

**United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)  
with the OECD Development Assistance Committee's Network on Gender Equality  
(GENDERNET)**

**2012 joint biennial workshop:**

**“Food security and land rights: empowering rural women”**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 31 January – 1 February 2012**

**Concept Paper**

**Theme:** In view of increasing global attention to agricultural and rural development issues, IANWGE and GENDERNET will organize a joint workshop on “**Food security and land rights: empowering rural women**”.

**Objective:** The overall objective of the joint workshop is to inform participants so that they are better equipped to contribute to policy and programming discussions on gender equality, food security and land rights, and to inspire innovation within their agencies, by:

- deepening knowledge and understanding of issues related to women’s role and access to productive resources and markets for food security and agriculture;
- identifying entry points for strengthening practice in both policy approaches and programming; and
- encouraging the free exchange of information and collaboration amongst gender advisors, agricultural specialists and other development actors from bilateral and multilateral agencies, government partners and civil society.

**Intended outcomes:**

- Inputs to the priority theme of the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women on “The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges” (March 2012), the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, ‘Rio +20’ (June 2012) and to the participating entities’ work on food security and land rights.
- Identification of precautionary measures that could be put in place to prevent future adverse impacts of food crises on women farmers.

- Examination of new approaches to rural women's economic empowerment.
- Identification of opportunities to scale up and replicate our good practices.

**Focus:**

The workshop will focus on the following *themes*:

- increasing food availability, access and affordability of nutritious food for women and families living in poverty, and supporting women's contributions to food security;
- improving women's rights to access, use, control and ownership of land;
- understanding and unlocking agricultural value chains so that the returns to women are maximised;
- strengthening rural women's voice and leadership; and
- facilitating women's contributions to poverty reduction by strengthening their important role in the agriculture sector.

Case studies and presentations will address the *aspects* of:

- innovation;
- modalities and methods (e.g. South-South Co-operation); and
- scaling up and replicate successful initiatives.

**Intended outputs:**

1. A **statement** jointly developed by the Chairs to be submitted as contribution to CSW 2012, which will contain the main conclusions of the discussions, key policy advocacy messages to take to CSW 2012 and beyond, as well as recommendations for key programming to strengthen bilateral and multilateral support for rural women's empowerment.
2. A **report of the workshop** drafted by committee from both Secretariats (OECD-DAC GENDERNET and IANWGE) will be in charge of the final report. The report will reflect the key "lessons learned" and identify concrete follow-up strategies.

The statement, report, workshop papers and presentations will be made available through the respective Networks.

**Context:** Gender inequality is a major cause and effect of hunger and poverty around the world. It is estimated that 60 per cent of chronically hungry people are women and girls, while countries with the highest levels of hunger also have high levels of gender inequality.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, women and girls are critical actors for overcoming hunger, malnutrition and poverty. However, while they form the backbone of smallholder agriculture and are the main food producers in many developing countries, they generally have more limited access than men to key opportunities, productive resources, local services and social protection. For example, in rural Sub-Saharan Africa, women have access to less than 10 per cent of available credit to smallholder agriculture.<sup>2</sup> With regards to women's limited access to land—emanating from a complex web of traditions, rules, norms and regulations imposed both formally by the State and informally by customary practices—it is not only an impediment of women's ability to exercise and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with men (as set out in the 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women*), but it also limits women's productivity and excludes them from critical decision-making and leadership positions in rural areas. While agriculture provides employment for about 1.3 billion smallholder farmers and landless workers, it is important that women and men can benefit equally from decent employment opportunities. In addition, rural off-farm employment has also an important role to play in enabling rural women's economic empowerment, rural development and poverty reduction.<sup>3</sup>

The 21st century provides new opportunities for an agricultural renaissance. The international community has come to realize that food insecurity and malnutrition—resulting from inequitable access to food, volatile food prices and increased pressure on land and other natural resources—has major global ramifications. The effects of climate change, environmental degradation,

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<sup>1</sup> IFPRI (2009). The 2009 Global Hunger Index. The Challenge of Hunger: Focus on Financial Crisis and Gender Inequality. IFPRI Issues Brief 62.

<sup>2</sup> UN (2011). Report of the Secretary-General on Ten-year appraisal and review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, A/66/66.

<sup>3</sup> In Africa, non-farm activities account for 42 per cent of household income; in Latin America it is 40 per cent, and in Asia, it is 32 per cent. See FAO (2002). "Promoting farm/non-farm linkages in developing countries. Case studies from Africa and Latin America". Rome: FAO; and FAO/IFAD/ILO (2010a). Making Migration Work for Women and Men in Rural Labour Markets. Gender and Rural Employment Policy Brief No.6.

globalization, and increased competition for natural resources on food production and distribution are major challenges of our time and have main gender implications that need to be taken into consideration. The world is slowly beginning to recover from the 2007 global economic crisis though the risk of a double-dip recession persists (and the food and fuel crises that preceded the global economic down turn). Developing countries continue to face crises on many fronts. The latest severe drought and famine in the Horn of Africa—the worst in 60 years—has caused a severe food crisis threatening the livelihoods of over 13 million people. Increased competition for resources can adversely impact on developing countries especially those with poor governance and weak legal protection for local communities and small farmers – women often being the most exposed to further discrimination. For example, a phenomenon labelled ‘land grab’—the rush to acquire land by domestic and foreign investors in particular in Africa and South-East Asia—requires international scrutiny, as does the balance between biofuel and food production with its important gender and equity implications for rural development and poverty reduction.

A range of new actors eager to address global issues are emerging, along with knowledge and technology that can help address these global challenges. For example, private sector and civil society organizations are investing in renewable energy solutions and information and communication technologies (ICTs) that can bring innovation and development solutions closer to rural and remote areas. Innovative partnerships with the private sector, that accelerate rural women’s engagement in the global value chain and support women’s participation in governance processes, can bring women farmers’ production closer to national and international markets and more women into decision-making fora.

The focus of the workshop on rural women is therefore very timely. Efforts need to be stepped up by all actors to allow for improved participation of rural women at all levels of policy and decision-making processes, including in sectors and around issues related to rural development, agriculture and trade. Initiatives to enhance rural women’s access to productive resources (including land) and develop their capacity related to international quality standards, markets, technology and innovation can help equip rural women and men to better respond to food insecurity and malnutrition. For example, it has been estimated that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 per cent.

This would raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 per cent; and reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 per cent.<sup>4</sup> This is not insignificant—rural women can be critical agents of change if the resources and opportunities are made more accessible to them.

The international community, with the support of multilateral and bilateral agencies, can help drive increased attention to long-term gender-responsive rural development strategies, women's access to productive resources, in particular land, and full participation in decision-making processes. In addition, access to gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex and age on rural development issues will better inform policy making processes. Making available lessons learned and good practices can help promote south-south exchange and collaboration to find effective solutions. Multilateral and bilateral agencies along with other key development partners could spur discussions on improved coordination and aid effectiveness around rural women's issues.

**Modality:** The agenda should be structured as an interactive dialogue in plenaries and breakout sessions with 2-3 panellists each, including presentations of thematic/country case studies of interest to participants. Enough time should be allowed to motivate discussion and mutual learning amongst participants. Members of both networks are invited to identify appropriate case studies, resource people and speakers. The case studies will help the workshop participants reflect on innovative practices and investments, effective guidance and research on strengthening support for rural women.

**Participants:** Members of the two Networks, selected representatives from academia, civil society, international organizations and partner governments.

**Key milestones:**

Submission of ideas for presentations and case studies	2 December 2011
Biennial workshop	31 January – 1 February 2012

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<sup>4</sup> FAO, 2010-11: The State of Food and Agriculture—Women in Agriculture. Closing the Gender Gap for Development.