

FAO POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY: Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development

INTRODUCTION:

Gender equality is central to FAO's mandate to achieve food security for all by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and improving the lives of rural populations. FAO can achieve its goals only if it simultaneously works toward gender equality and supports women's diverse roles in agriculture and rural development. Gender equality is not only an essential means by which FAO can achieve its mandate; it is also a basic human right.

In pursuing its goals, FAO is mandated by the United Nations system to promote and protect Human Rights and Gender Equality and to work in a way that ensures that it contributes to their realization by addressing underlying causes of human rights violations including discrimination against women and girls. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the over-arching UN document that formally recognizes universally agreed human rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is central to the issue of gender equality. CEDAW obliges governments to promote, protect and fulfill the equal rights of men and women in their own jurisdictions. Progressive achievement of CEDAW's principle of substantive equality requires actions to achieve equality of opportunity between men and women, and actions to correct the inequalities of power between men and women. Given that masculine and feminine roles are socially constructed and maintained through patriarchal culture, CEDAW provides that State Parties are obligated to take all appropriate measures to modify socio-cultural patterns and stereotypes, and to eliminate prejudices and cultural practices based in sexist ideas.

The purpose of this policy document is to provide FAO with a framework to guide its efforts to achieve gender equality in all its technical work and to assess results, and calls on the whole organization to contribute to these efforts. This policy specifies FAO's goal and objectives related to gender equality, and delineates an accountability structure to ensure policy oversight, and achievement of results (Annex A). This includes specifying roles and responsibilities for coordinating and supporting the implementation of the policy (Annex B). A separate human resource action plan addressing gender parity issues in FAO has been developed for 2010-2013 and a gender policy for human resources is planned for the longer term.

This policy document also responds to the performance and reporting standards for UN entities required by the UN System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women which was endorsed by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in October 2006, as a means of accelerating gender equality and women's empowerment within the policies and programs of the UN system, and implementing the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2¹. The SWAP framework establishes a common understanding of, and some standard requirements for, gender equality and women's empowerment. It is intended to promote both accountability and leadership by providing senior managers with clear guidelines as to what they are accountable for and for ensuring adequate resources and capacity in their entities to be successful leaders on gender equality and women's empowerment.

RATIONALE

Current data indicate that about 45% of the world's population depends on agriculture, forestry, fishing or hunting for their livelihoods and that worldwide, women constitute 43 per cent of the agricultural labor force producing a large portion of the world's food crops². Women's roles range from cultivators on their own or others plots, as unpaid or paid workers, employers and employees, and as wage-laborers in both on- and off-farm enterprises alongside their parental and child rearing roles and responsibilities. Everywhere in the world, women face constraints that limit their capacity to contribute to agricultural production and in taking advantage of new opportunities arising from changes shaping the rural economy. They face overt and implicit discrimination in access to key productive resources such as land and services such as credit and extension; they face wage discrimination in rural labor markets; they are also more likely to be in part-time, seasonal and/or low-paying jobs when engaged in rural wage employment; and they often work without remuneration on family farms.

This disproportional disadvantage or "gender gap" exists for many productive assets, inputs and services including land, livestock, labor, education, extension and financial services. It reduces women's productivity and diminishes their contributions to the agriculture sector, and not only affects their wellbeing and that of their families, especially in terms of their food and nutrition security, but also imposes a high cost on the economy through productivity losses³. As demonstrated in the FAO flagship publication, the State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011 on women in agriculture,

¹ CEB/2006/2: United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women: focusing on results and impact.
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/gm/UN_system_wide_P_S_CEB_Statement_2006.pdf

See Annex 1 for the policy

² FAOSTAT, 2006 & State of Food and Agriculture, Women & Agriculture -Closing the Gender Gap for Development, 2011

³ FAO: State of Food and Agriculture, Women & Agriculture -Closing the Gender Gap for Development, 2011

closing the gender gap in agriculture would produce significant gains for society by increasing agricultural productivity, reducing poverty and hunger and promoting economic growth. Enabling women to access productive resources to the same extent as men would increase yields on their farms by 20–30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5–4 percent, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12–17 percent. In recent years, the combined food, climate and financial crises have led to a renewed attention to the roles women play in producing food and in agricultural production. FAO estimates that worldwide about 925 million people are undernourished, with women accounting for a high proportion of the chronically hungry. Closing this gender gap in agriculture alone could lift 100–150 million people out of hunger.

FAO believes that increased attention is needed to reducing the gender gap across all areas of its work. At the same time, FAO recognizes that agricultural production relies heavily on the interdependence, complementarity and partnership between women and men in the family. It is therefore important to emphasize that reducing the gender gap is done in a way that pays attention to and advances this complementarity and partnership. FAO believes that progress toward gender equality requires consistent and increased institutional investment in gender expertise within the organization as well as strengthened mechanisms and processes to ensure concrete results.

In order to achieve its mandate, FAO will integrate gender issues in all facets of its work. It will ensure that gender mainstreaming becomes standard practice in its all normative work and regional, sub-regional and country level programs and projects. This action is in line with intergovernmental mandates on gender mainstreaming requiring to ensure that all its information sharing and knowledge management activities, work on developing normative public goods, policies, regional, sub-regional and country programs and projects, and technical interventions include a gender mainstreaming approach by incorporating gender analysis, using sex disaggregated data, and paying attention to gender- differentiated impacts. This will contribute to increasing the coverage, effectiveness, efficiency and ultimately the impact of FAO interventions for women and men, while at the same time contributing to achievement of the broader UN goal of human rights and social justice.

FAO's Gender Equality Goals and Objectives:

Clear synergies exist between FAO's mandate and its gender equality goals and objectives. FAO believes that progress toward eliminating hunger and poverty will result from: (i) ensuring that its programs and projects as well as normative work reduce the gap between rural women and men in access to productive resources and services; (ii) ensuring that women and men have the ability to influence program and policy decision making and build institutional responsiveness and accountability (voice); and (iii) ensuring that rural women and men can take up economic opportunities to improve their individual and household wellbeing (agency). Women's ability to articulate their needs and priorities will facilitate the ability of rural institutions in member countries to address their needs and become more accountable to both women and men farmers. Similarly, both women and men need an enabling environment to exercise choices and transform them into desired actions and outcomes.

FAO's Gender Equality Goal

The goal of FAO's gender equality policy is to achieve equality between women and men in sustainable agricultural production and rural development for the elimination of hunger and poverty.

This means that FAO will work toward gender equality in **all** its areas of work – food and nutrition security, agriculture and consumer protection, economic and social development, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry, natural resource management and environment, and technical cooperation, knowledge exchange, research and extension.

FAO's Gender Equality Objectives⁴

The following objectives will guide FAOs work in advancing women's and men's equal voice, agency and access to resources and services. FAO will work with countries, other UN agencies, and bilateral, CSO and private sector partners to make progress as specified below toward achieving these objectives by 2025.

- 1. Women participate equally with men as decision-makers in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programs.**
- 2. Women and men have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources**
- 3. Women and men have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development and to markets**
- 4. Women's work burden is reduced by 20% through improved technologies, services and infrastructure**

⁴ FAO will develop benchmarks and time-bound targets for its work toward achievement of all its Gender Equality Objectives

5. Percentage of agricultural aid committed to women/gender-equality related projects is increased to 30% of total agricultural aid⁵

The major responsibility for achieving FAO's gender equality goal and objectives lies with its member countries. FAO is one of many agencies and actors contributing to the achievement of those goals and objectives, and FAO is accountable for the quality, efficiency and timeliness of its contribution at the output level; for monitoring the intermediate outcomes in terms of utility and effectiveness; and for monitoring, along with its partners, progress toward the achievement of its gender equality goal and objectives.

FAO's major contributions toward achievement of its gender equality goal and objectives will come from:

- Generating and communicating the evidence base through the use of gender disaggregated data to substantiate the importance of closing the gender gap for achieving FAO's overall mandate
- Developing and sharing gender equality norms and standards for agricultural policies and programs
- Building and disseminating knowledge on rural women's needs and priorities in all FAO's areas of work
- Ensuring the incorporation of gender analysis in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of all field programs and projects
- Sharing comparative data on how effectively countries are closing the gender gap in different technical areas of agriculture and rural development
- Ensuring that rural women's needs and priorities are documented, heard and addressed in all processes that FAO leads and supports;
- Ensuring that none of its efforts perpetuate gender inequality or worsen discrimination against women
- Working with partners to learn how FAO's support for gender equality in agriculture can be more effective
- Developing internal structures and systems that promote gender equality and ensuring equal participation of men and women in decision making in FAO

⁵ In mid-2000, about 5.1 per cent of total official development assistance to agriculture was committed to women/gender-related agricultural projects (Ransom, E and Bain, C. "Gendering Agricultural Aid" in GENDER & SOCIETY, Vol. 25 No. 1, February 2011 48-74). The levels of ODA to agriculture decreased from the late 1980s to mid-2000s, but have increased in more recent years, reaching about 6 billion USD in 2008. Government expenditure on agriculture increased from 55 billion USD in 1980 to 205 billion USD in 2007 (mostly attributable by spending in Asia - excluding South Asia- and in China in particular). In Sub-Saharan Africa spending on agriculture has decreased substantially from the 1980s (Lowder, S and Carisma, B. "Financial resource flows to agriculture" ESA Working paper No. 11-19, FAO, December 2011).

FAO's Gender Equality Strategy:

FAO will work in two main ways to achieve its gender equality objectives. First, it will adopt gender mainstreaming internally in all its work. This means that all FAO work will systematically examine and address women's as well as men's needs, priorities and experiences as part of the development of policies, normative standards, programs, projects and knowledge building activities so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. Second, FAO will carry out programs and projects specifically targeted to women in cases where the gender equality gap is so large that women cannot access opportunities that are available.

As part of its gender equality strategy, FAO will implement a set of minimum standards by 2015 to ensure the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in all its work and for targeted interventions. FAO will also institute a series of institutional mechanisms and processes to ensure the implementation of these minimum standards.

Gender Mainstreaming Minimum Standards:

To ensure that FAO systematically addresses the gender equality dimensions relevant to its normative work and country-level programs and projects, FAO will put in place the following standards for gender mainstreaming by 2015:

- That all major FAO statistical data bases incorporate sex-disaggregated data, where relevant and as available; in the short-run, this includes mining available data sources, notably household surveys, for gender-disaggregated statistics. In the long-run, separate efforts are to be made to collect and disseminate gender-disaggregated data
- That FAO invest in strengthening the capacity of member countries to develop, analyze and use sex-disaggregated data in policy analysis and program and project planning and evaluation. In particular, technical support to data collection activities in countries such as agricultural censuses and surveys, will promote the mainstreaming of gender issues as indicated in the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2010
- That a gender analysis is carried out and a gender action plan is developed for all strategic objectives and progress on gender equality is measured for all corporate outcomes
- That a financial target for resource allocation for the FAO gender equality policy is set and met
- That a country gender assessment is undertaken as part of the Country Program Framework preparation (this includes all field programs and emergency projects)

- That a gender equality stock-taking exercise is conducted for all services to provide a basis for better implementation of gender mainstreaming including measuring progress and performance
- That gender analysis is incorporated in the formulation of all field programs and projects and gender-related issues are taken into account in project approval and implementation processes
- That all program reviews and evaluations fully integrate gender analysis and report on the gender-related impact of the area they are reviewing.
- That a mandatory gender mainstreaming capacity development program is developed and implemented for all professional staff and managers. This program will be tailored to the specific needs of different units in FAO HQ, regional and country levels and conducted by trainers with the subject matter expertise relevant to those units.
- That minimum gender analytical competencies are specified and all managers and professional staff are required to meet them
- That each technical department establishes a gender equality screening process for all normative work, programs, and knowledge products
- That an assessment of contribution to the achievement of FAO's gender equality objectives is included in the Performance Evaluation and Management Systems (PEMS) of all professional staff
- That human and financial resources and normative and operational results related to gender equality from HQs to country level are systematically tracked and reported to FAO governing bodies and to the UN system

Women-specific targeted Interventions Minimum Standards⁶

FAO will ensure, at a minimum, by 2017 that:

- 30% of FAOs operational work and budget at the country and regional levels is allocated to women-specific targeted interventions. Priority attention will be given to supporting organizations and activities that advance women's access to nutritious food, women's access to and control over land and other productive resources, strengthening rural women's organizations and networks, increasing women's participation and leadership in rural institutions, incorporating women's knowledge of agriculture into programs and projects, and ensuring the development of technologies and services that reduce women's work burden.

⁶ OED's Evaluation of FAO's role and work related to Gender and Development (June 2011) showed that only 13% of FAO's total field program resources over the period 2002-2010 paid attention to women's needs or incorporated a gender perspective and that gender and development projects comprised only 9% of TCP's total portfolio. Since 2002, ESW led and managed work on gender related issues received 1% of the organization's net appropriation.

- TCP's total portfolio allocated to gender–equality related programs and projects is increased from 9 to 30%

Institutional Mechanisms for Implementation and Oversight:

To ensure that gender mainstreaming and women-specific targeted interventions are fully implemented, FAO will institute the following institutional mechanisms and processes by 2015⁷.

- **Capacity Development:**
 - All capacity development activities integrate gender issues as relevant
 - The results of gender equality capacity development activities from HQs to country level are tracked annually
 - All Gender Focal Points (GFP) and alternates are appointed from HQs to country level are senior staff; they have written terms of reference and at least 20 per cent of their time is allocated to GFP functions and tracked in the PEMS system. Special funds are allocated to support GFP networking.
 - FAO is staffed with the appropriate mix of gender expertise and skill to carry out its advocacy, knowledge building and sharing, technical assistance, networking, and monitoring roles in relation to FAO's Gender Equality Policy
 - All management and leadership capacity building opportunities promote gender equality issues
- **Knowledge Building:**
 - Knowledge on gender equality, especially FAO gender equality results, is systematically documented and publicly shared
 - Learning platforms and the sharing of best practice on gender equality programming are supported through exchange programmes and training for both male and female FAO staff
- **Communication:**
 - An advocacy and awareness raising strategy on gender equality is developed and implemented
 - A communication strategy including gender equality is developed as an integral component of public information dissemination
 - All FAO public imaging and branding is gender-sensitive
- **Partnerships:**

⁷ These mechanisms and processes accord with the UN System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) for Implementation of the United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women referenced above

- Partnerships are developed with gender experts, CSOs especially rural women's organizations and networks, local authorities and private sector stakeholders at country and regional levels for advocacy, technical advice, capacity development, monitoring and evaluation
- Partnerships are strengthened with UN agencies especially UN Women to ensure learning and exchange, coordination and cooperation for the achievement of FAO's gender equality objectives
- **Culture Change:**
 - Processes and mechanisms are developed to minimize gender discrimination in the workplace and promote a gender friendly work environment.
- **Monitoring & Reporting:**
 - All organizational units, regional, sub-regional and country offices report annually on their gender equality results. Departmental heads, regional, sub-regional and country representatives provide oversight for the implementation of the policy in their units
 - FAO Conference and Regional conferences include a standing agenda item on gender equality
- **Evaluation:**
 - The evaluation function addresses the extent to which FAO addresses gender equality issues in all the processes it lead and supports
- **Audit:**
 - The audit function annually assesses FAO's capacity to meet its gender equality mandate including gender parity in staffing at HQ, Regional and country levels
- **Oversight:**
 - FAO will establish a Steering Committee which will monitor progress toward the achievement of FAO's gender equality goal and objectives. This Steering Committee will be comprised of representatives from a cross-section of the organization from Senior Managers, FAO Representatives, Gender Officers in the ROs, ESW and other technical departments. It will be headed by an ADG from headquarters and the field on a rotational basis and report to the DG. The Director of ESW will act as the Secretary of this Steering Committee.

The specific roles of the Steering Committee are to :

- Communicate and advocate in-house to reinforce awareness of the importance of the gender equality in the work of FAO and its partners.

- Ensure that gender-related work planning is results-oriented across FAO in accordance with the gender equality results and accountability frameworks.
- Ensure that the allocation and disbursement of funds organization-wide (at HQ, regional and country level) for gender equality are made and tracked on an annual basis
- Establish quality standards for gender equality and hold managers accountable for meeting them
- Ensure that divisions and decentralized offices are managing knowledge about gender equality and gender mainstreaming for continuous learning.
- Commission an external gender audit (of FAOs technical work and mechanisms and processes to implement its gender policy) every 5 years and oversee implementation of the gender audit recommendations.

Annex A: FAO Gender Policy Accountability Framework

