

Uganda | Engaging women in family farming to eradicate hunger

Despite the potential of the agricultural sector, many regions of Uganda still suffer from hunger. As everywhere, the serious problem of hunger is linked to climate change, unequal resource allocation, illiteracy, attitude towards farming and poor policy implementation. One of the root causes is also the uneven access of women and men to resources and markets. The Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) shares its views on the key role women have to play.

53% of country's export revenue. For this reason, agriculture is a major source of income for the vast majority of the households and a determinant for food and nutrition security, employment, income generation and export trade. The sector has the potential to sustain, encourage and promote the economic development and eradicate hunger.

Nevertheless, many regions in the country are not able to produce enough food to tackle acute malnutrition. Nearly half of the country's families record low food consumption. This situation is due to poor agricultural production, low rains and increasingly destructive weather events, as a consequence of climate change. This resulted in a decline in food stocks for households and in an increase in food prices, which further reduces their ability to purchase food.

Yet, despite these difficulties, reducing the gender gap in agriculture in terms of access to resources and markets would break this vicious cycle.

Enhancing women's participation

In the Northern and Eastern regions of Uganda - that predominantly rely on livestock rearing- women make up the vast majority of food producers. However, while land is accessible to all, only men benefit from land and cattle ownership. Unwritten customary laws prevent women from inheriting land or livestock because they leave their father's clan when they get married. As a result, rights over productive resources and access to markets are mainly concentrated in the hands of male headed households, while female headed households are likely to earn a lot less from farming activities and are much more exposed to risk factors that eventually lead to hunger.

Over the years, many development organizations, including WOUGNET, have raised



serious concerns about the state of food security in Northern and Eastern Uganda. In particular, WOUGNET recognizes the importance of closing the gender gap in agriculture and continues to emphasize the need to encourage women to participate in family farming. The organization is primarily engaged in supporting female led households in agriculture at district level, through its educational programmes. An example is the project, initiated by WOUGNET in 2005 and still ongoing, on "Enhancing access to agricultural information using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)" in Apac District. The project aims to develop and improve information and communication systems to enable easy access to agricultural information, especially for rural women. Uganda and other countries at risk can reverse the effects that may lead to hunger by encouraging rural women in affected areas to participate in skills development projects run by government and non-government actors.

Also, there is a need to engage in dialogue with law and policy makers on the urgency to have gender specific policies and laws that give women equal ownership rights over land and livestock. Policy implementation frameworks should include mechanisms that identify, educate, support and follow up on affected populations, particularly women and children.

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