

FAO strategic objective:
Enabling environment for
markets to improve livelihoods
and rural development

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Agro-industries and rural infrastructure

Address gender issues in policy guidance for agro-industrial development, and produce technical guidelines of best practices in infrastructure design that recognizes gender needs.

Conditions and wages

Promote equitable employment conditions for men and women in agro-industries, measured by ratio of men's to women's wages.

Fisheries policy and enterprise development

Include gender issues in guidance to governments on fisheries and aquaculture policy, and increase men's and women's incomes through enterprise development.

Gender equity in value chains

Produce business development training materials that address the different needs of rural men and women, and promote gender sensitive activities that link both male and female farmers to value chains.

Employment and livelihoods

Rural development programmes must address gender discrimination in wages and access to livelihood assets

Economic globalization has linked even isolated rural areas in a chain that connects local, national, regional and international markets. Value chains are evolving rapidly with the expansion of supermarkets and of demand in industrialized countries for fresh produce year round.

For millions of agricultural producers, agro-processors and rural workers, globalization offers increased employment and income opportunities. But improvements in livelihoods will depend on how effectively developing countries can participate in markets.

FAO's strategy aims at creating "enabling environments" that benefit everyone in the value chain, from producers to exporters. It calls for policies that enhance the development impact of agro-industries, promote rural employment and help small producers diversify into new enterprises.



Gender dimensions of rural employment and livelihoods

As agriculture shifts from subsistence to commercial production, the future of small-scale producers in developing countries depends on their being able to diversify into new income generating activities, including off-farm employment.

Rural women's employment prospects are severely limited. Like women everywhere, they have primary responsibility for raising children, preparing food, and taking care of sick family members, plus extra burdens, such as collecting fuel wood. Gender roles reduce rural women's participation in labour markets and confine them to lower paid and more precarious employment in agriculture.

As farmers, women grow traditional food crops, while men are more likely to grow cash crops and, therefore, are better positioned to capitalize on new market opportunities. Women farmers face systematic discrimination in access to the resources and services needed to improve their productivity, such as credit, secure land title and education. Gender bias in North Africa and the Near East limits women's use of machinery, such as tractors, which affects the productivity of farms run by women.

Women farmers in some countries have established profitable businesses supplying international markets with organic or fair trade produce. But studies show that women can lose income and control as a product moves from the farm to the market – in Uganda, strong urban demand for leafy vegetables led men to take over their cultivation.

When off-farm employment is available – for example as farm labourers or in agro-processing – women continue to suffer gender discrimination. In India, the average wage of female farm workers is 30% lower than that of men. As casual or seasonal labourers, they are usually the first to be laid off.

Worldwide, the processing of vegetables, flowers, shrimp, pigs and poultry is carried out mainly by women. Low-paid tasks in agro-processing are generally “feminized”, while men are more likely to have jobs that require training and earn higher wages. Limiting women’s range of occupations has high efficiency costs. It also leads to less investment in girls’ education. Because girls receive less schooling, they are more likely to be employed as poorly paid “bonded labour” on large farms and plantations.

Rural wage employment can help women escape from poverty by increasing their income and strengthening their household bargaining power. However, there can be significant trade-offs. In Ecuador, young women’s employment in the cut-flower export industry has brought them economic benefits, but reduced the amount of time they have for communal work and child care.



FAO action for gender equity in employment and livelihoods

FAO works directly with farmers’ groups and agribusinesses to strengthen their managerial and technical skills and links to markets. It conducts gender-sensitive analyses of trends in farm and off-farm employment, and promotes gender equity in government policies for expanding rural job opportunities. It promotes labour standards, occupational health and safety, and the participation of rural workers’ unions in negotiations for improved working conditions.

In Papua New Guinea, FAO trained 1 000 rural women to identify market opportunities, design business strategies and improve production methods. The benefits included improved household nutrition and increased income.

In Asia, Africa and Latin America, FAO’s Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development programme helped small-scale farmers groups to respond to new market opportunities through training in marketing, financial management, business planning and value chain development. The programme provided small grants for some 50 micro-enterprise projects.



In the Democratic Republic of Congo, FAO helped women in and around Kinshasa to expand their small-scale horticulture businesses by securing access to land and water, improving produce quality and safety, and finding viable markets. The project introduced 4 500 producers to conservation agriculture practices, trained 2 000 women and men in business management, and provided loans to 115 micro-enterprises.

FAO strategic objective:

Improved food security
and better nutrition*

Food security and nutrition

Women play a decisive role in household food security, dietary diversity and children's health

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Nutrition policy

Promote sector policies and programmes for nutritional improvement at national and community-levels that recognize gender-defined needs, opportunities and constraints.

Nutrition education

Develop gender-sensitive nutrition education initiatives, training programmes and materials that target men, women, girls and boys.

Food quality and safety

To reduce disease outbreaks caused by home-prepared food, develop awareness and educational materials on household handling of food.

Street foods

Improve the quality and safety of street foods through training for men and women vendors in basic hygiene.

Gender-specific data

Promote assessments of nutrient requirements, dietary intakes and nutritional status that analyse gender, age and development stage.

FAO estimates that around one billion people are undernourished, and that each year more than three million children die from undernutrition before their fifth birthday. Micronutrient deficiencies, which affect about two billion people, lead to poor growth, blindness, increased severity of infections and sometimes death.

The root causes of world hunger – including rural poverty, population growth and environmental degradation – are exacerbated by the global economic slowdown, volatile food prices and the impact of climate change.

FAO's strategy for improved food security and nutrition calls for action to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations and to strengthen government capacities to formulate and implement food security policies and address nutrition issues.



Gender dimensions of food security and nutrition

In developing countries, rural women and men play different roles in guaranteeing food security for their households and communities. While men grow mainly field crops, women are usually responsible for growing and preparing most of the food consumed in the home and raising small livestock, which provides protein.

Rural women also carry out most home food processing, which ensures a diverse diet, minimizes losses and provides marketable products. Women are more likely to spend their incomes on food and children's needs – research has shown that a child's chances of survival increase by 20% when the mother controls the household budget. Women, therefore, play a decisive role in food security, dietary diversity and children's health.

But gender inequalities in control of livelihood assets limit women's food production. In Ghana, studies found that insecure access to land led women farmers to practise shorter fallow periods than men, which reduced their yields, income and the availability of food for the household. In sub-Saharan Africa, diseases such as HIV/AIDS force women to assume greater caretaking roles, leaving them less time to grow and prepare food.

Women's access to education is also a determining factor in levels of nutrition and child health. Studies from Africa show that children of mothers who have spent five years in primary education are 40% more likely to live beyond the age of five.

Having an adequate supply of food does not automatically translate into adequate levels of nutrition. In many societies women and girls eat the food remaining after the male family members have eaten. Women, girls, the sick and disabled are the main victims of this "food discrimination", which results in chronic undernutrition and ill-health.

The physiological needs of pregnant and lactating women also make them more susceptible to

* Note: This description incorporates FAO's strategic objective on improved quality and safety of food

malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Twice as many women suffer from malnutrition as men, and girls are twice as likely to die from malnutrition as boys. Maternal health is crucial for child survival – an undernourished mother is more likely to deliver an infant with low birth weight, significantly increasing its risk of dying.

Good nutrition and health depends on the safety of the food consumed – contamination leads to illnesses such as diarrhoea that are a major cause of illness and death in children. Efforts to improve food safety must take into account existing gender roles in the food chain. Training for women in hygiene and sanitation can make an immediate contribution to household and community health.

FAO action for gender equity in food security and nutrition

FAO interventions to improve household food security and nutrition address broader issues of livelihoods and gender. They improve small farmers' access to productive resources, and provide nutrition education and training in food safety, processing and storage. FAO enhances homestead food production, especially through home gardens that provide a nutritionally rich diet and allow savings on food purchases.

In Viet Nam, a FAO programme to reduce vitamin A deficiency in four communities promoted home gardens and nutrition education. Evaluations confirmed that home gardens had greatest impact when men and women understood their nutritional and economic benefits. The project reduced the rate of malnutrition by more than 12% in just two years.



In Lesotho, FAO worked with UNICEF and the WFP to improve food security and nutrition among 7 000 HIV/AIDS-affected households by providing training in conservation agriculture, crop diversification and improved child feeding practices. To improve women farmers' incomes, the project introduced soap making, goat breeding and beekeeping.

In Afghanistan, FAO used literacy classes to help improve the nutrition status of 3 500 women and their families. It trained literacy facilitators to deliver, along with the literacy classes, key messages on health, sanitation, nutrition, backyard farm management and business development. FAO is expanding the programme to reach another 35 000 families.

FAO strategic objective:

Improved preparedness and response to food and agricultural threats and emergencies

Emergencies

All rural people suffer during emergencies, but men and women are affected in different ways

FAO's targets 2008-2013

Early warning

Address gender-related concerns in FAO special alerts on food supply difficulties and crop prospects, and mainstream gender into regional food security assessments.

Identifying vulnerable households

Use socio-economic and gender analysis to identify food insecure and vulnerable (e.g. female-headed, orphan-headed and elderly-headed) households as participants in emergency projects.

Needs and livelihoods

Address women's and men's different needs and household livelihoods in needs assessment and livelihood assessment guidelines.

NGO partners

Require that NGOs and other partners in agriculture emergency operations use gender-sensitive approaches, including sex-disaggregated data.

Gender-based violence

Specifically address the vulnerabilities of men, women, boys and girls (e.g. to gender-based violence), in projects aimed at mitigating the vulnerability of populations displaced by emergencies.

Impact assessment

When performing impact assessments, analyse how men and women in households benefit from emergency projects.

Emergencies arising from natural disasters, drought, diseases, civil conflict, market shocks and extreme climate events often have their greatest impact on poor rural populations. During 2009, the UN estimates that some 30 million people required emergency assistance.

FAO says emergency preparedness and response must address the specific needs of populations dependent on agriculture, with particular focus on food insecure and nutritionally vulnerable groups.

Its strategy to help countries to prepare for food and agricultural threats and emergencies, and respond to them effectively, calls for the use of socio-economic and gender analysis tools to identify the most vulnerable communities.



Gender dimensions of emergencies

In emergency situations, rural communities are frequently traumatized and agricultural systems devastated, leading to disruption of food production, livelihoods, health care and law enforcement. Understanding how men and women experience and respond to crises, and assessing their capacity for recovery, are essential to effective emergency relief operations and to rehabilitation.

All rural people suffer during emergencies, but men and women are affected in different ways. Studies after the Asian *tsunami* of 2004 revealed that in several coastal villages in Indonesia, females made up 80% of all fatalities, possibly because they had not learned to swim. Throughout the region, men lost fishing boats, reducing many to poverty and forcing them to migrate in search of work. Women who traditionally processed fish also lost their livelihoods. With male household members absent, cases of rape increased, discouraging women from seeking employment.

During emergencies, women and children may be more exposed to risk of malnutrition because they have limited access to resources such as land, animals and savings. With fewer survival options, female-headed households especially may be forced to submit to "survival sex," which increases their exposure to HIV and other diseases. Men and boys have particular vulnerabilities – for example, when they are targets for recruitment into armed conflicts or when boys are unable to feed themselves due to lack of cooking skills.

Emergencies may present opportunities for poor men and women to participate more in decision-making and contribute to the rehabilitation process. Since rural women are usually responsible for household food production, preparation and storage, they should be seen as potential partners in emergency related planning rather than simply "victims".

Post-disaster, women remain more vulnerable than men. Along with reduced access to resources, they

must cope with increased responsibility for caring for members of the household. Following a devastating hurricane in Honduras, the increase in women's domestic workload made it impossible for many to return to off-farm work. Women's nutrition and health may also suffer as workload increases.

If rural women normally have limited access to land, their rights may be even further reduced following a natural disaster. With many title holders dead and boundaries erased, poor and marginalized women and men often have no alternative but to remain in refugee camps, and have little say in programmes for land redistribution.

FAO support to gender equity in emergencies

FAO works to reduce rural people's vulnerability to emergencies, first by helping to improve their food security and strengthen their livelihoods. When emergencies occur, it uses socio-economic and gender analysis to identify the most vulnerable groups. It designs emergency interventions for rapid distribution of food and agricultural relief, and supports the transition from relief to reconstruction and development.



In Indonesia, following the *tsunami*, FAO used its socio-economic and gender analysis approach to build the capacity of national trainers to integrate gender concerns into rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes.

In Colombia, FAO trained 2 700 people – mostly women and young boys displaced from rural areas by escalating conflict – in urban horticulture and provided them with basic nutrition education, seeds, agricultural tools and other inputs. Nutritional benefits reached an estimated 14 000 vulnerable people.

In Sudan, FAO is helping female-headed and other vulnerable displaced households to overcome seasonal food shortages by growing vegetables in winter and taking up new income generating activities. Inputs to 4 000 households included training, vegetable seeds, hand tools and labour-saving technologies. Around 450 women will be trained in food processing, egg production and cheese-making.



FAO strategic objective:
Increased and more effective
public and private investment
in agriculture and rural
development

FAO's targets 2008-2013

FAO/World Bank Cooperative Programme

Address gender considerations in all sector and subsector studies conducted for the World Bank, and in appraisals and evaluation of Bank-financed projects.

IFAD projects and studies

Include a gender focus in all poverty-eradication projects and studies prepared on behalf of IFAD.

Financing institutions

Address gender dimensions in all relevant documents prepared for international, bilateral, regional and sub-regional development financing institutions.

Social analysis

Mainstream gender considerations in guidelines for social analysis in the preparation of agricultural investment projects.

Investment

Ignoring gender inequalities carries great costs to rural women and to developing countries' potential for economic growth

The share of agriculture in official development assistance was 18% in 1979, but less than 5% in 2007. To boost agricultural production and productivity, especially that of the world's 450 million small-scale farmers, the sector's share needs to reach 10% within five years.

FAO's strategy aims at securing increased public and private investment in agriculture and rural development. But it also seeks to make investment more effective, in accordance with international agreements to enhance donor co-ordination and countries' management of development aid.

The strategy calls for improvements in the design of investment operations, and says public funding must be applied in core areas to maximize leverage and impact on poverty reduction and food security.



Gender dimensions of development investment

Development planners have two main options for targeting investment interventions to redress gender inequalities: designing projects exclusively for women, or mainstreaming gender by addressing gaps in gender equality in all relevant projects and project components. International lending institutions agree that the latter is more effective – IFAD, for example, has adopted gender mainstreaming in all its operations for reducing rural poverty.

Yet evidence suggests that gender issues are incorporated explicitly into less than 10% of official development assistance to agriculture. Ignoring gender inequalities carries great costs not only to rural women, but to developing countries' potential for economic growth.

Analysis of gender relations in the division of labour, access to resources, and control of crops and income from their sale is essential for sustainable investment programmes. Property rights are particularly crucial, since they often determine the willingness of men and women to invest in production and to protect natural resources.

Members of the same household may not agree that selling livestock should be a priority – who benefits depends on who decides how the income is spent. Women may be reluctant to provide labour for income-generating activities which they do not control, or activities that could be expropriated by men.

Gender analysis of time allocations in agriculture may reveal that lack of proper soil management is due to out-migration of male household members, which leaves women with more agricultural work and no time for soil conservation. Weeding, harvesting and threshing crops are often "women's tasks" – therefore, a programme to increase cash crop production can have negative impacts on women already overburdened with domestic work, and fail to reach its objectives.

Understanding women's workloads can suggest other areas for investment. In northern Pakistan, surveys found that almost a third of rural women's time was spent collecting fuel wood and water. In response, the government launched a programme to provide rural households with piped water and kerosene, allowing women to increase their earnings from livestock and horticulture.

The success of agricultural investments often depends on equitable access to services. In some countries, women farmers rarely receive production loans. Credit components of projects may establish a separate line of credit for women's groups or earmark loans for women's crops and activities, such as agro-processing. Adjusting extension messages to focus on activities that women control can facilitate their contact with male extensionists.

One final, important lesson: include men. Programmes designed to reach both men and women are more effective. Getting men's support is critical to the success of gender-responsive projects.



FAO's action for equity in investment in agriculture and rural development

FAO's Investment Centre helps developing countries to formulate policies and strategies that promote investment in agriculture and rural development, and to prepare investment programmes and projects for funding by international financing institutions and bilateral donors.

In Viet Nam, the Investment Centre helped formulate a \$50 million IFAD programme to increase participation of small-scale farmers in food and agricultural value chains in two provinces. A FAO study recommended investment in coconut processing – since 90% of the workforce in coconut processing was female, women would benefit from new employment opportunities.



In Ghana, a \$100 million programme, prepared by the Investment Centre and funded by IFAD and the African Development Bank, is helping 32 000 farming households in the country's northern regions to develop commodity chains to southern markets. The 8-year programme, which targets women, young people and vulnerable groups, will strengthen producer organizations, improve rural infrastructure and facilitate access to financial services.

In Gabon, FAO helped to formulate an IFAD-funded project aimed at improving the access of 28 000 smallholders to value chains (for banana, cassava and peanuts) with high market potential and strengthening service providers to rural communities. Gender was an important consideration in the project design: it targets 160 villages and 240 producer groups, and half of the beneficiaries are women farmers.



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