influence in politics is on the rise in Central and Eastern Europe and CIS countries, where most countries register a higher participation of women at the parliamentary, ministerial and sub-ministerial level. This is the result of lobbying by women's NGOs and the establishment of new national organizations for the advancement of women (UNDP, 1999). In some countries quite the opposite occurred. Countries that were ahead of others in the representation of women, such as Albania, Hungary, Poland and Romania, have fallen

behind in terms of the percentage of parliamentary seats occupied by women.

In regional parliaments and governments women are somewhat better represented, compared to the national level, with an average participation of women around 24 percent (Eurostat). With the exception of Sweden, no country comes close to equal representation of men and women in these important political structures. The same picture arises in many Central and Eastern European Countries and the CIS; in Bosnia Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Poland and Turkey there are hardly any differences between the national and municipal level, whereas in Albania women's local representation is worse with 1 percent of women in the councils vs 11 percent in parliament (UNDP, 1999).

Female representation in public committees

Together with government and parliament, expert groups and advisory committees are important loci of power. This is true for most public committees and advisory boards in the EU-15 member states (Council of the European Union, 1999). With comparable structures at the European level, the less committees deal with social issues, the more male dominated they are; the same is true for Romania. In the Chamber of Deputies, since 1996, the commissions on economic policy, reform and privatization, industry and services and public administration, land administration and environment count only a small proportion of women (3 percent, 5 percent and 7 percent respectively). It has been noted that women are under-represented in leadership positions in non-governmental organizations, where they account for a quarter of all decision-makers, and only 12 percent head such organizations (UNDP, 2000a).

Non-governmental organizations

An important development in accession, applicant, Balkan and CIS countries is the increased activity of the NGO-sector, and especially of women's organizations, which contribute much to the improvement of women's situation in various fields. NGOs offer a range of services to women victims of domestic or sexual violence and trafficking; provide legal assistance to those who have been discriminated against; distribute information on family planning; HIV/AIDS and the risks of drugs and

other health-related issues; organize training and schooling for women; establish self-employment projects; fight gender specific stereotypes and promote women's engagement and participation in public life. (IHF, 2000; Bak, *et al.*, 2000). Women NGOs in the region obtain support from organizations abroad and from other international organizations (IHF, 2000). In rural areas, the rise of women's NGOs seems slower than in urban areas. In many cases they are not present meaning an important source of information and services to women is missing in rural areas.

Gender mainstreaming of EU policy

In recent years, women's representation in decision-making has become an issue of concern for the European Union. In the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) the European Union defined equality as a central task of the European Community. This includes explicitly the issue of employment and pay as well as equality in power and decision-making (Council of the European Union, 1999). Member states are pressed to develop national plans of action to improve women's representation and participation in public life.

Statistics are unavailable on the representation of rural women. However, the EU places specific attention on the participation of women in rural development. Recently the Director-General of Agriculture published several documents concerning the gender mainstreaming of rural development policy. In these documents the European Union explicitly stressed, for the first time, the importance of women's participation in the development of (local) rural development plans and policies.

The EU considers women's participation important for various reasons. First, participation is important for women themselves and second to improve the quality of rural development policies (EC, 2000a; EU, 1999). One of the priority themes of the new LEADER⁹ programme concerns the participation of rural women in employment and decision-making (EC, 2000d). The European Union also publishes a guide concerning gender mainstreaming of structural funds. The integration of women

⁹ Leader⁺ is one of four initiatives financed by EU structural funds and is designed to help rural actors consider the long-term potential of their region.

and their interest in projects is currently one criterion for evaluation (EC, 2000e).

This growing awareness and readiness of the European Union to promote gender equality in decision-making is promising, since it goes beyond 'awareness' and focuses on implementation of concrete mechanisms. Gender mainstreaming of structural funds make sanctions possible, where women are not integrated into projects, or women are not well represented in decision-making structures related to rural development. Much still depends on the readiness of European policymakers to enforce integration of gender issues in projects and promote the gender mainstreaming of national policy (Braithwaite, 2000).

Women in agricultural organizations and rural development programmes

Little data exists on the representation of women on farm and in other agricultural organizations, a European wide comparison cannot be made and national data on the topic cannot be traced. On average, farmwomen in The Netherlands are better represented at the regional level of the farm union (13 percent) and at the level of commissions (30 percent), than they are at the national board level (7 percent). In Ireland about 5 percent of farm union board members are female (in 2000). In 1998 in The Netherlands 12 percent of farm union members were female and 15 percent of board members (Bock and De Rooij, 2000).

National research projects reveal that women participate less in rural development programmes than men. This is true for rural development subsidy schemes, integration in specific projects and their representation in (local) rural development committees and advisory boards (Bock, 1999, 2002; Bak, *et al.*, 2000; Oedl-Wieser, 1999; Houses of Oireachtas, 1994). Research in The Netherlands revealed that in 1997 only 6.7 percent of all members of land consolidation committees were women; moreover more than half of the committees (58 percent) have no female members at all.

In the four Dutch LEADER II¹⁰-areas, on average 17 percent of members of the

¹⁰ The Leader II Programme, which ended in 1999, was an EU funded initiative for rural development.

local action groups are female (Bock, 1998). The participation of women (in 1997/1998) ranged from 0 to 33 percent on the committee that judges project proposal quality and requests government subsidies. At the same time, women submitted only 9 percent of all proposals presented for a subsidy from the rural renewal fund. Of all the awarded projects (1997–1998) only 4 percent originated with women (Bock, 2002).

In Poland, an evaluation of assistance programmes for the development of rural areas showed that four out of 25 organizations participating in the survey had a programme directed towards rural women. Another 12 attempted to begin such programmes but indicated financial problems and women's disinterest (Bak, *et al.*, 2000). Research among rural women, who managed to gain access to these assistance programmes, revealed that more than two-thirds encountered difficulties. Barriers to access seem to have been insufficient information on the programmes and cost of participation. Nevertheless, participation seems to have been effective, because the majority of rural women involved, who were later surveyed, stated that their economic situation had improved.

Finally, research on rural development in West, Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS identified a broad range of problems and needs of rural women (listed below). The degree of incidence varies between the regions (Bock, 1998, 2002; Houses of the Oireachtas, 1994; Oedl-Wieser, 1999; Bak, *et al.*, 2000; UNDP, 1999).

- increasing burden on women because of the ageing of the population;
- lack of good quality social and medical services in rural areas;
- absence of child care;
- closing of schools and deterioration in the performance and quality of existing schools;
- lack of public transport or costly transport resulting in reduction of mobility and participation in public life;
- need to accept low paid, low quality and insecure employment;
- need to commute to nearby cities to find work;
- under-registration of women's work;
- under-registration of female unemployment;



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- ineligibility for training and social employment schemes because lacking formal registration of female unemployment;
- lack of training and re-training courses as for example in starting and managing own business;
- lack of employment projects that are both attractive and accessible to rural women;
- lack of part-time employment;
- lack of access to loans and credit;
- lack of advisory services on civil law;
- lack of assistance from NGOs;
- physical and social isolation;
- feelings of loneliness and depression;
- poverty and burden of managing low incomes;
- problems with addictions (alcoholism) in the family;
- rise in violence against women as a result of poverty, stress and increasing mobility.

Conclusions

In the last five to ten years the situation of rural women has not fundamentally changed. On average their circumstances have developed along the lines indicated in the 1997 FAO-publication *Rural Women and Food Security* (Howard-Borjas and De Rooij, 1997). For example, feminization of agriculture on the one hand and masculinization on the other continue today. Women leave farms to find employment elsewhere. They leave large industrialized farms, that no longer require female labour, and smaller farms that depend, to a growing degree, on off-farm earned extra income.

In addition, many women want an independent, professional career. This is an important factor driving them out of farming as they wish to use their professional education, which may have nothing to do with farming. This may seem paradoxical, but the same development pulls women into farming, either as new farm heads, to substitute their off-farm income-earning husbands, or as new rural entrepreneurs, who start new income-generating activities on the farm. The feminization of agriculture may be the result of the absence of appropriate alternative employment and training or re-training opportunities for women, traditional values and discrimination in the labour market. The latter pull factors are to be found particularly in Central and Eastern European countries and the CIS.

Women who leave may feel liberated from hard work and provided the opportunity to develop a new career, although their departure may be out of material necessity, or because their labour is no longer required. For those remaining on the farm, being a farming woman may be an expression of their freedom to choose an occupation. However, they may feel forced to place personal wishes aside to secure food or a living for the family.

The feminization of agriculture may be judged positively, for farmwomen as a group, as it improves their legal position. That is to say, it facilitates women's access to resources, such as land, capital and farm profits and enables them to take a seat on various boards, open to farm heads only. This may formally be the case, in practice being a farm-head may not necessarily change the division of labour or responsibilities indoors. This is clear in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS but,



Conclusions

by women gaining formal power, at least one significant bottleneck is passed.

Agenda 2000 and the 1999 CAP reforms may be considered potential opportunities for women, especially when combined with the renewed effort of gender-mainstreaming of EU policy. First, it admits the importance of the quality of life in rural areas, in economic and in social terms. Second, it entails re-evaluation of investments in social capital, now considered the foundation of innovation and revitalization. Third, women's employment and political participation may increase through the creation of new rural enterprises and the creation of new bottom up governing structures and methods. Old structures and traditions, including gender-specific restrictions, are persistent and difficult to overcome (Bock, 2002) and the CAP reform of June 2003 entailed adjustments in the agricultural sector, which remain to be assessed.

At the same time life is more difficult in the more remote areas, especially in Central and Eastern European countries and the CIS and in some areas of Western Europe. As a result of the absence of employment opportunities and the ongoing crisis in the agricultural sector, many rural families must cope with low incomes and the erosion of the quality of life in these areas.

Accession and applicant countries face specific problems and insecurities, which affect both women and men; although, as wives and mothers, women may experience specific risks. They must deal with discrimination in the labour market, fewer possibilities of becoming active in another occupation; have greater difficulty accessing resources; higher workloads; lack of services; persistent traditional gender roles and unstable family situations.

One result is an increase in domestic violence against women and abuse of women. This is principally in isolated areas, where there is scarce means of communication and no women's organizations. Therefore, it may be difficult for women (and children) to stand up for themselves or seek help. Women's equal access to the SAPARD and other pre-accession funds, together with more gender sensitive authorities, would be advantageous to all rural women.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested to positively strengthen the situation of rural women across the region, so that they may better access credit, markets, education and services.

- Rural women's capacity building should be facilitated, such as increased access to schooling, training and re-training programmes, to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in farming and the private labour market;
- Gender specific amendments of laws and regulations and new legislation are required to improve women's legal position;
- Investment in rural areas is needed to improve quality and to arrest the erosion of public, social and medical services required to enhance life in rural areas for individuals and families. These include accessible and affordable child care facilities, delivery of basic health care, well-functioning quality schools, communication and information networks and other infrastructure;
- Raise awareness among the rural population of the rights of women and improve legal, social and health support to rural women who are victims of violence. Violence against women should be strictly defined in criminal law and pursued by justice systems;
- Provide support to rural women's NGOs, to enlarge their role and influence in civil society.

In addition, the following recommendations have been made in the context of the eleventh session of the working party on Women and the Family in Rural Development of the European Commission on Agriculture (Verbole, 2002):

- Continue to promote rural women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels;
- Promote equal access to ownership for rural men and women to land and other resources;
- Improve the knowledge-base on local initiatives for development in rural areas, especially those focusing on farm and rural women;



Recommendations

- Promote the building of a solid quantitative and qualitative database on rural women to gain better knowledge of their specific contribution to the rural economy and assist the formulation of more accurate policies and strategies and measure improvements resulting from development programmes (programme monitoring and evaluation);
- Follow-up on existing international and national plans of action and support the formulation of plans in countries that do not yet have one;
- Monitor the evolution of such crucial processes as the ageing population, the ageing-related feminization of agricultural activities (in some countries) and out-migration of youth and its impacts on food security;
- Set up a gender-sensitive monitoring system on the influence of poor infrastructure and low spending power including new requirements and pressures on rural areas;
- Investigate the issue of decentralization and its impact on participation of men and women in decision-making;
- Monitor rural women's working position in formal and informal sectors (social security issues) and stimulate development of alternative activities for rural women (i.e. small-scale enterprises, organic agriculture; aquaculture, small-scale processing industries, agri-tourism);
- Investigate how existing and potential international rural women's and related networks can support national and local networks and how they can be reinforced throughout the region.



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Latin America and the Caribbean



Latin America and the Caribbean¹¹

An essential contribution

The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations refers to ‘discrimination against women and its impact on the realization of the right to food’¹², as one of the most serious constraints to food security. For many reasons this statement can be considered true for Latin America and the Caribbean, where rural women play a fundamental role in ensuring food security in each country, but find themselves held back in many areas. They account for almost half the rural population and provide an essential contribution to food production, yet their work remains invisible.

Women are overwhelmingly responsible for reproductive activities and feed their families as best they can in the face of widespread poverty (see Table 4.1). They have been strongly affected by liberalization and globalization of trade; and by the accelerated growth and circulation of knowledge, from which they are largely marginalized. Finally, as citizens, women are unable to fully exercise their rights or develop their human potential. Moreover, the rural women of Latin America and the Caribbean live in a heterogeneous continent with varying levels of rural and economic development and a wide range of cultures and races. Agro-ecological conditions, territorial dimensions and distances to urban centres vary within and between countries.

¹¹This chapter is based on the work of Ms Soledad Parada, FAO consultant.

¹²United Nations. Commission on Human Rights, 57th Session, report by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, submitted by Mr Jean Seigler in accordance with the Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2000/10.

Table 4.1
Poverty and undernourishment in Latin America and the Caribbean

	Food-deficit country (2000)	Proportion living below US\$1 a day (1990–2001)	Proportion of undernourished in total population		
			1979–1981	1990–1992	1998–2000
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN			13	13	11
NORTH AMERICA			4	5	5
Mexico[3]		8.0	4	5	5
CENTRAL AMERICA			20	17	20
Costa Rica[3]		6.9	8	6	5
El Salvador[3]			17	12	14
Guatemala[4]	Yes	16.0	18	14	25
Honduras[4]	Yes	23.8	31	23	21
Nicaragua[4]	Yes	82.3	26	30	29
Panama[3]		7.6	21	19	18
THE CARIBBEAN			20	26	25
Cuba[3]	Yes		4	5	13
Dominican Rep.[4]		<2	25	27	26
Haiti[5]	Yes		48	64	50
Jamaica[3]		<2	10	14	9
Trinidad and Tobago[3]		12.4	6	13	12
SOUTH AMERICA			14	14	10
Argentina[1]			-	-	-
Bolivia[4]	Yes	14.4	26	26	23
Brazil[3]		9.9	15	13	10
Chile[2]		<2	7	8	4
Colombia[3]		14.4	22	17	13
Ecuador[3]	Yes	20.2	11	8	5
Guyana[3]		<2	13	19	14
Paraguay[3]		19.5	13	18	14
Peru[3]		15.5	28	40	11
Suriname[3]			18	12	11
Uruguay[2]		<2	3	6	3
Venezuela[4]		15.0	4	11	21

NOTES: the population undernourished in 1998–2000:

[1] <2.5 percent undernourished

[2] 2.5–4 percent undernourished

[3] 5–19 percent undernourished

[4] 20–34 percent undernourished

[5] 35 percent undernourished

a. Poverty line is equivalent to US\$1.08 (1993 PPP US\$). b. Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified.

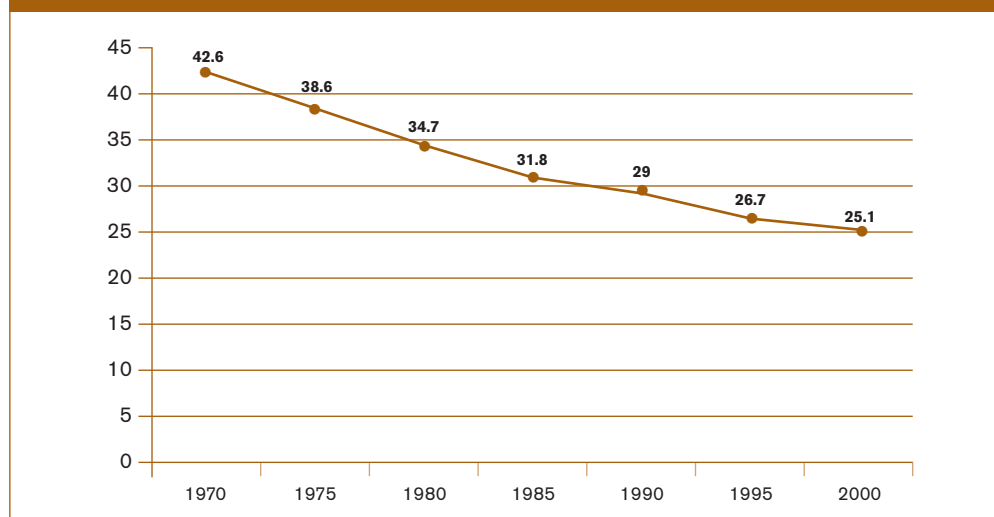
Source: FAO, The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002.

Breaking ground:
present and future perspectives for women in agriculture

Declining rural population

The rural population in this region has fallen in recent decades, and now accounts for about one-quarter of the total population. This proportion needs to be raised to include the urban population of municipal centres, in predominantly rural areas, whose activity is related to agriculture and who experience the same circumstances and problems as the rest of the rural population.

Figure 4.1
Percentage of rural population in Latin America and the Caribbean 1970–2000



Source: CELADE. Demographic Bulletin No. 63, 1999.

The decrease in the rural population is strongly influenced by migration, which is driven by insecure living conditions in the rural sector, and involves men, women and the young. The scale of rural areas and of urbanization varies between countries; in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras more than 50 percent of the population live in rural areas, and in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Venezuela less than 20 percent.

Migration

Migration continues in the region, and mainly involves women as a household coping strategy, and young women as a personal strategy. Rural-urban migration and

emigration to other countries are available family strategies to cope with rural poverty in Latin America. Migration is the result of better education for the rural young, of both sexes, who are unable to find openings for personal advancement.

The indigenous population

The broad ethnic composition of the population is not always considered when policies are created to overcome poverty and foster food security. Some 400 ethnic groups live in the rural and urban areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, each with its own culture, language, social organization, world vision, economic system and production procedures adapted to its ecosystem. The indigenous population is particularly numerous in Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. People of African descent and Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean make up about one-third of the population of the region and live mainly in Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela and in the countries of the Caribbean.

Female-headed households

Various studies reveal an increase in the number of rural female-headed households, particularly in Central America, where El Salvador, Honduras and Panama have shown the highest increase, although, the statistics underestimate the registration of female-headed households, as cultural patterns ascribe men as the head of household. This is confirmed by the fact that countries with this information show a consistently higher proportion of homes in which the woman is the main income provider, exceeding 38 percent in the rural households of El Salvador at the end of the last decade.

This is important as most rural programmes and policies are directed towards men, while there is evidence that women are often responsible for maintaining their families or are the main income providers.

Rural poverty

Despite their broad diversity, all countries in the region have one common feature a vast proportion of their population, especially the rural, live in poverty. As noted in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, 'Poverty is a major cause of food insecurity and sustainable progress in poverty eradication is critical to improve access to food'.

An essential Contribution

The statement by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) at the Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey in 2002 still holds true, 'without increased, targeted funding to fight world poverty and hunger, the most basic of obstacles to human and economic potential will remain.' (FAO/WFP/IFAD, 2002).

The continuation of rural poverty

In late 2000, more than 60 percent of the region's rural population was living in poverty. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 'relative poverty rates continue to be far higher in the region's rural areas than in its urban centres (54 vs 30 percent of all households). In 1999, nearly 134 million poor people were living in urban areas vs 77 million in rural areas, since the proportion of the total population residing in urban areas is substantially larger. The situation with respect to indigence is quite different, as the size of the population living in extreme poverty is slightly smaller in urban areas (43 million) than in rural areas (46 million), (ECLAC, 2001), (see Table 4.2.)

According to ECLAC data, poverty and indigence have increased in relation to

1980 and remained high, in percentage and absolute terms, throughout the 1990s. The latest data for 2000 indicate a majority of the indigent population lives in rural areas, 52 percent as compared to 48 percent in urban areas (ECLAC, 2001).

Table 4.2
Latin America: level of poverty in rural areas (a)

	Poverty (b)		Indigence (c)	
	Million	Percentage	Million	Percentage
1980	73.0	59.9	39.9	32.7
1990	78.5	65.4	48.4	40.4
1994	75.6	65.1	47.4	40.8
1997	78.2	63.0	46.6	37.6
1999	77.2	63.7	46.4	38.3

Source: ECLAC, Social Panorama of Latin America 2000–2001. Santiago, 2001

a) Estimates for 19 countries in the region.

b) Percentage of persons in households with incomes below the poverty line. Includes households below the indigence line.

c) Percentage of persons in households with incomes below the indigence line.

Box 4.1 METHOD USED TO MEASURE POVERTY

There is no universal definition or method to define poverty, its measurement comprises two stages: (i) identification of the poor and (ii) aggregation of poverty into a synthetic measurement. The first stage defines a threshold, referred to as the poverty line, which identifies the population whose per capita income is lower than the cost of a basket of goods to satisfy their basic needs. Aggregation, for its part, is effected by selecting an indicator based on people's income deficit relative to the poverty line.

Poverty estimates used by ECLAC are calculated using the cost-of-basic-needs, based on poverty line calculations. The poverty line is the minimum income required for members of a household to meet their basic needs. The poverty line for each country and geographical region is estimated on the cost of a basic food basket, considered sufficient to cover the nutritional needs of the population, bearing in mind consumption habits and the actual availability and relative prices of foodstuffs. An estimate of the resources needed for households to satisfy their basic non-food needs is then added to the value of the basic food basket.

The indigence line represents the cost of the food basket, people who are indigent (or extremely poor), are those living in households whose incomes are so low that even if they were to spend all their money on food, they are still unable to meet the nutritional needs of all their members. The value of the poverty line is calculated by multiplying the value of the indigence line by a constant factor that takes basic non-food expenditures into account.

Sources of information include data on family income arising from national household surveys. These data are adjusted for non-response to certain questions on income levels – wage-earners, independent workers and retired people – and for probable distortions from underreporting. This adjustment is made by contrasting the income items in the survey with the estimated household income and expenditure account of the System of National Accounts (SNA), prepared for this purpose on the basis of official information. The concept of income is understood to mean income from paid work (in cash and kind), from independent work (including self-supply and consumption value of products produced by the household), property rents, pensions and allowances, and other transfers received by households. In most countries, household income includes an amount for the imputed rental value of the home when this is owner-occupied.

The percentages of poor and indigent households and individuals are calculated by comparing the monthly per capita value of the poverty and indigence lines with total household income, also expressed in per capita terms. National poverty and indigence rates are estimated as a weighted average of the rates for each geographical area, and are therefore based on the incidence of poverty in each area and on the share of the country's total population that they represent.

SOURCE:
ECLAC Social Panorama
of Latin America
2000–2001.
Santiago, Chile. 2001.



An essential Contribution

Differences between countries

Levels of poverty and indigence differ *between* countries, but no country has managed to eliminate rural poverty and indigence. Although rural poverty and indigence have fallen in some countries, the levels are unacceptably high. Significant reductions in poverty and indigence were achieved in the 1990s in Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Panama. Although reductions were realized in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, more than three-quarters of the rural populations in these countries still live in poverty. Rural poverty remained stable but high in Colombia and El Salvador, where there was a rise in the proportion of the indigent population and in Bolivia, Mexico and Venezuela rural poverty and indigence increased.

Differences within countries

Differences in poverty levels also exist *between* and *within* countries. A study by Larrea *The geography of poverty in Ecuador*, cited by Cuvi (2001), places the worst living conditions in the rural Amazon region, which lacks infrastructure, and has limited development and agricultural productivity. Similarly, poverty is more widespread in the rural highlands than in the rural coastal area, especially among the indigenous population, on account of land shortage and erosion, absence of irrigation, credit and technical assistance, and inadequate health and education facilities.

The highest levels of poverty in the region are suffered by women of indigenous Afro-Latin and Afro-Caribbean populations. After centuries of two-pronged exclusion and subordination, based on their ethnicity and gender, these women, at the beginning of this new millennium have the worst economic and social indicators, limited cultural recognition and restricted access to decision-making bodies (Hopenhayn Bello, 2001).

Poverty affects many rural households in Latin America because of insufficient income and inadequate access to basic sanitation, water and health services. The rural-urban divide is clarified by Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Access to health and sanitation in selected Latin American and Caribbean countries

Countries	Adequate sanitation (1990–1997)a/		Safe drinking water (1995)b/		Health services (1985–1995)c/	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Bolivia	74	37	88	43	77	52
Brazil	80	30	80	28	NA	NA
Chile	90	99	47	NA	NA	
Colombia	97	56	90	32	NA	NA
Costa Rica	95	70	100	99	100	63
Dominican Republic	76	83	88	55	84	67
Ecuador	95	49	81	10	70	20
Guatemala	95	74	97	48	47	25
Honduras	NA	57	91	66	80	56
Nicaragua	34	35	93	28	100	60
Panama	NA	NA	99	73	95	64
Paraguay	65	14	70	6	90	38
Peru	89	37	91	31	NA	NA
Trinidad and Tobago	99	98	100	88	100	99
Venezuela	64	30	79	79	NA	NA

a/UNICEF 1999. b/World Bank 1999b. c/UNICEF 1996.

NA: not applicable

Source: IFAD Rural Poverty Report 2001



The status of women and food security

The feminization of poverty and rural women's coping strategies

There are no gender-disaggregated statistical information on the income of men and women, given that household surveys take household income as a whole, although some sources indicate that poverty primarily affects women. A study by Köbrich and Dirven identifies lack of access to assets and disparity in control of these assets as critical factors associated with rural poverty in Latin America.



Peasant woman sowing seed in the Mantaro valley near Huancayo.
(J. Van Acker, 1979)

The authors indicate this disparity in assets and control is based on studies that reveal poverty primarily impacts women, the young, the old and ethnic communities – all groups traditionally having limited access to and control of land and capital. Another factor is the quality, or productivity of these assets, as largely determining the benefits of their use. These assets are classified into natural capital (land, soil, climate, water, locality); physical capital (investment, infrastructure, technology); financial capital (own resources, credit, subsidies); human capital (education, health) and social capital (trust, cooperation, reciprocity).

Recognition of these assets implies that programmes must consider the characteristics of each, if they are to address poverty comprehensively (Köbrich, Dirven, 2001).

In the face of extreme poverty rural women have developed multiple coping strategies to feed their families. And, at the household micro-level, they have increasingly taken up wage labour. More women are engaged in off-farm rural employment than men, they cultivate home gardens, gather and process food and migrate to urban areas to send remittances home. One coping strategy has been the

Box 4.2 PEASANT FARMER ORGANIZATIONS AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Peasant farmer organizations act to assert their members' right to exercise full citizenship. In the late 1990s, new organizations were set up and those existing strengthened or restructured for greater independence. These organizations voiced their opinion on food security and emphasized the concept of 'food sovereignty', as reiterated by the Latin American Alliance of Peasant Farmer Organizations (CLOC) at the World Forum on Food Security, held in Havana, Cuba, in 2001.

The participants declared, 'We define food sovereignty as the peoples' right to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution and consumption of food to guarantee the right to food for the entire population, based on small and medium-sized production, respecting their own cultures and the diversity of peasant, fishing and indigenous forms of agricultural production, marketing and management of rural areas, in which women play a fundamental role.'

The participation of rural women in productive activity

International agencies report that women assume much of the burden and social cost of major changes occurring in the wake of globalization of the economy. Impoverishment of various parts of the region, marginalized by fierce international economic competition and rigorous structural adjustment, may have been harsher if women had not increased their production efforts in agriculture and the informal economy.

Over the past 20 years, women's participation in the workforce has increased in all countries of the region. The change reveals feminization of the workforce and employment, although, as reported above, the quality of women's employment is poor. Various forms have evolved: part-time day-work, casual labour, subcontracted work or domestic work – all precarious employment; poorly paid and limited in training opportunities. Moreover, women's work is rarely covered by legal rights, collective labour agreements or social security.

In order to gain an insight into women's contribution to agriculture, we must look beyond official statistics and include the majority of women that employment statistics classify among the economically inactive population.

Women the invisible producers

All women of working age, girls and old women, considered outside the economically active population (EAP), contribute to economic activity. This includes women working in the household, caring for vegetable gardens to feed the family and those whose work goes unacknowledged in the official statistics. These women are involved in some stages of the production cycle and carry out the invisible tasks of gathering food, rearing and feeding backyard animals, cooking for other workers employed in the fields, selling produce in front of their homes.

Statistical data on the female EAP in rural areas

Data for 1999 indicate that there are some 37 million women of working age in rural Latin America; about 13 million are considered part of the EAP, the remaining 24 million feature as invisible workers. This underreporting of rural women's economically productive activity stems from the criteria used, and women's own perception of their work (FAO, based on ECLAC, 2001).

Qualitative data on women's labour in rural areas

To understand women's real contribution to productive activity, FAO developed the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) Programme to promote socio-economic and gender criteria in development projects, programmes and policies and to enable development actions to address differing gender needs and priorities. SEAGA places a gender-sensitive focus on the sociocultural, economic, demographic, policy, institutional and environmental factors influencing the results of development initiatives and on the interplay of these factors. Programme analysis operates at three levels: macro (programmes and policies), intermediate (institutions) and field (communities, homes and individuals)¹³.

Participatory analysis activities were developed with senior officials from the ministries of agriculture, heads of FAO Technical Cooperation Projects and their field staff. These techniques were applied to identify the respective activities of men and

¹³ More information on the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) Programme of FAO is available on its site: http://www.fao.org/sd/SEAGA/index_es.htm

women in rural areas. Various FAO projects included studies to determine gender roles in productive activities, and confirmed that all women of working age contribute tangibly to food production.

For example, periodic activity studies, better known as seasonal calendar and daily routine gender analysis, conducted in different agro-ecological contexts in various countries have shown that, in the most diverse situations, women considered statistically to be 'inactive' are in fact involved in agricultural production.

Post-Harvest Project GCP/BOL/032/NET, implemented by FAO in Bolivia, focused specifically on the gender-differentiation of labour so that it can tailor its training activities to women. Project findings are explained in Box 4.3.

Box 4.3 DIVISION OF LABOUR BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN


In the Quechua community of Arroyito, land is owned by the male head of family; however, men are not responsible for all family plots. Women have their own plots, normally close to home, where they grow plants for household consumption: maize for corn-on-the-cob and chicken feed, bean, cassava and vegetables. Men grow cash crops: sugar cane, maize and cassava.

In the Guaraní community of Barrio Nuevo, men contribute money to the communal fund and have the right to a parcel of land assigned by the village leader. Women make no cash contribution and have no right to community land. In most families, men and the older sons work as day labourers in other communities. Agricultural activity is carried out mainly by woman and children, except for land clearing which is done by men. Plots are small, on average 0.2 hectares, and grow maize and cassava for home consumption.

In the Camba community of Tundy, women are engaged in domestic chores and do not work in the fields, which are the responsibility of men. Women with their daughters, from age six, weave straw (palm leaf) hats, their main source of income, used to cover everyday household needs.

Source: Post-Harvest Project GCP/BOL/032/NET. Bolivia, 2001.

Women's involvement in production activities was examined in three regions of Nicaragua where FAO projects are ongoing, and similar conclusions were arrived at as those for Bolivia (Box 4.3) (Dévé, 1997). Comprehensive gender-based analysis



The status of women and food security

identified different gender roles in production. Household production units were examined, focusing on the division of labour and respective gender roles in production. These participatory studies indicated that in mixed households (male head of household and spouse), female involvement varied and generally rose in proportion to the level of poverty, sometimes accounting for more than 50 percent of the work. Another study in Nicaragua showed women are involved in all stages of production, except preparing land and applying agro-chemicals.

In Bolivia, the gender-division of labour in maize cultivation was studied in the Quechua community of Arroyito (Maijer, 1997). It was found that women and men worked together in the field, while household chores were mainly done by woman, supported by her family. Men helped with the more laborious activities, such as shedding grain. Most household post-harvest activities for subsistence and cash crops are carried out by women. This same situation applies to other communities of different ethnic groups.

It was noted that women generally undertake concurrent activities, adjusting their work schedules to the demands of the season. In this way they take care of most activities occurring in or near the home, requiring limited physical effort but considerable time, and that can be interspersed with other work.

Women's activities are considered domestic rather than productive work

Although women make a real contribution to agriculture, many of their activities are considered domestic rather than economic. However, many studies have demonstrated that women play a major role in agriculture and food security, and are actively involved throughout the production cycle in sowing, harvesting, post-harvest and marketing activities and in tending vegetable gardens. They are extensively involved in livestock activities, working alongside men in the care of large and small animals, but holding greater responsibility for small animal production.

Women's remunerative employment and reduction of rural poverty

As noted above, women's participation in economic activity, as defined by employment statistics, has increased in recent decades. Nevertheless, their

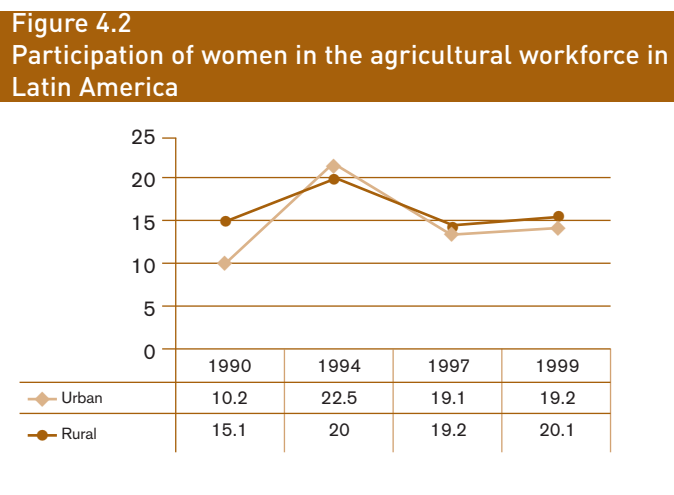
employment is precarious and income lower than that of men; resulting in less work security. A noticeable feature is the increasing participation of women in agricultural activity and in off-farm rural employment. The increasing integration of women in remunerated activity has significantly mitigated levels of poverty in the region. A FAO study in Chile shows differences in employment of women below and above the poverty line (Parada, 2001). It was revealed that, in 1998 in Chile's Region VI, 10 percent more women above the poverty line were employed than women below the poverty line.

Women in agricultural rural employment

Statistics, in Latin America, show a rise in the employment of rural women from 15.1 percent in 1990 to 20.1 percent in 1999, leading some observers to talk of the feminization of this sector. However, as mentioned earlier, women's work is seasonal and without labour rights.

The increased involvement of women in agricultural activity applies to both subsistence and commercial farming, where there has been a high intake of women in the export crop sector, notably fruit growing in Chile and Ecuador. Similarly, the higher output of vegetables, and other non-traditional crops in the central highlands of Guatemala, would not have been possible without women's labour. In this case, the agro-export or trading companies purchase the produce of smallholder farmers in the area. Similarly, the large coffee, sugar-cane and banana estates employ a large contingent of women (National Office for Women, UNICEF, 1998).

Women's conditions of employment are precarious. An FAO-sponsored study by Chile's National Office for Women (SERNAM) identified their work as hazardous to health because of the chemicals used, which applies to women working throughout the corporate agricultural sector in Latin America (SERNAM, FAO, 2001). This



Source: FAO, from figures in Social Panorama of Latin America 2000–2001. ECLAC, 2001.



The status of women and food security

same study in Chile confirmed women's lack of labour rights in the export fruit sector, one of the country's most dynamic and successful sectors. Almost three-quarters of women living below the poverty line have no social security and thus no safety net in the event of a work-related accident or pension rights when no longer able to work.

Gender differences in income level are found in virtually all sectors of several countries in the region, especially the agricultural sector. Women's income, as a proportion of men's, varies between countries from 12 percent in Peru to 92 percent in Costa Rica, with an average of around 50 percent for the region.

Women in off-farm rural employment

A study conducted by FAO on women in Chile reveals the importance of off-farm rural

work as a means to overcoming poverty (Parada, 2001). The study examined their work, distinguishing between those living in households below and those above the poverty line, and noted that those living below the poverty line are overwhelmingly engaged in agricultural activities; those above are primarily engaged in services and trade, a large proportion of these women are engaged in domestic service. There are more women than men working in off-farm employment, which is better paid than agricultural work, thus providing higher income for the household. Information from



Woman technician recording audio track of a video production in the project at Tamuim. (L. Dematteis, 1993)

Colombia's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development indicates a greater involvement of women in off-farm employment.

Reardon and Berdegúe, in their study on off-farm rural employment and income in Latin America, observed that women are relatively dependent on off-farm activities, where there is easy access but low earnings, such as petty trading (Reardon, Berdegúe, 1999). Many studies explore the relative incomes and types of female activity (Weller, 1994, for Central America; Berdegúe, *et al.*, 1999, for Chile; Lanjouw, 1999, for Ecuador, and others). The findings for Ecuador (Lanjouw, 1999) seem to be representative: (1) women earn lower incomes in off-farm employment; (2) women tend

to concentrate on the service sector and on small-scale low-income self-employment in manufacturing; (3) women are less likely to engage in multiple activities.

Access to productive resources

A FAO study in Chile, using information from the Survey of Social and Economic Characteristics and the VIII National Agricultural Census, drew up a classification of agricultural holdings (Parada, 2001). The study revealed that holdings with insufficient output to overcome poverty had a higher proportion of women producers. The conclusion, from the gender perspective, was that women producers had systematically less access to the most productive assets, which significantly determined the output of their holdings. The figures showed that women's holdings were on average smaller, had less irrigation and used fewer agricultural machines. The study concluded that rural poverty would be much worse if rural households depended solely on agricultural production.

This lack of access to productive resources such as land, water, credit and training, exacerbates the condition of poverty in which live more than half the women of Latin America and the Caribbean. At the same time, their lack of access to these resources limits their independence and participation in decision-making in the home, communities and society as a whole. The overwhelming majority of women in the region do not have land, which restricts their access to all other productive resources.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, observed that women's poverty was directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy. Women lack access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance, cannot access education and support services, and have minimal participation in the decision-making process (FWCW Platform for Action).

Women's access to land

Pioneering studies in the region by Magdalena León and Carmen G. Deere extensively examined the relationship between women's land ownership, their empowerment and autonomy (León and Deere, 2000). They revealed that neither land reform nor access to the land market have occurred in a context of gender equality. The studies widely document the obstacles faced by women seeking access to land ownership.



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Latin America has the highest concentration of land ownership and women tend to access land through inheritance, as beneficiaries of land reform programmes or through the land market. In the last decade, recently accessed land was promoted through the land titling programmes to activate land markets. Studies show how predominant cultural patterns constrain women's deployment of each of these mechanisms. Most women farmers have smallholdings of no more than 5 ha.

Agrarian law, civil legislation and customary law all condition women's access to land and the main beneficiaries of land reform have been men. Most land reform programmes or legislation, directly or indirectly relate to access to land and have explicitly or implicitly excluded women, or have made no effort to guarantee their access.

The FAO reviewed the legal framework of land access in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Nicaragua (Galán, 1998) as determined by their constitutions, civil codes, family codes and agrarian laws. FAO's study concluded that some agrarian laws and civil codes contained provisions that were discriminatory to women. For example, the Dominican Republic's Law on Land Reform identifies the man as the rightful beneficiary of land reform. The country's civil code restricts the empowerment of women by prescribing that the man is the head of household and administrator of all its assets.

Agrarian law in Honduras and Nicaragua recognizes the right of women to be direct beneficiaries of land reform, but there are still discriminatory provisions in their civil or family codes that condition women's access to land. Cuba's agrarian law and civil legislation recognize full gender equality of rights, however, far more men own land and are cooperative members and managers.

On civil status, agrarian law in Cuba, Honduras and Nicaragua recognizes the right of women in consensual union to be beneficiaries of land reform; this union needs to be recognized by a competent authority, a requirement that restricts women's access to land. The Dominican Republic does not recognize consensual union.

Cuban and Honduran legislation regulates the inheritance of land acquired through land reform, assigning it by right to the beneficiary's spouse. The laws of the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua have no provisions in this regard. The matter is dealt with under the civil code, which does not recognize the spouse as compulsory heir.

In Ecuador, couples living in consensual union have had the same rights as legally married couples since 1982, which hinge on three conditions: (i) two years of proven

cohabitation; (ii) evidence of no other matrimonial ties; and (iii) legal recognition by a judge. This last condition is even more costly than formal marriage (Deere, León, García and Trujillo, 1999).

In countries that guarantee a woman's right to succession, prevailing cultural patterns still make it difficult to exercise this right. In Brazil, rural women were granted equal rights to property under land reform in 1988, in practice they do not have equal access. A study by the Ministry of Agricultural Development and the Institute for Land Reform, under FAO's Technical Cooperation Project for the Integration of a Gender Perspective into Land Reform (TCP/BRA/8922) (Linhares, 2002), noted, despite legislation recognizing gender equality, cultural patterns in Brazil as in the rest of the continent, still constitute solid obstacles to rural women exercising their full rights of citizenship.

"Such barriers are present in the practices of the National Institute of Land Settlement and Reform (INCRA) and other government institutions involved in land reform, and in the trade unions, movements and associations of rural workers." The study states that as women's access to citizenship is relatively recent, they are still heavily affected by social discrimination and by their failure to understand their rights.

The situation is more difficult for women rural workers, as their role in reproductive activity and domestic care conceals their active contribution to the development process. Moreover, women have not achieved better access to land through the land market. A study in Colombia shows that women have only accessed 11 percent of agricultural holdings through the land market or through the allocation of land by the State. The Dominican Republic's Land Reform Act, issued in 1962, did not consider women as direct beneficiaries, but as heirs on the death of the spouse or abandonment. This limited their access to land because of the high proportion of consensual unions in rural areas. Currently, the wife's name is included with the husband's on the Certificate of Provisional Allocation assigning land on agricultural



These contour terraces, being built by women, yield 70 percent more potatoes per hectare than do the old sloping fields.

(I. Velez, 1985)



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settlements developed by the State. Law 55–77, amending the Land Reform Act removes all forms of restriction on women, giving them equal access to land tenure and to training and technical assistance provided by the Dominican Institute of Agriculture (AID) (Tejada de Walter, 2000).

In El Salvador, only 8.5 percent of women are engaged in agricultural activity. An amendment to the Land Code, with the following three provisions favouring women, is still pending:

- A contract for agricultural land applies to the whole family, regardless of the fact that it might only feature one name.
- When drawing up a contract for the adjudication of land, the title should include the names of both spouses or partners or of the person responsible for maintaining the family.
- In the event of abandonment or annulment of marital ties by the person



Masaya. Family members of beneficiary children attending the Gaspar Garcia Laviana day centre tend to the centre's garden where they raise produce to be used in the lunch programme.
(L. Dematteis, 1997)

designated as titleholder in the contract, the rights granted to the remaining family members shall not be revoked (these provisions already exist in Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua).

The situation in Peru is paradoxical (Macassi León, 1998). The Land Reform Act stipulates that on the death of a beneficiary without completed payment of the allocated land, the land in question is transferred free of charge to his 'spouse or permanent companion', which is tantamount to a right of

cohabitation. However, if the land has been fully paid the companion is excluded and has no recognized right, which excludes most women from land entitlement, as most rural couples are in cohabitation. In Costa Rica the distribution of land to consensual unions must be in the name of both partners.

Mexico was the first country to establish gender equality rights to land ownership (1971). But, rural women suffered a setback in the 1990s when Article 27

of the Mexican Constitution was amended and no longer guarantees the woman inheritance of the family plot on the death of her spouse (Deere and León, 1997).

In Paraguay, the Agreement on the Land Statute (L854) explicitly identifies, as beneficiaries of land settlement programmes, all adults over the age of 18 who are engaged in, or formally propose to take up, agricultural work, without distinction of sex or nationality (Molinas, 1999).

In Guatemala, women's access to public and private land reform programmes has been limited by a combination of legal, institutional and socio-cultural constraints. The civil code qualifies the man as the head of household and manager of household goods. Nevertheless, programmes set up by the National Land Fund (FONATIERRA/1988-1999) have recorded an increase in the number of women gaining access to land through peasant-farmer groups (J.C. Fenix, 1999).

Land titling programmes

In the past decade massive programmes have taken place in Latin America to regulate land ownership, granting property titles to people with limited resources. This was intended to alleviate poverty; a property title is a useful social tool for these sectors of the population as it provides access to state and private housing subsidies, credit, technology, agricultural advice and funding. Titling programmes were launched to reduce irregular ownership and facilitate proper functioning of the land market.

Studies were conducted on the recent regularization of property titles in countries of the region. In Chile, the Ministry of National Assets evaluated its programme of regularization for the period 1994–2000. After this evaluation in 1996, it was found that 75 percent of beneficiaries lived below the poverty line, of these 39 percent were women, and their irregular situation was caused by defective inheritance and purchase procedures (Ministry of National Assets, 1999).

The evaluation showed that women, more than men, tended to maintain and permanently occupy their property. It revealed that while title of ownership did not particularly facilitate access to life-enhancing resources, it mitigated inequality within households. Beneficiary women tend to make decisions on the welfare of their families. Having a property title in their name gives them more say in decisions relating to the holding and the family. It reduces out-migration,



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stimulates new sources of work and the children's education. At the same time, beneficiary women reported increased respect from their husbands or companions to whom they were prepared to grant fewer concessions. Furthermore, they enjoyed the assurance of a home for themselves and their children.

Women's access to water

In most countries in the region, irrigation is an important means of increasing productivity, fostering diversity and intensifying cropping.



Woman throwing fish food into pond on a fish farm.

(G. Bizzarri, 1995)

Access to water and irrigation are linked to the presence of water and to technological development. However the key criterion is land tenure; therefore women find themselves disadvantaged when it comes to water and irrigation.

There are few studies in the region on surface or groundwater availability, or their use in different types of irrigation. Virtually no studies exist on the economic, social or

environmental considerations that would allow examination of this situation from a gender perspective.

Particularly, in Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador and Venezuela limited irrigation potential is related to total surface area. In Bolivia, the reasons are climatic conditions, rugged terrain and lack of water in much of the country. The main problem in Argentina, El Salvador and Venezuela is the lack of water in areas best suited to irrigation. The humid conditions of much of Costa Rica and Panama mean there is little need, and therefore potential, for irrigation.

In most countries, from the 1950s, irrigation developed considerably, surface irrigation being the most common technique. The only reference found for this publication concerns Chile and shows that female heads of household have less access to any type of irrigation, and 66.3 percent of female heads of agricultural household have no irrigation compared to 58.9 percent of male farmers. The region's irrigation

is derived mostly from surface water; the exceptions are Cuba and Nicaragua where water from aquifers accounts for 77 percent and 50 percent of irrigated area respectively. A gender-based differentiation of needs is required, and to establish whether irrigation is from off-take or direct diversion of surface water, from surface reservoirs, or from pumping of groundwater, as in Cuba, Mexico and Nicaragua. Consideration of gender and irrigation is important for the effective management of government irrigation schemes and to support private small-scale irrigation, whether in capital, equipment, training, extension or technical assistance.

Not enough attention has been given to the role women play managing the region's water resources. Few studies have been conducted in Latin America on this subject; as compared to Africa where studies show that failure to consider gender aspects can impact negatively on irrigation policy and projects. A study in the province of Carchi in northern Ecuador, close to the border with Colombia, examined women's access to two irrigation projects and showed that traditional societal roles prevented their active participation in the irrigation associations, subsequently limiting their rights to water (Bastidas, 2000).

Box 4.4 WATER RIGHTS IN ECUADOR

In Pungal, the province of Chimborazo, Ecuador, a 'block' (measuring about 0.7 ha) gives the right to 10 litres/second of water for 7.5 hours, once a week. Water rights are linked to participation in all communal canal digging and maintenance work, attendance at meetings and payment of annual charges. New members must make up for their absence from past communal work and meetings by paying an entrance fee that is adjusted each year. The members' list always features the head of family, generally a man. The only women who are direct members are widows and the occasional single woman – the others only have the right to water through a direct male member.

Source: Deere D, M., León, E., García and J.C. Trujillo. Género y derechos de la mujer a la tierra en Ecuador. CONAMU, Quito, Ecuador, 1999, in *Guía conceptual y metodológica de género en poscosecha*.

Of particular interest is Chile (see Box 4.5) where the National Irrigation Commission is promoting actions to mainstream gender into irrigation support programmes and projects.

Box 4.5 PROGRAMME OF IRRIGATION TECHNOLOGY APPLIED
TO AGRICULTURE IN SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA

Objectives to:

- Improve irrigation systems, solving problems of on-farm water storage, conveyance, distribution and technical infrastructure by formulating INTA and off-farm projects based on the Development Act and other sources.
- Improve production systems through technical training in agriculture.
- Build water-user associations' capacity to manage water resources.

This programme has identified a total of 1 315 women, and the focal point of the Ministry of Agriculture's Advisory Commission on Equal Opportunities has proposed actions to take women's needs into account; mainstreaming gender into the following programmes:

- ❖ irrigation development in districts with problems of employment and poverty;
- ❖ applied technology in the Laja-Diguillin irrigation and cropping system; and the
- ❖ project for the transfer of technology for irrigation and natural resource protection in the district of Ninhue and Portezuelo.

Total funds required: approximately US\$3 million.

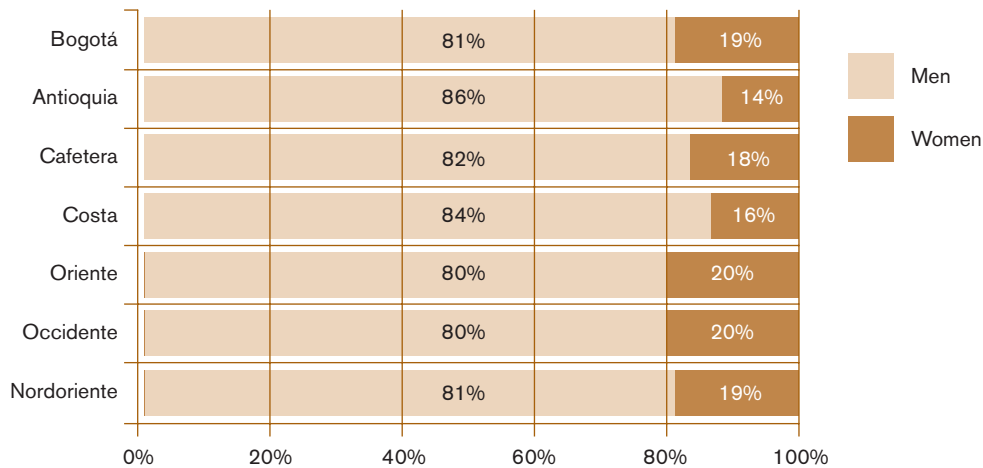
Source: National Irrigation Commission. Committee on Rural Women of Chile. Santiago, 2002.

Women's access to credit

Rural women are constrained when seeking credit, as they do not own land and cannot provide collateral. Many are unaware of the rules of the market and/or resort to unconventional forms of saving. Cash may be kept at home or saved in kind as grain and/or animals, the most common form being small livestock that are sold in times of need. Often women are easy prey to illegal credit at extortionate interest rates, its special appeal being availability and limited requisites. As important, women are afraid to take out loans; a study in Ecuador revealed that women did not request loans because 'they are afraid to ask a bank' (especially illiterate women). This is because they cannot meet the bank's collateral requirements or because of the inordinate time it takes for a loan to be granted. They are also afraid they will not be able to keep to the repayment schedule (Deere, León, García and Trujillo, 1999).

The figures for Colombia refer to the number of loans (see Figure 4.3). They depict a situation where the proportion of loans more or less reflects the proportion of

Figure 4.3
Colombia, Loans to small farmers; June 1999–May 2000



Source: FAO from figures of the Agricultural Bank of Colombia, IICA.

only 16 percent of the value of disbursed credit was to women. In 1999–2000, most were used for livestock activities (54 percent) followed by 21 percent for subsistence crops. The figures are considered to be worse in other countries, as suggested by a study by Magdalena León and C. G. Deere in Ecuador (Deere, León, García and Trujillo, 1999). A total of 353 surveys in the provinces of Chimborazo, Manabí, Guayas, Cañar, Los Ríos and Pastaza indicated only 7.2 percent of women had applied for credit. The documentation usually required by lending agencies is an identity card, a property deed and/or a Land Registrar's certificate and farmer certification; the most expensive item is the registration of property.

Microfinance institutions play an increasing role in Latin America's financial sector, offering financial instruments to low-income rural and marginal urban population groups. It is significant that many of their customers are female. These institutions help women fulfill their responsibility for food security, helping them develop production beyond daily subsistence, and offer useful savings and, increasingly, micro-insurance facilities (see Table 4.4).

TABLE 4.4
ACTIVE PORTFOLIO AND WOMEN CLIENTS OF SELECTED MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS

Country	Microfinance institution	Active portfolio (US\$)	Percentage of women clients
Mexico	FINCA	2 151 938	96
	Financiera Compartamos*	43 031 000	98
Guatemala	FINCA	500 947	88
	Génesis Empresarial*	17 336 000	59
Haiti	FINCA	212 559	98
	Sogesol*	2 667 000	62
Honduras	FINCA	3 155 203	92
	FinSol*	6 408 000	53
Nicaragua	FINCA	2 717 804	100
	FAMA*	8 775 000	72
Ecuador	FINCA	5 760 764	89
	Banco Solidario*	53 068 000	45
Peru	FINCA	794 532	95
	MiBanco*	92 294 000	57
Bolivia	Bancosol*	80 917 000	60

*: ACCION Internacional partner programme.

FINCA information as at 05/2003; Accion financial information as at 31 December 2002, percent of women for 2001.

Education

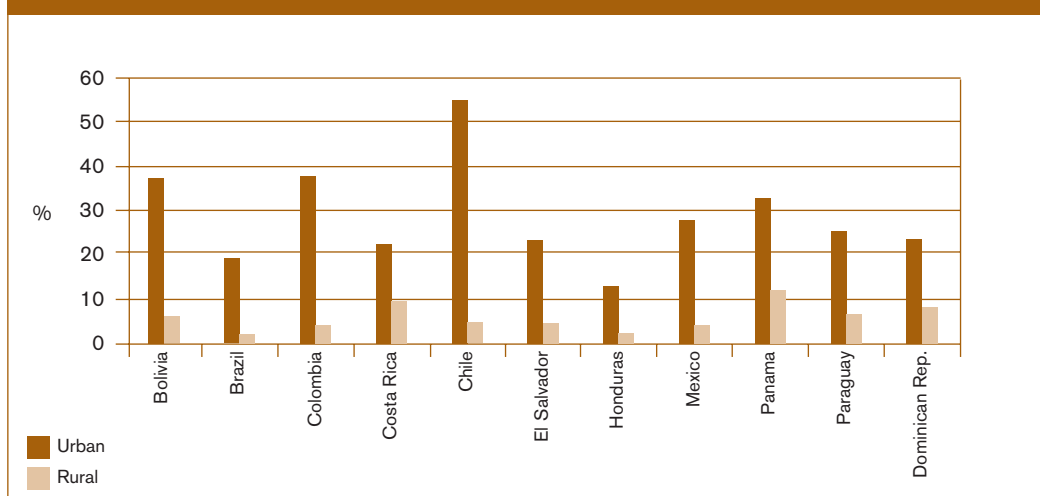
Inequalities and deficiencies

The low education level in the region impedes poverty alleviation, the achievement of food security, and the exercise of citizenship and achievement of full human potential. Although, significant progress has been made in the last ten years in providing broader educational coverage, the impact of the 1980s crisis and its reduced public expenditure on education is keenly felt. Another important observation is that globalization requires larger pools of skilled workers, but rural areas continue to have low levels of education, sometimes with significant gender disparity.

Figure 4.4 shows the – still insufficient – advance in the education of men and women in the selected countries in the region and in the gender-equality of education. The average number of years men and women aged 15–24 study is significantly higher than for those aged 25–59, the graph reveals inadequacies. Country information indicates that young rural women from Chile and Panama score the highest (9.8 and 8.4 years of study, respectively) higher than for young rural men.

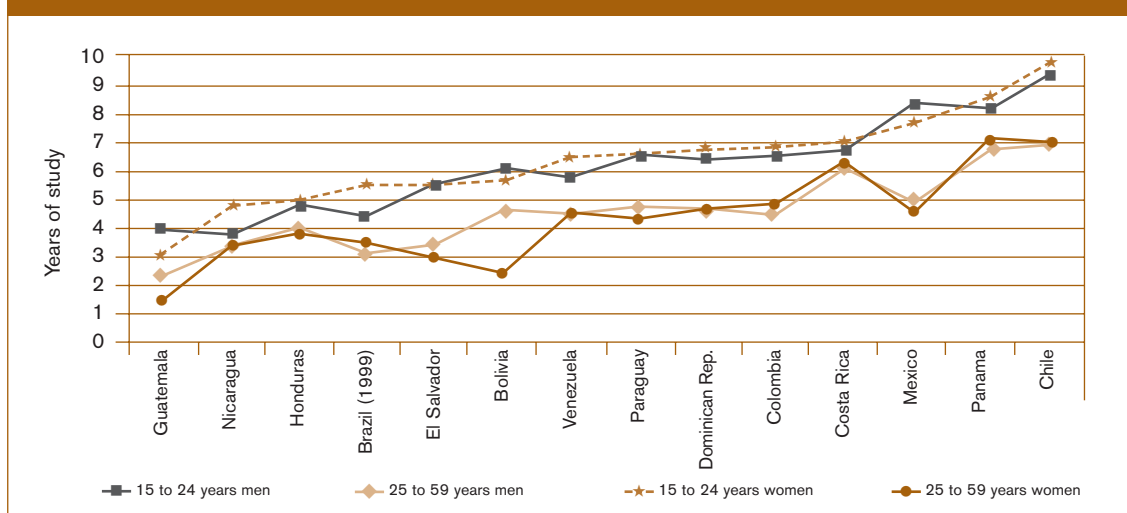
In Guatemala, the average time young rural women aged 15–24 study is only 3.1 years, below the average 4.1 years for young rural men. In 11 of the 14 countries, young rural women aged 15–24 have higher educational levels than young rural men, exceptions are Bolivia, Guatemala and Mexico. Because of greater discrimination in the past, in 10 of the 14 countries, women aged 25–59 have lower levels of education than their male counterparts, who have a maximum of 7.1 years of study in Chile, but barely 1.4 years in Guatemala.

Figure 4.4
Population aged 25–39 with 10+ years of education in selected Latin American countries



Source: PRIE from ECLAC, Social Panorama of Latin America 1999–2000, based on tabulations from household surveys.

Figure 4.5
Latin America, 2000. Average years of study for the rural population



Source: ECLAC, Social Panorama L. A. 2000-2001, Santiago, 2001.

Breaking ground:
present and future perspectives for women in agriculture

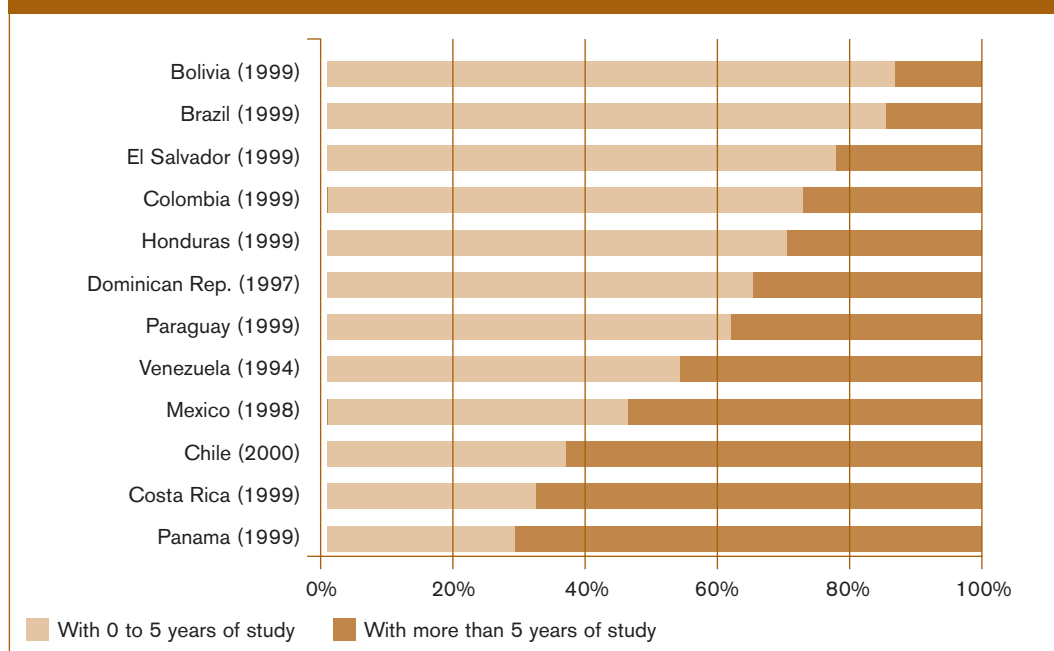
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Educational inadequacies and gender in rural areas

The overall figures are averages that conceal differences in the region. Progress has not been uniform between or within countries; often there is a significant disparity between rural and urban areas and within rural areas. A study in rural Cajamarca, Peru, shows that while 84.5 percent of boys aged 6–15 attend school, the figure falls to 75.7 percent for girls aged 6–15. Whereas 34.1 percent of male adolescents of 16–20 are in school, against only 11.9 percent for female adolescents aged 16–20. In the 21–24 age group, 6.7 percent of men attend an educational institution compared to barely 2 percent of women.

The crisis in the 1980s, and its concomitant reduction in revenue in virtually all countries, is reflected in the fact that, in most countries, women aged 25–59 have very low levels of education. In Bolivia and Brazil, over 80 percent of rural women in this age group have 0–5 years of study, over 60 percent in Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras and Paraguay, and over 40 percent in Mexico and Venezuela. Only Chile, Costa Rica and Panama have a lower proportion of women aged 25–59 with 0–5 years of study.

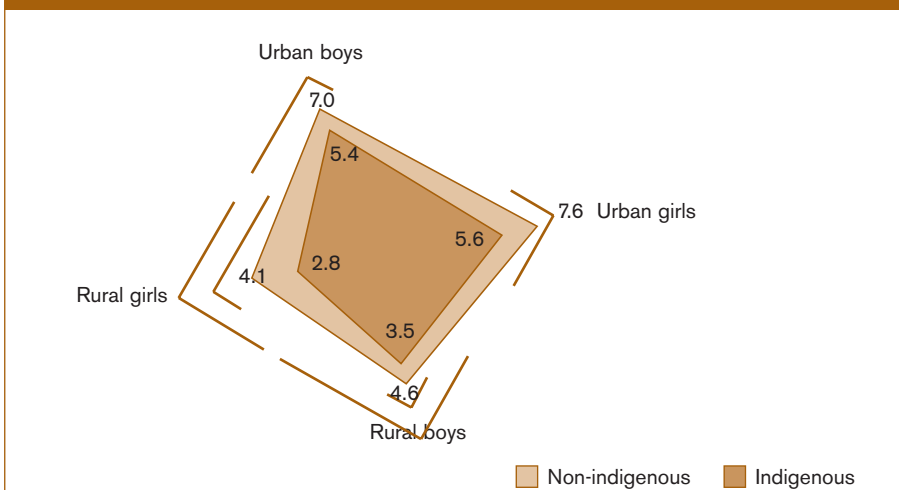
Figure 4.6
percentage of Rural women aged 25 to 59 having 0 to 5 years of study



Source: ECLAC, Social Panorama 2000-2004, Santiago, Chile, 2001

At the same time, there is serious misalignment of school programmes and methodologies with rural reality, especially that of indigenous women's lives, which prevents their integration and continuation in formal and informal education. In Guatemala, for example, a major restriction to development is that indigenous women are monolingual and education programmes and curricula are inadequate, perpetuating existing inequalities (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, 2000). In rural Guatemala, girls aged 14–18 from non-indigenous rural families have studied for an average of 4.1 years, compared to the 2.8 years for girls aged 14–18 from indigenous rural families. The same situation prevails in other countries with significant indigenous rural populations, where the level of poverty can reach alarming proportions.

Figure 4.7
Guatemala – Average years of study for boys and girls 14 to 18 years, 1999



Source: ENIGFAM 1998–1999, in Asturias, *et al.*, *Hogar, familia y exclusión en Guatemala*. Human Development Report. United Nations System, Guatemala 2001.

Although rural women have had few educational opportunities, they are great advocates of education for their children. A study in Peru revealed consensus among rural women that their children of both sexes should study and go to school. Interviews confirmed, however, that despite all the talk of equality a cultural bias still exists, the girls stay at home to help with household chores and subsequently marry, and the boys go to school. This bias is weakening among younger parents (mothers and fathers) who believe the situation needs to change (PROMUDEH, 2001). When



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interviewed, they expressed concern about the violence and long distances to schools and their lack of confidence in the quality of education provided. To quote the mothers 'the quality of education ends where the road finishes'.

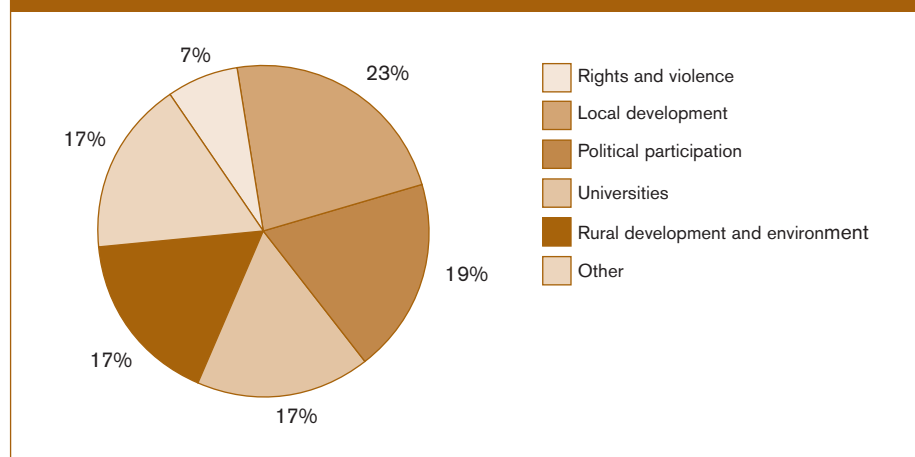
Training for rural women

Often the gap in educational opportunity available to rural women is eased by agricultural extension, training and technology transfer, although these are partly limited by the failure to recognize women's role as producers. In most countries there have been significant training efforts, generally involving pilot activities to develop methodology and, because of the lack of resources and the policy of state withdrawal, these activities have not reached the majority of potential recipients.

Non-governmental organizations

Non-governmental organizations and international cooperation have stepped in to make up for the scarcity of government training for women. However, NGO activities have failed to prioritize rural development. One study in Ecuador reported only 17 percent of NGO training was directed towards rural development and the environment (Ordóñez, 2001).

Figure 4.8
Types of training in Ecuador, 2000



Source: Ordóñez, M. Sistematización sobre oferta y demanda de capacitación y formación en género en Ecuador. 2001

Funding is mainly provided for gender-based training by international cooperation and United Nations agencies. The largest share of funding is for training in rights, violence and local development, followed by involvement in policy-making.

NGOs have developed training activities in all countries and produced training manuals and other didactic materials, for example the Training Manual for Rural Women of the Andean Community *Gender Equality in Sustainable Agriculture* produced by the Flora Tristán Peruvian Women's Centre. Training activities have focused on thematic areas directly related to production and on leadership training, building self-esteem and other matters of vital importance to empower rural women.

Gender awareness and training in FAO projects

As part of the Plan of Action for Gender and Development (2002–2007), FAO's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean held awareness-raising and training workshops on the incorporation of gender into FAO programmes and projects, which now include gender in their training components¹⁴.

FAO's Technical Cooperation Projects helped integrate a gender-based approach into the transfer of technology, enabling women's access to training. For example, the *Conceptual and methodological guide on gender in post-harvest activities*, developed by FAO Post-Harvest Project GCO/ECU/069/NET in Ecuador, was a useful methodology tool for addressing gender in the post-harvest, marketing and credit components of technology transfer. It served to design and apply gender-based criteria and concepts in the expert-to-farmer delivery of training and technology transfer. Methodology tools are provided for the compilation, collation and analysis of information and for the appropriate use of this information in the planning process.

Training modules developed by FAO's Post-Harvest Project in Bolivia (GCP/BOL/032/NET) also contributed. These modules form part of the project's gender-based strategy and serve to help rural women handle routine problems related to post-harvest activities, for example threshing maize and using silos.

¹⁴ Chile 2001, Bolivia 2002.

Rural women and health

Maternal mortality

A gap still exists between rural women's access to health services and that of urban women. Access to health centres is generally restricted, and rural areas continue to have high primary health indicators: maternal and infant mortality.

Reproductive rights

Although considerable progress has been made in terms of reproductive rights, women are not assured the right to choose the number of children they want. There is a gap between awareness and employment of birth control in both rural and urban areas. A study in Ecuador in 1998 indicated that 64 percent of rural women aged 15–49 were aware of contraceptive methods, increasing to 88 percent in urban areas (CONAMU, INEC, 2000), only 23.4 percent of rural women and 35.6 percent of urban actually used them. Nevertheless, this increased awareness of contraception reduced the average number of children per rural woman.

In Colombia, a study in 1995 indicated a fertility rate of 4.4 children in rural areas and 2.6 in urban areas (ENDS, 1995, in IICA, 2000). In Argentina, the World Bank conducted a survey in three rural provinces of the northeast and northwest to examine the link between reproductive health and poverty and the impact of gender and associated roles on reproductive health (World Bank, 2001). A reproductive health profile was identified that was cause for concern particularly in rural areas, because of specific economic, social, cultural and institutional factors. This included women's low social status, division of labour and lower incomes, absence of reproductive health services and family planning and lack of health coverage for all.

The study concluded that 94 percent of homes with more than two children were in the two poorest quintiles. Homes with more than two children and a dependent woman were in the poorest quintile. The study revealed only 25 percent of the surveyed population had medical coverage. Two-thirds of those covered did not use it, because they were unable to pay their contributions, there was no transport service or because they could not afford the fare.

The health of rural women workers

Rural women wage-earners work long hours, often without protection making them vulnerable to pesticide use. A study on Chile's fruit-growing sector reports:

Box 4.6 WORKING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN THE FRUIT-GROWING INDUSTRY

The seasonal nature of women's work in the fruit-growing sector makes conditions particularly tough. Working days are long with unlimited hours in packing plants, few breaks and intense pace of work because the produce is perishable and piecework pervasive. Normally women work 10 to 14-hour days in a packing plant (for 53 percent of female workers) and as much as 16 hours, Saturdays and Sundays included.

Work in orchards is shorter, from 8 to 10 hours a day. There is a strong correlation between 'length of working day' in the packing plant and 'level of exhaustion' and manifestation of stress-related disorders: neurosis, ulcers and gastritis.

Source: Díaz, X and J. Medel. *Mujer, trabajo y salud. Los daños ocultos. In Mujeres en Riesgo. Trabajo y Salud.* Latin American and Caribbean Women and Health Network. Santiago, 1997.

Rural women and pesticides

The monetary value of pesticide imports into Latin America and the Caribbean has tripled in the last ten years, with a corresponding increase in concern for human health, specifically associated with reproduction and food safety. A study in Chile drew attention to this danger, referring to the conditions of seasonal work in the fruit export sector where pesticide use has increased faster than orchard area (SERNAM, FAO, 2001).

Table 4.5
Use of pesticides in Latin America and the Caribbean

	Year				
	1980	1990	1995	2000	2001
Pesticides (Trade) Imports – Value (US\$1 000)	405 736	666 740	1 238 316	1 630 423	1 707 524
Land use Agricultural area (1 000 ha)	716 842	749 542	772 651	781 137	784 205

Source: FAOSTAT



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Although men generally apply pesticides, the effect extends to the large number of women working in the orchards and packing plants. 'No-go' periods after pesticide application often are ignored and women have less social security cover than men. Equally worrying is the national regulatory structure, the scattering of inspection units and the number of government bodies establishing rules.

A study by SERNAM (2001) in Chile examined a selection of literature on exposure to pesticides and reproductive problems, which noted birth defects from genetic damage caused before conception or directly to the embryo or foetus. The study showed an increase in incidence of malformed babies, which reached 41.2 per 1 000 during the observation period. It also showed that the parents' agricultural activity and exposure of the home to pesticides were closely associated with the occurrence of malformation. A similar situation is found in Ecuador's flower export sector.

Box 4.7 CONDITIONS OF WORK IN THE FLOWER INDUSTRY

Company X employs 140 workers, 46 percent are women. The work includes the use of pesticides of medium toxicity to the nervous and psychological system, the skin and the respiratory system – based on the permissive international scale. The fumigation staff always wear the same clothing and masks as the previous shift. This is a problem because of the lack of hygiene, failure to clean toxic substances and respiratory contamination.

Workers becoming pregnant are unilaterally dismissed on some trumped-up charge of low productivity or absence of social security. They do not have social security because they are often in the midst of the three-month trial period, after which many leave.

There is no sick leave except for extremely serious cases. Under these conditions, 30 percent of women workers have symptoms of health disorders, mainly neuropsychological, dermatological or respiratory. Women with an extended disorder tend to be dismissed.

Source: *Mujeres en la floricultura. Violación del derecho a la salud*. Jaime Breith. In: *Mujeres en Riesgo. Trabajo y Salud*. Latin American and Caribbean Women and Health Network, Santiago, Chile, 1997.

In Guatemala, the large coffee, sugar-cane and banana estates employ a large number of indigenous and mestizo women whose working conditions are precarious and whose health is endangered by the use of chemicals (National Office of Women, UNICEF, 1998).

Rural women and HIV/AIDS

Between its emergence in the early 1980s and 2000, a total of 36 million people were estimated to be HIV positive and 5.3 million infected with the virus. According to ILO estimates (1999), the epidemic mainly affects people of productive age (15–49 years) and has a direct impact on the world of work. Until recently, the epidemic was considered mainly an urban problem. However, FAO and the United Nations Programme on AIDS indicated the difference between HIV infection in urban and in rural areas is narrowing in some countries. There are many people in developing countries living in rural areas so that the absolute number of rural victims is very high¹⁵. In their publication *Sustainable agriculture/rural development and vulnerability to the AIDS epidemic*, FAO and UNAIDS urged governments to adopt the control of AIDS as one of their rural development objectives.

In late 2001, it was estimated that about 1 920 000 adults and children carry HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean, 210 000 contracted the virus in 2001 alone (UNAIDS, 2002). Significantly, each death from AIDS results in children becoming orphaned: there are some 580 000 AIDS orphans in Latin America and the Caribbean, including 130 000 in Brazil and 200 000 in Haiti¹⁶. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in rural areas of the Caribbean is a major problem.

World Health Organization (WHO) statistics rank the Caribbean as the world's second region in HIV/AIDS prevalence. Almost one half of HIV-positive adults are women, the group with the highest increase in infection together with poor segments of the population. Women whose husbands are migratory workers are especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and migration is prominent in rural areas.

As women are the principal caregivers in the home, the Government of Barbados was led to introduce a gender dimension into its health services¹⁷.

¹⁵ FAO UNAIDS/FAO HIV/AIDS epidemics is shifting from urban to rural areas. Agricultural policies need to be reconsidered. Press release Rome/Geneva, 22 June 2002.

¹⁶ According to UNAIDS, estimated deaths from AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean are around 100 000.

¹⁷ Intervention of the Minister of Social Development of Barbados at the XXIII Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace in the Twenty-First Century". New York, 2000.

Violence and food security

Violence inhibits equality of opportunity and food security at the household micro-level and national level. Until recently, it was the cultural perception that women were affected only by the death of a son or husband. However, armed conflict seems to directly affect adult males, females and children, because women participate in protest groups and are victims of repression, slaughter and persecution by armed groups, many act as peasant leaders (Ministry of Agriculture and Social Development, IICA, 2000). Disruption to the production cycle, population displacement and loss of labour for agricultural work increasingly undermine production, food security and income.

Violence is a current feature of rural Colombia, but the effect of past armed conflict in Central America and Peru is still very much in evidence.

Box 4.8 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN

Colombia's Equal Opportunity Plan for Rural Women states that one of the main structural obstacles to gender equality is social and political violence that translates into armed conflict, and affecting women who lose sons and husbands. Women are subject to deep traumas of death or enforced displacement, violence and maltreatment including kidnapping, disappearance or death leading to the dismantling and elimination of community organizations. Conflict leads to an increase in female heads of families, the impossibility of implementing government programmes in conflict areas, loss of rural women's property, uprooting, displacement and accelerated impoverishment.

Source: Equal Opportunity Plan for the Rural Women of Colombia. Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. IICA. Bogota 2000.

Impact of globalization

There is no universal definition of globalization, but its main characteristics shape the current world economic order. Expansion of foreign private investment in agriculture, food processing and marketing is largely, but not exclusively, in the hands of transnational corporations, and increasing international trade in food is facilitated by a reduction in trade barriers (FAO, 2003).

Globalization is reported to affect most rural inhabitants negatively. In particular women have been marginalized from the process, as they are overwhelmingly small

producers or landless rural inhabitants. A study by ECLAC confirms that the international trading system, globalization and liberalization are basic challenges facing all nations. Globalization's impact on smaller, more vulnerable countries less able to adapt, such as the small island developing states, is by no means satisfactory. Barbados and other developing nations face a series of challenges that risk permanently consigning their citizens and especially women and children to 'vulnerable group' status (Thorin, 2001).

The entry of the region's agricultural commodities into international markets is held back by restrictions imposed by developed countries. In almost all countries of Latin America and the Caribbean promotion of agricultural modernization policies have benefited the export sector in particular and production has been reoriented towards goods that can compete on international markets. Such policies seek to raise the production and productivity of export crops and to diversify the economy by promoting new crops with international market potential.

This re-gearing of the production sector has brought about changes in the work patterns of male and female small producers. It has displaced women's labour from subsistence farming to new export activities and accelerated migration to major urban centres. Productive resources have prioritized export activities, which receive credit facilities and greater institutional support than other agricultural activities.

Subsistence activities continue to exist, together with low productivity and low market value for products. Low productivity stems from small-scale production techniques, unskilled labour, and absence of basic production infrastructure, high cost of capital and lack of clear land ownership rights. All these features apply to the production conditions of many rural women.

These sectors need revitalizing through fostering mechanisms to integrate small producers, especially women, into the modernization process, thereby raising their productivity. This will facilitate their access to productive resources (land, machinery and equipment, credit, training, market information and technology) and will raise their involvement in decision-making affecting their sector.



A gender approach to rural development policies

Rural women, food security and policy-making

It is increasingly recognized that the progress towards food security and overcoming poverty and indigence, requires the implementation of proactive gender-sensitive social policies that fully recognize the potential and limitations of each gender, as determined by respective roles in society. Progress has been made in incorporating a gender approach into public policies affecting the everyday lives of rural women.

There has been a change from an assistance-oriented mentality to a gender equality approach. Gradually the process has advanced from ad hoc actions, or small projects targeting women, to the integration of gender into equal opportunity plans and national

agricultural and rural development policies (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, IICA, 2000).

In some countries, this progress has taken the form of Equal Opportunity Plans for rural women and proposals to mainstream gender into the policies of ministries of agriculture and rural development. Several ministries of agriculture have set up special mechanisms to monitor the process.

It is important to consider both advances and shortcomings in the broader context of national inadequacies. Shortcomings include the absence of integrated policies to address rural development beyond that of the sector, limitations placed on rural development policies by the macro-economic environment, limited progress in decentralization and formulating territorial policies and failure of policies to overcome poverty.

Box 4.9 REAPPRAISING THE RURAL SECTOR

The rural sector has lost significance in the region, and rural development is excluded from government priorities, therefore, the main international, national and local barriers to sustainable local development continue to exist. A number of Equal Opportunity Plans for rural women emphasized the strategic need to revitalize the rural area and to retrieve agriculture as a key element in reviving the economy and reducing poverty. Some country plans refer to existing restrictions. Colombia's plan explicitly states that it will not be possible to relaunch the rural sector unless tariff barriers, subsidies and protective mechanisms are removed, unless there is greater productivity at lower cost, unless there is training and integration of both male and female rural workers.

Source: Equal Opportunity Plan for the Rural Women of Colombia. Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. IICA. Bogota 2000.

Equal opportunity plans for rural women

Equal opportunity plans for rural women have arisen from the failure of General Equal Opportunity Plans to reflect the conditions of women in rural development. As Table 4.10 indicates, Equal Opportunity Plans exist in most countries and facilitate the incorporation of gender into public policies, but not all refer explicitly to rural women. Selected examples of these Equal Opportunity Plans for Rural Women are described below.

Box 4.10 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PLANS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Argentina	Equal Opportunity Plan 1995–1999
Belize	National Strategic Plan on Gender Equity and Equality. September 1998
Bolivia	National Plan of Follow-up to the Recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995
Brazil	Strategies for Equality: Platform of Action for Implementation of the Commitments Assumed by Brazil at the Fourth Conference on Women
Chile	Equal Opportunity Plan for Men and Women 2000–2006
Colombia	Revision following the Beijing Conference – Implementing the Contract with the Women of the World: from Words to Action. 1996
Costa Rica	Equal Opportunity Plan
Cuba	National Plan of Action of the Republic of Cuba in Follow-up to the Fourth UN Conference on Women. 1997
Ecuador	Equal Opportunity Plan 1996–2000. Annual Plan of Operations of the National Directorate for Women 1997
El Salvador	National Policy on Women. 1997
Haiti	Post-Beijing Plan of Action. 1997
Jamaica	National Plan of Action for Implementation of the Beijing Platform
Panama	National Plan on Women and Development: 1996–2001
Paraguay	National Equal Opportunity Plan for Women 1997–2001

Chile

Chile's Equal Opportunity Policy Proposals for Rural Women is a complementary document to its Equal Opportunity Plan. It highlights the diversity and variety of cultural, social and economic situations in which rural women live and propose measures to help build their capacity and competence (SERNAM, 1999).

This Plan was drawn up in 1997 by the Working Panel on Rural Women, a platform of cooperation and dialogue for government, non-governmental and international agencies and peasant and indigenous associations.

The proposals include measures to tackle the poverty of rural women, improve their housing conditions, health and education and, in particular, remove discrimination in their productive activities with a special focus on agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Measures exist to remove existing discrimination in women's everyday domestic and reproductive work.

The main lines of action are to facilitate access and improve the status of women in the employment and commodity market; to promote educational opportunities to ease rural women's integration into society; to provide equitable and quality health care for rural women, improve the protection of women's occupational health; encourage the social and political participation of rural women and their access to decision-making bodies; and to strengthen public institutional structures for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of equal opportunity policies for rural women.

Colombia

Colombia was one of the first countries to formulate policies for rural women. In 1984 it approved a Policy for Rural and Indigenous Women and in 1993 a new Policy for Rural Women was incorporated into the Policy of Equality and Participation for Women, and approved in 1994.

The strategic purpose of Colombia's Equal Opportunity Plan for Rural Women is to help reduce the political, socio-economic and cultural obstacles preventing rural women from enjoying equality of opportunity, and to engage them fully in economic growth, social development and in the exercise of their citizenship rights (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, IICA, 2000b).

The Plan has five strategic objectives:

- Eliminate obstacles to rural women's access to income-generating activities.
- Provide rural women with greater access to better quality social services in order to raise their and their families' quality of life.
- Consolidate rural women's citizenship and participation in decision-making.
- Promote recognition and respect of the diversity of cultural and gender characteristics of rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian women, thus eliminating all forms of discrimination and enabling them to reaffirm or recover their identity.
- Facilitate the incorporation of a gender perspective into the institutional structure, policies and regulatory provisions of the rural sector and its support institutions.

The Plan identifies the main obstacle to equal opportunity as the prevailing macro-economic model and its ensuing economic crisis; measures that were supposedly neutral have in fact had a clearly discriminatory and unequal impact at the meso- and micro-economic level, especially the excessive workload and responsibilities placed on women in individual households.

The Plan emphasizes the need for government bodies to broaden the production of gender-sensitive statistics, indicators and instruments related to the rural sector.

Colombia's draft law aims to improve the lives of rural women, especially those with low incomes. It will apply special measures to accelerate equality between rural men and women. There are provisions on i) equal participation of women in rural funding opportunities; ii) social security benefits for rural women; iii) education, training and recreation of rural women; iv) participation of rural women in decision-making bodies, and v) land reform.

Inadequacies

A survey conducted in Ecuador shows that agricultural and macro-economic policies failed to take the needs of rural women into account, and that the incorporation of gender into national programmes against poverty has been weak. Some basic programmes against poverty, such as the Emergency Social Investment Fund (FISE), the Solidarity Grant and the Emergency Grant, have not included criteria for recognizing gender inequalities and have not envisaged proactive measures benefiting women (Cuvi, 2001).



A gender approach to rural development policies

One reported obstacle to the integration of gender into programmes is the shortage of female professionals (and male professionals) who understand gender-based rural development planning, and consequently the limited use of gender tools in programming. The survey mentions the problems programme beneficiaries have gaining access to credit and draws attention to ignorance of their rights.

Gender mainstreaming in agricultural and rural development policies

Efforts to mainstream gender into public policies have advanced parallel to the creation of dedicated ministerial mechanisms. The joint action of international organizations and ministries of agriculture and rural development has been helpful in delivering gender training.

Barbados

The Minister for Social Development in Barbados informed the twenty-third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on *Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century*, held in June 2000, that institutional mechanisms had been put in place to mainstream gender into all spheres of development and that focal points had been set up in all ministries and departments to ensure that gender was mainstreamed in all programmes.

Brazil

Brazil's Ministry of Agricultural Development (MAD) introduced a series of initiatives to framework the correction of gender disparities. Decree No. 33 of 8 March 2001 formally established the Affirmative Action Programme for the Promotion of Equal Opportunity and Treatment for Men and Women, to be initiated by the Ministry of Agricultural Development and the National Institute of Land Settlement and Reform (INCRA) to benefit both sexes.

Measures were adopted including changes to rules of selection to facilitate women's access to land reform, replacing the term 'housewife' with 'rural worker' to ensure women's social security and labour rights; modification of rules on land titling, with the deed of ownership or contract of concession now issued to the couple, and covering

recognized consensual unions. There is a drive to have women occupy 30 percent of executive positions by providing gender-tailored management training and special tutoring for newer women recruits. There is a special credit line for women, with 30 percent of funds earmarked for rural women, and a similar percentage for training and technical assistance. Restructuring of INCRA was achieved with the appointment of male and female regional administrators of the Affirmative Action Programme, answerable to the Office of Agricultural Development.

This institutional framework set up by MAD, and studies and documents produced by Project INCRA/FAO/TCP/BRA/8922(A), led to the formulation of a Strategy Proposal for the Integration of a Gender, Race, Ethnic and Generational Perspective into Land Reform and Peasant Farming Programmes and Projects.

The proposal includes strategies for the macro- and institutional levels (which should reach the micro-level through institutional actions). The proposal aims to ensure that gender, race, ethnicity and generation are mainstreamed in land reform and peasant farming programmes and projects. Each strategy is equipped with a set of actions.

Box 4.11 STRATEGY PROPOSALS FOR THE INTEGRATION OF A GENDER, RACE, ETHNIC AND GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE INTO LAND REFORM AND PEASANT FARMING PROGRAMMES IN BRAZIL

At the macro-level

- 1 Create a specific body in the organizational structure to consolidate the MAD/INCRA Affirmative Action Programme, attached to the Office of the Minister, the Office of the Executive Director of INCRA, and in the regional states to the Regional Authority with an appropriation of human, budgetary and financial resources to ensure the sustained mainstreaming of gender, race, ethnicity and generation in land reform and peasant farming programmes and projects.
- 2 Use the terms 'women and men' in the Statute on Land Ownership and associated legislation, instead of the generic masculine, thus eliminating all notions of the man as the appointed head of household.

At the institutional level

- 1 Bring the specific body (paragraph 1 above) into operation, with appropriation of human, budgetary and financial resources and general responsibilities for mobilizing, supervising and monitoring actions.
- 2 Develop indicators to measure the progress, results and impact of activities undertaken by the Affirmative Action Programme.
- 3 Promote awareness and training of male and female management and support staff at the MAD and INCRA and of men and women peasant farmers.
- 4 Revise rules and instruments so that these identify and highlight the contributions of women and girls to land reform and peasant farming, ensuring their greater integration into the processes of land registration, selection and titling.

- 5 Generate a process of broad democratic internal discussion involving all regional authorities and other MAD bodies to define procedures to enhance the proportion of women in executive positions, with a minimum target of 30 percent by 2003, in accordance with Decree No 120 of 22 May 2001.
- 6 Develop information activities for the land reform target population, democratizing access to information as a fundamental channel towards the consolidation of citizenship.
- 7 Include gender, race, ethnic and generational classifications in studies and research conducted under MAD and INCRA.
- 8 Develop activities to encourage the organization of women and to reinforce existing women's organizations, thus furthering their empowerment and their effective exercise of citizenship.

Breaking ground:
present and future perspectives for women in agriculture

Chile

In Chile, the Ministry of Agriculture's Advisory Commission on Equality of Opportunity was established by Decree No. 180 of the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic in 1999. At the request of the Minister of Agriculture, the Commission examined the Equal Opportunity Plan for Men and Women 2000–2010 and identified linkages or areas of action relevant to National Agricultural Policy, determining areas where each ministerial service could specifically commit to equality of opportunity. Subsequently, on 8 March 2001, the Minister of Agriculture issued a ministerial commitment to gender equality.

Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, the National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family, with the help of FAO, drafted the Agriculture and Environment Addendum of the Equal Opportunity Plan for Women and Men 1997–2001¹⁸. This addendum sets out guidelines for integrating a gender perspective into agriculture and the environment. It was the direct result of a critical assessment of the status and conditions of women's participation in the country's agricultural and agroforestry dynamic. Consultations held with sectoral institutions drew up a document with the participation of technical staff.

Consultations held with officials from the four institutions, lead to presentation of the final document by the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, the Minister of Environment and Energy, and the Executive Director of the National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family, the coordinating body for public policy on gender equality in Costa Rica.

¹⁸ FAO Project TCP/COS/4552 MAG/FAO/Gender, with the participation of the expert consultant on gender and policy, Patricia Bifani.

Box 4.12A COSTA RICA: THE AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT ADDENDUM OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PLAN FOR MEN AND WOMEN, (1997–2001)

The general objectives include a gender dimension in policy guidelines for agriculture and the environment and are to:

- 1 Improve institutional mechanisms to ensure equality of opportunity in access to services provided by the agricultural and environmental sectors and to strengthen mechanisms that ensure appropriation by rural women of the results of their productive work.
- 2 Recognize and value the role of rural women in agricultural production, in reproduction of the agricultural workforce and in the community.
- 3 Strengthen the competitiveness of small farmers of both sexes, by enhancing the productivity and efficiency of their work and increasing their participation and representation in decision-making.
- 4 Foster the inclusion of rural women in activities contributing towards ensuring food security and generating greater added value.
- 5 Contribute towards the empowerment of women as catalysts of development by creating opportunities for the control of production factors, including land, work, capital, income and markets.

Box 4.12B [CONTINUATION] IN COSTA RICA: STRATEGIC THRUSTS OF THE RURAL EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PLAN FOR MEN AND WOMEN: DEFINING CRITERIA

This strategic instrument of gender policy has six interconnected aims. The process of productive transformation is viewed as a multi-staged system extending from input supply to delivery of the final product to the consumer. A system-wide gender approach to reality has been used by SEAGA (Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis); it was proposed by FAO to address rural development. This approach realizes the objectives of change, explicit in the reorganization process, and aligns them with the aims of SEAGA. The gender dimension is therefore relevant to all stages and interlinkages that make up the system.

Strategic thrusts (viewing the productive process as a system requiring the strengthening of producers of both sexes):

- 1 Equality of opportunity in accessing and controlling land
- 2 Equality of access and control of natural resources and sustainability of their management
- 3 Equality of opportunity in access to rural financing
- 4 Equality of opportunity in access to and control of technology transfer and training services
- 5 Equality of access to labour markets and to farm and off-farm employment and higher visibility of both male and female producers
- 6 Equality of opportunity in business management (trade and agroindustry)

Three further elements underlie these strategic thrusts:

- ❖ evidence of ongoing participation in every decision-making process;
- ❖ information as a vital resource in globalization and the new production environment;
- ❖ organization as requisite to the restructuring of production in the sector.

Source: National Centre for the Development of Women and the Family. Agriculture and Environment Sector Addendum to the Equal Opportunity Plan 1997-2001. Document Series No. 17. San José, Costa Rica. 1997.

Guatemala

Towards the end of 2000, Guatemala's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food issued a decree setting up a special ministerial executive unit, the Unit for Gender, Women and Rural Youth (Ministerial Decree No. 1595).

In its Agricultural Policy 2000–2004, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food sets out the objective of incorporating a gender perspective into its strategies, policies and programmes to secure the equal participation of rural women.

The special executive unit is tasked with ensuring the incorporation of gender into the Ministry's policies, programmes and projects; formulating affirmative actions that will help eliminate inequalities of gender and age; fostering conditions of equality women and the young's access to land ownership and in the resolution of associated disputes; promoting the training, organization and consolidation of women's groups; ensuring the fulfillment of international commitments made by the Guatemalan Government and commitments in the Peace Agreements, insofar as these refer to gender, women and rural youth.

Guatemala approved a Policy for the Participation of Rural Women 2000–2004, the objective is to integrate rural women into the development of productive activities, enabling their access to land ownership and other productive resources and their ability to form associations and organizations, so that they might improve their economic and social conditions. One specific proposal is to check that rural policies on access to land, financial and other resources demonstrably include women. (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, 2000).

Emerging issues

Migration of rural women

Continuing rural-urban migration

The leveling of absolute numbers of the rural population indicates continuing rural-urban migration. The consequences of out-migration on the poverty of broad sectors of the rural population and on their food security are contradictory. According to Taylor, research shows that migration, and its resulting loss of household labour, have a negative impact on agricultural production, at least in the short term. He adds that remittances from migrants can help, directly or indirectly to reduce poverty, on condition that i) the resulting loss of labour does not significantly impact the production activities of poor households; ii) remittances are sent overwhelmingly to poor households; iii) the remittances are directed towards alleviating the production restrictions of poor households; and iv) the remittances and the production they trigger have a sizable multiplier effect on local income for the primary benefit of the poor (Taylor, 2001).

Feminization or masculinization of the countryside?

No recent information is available, but various studies indicate that women have migrated more than men. In Colombia a study revealed that rural-urban migration was predominantly female in the 60's and 70's (Villarreal, 1996), the same study states reasons differ for men and women. Agricultural employment and access to land are limited for both sexes, particularly for women; unskilled rural women have access to domestic employment in urban areas, which is the work most take up. Women are more likely to out-migrate for family reasons, either because of family displacement or as a coping strategy by sending remittances home. The study concludes that factors influencing internal migration relate to the failure of land reform to generate rural employment or to resolve the problems of lack of land, gender inequality and political violence.

Colombia's Equal Opportunity Plan for Rural Women noted a greater migration of young women to urban areas, where they enter the informal economy or domestic employment; they are also prey to prostitution and the sex slave trade (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, IICA, 2000b).

Migration is an extremely complex phenomenon having multiple facets in different socio-economic and agro-ecological contexts. The norm seems to be a higher proportion of women migrate, in other areas migrants are mostly male, especially seasonally. A study in Bolivia (Villanueva, 2002) based on data for selected communities of Potosí shows a greater proportion of women inhabitants (52.5 percent) than men (47.4 percent), and broader differences when men migrate seasonally. Thus from November to January and from April to October, it is common to see more women and school-age children in the rural communities.

In some countries rural women emigrate abroad, for instance the Dominican Republic, which is one of the countries in the region with the highest levels of emigration.

The need for further studies

The complexity of the subject requires further studies into the general patterns of rural-urban migration and associated factors, and into the effect of migration on point of departure and destination. Studies, developed with a gender perspective, will shed light on many interesting aspects.

Rural-urban migration was studied extensively in the 1970s, focusing on the impact of migrants on receiving urban areas; there was an amply documented increase in poverty and marginalization around large cities. At the same time, Taylor indicates that studies on the rural impact focused on how rural employment markets adapted to the loss of labour and capital.

The 2000 population censuses, conducted in many countries, may provide a good basis and opportunity for further studies.

Ageing of the countryside

The migration of young rural men and women to urban areas and the relative decline in fertility has caused progressive ageing of the rural population. This poses new challenges

in the search for mechanisms to retain young men and women in the countryside, especially as the present generation has a higher level of education than the past. A rural environment is needed that can meet the expectations of this generation and that can permit the transfer of property from the old to the young, while the old are still alive.

The elderly and especially older women, who usually outlive their husbands and thus come into land ownership, can play a key role in forming legal agreements with the young, to the benefit of both generations.

Off-farm employment of rural women

The upward trend of off-farm rural employment is important from the gender perspective. There are few gender-sensitive studies on this type of employment, even though statistics indicate its importance to women.

Policy-makers need to take into consideration the contribution women make to food security through off-farm rural income. This reality needs to be addressed through education policies, so that women can learn the skills for today's occupational areas and break out of their almost exclusive reliance on domestic service and other subordinate sectors of the economy.

State reform, new institutional structures and the gender approach

State reform and modernization in the region provides an opportunity to debate the role of national mechanisms to promote gender equality. Policies geared towards achieving gender equality in rural areas will be better formulated if institutions for women's affairs examine rural development and seek to mainstream gender into agencies responsible for rural development.

Gender can only be expressed holistically and system-wide, therefore it is important to move rapidly from the level of the sector towards national policies and embrace all public and private institutions dealing with rural development. Decentralization requires further study so as to enhance the gender perspective and to progress.

Finally, the debate has only just begun on gender in government mechanisms and the management of public finances and the allocation of resources; this is an area requiring further examination.

Women and genetic resources

Renewed importance is attached to the value of genetic resources. The region is especially rich in biodiversity and is the original source of much of humanity's staple foods. The germplasm of these food crops and their genetic diversity are crucial for dealing with environmental change (climate, soil, vegetation, associated and predatory species) and social change (dietary habits, cropping techniques, type of farming) affecting agriculture.

The Green Revolution has made major advances, with improved varieties, biotechnology and transgenic plants; these gains carry within them the risk of loss of biodiversity unless appropriate safeguards are adopted. In this connection there is a need to highlight the role women have played in conserving genetic diversity. There has been little study of the role of human culture, of changes in the evolution of species, very little thought given to the role of society and even less to that of women.

FAO in Guatemala studied the role of women in the conservation of genetic resources of maize (FAO, IPGRI, 2001), documenting the decisive role of women, especially in post-harvest activities and in seed selection for both subsequent sowing and culinary quality. Women's activities have resulted in the conservation of indigenous varieties of maize, which is both the local staple food and at the heart of the Mayan world vision.

Similar studies are required in other countries to open new avenues to bolster women's contribution to the stewardship of biodiversity, especially plant genetic resources.

Towards a new conception of the rural dimension

A new perception of the rural dimension is needed; men and women still live in gender inequality with major inadequacies in living conditions, when compared to advances in other parts of the world. Rural inhabitants are involved in agricultural activity, which continues to be central to their existence, and are increasingly engaged in a wider spectrum of economic activity. The various world visions existing in the rural dimension need to be accommodated if rural development is to benefit all.

Lessons from the twentieth-century

Integration of a gender perspective into agricultural development policies, programmes and projects is gradually gaining ground. To this end, FAO is promoting the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) approach in an increasing number of projects, providing added insight into differing gender needs, potentialities and limitations existing in rural life. Projects include the Special Projects for Food Security, Post-Harvest Projects, Agroforestry Projects and Proposed Programmes of Development of Mountain Areas.

All these activities have provided feedback for the incorporation of gender into public policies and into the activities of non-governmental organizations.

A brief summary is given in Box 4.13 of experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean that illustrate mainstreaming actions and offer methodological input.

Box 4.13 INCORPORATING A GENDER APPROACH INTO COMMUNITY AGROFORESTRY DEVELOPMENT IN BOLIVIA

The project was initiated in 1991 by Community Forest Development in the Bolivian Highlands. The objective was to raise the standard of living of Bolivia's Altiplano peasant farmers by integrating self-sustaining forestry activities into their production system and enable them to satisfy their forest product needs, increase agricultural production and maintain their natural resources.

Project Q'omer Jallp'a FAO/Netherlands-Prefecture of Potosí targeted 98 rural communities in 13 municipal districts in nine provinces of the department of Potosí. Implemented in two phases, the Project first concentrated on community forest development from 1991 to 1996. In the second phase, with a change in focus to the integrated development of productive areas, it ran from 1997 to 2001.

The project is in an area where there has been little exploitation of natural resources, because of lacking technical expertise in agriculture and fruit production. This resulted in high vulnerability to climatic factors (low temperatures and irregular rainfall) in communities located in the Puna (High Andean Plateau). In recent years there have been significant changes in these communities' ecosystem, thanks to the preparation and recovery of land for cultivation, introduction of new forest, fruit and crop species, supported by the construction of a production infrastructure that facilitated the most profitable use of local resources.

Breaking ground:
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Box 4.13

The first phase of the project strengthened producers' organizations, identifying needs and demands at the household level, but without considering the differing gender needs within the household; this nevertheless improved household living conditions and those of women.

The second phase of the project adopted a gender equality approach to rural development, (Gormatz, 1994). The methodology, based on Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA), addressed the issue of gender in community development from a holistic perspective, with the aim of female participation and establishment of shared gender responsibility for community development. This conceptual basis of the agroforestry project's operational strategy, paved the way for sustainable human development where benefits target the entire population, drawing upon the abilities of all individuals, men and women, and using the resources, strategies and options developed by these rural communities.

This approach meant analysing the production systems of the target communities. The methodology and tools were adapted from SEAGA, where the main characteristic is to analyse and understand production and environmental processes holistically, in relation to the underlying economic factors and cultural dimension. Production systems are thus viewed as an entity geared towards one purpose, with different components receiving project intervention.

Guidelines of the approach used

The following guidelines complement the gender-based project approach, drawing upon Gender and Development and the operational orientation of SEAGA:

- ❖ Mainstreaming the gender component
- ❖ Promoting agroforestry, production and social development with a gender-based approach
- ❖ Helping overcome current relations of gender inequality
- ❖ Helping assert the economic value of reproductive work
- ❖ Supporting the integration of women in public life

The SEAGA methodology established three areas of analysis to organize the work at its different levels:

DYNAMICS OF DEVELOPMENT

- Facilitated understanding of the economic, social, demographic, cultural, environmental and policy factors and their respective interplay in the past, present and future.

ANALYSIS OF THE DYNAMICS OF HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOODS

- Aided comprehension of the basic needs of both sexes and their respective opportunities and limitations for achieving their development objectives.

PRIORITIES OF DEVELOPMENT STAKEHOLDERS

This information helped plan development activities reflecting gender-based priorities of a community based on respective resources and market demand. The systematic processing of project experiences in integrating gender into development helped:

- ❖ match these experiences with the basic principles of situational analysis to determine relevant lines of action for the integration of gender into the project;
- ❖ understand different gender-based strategies employed in communities for the management of natural and economic resources;

Box 4.13

- ❖ identify the productive roles of women and men in the production system and subsystems; and
- ❖ reach a consensus on gender-based development priorities and plans of action with all beneficiaries (men and women) and local authorities.

EVALUATION OF THE GENDER APPROACH IN THE SECOND PHASE:

There is relatively functional participation in most communities tending to concentrate on the realization of activities, without extending to other spheres:

- ❖ the areas of planning, management, decision-making and representation continue to be outside the reach of women in most communities.
- ❖ women have managed to progress in producer organizations and have gained access to the above-mentioned areas in organizations in which they are majority members, and
- ❖ certain communities were followed-up by women technical experts and were decisive in determining women's progress and participation in the second phase, i.e. the setting was ripe for further action.

Source: Villanueva, 2001

Box 4.14 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF GENDER IN MOUNTAIN AREAS, PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

Projects implemented in the region adopt an integrated and participatory perspective drawing on many different experiences. They cover the technical aspects of forest, catchment, agriculture and socio-economic characteristics affecting households (health, housing, education). Several projects are being implemented in mountain areas and public activities are being developed in support of rural women, but there are significant discrepancies between policy objective and local reality.

The institutions and personnel involved in the projects consider the gender issue synonymous with women. The result is a tendency to pursue activities targeting women only, neglecting gender analysis and integration of a gender-based approach into all project activities. Another shortcoming is failure to integrate gender into the project cycle and to identify gender indicators. These failings are compounded by the limited funds earmarked for gender, so the issue is often little more than a well-intentioned appendage to documents and policies.

Given this situation, FAO-sponsored projects in mountain areas include a training component on socio-economic and gender analysis specifically targeting institutions, their field staff and project beneficiaries of both sexes. There is also a component for the organization and training of leadership in order to foster more equitable participation in project activities.

Based on the experiences of projects FAO/SEARPI, (Service for water channeling and regulation of the Pirai river – Bolivia [GCP/INT/542/ITA-Bolivia]; Community forest development in the Ecuadorian Andes [GCP/ECU/070/NET]; Project to support the management and coordination of the forest action plan for Guatemala [GCP/GUA/008/NET]; Women and trees in the Andean countries promoted by the Forest, Trees and People Programme (FAO-FTPP).

Source: Marcela Ballara, Socio-economic gender analysis in mountain areas. Santiago, Chile, 2001.



Conclusions and recommendations

FAO's framework for the advancement of gender equality is the Plan of Action on Gender and Development (2002–2007), which is considered a requisite for the achievement of food security, and the continued implementation of the Platform for Action established at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995.

A priority of the Plan of Action 2002–2007 is to incorporate gender into the various plans and programmes promoted by FAO. The intention is to create an institutional framework to facilitate gender equality in sustainable agricultural development, in the Organization and in national institutions. The Gender and Development Unit of FAO's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has already taken action in this regard¹⁹:

Training in Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) for agricultural institutions' technical unit staff, field programmes and projects, and agricultural and rural development experts in member countries.

Support for actions to incorporate a gender perspective into public policy and development plans to improve women's access, use and control of productive resources; to foster equality of participation in decision-making; and to promote actions to enhance opportunities for remunerated work and generation of income. FAO is promoting technical assistance in the region for the incorporation of a gender-based approach into agricultural censuses. This will allow information to be collected on production unit activities disaggregated by gender, generation and ethnic group.

Technical assistance and mainstreaming of gender in field projects is accomplished through agricultural activities benefiting rural households or projects specifically targeting rural women and involving their organization and leadership, the transfer of

¹⁹ For more details see FAO Gender and Development Unit of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

technology, training in post-harvest methods, marketing or other areas useful to food security in rural households.

The following recommendations are being put into effect under FAO's four major priorities: achieving **food security** at the individual, household and national level; obtaining appropriate **international trade** in food and agriculture as a fundamental element for the achievement of food security, the economic growth of countries, a rational allocation of resources and a globally efficient economic system; ensuring the **sustainable management of natural resources** – appropriate management of forests, water and soil – bearing in mind the existing relationship between humanity and environment and promoting sustainable production practices to guarantee the quality and safety of foods and improve the conditions of health of populations; and **support to rural institutions** in the ongoing process of institutional reform so that they can promote development and reflect a new paradigm of agriculture that is geared towards the capabilities of stakeholders of agricultural development.

The following conclusions and recommendations have been identified to advance gender equality, as a condition for food security and to achieve the region's priority objectives:

Gender-based policies. The approach of ad hoc actions targeting women should shift towards the incorporation of a gender-based approach into all sectoral rural development policies and policies to overcome poverty in the region. Broadening awareness-raising and training in FAO's Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) will contribute effectively towards mainstreaming gender in accordance with the guiding principles of SEAGA, which serve as an instrument of change for sustainable human development, in which the rural sector is given greater value and in which gender equality features as a fundamental element.

Macro-economic priorities. Various Equal Opportunity Plans in the region confirm a gender-based approach needs to be incorporated into macro-economic policies. The most appropriate options for sustainable rural development should be considered. These should facilitate creation of enabling conditions for agriculture and the securing of financial resources required for integrated development of proactive social policies to overcome poverty and ensure gender equality.



Conclusions and recommendations

Sustainable food production: access to land, irrigation, credit and markets.

Promotion of food security requires removal of economic, cultural and other obstacles preventing gender-equitable access to productive resources; including land, irrigation, credit and markets. Gender-based public policies should identify these obstacles and determine appropriate actions for their removal. A gender-based analysis covering policies of access to productive resources would highlight their strengths and weaknesses, and facilitate the achievement of their objectives.

Biodiversity. Food security in Latin America and the Caribbean rests on the abundance of its genetic resources. Consideration should be given the important role played by women in the conservation of genetic resources through safeguarding traditional native crop varieties to feed the population, especially in poorer communities.

Women's traditional knowledge should enable their increased role in the *in situ* conservation of wild relatives of cultivated plants and wild food plants; in the conservation and sustainable use of local varieties or traditional crop varieties on household farms or gardens and in drawing up an inventory of these varieties.

In brief, a gender-based analysis of roles in rural areas of Latin America could effectively contribute to the achievement of sustainable agricultural, fisheries, forestry and rural development to guarantee food security.

Natural resources and desertification. A gender approach in public policies on natural resource protection will foster the achievement of the objectives of the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development (Agenda 21) of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 1992, of the Kyoto Declaration and Plan of Action on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security (Kyoto Declaration and Plan of Action) of 1995, and of the Leipzig Declaration and Global Plan of Action on Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, (Leipzig Declaration and Global Plan of Action) of 1996. The gender-based approach will enable achievement of the objectives of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

Promotion of productive employment. Promotion of productive employment should begin with recognition of rural women's contribution to economic activity. Promotion of employment should consider all skills possessed and exhibited by rural women in the coping strategies deployed under conditions of extreme poverty. Adoption of special measures is required to promote agricultural and off-farm productive employment, with special attention placed on conditions of social security and labour protection.

Education. Specific consideration is required to broaden education coverage in rural areas and to narrow the gap with urban areas. Education should promote social and gender equality, build skills equal to the demands of globalization. At the same time, it is important to safeguard individual groups; respect cultural differences and highlight bilingualism. As an educational process agricultural extension should urgently incorporate these considerations and adjust its modalities to bring the learning process equally to women, men and the young.

Health. Achievement of social and gender equality in health is an objective for all mechanisms for equality of opportunity for rural men and women. Equality in access to health services should include recognition of women's knowledge of traditional medicine. Many Equal Opportunity Plans for Rural Women emphasize the need to monitor the occupational health of rural women workers, specifically in regard to their exposure to pesticides.

Development of citizenship. Achieving food security in the region, and other primary objectives for overcoming poverty and accomplishing gender equity require that rural women participate actively in decision-making on rural development policies. Strengthening their representative organizations will reinforce their ability to negotiate the region's desired future.



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The Near East



The Near East²⁰

Context of rural development

This chapter examines the progress made over the past five years in support of the role of rural women in food production and their contribution to food security in the Near East region. It explores measures that enhance the status of rural women, increasing their contribution to food production and food security. The type or extent of the contribution rural women can make depends on their access to and control over resources and benefits.



Harvesting a good crop of dwarf beans in a greenhouse.
(F. Botts, 1979)

Although data on rural women and food security are only available for a few countries, this situation is improving and progress has been made in the recognition of rural women as active partners in development programmes and projects. In many countries, gender-mainstreaming plans of action and

poverty-alleviation programmes have been formulated; women's associations created and gender mechanisms institutionalized at the central and decentralized levels; including councils, committees and units. Progress has been made in access to resources, such as newly reclaimed lands granted to women and their access to credit for microenterprises. Different strategies target rural women as beneficiaries of loans and credit is linked to their specific situation.

²⁰This chapter is based on the work of Ms Nadia Ramses Farah, FAO Consultant.

Data and observations show that rural women in the Near East region contribute to food security at the household level, and participate in agricultural production, mostly as unpaid family workers. They perform all household responsibilities and child care services and are primarily responsible for maintaining household food security and making do with whatever resources they may have access to. In a few countries in the region the number of women engaged in agriculture is increasing, because of male migration within and outside the countries and wars.

In spite of the above-mentioned progress, gender gaps persist and rural women face similar constraints to women around the world, such as limited access to land, credit, appropriate technology, education and suitable health services.

Main characteristics of the Near East Region

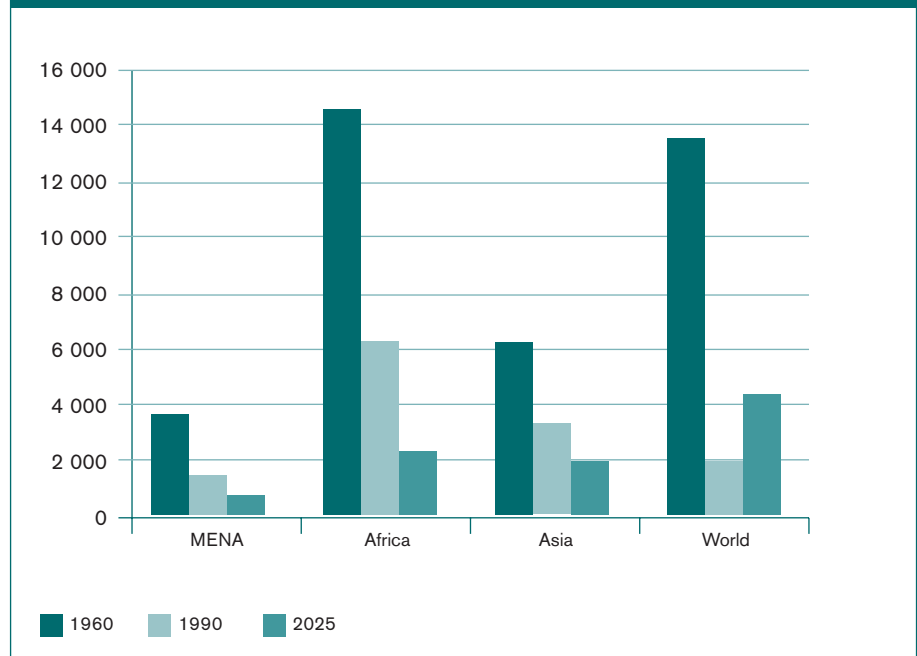
While there are significant differences in food security resources between countries in the region, they share a number of common issues: 1) About 70 percent of the total area is arid or semi-arid; only 38 million hectares of arable land (about 34 percent of the total arable land) is irrigated. 2) There is serious degradation of natural resources because of soil erosion, desertification, water logging and salinity (wind erosion affects about 35 percent of the total area, while water erosion affects about 17 percent). 3) Almost all countries in the region have entered a process of market-oriented economic reform, albeit with varying degrees of commitment and success. Considerable economic, political and social difficulties prevail. 4) Several countries in the region suffer greatly from under nutrition and appropriate food safety nets are needed to protect vulnerable groups in both urban and rural areas. 5) The region depends heavily on commercial imports and several countries depend on food aid to meet their food needs. Net cereal imports increased from 6.5 million tonnes 1969–1971 to 39.3 million tonnes by 1988–1990 and are projected to reach 75.5 million tonnes by the year 2010.



Main Characteristics of the near east Region

Compared to other regions throughout the world water reserves are lowest in the Arab region. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is the driest in the world, and its water reserves are shrinking.

Figure 5.1
Renewable water resources in cubic metres per capita by region

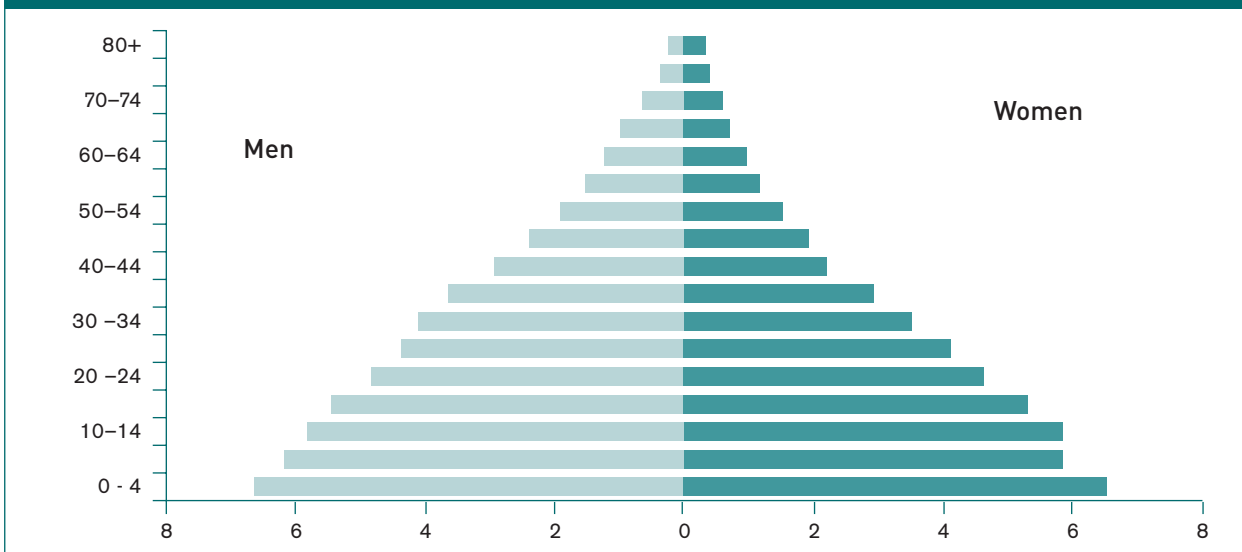


Source: Zafiris, 2000

Population characteristics

Certain characteristics of rural societies in the Near East region might better explain the role of rural women in food security. Constraints prohibiting the participation of rural women in food security include the gender division of labour in agriculture; unpaid family work; the role of women in the decision-making process; in reproduction; social and other restrictions. All these elements may be analysed and characterize the situation of rural women in the Near East region.

Figure 5.2
Population pyramid of the Arab region 2003



Source: ESCWA Social Statistics Datasets, 2003.

The total population in the Arab region is around 307 million, of which approximately 50 percent are women. However, in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain; Kuwait; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, men constitute little more than half the population. This is because there are a comparatively higher number of male migrant workers in these countries. The proportion of the working population aged 24–64 years make up 59 percent of the total population. Women make up the majority of the population

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aged 60 years and older, because of their higher life expectancy at birth compared to men, averaging 68.5 years and 65.1 years respectively for the period 2000–2005.

At the regional level, the population is currently growing yearly at an estimated rate of 2.4 percent and is set to double in 29 years, while this rate is expected to drop to 2.1 percent for the period 2000–2015. This population growth rate is mainly linked to high fertility rates that prevail in a number of Arab countries (ESCWA, 2004). Overall, the region experiences a high population growth rate, which is estimated at 2.4 percent annually and is characterized by an unequal distribution of population and resources; about 38 percent of the population is under the age of 15. The largest populations, in 2000, were in Iran (70 million) and Egypt (68 million) followed by Morocco and Algeria (30 million, each) to only 565 thousand in Qatar. A higher rate is found in Palestine (3.7 percent); Oman (3.5 percent); Yemen (3.3 percent); Saudi Arabia (2.9 percent); Qatar and Iraq (2.7 percent, each).

Table 5.1
Population structure by gender and age group, 2003 (%)

	Total population		Population aged 15		Population aged 15–24		Population aged 25–59		Population aged 59+	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Bahrain	42.5	52.5	48.9	51.1	46.9	53.1	36.9	63.1	50.5	49.5
Egypt	50.1	49.9	49.0	51.0	49.2	50.8	50.9	49.1	53.8	46.2
Iraq	49.3	50.7	49.1	50.9	48.9	51.1	49.3	50.7	52.6	47.4
Jordan	47.9	52.1	48.8	51.2	48.7	51.3	46.6	53.4	48.7	51.3
Kuwait	39.8	60.2	49.0	51.0	46.3	53.7	33.7	66.3	41.6	58.4
Lebanon	51.0	49.0	49.0	51.0	49.4	50.6	52.3	47.7	54.8	45.2
Palestine	49.1	50.9	48.9	51.1	48.6	51.4	48.6	51.4	57.3	42.7
Oman	42.6	57.4	48.9	51.1	47.5	52.5	34.0	66.0	45.4	54.6
Qatar	36.6	63.4	48.9	51.1	48.4	51.6	28.2	71.8	33.5	66.5
Saudi Arabia	46.3	53.7	48.8	51.2	48.6	51.4	42.5	57.5	47.5	52.5
Syria	49.6	50.4	48.9	51.1	49.2	50.8	50.1	49.9	53.9	46.1
Emirates	35.0	65.0	49.0	51.0	45.3	54.7	26.1	73.9	36.2	63.8
Yemen	49.2	50.8	48.9	51.1	48.6	51.4	49.9	50.1	51.7	48.3

Source: ESCWA Gender Statistics, 2003.

Women's Characteristics

Education and training

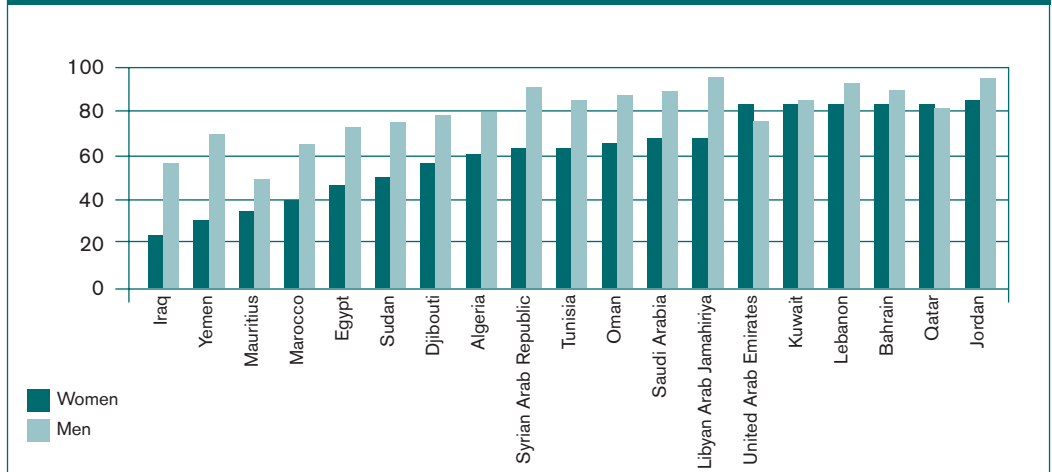
There are gender disparities at all educational levels, although net enrollment rates for primary education in Bahrain, Egypt and Tunisia in 2000/01 were almost 100 percent for girls. At the regional level, an estimated 7.4 million children were not in school in 2000, of which 4.4 million were girls. At the preparatory level, the net enrolment ratio for women in 2000/01 was 51.7 percent, compared to 56.4 percent for men. In the same academic year, 17.8 percent of women and 21.6 percent of men were enrolled in secondary education. At the university level in some countries, more women were enrolled in secondary schools than were their male counterparts. This is because daughters are usually kept in the country at home, while sons are sent abroad to pursue higher education outside the Arab region (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS] database).

Women tend to have higher illiteracy rates than men. The highest female adult illiteracy rates are found in Iraq (76 percent); Yemen (71 percent); Mauritania (69 percent); Morocco (62 percent); Egypt (54 percent) and Sudan (51 percent) (World Bank, World Development Indicators Database, 2002).

Illiteracy rates for young women (15–24 years) are generally higher than for boys of the same age and women from urban areas. Women working in agriculture have much higher illiteracy rates in Yemen 94 percent, Egypt 79 percent and in Syria 53 percent (Farah, 2000).

Between 1990 and 2000, the adult literacy rate in the Arab region increased from 50 percent to 60 percent and is expected to exceed 70 percent by 2015. (ESCWA, 2004).

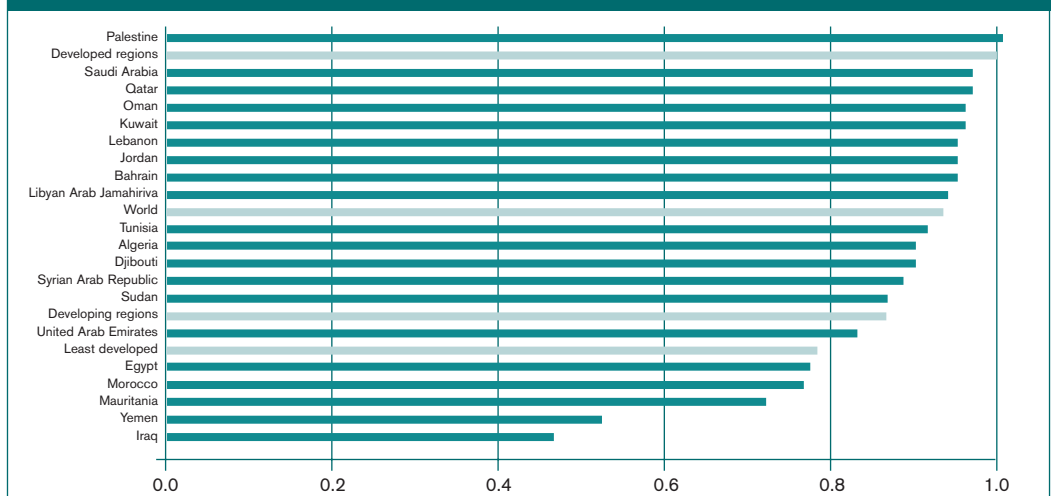
Figure 5.3
Adult literacy rates of women and men in selected Arab countries in 2003 (%)



Source: UNESCO,
Institute for Statistics (UIS)

Gender gap in youth literacy: In most Arab countries, the gender parity index (GPI) for the youth literacy rate in 2000 ranged between 0.86 and 1.0. In Palestine, GPI for the youth literacy rate was 1.01, indicating that young females were marginally more literate than their male counterparts. The widest gender gaps in favour of men in youth literacy rates were observed in Iraq and Yemen. Moreover, the GPI for youth literacy rates was lower than the average in five Arab countries namely: Egypt; Iraq; Mauritania; Morocco and Yemen (ESCWA, 2004).

Figure 5.4
Gender parity index for youth literacy rates in selected Arab countries in 2000



Source: UNESCO
Institute for Statistics (UIS)

Reproductive health

It is more difficult for rural women to ensure food security for their households because of the larger family size. In rural families, children are considered an investment rather than a burden on expenditure, because of the labour they provide from an early age. Female children help in household chores, and may replace women with very young children in combining farm and family labour. Rural women in this region tend to have larger families.

Total fertility rates for women aged 15–49 are very high. However, there are pronounced discrepancies between countries. Those with the highest fertility rates in 2000 were Yemen (7.6); Afghanistan and Mauritania (6.8); followed by Palestine (5.6); Oman and Saudi Arabia (5.5 each); Sudan (4.5) and Jordan (4.3), which shows a total high fertility rate for the region as a whole. The lowest fertility rates are in Bahrain (2.3) and Tunisia (2.1); the rate of decline in total fertility rate was slow between 1990 and 2000.

Certain countries have not adopted family-planning programmes, which is true for most Gulf countries. Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia have efficient family-planning policies to curb population growth and are considered success stories in the region.

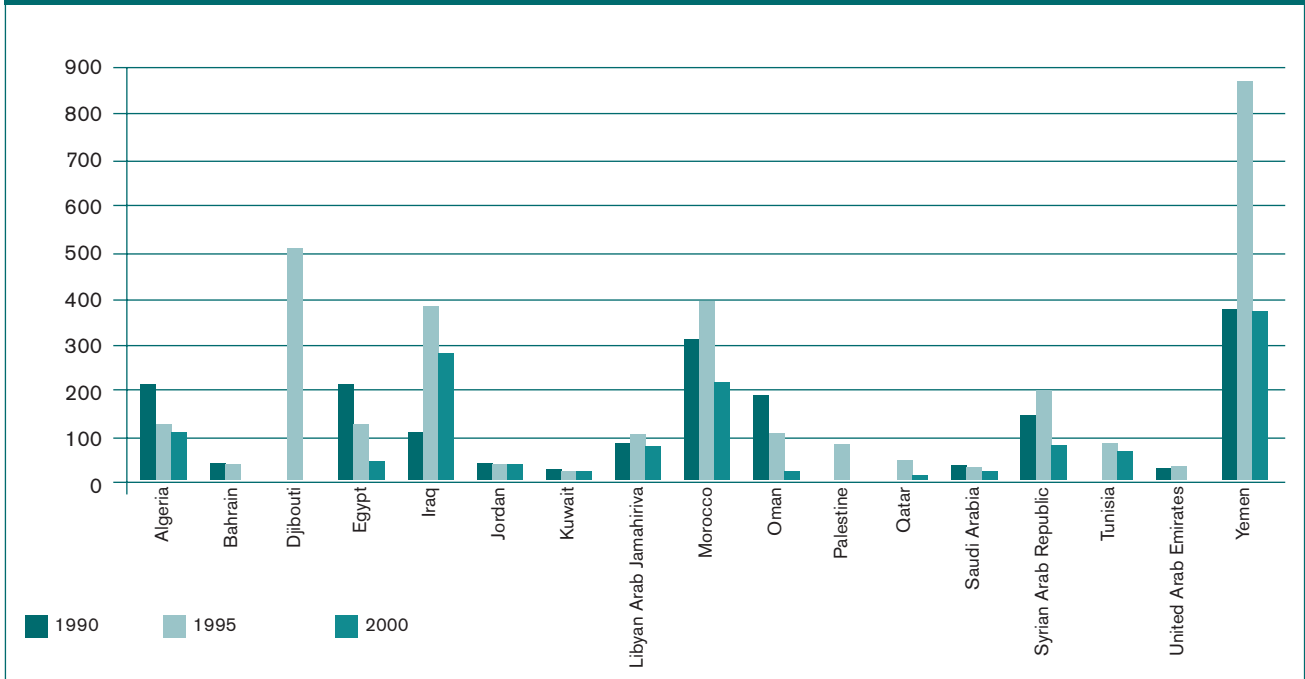
At the same time, there are differences between the region's rich and poor nations in women's access to reproductive health services. Oil-rich countries have achieved an almost universal rates for antenatal care and deliveries attended by health personnel. These countries offer free, high-quality health services to their citizens. Furthermore, they have achieved low maternal mortality rates for the same above-mentioned reasons.

Conversely, poorer countries have sizeable agricultural sectors and a high proportion of their citizens live in rural areas, where there are fewer resources to devote to their citizens on a cost-free basis, especially women. Rural women have the worst rate for antenatal care and percentage of birth deliveries attended by health professionals, they also experience high maternal mortality rates.

The worst maternal mortality rates are for Mauritania and Sudan (550 per 100 000 live births) followed by Yemen (350) and Egypt (170). It may be concluded from the above that rural women with large families and poor access to reproductive health services are more prone to high reproductive and maternal mortality. They are also obliged to ensure food security for a large number of children in conditions of relative poverty.

Figure 5.5

Maternal mortality ratios in selected Arab countries for selected years between 1990 and 2000 (Per 100 000 live births)



Source: ESCWA Social Statistics Datasets, 2003.

Between 1990 and 2000, maternal mortality ratios (MMR) decreased dramatically in most countries. Notable decreases in MMR occurred in Lebanon (104 in 2000), with a drop to one-third of cases in 1990; Algeria (120 in 2000), with approximately half the number of cases in 1990; Egypt (44 in 2000), with a drop to almost one-fifth of cases in 1990 and Oman, which experienced the most dramatic decline from 190 to 14 deaths per 100 000. This is in contrast to Iraq where the ratio increased from 117 to 274 between 1990 and 2000. During this period, MMR remained comparatively high in Yemen, increasing from 351 in 1990 (ESCWA, 2004).

Some governments have adopted policies for managing population growth with significant success (World Bank, 1994). In Tunisia, the Family Planning Association was established in 1968 and, in addition to conventional measures, it promoted the importance of birth spacing for the health of the mother and child. Laws have been enacted to raise a woman's marriageable age to 17 and 20 for men. Family benefits

have been limited to the first three children of a household. Basic education is provided free of charge, and girls and boys have equal access to education and practically identical enrollment rates.

Egypt has had a formal population policy since 1966, when the national family planning programme was established. The first national population policy was introduced in 1973. Between 1980 and 1996, the fertility rate dropped from 5.1 children per woman to 3.3 children per woman and contraceptive prevalence rate rose from 21 to 50 percent. The population programme still remains a national priority for the government.

Usually populations in larger countries have fewer resources than the smaller, particularly those in the oil-rich Gulf countries. Moreover, the larger, poorer countries are more likely to generate a higher percentage of their income from agriculture.



Economically active population in the rural sector

Both women and men are income earners and the number of men and women in the job market is increasing. Education is seen as a way to protect girls from an uncertain future. In addition, women are taking up studies and jobs that were previously occupied by men. In Syria, for example, approximately 50 percent of students in the faculty of agriculture are women and in the Sultanate of Oman 48 percent of students enrolled at the Agricultural University (1998) are women. Women assume added responsibilities as they fill the labour gap created by men who leave in search of better wages (IFAD, 2003).

Women active in agriculture

The economic activity rate of Arab women remains lower than that for women in other regions in the world. In 2000, Arab women comprised around 29 percent of the regional labour force and were more often unemployed than men were. Moreover, in 2001, the unemployment rate of women was around 17.1 percent compared with men at 10.6 percent (ESCWA, 2004). The activity rate in rural areas in Syria stands at 83.7 percent for males and 33.4 percent for females. In Oman, women represent 24 percent of the active population. The rural female unemployment rate is highest (12.1 percent) versus (7.1%) for rural males with a gender gap of (+5). Over 70 percent of female workers receive incomes from US\$40 to US\$80, only 41 percent of that earned by men (FAO, TCP and Syria).

Most women work in agriculture as unpaid family labour. The percentage of unpaid female workers to total female agriculture workers is 79 percent in Yemen; 66 percent in Syria; 60 percent in Egypt and 45 percent in Palestine (Farah, 2000). These high rates of female unpaid family workers in agriculture are the main reason for the relatively high rate of unpaid family workers at the national level. While some males (usually boys) work as unpaid family workers, the gap between males and females is significant. Accordingly, women working as agricultural producers are

deprived of an income while they perform a very important task; namely ensuring household food security.

Impact of structural adjustment policies

Most Near East countries have shifted from a centralized to a free-market economy and have adopted structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) to ease the integration of their countries into the international economic system. Major features of these structural adjustment policies are economic liberalization of market and privatization. SAPs insist on the reduction of government expenditure, lifting of subsidies (especially agricultural and food subsidies) and alignment to international prices.

These measures have led to increased income inequalities and higher poverty levels and have sometimes negatively affected small and poor farmers. Cuts in subsidies and subventions to the agricultural sector have negatively affected rural populations, particularly rural women, as agricultural smallholders who were neither equipped nor prepared to face the new challenges of national and international competitions.



Young woman carrying load of fuelwood.
(R. Faidutti, 1987)

Female-headed households

The number of female-headed households is also an indicator of female poverty throughout the region. This figure does not differ much from the national rate. It is suspected that the rate of female-headed households is much higher than revealed in the available statistics, especially for North Africa, because of extensive male migration to European countries.

Female-headed households are defined by the United Nations as women who head households and who are responsible for expenditure and management of household affairs in the absence of a male. The number of women-headed households is increasing because of, *inter alia*, male migration, disabled males, widowhood and divorce.

The percentage of female-headed households is highest in Pakistan and Sudan,



Economically active population in the rural sector

25 percent and 23.8 percent respectively (FAO, 1995). The latest rate for both Egypt and Morocco is the same, 17 percent. Female-headed households in Egypt have their own specific socio-economic characteristics that are different to male-headed households in rural areas. In relation to this aspect, 62 percent of women who head families are widows. The illiteracy ratio for women-headed families (73%) is higher than the ratio for the entire population of rural women (63.3). A total of 42 percent of female-headed households have incomes of less than LE 1 200²¹ per year, and 30 percent have incomes that range between LE 1 200–1 800 per year. About 80.5 percent of female-headed households in rural area have no land holding. In this respect, liberalization of the land rental relationship has pushed some female-headed tenants out of their agricultural land holdings (Ahmed, M. 2003).

²¹ US\$1 = 6.3 LE

Gender Policies

Since the mid-1990s international conventions on Women and Population, the World Food Summit and others, have raised the awareness of policy-makers to integrate the gender approach into the formulation of policies, projects and programmes. The following three main trends are emerging: women and political participation, mainstreaming gender in agricultural policies and programmes, establishment of gender mechanisms.

Women and political participation

Women's political participation in the region is minimal and the number of women ministers is still low. In some countries, especially the Gulf Countries, women do not yet have the right to vote or take part in parliament. In other countries, the number of women members of parliament is higher because seats are reserved for them, as in Syria (10.4 percent). Nevertheless, political participation is still minimal and measures should be adopted to increase women's political participation in the region. On the other hand, it is noted that women hold high-level positions in many other fields such as law, education, health and social security.

A total of 16 Arab countries have effective parliaments and have given women the right to vote and run for public office. However, on average, women's share of parliamentary seats does not exceed 4.1 percent. Sudan, Syria and Tunisia have the best record of female representation in parliament, listing 9.7, 10.4 and 11.5 percent respectively (ESCWA, 2000).

Mainstreaming gender in agricultural policies and programmes

The Ministries of Agriculture in the region are mainstreaming gender into their policies, projects and programmes. To achieve this, many countries have benefited from support provided by FAO's Regional Office for the Near East through technical

projects that prepare methodologies for the development of strategies and the plan of action (POA). The aim is to integrate the gender dimension into rural and agricultural development policies and programmes. The strategies and POA started

with the assessment of the situation of men and women in the agricultural sector. Surveys were conducted in pilot areas and led to data collection and analysis. Gender roles were identified in agriculture, including constraints, potentialities (natural resources, human resources), priorities and needs. Solutions were proposed by the main actors and partners involved in agricultural development at the grass-roots level.

The objective of the strategies and the plan of action sought to improve the livelihoods of men and women, and promote equal opportunity in access to resources and services. This includes training, extension, credit, information and other issues identified as constraints to women's



Woman with her baby purchasing products in the local market.

advancement. Information, communication and networking were among the components of the plan of action. Its main principles included increasing agriculture productivity and developing income-generating activities in the context of sustainable use of natural resources. Support provided through technical support included training of trainers on a gender approach methodology and tools. The main goal of the pilot actions was the adaptation of the gender approach methodological tools to the sociocultural context of the countries. FAO projects were implemented in Algeria; Egypt; Jordan; Morocco; Syria and Tunisia.

Establishment of gender mechanisms

Almost all countries in the region have initiated actions, within the Ministries of Agriculture, to translate the gender approach into institutionalized structures. The main established structures are WID/Gender Unit, Direction of Women, Policy and Coordination Unit for Women in Agriculture, Division of Women. These structures are either independent or a part of the extension service. In some cases, the unit in charge of home economics has moved to a women/gender unit. In other cases, a special adviser on women and gender issues is located within the Cabinet of the

Minister. Those who head the women/gender structures have been trained in the gender approach, methodologies and tools.

FAO's Regional Office for the Near East has organized regional training sessions on the Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA) in the languages spoken in the region. Trainees are facilitating the gender approach in rural development in the Near East networking process.

All countries in the region have established national committees/NGOs and other organizations for the advancement of women, which are being headed by the First Ladies. The creation of a special prize for the best action to promote the advancement of women was announced during the Conference of Arab Women organized by ESCWA in Beirut, in July 2004. Furthermore, ministries that are in charge of women and the family have been established in Algeria, Mauritania and Tunisia.



Gender roles in agriculture

Gender division of labour

Women contribute to food security in many ways. They produce food for household consumption; earn income as wageworkers or as producers of agricultural items sold on the market to supplement their household food requirements.

FAO estimates that women produce more than 50 percent of food grown worldwide and they are the majority of the world's agricultural producers (FAO, 1995). In the Near East, women's real participation in agricultural production is largely underestimated and their economic activity is narrowly defined in census and survey statistics throughout most of the region. Egypt, in the 1996 census survey, estimated that 9 percent of rural women are economically active. This is because female agricultural labour is mostly unpaid and family labour underestimated. However, use of FAO's more flexible definitions of economic participation in this region reveals high rates of female participation in agriculture and Djibouti; Iraq; Iran; Jordan; Libya; Turkey; Mauritania and Morocco show clear trends towards the feminization of agriculture (FAOSTAT).

All countries in the region experience similar urban-rural disparities. High rural poverty is placing new strains on households and changing well-established divisions of roles, responsibilities and resources between women and men.

Women in the region spend long hours every day in crop and livestock production. They are involved in almost all aspects of crop production, except for land preparation, water management and other mechanized and capital-intensive activities. Although, in some situations, women will be found engaged in all areas, generally, the tasks women perform are often non-mechanized and labour-intensive. Thus, women broadcast seeds and fertilizers by hand, pick fruit and vegetables and carry produce on their backs. Women spend many hours in post-harvest activities such as threshing, cleaning, sorting and grading.

Rural women spend much time every day on agricultural and domestic tasks, with little time to improve skills, rest or recreation. As paid and/or unpaid labour,

women may spend up to 19 hours/day performing essential chores such as sowing; weeding; harvesting; animal husbandry; cleaning; fetching water and firewood; baking; cooking; sewing and child rearing to ensure the livelihood of the household.

Data indicate that women are not usually remunerated for their work, and there are distinct disparities between wages earned by men and women. Often women are paid two-thirds or even half the wages earned by men for the same task (FAO, 1995).

For example, women in Egypt participate in all phases of production including irrigation; pest control; transporting; marketing; ploughing; leveling and furrowing. Yet these tasks are usually perceived as exclusively performed by males. Similar situations are found in most Near East countries such as Maghreb, Mashrek, Sudan and Mauritania.

Both males and females participate in farming activities from an early age and the level of female participation increases at the same rate as male participation. Women's participation increases significantly in the age group 30–34 years as most men seek job opportunities outside agriculture as a result of the limited size of the family house holding. (Abdel Aal, M. 2002).

In rural areas of the Near East, the traditional view is that men undertake all work requiring physical strength, transport and marketing, whereas women, although active in several phases of agricultural production undertake all domestic chores, gardening and animal care.

The current stereotype of traditional gender division of labour, especially for women in agriculture, can be described as follows:

'The traditional family structure is an outcome of a corporate society, which curbs individuality and stresses the complementarities of roles. The family is hierarchical. Sex roles within the family are defined: males are the breadwinners; women are responsible for the children and the household. Women gain status through their traditional roles as wives and

Table 5.2
Gender division of labour by major crops in Egypt, % of women in 2000

Activities	Maize	Wheat	Rice
Planting	35.0	32.0	34.0
Fertilizing	45.0	39.0	37.0
Irrigating	22.0	41.0	38.0
Weeding	35.0	41.0	42.0
Pest control	28.0	29.0	23.0
Harvesting	40.0	35.0	40.0
Transporting	38.0	37.0	40.0
Replanting	41.0	–	–
Storage	76.0	73.0	64.0
Sacking	36.0	33.0	43.0
Marketing	58.0	63.0	50.0
Sloughing	37.0	36.0	39.0
Leveling	38.0	34.0	38.0
Furrowing	35.0	–	–

Source: Farah, N.R. 2000b



Gender roles in agriculture

mothers. Employment of women is not a measure of higher status; it might be a measure of economic need. The traditional division of labour provides some advantages derived from their traditional roles within the family. In fact, women control the organization of the domestic domain and financial dispersal a good part if not all the day. They are the main forces in communication between the households. They control those things most valued by men, i.e., sex, honour, children, and a well-organized household' (Rugh, 1988).

In most Near East countries, rural women have almost complete authority over poultry, buying, selling or vaccination. For most rural women, raising and selling poultry provides an income for the family and for themselves. According to a study undertaken in Egypt, women have little say in almost all other aspects, except for agricultural investment (19 percent women) and vaccination of livestock (16.5 percent). Another major indicator of control of economic resources is the marketing of agricultural products. Here only 4 percent of women take part in this decision-making issue (Boutros, 1993).

Rural women in Egypt participate little in decision-making at the household level in irrigated areas. Men have almost exclusive authority on matters related to seeds, buying and selling of livestock and land. This also includes the use of herbicides and agricultural machinery, what to grow and where to sell products. Women make decisions related to poultry and contribute to decisions on agriculture projects and the vaccination of livestock.

Access to resources

Data on women's access to land is minimal in the region. Some data indicate that women landholders form around 5 percent of total landholders in Egypt and Syria. Female land ownership is around 51 percent in Cyprus; 29 percent in Jordan; 24 percent in Egypt; 14 percent in Morocco and 4 percent in Syria. The areas of landholdings are almost the same in Egypt (2.4 *feddans* for males and 2 *feddans* for females); but is only 57 *dunum* for Syrian females compared to 80 *dunum* for males. Some countries have undertaken the implementation of programmes on newly reclaimed land. However, the share of women on the newly reclaimed land in Egypt does not exceed 7 percent (Farah, 2000).

There is a difference between landholding and land ownership. Landownership does not necessarily lead to landholding. Most middle-class women own land through inheritance, but they rent it to others, who are mostly men. It is the tradition in some countries not to leave girls land, as an inheritance, even if this is against the law. Families are apprehensive that the husband will take over and family landholdings will be dispersed. Instead of land, some families give a gift of money or jewellery to their daughters.

In spite of the significant participation of women in agricultural activities their access to and control of land is limited. Overall, female holders represent only 5.72 percent of the total number of landholders in Egypt. Women in Lower Egypt enjoy the highest share across regions constituting 7.28 percent of the total landholders of lower (Abdel Aal, M. 2002).

Access to services

Legislation provides equal access to resources and services in most countries and progress has been noted in services such as education and health. However, disparities remain in rural areas when compared to urban areas.

Although women are active in the agricultural sector, they do not benefit from all the support and related services. The following gender gaps have been observed:

- Women do not benefit, as they should, from training and extension for improvement of their skills, working conditions and productivity.
- Compared with urban women, rural women suffer from high illiteracy rates and workload related to their domestic and agricultural tasks that limit their participation in training and extension sessions.
- Extension staff are predominantly male, which generally limits communication for cultural reasons. Many women have graduated in agriculture (50 percent); however, they do not hold decision-making and technical positions. Mostly, women work in agricultural research, education and administration. Female extension agents generally work in offices and often deal with traditional matters related to home economics.
- This tendency is being reversed; female graduates are present at the village level in Algeria; Morocco; Tunisia; Jordan; Syria and Egypt.



Gender roles in agriculture

- Rural women's access to credit for investment in agricultural inputs is still limited. However, many small credit programmes have been created for rural women in the last five years. These have been developed through institutions in order to provide women with the financial support to improve their incomes or to increase household food security, though the earned income remains low. In Egypt the percentage of women obtaining (in the 1990s) short-term production loans did not exceed 12 percent, only 16 percent obtained investment loans. In Jordan, rural women received 19.6 percent of total agricultural loans, but the value of their loans did not exceed 12 percent of the total value of agricultural loans given in 2001. The share of women in the total value of loans ranged from 9.9 percent to 18.9 percent. The highest percentage of loans to women were mid-term loans, 21 percent of total loans in this category; 10 percent of long term; 2.4 percent of short term and 4 percent of seasonal loans (Qura'n, R. 2004). Schemes adapted to the local context including agricultural banks, cooperatives and social funds for development are still under experimentation.
- Access to information at the village level is limited. Surveys demonstrated that women did not benefit from support for agricultural inputs' investment provided by governments because the information related to the programme did not reach them.

Because of the traditional division of labour in agriculture in the region, rural women lack access to production inputs, transport and marketing services. Incomplete information, based upon indices estimated from experimental work and sample surveys, indicate a gender division in technology use. Women profit from improved cook stoves, food processing and food storage devices, while men benefit from irrigation, post-harvest threshing devices and improved transport (Mansour, 1994).

Agricultural research targets large-scale agricultural units, and therefore, technologies targeting small-scale units held by women have not been developed. Rural women have not yet been provided with simple and accessible technologies adapted to their needs (Bou-Salah, 2004).

Representation of women in agricultural organizations

Women's associations have been created in the region. However, few are located at the village level. They mainly deal with natural resource management, medicinal plants, production and marketing. Most have obtained financial support from governments and donors to develop activities related to education, health and income-generation activities.

Women are seen to be under-represented on the board of cooperatives. In Palestine, women are intensely involved in agricultural labour, although they are almost absent from any system of decision-making. In the West Bank eight marketing agricultural cooperatives exist under the umbrella of the Agricultural Cooperative Union, the total number of members is 7,414 with only two women, at a rate of 0.03 percent of female membership. The data collected do not indicate why women do not appear in decision-making systems. In many cases, it is the choice of women themselves, for reasons that should be investigated through specific surveys.

Constraints to rural women's participation in agricultural development

A main constraint to rural women's participation in agriculture and food security is the heavy workload within and outside the household, especially where there are a large number of children. The traditional division of labour dictates that rural women are responsible for all domestic chores, plus all their roles in agricultural production and care of livestock.

When accounting for all activities, carried out by women in rural areas, the number of work hours per week increases dramatically. Participatory rapid assessment (PRA) of rural women's work in different areas of the Near East demonstrates that women, on average, work from 10 to 16 hours per day, while men work an average of six to eight hours. The length of a woman's agricultural workday depends on many factors such as the gender-based division of labour, the husband/ brother or father's occupation, size of family and number of women in the extended family, area of land under cultivation and the use of technology in both agriculture and within the household.

Technology in agricultural production is essentially oriented towards large-scale agricultural units headed by men, which are mostly mechanized. Tractors are used to till,



Gender roles in agriculture

irrigation is carried out with water pipes and trucks transport produce to market. When there are no paved roads or trucks women walk to the market carrying the produce on their heads, where they sell poultry, vegetables and fruits. When there are paved roads and trucks, women no longer take part in the marketing of produce. Normally the hours they devote to work do not allow them time to market their produce. These above-mentioned constraints lead to the loss of training opportunities and attendance at literacy classes; moreover, rural women are generally underpaid for their products, as they do not participate in the marketing process.

In some cases, the men in the household work outside the agricultural sector, but women perform all activities within and outside the household. If the household is an extended family, involving a large number of daughters and sister-in-laws, this workload might be alleviated. In this case, the work is divided among the women of the extended family. Those working in the field carry out all agricultural activities and some household chores, while the others stay in the home and do most household chores and care for the children. Typically, women spend 9 to 10 hours working in the field. The household workload is made easier for women with appliances: gas stove, washing machine, refrigerator and access to piped drinking water.

The situation is different for women in nuclear families who have large areas of rented or owned land. In this case, both men and women are involved solely in agricultural production. However, the small size of the family and the large area of land affect women's time use in different ways and they work for much longer hours, around 14 hours per day.

The third category of women is the poorest. They have no access to electricity and are therefore are unaided by home appliances. Everything is made by hand and cooking is performed on traditional wood or dung-fuelled stoves. The task is harsher for nuclear families and female-headed households, even those with a large number of children. The workday for these women may be 16 hours per day or more.

In Egypt and Syria, rural women substitute their daughters' work for theirs, both outside and inside the household, especially when there are young children in the family. In Egyptian and Syrian agriculture, girls aged 15 to 19 years form 20 percent of the female labour force. This substitution of the mother's labour, by the daughters', impacts girls' education and health. It is known that fathers, who depend on their daughters' agriculture labour, are more reluctant to permit them to marry at an early age, because of the expected loss of labour.

Conclusions and lessons learned

During the past decade, a dynamic process has begun in Near East countries as progress has been made in mainstreaming gender into national policies. This has been accomplished through strategies and national plans of action and through the formulation of poverty alleviation programmes. In contrast, there has been a decline in agricultural and food production indices. In a few countries in the region, a high percentage of the population suffers from undernourishment, possibly the result of internal and external conflicts.

In addition, progress has been made in the recognition and participation of rural women as active partners in rural and agricultural development programmes. In spite of these efforts to improve the situation of rural women, there is a need to strengthen support to rural women in their role of ensuring food security. This includes facilitating women's access to agricultural productive resources (land; water; credit; production inputs and marketing) and social services including education and training; extension and reproductive health services.

Out of these efforts, certain patterns have emerged that may be qualified as lessons learned:

- The gender concept has been adopted in the region although, in some cases, the goals and content of the concept have not been fully understood. It is important that gender terminologies, methodological tools and training packages be adapted to the local sociocultural characteristics.
- The gender approach is largely implemented in certain fields such as education and health; however, the approach is still weakly implemented in technical fields.
- Research and academic institutions are not yet involved in gender issues. Although gender and participatory approaches are used in the formulation and implementation of projects funded by external donors and development agencies, the approaches are used less in governmental institutions.
- Gender-sensitive databases remain the prerequisite for gender mainstreaming in policies, legislation and development programmes. Training in the gender



Conclusion and lessons learned

approach is mainly oriented towards personnel working in gender structures. Planners, statisticians and other decision-makers do not participate, as they should, in being trained to use a gender approach.

- The role and functions of gender structures within the ministries of agriculture is limited. The structure is insufficiently supported in terms of inputs, and they are thus unable to perform duties related to advocacy, monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming within the agricultural policy, programmes and projects.
- Several development organizations have advanced small amounts of credit to poor rural women through multiple income-generating projects. Some women have been reluctant to accept this type of credit. This was because of the terms, or the organizations imposed projects that added to their work and gave no guarantee that the project would benefit them directly. A lesson learned is that rural women have their own needs and priorities. They will not accept financial support (grant or loan) if it is not appropriate to them.
- Increase in the number of female development and extension agents working at the grassroots level. Internal policies must correct the income imbalance caused by structural adjustment policies and globalization to avoid weakening national economies and increasing dependence on foreign sources of income.

Recommendations

It is important that people dealing with rural and agricultural development policies and programmes have a proper understanding of gender concepts and goals. Gender terminology used should be adapted to the socio-cultural context of each country. Note that the gender approach targets the roles of both women and men in the family.

Starting with the lessons learned, during almost five years of implementation of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach in rural and agricultural programmes in Near East countries, and in accordance with FAO's Gender and Development Plan of Action 2002–2007, several recommendations were made by participants at the Regional Expert's Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in Rural Development in the Near East Countries, Cairo, Egypt, 26–29 May 2003. Furthermore, the following recommendations include those made for the 27th NERC conference at Doha, Qatar, in March, 2004 and take into account the priorities and the context of the Region.

Capacity building in gender analysis approaches, methodologies and tools:

- Support for national capacity building in gender analysis approaches taking into consideration environmental aspects. Preparation of gender analysis tools and training material and documents.
- Training of policy-makers, planners and development agents at centralized and decentralized levels under FAO's global Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis programme (SEAGA).
- Training in Gender and Statistics in Agriculture.
- New approaches for training, extension and research programmes adapted to rural women's and men's situation and roles in agriculture.
- Agricultural policies and programmes, including research and extension, training and production services should develop schemes that respond to the



Recommendations

situation, needs and priorities of both men and women, in order to maintain the populations in rural areas and avoid male and female migration.

- Improvement of women's access to resources, such as land, training, inputs and marketing of products. In addition, rural women should be consulted for agricultural policies, projects and programmes formulation. This will ensure they are integrated into agricultural programmes and projects that respond to rural women's specific needs and priorities.
- Efforts should continue to support national capacity building in gender analysis approaches and establish gender sensitive databases, required to guide the policy-making process.
- Gender-orientated research should be promoted, given the serious gaps in knowledge related to gender issues.

Support to the institutionalization and promotion of the integration of a gender dimension in agriculture and rural development policies and programmes

- Inclusion of gender-sensitive mechanisms and tools for development planning, monitoring-evaluation to ensure that gender mainstreaming is implemented at the central as well as decentralized levels.
- Gender-disaggregated data to be integrated in studies, research papers, surveys and agricultural censuses.
- Institutionalization of a gender-sensitive approach in agricultural training and extension, as well as in the curricula for statistics and planning studies.
- Institutionalization of gender mainstreaming activity/function, with clearly defined mandates and tasks including advocacy, policy advice and monitoring and evaluation within the key divisions/departments of the ministries in charge of agriculture and rural development. For example: divisions/departments of studies, statistics, programme planning, personnel, reporting, coordination, and database development tasks as a cross cutting issue. This will ensure that a

gender dimension is taken into account when preparing development policies, programmes, and legislation.

- Organization of inter-departmental committees related to gender and development for coordination and prioritization of actions.
- Initiation of partnership between government institutions and civil society through the creation of rural men's and women's associations at the village level for development programmes that respond to the needs and priorities of men and women.
- Train researchers, planners and statisticians in the gender approach to improve skills related to gender disaggregated data collection and analysis.

Information and communication

- Creation of a database on gender roles in agriculture and rural development.
- Preparation, collection and dissemination of information on gender roles and needs in rural and Bedouin areas.
- An integrated policy needs to be followed where agricultural production and food security is promoted and accompanied by extension, education and health.

Networking

- Strengthening of networking at the national, regional and international levels and sharing of information on gender mainstreaming in the region, such as lessons learned, successful approaches and good practices.
- Contribution to the creation of websites and networks in the languages spoken in the Near East Region with information on good/best practices in gender and agriculture development programmes.

Valorization of rural men's and women's potential to improve their participation in rural development

There is a need to help men and women farmers, particularly the young, remain in rural areas with attractive livelihoods strategies and diversification of activities. In



Recommendations

this regard, cooperation and sharing of experiences between North-South and South-South countries should be promoted.

- Integrated programmes targeting rural populations to ensure coordination between the stakeholders concerned with rural development programmes.
- Development of efficient communication strategies to reach men and women living in rural remote areas.
- Encouragement of microenterprises and other rural activities.
- Promotion of adapted technologies and methodologies for the better management of natural resources and to improve Rural/Bedouin household income. Recognizing the value and potential of traditional knowledge and local best practices of rural men and women.
- Innovative approaches to help rural women and men find efficient strategies, enabling them to face the new challenges of globalization and the free market, e.g. development of income-generating activities based on local resources to improve income and family livelihoods.
- Improvement of access to land programmes such as those initiated in some countries. For example the newly reclaimed lands attributed to men and women in Egypt and Algeria.
- Facilitate access to credit and give priority to female-headed households for the mitigation of negative outcomes. An alternative might be the establishment of women's associations for transport and marketing to empower women to gain control of benefits. Investigation of conditions before extending credit to rural women, and being innovative when proposing income-generating activities.

In addition, the following themes might be developed through further research:

- ▶ Monitoring and evaluation of national gender mechanisms; integration of women into agricultural projects, including impact of extension services delivered by female technicians to rural women;
- ▶ Gender-appropriate technology in agriculture;
- ▶ Gender-related impacts of armed conflict on women's livelihoods, security and the agricultural sector;

- ▶ Consequences of the feminization of agriculture on agricultural production in terms of gender-related aspects of collective resource management, such as irrigation, etc.;
- ▶ Comparative analysis of women's political participation throughout the Near East.
- ▶ Gender relations analysis for household management.



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