



Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty

Status, trends and gaps



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Foreword

There's no debate about the importance of women for rural economic growth and poverty reduction. They fill many crucial roles, as farmers, wage labourers and small-scale entrepreneurs, as well as caretakers of children and the elderly. Rural women have the potential to lift their households and communities out of poverty. But they are hampered by persistent gender inequities that limit their access to decent work, which they need as a vehicle for economic empowerment, social advancement and political participation.

Policymakers and researchers seeking to respond to this situation are hindered by gaps in data and analysis. To tap rural women's potential contributions and channel investments appropriately requires an understanding of the complex and dynamic challenges women face. Without that knowledge it is impossible to analyse these fundamental issues or propose appropriate responses. This report is a contribution to that knowledge.

Rural women and men have long had very different work experiences, often to the detriment of women. They lag behind men in access to land, credit, a broad range of technologies, information, advisory services and training. They are frequently shut out of 'social capital', such as farmers' organizations, workers' unions and community networks that can enhance productivity and growth. Yet despite these limitations and the enormous burden of unpaid and mostly invisible work they provide at home and in family businesses every day, women make substantial contributions to feeding their families and their nations.

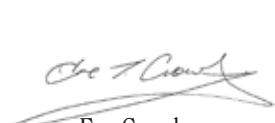
Further complicating the response by policymakers are the variations in the inequities women face, which differ by country and are influenced by social, cultural and religious values and practices.

Also affecting their ability to compete are distant events, such as changes in international trade and migration, financial crises and diversification of the rural economy. This complexity underscores the urgent need for data.

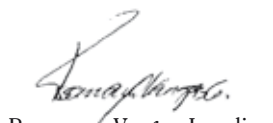
Recognition of this need led our three agencies to organize a technical workshop on the gender dimensions of rural employment, held 31 March to 2 April 2009. It sought answers to important but rarely addressed questions: What do we know exactly about the gender dimensions of agricultural and non-farm rural employment? What are the gaps in data and research? Are there examples of good practices that could be used to address gender inequalities through national policies? This report on the outcomes of the workshop is a first step in providing guidance to policy makers, researchers and development practitioners in developing countries and the international community.

The report reflects the latest thinking on the gender dimensions of rural poverty. The cornerstone of its analysis is the United Nation's Decent Work Agenda, which calls for creating better jobs for both women and men, obtaining social protection for all rural workers, ensuring that labour standards apply to all rural workers and promoting rural institutions that equally represent women's and men's interests.

The workshop and report also highlight collaboration among the three agencies on a topic that is central not only to our mandates but also to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Almost half the world's people and three quarters of the poor live in rural areas. Addressing gender and rural employment is therefore central to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals – not just the one on gender equality.



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Introduction

Gender equality is an essential component of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. Equitable access to more and better jobs in rural areas enable rural women to become effective economic actors and engines of growth; as well as to produce or acquire the food, water, fuel and social services their families need. Indeed, the quality of the care mothers are able to give to their children and other household members contributes to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and improves prospects for future generations. The important gaps in data availability and analytical work in many key areas handicap policy makers' efforts to address these crucial issues adequately when designing poverty alleviation and growth strategies.

With the aim of promoting gender equitable rural employment strategies, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Labour Office (ILO), partnered to carry out an assessment of the latest thinking on the gender dimension of rural and agricultural employment. The three organizations are committed to improving gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and rural areas, and to strengthening women's leadership and decision-making participation.

To ensure that reliable statistical data, field-based evidence and good practices highlighting innovative policy solutions would be made available, FAO, IFAD and ILO issued a call for papers to which almost 200 authors responded. Forty papers were then selected for presentation and discussion at a technical workshop on gender and rural employment organized in Rome, from 31 March to 2 April 2009. The main selection criteria for the papers presented were academic rigour and originality of the data and analysis, rather than geographical coverage, even though efforts were made to ensure as balanced

a geographical coverage as possible (72 percent of the papers related to Asia and Africa). Most of the papers selected had been prepared and elaborated by academics (45 percent) and research institutes (19 percent) but also by UN organizations (24 percent), national administrations (7 percent) and civil society (5 percent). The workshop gathered 120 technical experts and development agency representatives, to discuss issues presented in the forty papers and to share their knowledge, questions and experiences.

Designed to encourage maximum interaction among participants, three main topics were discussed: key gender issues, gaps in knowledge, data and approach, and policy implications. From the rich group discussions, the most important conclusions include the following:

- Gender inequalities in rural employment exist everywhere, regardless of the level of economic development in the country/region, but exhibit different patterns according to social, cultural, religious and economic factors. Some of them – such as the burden of unpaid work at home, lack of education and bargaining power, and limited access to assets - clearly constitute significant economic disadvantages for women compared to men. In this context, it is interesting to observe that 90 percent of the wage gap between men and women in developed or developing countries is unexplained: in other words, it is attributed to gender discrimination.
- Women tend to be more risk adverse than men when engaging in rural employment and women's heavy burden of unpaid work is one of the most important factors constraining their access to paid work in rural settings.
- Gender patterns of rural employment change over time and differ across countries, in response to new trends, shocks and opportunities but some

deep set gender inequalities remain. Changes in international trade, migration, financial crises, diversification of the rural economy are a few of the many phenomena that play an important role in changing men and women's rural employment opportunities and roles.

- It is not enough to create more jobs for rural men and women. The quality or decency of those jobs also matter.
- Financial services must be linked to wider sustainable development processes, so that increased access to financial services also contributes to the development of markets, value chains and the strengthening of local and national economies. Both the opportunities and the challenges have gender dimensions that need to be taken into account in the current process of innovation and expansion.
- Sex-disaggregated data are needed to fill critical gaps in knowledge and improve policy decision-making processes.
- Since gender differences in rural employment are many and often inter-related, a package of complementary policy measures are needed, including legal reforms that promote gender equalities, social safety nets, support to the creation of farmers, women and youths' organizations, child care programmes, female education, instruments to improve access to information and labour markets.

The main objective of this publication was to gather the most important data and issues presented and discussed at the workshop to share them with the community of practice in rural development. It combines empirical data and good practices based on national and international experiences on the gender dimension of rural and agricultural employment. The publication presents an update

analysis of current development issues that are crucial for addressing rural poverty and achieving the Millenium Development Goals.

The publication is structured into three main parts: Part 1 is an overview provided by Marzia Fontana (Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex) with Cristina Paciello (University of Rome "La Sapienza") presenting issues related to gender equality and rural employment for poverty reduction, that includes the construction of a gender analytical framework across regions and contexts. This section also identifies appropriate policy responses and gender based constraints to the achievement of decent work for all. Part 2 outlines and analyses key issues from the forty papers presented at the workshop, and provides abstracts of all those papers. Finally Part 3 offers a selection of six workshop papers that cover thematic areas of particular relevance to discussions about gender and rural employment.

Acknowledgement

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- Part II was written by Soline de Villard who consolidated the workshop contributions with David Suttie and Brett Shapiro, under the guidance of Jennie Dey de Pryck, Peter Wobst, Eve Crowley, Loretta de Luca and Rosemary Vargas-Lundius and in collaboration with the 40 authors (and their co-authors) who presented their papers at the FAO-ILO-IFAD Workshop “Gaps, trends and current research in gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty” held in Casa San Bernardo, Rome, 31 March – 2 April 2009: Dinara Alimdjanova; Leigh Anderson (and Diana Fletschner); Kirsten Appendini; Hedayatullah Ashrafi; Jahangir Alam Chowdhury; Albertine De Lange; Cheryl Doss; Simel Esim (and Mansour Omeira); Nelly Figueiredo; Christy George; Ceren Gürkan (and Issa Sanogo); Maria Teresa Gutierrez; Helen Hambly (and Silvia Sarapura); Maria Hartl; Tom Hertz (and Ana Paula de la O); Johannes Jütting; Govind Kelkar; Ayal Kimhi; Amelita King Dejardin; Miet Maertens; Mac Mashiri

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|----------|---|
| AIDS | Advanced Immune Deficiency Disorder |
| CBO | community-based organization |
| CEACR | Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Applications (ILO) |
| CRC | Convention on Rights of the Child |
| DDS | Deccan Development Society |
| EGS | Employment Guarantee Scheme |
| ESCAP | Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| ETI | Ethical Training Initiative (Kenya) |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FHH | female-headed household |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HEBI | Horticultural Ethical Business Initiative |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome |
| IATP | Integrated Agricultural Training Programme |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IFPRI | International Food Policy Research Institute |
| ILC | International Law Commission |
| ILO | International Labour Office |
| INPC | National Consumer Price Index (Brazil) |
| INSTRAW | United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women |
| IPEC | International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour |
| IUF | International Union of Food and Agricultural Workers |
| JFFLS | Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (FAO) |
| LDC | least-developed countries |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MEDA | Mennonite Economic Development Associates |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| MHH | male-headed households |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| NREGA | National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (India) |
| NSS | national sample surveys |
| NTAE | non-traditional agricultural exports |
| NUPAWU | National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers (Uganda) |
| ODI | Overseas Development Institute |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PNAD | National Research by Sample of Dwelling (Brazil) |
| PROGRESA | Programa de Educacion, Salud y Alimentacion |
| RIGA | rural income generating activities |
| RPO | Rural Producers' Association |
| SEWA | Self-Employed Women's Association |
| SHG | self-help group |
| SNA | System of National Accounts (UN) |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| TVSD | Technical and Vocational Skills Development |
| UNAIDS | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Fund |
| UNIFEM | United Nations Development Fund for Women |
| UNIPO | United Nations Industrial Development Organization |
| UNRISD | United Nations Research Institute for Social Development |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| WIETA | Wine Industry and Agriculture Ethical Trading |

