

# Gender

KEY TO SUSTAINABILITY AND FOOD SECURITY

FROM WORDS TO ACTION...



Plan of Action for Women in Development, 1996-2001

# Foreword

*Sustainable agriculture and equitable and effective rural development cannot be pursued without explicit recognition of the substantial contribution of rural women. In an atmosphere of increasing poverty, food insecurity, rural out-migration and environmental degradation, women continue to provide food for their families despite limited access to land, credit, capital and technology, lack of education, training and information, and an unfavorable legal and policy environment. The perseverance with which rural women confront these obstacles signals the vast untapped potential that could be released to benefit both this and future generations.*

*FAO is committed to mainstreaming the concerns of rural women into its operations, and significant steps have already been taken to accomplish this. The FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development (1996-2001), adopted by the FAO Conference in 1995, presents a framework for ensuring that gender issues become an integral part of the Organization's work, both normative and operational. As gender is a cross-cutting issue and requires organization-wide responsibility, the Plan was prepared using a highly inclusive and participatory approach in order to secure a strong staff involvement in the Plan's implementation, and an adequate allocation by management of resources toward this end.*

*The result has been that, for each of the technical areas for which FAO is responsible, 'Programmes of Action' for the advancement of women have been developed by the staff members who work in those areas. These Programmes seek to strengthen the technical, professional and resource capacities of FAO to address issues of gender, and to diffuse responsibility for integrating such issues among all those working in the development arena. This will help ensure that FAO's commitments to the advancement of women are translated into concrete achievements. The Programmes form the core of the FAO Plan of Action, a summarized version of which is presented in this publication.*

*The Introduction presents the broad conceptual framework for analyzing the implications of gender for sustainable agriculture and rural development, including what development needs from women and what women need from development. The second section, "From Words to Action", shows how FAO is transforming these ideas into strategies and actions, specifically in the areas of natural resources, agricultural support systems, food and nutrition, and improved policy-making and planning. The final section, "FAO Institutional Arrangements", identifies the administrative mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress both for implementing the Plan and promoting equal employment opportunities for women throughout the Organization.*

*As the United Nations Agency responsible for agriculture, forestry and fisheries worldwide, and with the mandate to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development as well as food security for all people, FAO will carry on and further its mission to ensure that women, in addition to men, have the support and access to resources they need to pursue sustainable livelihoods and an improved quality of life. Through the Plan of Action, the Organization will ensure that this pledge is carried forward to the next millennium, with all the resources and creativity it has at its command.*

**Jacques Diouf**  
*Director-General*

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*The FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development (1996-2001) is the Organization's continuing response to the global events of the 1990s as well as the recommendations of recent international fora including the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Nutrition, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the World Food Summit. It also represents the FAO framework for assisting Member Nations in implementing the Platform for Action, a global blueprint of actions to promote the advancement of women that was the major outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September, 1995.*



## A new framework for development

The root causes of persistent poverty and food insecurity among rural women and the families they support are inter-related:

- lack of access and control of productive resources and services
- over- and underemployment
- inequalities in employment opportunities and remuneration
- exclusion from decision- and policy-making
- an unfavourable legal environment

**For FAO, addressing these priority areas is fundamental to enhancing the status of rural women and achieving food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development.**

**Women in Development (WID)** has been very successful in increasing development workers' awareness of women's distinct priorities, situations and concerns. It has stimulated networking and alliance building among rural women and their advocates. WID emphasizes the substantial roles of rural women and their contributions to food and agricultural production in order to alter development practices and direct scarce economic resources to them.

It became evident, however, that simply targeting women as a group with special needs was not enough. By treating women as special beneficiaries in projects and programmes, women's issues often became mere appendages to mainstream development interventions. It



*It is necessary to "make visible" the differences between women and men in terms of their roles and workloads (Ecuador).*

**GENDER** refers not to women or men per se, but to the relations between them, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution.

**GENDER ROLES** are the socially ascribed roles of women and men, which vary among different societies and cultures, classes and ages, and during different periods in history. Gender-specific roles and responsibilities are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions.

**GENDER ANALYSIS** seeks answers to fundamental questions such as who does or uses what, how and why. The purpose of gender analysis is not to create a separate body of social knowledge about women, but to rethink current processes—such as natural resource use and management, economic adjustment and transformation, or demographic changes—to better understand the gender factors and realities within them. Armed with this knowledge, it should be possible to avoid the mistakes of the past and tailor interventions to better meet women's and men's specific gender-based constraints, needs and opportunities.

was the overall structural factors in society—the rules and practices of the household, community, market and the state—which sustained women's subordinate position. These needed to be understood and effectively changed.

**The Gender and Development (GAD) approach** seeks to understand the ways gender constrains or advances efforts to promote sustainable economic growth while ensuring an equitable distribution of its benefits. Emphasis is placed on analyzing the incentives and constraints under which women and men work in order to "make visible" the differences between them in terms of their roles and workloads, the impact of interventions on them, and their ability to gain access to resources and decision-making. It also analyzes the implications of these findings for planning and implementation.

Efficiency, a central component of the approach, provides the tools and methods for more sound interventions. Greater participation is sought from women at all stages of the development process and at all levels. **The use of a participatory approach helps to empower women by raising their consciousness, as well as their voices, about their needs, rights and capabilities.**

In this way, a gender and development approach not only makes the process of gender subordination visible, it also helps to mobilize all actors to work towards social and economic change.

Our perceptions of the meaning of development have changed. In the post-UNCED era, and as a result of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and Fourth World Conference on Women, FAO's newly established Sustainable Development Department is committed to making sustainable development operational. This implies moving beyond the rhetoric of international debates to actually integrating the human, social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability into a coherent global vision for sustainable agriculture and rural development.

**The advancement of women is central to achieving sustainable development.** Women are responsible for natural resource management through their day-to-day productive and reproductive tasks of providing fuel, water and food for household consumption and for sale. However, they are rarely in a position to influence decisions that determine the allocation of resources and, hence, the sustainable use of land, water and woodlands. Women have learned ecologically sustainable methods of agriculture and have acquired extensive knowledge about genetic diversity. If they are denied partnership in development, this wisdom is lost.

Women are often the major suppliers of household subsistence. When their access to productive resources declines, more people suffer from poverty and its related effects, including hunger, malnutrition and illness. Improving women's access to resources and services increases farm productivity, provides a more efficient use of resources, and ultimately yields higher profitability.

Promoting development that is economically efficient, environmentally friendly and equitable requires a complete reorientation of development efforts to enhance women's capacities. FAO seeks to achieve this goal by addressing what women need from development, as outlined in **the strategic objectives for the Plan of Action for Women in Development:**

- Gender-based equity in access to, and control of, productive resources.
- Increased participation in decision- and policy-making processes at all levels.
- A reduction in workloads and enhanced opportunities for remunerated employment and income.

## PLAN OF ACTION FOR WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

### THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAN:

- Ensure an evolving and dynamic understanding of the situation of rural women, including their contributions to, and constraints in, agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
- Incorporate gender concerns in all technical areas addressed by FAO.
- Enhance the benefits that rural women derive from their contributions to sustainable agriculture, forestry, fisheries and rural development, as well as strengthen their capacities to contribute to national development in each of these sectors.

### TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN, FAO WILL FOCUS ON FOUR INTER-RELATED AREAS:

- **Increase the availability, accuracy and use of quantitative and qualitative data and information on the gender dimension of agriculture and rural development.**
- **Develop and utilize methodologies, tools and training activities to assist development specialists in FAO and Member Nations in integrating a gender perspective into agricultural and rural development approaches.**
- **Strengthen the skills and capacities of rural women to reduce the burden of their labour and increase their economic gains.**
- **Support the formulation and application of gender-responsive agricultural and rural development policy.**



"WE USE THE EARTH'S RESOURCES  
...IF WE DON'T ALL WORK TOGETHER  
...WHAT WILL BE LEFT FOR OUR CHILDREN?"  
*(words of women)*

## [ LAND AND WATER ]

Women play an important role in land and water management. They are most often the collectors, users and managers of water in the household as well as farmers of irrigated and rain-fed crops. Because of these roles, women have considerable knowledge about water resources, including quality and reliability, restrictions, and acceptable storage methods.

**Women farmers, using traditional methods, have been effective in conserving soil fertility.** Given access to appropriate resources, they practice fallowing, crop rotation, intercropping, mulching and a variety of other soil conservation and enrichment techniques. Over the years, rural women have developed practices for the efficient and sustainable use of the resources available to them. For these reasons it is important to build upon and enhance their skills in land and water management strategies and involve them in protecting and sustaining land and water resources.

Current processes are undermining women's ability to use and conserve scarce land and water resources sustainably. Privatization, population pressure and the dissolution of customary land tenure have reduced the amount and quality of land available to rural communities. More and more people are obliged to use land ill-suited to continuous cultivation. This increases the rate of environmental degradation and deprives them of their livelihoods.

**Insecure land tenure reduces people's incentives to maintain soil quality** because they have no permanent rights to the land. Access to land affects both men and women. In areas where it is restricted, however, women face the added difficulty of having their requests for land mediated through men. Even the use of small plots must be granted by a husband, inherited from a father or requested from male village elders. If women have their own plots, they are usually small, dispersed, remote and less fertile. In areas with a high divorce or abandonment rate and where land remains with men in the



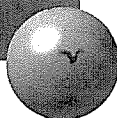
*Women have considerable knowledge about water resources, including quality and reliability, restrictions, and acceptable storage methods (Niger).*

### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

*FAO will promote and improve the collection, analysis, widespread dissemination and use of data and information on the role of women in natural resources. FAO will also seek to increase rural women's participation in technology generation and dissemination, in decision-making at all levels, and in training activities on the sustainable utilization of natural resources. In addition, FAO will work to identify, document and remove the constraints to equal employment opportunities and remuneration for women in natural resources related industries.*

#### Land and Water

- Develop gender-responsive advisory materials for on-farm water management, soil management (including tillage methods, soil conservation methods and strategies), and plant nutrition practices (including fertilizer acquisition and the allocation of plant nutrients within the farm).
- Incorporate gender into the *Guidelines for Land Use Planning* and the *Guidelines for the Adoption of a*



*Rural women have developed practices for the efficient and sustainable use of the resources available to them (India).*

case of separation, women are reluctant to invest time and resources into long-term land improvements such as building irrigation or drainage systems, terracing, planting tree crops or other activities that maintain soil fertility.

**When women do not own land, they often have no access to agricultural support services** such as credit with which to purchase inputs, to training in land and water development, or to water resources for irrigation.

In many cases, water resource policies and programmes have proven detrimental to women's land and water rights and thus to their sustainable management and use. Interventions such as irrigation often fail to take into consideration the existing imbalance between men and women's ownership rights, division of labour, and incomes. Irrigation raises the value of the land, bringing about social change which usually favours men. In

addition, irrigation systems may favour mono-cropping, often for the production of cash crops, and thus may exclude provisions for a more diversified cropping pattern supporting a variety of food crops. Cash crops are usually controlled by men and decisions regarding the scheduling of irrigation water tend to be made without consideration for women's productive and reproductive activities.

**Women must be involved in policy-making and planning** to ensure the most productive and efficient use of land and water resources to meet present and future food and agricultural demands. Women farmers need to be part of the planning and **implementation of land and water management programmes**, with full access to inputs and organizational arrangements. Equally important is the increased participation of women in **training and extension activities** that deal with soil resources and land-use planning, and in water conservation and development.

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



### From Words to Action...

- Participatory Approach to Better Land Husbandry.*
- Prepare case studies on the development and testing of participatory methodologies for land use planning, specifically with regard to women's roles in priority-setting, conflict resolution, and stakeholder negotiations over land use alternatives.
  - Prepare briefing sheets on *Women and Land Use Planning* and *Women and Soil Conservation*.
  - Develop a "tool kit" on *Women in Land, Water, and Plant Nutrient Development*.
  - Develop guidelines and training materials on how to increase women's participation in water users' associations and in training courses for on-farm water management.
  - Incorporate detailed information by gender and age on land tenure and on the labour inputs for land use operations in the FAO Universal Land Use Database (ULUD).



[ PLANTS ]

Women play a central role in the development of sustainable agricultural systems, particularly in improving crop and grassland productivity. In sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that women contribute 30 to 80 per cent of the agricultural labour for crop production, depending on area and economic class. In nearly all rice growing areas of Asia men traditionally perform such activities as land preparation, ploughing, irrigation and leveling of the fields. However, sowing, transplanting, weeding and crop processing are usually women's work.

Women in Latin America are also heavily engaged in crop production. Surveys in Colombia and Peru show that female participation in agricultural field tasks ranges from 25 to 45 per cent. The contribution of women to crop production in the Near East varies widely from country to country, but in many countries it is substantial. Where drought has forced men to migrate, women have increasingly taken on agricultural tasks that were traditionally done by men.

Given their varied and complex responsibilities in rural households, women often have a special interest in the diverse and multiple uses of plants. Women farmers play a leading role in maintaining crop diversity and populations of valued wild plant species.

They often have considerable knowledge about the characteristics, distribution and site requirements of indigenous trees, shrubs and herbs. **Women's knowledge of plants for food, fuel, health and crafts plays a decisive role in the conservation of different species and varieties** according to their usefulness to the community. Plant genetic resources for food are selected by women according to such variables as nutrition and medicinal properties, taste, texture, processing requirements, storage qualities, resistance to pests and diseases, soil and agro-climatic adaptability.

There is limited knowledge and recognition of women's roles in seed production, crop manage-

**Genetic resources, particularly plant genetic resources, are increasingly under threat. Rural women in developing countries hold the key to many of the planet's agricultural systems for food production, seed selection and protection of agro-biodiversity. Home gardens are often used as experimental plots where women adapt or diversify wild and indigenous species. Research in home gardens in one single village in Thailand revealed 230 different plant species, many of which had been rescued from a neighbouring forest before it was cleared.**

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

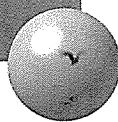


**Plants**

- Carry out studies on the role of women in on-farm in-situ conservation, and the use of genetic resources, integrated crop and grassland management and production, integrated pest management and seed production and exchange.
- Prepare case-studies on: the role of women in urban and peri-urban horticulture production; the factors limiting the participation of women in integrated-pest management activities; women's home

gardens and their contribution to food security; and on gender factors in tree crop intercropping systems.

- Collect and disseminate information on the gender aspects of technologies and sustainable production systems for different agro-ecological zones.
- Highlight gender issues in technical guidelines and in the identification and dissemination of appropriate production, protection and propagation technologies, and training activities.



*Women contribute 30 to 80 per cent of the agricultural labour for crop production (Myanmar).*

ment, improvement and protection, or in the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources. Consequently, women are often excluded as participants in, and beneficiaries of, development activities in plant production and protection.

More information is needed on the role of women in crop production and protection in order to design extension and training activities that better target them. **Technology development must be carried out in collaboration with women farmers** in order to benefit from their knowledge and respond to their needs concerning the sustainable use and conservation of plants for crops, medicines, crafts and other purposes.

## [ ANIMAL RESOURCES ]

Women play key roles in raising animals and in harvesting and processing livestock products both for home consumption and for sale. Although men are often the owners (and sellers) of large livestock, **it is the women who perform most of the household labour devoted to animals.** As males seek off-farm employment, rural women are assuming greater and more varied roles in managing the family farm, including animal husbandry operations. At the same time, and in response to the expanding urban demand for livestock products, peri- and intra-urban stock raising have increased as income-earning enterprises. It is the women and children who are mainly involved in these activities. In most cities in the developing world, women are also vendors of prepared foods, many of which utilize livestock products.

The contribution of women to livestock production, processing, and to marketing livestock products is

### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



From Words to Action...

- Undertake specific measures to increase the number of women participating in plant-nutrition and fertilizer extension and training programmes.

#### Animal Resources

- Incorporate gender-disaggregated information on household labour, income, and management structure into the FAO Global Livestock Production Systems Database.
- Prepare and publish case studies on the benefits of incorporating gender into livestock production activities.
- Address gender issues (for Member Nations) in training workshops in livestock sector policy and planning.
- Incorporate gender-disaggregated data and information into the Regional Dairy Information Networks.
- Carry out gender-targeted training programmes on the technical and managerial aspects of animal husbandry, feed resources, nutrition and health, and

often overlooked. Animal health and production extension services are rarely directed towards women and therefore are not sensitive to their needs. **Women's roles are increasing in virtually every link of the producer-to-consumer chain within the livestock sector.** It is imperative to enhance their access to appropriate technologies and information regarding livestock husbandry and processing of animal products. This requires technologies that are labour-saving and efficient, environmentally friendly and profitable, and that take into consideration consumer needs for products that are safe, nutritious and affordable.

To achieve this goal, policy-makers, planners and development workers must have a better understanding of the relative and often shifting roles of all family members in livestock-related activities, including division of labour, decision-making and traditional knowledge and practices. This will ensure that all actors in the sector are better served, and that women, in addition to men, participate more fully in decisions regarding technology generation and dissemination, and receive training in the technical, managerial and organizational aspects of improved livestock production and processing.



*Women play key roles in raising animals and in harvesting and processing livestock products (Yemen).*

## [ FORESTS AND TREES ]

**Women's knowledge of forest products represents a vast database of species which scientists are unable to catalogue. Tribal women in India, for example, know medicinal uses for some three hundred forest species.**

Rural women are major caretakers and users of forests. They are the main gatherers of fodder and fuelwood, and they seek out fruits and nuts to provide food for their families. In addition, they use bark, roots and herbs for medicines. **Women's gathering activities are very important to household income and nutrition.** The products they collect are important supplements to the family diet. Much of what they gather is processed or marketed bringing in supplementary cash income. During periods of famine and shortage,

### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

on the processing and marketing of livestock products, in order to improve women's access to, and employment in, livestock sector institutions and services.

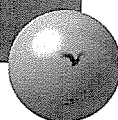
- Incorporate gender-specific traditional knowledge and practices into FAO's Global Program for the Management of Farm Animal Genetic Resources.

#### Forests and Trees

- Incorporate gender-disaggregated data into: existing databases (specifically the

database on communal management); research on community forestry legal frameworks; marketing and other studies; and project reporting.

- Develop gender-sensitive training materials in community forestry, and distribute this material to universities, training institutes and NGOs for use in training programmes. Translate the materials into local languages to ensure improved accessibility for rural women and men.



*Forests often represent an important source of employment for women (Asia - Pacific).*

women gather buffer foods which would not be consumed under circumstances of less duress but can be crucial to family survival during a crisis. Beyond the immediate benefits of food and medicinal plants that are consumed by the family or sold on the market, easy access to forest products, particularly fuelwood, gives women time for other activities.

**Women contribute to forestry in many significant ways. They play a key role in agroforestry**, a farming system that incorporates trees, crops and livestock production. **They are active in watershed management** where actions to reduce soil erosion, such as maintaining forest cover, lessen the hazard of floods and the silting of reservoirs and waterways. Women also contribute to tree improvement and propagation to ensure the proliferation of useful tree species, and to forest protection and conservation. This, in turn, protects the many animal and plant varieties that depend on forests for their survival and improves the overall health and maintenance of forest ecosystems.

Forests often represent an important source of employment for women. From nurseries to plantations and from logging to wood processing, women make up a significant proportion of the labour force in forest industries throughout the developing world. Although rural women contribute substantially to forest harvesting indus-

### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



From Words to Action...

- Prepare a programme for the promotion of equal employment opportunities in wood-based industries.
- Develop gender-sensitive guidelines on the processing of non-wood forest products for income generation, on the measures to reduce fuelwood consumption, and on marketing forest products for grassroots-level operators.
- Prepare guidelines to improve the use of wood for cooking and heating at the household level and to improve living conditions with regard to indoor air quality and wood fuel consumption patterns.
- Prepare a case study that illustrates successful examples of forest harvesting methods that reduce women's workloads and increase work safety.
- Produce analytical papers and case studies on the roles of women in agroforestry, watershed management, dryland forestry, wildlife and conservation area management, forest genetics and tree improvement, forest protection and

tries and marketing, their roles are not fully recognized and documented, their wages are not equal to those of men, and their working conditions tend to be poor.

In many countries, large areas of communal forest land have been privatized and set aside for agriculture and commercial forestry resulting in widespread deforestation and a decline in access to woodland resources. As a result, women must spend more time collecting fuelwood and other forest products. In addition, as more and more men find employment in the towns and cities, women must take on the work previously done by them. This additional burden leaves little time for the lengthy tasks of collecting and processing forest products which are important to the family economy.

**The sustainable utilization of forest resources requires the participation of all rural inhabitants, including women.** Although women's needs often differ from those of men, many programmes tend to overlook their needs regarding the forest. Women have unequal access to forestry information, training, education and research. Policy-makers and planners lack adequate data, information and methodologies to respond to women's specific needs. As a result, national capacity for the development, conservation, management and protection of forests and forest ecosystems is constrained.

## [ FISHERIES ]

Women's contribution to fisheries is substantial. In some regions women are engaged directly in fish production, fishing from the shore, small boats or canoes, or serving as crews on boats. In many communities, women also play a major role in making and/or mending fishing gear. Where aquaculture is practiced, women's contribution in feeding and harvesting fish is immense.

In most fishing communities women predominate in the handling, preservation and processing of fish products. During post-harvest activities they assist in unloading boats and nets. During the processing activities they work at sun-drying, salting, smoking and preparing fish paste and cakes. The tasks related to these procedures, such as collecting water and salt, or fuel for the smoking ovens, are time-consuming and physically exhausting. Post-harvest losses are often very high due to inefficient technologies, ineffective methods, and inadequate storage facilities. **Improvements in equipment and methods can make a significant difference in the quantity of fish available** for home consumption

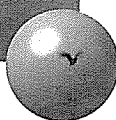
### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

management, and on women's roles in informal and formal forestry research, education and extension.

- Develop guidelines to assist extension planners and designers meet the needs of women more effectively, and incorporate gender into forestry curricula in educational and training organizations.
- Develop methodologies to increase women's access to more appropriate technical, marketing and other types of forestry information and advice.

### Fisheries

- Establish an Internet-accessible electronic bulletin board/discussion group on gender issues and activities in the fisheries sector.
- Screen all fisheries project documents to ensure that, where relevant, gender considerations are taken into account. This will be done by the Core Group on Women in Fisheries.
- Prepare case studies that highlight and publicize "success stories" of women in fisheries.



**In 1986 the Core Group on Women in Fisheries was established to serve as a focal point for women in fisheries within the Organization. The Core Group serves as an important catalyst in ensuring that fisheries professionals at all levels appreciate the significant and continuing contributions of women in the fisheries sector.**

**It provides these professionals with the managerial and developmental tools and methodologies needed to enhance women's involvement in the sector.**

and for sale, even without an increase in the size of the catch.

In many regions women have the primary and often exclusive responsibility for marketing fish products. Since the income from the sale of fresh or processed fish often represents an important contribution to a family's overall income, **effective marketing is critical in determining the family's standard of nutrition and living.** This is especially true where women control this income—they are more likely than men to spend money on

alternative sources of food and other basic household necessities.

The role of women in fisheries tends to be small-scale and home-based, however, in some countries they work as wage labourers in large-scale processing operations. In a few regions of the developing world, women are important fisheries entrepreneurs, earning, handling and controlling significant amounts of money and financing a variety of fisheries enterprises.

Development efforts over the last few decades have made it clear that sustained improvements in productivity and the sustainable utilization of fisheries resources can be obtained upon recognition of the crucial role of women. Yet, women in fisheries often lack access to physical and capital resources, to decision-making and leadership positions, and to training and formal education. Access to these would improve the efficiency, profitability and sustainability of their activities. Although large-scale fisheries development projects, mechanization, and improved technology may increase productive capacities, they can also increase the post-harvest work of women. This increased workload is often per-

From Words to Action...



*In some regions women are engaged directly in fish production (Bay of Bengal).*

formed without improved remuneration, or deprives them of traditional forms of employment and income. If a fisheries activity is enlarged or mechanized, it often becomes the domain of men.

**It is necessary to ensure that women are equal partners and productive and self-reliant participants in fisheries activities aimed at improving their own and their family's nutritional and living standards.** Women must be given the opportunity to acquire appropriate technologies that enable them to make the greatest possible contribution to sustainable development and growth. As experience has shown, the benefits of programmes and projects aimed at men have rarely benefited women and, at times, have made their situation worse. For these reasons, it is essential to increase women's participation and decision-making in fisheries development interventions.



## A New Vision of the Changing Roles of Rural Women

TRADITIONAL VERSION	NEW VERSION
<p><b>RURAL WOMAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hoes and ploughs</li> <li>• Sows</li> <li>• Weeds</li> <li>• Harvests</li> </ul>	<p><b>AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans and executes vegetable and grain production programmes</li> <li>• Responsible for seed procurement, land preparation, crop multiplication, irrigation, fertilization and pest control</li> <li>• Responsible for breeding, disease control, care of livestock and processing of livestock products</li> </ul>
<p><b>RURAL WOMAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plants trees</li> <li>• Gathers wood</li> <li>• Makes charcoal</li> </ul>	<p><b>TRANSPORT AND ENERGY MANAGER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitors household energy consumption</li> <li>• Develops strategies for optimizing domestic-use production systems</li> <li>• Designs and implements cost-effective strategies for use and maintenance of energy supply</li> <li>• Tries to avoid environmental destruction</li> </ul>
<p><b>RURAL WOMAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cares for house and yard areas</li> </ul>	<p><b>ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL MANAGER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designs and maintains living and work areas to maximize utilization</li> <li>• Works to preserve the ecology while providing pleasant surroundings for the community</li> </ul>
<p><b>RURAL WOMAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processes food</li> <li>• Cooks food</li> <li>• Maintains cooking and food-processing equipment</li> </ul>	<p><b>NUTRITION ENGINEER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeper and transmitter of knowledge of preparation techniques</li> <li>• Knows many nutritional values of crop and livestock resources</li> <li>• Conserves nutrients and recycles</li> </ul>
<p><b>RURAL WOMAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finds and brings water home for cooking, cleaning and drinking</li> </ul>	<p><b>HYDROLOGIC SUPPLY TECHNICIAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locates water resources</li> <li>• Allocates supplies</li> <li>• Transports water</li> </ul>

Source: adapted from the **International Women's Tribune Centre**, *Women, Environment & Development*. Newsletter No. 49, 1993.



**"WORKING WITH MEN ON EXTENSION  
ACTIVITIES HAS OPENED OUR EYES."**

*(words of women)*





## RURAL FINANCE AND MARKETING SERVICES

Rural women are producers of food, traders, and family caretakers. They play important roles in their communities as well as in national economies. Their efforts to initiate or expand income-generating activities, however, are constrained by their limited access to credit and other financial services such as savings and deposits. Access to these services would ensure sustainable financial intermediation and discourage dependence on external sources.

**Financial services must be made available if small farmers are to improve their agricultural productivity and enhance their household income and food supplies.** They need short-term credit to purchase agricultural inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides, or to hire paid labour. They need long-term credit to purchase appropriate technology such as labour-saving tools and implements, or to establish small-scale dairy or poultry enterprises. In most developing countries, however, women receive only a minor share of the total agricultural credit—even in countries where they play a predominant role in food production.

Women's lack of access to credit is part of a larger problem of inadequate credit availability for small farmers. Women, however, face additional obstacles in obtaining credit. This problem has become more acute as women become increasingly responsible for overall farm management, especially in circumstances of male migration. Although women may be better credit risks than men (generally higher rates of repayment), banks and other formal lending institutions are reluctant to extend credit to them since the loans are usually small and women tend to be inexperienced borrowers often unable to meet collateral requirements such as land title or cattle. Many factors limit women's access to credit: they are usually not involved in development projects; extension programmes are oriented mainly to men; and they are often incapable of following application procedures due to lack of knowledge of institutional credit and widespread illiteracy. Women's limited participation in farmers' associations and cooperatives also restricts their access to credit since membership in such organizations provides both loans and credit information.

**Facing restricted access to formal credit, women have relied heavily on informal sources of credit** from family, friends and traditional moneylenders. Rotating savings and credit associations (traditional financial institutions established largely by women, and for women, such as "tontines" in West Africa,

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



*FAO will act as a catalyst in the collection and dissemination of data and information on women's roles in farm production and post-production activities. It will also assist women to overcome their constraints to receiving appropriate support services.*

**Rural Finance and Marketing Services**

- Prepare training materials and programmes on savings, credit, and the management of economic activities in order to improve the capacity of rural

women to negotiate with formal rural finance structures.

- Publish a study of key gender issues in marketing to be used as a training manual for project designers, planners and executing officers.



*Women all over the world are highly active as traders, hawkers, street vendors and marketers (Swaziland).*

“*arisan*” in Indonesia, and “*panderos*” or “*juntas*” in Peru) fulfill economic as well as social purposes. These informal credit institutions are not always dependable; they often have a high cost and offer limited capital. Many do not offer a secure place to save money or earn a return on savings. **Participation in these institutions does not link women to the mainstream financial system and perpetuates the marginalization of their economic activities.** As a result, women’s businesses tend to be smaller and grow more slowly than men’s. They are more likely to be home-based and to be in sectors that are technologically unsophisticated and overcrowded to the point of market saturation.

Women’s limited access to marketing facilities and services inhibits their efforts to expand the volume of their income-generating activities. Women all over the world are highly active as traders, hawkers, street vendors and marketers. In West Africa, women traders handle 60 to 90 per cent of domestic produce from farm to consumer. They have a similar role in many Caribbean countries and in the Andean region of Latin America.

Although women play a predominant role in marketing in many countries, little has been done to assist their activities through improved transportation or better market facilities. Even in countries where they traditionally have important roles in the wholesale trading of certain goods, illiteracy or restrictions on women’s independent legal capacity prevent them from meeting the procedural requirements of formal service institutions. Only in a few instances have women had access to training in marketing, accounting and management.

**Women, as well as men, need increased access to appropriate financial services such as savings, deposits and credit. They also need a greater capacity to negotiate with formal rural finance structures.** Effective policy-making and planning requires more data and information on the roles and constraints of women in marketing.

## [ RURAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS ]

**COOPERATIVES AND FARMERS’ ORGANIZATIONS.** Agricultural cooperatives and farmers’ organizations serve many purposes: they permit economies of scale for their members to access services; provide an institutional means for integrating the smallholder sector into the national economy; enable the increased exchange of goods and services between traditional and other sectors of the economy; and they allow members to benefit from technology transfer. In their ideal form they adapt to many economic activities. They often operate at the grassroots level among people who know each other and for this reason they are well suited to providing financial services to rural people.

In many countries, however, women have limited access to such groups and organizations. While there may not be laws prohibiting women from becoming members, **they are generally excluded because membership is based on land ownership or ‘head of household’ criterion.** Even in countries where membership is open to all, women do not always benefit to the same extent as men nor are they able to participate equally in decision-making and policy directions. The lack of services to reduce domestic work and childcare leaves little free time for women to participate. Under present circumstances, women who decide to join these organizations take on responsibilities that may expand their working day.



**TRADE UNIONS.** The role of trade unions was established by legal and institutional frameworks governing labour and employment at national and international levels. This gives them an important advantage in organizing workers, in bargaining with employers over terms and conditions of employment, and in mediating between workers and the State. However, women's participation in trade unions has been historically low. At the international level trade unions have been a major advocate of workers' rights, but at the national level they have not sufficiently addressed the differentiated needs of working women.

Issues such as childcare, sexual harassment, lack of access to capital, and the social discrimination of women are rarely central to the concerns of most trade unions. **The strategies of traditional trade unions are not appropriate for the great majority of women workers** who are engaged in agricultural and informal sector activities. Conventional trade union strategies are directed to workers in the formal, large-scale sector where employee-employer relations are defined and regular, and where workers are generally confined in one workplace. But women workers are concentrated (and scattered) in micro- and subsistence-scale activities in the informal sector and in domestic services. Increasing numbers of women work under casual, temporary or flexible arrangements. Many are self-employed or have no clear employer-employee relations such as homeworkers under subcontracting arrangements.

**WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS.** The number of women's groups and organizations promoting women's participation in agricultural development has increased significantly over the past decade. These groups have played an important role in increasing rural women's visibility at local and international levels; representing and safeguarding women's traditional and legal rights (e.g., access to land or participation in the decision-making process at village level); improving women's ability to control their earned income; facilitating women's access to agricultural resources and services (e.g., extension, training, inputs, credit and technology, etc.); and influencing policy-making and legislation at the national level.

Sustainable development requires social change on the part of both women and men. For this reason, the creation of women's groups is not always an effective solution. Mixed organizations, however, are more likely to put priority on the issues of concern to the majority of members, often men, and on men's economic activities, which are traditionally considered crucial for household welfare. Mixed organizations usually treat women's constraints and needs as secondary to the general problems of workers and the poor. Because women have lower educational levels, less experience in public affairs, and fewer communication skills than men, they tend to be passive members of mixed organizations.

Decision-making is traditionally seen as a man's role, and men hesitate giving women this responsibility. In addition, women often require more training and experience to build their self-confidence and leadership capacities. Mixed organizations normally do not have the time or resources to give women these opportunities. **Women's groups, on the other hand, can be effective in building their organizational and negotiating capacity, in establishing their power base and in focusing attention on their most pressing concerns which often differ from those of men.**



*Women's groups play an important role in increasing rural women's visibility (Senegal).*



## AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

**Technological innovations can be turned into opportunities to boost women's production potential and improve their quality of life and that of their families. In Burkina Faso, for example, the introduction of small dams for irrigation led to other improvements for women such as the planting of trees for fruit and firewood, and the installation of a convenient domestic water supply. After studying the gender dynamics of each situation, a training package was developed to accompany the introduction of the new technologies. The package included technical training, and training in organizational skills, credit, input supply and marketing. This enabled the technology to benefit all members of the community or household in an equitable and sustainable manner.**

The ultimate goal of agricultural research is to benefit farmers. Research activities are conducted by international agricultural organizations, national agricultural research systems, and commodity-focused groups at universities, research stations, as well as that conducted at the farm and household levels. Properly designed research can have a high payoff in terms of improving food availability, providing employment opportunities, enhancing resource management, and reducing environmental degradation.

Agricultural technology development has largely ignored the needs and priorities of women and only recently has it shown any concern for the environment. Although rural women are knowledgeable about and use traditional technology, they have little access to modern technology that could benefit them in their productive and reproductive activities. This is due to their lack of participation in setting research priorities or in

enhancing and disseminating conventional technologies and local knowledge. As a result, **women are often subjected to the unintended side-effects of modern technologies** introduced for the benefit of others. This can have a devastating impact on their access to resources, income-generating activities, and on their control over their own labour.

Scientific research and technology development needs to be far more gender sensitive if it is to benefit women and benefit from them, especially in areas of crop production and biodiversity.

### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



#### From Words to Action...

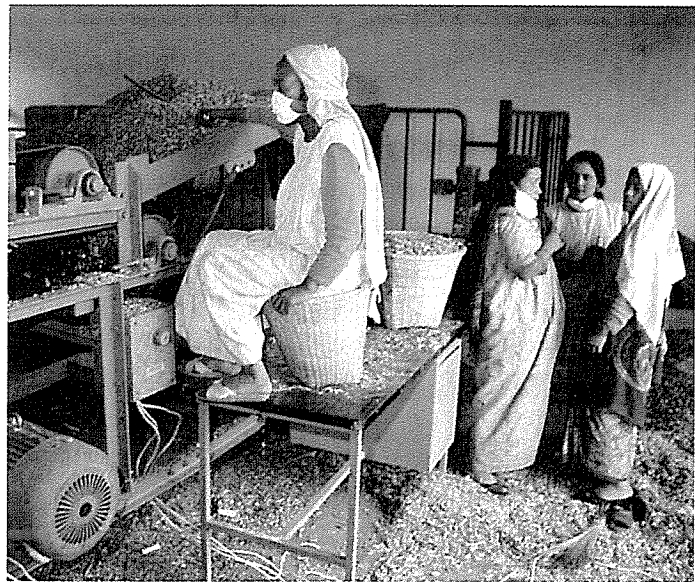
##### **Agricultural Research and Technology Development**

- Develop a database on national research and technology development institutions that incorporate gender-disaggregated data.
- Develop gender-sensitive guidelines on better ways to address the technological needs and priorities of rural women farmers and on the role of local knowledge systems in technology development policy.
- Carry out field studies on gender issues in agricultural engineering.
- Undertake research on the role of women in post-harvest systems and on the design of food processing equipment appropriate for women.
- Develop studies on the role, experience and knowledge of women in management of genetic resources and biodiversity.
- Upgrade and broaden information on different aspects of women in agriculture



**Strong research programmes are still needed on food crops and animals, usually the domain of women**, especially indigenous local crops, poultry and small ruminants.

Research and agricultural technology development are also required for post-harvest activities, many of which are carried out by women. Where post-harvest losses are high, farmers often must cultivate the land more intensively to obtain the same yield. This places additional stress on the environment. **Providing rural women with the information and technologies needed to reduce post-harvest losses is an important means of increasing available food supplies**, reducing women's time and labour constraints, and easing environmental stress.



*Scientific research and technology development needs to be far more gender sensitive (Nepal).*

## AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND EXTENSION

The contributions of both female and male farmers are substantial and essential to agricultural development. Achieving agricultural development goals of efficiency, sustainability and equity is hindered by the predominant practice of directing extension and training resources primarily to men. A 1989 FAO global survey showed that **women received only five per cent of all agricultural extension services worldwide**. Such lack of access to information undermines women's ability to maintain environmental quality and the sustainable use of resources.

Agricultural extension services are not adequately reaching rural women. For the most part, extension policies do not specifically identify women as an integral part of the target audience. This is often due to

### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

and rural development within the FAO International Information System for Agricultural Sciences and Technology/ Current Agricultural Research Information System (AGRIS/CARIS) networks.

#### **Agricultural Education and Extension**

- Undertake studies on female enrollment in agricultural education institutions in order to develop country strategies to increase female student enrollment

and to increase the number of women extension workers.

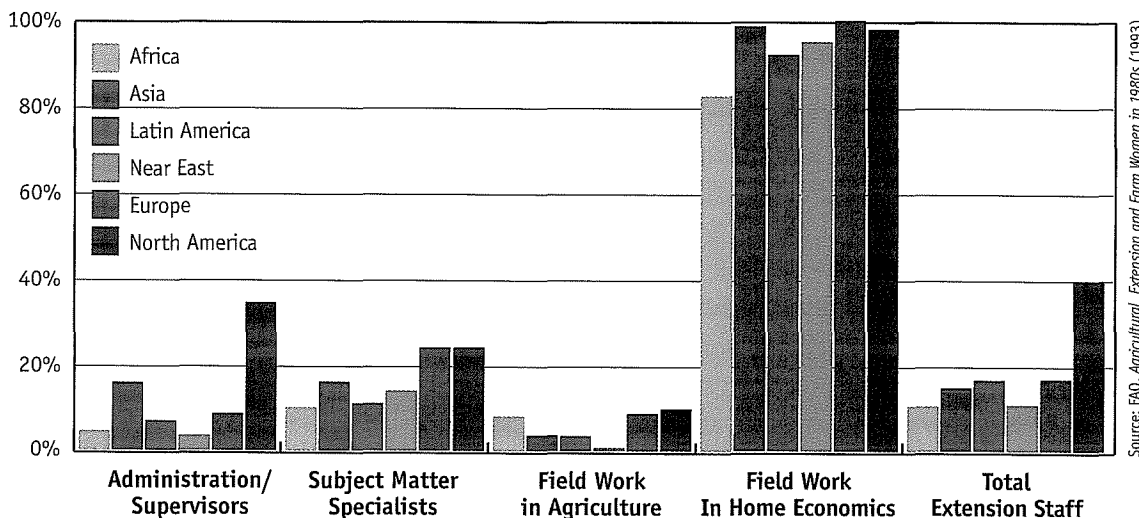
- Prepare a guide for developing curricula for agro-ecological study and training programmes that specifically addresses gender issues.
- Train extension workers in ways to integrate gender concerns, environmental and population education, into agricultural training programmes.
- Prepare a guide on *Incorporating the*



misconceptions about, and prejudices against, the actual and ideal roles of women. Traditional extension methodologies may not be appropriate for working with rural women. **A multi-directional communication is needed among rural women, researchers and extension agents to ensure the development and adequate transfer of technologies.** Existing extension services tend to focus on a few “progressive” farmers while neglecting many resource-poor farmers and the landless, including women. In some attempts to reach rural women, special women’s units have been created, but these are often separated or have staff without sufficient backgrounds or funds to implement technical agricultural projects.

Women also face barriers in their access to tertiary (university and college) agricultural education. As a result **they are under-represented in research, extension and educational institutions.** The lack of curricula and programmes of study that address gender issues has meant that students of both genders are unaware of women’s contribution to sustainable agriculture and rural development. The low level of participation of girls and young women in rural youth programmes in many developing countries further hinders their access to the knowledge and skills related to improved agricultural practices and to training in leadership development and community action.

**WOMEN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION STAFF**



**STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

From Words to Action...

*Needs and Interests of Rural Women into Extension Messages.*

- Prepare a gender-disaggregated database and directory of extension rural youth programmes that will show the number of male and female youth participants, volunteer leaders and young professionals.
- Develop a *Guide for Rural Youth Programmes* on the need for balanced participation of both male and female youth, and for curriculum materials that



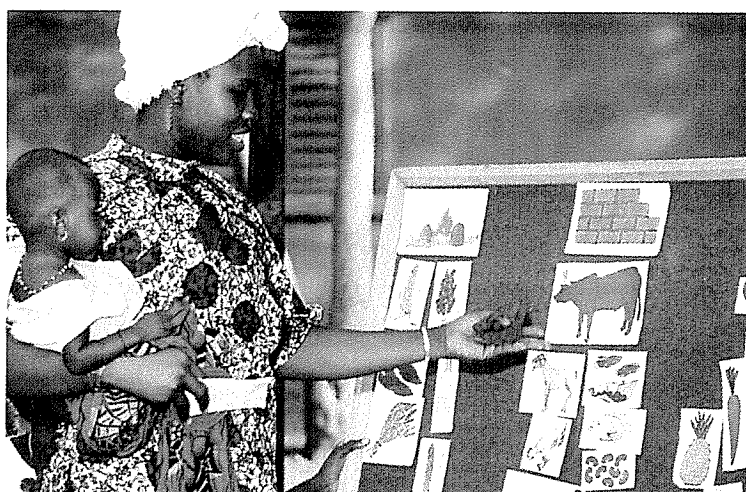
*The contribution of both female and male farmers are substantial and essential to agricultural development (Peru).*

## COMMUNICATION

People-oriented sustainable development can only realize its potential if rural people are involved and motivated, and if information and knowledge are shared. **Participatory communication methods and media serve to establish a dialogue with rural people and increase their participation in decision-making.** Communication strategies have also proven effective in conflict resolution and in defining common goals. In many societies, women are increasingly using communication technologies to help their visions of sustainable livelihoods become reality.

At present, however, communication methods and techniques have not been sufficiently applied to issues of specific concern to rural women. Communication can play an important role in empowering rural women and increasing their participation in decision-making. At the same time, properly designed communication strategies can promote the sharing of information, knowledge and skills with women, as well as learning from them.

**Communication is a deliberate intervention to affect social and economic change. A development strategy that uses effective communication approaches can reveal women's and men's underlying attitudes and traditional wisdom. It can help them to adapt their views, acquire new knowledge and skills, and spread new social messages to large audiences. The planned use of communication techniques, activities, and media gives women powerful tools both to experience change and then to guide it. An intensified exchange of ideas among all sectors of society can lead to the greater involvement of women and men in a common cause. This is a fundamental requirement for appropriate and sustainable development.**



*Properly designed communication strategies can promote the sharing of information, knowledge and skills with women (Burkina Faso).*

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

address the specific needs of young rural women and girls.

- Develop training materials to train young rural women in leadership skills.

**Communication**

- Undertake studies on the constraints and access of rural women to communication media in order to develop more effective national communication policies and strategies.
- Develop training methodologies to

improve the quality and outreach of training activities for women as rural communicators.

- Carry out research on the relationship between the environment, land, food and family size; and develop communication strategies on how to improve women's and men's lifestyles.
- Develop multi-media materials to increase women's skills designed to enhance their participation in development.

From Words to Action...



**"WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO FEED  
OUR CHILDREN AND ENSURE THEIR WELL BEING."**  
*(words of women)*





Malnutrition remains a crucial problem in both developed and developing countries; it may be linked to either insufficient food intake (under-nutrition) or unbalanced diets. **Throughout the world, women are the principal guarantors of nutrition, food safety and quality at household and community levels.** They are the ones who often produce, purchase, handle, prepare and serve food for the family and in community institutions.

More and more women entrepreneurs are engaged in cottage food industries in many developing countries. They produce a wide range of local foods which are sold at competitive prices in the market. The street food sector, a rapidly growing business in most developing countries, is increasingly operated by women who rely on this income source for themselves and for their families. Street food activities play an important role in supplying suitable, low cost food to poor segments of the population, and represent an important contribution to food security.

Women, as providers of food, have a fundamental role in assuring improved nutritional status. Development interventions aiming to improve access to food, however, often bypass women. National, regional and international agencies operating in the food sector give little attention to designing programmes that suit women's needs, education, and cultural backgrounds, or their aspirations for improving their economic and social conditions.



*Street food activities represent an important contribution to food security (Togo).*

#### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



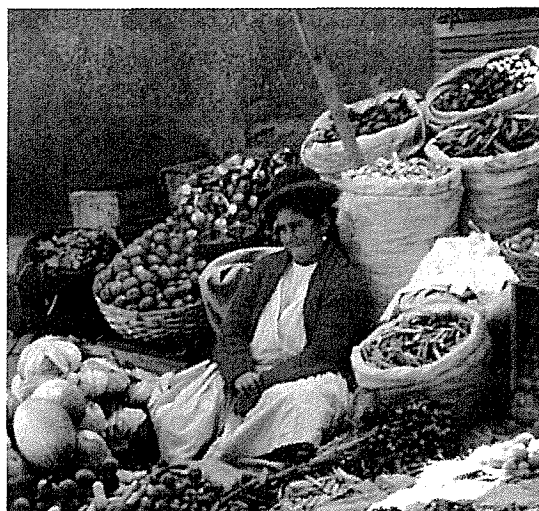
*FAO will give special attention to alleviating the constraints faced by women in carrying out their traditional role as food providers, and to promoting healthy food habits and lifestyles. This includes targeting both women and men for nutrition education. At the same time, FAO will work to enhance national capacity to design, implement, monitor and evaluate gender-responsive, community-level interventions to improve household food security and nutrition.*

#### Food and Nutrition

- Develop gender-sensitive training and educational materials for policy-makers and planners to improve household food and nutrition security, especially among women-headed households.
- Provide policy assistance to Member Nations on the development of national food-based strategies to prevent and control micro-nutrient deficiencies among vulnerable groups, including women.

Women in their reproductive years, especially during pregnancy and lactation, have specific nutrient requirements which determine both their own nutritional status and that of their children. In many societies these specific needs are not recognized and both women and children suffer the consequences. In some societies, priority is given to feeding other members of the family first, a discriminatory practice often extended to girls. This compromises their nutritional and health status from an early age.

Women play a pivotal role in securing and preparing food for the family. They have the primary responsibility for the care of children and for the nutrition information in the household. The different rights, responsibilities and decision-making abilities of women and men need to be understood in efforts to improve food security and nutrition. Data on the differences between males and females, in terms of access to food and other resources, must be improved in order to facilitate the assessment and monitoring of progress in the achievement of food security and nutritional goals. **Women need better access to technical information and assistance on improving the quality and safety of products and on strategies to improve the nutritional status** at the household level through, for example, home gardens and livestock rearing.



Women play a pivotal role in securing and preparing food for the family (Bolivia).

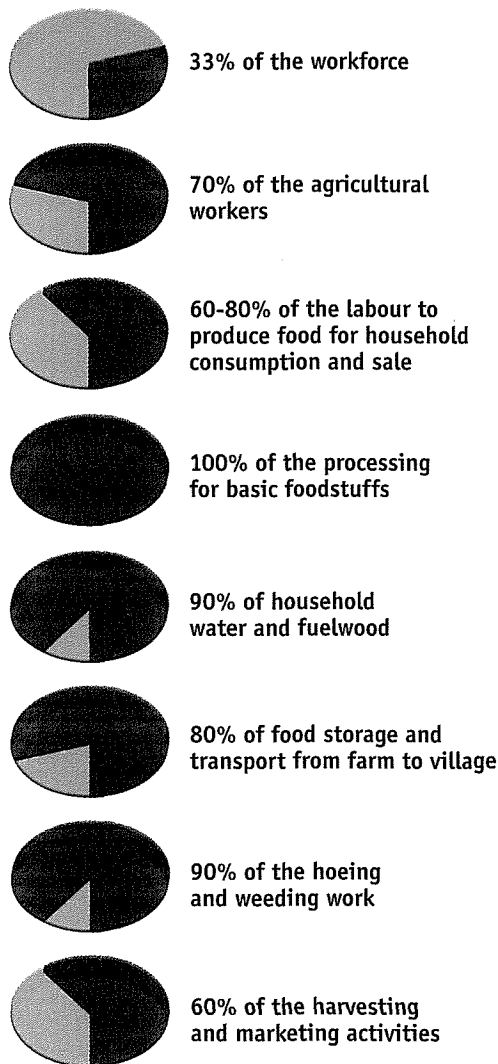
STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

From Words to Action...

- Collect, analyze and disseminate gender-disaggregated data on food and nutrition to be used in the design of policies, programmes and interventions that improve the nutritional level of all household members.
- Provide training to women entrepreneurs in cottage food industries in order to enhance their capacities and ensure the safety of their products.

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO LABOUR IN AFRICA

In many African countries women provide:



Source: International Fund for Agricultural Development



**"WE HAVE IDEAS THAT WOULD  
BE INTERESTING TO SHARE WITH THE MEN.  
TOGETHER WE CAN DO THINGS BETTER."**

*(words of women)*



## [ DATA COLLECTION, RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS ]



*Changes in the economy, especially in agriculture, affect women and men differently since the roles, needs, and constraints of women differ from those of men (Zambia).*

The challenge of agricultural and economic policy-making and planning is to enhance productivity and output while at the same time maintaining the natural resource base, safeguarding and increasing rural incomes, generating employment, and promoting the nutrition and food security status of households and individuals. Yet in many parts of the world agricultural policies have translated into increased poverty in rural areas. As a result, farming families are required to supplement their incomes either through the migration of family members, or by cultivating previously fallow or marginal land and converting their food crop land to cash crop production.

Changes in the economy, especially in agriculture, affect women and men differently since the roles, needs, and constraints of women differ from those of men. Although women play a central role in the economy, their presence in agricultural production is largely invisible and thus overlooked in both economic analysis and policy formulation. This represents a significant obstacle to promoting gender-responsive sustainable development.

**Comprehensive, reliable and unbiased data and information on the nature and role of women's contributions to food and agricultural production is needed.** This is one of the main constraints to incorporating gender issues into agricultural and economic development policies and planning. Data on women is still seen as only marginally relevant to policy-making. Reliable sources for such data, particularly in the agricultural sector, are generally lacking in developing countries. Gender biases mark every stage of the exercise from design, to field interviews, and to analysis. This compounds the difficulties of data collection in rural areas, particularly in the informal sector.

### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



From Words to Action...

*FAO will work to incorporate gender in a more systematic manner in the design of agricultural and economic research and policy assistance. It will analyze the differential impact of national policies and market reforms on both women and men. FAO will provide technical support to improve the statistical data on women in the agricultural and rural sectors in national data collection programmes, including agricultural censuses and surveys. And it will assist in the creation*

*of a legal environment that enables women to advance in terms of legal status and economic strength.*

#### **Data Collection, Research and Analysis**

- Include a chapter on gender-disaggregated data in the agricultural and rural sectors of the FAO publication *Methodological Analysis of the 1990 Round of the World Agricultural*



Women's participation in the labour force tends to be fluid, seasonal and varied. As a result, concepts and definitions relating to women's work and household relationships contribute to their invisibility. In addition, international and national emphasis on economic over non-economic activities has created a focus on statistics relating to the market and to monetary transactions which excludes much of women's work in rural areas.

**Gender disaggregated data alone cannot provide insights into the processes that determine the differential impacts of policies on women and men.** For policy-making purposes this data must be accompanied by the analytical framework necessary to understand gender relations. For instance, most structural adjustment and market-oriented reform policies advocate a reallocation of resources from the non-traded to the traded sector through price incentives for traded commodities. Yet the demands put on women's labour by reproductive and household tasks, plus social discrimination, often cause them to act in ways not foreseen in most development planning.

Resources such as land, labour, credit and equipment are required to shift from subsistence production to the traded sector. Lack of access to these resources poses a fundamental constraint to women farmers. Shifting to the traded sector also entails the use of market inputs such as fertilizers and seeds, and to services such as irrigation, training and extension. In most societies, access to these resources and services is through the male. In some societies women have an obligation to work on male-controlled cash crops in addition to household food crops. A market-determined increase in cash-crop

**Women's cash income is not enough to buy adequate supplies of food and other necessities. They must work additional hours in the surrounding countryside to produce these goods. This labour, and the resulting goods, are a direct substitute for cash income and are essential for survival. Yet in a world where economic value is computed in monetary terms alone, women's work is not counted as economically productive when no money changes hands. Although women perform a large share of work in subsistence economies, they are often viewed as unproductive. A huge proportion of the world's real productivity therefore remains undervalued. The essential contribution women make to the welfare of families and nations remains unrecognized.**

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



- Censuses (1986-1995)*, in order to provide concrete recommendations and guidelines to governments on the collection, dissemination and use of such data in the year 2000 Round of Agricultural Censuses (1996-2005).
- Prepare a training package and provide training for agricultural statisticians on the means to incorporate gender into national data collection programmes.
  - Incorporate gender indicators into the Database on Rural

Development and Rural Poverty.

- Carry out gender-sensitive studies on: adjustment, transition, and economic development; the economics of sustainable agriculture and natural resource management; and on the economics of poverty.
- Develop guidelines to incorporate gender issues into project, programme and policy analysis and formulation activities.
- Incorporate gender into policy assistance



production by men could result in an unacceptably high labour input by women. This added burden takes time and energy away from their other tasks. The more time women spend working on their husband's land, the less they can spend tending the crops they need to feed their families or to sell in the market. As a result, their personal income—an important source of community respect, household subsistence and economic independence—declines, and their labour is increasingly spent on activities for which they receive no remuneration.

Women's willingness to shift to higher price cash crops will depend on the extent to which they benefit from this; either by controlling income from the sale of their own cash crops or by significant participation in household decision-making. **If cash crops do not put income and/or food under women's direct control, they will not always shift their labour from subsistence to cash crops even in those cases where they are more profitable.**



*There is a real need for policy-makers and planners to better understand the dynamics operating at the household and community levels (Sri Lanka).*

**The degree to which female labour responds to market signals may have other unforeseen effects on the family.** Although generally excluded from macro-economic and agricultural policies and planning, the labour and resources required for maintenance of the household is tremendous. This includes caring for children, the elderly and ill, gathering fuel and water, processing food, preparing meals, cleaning, and so on. A woman who decides to shift into cash crop production often faces a double burden. Given the lack of labour-saving technologies at her disposal, her capacity to sustain both work and household will most likely

#### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



From Words to Action...

- activities that enhance public and private sector participation in agricultural development as well as the institutional mechanisms to facilitate economic and market reforms.
- Develop training materials on how to incorporate gender issues into policy and sector analyses, investment project planning, and decentralized development.
- Prepare studies on gender analysis in farming systems analysis.
- Revise existing guidelines, manuals and handbooks to incorporate gender, including *The Farming Systems Research Manual*, and *Participatory Approaches to the Intensification of Farming Systems*.
- Develop methodologies for assessing the impact of changes in the international trading environment on vulnerable groups in the rural population, including women.
- Incorporate gender issues in the formulation of commodity advisory



reach its limit. Either she will no longer be available to work, or household food security and welfare will suffer. There is a real need to take a more holistic view of farm production systems and offer a framework for policy-makers and planners to better understand the dynamics operating at household and community levels. In the past, the differing impact on women and men of various policies and programmes were not considered before they were enacted. **Adding socio-economic research and analysis to formal statistics** should assist in avoiding such mistakes.

Well-planned macro and sectoral policy changes have the potential for stimulating growth. They provide the opportunity for rural women to improve their participation in production, processing and marketing in the rural agricultural and industrial sectors. Examples exist of countries where employment in export-oriented agriculture and manufacturing has expanded and a shift in distribution of real income from urban to rural areas has been noted. Women's ability to take advantage of such opportunities will depend on their access to, and control over, labour and capital resources, credit, extension and training, and markets. Effective macro and sectoral policy-making and planning must be made to ensure women's access and control.

## [ LEGISLATION ]

Despite international legal conventions and agreements to ensure women's equal rights with men in all spheres of activity, **many legal obstacles exist** which prevent rural women from fully participating in, and benefiting from, rural development. The major legal barriers that women confront are often inter-related and tend to be mutually reinforcing. They include:

- **Women's traditional rights to land ownership and use.** Several types of customary, religious and civil laws limit women's access to land and other forms of income-producing property. For the most part women have fewer rights than men to own land or livestock, and inheritance laws often exclude women or allow them a much smaller share of inherited property than male heirs. Married women are frequently denied the legal capacity to own or administer property or to act in commercial matters in their own name. As a result, women may not be able to acquire land by tenancy or sales contracts.

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN



- projects and make special efforts to include women's groups in project implementation activities.
- Include gender issues in commodity policy training of trainers' programmes in order to enhance the capacities of national institutions and organizations to address such issues.
- Prepare studies and guidelines on the design of gender-sensitive rural development approaches that are sustainable, participatory, equitable and

environmentally-friendly.

- Undertake case studies, research and analysis on anti-poverty employment creation strategies for marginalized rural groups such as pastoralists, indigenous populations and the landless, including women.

### Legislation

- Prepare national case studies on the legal status of women including their access to natural resources, their



- **Land reform and settlement schemes.** The 'head of household' concept is often used as the basis for land distribution in the design and implementation of land reform and settlement schemes. These programmes give the father or husband the right to land. They ignore the existence of female-headed households, the rights of married women to joint shares of property, and they ignore women's crucial economic contribution to the household. Such schemes may replace a traditional system of land use and tenure where women have rights based on common law and local practice.
- **Laws which affect women's access to credit and loans.** Many legal constraints continue to limit rural women's economic independence and therefore their access to credit. Both public and private lending institutions often discriminate against credit applicants on the basis of their sex or marital status. In addition, women are unlikely to have land in their own name to use as collateral, or they cannot enter into a contract without male authorization.
- **Women's legal rights to full membership in cooperative movements and collective organizations.** Regulations and by-laws of cooperatives frequently limit membership to land owners and/or heads of households. This eliminates an important source of credit and participation for rural women in development at the grassroots level.
- **Discriminatory wages.** Women agricultural workers often lack legal recourse to ensure minimum living wages or to prohibit discrimination in gender biased wage rates.

Rural women suffer from an inferior legal status. Government- and community-level awareness of their legal rights is lacking and the enforcement of progressive legislation is difficult. **There is a real need to raise awareness of rural women's legal rights, enhance the identification and resolution of legal problems affecting women in agriculture and rural development, and enact laws which remove barriers to the advancement of women.**

#### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

From Words to Action...

membership in organizations and cooperatives, and their access to credit. This will provide guidance on the drafting or amendment of laws.

- Incorporate gender issues into land registration and land market studies.
- Encourage legal literacy campaigns, with the assistance of NGOs or national machinery, that inform rural women about new family codes or legislation.



## Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Each Division within FAO is responsible for implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on its respective **Programme of Action**. Progress in implementation will be monitored at all levels within FAO, and periodically reviewed in progress reports. When required, the Women in Development Service (SDWW) will provide guidance and technical support for meeting these responsibilities. SDWW will also compile monitoring information and reports on Organization-wide progress regarding implementation of the Plan. At the project level, the Agricultural Operations database (AGOMIS) will be revised to incorporate indicators on the advancement in the status of women.

## Coordination

An **Inter-Departmental Committee on Women in Development (COWID)** has been established to function as the highest level coordinating and advisory body on gender/WID. Its purpose is to streamline, and make more effective, the mechanisms for coordination and advice in this area.

The Committee will provide **policy guidance** and facilitate **coordination and decision-making** on normative and operational matters relating to women in development. It will also monitor overall progress in implementing the Plan of Action, provide a forum to review and clarify inter-departmental issues relating to the Plan's effective implementation, and ensure operational coherence among the Divisions in implementing their respective Programmes of Action.

## Affirmative Action

**FAO will facilitate the access of women to Professional posts** in order to make greater progress toward reaching the UN target of **35 per cent**; and it will encourage the promotion of women within the Organization, without affecting the principles of merit and equitable geographical distribution. Measures will be included that provide for the selection of women, when equally qualified, and that are more supportive of work-family linkages.

**FAO will also expand the external and internal pool of qualified women candidates** by building and maintaining a roster of institutions and NGOs concerned with women's issues, women's professional organizations dealing with agriculture and rural development, and women's bureaux and ministries that can provide qualified women candidates.

In addition, the Organization will place **increased emphasis on the training and development of women staff** in order to encourage their access to higher level posts. The introduction of Staff Development Programmes will be considered to develop, inter alia, supervisory and managerial skills of staff; balanced gender representation in these programmes will be pursued.

Affirmative action issues apply to the beneficiaries of, and participants in, FAO's work as well as to its own staff. The Organization will make a renewed commitment to employ women as consultants and as project staff, and to recruit qualified professional women at Headquarters, and to increase the number of women in project-related training programmes.

## SELECTED DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

*The following is a list of selected documents and resources published by FAO that primarily focus on WID/gender issues. There are numerous other gender-related reports; queries about any specific document not mentioned below may be addressed to the Women in Development Service (SDWW).*

### NATURAL RESOURCES

Guidelines: Women in Land and Water Use

Farmers Rights in the Conservation and Use of Plant Genetic Resources: A Gender Perspective

Guidelines for the Integration of Women in Dairy Development

Gender Analysis and Forestry: A Training Package and Video Programme

Guidelines for Integrating Gender Considerations into FAO Forestry Projects

Restoring the Balance: Women and Forest Resources

Gender Analysis for Forestry Development Planning (videocassette)

Mujeres y arboles” (Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia)

Gender in Small-Scale Fisheries - A Portrait (videocassette)

Guidelines: Women in Fishing Communities

Meeting Information Needs on Gender Issues in Inland and Small Water Body Fisheries

Meeting Information Needs on Gender Issues in Aquaculture

### AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Guidelines: Women in Rural Savings and Finance

Organization of Women's Groups for Savings Mobilization and Micro-enterprise Development

Analyse des programmes de crédit en faveur des femmes rurales (Afrique)

Managing Income-Generating Rural Activities: A Training Manual

Agricultural Extension and Farm Women in the 1980s

Improving the Relevance and Effectiveness of Agricultural Extension Activities for Women Farmers

Constraints to Adoption of New Technologies by Women in Developing Countries

Extension “Woman to Woman”: Training Peasant Women Liaisons to Reach Peasant Women

### FOOD AND NUTRITION

Women's Role in the Management of Family Resources for the Achievement of Household Food Security and Nutrition

### POLICY AND PLANNING

A Gender-Disaggregated Data Base on Human Resources in Agriculture: Data Requirements and Availability

Improving Gender-Disaggregated Data on Human Resources Through Agricultural Censuses and Surveys

Guidelines on Social Analysis

Food Security Training Manual

Policy Reform, Poverty and Agriculture: Impact and Analysis

Politique et stratégie de développement en faveur des femmes rurales

The Legal Status of Rural Women in Nineteen Latin American Countries

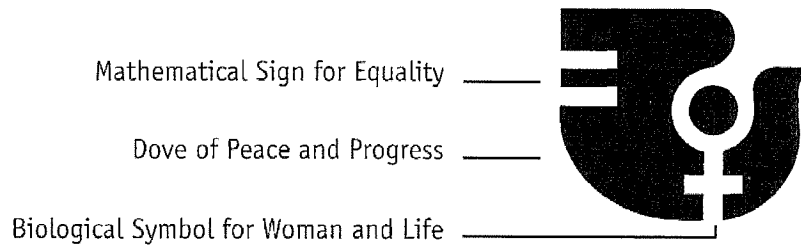
The Role of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (Bibliography)

Women, Agriculture and Rural Development: Synthesis Reports for the Near East and Africa Regions

Women, Agriculture and Rural Development: Sectoral Reports for Namibia, the Philippines, Tunisia and Perú

Fact Sheets: (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Honduras, Iran, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Perú, Philippines, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zimbabwe)

## Progress for Women Means Progress for the World



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