

# Enabling rural women's economic empowerment

Institutions, opportunities, and participation  
(Background paper)

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& Assess the situation

& Identify good practices/entry points

Objective

⌘ Global context in brief

⌘ Issues to be addressed at different levels

- ⌘ Rural women's roles in agriculture
- ⌘ Employment & income-generating activities
- ⌘ Access to productive resources, etc.
- ⌘ Infrastructure and service delivery
- ⌘ NRM, climate change
- ⌘ Enabling institutions, policy environments
  
- ⌘ Good practice/entry points

⌘ Informed by livelihoods frameworks and decent work agenda

# Scope & focus

- ⌘ Policy choices, assumptions (e.g. globalization, liberalization, privatization, deregulation) – *gender- (and other) differentiated impacts*
- ⌘ Increase in formal, labor intensive, low-skilled, low-value-added jobs in developing countries (many filled by women) FAO, 2011a
- ⌘ Population (urbanization, maternal mortality, fertility declines, etc.), climate change
- ⌘ Shocks, crises – impacts (retrenchment, reverse migration, school-leaving, stress, “coping strategies”)

## Global context in brief

## **Situation:**

- “Economic situation: desperate.”
- “ Limited sources of reliable, sustainable income & full-time, consistent work.”
- “We live hand-to-mouth. Barely able to afford food, pay housing, bills, clothing, shoes.”
- “Lack of money contributes to significant emotional stress – goals seem impossible, create depression and anxiety.”
- “Lack of money – created a housing crisis – substandard housing.”
- “I want to stay.”

## **Barriers:**

- Lack of funding, skills, education, home, policy barriers
- Lack of child-care
- Lack of tax/financial information
- Little or no access to credit (interest-free or no low interest loans)
- Struggles with our own relationships (personal, family, community)
- Domestic violence
- Other women who are not supportive

# Where?

Where do you think these issues (in the previous slide) came from?.....

From my own community – Denman Island, Canada

Heroine's Journey – a Rural Women's Economic Independence initiative

Example shows that rural women the world over are facing similar issues (although clearly also context-specific)...in great part because of policy choices among other issues.

Where?

## Multiple, multi-dimensional

- ⌘ In the context of social relations, structures
- ⌘ Unpaid work
- ⌘ Agricultural work –food/nutrition security
- ⌘ Agricultural work -economic empowerment/ poverty reduction
- ⌘ *Good practice: Engaging men e.g. Abatangamuco (CARE), MenEngage Alliance*

# Rural women's roles in agriculture

- ⌘ Lack of access to decent work – cause of poverty for rural people, especially women (ILO, 2009a)
- ⌘ Agriculture - main provider of employment
- ⌘ Policy need for wider range of economic opportunities for women and men
  - ⌘ Informal work (poorly paid, no protection)
  - ⌘ Non-farm economic opportunities (e.g.. input agents, trading, finance, health, education, factories, insurance, shops, etc.)
  - ⌘ Public work programs
  - ⌘ Migration (e.g.. domestic, international). Policies – incentives to stay; protection for migrants; user-friendly remittance systems
  
  - ⌘ *Good practice in public work program: e.g. Mahatma Ghandi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, India; informal work - SEWA, India*

Decent, productive employment,  
income-generating activities

- ⌘ Land, water rights
- ⌘ Informal/non-formal educ'n
  - ⌘ E.g. incentives tied to social protection, quotas, fast-tracking, secondary/tertiary education, literacy/numeracy /business skills, etc.
- ⌘ Financial services: e.g. micro-insurance, working with men on WEE, etc.
- ⌘ Markets (physical, skill access)
- ⌘ Technology (including ICTs)

## **Constraints**

- ⌘ Policies, legislation (also enforcement)
- ⌘ Customary law/practices
- ⌘ Gender/social relations in households, kinship, communities

## **Good practices**

- ⌘ *Inheritance protection, will-writing, paralegals (e.g. Zambia)*
- ⌘ *Women's group land association (ICRISAT, Niger)*
- ⌘ *Financial services: BRAC (Bangladesh, etc.), VSLA (CARE)*
- ⌘ *Markets, value chains (Oxfam/Novib/IFAD)*
- ⌘ *AWARD program (tertiary education)*

**Access to productive resources & services**

⌘ Transport

⌘ Health services

⌘ Clean, efficient, renewable energy

⌘ Clean water, sanitation

⌘ Information/extension

## **Good practices**

⌘ *Removing user fees*

⌘ *SELF's solar power fuel secondary education (S. Africa)*

⌘ *Grameen Shakti Solar Home Systems, Bangladesh*

⌘ *Improved stoves, Kenya, Mali, Malawi*

⌘ *Sanchar Shakti - Mobile schemes, India*

# Infrastructure & service delivery

⌘ Gender differentiated knowledge, interests, roles, skills – key to informing NRM & climate change strategies

⌘ Chiapas, Mexico female shepherds

⌘ Women's management of agro-biodiversity

## **Good practices**

⌘ *“Green” technologies, approaches (e.g. organic agriculture, niche markets, conservation agriculture, solar, etc.*

⌘ *Documenting with women their adaptation, mitigation (Asia Pacific Forum for Women and Law in Development)*

# NRM & climate change

⌘ Formal, informal institutions

⌘ Under-representation /participation

⌘ **Effective institutions**

⌘ Understand effects of gender discrimination, work to transform

⌘ Strengthen capacity to address

⌘ Long-term commitment to change (resources, time, energy)

**Good practices**

⌘ *Self-employed Women's Association in India (SEWA) including SEWA Academy*

⌘ *Nepal: Joint Declaration on social dialogue to advance gender equality*

⌘ *CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program*

⌘ *CARE's multi-year Strategic Impact Inquiry on Women's Empowerment*

⌘ *Oxfam/Novib/IFAD – coffee work in Uganda (local institutions), Gender Action Learning (GAL)*

# Effective Institutions

- ⌘ Address gender disparities
- ⌘ Complementary, coherent (e.g. livestock/land)
- ⌘ Women's contribution in informal economy & unpaid work (thus, smallholders)
- ⌘ Guarantee work rights, standards
- ⌘ Conducive regulatory environment/business procedures
- ⌘ Fair tax systems
- ⌘ Gender-responsive budgeting
- ⌘ Access to adequate social protection
- ⌘ Impact measurement/data collection

## **Good practices**

- ⌘ *GRB, Morocco 2007 budget increased by over 50 percent compared to 2005*
- ⌘ *Bolsa Familia (Family Grant, Brazil)*
  - ⌘ *Cash transfer to poorest families*
  - ⌘ *Health, education, social-welfare, childcare*
- ⌘ *Mexico – childcare provision, 2007*
- ⌘ *FAO/Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam data retabulation*

# Enabling policy environments

- ⌘ Definitions of economic empowerment (holistic), link with social/structural aspects
- ⌘ Engage men!
- ⌘ Commit to longer term rural/agricultural investment
- ⌘ Support governments - decent work standards/rights
- ⌘ Maintain, increase advocacy/action in global, regional bodies/mechanisms/programs (CAADP, WTO, etc.)

## International entry points?

- ⌘ Comprehensive “totality of activities” policies.
- ⌘ Invest in agriculture, rural employment, infrastructure, services (in ways that benefit men *and* women - GRB). Incentives?
- ⌘ Resources to translate policy/legislation into action, e.g. women’s property, land rights, and other rights
- ⌘ Engage men!
- ⌘ Protect (or introduce) social protection floors – health, education, energy, water, sanitation
- ⌘ Promote rural women’s participation in government, business, agricultural R&D
- ⌘ Strengthen capacity
- ⌘ Data collection/use – impact

## National entry points?

- ⌘ Build on rural women's and men's knowledge, skills, interests, needs.
- ⌘ Support women's efforts towards solidarity & towards formal economy.
- ⌘ Strengthen institutions' capacity to increase women's representation, participation, engage men in so doing.
- ⌘ Engage men, women in eliminating harmful practices.
- ⌘ Ensure women's access to transport, markets etc. (work with leaders, men, donors, planners, etc.)
- ⌘ Engage men as "agents of change," "champions" – e.g. CARE Burundi's *Abatangamuco*

## Local entry points?

1. How do we define economic empowerment? Who defines it?
2. How to measure “economic empowerment”?
3. Move beyond “numbers of women” “increase in income” to more holistic measurement of impact. Move beyond “good practice” to actually show “impact” at scale. How?
4. Quality of life impacts?
5. Changes in attitudes, behaviors, perceptions that inform the quality of life?

Left wondering!