

**Enabling rural women's economic empowerment: Institutions, opportunities, participation
Expert Group Meeting: 20-23 September 2011, Accra, Ghana**

Recommendations

We recognize that rural women's and men's lives, their livelihoods, and their roles and responsibilities are multi-dimensional and dynamic. They are impacted by policies, institutional mechanisms and rules, as well as by the gender relations institutionalized in households, communities, and beyond. This means that policies and programmes must be informed by participatory process involving rural women and men and take into account the diversity and complexity of factors that underpin the well-being and empowerment of women, men, girls and boys.

We recognize rural women as agents of change who contribute to local and national economies, agriculture, rural development, household livelihoods, food and nutrition security and social well-being. We recognize the role of men as agents of change alongside women.

We recognize women as leaders, decision-makers, producers, workers, entrepreneurs, and service providers in national and local policies, alongside men.

We recognize the diversity of rural women by age; religion; ethnicity; their social, economic, political and ecological status, and other factors. We respect their cultural identities, languages, worldviews and their individual and collective rights.

We recognize the full enjoyment of indigenous women and men, as a collective or as individuals, to land, territories and productive resources based on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We recognize that Governments have the responsibility to promote, protect, and fulfill the human rights of rural women and men to ensure their economic, social and cultural wellbeing.

We recognize that violence against women persists in all countries and is a major obstacle to rural women's empowerment and enjoyment of their rights.

We recognize the multifaceted characteristics of rural economies creating both opportunities and challenges for rural women and men in the farm and off-farm sectors.

We recognize the many inequalities and challenges faced by different groups of rural women and men in accessing economic and social opportunities and services. Rural development frameworks have not been able to successfully address the range of gender-specific challenges rural women face.

We recognize that macro-economic policies have not given adequate attention to the empowerment of rural women and that trade, employment and fiscal policy decisions have tended to contribute to the economic marginalization of rural women.

Therefore, new rural development frameworks need to take into account the risks and opportunities faced by diverse groups of rural women and men in the changing global context. These frameworks should ensure the compliance and accountability of state and non-state actors operating at macro, meso and micro levels to mitigate these risks and accelerate access to opportunities and respond to the rights, aspirations and needs of rural women and men.

National and international governance systems need to promote inclusive economic growth strategies that generate long-term societal benefits, including improved well-being of rural women, and reduced inequality and poverty in rural areas as well as reduced inequality between rural and urban areas.

Effective decentralization can be an important strategy for rural women's economic empowerment, and can be conducive to a fuller engagement of rural women in public affairs, provided it is accompanied by attitudinal change, capacity development, and inclusive and participatory processes for the formulation and implementation of policies, strategies, programs and projects.

The green economy, including environmentally sustainable agriculture, can provide policy instruments to achieve sustainable development and help mitigate climate change for current and future generations. Given rural women's key contributions to agriculture, rural livelihoods and sustainable development, they need to play an important role in defining, structuring and implementing the green economy.

The implementation of these recommendations has to be in accordance with international conventions and human rights standards, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Covenant on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Rio Conventions, relevant ILO conventions and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other international commitments such as the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

The following recommendations are addressed to a range of different stakeholders, including Governments, the United Nations system, the private sector and civil society, including rural organizations:

1. Economic policies, growth and equality

1. Ensure that economic policies fully prioritize decent work and employment generation in order to lead to a sustainable increase in the disposable incomes, food security and improved living conditions of rural women and men, girls and boys.
2. Facilitate an institutional and policy environment that promotes decent work for rural women, including migrant women, in both the formal and informal economy, including social protection, collective bargaining, and freedom of association.

3. Increase investments in infrastructure; essential services; indigenous, traditional and new technologies; and productive capacities in rural areas to reduce rural women's unpaid care work and enhance their sustainable livelihoods. Encourage men to take on caregiving and household tasks.
4. Develop and implement policies and programmes that support rural women's, farmers' and producers' organizations to compete effectively in the agricultural sector.
5. Promote rural and indigenous women's knowledge, products and services; and protect these from piracy, ensure fair benefit-sharing, and protect their intellectual property rights according to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
6. Develop and implement policies, programmes and incentives to enable rural women's active and effective engagement in the global value chain as producers, entrepreneurs, suppliers, workers and consumers in local and global markets by promoting capacity development on quality assurance and standards, and public procurement.
7. Introduce tax systems and other fiscal and macro-economic measures that redistribute wealth to poor segments of society, including rural women.
8. Develop and adopt measures that offset the negative impact of global and regional trade agreements on rural women's production and livelihoods, including 'special and preferential treatment' for rural women producers and their products.
9. Emphasize channels for development, testing, application and dissemination of frameworks and tools designed to assess the impact of participatory approaches while including women farmers' knowledge and perceptions, thereby improving local technology absorption and innovation.

2. Equal access to and control of land and other rural productive resources

10. Ensure that national laws and policies guarantee women's right to land, including upon divorce and separation, and right to inheritance in both customary and statutory systems.
11. Ensure that laws and policies on land are implemented and known by the target communities and that title holders clearly understand the type of land title they hold or wish to apply for.
12. Support the development and implementation of gender-sensitive land and property laws, both statutory and customary, by providing: i) capacity development among decentralized officials; ii) dialogue with, and awareness building among the target population in their own languages using a variety of media, and iii) legal aid and appeal mechanisms in relation to land and property issues (both in statutory and customary law).
13. Promote changes in customary law to ensure women have access, on an equal basis with men, to land over their lifetime, irrespective of their marital status.

14. Ensure that the option of joint titles is provided during land reform processes and when land records are being updated.
15. Take measures to require the consent of each spouse for the sale of land, or its use as collateral.
16. Ensure that in the registration of land for collective use, especially among indigenous peoples, the names of all female and male members of the community who use the land, are clearly stated.
17. Institute and enforce policies that limit the quantity of national land that foreign countries and corporations can buy. Hold Governments accountable for “land grabbing” which is detrimental to women’s and men’s livelihoods and employment opportunities and undermines food and nutrition security and food sovereignty.
18. Take measures to protect rural the rights of rural women affected by land expropriation, including through stakeholder meetings.
19. Ensure that changes in land administration or changes in land tenure systems do not cause environmental damage, do not destroy the ecosystems on which women and men depend for their productive and reproductive work and their cultural wellbeing, and do not have a negative impact on household food and nutrition security.
20. Prepare resettlement plans, with the agreement and consultation of local communities, including internally displaced people, refugees and returnees, to provide secure land with access to water, fuel, and services, and sustainable alternative
21. Enable small-holder farmers and agricultural workers, in particular women, to become more productive, competitive and profitable through strengthening provision of, and linkages to, affordable and labour-saving technologies, inputs, services and access to capacity development, and enhance their market access by identifying and addressing gender specific constraints.
22. Recognize and support women as actors in climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies (such as protection of water, food, fuel/energy and livelihoods).
23. Develop, in collaboration with the international community, environmental service payment schemes (e.g. carbon, water) taking into account rural women’s rights and capacities, and train rural women and men to design, participate in, and make decisions in relation to these schemes to ensure that the benefits accrue to them. There should be full and effective participation in decision-making based on the right of free prior and informed consent of women and men involved, particularly where such schemes concern indigenous peoples’ territories.

24. Ensure that rural women and men have access to productive resources and inputs (such as financial resources, extension services, farm technology, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation etc.) to make the best use of the land available.
25. Take measures to facilitate uptake of technology by rural women by involving them in all stages of research, training, entrepreneurship and innovation.

3. Provision of and entitlement to services

26. Provide the necessary space and infrastructure to establish sustainable community resource centres controlled by rural women where they can easily and freely access updated and pertinent information, education and training, including on health, markets, services and long-distance learning opportunities.
27. Create mechanisms that empower rural producers' and women's organizations to hold public and private sector service providers accountable for the quality and cost of services provided to women and men in rural areas.
28. Promote South-South exchange and use of knowledge, technologies, good practices, and resilience strategies, including through the opportunities provided by information and communication technologies (ICTs) and internet-based technologies.
29. Ensure that access to essential services for poor rural communities is not subject to cost recovery and user fees.
30. Increase rural women's access to financial services, including savings, credit, insurance, and domestic payment services, and economic, financial and business literacy skills, as well as provide support to transition from informal to formal financial services.
31. Support community-managed financial services, and establish monitoring mechanisms on commercially motivated operations in the financial sector.
32. Invest in and create infrastructure, community facilities and on- and off-farm care services for children, elderly and persons with disabilities that reduce rural women's unpaid care work and domestic tasks. Provide for children's basic needs and education, and work to improve conditions for the elderly and people with disabilities to live in dignity and with self-respect.
33. Recognize and invest in community health insurance to support rural women and caregivers to meet their health needs and support initiatives that provide regular mobile clinics for free health services, including reproductive services (e.g. family planning, pap smears, mammograms, sexually transmitted diseases) that reach all women, including in remote areas on an at least annual basis.

4. Leadership, decision-making and voice

34. Develop programmes and outreach to ensure that rural women are aware of their rights, as well as of existing rural development policies and the roles and duty of national and local government, with the view to enable rural women to hold all duty bearers to account.
35. Strengthen gender-responsive accountability mechanisms to ensure rural women and their organizations can influence policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring at all levels of government, including local and self-governments, on all issues that concern them.
36. Undertake affirmative action, including quotas, to promote rural women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels of government accompanied by relevant capacity development, while also securing men's support to the promotion of women in leadership positions.
37. Take measures to enhance the economic empowerment of different groups of rural women, including through investments in their capacity development, sensitization, sharing of information and lessons learnt at different government levels, in the private sector and civil society.
38. Ensure that gender units are established and/or strengthened at senior levels in sectoral ministries and are supported by adequate budgets and power to ensure that all policies and programmes are gender-sensitive and respond to the concerns of rural women and men.
39. Provide all rural women and men with free-of-charge access to personal identification documents (such as identity cards, social security numbers), so that they are recognized as full citizens with equal access to productive assets and services. It is noted that having identification documents should not be a precondition for women and men to enjoy their rights as citizens.
40. Develop the capacity of rural women's, farmers', fisher and producer and other organizations to be more inclusive (by gender, age, and ethnicity), including by creating fair and transparent criteria for the inclusion of women in leadership positions in these organizations.
41. Assist informal rural women's groups to affiliate with formal organizations in the areas of their activities (at local/regional/national levels) or to form umbrella organizations and support groups; and facilitate networking among women's organizations and women's rural producer organizations.
42. Promote knowledge sharing, including the transmission and exchange of traditional knowledge, to support rural women in different aspects of their lives and livelihoods.
43. Support regional level dialogues among rural women farmers' organizations to strengthen their capacity to influence global and regional policies in ways that will improve their lives and livelihoods and reduce rural poverty.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

44. Ensure that data collected in household and labour force surveys, agricultural censuses, and population censuses are disaggregated by sex, age, and other variables (i.e. ethnicity, where appropriate), and are analyzed, published, and used for informed policy-making and planning and for the establishment of satellite accounts.
45. Promote the administration of time-use surveys and facilitate their use within national statistical systems.
46. Ensure that the measurement of economic growth includes the contribution of rural women and men in paid and unpaid work in the productive (farm and non-farm) and reproductive sectors.
47. Ensure that available data and information is widely disseminated and accessible to rural women and men in a transparent fashion.
48. Develop the capacities of rural women and their organizations to participate in the conceptualization, collection and use of data and information to advocate with their own governments at national and local levels and hold them accountable.
49. Provide training in participatory methods to scientists and policy-makers at different levels and in different disciplines.

6. Resources

50. Allocate adequate financial resources (by applying the principles of gender-responsive budgeting) in national budgets for the economic empowerment of rural women so as to implement the recommendations.
51. Ensure financial support for rural women's organizations, including for awareness-raising on rural women's rights.

7. UN system

52. The UN system should comply with gender equality and diversity commitments within its own organizations in order to serve as role models for Governments and other organizations and to legitimize policy guidance on gender equality issues in their operations.
53. The UN system, in particular FAO, ILO, the UN Statistics Division, UNESCO, UN Women and WHO, should improve gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex, age and other variables (i.e. ethnicity) where appropriate, and analyze data on rural-urban disparities. In particular, they should:

- establish multi-disciplinary teams in support of national statistical offices to conceptualize, analyze, and utilize major national surveys and censuses to support gender equality policy processes and economic empowerment of rural women;
- promote south-south exchanges on information and data collection, analysis, and use, and knowledge management; and
- strengthen dialogues between users and producers of data in different sectors (e.g. health, education, labour, agriculture and rural development).