

Recent policy statements

The new FAO Gender and Development Plan of Action (2002-2007), endorsed by the FAO Conference in November 2001, represents the most recent and the most comprehensive policy statement in support of gender mainstreaming. This Plan aims to realign concepts, approaches and institutional arrangements with the Gender and Development (GAD) approach now widely adopted in the UN System, and to put into place effective supportive mechanisms and monitoring arrangements for gender mainstreaming throughout the Organization. Gender mainstreaming is one of the 16 Priority Areas for Inter-disciplinary Action (PAIAs) identified in the FAO Medium Term Plan 2002-2007 (MTP) submitted to the FAO Council in November 2000. Gender mainstreaming, as one of these PAIAs, was addressed only briefly in the MTP in anticipation of the present Plan of Action presenting to the membership a more comprehensive picture of all gender-sensitive activities foreseen in the substantive work of FAO over the medium term.

The Plan builds on lessons learned in the implementation of two previous plans and the observations made by the FAO Programme Committee (and later endorsed by the FAO Council), in its review of the 1999 Corporate Progress Report on Gender Mainstreaming. The Committee noted, *inter alia*, the need to improve the existing mechanisms to incorporate gender into FAO's work; to adopt verifiable indicators to demonstrate effective progress; to firmly entrench gender mainstreaming in programme planning of all units in the Organisation; to ensure adequate coverage of gender mainstreaming in corporate reports, such as the Programme Implementation Reports (PIRs) and the Programme Evaluation Reports (PERs); to ensure that implementation monitoring responsibilities were shared among all programme managers; to develop a coding and monitoring system for gender mainstreaming; and finally to separate the two related, but different, issues of gender mainstreaming in FAO's technical work and gender balance in staffing.

Programme objectives

The Plan's objectives are derived from the global goals and strategic orientations of FAO's Strategic Framework 2000-2015. The Plan explains how these objectives will be achieved in four priority areas of intervention, and identifies a series of key actions in each area. The Plan aims to strengthen the role and responsibilities in relation to gender mainstreaming of existing mechanisms for policy, programme and project review and approval, at both Headquarters and in the decentralised offices, by firmly incorporating gender mainstreaming into programme planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. For this purpose the terms of reference of the corporate Programme and Project Review Committee were amended to include the promotion of gender equality in normative work and field activities as one of six guiding principles for assessing all projects and programmes, regardless of source of funding. Toolkits for gender analysis in agriculture and rural development have been developed and some of these have been included in a new electronic resource and reference base for project formulators.

The Plan was prepared through a consultative process involving FAO's technical departments, and units responsible for staff development and training, and

information, as well as the Programme, Budget and Evaluation Office (PBE). Divisions reviewed selected major outputs of the Medium-Term Plan 2002-2007 to incorporate more explicitly and visibly a gender dimension, as well as to identify verifiable gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and evaluating their implementation. The major outputs selected by divisions for inclusion in the present Plan are categorised under the four priority areas of intervention. This attempt at institutionalizing a gender mainstreaming approach and “engender” the regular programming process of the organization became the subject of a case study (one of five done in 2001) under the a UN system-wide study of experiences with integration of gender in UN programming and budgeting processes, carried out by Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)

Since the beginning of 2002, Focal Points for Gender Mainstreaming have been nominated within the 24 technical divisions and other related units of the organization. Their Terms of Reference, which are annexed to the approved Plan, were developed, taking into account the findings of the UN System wide study on gender focal points in which FAO participated and in close consultation with managers across the organization. Various briefings and training sessions on gender mainstreaming have been organized for them by the Gender and Population Division, using the tools and training materials developed and field tested over many years under the Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA). Extensive briefing sessions on the new Plan were conducted with management and staff in each of FAO’s five regional offices. There is also one full-time WID/gender specialist outposted from the Gender and Population Division in each of the regional offices. Moreover, an internal bi-monthly Gender e-newsletter was launched in 2002 to inform staff of FAO’s efforts in gender mainstreaming

The Plan is also FAO’s framework for follow-up to relevant recommendations of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995, Article 14 on rural women of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” held in June 2000. Notably, the Plan echoes and expands on the objectives of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action adopted in 1996, which clearly reflects the importance of gender in all its seven commitments. These commitments were reconfirmed in the resolution adopted by world leaders attending the World Food Summit: five years later, which took place in Rome from 10-13 June 2002.

Finally, the Gender and Development Plan of Action integrates the outcome of the High-Level Consultation on Rural Women and Information, convened by FAO in Rome in October 1999. The Strategy for Action, entitled “Gender and Food Security – The Role of Information”, stresses the need to have comparative information on women and men, and statistics disaggregated by sex, that clarify gender-specific needs, constraints and interests so that appropriate action can be taken, as well as the importance of all stakeholders’ participation in planning and implementing agricultural policies and programmes. It also stresses the important role of the media in bridging the rural-urban divide, and in communicating a more accurate picture of the contributions of both rural women and men to agriculture and the rural economy, and the importance of providing access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) for both rural women and men. ■