

Promoting the leadership of women in producers' organizations:

Lessons from the experiences of FAO and IFAD



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



IFAD

Investing in rural people

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
COP	Conference of the Parties
DC	Dimitra Club
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAIN	Governance, Autonomy, Integration, Needs-based
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
LAPA	Local Adaptation Plan of Action
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
PAKISAMA	National Confederation of Small Farmers' and Fishers' Organizations
PDHRA	Participatory Integrated Watershed Management Project
PO	producers' organization
PPILDA	<i>Project de Promotion de l'Initiative Locale pour le Développement à Aguie</i> (Project to Promote Local Initiative for Development in Aguie)
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PROPAC	<i>Plateforme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale</i> (Subregional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa)
REAF	Commission on Family Farming of MERCOSUR
RWLP	Rural Women's Leadership Programme
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
VSLA	village savings and loan association
WASAA	Women in Agribusiness in Sub-Saharan Africa Alliance
WLC	women's leadership circle
WOCAN	Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management

Definitions

Leadership (Oxford English Dictionary): “The action of leading a group of people or an organization, or the ability to do this.”

Leadership (World Bank): “A tool to move society from one (steady) state to another; it is inherently about change. Leaders play a key role, not only as visionaries and models of integrity in their individual capacity but also institutionally, in defining, energizing and seeing through reform. World Bank leadership activities focus on each of these three dimensions:

1. **Vision dimension – Transform a vision into reality:** capacity to engage various constituencies to produce a shared vision of the future, identify realities to be addressed to reach the shared vision and change.
2. **Effectiveness dimension – Technical and managerial skills:** capacity to: (i) diagnose underlying problems/issues; (ii) prioritize among multiple and competing challenges; (iii) find solutions; (iv) mobilize stakeholders; and (v) implement their capacity to govern and build more effective institutions and organizations.
3. **Integrity dimension – Embody values, be a ‘role model’:** commitment to serve the public good, to personify individual and professional ethics, and to champion accountability relationships that inspire mutual trust in institutions, communities, and society as a whole.”

Empowerment (World Bank):¹ “A concept that may have a varying connotation according to different socio-cultural contexts and the subjective outcomes that ‘empowered’ people want to achieve. Empowerment can encompass the economic, social, behavioural, political and environmental domains in the life of individuals.” The following definition, also from the World Bank, is useful to highlight the responsible interaction between people and their formal and informal institutions: empowerment is “the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives”.

Producers’ organizations (FAO):² “Membership-based organizations, with elected leaders, that provide various types of economic and/or social services for their members and represent them in policy discussions. They include organizations – formal and informal – of small farmers, pastoralists, fishers, foresters and small- and medium-scale entrepreneurs engaged in agroprocessing. These organizations may operate at the local level and can aggregate in union/federations/apex organizations at the national, regional and international levels.”

Producers’ organizations (International Cooperative Alliance):³ “Autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.”

1 World Bank. 2002. *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook*. Draft. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/486312-1095094954594/draft.pdf>

2 FAO. 2007. Elements of an incremental process to build a strategic partnership to support institution building of producers’ organizations. Draft concept note. Rome: FAO.

3 Ton, G., J. Bijman and J. Oorthuizen, eds. 2007. *Producer organisations and market chains: Facilitating trajectories of change in developing countries*, p. 93. Wageningen, the Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers.

Acknowledgements

This paper has been funded by the European Union through the Improved Global Governance for Hunger Reduction Programme. The views expressed can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) or the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The paper was prepared by Beatrice Gerli, Consultant in Gender and Targeting, under the supervision of Carol Djeddah, Senior Officer, Rural Institutions in FAO's Social Protection Division; and Clare Bishop-Sambrook, Lead Technical Specialist, Gender and Targeting in IFAD's Policy and Technical Advisory Division. Special appreciation goes to Igor Vinci, FAO Consultant for Policy and Research, for his contribution of text on FAO's experiences.

Acknowledgements are extended to Zoe Bienvenu, FAO Consultant; Dubravka Bojic, FAO Policy Officer; Mauro Bottaro, Dimitra Consultant; and Maria Elena Mangiafico, IFAD Knowledge Management and Grants Officer, for their continuous support during the drafting process.

Additional thanks goes to the paper's peer reviewers: Agricord; Clare Bishop Sambrook, IFAD Lead Technical Specialist; Francesca Romana Borgia, IFAD Rural Institutions Consultant; Deborah Duveskog, FAO Regional Emergency Officer; Wafaa El Khoury, IFAD Lead Technical Specialist; Sophie Grouwels, FAO Forestry Officer; and Matteo Marchisio, IFAD Country Programme Manager. Sincere thanks are also expressed to FAO and IFAD staff and partners and the rural women and men whose practical insights and technical support have been essential.



Executive Summary

This paper explores aspects of promoting rural women's leadership in producers' organizations (POs). Despite the vast amount of work that women perform in the agriculture sector, their role remains largely unrecognized. The concerns and issues of women farmers are scarcely heard at the local, national and global levels. One reason for this silence is that there are not enough women in leadership positions to be able to represent the interests of rural women. This shortage is compounded by women's lack of voice in decision-making processes at all levels – from households to rural organizations – and in policymaking.

Ensuring that women have a greater voice is not only a matter of gender equality. Women's leadership, especially in POs, is essential for increasing the production of smallholder agriculture, as women make massive contributions to the sector. Women leaders can advocate for women's better access to and control over assets and productive inputs, thus boosting their productivity and incomes, leading to food security and increasing their employment opportunities and real wages.

This paper has three main purposes: (i) to identify relevant aspects that relate to the promotion of rural women's leadership within POs; (ii) to identify related good practices that are implemented by IFAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and their partners; and (iii) to present key messages and recommendations for guiding the design and implementation of interventions in support of women's leadership. The analysis is clustered around the following three dimensions:

- 1) **PO environment:** Enable PO representatives to voice the needs of small-scale producers, both women and men, to ensure that their concerns are taken into account in the design and implementation of policies, legal frameworks, strategies, programmes and projects. Evidence-based research has been found to be essential in supporting the case for greater gender equality in decision-making, and in promoting rural women's participation in policy dialogue, decision-making and international and special events.
- 2) **PO arrangements and mechanisms:** These include "women's wings", gender quotas and gender plans that promote women's leadership to trigger organizational change and help build women's confidence and skills. Depending on the socio-economic conditions of women in the given context, some organizations may be better suited than others to encouraging women's leadership (women-only versus mixed membership, or formal versus informal arrangements). Value chain interventions can be effective mechanisms for identifying the stages (or value chains) where women are more involved, so as to tailor specific strategies for improving women's position vis-à-vis other stakeholders.
- 3) **Individual capacities and behaviours:** These include skills, mentalities, stereotypes and beliefs that may advance or hinder women's leadership in POs. Women in leadership roles and networks of women leaders should be made more visible so that these women can become role models in motivating the young and their own peers to pursue leadership pathways. Support for women leaders should also be shaped along a leadership pathway, so that they can take on more responsibilities. The involvement of men is another key to the sustainable fostering of women's leadership through efforts to rework power structures from within.

Key messages and recommendations have emerged from this analysis of good practices and can be applied to the design and implementation of interventions in support of women's leadership. These messages and recommendations also highlight implementation arrangements and indicators for developing women's active participation and leadership in POs.

The strategies and methodologies described in this paper have been drawn from a variety of IFAD and FAO experiences that encompass various regions and different types of rural organization. Recommendations are provided in each section, based on lessons learned from the field. In addition, a set of core considerations has been gathered to inform project managers of relevant strategies within the broader project context. These considerations aim to improve the design, implementation and supervision of development interventions so that women are able to participate actively and take on leading roles in POs.



Introduction

Background and rationale

The role of women in agriculture

Women make essential contributions to agricultural and rural economic activities in the developing world. Women also contribute to the food security and income generation of their households, although their roles vary considerably among and within regions. Women's share of the agricultural labour force ranges from approximately 20 per cent in Latin America to almost 50 per cent in East and Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.⁴ Global phenomena such as men's migration to cities, and seasonal migration are expanding the role of women in the agriculture sector in rural areas.

The livelihoods and well-being of women farmers are constrained by the same factors as affect small agricultural producers in general. However, these constraints are compounded by gender-specific factors, including: (i) traditional practices that hinder women's access to and control over land and other productive assets; (ii) women's limited access to agricultural inputs, services, education and technology; and (iii) women's propensity to have lower incomes than men because they tend to control food crops rather than cash crops and participate in less-profitable value chains.

Furthermore, the typical working day of a rural woman is longer than that of a rural man in most societies, where women are primarily responsible for domestic and child-rearing activities, including food preparation.⁵ Poor infrastructure and the limited provision of public services also force women in rural areas to spend long hours collecting water and fuel.⁶ The workload burden on women prevents them from participating in groups (e.g. POs) and engaging in leadership roles, thus limiting their decision-making capacity.

The voice gap: participation without representation

Despite the amount of work that women perform, their role in agriculture remains largely unrecognized. The concerns and issues of women farmers are barely heard at the local, national and global levels. A major reason for this silence is that there are too few women in leadership positions to represent the interests of rural women. This shortage is compounded by women's inability to contribute to decision-making and policymaking processes at all levels – from households to rural organizations.

The lack of women's representation has negative consequences that are evident at various levels:

4 FAO. 2011. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11. Women in agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development*. Rome: FAO. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e00.htm>.

5 Ilahi, N. 2000. *The Intra-household Allocation of Time and Tasks: What Have We Learnt from the Empirical Literature?* Policy Research Report on Gender and Development, Working Paper Series No. 13. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/wp13.pdf>

6 Fontana, M., and L. Natali. 2008. *Gendered Patterns of Time Use in Tanzania: Public Investment in Infrastructure Can Help*. Paper prepared for the International Food Policy Research Institute Project on Evaluating the Long-Term Impact of Gender-focussed Policy Interventions. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/genderedpatternsoftimeuseintanzaniapublicinvestmentininfrastructurecanhelp.pdf>

- The limited presence and voice of women in public affairs results in policies, investments and legal frameworks that are less sensitive to their specific needs and constraints. While seeming to be gender-neutral, these frameworks may be detrimental to women, thus failing to achieve the intended development outcomes. Women are particularly affected by the growing incidence of land grabbing;⁷ inappropriate incentives in value chain development, which can increase women's workloads; and rural finance programmes that overlook women's specific constraints (e.g. lack of collateral). In addition, the few women in leadership positions at the national level might lack the ability to represent effectively the interests of rural women from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- Women are often excluded or absent from, or underrepresented on, the decision-making processes in POs and other rural entities. There are few women PO members in leadership positions, and even fewer as organizations progress from the local to the regional and national levels. Women's inability to express themselves widens the gap between their concerns and the services and policies offered by POs. This shortfall also hinders women's access to the benefits provided by POs, such as knowledge, agricultural inputs and better links to markets and government authorities – all of which would improve women's performance of agricultural activities and their self-esteem and confidence.
- **In intra-household decision-making**, even when women play a key role in pursuing livelihood strategies for their households, they often have little or no control over the incomes derived from their work or family-based activities. As a consequence, they can be excluded or marginalized from decisions on spending priorities and constrained in their asset accumulation, affecting the well-being of all household members, particularly children.

In short, there is a dramatic imbalance between rural women's voices and decision-making power and their enormous contribution to agricultural marketing, production and livelihoods. The causes of persistent gender inequality in relation to leadership and decision-making are varied and complex, and stem from differences between the rights, opportunities and roles of men and women.

Why rural women leaders are relevant to producers' organizations

Ensuring that women have a greater voice is not only a matter of equal rights. Women's significant contribution to and strong leadership in agriculture – especially POs – are essential for increasing the productivity of smallholder farms.

If women had the same access as men to productive inputs, the yields from their farms could increase by 20-30 per cent and total agricultural output by 2.5-4.0 per cent in developing countries, thus helping to reduce the number of hungry people worldwide by 12-17 per cent.⁸ Women leaders can advocate for increasing women's access to and control over assets and productive inputs, in turn boosting women's productivity, raising their incomes, and leading to improved availability of food and employment and higher real wages.

⁷ According to Oxfam, over the last ten years, companies and governments have acquired at least 227 million hectares of land in developing countries, eroding the livelihoods of local communities. As a result, women are facing income reductions from the loss of land that was used for food crops; spend more time fetching water and fuelwood; and are more exposed to conflicts relating to land grabs.

⁸ FAO. 2011. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11. Women in agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development*. Rome: FAO. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e00.htm>.

Addressing the inequalities between men and women and facilitating the empowerment of women are essential for enhancing food and nutrition security. Extensive evidence shows that increasing the voice of women leads to improved education levels and nutrition for the children in their households.⁹ The leadership of women is therefore essential for effective agriculture-related interventions and, ultimately, for development outcomes.

Women's leadership and active participation in the decision-making processes of rural institutions and organizations is not only an issue of human rights and gender equality. It also constitutes a long-term investment in making smallholder agriculture more productive and sustainable, and it will contribute to better food security for all.

How producers' organizations can enhance the empowerment of women and improve livelihoods

The active involvement of rural women in POs would foster recognition of the role that women play in agriculture and help to eliminate the constraints and issues that they face. There is increasing evidence from research and field experience that collective action through POs¹⁰ can improve the access of men and women smallholders to the resources, services and information that would enable them to develop sustainable livelihoods. The capacity of POs to reduce gender-based inequalities in relation to agriculture includes the following:

- **Strengthening the position of farmers**, through collective action, so that they can influence policymaking in support of policy and legal frameworks that are gender-sensitive. By channelling women's voices and advocating for their interests, POs can help to address issues related to access to land, natural resources and markets, and promote the development of tailored extension services.
- **Responding to the specific interests and needs of small producers**, by providing an array of services tailored to the needs of women and men PO members, especially in support of women's access to agricultural inputs, technologies, information and capacity-building. As POs are based on cooperative values, they can influence the attitudes and behaviours of members to encourage women's leadership and involvement in decision-making.
- **Allowing rural women to participate in POs so that they can build networks**, increase their confidence and self-esteem, develop leadership and technical skills, and engage in decision-making processes at different levels.¹¹

POs that are gender-sensitive and inclusive can therefore act as catalysts of change. They can generate social inclusion and empower their women members.

9 FAO, 2011 (see note 8) includes evidence from studies by Behrman and Deolalikar (1988), Behrman and Wolfe (1989), Doss (2005), Haddad (1999), Hoddinott and Haddad (1995), Katz (2000), Kennedy and Haddad (1994), Kennedy and Peters (1992), Quisumbing and Maluccio (2000), Smith et al. (2003) and Thomas (1997).

10 FAO and IFAD. 2012. *Good Practices in Building Innovative Rural Institutions to Increase Food Security*. D. Herbel, E. Crowley, N. Ourabah Haddad and M. Lee, eds. Rome: FAO. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2258e/i2258e00.pdf>

11 These dimensions of empowerment are based on an analysis provided by CoOPquity, enriched by consideration of gender issues.

Overview of the paper

Purpose and objectives

The gender policies of FAO¹² and IFAD¹³ each have a strategic objective dedicated to ensuring that women have equal voice and influence in rural institutions and organizations. The strong commitment of the two institutions to promoting women's leadership in POs has been reflected in their interventions over recent years. FAO and IFAD aim to strengthen the impact and sustainability of their programmes and projects by increasing the voice and influence of rural women.

FAO's most recent commitment in support of rural women's leadership is reflected in its CoOPequity programme, which works with governments to support the development of equitable, economically viable and sustainable POs and cooperatives. CoOPequity is funded by the European Union (EU) as a component of the FAO/EU Improved Global Governance for Hunger Reduction programme. IFAD has engaged with FAO on CoOPequity to strengthen the gender dimension of this programme.

This publication represents a key output of the strategic partnership between IFAD and FAO. Its objectives are to:

- frame aspects that are relevant to promoting the leadership of rural women within POs;
- identify related good practices implemented by IFAD, FAO and their partners; and
- gather key messages and recommendations that will inform the design and implementation of interventions in support of women's leadership.

The paper is intended for audiences that include:

- country programme managers, project staff and experts in gender and rural institutions who are involved in the design and management of development interventions;
- stakeholders at the country level, such as service providers, NGOs, civil society entities and fieldworkers, as well as POs; and
- decision-makers with roles in government policy and strategies in support of rural organizations and/or the promotion of gender equality.

Conceptual framework

This study builds on a conceptual framework that has three dimensions in support of women's equal voice and leadership within POs: the enabling environment, the organization dimension, and the individual dimension.¹⁴ These aspects correspond to the three pillars of FAO's capacity development framework¹⁵ (Figure 1) and facilitate the systematization and comparison of information and experiences for strengthening interventions in support of women's leadership in POs.

12 FAO's policy on gender equality, to be achieved by 2025, has the objective of ensuring that "Women participate equally with men as decision-makers in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes." FAO. 2013. *Summary of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality: Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development*. Rome: FAO. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/i3578e/i3578e.pdf>

13 The goal of IFAD's gender policy is to "Enable women and men to have equal voice and influence in rural institutions and organizations". IFAD. 2012. *Gender equality and women's empowerment policy*. Rome: IFAD. http://www.ifad.org/gender/policy/gender_e.pdf

14 This conceptual framework is based on the three dimensions mentioned in IFAD. 2014. *A Field Practitioner's Guide: Institutional and organizational analysis and capacity strengthening*. Rome: IFAD. <http://www.ifad.org/english/institutions/field.pdf>

15 See FAO's Capacity Development Portal: The three dimensions of the FAO capacity development framework. <http://www.fao.org/capacitydevelopment/the-three-dimensions-of-the-fao-capacity-development-framework/en/>; and FAO. 2010. *Enhancing FAO's practices for supporting capacity development of developing countries*. FAO Capacity Development Learning Module 1. Rome: FAO

The core part of this paper is organized according to these three dimensions:

- Part I reviews the **enabling environment** for POs, including characteristics that relate to legal and policy frameworks; participatory mechanisms for dialogue and collaboration between POs and the State; and linkages with other stakeholders, such as those in the policymaking and market areas. Given IFAD's limited engagement in policy dialogue, this section relates primarily to the work of FAO.
- Part II reviews the **functioning of POs**, including their capacity to ensure inclusive, equitable and transparent management; to provide and facilitate access to services that target the needs of women and men PO members; and to represent the interests of women and men members in decision-making processes.
- Part III relates to the **individual capacities and behaviours** that promote the inclusiveness and good functioning of POs, such as skills in management, negotiation and leadership. In turn, these capacities will contribute to improving livelihoods and food security.

FIGURE 1 Rural households, time use and the role of water collection



Source: FAO, 2015.
<http://www.fao.org/capacitydevelopment/the-three-dimensions-of-the-fao-capacity-development-framework/en/>

Structure

The structure of this review is based on:

- **identification and clustering** of the relevant dimensions and challenges affecting the leadership of women, according to the three elements of FAO's capacity development framework – the paper also clarifies the links among various technical areas (e.g. gender equality, value chains and rural organizations) to ensure that gender considerations remain on the agenda when supporting POs;
- **presentation of the key recommendations that derive from the analysis and examples presented;**
- **considerations** to inform the design and implementation of interventions in support of women's leadership within POs; and
- **examples of FAO and IFAD development interventions**, presented in Annex I and grouped under the three dimensions.

While conceptually separated for the purpose of analysis, the three dimensions are interlinked and many of the issues and key recommendations apply to all three. Examples are grouped around the three dimensions for the purpose of clarity, but they can relate to more than one dimension, and their implementation involves operating at all three levels.

Methodology

The paper builds on various case studies carried out by IFAD and FAO between 2010 and 2014 that relate to the strengthening of women's leadership in POs. Interventions were selected according to their performance, effectiveness and sustainability in improving the active involvement and voice of women within groups. These features were identified from evaluations, direct observation during field visits and the proven success of practices that have been scaled up or institutionalized in the two organizations. The case studies represent a range of social and geographical settings that capture the various challenges and opportunities faced by women in various regions of the world, and the strategies used in response.

The information in this report has been drawn from:

- analysis of project documentation, including project design reports, aides-memoires, working papers and implementation reports;
- information collected during field visits through direct observation of practices and interviews with project beneficiaries and implementing partners; and
- interviews with selected participants attending the global meetings of the Farmers' Forum in 2010, 2012 and 2014.



Part I: How the broader environment can enable women's leadership in producers' organizations

The operation, effectiveness and sustainability of POs at the local and national levels depend significantly on the broader environment, which encompasses legal and policy frameworks, the business environment, and mechanisms for dialogue and consultation between government and POs. An “enabling environment” is one in which PO representatives can voice the needs of men and women small-scale producers so that their concerns are taken into account during the design and implementation of legal frameworks, policies, strategies, programmes and projects.

Aspects of an enabling environment for promoting women's leadership in POs are presented in the following, together with a set of core lessons that feed into the preparation of relevant strategies and interventions:

1. Participation of rural women in policy dialogue and decision-making

2. Participation of rural women leaders in international and dedicated events

3. Building the case for greater gender equality in decision-making

1. Participation of rural women in policy dialogue and decision-making

Supporting rural women's participation in policy dialogue and decision-making to ensure that their voices are heard. Greater and more effective representation of rural women is essential to ensure that policies and legal frameworks promote women's active participation in POs. Some countries, such as Namibia, have introduced affirmative measures into their cooperative legislation that open the door for women in cooperative leadership.¹⁶ Cooperative development policies in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania are committed to enhancing women's effective participation in POs.¹⁷

Having women in the policymaking process does not necessarily mean that the concerns of rural women will be addressed. The geographic and social backgrounds of these women may differ from those of women in government or other platforms for dialogue, who generally come from urban areas and from a different socio-economic background.

Key recommendations:

- **Ensure that dedicated spaces, channels of communication and consultative processes are established through which rural women can be heard at the policymaking level.** Such opportunities will significantly enhance the inclusion of rural women in influencing policies, laws and programmes, particularly where their concerns are traditionally neglected or when it is difficult for them to interact with decision-making and consultative entities:

16 See Cooperative Act of Namibia No. 23 of 1996, Section 29.

17 See Uganda National Cooperative Policy of 2010, Sections 1.1 and 4.7.1. and the United Republic of Tanzania's 2002 Cooperative Development Policy, Section 3.2.

- IFAD supported the development of specific sessions on gender equality at the Latin American Southern Common Market's (MERCOSUR's) special meeting of the Commission on Family Farming (REAF), which led to the development of dedicated initiatives at the national and regional levels (Example 1.1.A, Annex I). This contributed to the creation of a specialized committee, MERCOSUR *Mujeres*, to address the challenges facing rural development and women in the context of family farming. Cooperation between REAF and MERCOSUR *Mujeres* has resulted in greater involvement of women in policy dialogue, and has led to a number of initiatives for improving women's conditions in Latin America's Southern Cone.
- POs need to establish strong links with government at the local and national levels to provide a channel of communication for rural women. **Promoting their participation in multi-stakeholder platforms will enable women to network between formal and informal organizations, including at the apex level, to ensure that the voices of the most excluded women are heard:**
 - Consultative platforms will ensure better linkages between rural women and decision makers. Examples include the women's leadership circles (WLCs) developed by Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management in Africa and Asia (WOCAN). These circles (Example 1.1.B, Annex I) are national-level platforms that foster regular dialogue between women policymakers and women farmers to stimulate the design and implementation of policies that meet the needs of rural women.

2. Participation of rural women leaders in international and dedicated events

This strategy will allow women to lobby and advocate for rural women's concerns. Relevant international and high-profile events will offer women leaders the opportunity to raise awareness of women's essential roles in agriculture, food security, rural economies and family well-being. These meetings also provide excellent occasions for women to enhance their networking and leadership skills:

- The third global meeting of the Farmers' Forum, held in Rome in 2010, included a special session on Promoting Women's Leadership in Farmers' and Rural Producers' Organizations, which set the framework for IFAD's engagement in this topic and placed it at the top of the agenda (Example 1.2.A, Annex I). The main points arising from the event became the cornerstone for a number of commitments by IFAD, which have been helping to shape programmes and grants.¹⁸
- Through its Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP), IFAD supported rural women leaders of farmers' organizations in participating in national, regional and global policy processes, such as the World Food Summit in Rome; a consultation workshop for civil society organizations under the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme; the Tenth Conference of the Parties (COP 10) of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which included COP 15 and COP 17 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change); and the 2010 global meeting of the Farmers' Forum. Women gained international recognition as leaders and were able to network with each other (Example 1.2.B, Annex I).

¹⁸ IFAD. 2010. Promoting Women's Leadership in Farmers Organizations. Rome, IFAD. http://www.ifad.org/farmer/2010/doc/concep_e.pdf; and IFAD. 2013. Strengthening institutions and organizations: An analysis of lessons learnt from field application of IFAD's sourcebook on institutional and organizational analysis for pro-poor change. Synthesis report. Rome: IFAD. http://www.ifad.org/english/institutions/synthesis/synthesis_report_web.pdf.

- The Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists, which took place in India in 2010, represented a significant opportunity to raise awareness of the specific challenges faced by women pastoralists (Example 1.2.C, Annex I).

3. Building the case for greater gender equality in decision-making

Evidence can be drawn from research and data to support greater gender equality in decision-making, providing the rationale for increasing attention to women in policies, programmes and legal frameworks.

Key recommendations:

- It is essential to generate and disseminate evidence-based knowledge that illustrates the gains that can be achieved from greater gender equality, particularly in terms of wealthier rural economies and families' well-being. Attention should be directed not only to women's role in productive activities, but also to the challenges that women face in obtaining access to resources and information and their lack of opportunities for participating in leadership and decision-making roles. Evidence on potential gains from gender equality should build a good case for promoting women's inclusion in rural organizations and their decision-making mechanisms:
 - For example, the FAO report, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11* focuses on losses caused by gender inequality in the agriculture sector. It calculates the potential improvement in agricultural production and the number of people who would escape poverty if the gender gap in access to resources were closed (Example 1.3.A, Annex I).
 - IFAD's *Nuevas Trenzas* programme (Example 1.3.C, Annex I) and the grant from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) (Example 1.3.B) have generated and disseminated knowledge on rural women in Latin America and East Africa. These sources of knowledge, which include information on women's capacity and expectations in improving policies, project design, and implementation of programmes, have contributed to advocacy and policy dialogue in both regions.
- Sector-specific analyses of gender inequalities gain traction and influence among policymakers and other relevant stakeholders, including IFAD and FAO, encouraging them to support the design and implementation of gender-sensitive sectoral policies and programmes. Collecting sector-specific information on the role of women and on gender inequalities can help the design and implementation of sectoral policies and programmes that acknowledge the different roles and functions performed by men and women in a given sector or value chain. This information can also help to tailor support to enhance the effectiveness and performance of the overall sector:
 - A policy relating to the fisheries value chain in Benin supported women's access to resources, markets, technologies, extension services and credit, thus improving the overall performance of the fishery sector (Example 1.3.D, Annex I).



Part II: How to promote women's leadership in producers' organizations

It is important to ensure that POs are able to address the various needs of their members, including women and young people,¹⁹ and can support their members in achieving their goals. Four key characteristics should be taken into consideration when promoting rural women's leadership and increased participation in decision-making processes at the organization level:

1. Type of producers' organization
2. Internal arrangements and mechanisms of producers' organizations
3. Women's leadership of producers' organizations in the context of value chain development
4. Support for organizational change

1. Type of producers' organization

Assessing which type of organization can best address rural women's needs can have an influence on the main characteristics of actual and potential members: their socio-economic conditions, ethnic or tribal diversity, social cohesion, inequalities and stereotypes.

Although the type of organization has important effects on the participation and leadership that women seek to achieve, there is no specific kind of entity that will guarantee women's empowerment. Women are empowered by participating in different activities and different kinds of group. The impact on empowerment is often increased by the combined effects of membership in more than one group, so programmes supporting women's involvement in several kinds of grouping can have a stronger impact on gender equality than supporting a single type of entity has.

Categorizing the characteristics of POs can provide an analysis of the opportunities and challenges inherent to various types of organization. Categories include informal groups versus formal organizations, and organizations that accept only women versus those with a membership of both men and women.

Formal versus informal groups

Key recommendations:

- **Support the voice of rural women through a wide range of collective action mechanisms, including informal groups and organizations.** These types of organization can be effective in building the capacity and self-confidence of women who are socially and economically marginalized:

¹⁹ Rocchigiani, M. and D. Herbel. 2014. Organization analysis and development. FAO Capacity Development Learning Module 4. Rome: FAO. http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/314528/FAO_CD_LM4.pdf.

- FAO Dimitra Clubs (DCs) (Example 2.1.A, Annex I) proved to be very effective in empowering women and strengthening their self-confidence. These clubs have enabled women and men to influence the content of radio broadcasts, providing them with the opportunity to discuss their concerns on radio programmes and to obtain information relevant to their needs. The role of community radio is central to the approach to gender equality; it improves the flow of information, communication and networking among various rural communities. Following the radio programmes, discussions in the DCs have enabled women to gain confidence and leadership skills, as well as the capacity to speak publicly over the radio. In fact, some women are now recognized leaders within their communities and hold public authorities accountable for addressing the needs of women expressed through the clubs and radio programmes. Collective action and informal groups can also respond to the needs of women in their quest for development of leadership skills and access to services.
 - The village savings and loan associations that IFAD supports, in partnership with the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) in Mozambique (Example 2.1.B, Annex I), are composed almost entirely of women. They have proved to be effective in building women's confidence and their basic knowledge of finance. Through a progressive and well-planned syllabus, women have learned how to save, how to develop microbusinesses and how to improve food security for their families.
- **Support informal groups as a first step in a strategy for women's empowerment and leadership development, where progressive formalization can be supported through a graduated approach.** Such support can also be provided in organizations for women only. Through informal groups, women will be able gradually to build capacities and gain recognition within their communities, thus creating an enabling environment for women to join and interact in more formal groups.
 - An IFAD-supported project in Benin (Example 2.1.C, Annex I) involved informal groups of women fishmongers with the objective of strengthening their capacity in management, accounting, marketing and trading. The project included the provision of appropriate infrastructure and established links with microfinance institutions. This led to the establishment of 50 formal groups of women engaged in the fish trade and related processing.

Women-only versus mixed groups

In general, POs that have women-only membership tend to be smaller than those that include men. This difference in size applies to the organizations' capital, number of members and volume of business. Women-only organizations also tend to focus on sectors that are dominated by women, are informal and have poor representation in unions, federations and other support structures.²⁰

20 Majurin, E. 2012. *How women fare in East African cooperatives: The case of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda*, p. 13. Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania: International Labour Organization.
http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/ent/coop/africa/download/woman_eastafrica.pdf

Women-only organizations are effective in bringing women together and ensuring a “safe space” where they can gain self-confidence and learn how to exercise leadership skills through interaction and free expression. Through women-only POs, women can also tailor services to suit their needs and priorities. In the context of economic development, however, there is the risk that these organizations result in the marginalization of women and their relegation to less significant and profitable value chains.

There are benefits as well as challenges to women’s membership in POs that are also open to men. On one hand, women can interact with other members involved in production activities. They can learn to interact with men members, and have the opportunity to raise concerns, request specific services and extend their networks. On the other hand, women’s voices can often remain unheard in mixed organizations, and – as a result of social, cultural or individual factors – women may not be able to take full advantage of the benefits that membership can offer. Moreover, women are often excluded from decision-making bodies and/or leadership positions in mixed POs, which are mostly dominated by men. Nevertheless, mixed organizations are more advantageous than women-only ones and are more likely to be formalized, have larger memberships, deal with diverse economic activities and, therefore, have stronger influence over policy dialogue and negotiations with other market stakeholders.

Key recommendations

- **Support women-only organizations**, particularly where women face severe discrimination and are not allowed to gather with men, or where they are unable to express their views and concerns.
- **Improve access to information, experience and networking** to empower women, so that they can champion their needs and concerns within mixed settings, or work towards the formalization or women-only groups.
- **Design strategies that promote the membership and leadership of women in a combination of women-only and mixed, formal and informal organizations**, which can provide diverse benefits and platforms for expressing women’s concerns. Informal groups can sometimes evolve into successful formal groups, and simultaneous membership of informal and formal groups can enhance the benefits of collective action.²¹
- **It is desirable for rural women ultimately to be able to join formal organizations.** They should be able to gain the confidence and skills they need to be active members and to take advantage of the opportunities that come with more established organizations.

2. Internal arrangements and mechanisms of producers’ organizations

The operating mechanisms and governance of POs can either promote or hinder the participation and role of women. In this light, various elements need to be taken into account, including the following.

Quotas

The setting of gender quotas for membership can tackle inherent gender inequalities, but is somewhat controversial. It may generate internal conflict, as it contradicts the principle of equal opportunity. Nevertheless, quotas can be helpful in generating the critical mass of women that is required to bring about change in policy and institutional culture.

²¹ Oxfam International. 2013. *Women’s collective action: Findings and recommendations*. <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/womens-collective-action-findings-and-recommendations-294502>

Key recommendations:

- **Apply temporary quotas to help build the critical mass of women in leading roles** as a way of motivating other women to follow, through networking and providing role models for women leaders:
 - Quotas can be a means of triggering or complementing women's bottom-up collective action. An example is the Magna Carta of Women, promoted by the National Confederation of Small Farmers' and Fishers' Organizations in the Philippines (PAKISAMA), which requires a gender balance in various types of organization (Example 2.2.B, Annex I).²²
- **POs should ensure – by applying quotas if necessary – that there is no likelihood of discrimination of diversity**, which might reflect the specific context in which the organization is working. Indigenous men and women, those of African descent, certain tribes and castes and victims of HIV/AIDS run the risk of being marginalized and discriminated against, hindering their access to the opportunities provided by organizations, including the possibility to become leaders and voice the concerns of the minority groups to which they belong:
 - IFAD's experience in Nepal during implementation of the RWLP included issues related to the caste structure of Nepalese society. *Dalit* women – known as “untouchables” – are marginalized and discriminated against by women from other castes. This exclusion has prevented *Dalit* women from obtaining membership in organizations and making their voices heard.
 - Any measures for quotas should be incorporated into the statutes, planning and monitoring systems of POs so that they are transparent and adhered to.²³

Application of fees

As groups shift towards more formal arrangements, the application and level of membership fees can become an issue. On one hand, charging a membership fee can be a barrier to women's membership. On the other hand, if it does not charge a fee, the PO may lack the funds it needs to offer specific services to its women members, such as leadership training.

Key recommendations:

- **The application of PO membership fees is recommended when economically viable for PO members.** Membership fees can also generate a sense of ownership and engagement among men and women members, strengthen their expectations and prompt them to request quality services. A pay-for-service culture can contribute towards the sustainability of an organization over the long term, creating greater capacity to deliver services, including those dedicated to supporting women's capacity and leadership development. Nonetheless, the application of fees may exclude poorer and more vulnerable groups, especially women, who have less control over family income and generally fewer resources than men.

22 UN Women. 2011. The Role of Farmers' Organizations in Empowering and Promoting the Leadership of Rural Women. Paper prepared by E.A. Penunia, Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development, Philippines, for the Expert Group Meeting on Enabling rural women's economic empowerment: institutions, opportunities and participation. Accra, Ghana, 20-23 September 2011. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/egm/Penunia-EP-12-EGM-RW-Oct-2011.pdf>

23 UN Women, 2011, p. 6. See note 22.

- **Develop innovative solutions such as different fee structures for different types of member to ensure an even balance between inclusiveness and business orientation.** For example, a lower fee can be charged to couples so that both wife and husband are able to become members of the organization:
 - The Women in Agribusiness in Sub-Saharan Africa Alliance (WASAA) has a structure of tiered membership fees based on a sliding scale depending on the size of the member's business (Example 2.2.A, Annex 1). By mixing various types of membership organization within WASAA, it has been possible to link small businesses with larger ones and to encourage trade partnerships and mentorship programmes.

Organizational (re)structuring

The structuring or restructuring of a PO to include gender mainstreaming plans or gender programmes can include establishing targets and strategies for improving the responsiveness of the organization to women's priorities and to gender issues. It can also foster women's representation in leadership positions.

Key recommendation:

- **Creating "women's wings" within POs can strengthen women's access to and leadership in POs by providing them with a space for discussing their issues, setting up direct channels with governing bodies, giving women the opportunity to use their leadership skills, and providing targeted capacity development activities.** Women's wings can help create the critical mass that is necessary for women to integrate fully within an organization and participate in decision-making processes. These wings can also help to promote gender-sensitive programmes and training that respond to women's specific needs, advocate for the advancement of women's rights at the policy level and facilitate the development of women leaders:
 - In the Philippines, IFAD's RWLP (Example 2.2.B, Annex I) supported the revitalization of a gender and development programme for PAKISAMA, a member of the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development.
 - IFAD's RWLP in Senegal (Example 2.2.C, Annex I) was instrumental in building the capacity of the members of women's wings through training in PO management, governance and soft skills such as communication, negotiation, lobbying and advocacy. This significantly improved the gender composition of POs, resulting in two women becoming the heads of their respective organizations, and generated a demand for training from neighbouring organizations.

3. Women's leadership of producers' organizations in the context of value chain development interventions

Value chain development strategies are being used increasingly because of their potential to provide a systematic methodology for identifying opportunities in and constraints to the production of commodities. When designed with a pro-poor approach, they can enhance the performance and equal distribution of added value among all stakeholders, including between men and women. Value chain projects that integrate gender equality goals can improve the benefits accrued by women by identifying gender-based divisions of activities and the ways in which gender power relations affect economic actors. A gender-sensitive analysis of the value chain can improve gender relations and gender equity, contributing to improved overall efficiency of the value chain.

Building awareness of the roles and responsibilities of women and men and their shares of benefits will influence women's economic empowerment. A more equitable distribution of benefits and workloads through value chain interventions can provide more opportunities for women to take up leadership positions and to gain status and recognition from other value chain stakeholders.

Key recommendations:

- **Value chain projects can be an effective strategy for identifying the stages in the chain where women are more involved, the type of technical and managerial support they require and the issues and concerns around which they can form groups** (e.g. capacity development, access to finance). Better recognition of women's role in the value chain, and targeted support can ultimately improve women's position and influence and enable them to gain status and negotiating power with other value chain actors:
 - The IFAD-supported Roots and Tubers Market-Driven Development Programme in Cameroon included an analysis of the value chain to identify the stages at which the presence of women is most significant: production, processing and marketing (Example 2.3.A, Annex I). Programme interventions not only increased production, productivity and sales revenue, but also made women aware of their economic weight within the value chain. Women were able to become front-line leaders within their village committees and to reaffirm their socio-economic value.
- **Target value chains with a high incidence of women to facilitate interventions that strengthen women's leadership.** By helping women to raise agricultural productivity and value addition, revenues will climb, thus improving women's livelihoods and economic empowerment and ensuring that their voices are heard.

4. Support for organizational change

As organizations are evolving entities, their decision-making processes and leadership structures can be modified to ensure that women can participate and that decision-making is more equitable. The culture of an institution can take time to change, especially when the institution is located in a remote rural area where there is little contact with alternative role models and diverse behavioural patterns, and where this isolation is reflected in the organization's managerial structure. Nonetheless, change can happen if supported by interventions that favour the role of women in POs and challenge the traditional decision-making processes that are in place. These efforts can ensure the inclusion of rural women in POs, fostering their leadership pathways.

To enable and sustain an enabling environment for rural women leaders, POs must embrace change on a sustainable basis. Not only should women have access to POs, but the organizations' members should also value the women's presence, embrace gender equality values and promote women's development.

IFAD and FAO have contributed to the development of tools and methodologies for bringing about organizational change to create an enabling environment for women to rise to leadership roles. These tools are aimed at encouraging more equitable and participatory management of POs by developing institutional practices and mechanisms. The tools and methodologies presented in Annex II are specific to promoting rural women's leadership by recognizing women's contributions to PO activities and developing tailored support that will boost women's leadership:

- The Closing the Gap (Example 2, Annex II) and Governance, Autonomy, Integration, Needs-based (GAIN) (Example 4, Annex II) methodologies enable POs to assess their gender sensitivity, guiding them in the development of strategies for promoting women's active membership and leadership. A bottom-up assessment process is used in both methodologies to safeguard the ownership of results and ensure that change is sustainable.

Key recommendations:

- **Build the case for including women in POs and ensure that relevant organizational change takes place to support this inclusion.** A better understanding of the key roles that women play in agriculture is essential for creating a more supportive environment in POs so that they accept women as members and support them in taking on leadership roles and increasing their voice in decision-making. Awareness of women's contribution to productive and reproductive activities should be raised among PO members, highlighting women's importance in harnessing the effectiveness of an intervention. Tools that raise this awareness, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), can increase recognition of women's contributions to productive and reproductive activities:
 - Proportional piling (Example 1, Annex II) is a popular PRA quantification technique that uses visual and tangible objects to generate discussion. It immediately displays the differences in workloads between men and women or among household members. It is an interactive exercise that can be used by people who are not literate, and can also serve as a baseline and monitoring tool.
 - Various methodologies have been successful in raising awareness within POs on women's contribution to productive and reproductive activities within their households. These methodologies are described in Example 3, Annex II.
- **Put gender plans in place to provide dedicated training for women to develop their skills.** This training will help to boost women's self-confidence, encourage them to take on leadership roles, and raise awareness of their value within households and in POs.
- **To ensure ownership and sustainability, all PO members have to be involved and play proactive roles in the identification of gender-based inequalities and the design and implementation of gender strategies.** An effective organizational change begins when members recognize the need for such change and for renewing their organization. Highly participatory processes can trigger positive behavioural changes not only within community groups, but also among local decision makers and relevant actors, thus bringing about change in the broader context.
- Use of the GAIN methodology in Mali by the Cooperative Union of Women in Action exemplifies an effective bottom-up approach for change. Cooperative members discussed their issues and sought solutions (Example 2.4.C, Annex I). This speeded up implementation of the action plan developed in response to these issues, and secured sustainable results.



Part III: How to address issues at the individual level

Various aspects related to individuals and their social context, such as skills, attitudes, behaviours, stereotypes and beliefs, are relevant to fostering (or constraining) women's leadership in POs. Interventions at the individual level complement interventions that focus on change in the organization or in the environment within which the organization operates – and they are equally relevant. These aspects relate to technical skills (e.g. financial, agricultural and managerial) and to areas that are traditionally less clearly linked to agriculture (e.g. sociology and psychology). These “soft aspects” should be taken into consideration when developing strategies for POs, because they influence the way in which individuals and POs operate. For this reason, work in this area relies on a wider set of literature, related not only to agriculture, but also to sociology, psychology, behavioural sciences and management.

Recent research has demonstrated that policies and programmes that are based on a more accurate understanding of how people think and behave will achieve better results and have great promise, especially with regard to significant development challenges such as boosting gender equality and the transition of roles between generations. Interventions should consider the specific psychological and social influences that guide decision-making and behaviour in the particular setting. The design and implementation of effective interventions in support of women's leadership should therefore encompass an iterative process of discovery, learning and adaptation.²⁴ The main aspects are as follows:

1. Feminine versus masculine attributes in leadership
2. Need for role models and women in leadership positions
3. Involvement of men
4. Building pathways to women's leadership

1. Feminine versus masculine attributes in leadership²⁵

The way in which leadership is interpreted has a significant impact on the possibilities for women to take up leadership positions. The behaviours and attitudes associated with the notion of leadership set the ground for understanding and working towards leadership pathways. By recognizing the main traditional beliefs and stereotypes involved, support for women in becoming leaders can be more effective.

The perception of leadership is generally based on values traditionally embodied by men; the ideal leader corresponds to stereotypical masculine characteristics of decisiveness, assertiveness, ability to make decisions and being vocal, both at gatherings and in private.²⁶

24 World Bank. 2015. *World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2015>

25 Ibarra, H., R. Ely and D. Kolb. 2013. Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers. *Harvard Business Review*, 91(9): 60-66.

26 Moran, B. 1992. Gender Differences in Leadership *Library Trends*, 40(3): 475-491. https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/7791/librarytrendsv40i3h_opt.pdf

In contrast, most cultures expect women to be kind, compassionate and unselfish.²⁷

The mismatch between conventional feminine qualities and those thought necessary for leading roles places women at a significant disadvantage. Numerous studies have shown that women who excel in traditionally masculine domains are viewed as competent but less likable than their male counterparts. Behaviours that suggest self-confidence or assertiveness in men often appear arrogant or abrasive in women – even in the eyes of other women.²⁸

Because many women do not fit the stereotypical leadership mould, those who aspire to be leaders need to be extremely well qualified, have proven records of achievement and be well prepared to take on the positions. Once they attain leadership positions, women are usually expected to “behave just like their male counterparts rather than enhancing their roles with the new and varied talents and fresh perspectives they might bring”.^{29 30} Meanwhile, women in positions of authority who maintain a conventionally “feminine” style may be liked but may not be respected. Men tend to refuse women’s authority and it is difficult for them to view women as leaders because women are deemed too emotional to make tough decisions and too soft to be strong leaders.

Promoting women’s leadership can be particularly challenging in rural areas, where traditional culture is often divided over whether or not, when and how women should exercise authority. In these contexts, patriarchal norms often relegate women to the private sphere and place restrictions on their mobility and economic opportunities, for example, through control over income earning and land entitlement. As a result of the strong links between masculine attributes and leadership attributes, it is essential to challenge beliefs and stereotypes that hamper the development of women’s leadership.

Key recommendation:

- **Anchoring leadership to a specific purpose enables women to focus their attention on the related goals and to consider what they need to do and learn to achieve these goals.** Women will thus be able to focus on behaving in ways that advance the purpose for which they are working, rather than having to define themselves in relation to gender stereotypes, rejecting either stereotypical masculine approaches because they feel inauthentic, or stereotypical feminine behaviours for fear that they convey incompetence. By focusing on a specific purpose, women will be more motivated to take on the activities that are critical to their success, such as networking and resource mobilization:
 - The RWLP in Nepal (Example 3.3.A, Annex 1) has enabled poor rural women to take advantage of the opportunities offered by climate change programmes and to tap into the available resources that are channelled directly to the district level. The rationale for women in becoming leaders includes the opportunity to obtain access to funds and to manage natural resources so that they can become more empowered through capacity development activities.

27 A. Koenig, A. Eagly, T. Ristikari and A. Mitchell. 2011. Are leader stereotypes masculine? A meta-analysis of three research paradigms. *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(4): 616-642. https://www.uni-klu.ac.at/gender/downloads/FP_Koenig_Eagly_2011.pdf

28 Ely, R.J. and D.L. Rhode. 2010. Women and Leadership: Defining the Challenges. In N. Nohria and R. Khurana, eds. *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, chapter 14. Boston, Massachusetts, USA: Harvard Business Press.

29 Shavlik, D.L. and J.G. Touchton. 1988. Women as leaders. In M.F. Green, ed. *Leaders for a new era: strategies for higher education*, pp. 98-117. New York: Macmillan.

30 Ibarra, H., and J. Petriglieri. 2007. *Impossible Selves: Identity Threat in Women's Career Transitions*. INSEAD Faculty and Research Working Paper. <http://www.insead.edu/facultyresearch/research/doc.cfm?did=18696>

2. Need for role models and women in leadership positions

The scarcity of role models for women in decision-making positions further hinders the development of women leaders. Role models are inspiring.³¹ Women leaders set an example for young women, motivating them to pursue pathways towards leadership and decision-making positions. Good examples of women leaders are of particular relevance when key leadership characteristics are closely associated with masculine attitudes. Aspiring leaders need role models whose lifestyles and behaviours they can evaluate and emulate according to their own standards. Examples of striking a good balance between family life and duties related to leadership positions are of particular importance to young women who are potential leaders. A scarcity of women leaders results in a shortage of role models and can suggest that being a woman is a liability, discouraging women from aspiring to leadership.

Women often lack access to networks and sponsors. Informal networks are an essential resource, but the lack of women in leading roles, together with men's tendency to interact with only other men, results in weak networks for women. Cultural norms can prevent women from networking with male colleagues because of social prejudices inherent in their societies (e.g. against staying out late or mingling with men) or simply because the burden of household work prevents them from spending time outside the home:

- During implementation of the RWLP in Nepal, several women indicated that meetings with local authorities – all men – were scheduled in the late afternoon and finished late at night (Example 3.3.A, Annex I). This made it impossible for women to join the reunions because they were preparing family dinner. It was also deemed socially unacceptable for women to be out late at night.

Key recommendation:

- **Publicize and make more visible the presence of women leaders.** Women can act as role models and motivate the young and their peers to pursue leadership pathways. They can also be powerful agents for change at the policy and legislative levels, thus supporting the development or enforcement of initiatives in support of women:
 - For example, Fatou Danso is the first woman village chief in The Gambia (Example 3.2.A, Annex I). She is enthusiastically supported by other women, local authorities and other village leaders in promoting rural women's leadership and improving women's rights to land entitlement.
 - A leader from India's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) participated in starting up the GAIN methodology in a PO union in Mali. This encounter served as an inspirational model, providing a very interesting example of networking among women leaders (Example 3.2.B, Annex I). Collaboration between SEWA and the PO union has served to promote values of trust, self-reliance and independence, inspiring women members of cooperatives in Mali to boost their leadership skills and challenge the governance structure of their union.

3. Involvement of men

Women can find powerful allies in their male colleagues who can support them in responding to the challenge for change. However, because of cultural contexts, and individual personalities, men can be resistant to women's authority, constraining women in their traditional roles and hindering their participation in groups and organizations.

31 Ibarra, Ely and Kolb, 2013. See note 25.

Family expectations from parents, husbands and mothers-in-law can also place heavy responsibilities and domestic workloads on women, hampering their possibility of taking active part in training and meetings, and ultimately affecting their ability to take up leadership positions.

Women's mobility can be restrained by cultural norms and by women's greater responsibilities in the family, which prevent them from attending training courses and effectively exercising the role of leader. Unlike men, women often do not own or use motorbikes, which hinders their ability to attend meetings in distant locations and remain away from home for long hours; taking rides with male colleagues is also usually impossible because of cultural pressures.

In ensuring the smooth integration of women leaders into society and sustaining the changes that come with such integration, the attitudes of men are a key factor. Men need to be involved from the beginning of the change process as part of efforts to win their support and transform them into partners rather than obstacles. Involving men requires awareness-raising activities and developing win-win strategies that do not challenge existing power structures, but rather rework them from within:

- A number of IFAD projects include an effective mechanism for stimulating men's involvement through the creation of a pool of men champions of women's empowerment who can become role models for other men. This mechanism allows men to lead through positive example, engage with other men and advocate for women's leadership within their communities.
- Prior to the implementation of RWLP activities in Nepal, women leaders identified men who could be or had been supportive, and included them in training activities. This critical mass of sensitized men influenced the views of other men in the community regarding women's self-development (Example 3.3.A, Annex I).

Key recommendations:

- **Involve men early in the change process as an effective means of influencing cultural contexts marked by heavy discrimination against women.** A successful example of men's involvement is the participatory forestry methodology of FAO's Initiating Participatory Forestry in Afghanistan for Sustainable Livelihoods project (Example 3.3.C, Annex I).
- It is also essential to build the case for increasing women's voice within the household, as well as in policymaking and within POs as described in previous sections. Efforts to **ensure men's support can be made in parallel with awareness-raising among men on the needs of women and on women's contribution to household incomes** and, more broadly, the well-being of the community. **A good strategy for sensitizing men on women's empowerment is to use the women's male peers as facilitators**, as these men might be more open to listening to women and challenging the opinions of other men:
 - Men's campfire conferences in Zambia (Example 3.3.B, Annex I) build on the local tradition for groups of village men to meet in the evening and socialize around a campfire. At the conferences, a core group of gender-sensitive men start discussions of gender-related issues, particularly related to domestic violence.

4. Building pathways to women's leadership

The number and types of challenges increase as women progress up the leadership hierarchy. Women's responsibilities grow as they interact at the regional, national and international levels. As they move along this pathway, women have to deal with more complex organizations and therefore find themselves confronted by stronger stereotypes and challenges. Additional efforts are needed to overcome these challenges in terms of both the skills and the time they require.

Key recommendations:

- **Establish women's networks and forums to ensure regular contact among women leaders at the national and regional levels.** These networks will provide a platform for dialogue and coordination, which will in turn boost the self-confidence of women. They will also strengthen the links among women in leadership roles and enable them to take a stronger stand in advocacy and policymaking:
 - The 2014 Farmers' Forum held a side-event on Moving Forward: Breaking the Glass Ceiling – Strengthening Women's Participation and Influence in Farmers' Organizations. This event identified key means of overcoming the challenges faced by women leaders, such as by networking and strengthening advocacy and negotiating capacities.
 - The Pan-African Forum, organized by the *Plateforme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale* (PROPAC) in 2013 (Example 3.4.A, Annex I) in support of a pan-African network of women leaders, provided a unique occasion for women leaders to meet. The event raised awareness of rural women's roles in and contributions to agriculture, food security, nutrition and poverty reduction in Africa. Participants were encouraged to share knowledge and work together in preparation for the 2014 International Year of Family Farming, placing the theme of gender on the international policy agenda.
- **Organize networking events dedicated to women at the regional and international meetings of POs,** such as the special sessions on women's leadership at the 2010 and 2012 meetings of the Farmers' Forum (Example 1.2.A, Annex I).
- **Organize learning events and exchange visits for sharing experiences gained from women's leadership, and investigate alternative governance mechanisms within POs** and among businesses that provide more equitable access to benefits. South-South cooperation helps women leaders to get to know their peers in other contexts, increasing their confidence to replicate successful experiences:
 - The Regional Programme for Rural Development Training (PROCASUR) organizes international "learning routes" to disseminate good practices, including strategies and practices related to the empowerment of women. In 2014, 20 participants from nine countries participated in a learning route in Nepal, where they visited three venues to learn how involvement in social, economic and financial activities has led women to play leading roles in their communities and in cooperatives. By participating in cooperatives, women have been able to build their skills and self-confidence, enabling them to establish a public presence; the experience has also demonstrated how gender relations within the household can be improved.
- **Support pathways to leadership by training women to move up the tiers of POs, from community POs to unions of POs, and to engage in all levels up to the international.** The skills required differ according to the level of engagement, and can include public speaking, negotiating, networking and knowledge of the mechanisms of policy and legal frameworks.

TABLE 1 Summary of key messages

Dimensions	Outcome of analysis	Recommendations
Enabling environment	1. Participation of rural women in policy dialogue and decision-making; ensuring that their voices are heard	• Ensure that dedicated spaces, channels of communication and consultative processes are established, based on the social context, so that women have a say at the policymaking level.
	2. Participation of rural women leaders in international and dedicated events	• Ensure participation of rural women leaders in relevant international and dedicated events.
	3. Building the case for greater gender equality in decision-making through knowledge from research	• Generate and disseminate evidence-based knowledge on the role of women in productive activities and on the gender gap in access to resources, information, leadership and decision-making, to raise awareness of women's contribution to food security and poverty reduction. • Provide sector-specific analyses of gender inequalities to gain traction with policymakers and other relevant stakeholders, with IFAD and FAO support to the design and implementation of gender-sensitive policies and programmes.
PO structure	4. Type of producers' organization: formal/informal; mixed/women-only	• Support informal groups as a first step in a strategy for the empowerment and leadership development of women, in which progressive formalization can be supported through a graduation approach. • Ensure that women ultimately acquire the conditions necessary for gaining access to formal organizations. • Support women-only organizations as a valid option where women face severe discrimination. • Develop strategies that support the membership and leadership of women in organizations that are women-only or mixed, and formal or informal. • Improve access to information, exchange of experiences and networking to empower women to voice their needs and concerns in mixed organizations, and support the formalization of groups.
	5. Internal arrangements and mechanisms of producers' organizations: quotas, fees, gender plans	• Apply quotas as a temporary solution to build a critical mass of women leaders to motivate other women to rise to leadership positions. • Ensure that organizations are aware of intra-gender discrimination (e.g. against indigenous people, people of Afro-descent, tribal groups, castes, victims of HIV/AIDS), as well as gender-based discrimination. • Charge fees, when economically viable for the PO's members, to increase their sense of ownership and engagement. • Develop solutions, such as different fee structures for different types of member, to balance the organization's inclusiveness and business orientation. • Create private spaces, such as "women's wings", within POs to gain a critical mass of women leaders who have the capacity to integrate fully within their organizations and to be involved in decision-making processes.

TABLE 1 Summary of key messages

Dimensions	Outcome of analysis	Recommendations
PO structure	6. Women's leadership of producers' organizations in the context of value chain development interventions	• Target value chains that are dominated by women to facilitate development interventions that strengthen women's leadership roles. • Use value chain projects as an effective way of identifying the stages at which women are particularly involved, and the issues they face, to provide the technical and advisory support that women need, and the interests and needs around which women can group, to develop interventions that reinforce women's leadership in rural organizations.
	7. Support for organizational change	• To ensure the necessary organizational change to support women's inclusion in POs, advocate and raise awareness among PO members on women's contributions to productive and reproductive activities. • Provide training to develop women's skills and help them to recognize their roles in the household and in organizations, boosting their self-confidence and encouraging them to rise to leadership positions. • To ensure ownership and sustainability, all PO members have to be involved and to participate proactively in identifying gender-based inequalities, and designing and implementing a gender strategy.
Individual capacities and behaviours	8. Feminine versus masculine attributes in leadership	• Anchor leadership in a specific purpose so that women can focus their attention on the related goals and assess what they need to do and learn in order to achieve these goals.
	9. Need for role models and women in leadership positions	• Publicize and make more visible the presence of women leaders; they can act as role models and motivate young people and their peers to pursue leadership pathways. • Facilitate networking among women leaders and their women peers as a way of building self-confidence and replicating successes.
	10. Involvement of men	• Involve men early in processes for supporting women, especially in cultural contexts where women are heavily discriminated against. • Ensure the buy-in and support of men – through male peers – while sensitizing them to the needs of women and the contributions that women provide to household incomes.
	11. Building pathways to women's leadership	• Establish women's networks and forums at the national and regional levels to provide a platform for dialogue where women leaders can network and women can boost their self-confidence. • Organize networking events dedicated to women at regional and international meetings of POs. • Organize learning routes and exchange visits so that women can share their experiences in leadership roles. • Support women's leadership pathways and train them to move up the tiers of POs, so that they can engage at high levels, including the international, developing the different skills required at each level.



Part IV: Considerations for interventions in support of women's leadership

This paper provides a broad overview of aspects that can leverage women's leadership within POs. It illustrates the challenges that rural women face, and the opportunities they have as members and leaders of POs and within the broader decision-making process.

The strategies described have been drawn from the experiences of IFAD and FAO in various regions and with different types of rural organization. The recommendations that are provided in each section, summarized in Table 1, are based on lessons learned from the field. Building on these recommendations and the insights gained during research for this paper, a set of key considerations has emerged for better informing project management. These considerations aim to improve the design, implementation and supervision of development interventions that support women's active participation and leadership in POs.

Intervention design

Support to the leadership pathways of rural women should be context-specific and tailored to the characteristics of the community. There is no single strategy for supporting leadership roles for women in POs. The opportunities and challenges that women face depend on the social norms and particularities of a given community. Stereotypes, the role of society and its traditions, and the extent to which policies and legal frameworks are enforced will vary substantially from community to community. Support can also vary and should be designed in ways that convey the right messages, ensuring that training materials are appropriate and facilitation is adequate and timely.

Country- or region-wide development interventions in support of women's leadership (and, more broadly, gender equality) should take the local context into account to guide adaptations and differentiations that ensure the relevance and effectiveness of activities. Inclusive participatory processes are recommended for tailoring interventions to specific contexts and ensuring the ownership and support of all actors.

Interventions to support women's inclusion and leadership can be clustered by type of value chain. POs that operate within the same value chain often have similar challenges and opportunities. For example, the horticulture value chain in Africa tends to be dominated by women and faces the issue of access to high-value markets (Example 2.3.A, Annex I). In Benin, women are involved in fish processing and marketing (Example 2.1.C, Annex I). Support strategies should tap into existing knowledge of gender issues in value chains (Example 1.3.D, Annex I) and encourage networking among women within the same value chain.

Changing social norms and mind-sets is a long and complex process that requires continuous support. It takes substantially more than a few training events or the setting of PO quotas for women to become leaders. The process entails consolidating self-confidence and skills, with backing from community peers – especially men. The planning of interventions should therefore include the dimension of time by assessing what can be achieved over a given timespan to help shape objectives and strategies.

Establishing networks, communities of practice or other bodies that could provide backstopping to women after the intervention's closure can play a strong role in bringing enduring positive results. In addition, the involvement of men, the broader community and local decision-makers can help to remove some of the cultural and social barriers that exist and to sustain change over time.

Linking an intervention in support of women's leadership to a technical sector or an immediate opportunity where the new skill set can be applied will speed up and sustain change. Focusing on leadership within a specific field of application will provide women with the opportunity to exercise their newly-acquired competence. It is also easier to gather women's interest around a specific objective or activity. For instance, opportunities deriving from public programmes can represent a good entry point for interventions that focus on facilitating women's access to the public programmes.

Programme design and management should be linked to **bodies and groups that are dedicated to women**. The issues and recommendations identified during local, national and regional events should be integrated into the intervention design. Whenever possible, women's organizations should be involved in the project design and implementation stages, as stated in the Women's Declaration at the 2010 Farmers' Forum.

Intervention implementation

The entire PO, including its activities and the various settings within its structure, should be included when addressing gender issues:

- Gender equality principles should be embedded in the PO statute, regulations and decision-making mechanisms to allow women to participate actively in management of the PO. Key messages presented in texts for the organizational and individual levels should be taken into particular consideration.
- Services and training provided by POs must cater for the needs and constraints of men and women (e.g. financial services must take into account women's difficulty in providing collateral).
- Activities in support of POs must be designed and delivered in ways that facilitate women's full access and participation.
- Action plans must take into account the interests of women, and be jointly implemented by both women and men members.
- Men and women must have access to the benefits and income derived from improved PO functioning.
- The use of tools that can develop a more equitable governance structure should be promoted within POs (see the Toolbox in Annex II), so that decision-making mechanisms and outcomes can sustainably address the issues and needs of women.

Training, services and capacity development activities must be organized in ways that facilitate women's access. Among others, the following elements need to be borne in mind:

- Timing of events: The time of day and venue of activities have impacts on women's ability to attend. The provision of childcare facilities is of significant benefit in enabling women's participation.
- Ways of conveying messages: The choice of language and written materials can be difficult for women to understand and/or prevent their active participation, given high rates of illiteracy. Indigenous women often do not speak the official language of a country.

- Choice of facilitators/implementing agents: When dealing with sensitive issues, such as the power struggles that underpin gender roles, it is important to select facilitators who are qualified. Communication skills and knowledge of the local context are essential for successfully bringing about change in groups and communities. Facilitators should come from within the community to ensure trust and reliability.
- Women and men facilitators/implementing agents: In certain contexts, both women and men should be used as facilitators to enable open interaction between genders. However, the presence of men can be detrimental to women's attendance or limit their capacity to speak up during meetings. On the other hand, there are benefits to including men as partners in fostering women's leadership. It is important that men are supportive.
- Identifying gender-based gaps in skills and knowledge and addressing them in the design of PO activities: Women often have weaker numerical skills than men, preventing their interaction with markets. Support should be provided so that women can catch up on the skills and capacity needed to close the gaps and benefit from participating in POs on a more equitable basis.

Sharing stories of women who have successfully become leaders (including the lessons they have learned) can be a powerful strategy for motivating other women to pursue leadership or undertake more vocal roles within POs. The use of peer champions, learning routes and exchange visits is a powerful strategy for triggering positive emulation and boosting motivation.

Intervention monitoring

Indicators should go beyond quantifying the number of women in organizations (as members or leaders) to capture the quality of women's participation. Measuring the number of times women speak up during meetings or the number of actions initiated by women PO members can gauge their level of engagement. The selection of indicators will depend on the broader nature of the intervention and its objectives.

Additional indicators should encompass the relevance and effectiveness of a PO for men as well as women members, to capture the extent to which membership has brought benefits (e.g. increases in incomes, reductions of workloads, enhanced skills). Indicators at the output level can capture the presence of activities and initiatives that support women members.

Indicators could measure the extent to which an intervention has changed individual and group behaviours and attitudes through qualitative methods and self-assessments (i.e. self-developed and Gender Action Learning System indicators – Example 2.4.A, Annex I).

Indicators should capture the leadership pathway with regard to the growing responsibilities and voices of women in their communities. These indicators should include women's linkages to other institutions and entities, such as by measuring the increase of women's presence in local councils or apex organizations; the number of actions/requests initiated by women; and changes in the proportion of women owning or co-owning land.



Annex I - Case Studies

To facilitate understanding and applicability, the following examples cluster around the three levels of analysis used in this paper. However, the case studies relate to more than one level and often involve simultaneous consideration of the individual, the structure of the organization and the broader environment. These interlinkages among levels are particularly relevant to the design and implementation of an intervention. The issues and lessons learned that emanate from each of these studies go beyond the specific level and aspects to which it has been assigned in this annex.



Examples of how the broader environment can enable the leadership of women in producers' organizations

1. Participation of rural women in policy dialogue and decision-making to ensure that their voices are heard

Example 1.1.A – Regional level: IFAD support to REAF/MERCOSUR

IFAD's long history of partnership with farmers' organizations in the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) in Latin America has supported the engagement of women in policy dialogue at the regional level in the Commission on Family Farming (REAF) and the Coordination of Family Farms of MERCOSUR.

REAF is an advisory body to MERCOSUR's Common Market Group, which provides assistance and a platform for policy dialogue on family farming. It submits proposals to the Common Market Group and the national governments that form REAF, whose main characteristic is its inclusiveness. Representatives of government, civil society and POs take part in REAF on an equal footing and bind the submission of proposals for the Common Market Group to consensual agreement.

A series of IFAD grants contributed to the establishment of REAF in 2004, which in return included the issue of family farming in the regional integration process. REAF has encouraged public policymaking and facilitated the trade of its members' products in MERCOSUR member countries, thus helping to generate incomes.

As REAF has gained financial sustainability through MERCOSUR's own resources, IFAD has progressively redirected its support to specific thematic topics such as gender and youth, following the recommendations agreed at the 2010 Farmers' Forum. Thematic groups relating to women's issues have been formed within REAF, prompting policy debate on gender and age-based equality in rural development and leading to initiatives at the national level. As a result, a special committee – MERCOSUR *Mujeres* – was created to address rural development and issues facing women in family farming. One of MERCOSUR *Mujeres*'s objectives is to strengthen partnership and coordination with REAF, which has led to several positive actions including access to credit and other rural finance services for single women farmers in Paraguay.

IFAD's support to the Southern Cone of Latin America has resulted in greater numbers of women involved in decision-making. In turn, this has provided women with opportunities to participate in policy dialogue.

Example 1.1.B. – National and international levels: Women's leadership circles

Women's leadership circles (WLCs) were promoted in Nepal through IFAD's Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP), which was implemented by Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN). WLCs are national platforms that aim to develop leadership and ensure regular dialogue among women policymakers, women professionals and women farmer/rural leaders, to promote more responsive policy design and implementation that meets the needs of rural women. In Nepal, the women from the grass-roots level who participated in WLCs graduated from the RWLP. The opportunity to put their new leadership skills into practice increased women's ability to connect to policymaking processes for the benefit of their communities.



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As a result of their success, WLCs have been replicated and scaled up in African and other Asian countries. WOCAN hosted a global meeting of WLCs in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2013, which was attended by 24 women farmers, policymakers and coordinators from Kenya, Maldives, Nepal and South Africa. The intention is to hold the meeting annually so that women farmers and policymakers can come together as part of the Network of Women Leaders in Agriculture. During the 2013 global meeting, WOCAN hosted a breakfast event for the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for Environment, providing a unique opportunity for women farmers and decision makers from Kenya, Maldives, Nepal and South Africa to share their concerns and discuss the issues aired at meetings of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme.

WLCs are therefore an enabling instrument for women at the grass-roots level to have their voices heard at the highest level. The circles enable women to become leaders who can influence policy dialogue at the national and international levels.

2. Participation of rural women leaders in international and dedicated events

The Farmers' Forum represents a unique bottom-up process for consultation and dialogue among small farmers, rural POs, IFAD and governments on rural development and poverty reduction. The Forum is rooted in concrete partnerships and collaboration at the country and regional levels through IFAD operations. Following workshops at the national and regional levels, the Farmer's Forum meets every two years for a global consultation in conjunction with IFAD's Governing Council.

IFAD's engagement in supporting women's leadership in farmers' organizations and raising women's position at the policy table led to a special event at the 2010 Farmers' Forum. The special session on Promoting Women's Leadership in Farmers' and Rural Producers' Organizations aimed to improve IFAD support through the following objectives:

- Identify the main challenges facing women as members of mixed organizations in their efforts to achieve high-level and leadership roles.
- Discuss how IFAD and POs can collaborate to help women from the grass-roots level to rise to leadership roles in rural organizations.
- Strengthen the network and solidarity of women who participate in the Farmers' Forum.

Participants at the special session identified key areas for supporting women's leadership, such as building awareness on women's rights; strengthening women's entrepreneurial capacity to engage in markets; supporting the transfer of knowledge to young women and improving knowledge sharing with regard to markets; and developing strategies for coping with and adapting to climate change. Support to local, national and regional networks is regarded as critical, particularly support to women's networks.

The Forum session set the framework for IFAD's ongoing engagement with rural women in POs, as reflected in its statement delivered at the Governing Council. The declaration provided women's leadership in POs with high-level visibility among Governing Council members, placing the topic very high on IFAD's agenda, particularly in terms of its support to POs. Core issues in the statement provide the cornerstone for a number of IFAD's commitments and have helped to shape IFAD programmes and grants. The statement has also brought the challenges facing women to the attention of all attendees at the Farmers' Forum, and increased awareness within the membership of mixed POs.

Example 1.2.B – The RWLP beyond national borders: Supporting rural women in international forums

One of the objectives of the Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP) is to enable rural women to take part in international policy dialogue forums and major advocacy events. Such participation will not only allow beneficiaries to carry the voices of their communities to important decision-making bodies, but will also give them the opportunity to practice their newly-acquired leadership skills. The programme has enabled rural women leaders of farmers' organizations to participate in national, regional and global policy processes, including those of the World Food Summit in Rome, the civil society organizations consultation workshop of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, the Tenth Conference of the Parties (COP 10) of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which included COP 15 and COP 17 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the global meeting of the Farmers' Forum in 2010, where the women leaders attended the session on Promoting Women's Leadership in Farmers' and Rural Producers' Organizations. Women participated and networked as leaders within an international arena.

Example 1.2.C – First Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists

The first Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists took place in Mera, India in November 2010. IFAD, together with other donors, contributed to the Maldhari Rural Action Group, a voluntary organization that educates, organizes and empowers the Maldharis – a marginalized pastoral community from Gujarat in India.

Worldwide, women pastoralists are among the most vulnerable people because of the numerous challenges they face, ranging from their remoteness from social services to the harsh conditions in which they live. The purpose of the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists is to enable women pastoralists to participate equitably in decision-making within their communities and governments, and at local, national, regional and international forums, to raise awareness of the obstacles they face in the context of shifting social, economic and ecological environments.

Participants at the gathering adopted a strong statement, the Mera Declaration, calling on governments, United Nations agencies, other relevant international and regional organizations, research institutes and their own leaders to recognize the equal rights of pastoralist women. The statement emphasized women's essential role in sustaining the environment, including through conservation of biodiversity and mitigation of climate change.



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3. Building the case for greater gender equality in decision-making through knowledge from research

Example 1.3.A – FAO's *State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Why supporting gender equality is smart*

FAO's flagship publication, *The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA)*, is issued once a year and its theme is global rural development and food security. The special topic selected for the 2010-11 issue was the role of women in agriculture; a number of studies showcased the costs generated by gender inequalities in access to agricultural productive inputs. Quantification of the gains that could be derived from closing the gender gap in agriculture was included showing that women with the same access to productive resources as men could increase the yields of their farms by 20-30 per cent, raising agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5-4.0 per cent. In turn, these increases could reduce the number of hungry people by 12-17 per cent. The publication also underlined the importance of closing the gap in social capital by promoting women's groups, women's participation in mixed rural organizations and women's leadership, to ensure that women's voices are heard in decision-making processes at all levels.

These powerful messages provided the rationale for policymakers and development organizations to consider supporting gender equality in agriculture as the right and smart thing to do.

Example 1.3.B – Building knowledge: Grant to AGRA

IFAD's regional grant for Knowledge Management and Learning on Gender Empowerment of Producer Rural Groups in East and Southern Africa is implemented by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), which capitalizes on the momentum created by the Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP). The objective of the initiative is to bridge the gap between the voices of rural women in decision-making and their substantial contribution to agriculture and rural livelihoods by supporting women's increased representation in POs in Malawi, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The initiative has three main strategies:

- Advance gender learning among IFAD and AGRA partner organizations through knowledge sharing, lessons learned and policy dialogue on women's economic empowerment in POs, food security and poverty reduction – this strategy has a significant bearing on the other two strategies.
- Strengthen women's leadership capacities and decision-making skills in POs, to increase their influence and participation at the local, national and regional levels.
- Build or strengthen rural women's entrepreneurial skills through training and other innovative learning methods.

In 2013, AGRA conducted a gender/social needs assessment in Malawi and Zambia, which identified a range of factors that contribute to the challenges for women's participation in POs (e.g. lack of skills in production and operations management, and poor leadership capacity, with impacts on group membership). The results of the assessment were shared among stakeholders at all levels (from decision makers at the policy level to service providers), informing the development of specific capacity-building and training interventions.

Example 1.3.C – Building knowledge about young rural Latin American women in the twenty-first century: *The Nuevas Trenzas* programme

The *Nuevas Trenzas* programme was implemented from 2011 to 2013 to generate and disseminate knowledge about the aspirations and expectations of today's young rural women in Latin America, including generational differences and similarities, challenges and opportunities, and what it takes to achieve improved livelihoods. The programme provides empirical evidence on changes in the characteristics of young rural women. This evidence is being disseminated to relevant stakeholders, ultimately improving their capacities to include young rural women effectively in their projects. The overall goal of the programme was to inform policymakers and rural development project managers of the characteristics, capabilities and expectations of young rural women, so that they can improve policy and project design and implementation, and inform policy dialogue in the region.

The six national teams working on the programme are the *Instituto de Estudios Peruanos* (Institute of Peruvian Studies), the *Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales de la Universidad Rafael Landívar de Guatemala* (Institute of Economic and Social Research of the University of Rafael Landívar, Guatemala); the *Programa Salvadoreño de Investigación sobre Desarrollo y Medio Ambiente* (Research Programme on Development and the Environment of El Salvador); the Hexagon Group of Ecuador; the *Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo Nitlapán de Nicaragua* (Nitlapán Institute of Research and Development, Nicaragua); and Colombia's *Universidad de los Andes* (University of the Andes). To ensure the quality and relevance of its work, each country had an advisory committee from various professions and social backgrounds related to gender, youth and rural livelihoods. IFAD is currently using research findings from this programme to develop new loans and country strategy papers.

Example 1.3.D – Increasing awareness of women's role in the fishery sector

FAO's 2013 report, *Good practice policies to eliminate gender inequalities in fish value chains*, builds the case for reducing gender inequalities in the fishery sector. Various case studies from different regions reflect women's disparate roles and needs in the fishing industry, where they are employed primarily in processing and marketing, and outnumber men in large-scale marine fisheries (accounting for 66 per cent of total workers) and small-scale inland fisheries (54 per cent).

The report analyses the challenges that women face in the fisheries sector, such as the lack of attention to women's roles in the sector, with policies focusing on capture, production and marketing rather than post-harvest and processing activities. This gap limits women's access to resources, infrastructure and economic opportunities, and has a bearing on the underperformance of the fishery value chain. The report includes examples of FAO programmes such as the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme in Chad, The Gambia, Niger and Nigeria, showcasing how FAO has addressed the challenges by combining its support for women's participation and leadership in fishers' organizations with relevant training in income-generating activities.

FAO's projects have strengthened the negotiating power of women in fishery value chains, increased their engagement in productive activities that are traditionally dominated by men, and helped them to gain respect within organizations and from value chain stakeholders. Women's expanded access to resources, infrastructure and economic opportunities has ultimately improved the sector's overall performance.

Examples of promoting women's leadership in producers' organizations

1. Type of producers' organization

Example 2.1.A – Empowering women through Dimitra Clubs

FAO has been promoting Dimitra Clubs (DCs) as an effective means to empower rural women. The clubs are informal groups (composed of either women only or women and men) with their own resources, which meet regularly to discuss development priorities and challenges; exchange experiences with other DCs; and act collectively to resolve agricultural or other issues. The flow of information, communications and networking is channelled via community radio. DC members develop radio programmes and take part in broadcasting them by phone.

The principal goals of the DCs are taking into account the priorities of both women and men, and facilitating the empowerment and leadership of women. As a result, women have gained self-confidence and leadership skills and the capacity to speak in public by raising their concerns through the medium of radio. Some women members of the clubs have progressively become recognized as leaders in their communities.

The bottom-up priorities of DCs are becoming recognized by public authorities and integrated into development interventions. Messages from DC radio discussions have reached other women with similar concerns – including those who are illiterate – who can now act on the clubs' recommendations related to agriculture, health and nutrition.

DCs have rapidly expanded across various countries and have developed new partnerships. Since 2006, their membership has increased to 200,000 men, women and young people in the challenging contexts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Niger, and in Burundi, Ghana, Mauritania and Senegal. IFAD has provided FAO with a small grant for integrating DCs into the IFAD/FAO portfolio in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, targeting beneficiaries in very remote and poor communities in northern Kivu.

Example 2.1.B – Informal savings and loan associations in Mozambique: Building financial skills and self-confidence

Informal village savings and loan associations (VSLAs), such as those supported by IFAD through the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) in Mozambique, are formed through effective self-targeting mechanisms that bring together trustworthy members of the community and provide men and women with access to basic financial services. As women face greater difficulties than men with access to formal credit, they represent the majority of VSLA members.

The VSLA model has been very effective in building the basic financial capacity and self-esteem of the poorest members of the community. The increased savings capacity of women has been reflected in the rise of microenterprises and improved food security in families. Women's status in the home and at the community level has also improved, challenging their traditional roles. Various women's groups have tested and adopted a mobile banking service, known as Mukesh, enabling them to become agents of change. Learning the skills to use mobile services and understand the concept of intangible money has paved women's way to new opportunities, such as owning online bank accounts and having access to other financial products (e.g. credit cards).

Women members of the more established VSLAs have expressed their desire to progress to higher levels of financial intermediation, with the aim of obtaining access to more substantial loans and increasing their managerial capacity for starting more significant entrepreneurial activities. The key development challenge is in putting a graduation scheme in place, to support associations' transition towards a more formal status so that women members can be linked to formal financial institutions that offer them a greater range of services and products.

Transition from informal to formal groups: Women fishmongers in Benin

IFAD's Participatory Artisanal Fisheries Development Support Programme (2003-2011) in Benin has supported the successful transition of informal groups of women fishmongers to formal status. Fifty formal groups of women engaged in the trading and processing of fish have been established. Women fishmongers now have access to credit and, through greater knowledge sharing and capacity-building, fish sale revenues have also climbed.

To achieve the programme's objectives, informal groups were offered capacity-building through training in management, accounting, marketing and trading. Exchange visits were also organized, supporting networking among groups and women role models. The programme ensured that women fishmongers' groups became more professionalized through adequate infrastructure. Approximately 500 ponds were rehabilitated, and market spaces were constructed for drying and storing the fish to ensure a regular supply for markets and processing plants. Training programmes were held on improving the quality and hygiene of fish products for preserving.

Once the groups had become sustainable, IFAD's programme enabled the women to obtain access to microfinance loans. As in the VSLAs in Mozambique (previous case study), technology has played a major role in professionalizing women's businesses in Benin. Women's groups are now in a better position to negotiate prices in real time through mobile phone applications.

The consequence of stronger formal groups for women is reflected in greater sales volumes and incomes. Women's living conditions have improved, together with their capacity to play greater roles in their communities and households.

2. Internal arrangements and mechanisms of producers' organizations for promoting women's participation and leadership

Example 2.2.A – Innovative fee structures of WASAA

The Women in Agribusiness in Sub-Saharan Africa Alliance (WASAA) applies different fee structures according to the country of operation. In Malawi, for example, it has established a two-tier fee system, charging US\$1,000 to large businesses and a smaller or no fee to small enterprises and farmers. In Uganda, WASAA leaders would like to charge fees – even small ones – but have been unable to collect any so far. WASAA, which represents business organizations of diverse sizes, has also used a tiered membership fee system with a sliding scale to establish fees according to the size of the business. Linking the various types of WASAA member organization has helped to foster relationships between smaller and larger businesses, to form trade partnerships and provide mentoring. These links have also enabled small businesses led by women to become WASAA members.³²

32 AGRA. 2012. Situation Analysis and Needs Assessment of Women in Agribusiness in Sub-Saharan Africa Alliance (WASAA). October 2012. <http://archive.agra.org/what-we-do/agra-gender-unit/gender-resources/>

Example 2.2.B – The RWLP in the Philippines

The National Confederation of Small Farmers' and Fishers' Organizations (PAKISAMA), supported by IFAD's Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP) in the Philippines, comprises sector-based rural women's groups, known as LAKAMBINI, through which PAKISAMA has implemented its Gender and Development Programme since 1995. Through the programme, PAKISAMA has launched a series of activities in favour of women's leadership and has promoted the inclusion of women in the confederation. Training seminars on gender sensitivity for women and men leaders at the provincial and national levels have produced several gender advocates within PAKISAMA. Women members have received the necessary capacity development to become trainers and organizers themselves, and are now able to train women smallholder farmers on the basics of gender issues. The programme has implemented a participatory action research methodology through which women members are able to understand and analyse their own situations and identify potential solutions.

Women members of PAKISAMA who have become trainers have formed women's committees as part of the LAKAMBINI, which have become the women's wing of PAKISAMA. The LAKAMBINI have developed a proper gender programme and become key players in many of the advocacy activities of national smallholder farmers' organizations. LAKAMBINI leaders have advocated for the inclusion of women's interests in national agricultural policies and for women's land titling in the agrarian reform programme, supported the Magna Carta of Women and organized many other initiatives at the policy level.

Unfortunately, PAKISAMA and LAKAMBINI experienced serious organizational and financial crises from 2003 to 2006, forcing the Gender and Development Programme to come to a halt. When IFAD's RWLP was implemented in 2010, PAKISAMA leaders and members took refresher courses on gender sensitivity before attending gender leadership courses. In an effort to develop more and new leaders, PAKISAMA has conducted training sessions on gender and leadership for approximately 200 women and 50 men farmer members, so that women in leadership roles at the national level can be trained alongside their male counterparts. PAKISAMA has also developed a gender mainstreaming strategy and appropriate monitoring mechanisms to track implementation.



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Example 2.2.C – The RWLP in Senegal

The Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP) in Senegal was implemented in partnership with the women's wing of the *Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux* (CNCR – National Council for Rural Consultation and Cooperation). The programme was instrumental in building the capacity of women wing members through training in management and governance, in combination with more specific instruction on soft skills such as communication, negotiation, lobbying and advocacy. Manuals on fostering women's leadership within POs were developed and translated into the two languages in the project's target areas.

The training of women wing members functioned as training of trainers and generated a multiplier effect through which POs with mixed membership have gained a core of 42 trainers (36 women and 6 men) and have trained 150 women members. Village associations and community organizations affiliated to CNCR were also included. The evaluation of the project found positive results from this intervention. Improvements in the composition of POs were significant, with two women becoming organizational leaders, and neighbouring organizations requesting training. Within CNCR, women's leadership increased, particularly in the technical committees where women were more active and able to put forward their requests and priorities during discussions.

The development of manuals is beyond the scope of IFAD's portfolio, and is now being considered by the women's wings of Guinea's National Programme to Support Players in Agricultural Sectors; Benin's *Projet d'Appui à la Croissance Economique*; Mauritania's *Programme de Lutte contre la Pauvreté Rurale par l'Appui aux Filières*; and Côte d'Ivoire's *Projet d'Appui à la Production Agricole et à la Commercialisation*.

3. Women's leadership of producers' organizations in the context of value chain development interventions

Example 2.3.A – IFAD's Roots and Tubers Market-Driven Development Programme in Cameroon: Making a difference by building awareness of women's economic importance in value chain development

The interventions of IFAD's Roots and Tubers Market-Driven Development Programme have achieved significant impacts on the lives of women through targeting stages of the value chain where women are most involved: production, processing and marketing.

The IFAD programme followed a two-pronged strategy in which women were able to define their own plans for development and receive the technical and managerial support they needed to implement these plans. Women producers and processors were asked to carry out their own assessments to identify challenges and opportunities, before defining priorities for developing their own plans of action. By following their plans and receiving the capacity they needed, the women were able to achieve their goals. The action plans were cofinanced by the beneficiaries themselves through the programme.

The programme has also supported development of the human and organizational capacities of women producers and processors. Among other initiatives, it has funded the development of PO governance, analytical and managerial capacities, and training of the project team and public-private service providers. Interventions have resulted in rises in production and productivity, and have improved the availability of quality products in the market. The production of roots and tubers has climbed substantially: cassava by 214 per cent, yams by 187 per cent, and potatoes by 135 per cent.



This increasing trend is also occurring in domestic consumption and sales revenues. Programme beneficiaries who grow cassava can now afford to educate their children, rebuild their homes, purchase equipment and buy plots of land for housing. Some women beneficiaries have diversified their income activities and are hiring local workers to assist with their root and tuber activities. Women have gained awareness of their economic weight: as the main actors in the roots and tubers value chain, they now represent 95 per cent of the membership of village decision-making consultation committees, which were previously controlled by men. Women are the new front-line leaders in dialogue at the village level, thus establishing their socio-economic position in society. In addition, some women committee presidents have increased their social and political standing, such as in Ngwei, where the dynamic leader of the village committee was nominated to manage the political campaign in the district of Pouma. Such examples provide a role model for rural women, increasing their willingness to take up leadership positions within POs.

Example 2.3.B – Gender-sensitive value chain development in Guatemala

The IFAD Rural Development Programme for *Las Verapaces* (2001-2011) in Guatemala promoted value chain development for a variety of crops (vegetables, spices, coffee and cocoa) through the implementation of a gender strategy.

The approach ensured that discussions within farmers' associations involved women alongside men, leading to recognition of the contributions of both women and men in each of the value chains. Subsequently, based on the work distribution identified through these discussions, a balanced allocation of resources was distributed to men and women. To bridge the capacity gap that women were facing, the programme offered specific services to women, including training in literacy, accounting, group management and technical topics. This training helped the women to increase their participation in the value chain in value-adding activities.

The programme resulted in the integration of women into high-value agricultural production and processing activities – usually restricted to men only – enabling women to enjoy the benefits generated from the activities that they controlled, including increased incomes. This enabled them to increase their recognition as key actors in the value chains, ensuring their active involvement in planning and decision-making for economic development activities.



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4. Support for organizational change

Example 2.4.A – Household methodologies for rural transformation and women's empowerment: The Gender Action Learning System

Since 2009, IFAD has promoted household methodologies. These innovative approaches aim to reinforce the role and decision-making capacity of women within households and POs in an effort to consolidate the different livelihood strategies that men and women pursue (e.g. women's plots versus men's) into one consistent endeavour. By forming a "family vision" for adult family members – often together with children – the family can conceptualize and work towards shared and measurable goals. Family visions can then be aggregated and incorporated into the PO structure to support the organization's equitable development.

Household methodologies empower women by raising awareness in the household of their contribution to both productive and reproductive activities, and supporting them in increasing their role in decision-making processes. Such empowerment processes do not occur at the expense of men. Instead, during the process of planning a household livelihood strategy, all household members come to realize that working together is a win-win solution that benefits everyone. Men start to recognize the gap between the role that women play in agriculture and the home and the benefits that they receive.

Household methodologies can also have direct impacts on women's roles in different kinds of rural organization because they are often delivered together with specific capacity development activities (e.g. in functional adult literacy, entrepreneurship and numeracy). Women become empowered in households and acquire enough confidence and skills to take up leadership roles in their organizations and communities.

Oxfam Novib and IFAD cofinanced a pilot project, the Gender Action Learning System (GALS),³³ to integrate the community-led household methodology into value chain and market development in Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda. This methodology promoted pro-poor wealth creation by supporting cooperatives working in the coffee and fruit value chains. GALS stimulated change within the household, promoting effective and tangible improvements in gender relationships, which in turn helped to increase productivity and enhanced the sustainability of value chains.³⁴

GALS has triggered a number of significantly positive changes in targeted households, through which workloads within households are now shared more equitably, agricultural productivity has climbed and women have acquired the confidence and capacity to express their opinions and play key roles in cooperatives and other rural organizations. Many of the women have become GALS trainers, sharing the innovative methodology in other communities and countries and motivating other women with their own experience.

Since 2012, GALS has been strengthened and the methodology has been integrated into other technical interventions: financial services, farmer training, group strengthening, business development services, and market linkages in a wide range of value chains. Through direct and peer-to-peer capacity-building, both women and men have been empowered to negotiate a better position in value chains and to achieve sustainable and equitable win-win collaboration among value chain stakeholders.

GALS is now used in several IFAD-supported programmes. Lessons learned from IFAD and Oxfam Novib have been integrated into the design of value chains and rural finance programmes, and GALS pilots have started in Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

Example 2.4.B – Niger’s *Projet de Promotion de l’Initiative Locale pour le Développement à Aguié*: How to recognize women’s contribution to agriculture

The comprehensive strategy of Niger’s *Projet de Promotion de l’Initiative Locale pour le Développement à Aguié* (PPILDA – Project to Promote Local Initiatives for Development in Aguié) supports women’s leadership by reducing their workload and ensuring that they receive recognition for their contribution to agriculture. In 2011-2012, PPILDA built 20 village wells and made 15 boreholes to improve drinking water resources. As a consequence, the time it takes women to fetch water has been significantly reduced, giving them the opportunity to participate in capacity development and training activities offered by the project.

The project in Aguié has created cereal banks, the management committees of which are led by women. These cereal banks provide the most vulnerable women in project villages with a stock of cereals during the agricultural growing period. Women’s committees distribute quantities of cereal on a weekly basis, to be repaid in kind at harvest time at an interest rate of 25 per cent of the stock, to cover the banks’ operational expenses. As a result, women have overcome the challenges they faced during the agricultural cycle. The increased production has improved food security and reduced migration and agricultural wage labour during the growing season. In addition, women’s leadership of the cereal banks has motivated other community organizations to adopt the same approach.

There are now 285 management committees and 46 cereal banks in Aguié in the hands of women. Women represent 25 per cent of village committee members; are active in farmers’ advisory groups, where they enjoy the same rights as their male colleagues; and are involved in decision-making processes in 62 per cent of the rural organizations supported by PPILDA.

33 As part of Oxfam Novib’s Empowerment Mainstreaming and Networking programme, GALS was adapted to village community development during a pilot that was co-funded by IFAD from 2009 to 2011. The pilot was led by Oxfam Novib’s Dr Linda Mayoux, Bukonzo Joint Cooperative, and Green Home in Uganda for the coffee, beans and fruits value chains.

34 See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/ifad-good-practice.html>



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The rise in the presence of women in leadership roles has been made possible by women's reduced workload and by targeted capacity development. Communities' perception of women in rural communities has significantly changed as a result, and women are now viewed as major contributors to agriculture and food security.

Example 2.4.C – FAO's Governance, Autonomy, Integration and Needs-Based methodology: Improving governance of the Women in Action union in Mali

The Governance, Autonomy, Integration, Needs-based (GAIN) methodology was developed by FAO, based on the experiences of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India and of several POs in West and Central Africa. The objective of this approach is to develop an effective assessment tool for triggering endogenous changes within a PO and enabling it to support its members better. By applying a participatory and iterative approach, GAIN is able to combine an organization's self-assessment with an analysis of its operating environment, to initiate the gradual process of economic self-empowerment. The approach was employed in 2012 in support of Women in Action, a union that was founded in Mali in 2011 with 39 grass-roots cooperatives and 3,000 members, predominantly women. The union is based on the Niger River, and is engaged in the agriculture and fishery sectors. In partnership with the NGO, PROEXFAP, FAO applied the methodology to strengthen the union's governance and its integration into markets.

The self-assessment involved 30 members of grass-roots cooperatives (of whom 27 were women) and their economic and institutional partners. From the assessment, it was discovered that the structure of Women in Action was too centralized and dependent on its president, who also chairs the central cooperative in Bamako. Participants described how newly formed grass-roots cooperatives had been based on self-interest, with their status imposed on them by international development agencies. Because of lack of training, especially in management, the cooperatives lacked the strategy and objectives that were necessary for strengthening their governance structures and becoming sustainable. The assessment highlighted that women members of the union had selected their leaders in accordance with cooperative values (e.g. competence, usefulness, willingness to listen, and generosity, and their trust of the treasurer).

On the basis of these findings, an action plan was developed to deliver appropriate training in the management and operation of cooperatives; raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities of grass-roots members, to increase leadership; and liaise with various cooperatives to form regional committees. In March 2012, Women in Action partnered technical assistance organizations to develop a plan of action. The president and other union members underwent three weeks of training, offered by SEWA, which included sessions on leadership, cooperative management, decentralized structuring and governance.

The immediate impact of GAIN on the behaviour of cooperatives has been to encourage them to distribute decision-making authority throughout the group. In their objectives, cooperative members have recognized the importance of training for women to become leaders, and the need to improve coordination among cooperatives and partners. The union itself can now better define roles and responsibilities, engage all members in the decision-making process and implement the newly established procedures.

Example 2.4.D – Bukonzo Joint coffee cooperative in Uganda: Self-developed solutions to change the behaviour of groups

The community-led Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach has been implemented in Uganda to promote gender equality in the coffee value chain and its cooperatives. A series of simple, pro-poor diagrams are presented to different stakeholder groups (men and women farmers, market intermediaries and traders) at the individual and collective levels. The objective is to determine the obstacles and opportunities at different nodes in the value chain and to formulate a plan of action. The simplicity of the tool allows poor, illiterate women to analyse and critically reflect on their livelihoods with a view to changing various elements of their lives within the context of their families, communities and markets. Domestic violence, lack of property and land rights, and the inability to control produce and income from the sale of coffee are some of the most critical issues that have been addressed by the poor women producers who have undertaken this process.

In the GALS approach, collective matrices and plans are powerful and constructive instruments for action, used to facilitate interaction and dialogue among different actors within the value chain, including between women and men from different stakeholder groups.

A team of well-trained fieldworkers facilitates the process, while a peer-learning structure is built to ensure community ownership and further dissemination of the methodology. GALS was consolidated in the context of an IFAD-funded grant to Oxfam Novib, implemented in Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda in three stages:

- (i) preliminary mapping of the selected value chain;
- (ii) action research with different stakeholder groups; and
- (iii) identification of win-win strategies through multi-stakeholder workshops.

A preliminary mapping of the coffee value chain in Uganda identified a clear gender division of roles and responsibilities. Women are heavily involved in the cultivation and processing of coffee (representing approximately 90 per cent of coffee farmers), in addition to their food crop production and household activities. Men own the land, make the decisions in relation to agricultural production, and provide little labour input. A significant number of women take part in barter trading, selling small amounts of coffee from their neighbours to traders at markets and buying fish or cooking oil for the community. A large majority of village traders and large-scale market intermediaries from Kasese district are men.

Before the project was implemented, internal household conflicts had impacts on the quality of the coffee. Women often had to sell produce that was not yet ripe at lower prices, to prevent men from selling the coffee and retaining the profits for their own personal use

(e.g. alcohol consumption). The practice generated conflict with market intermediaries who were unable to guarantee the quality of the coffee to their clients.

GALS has brought significant changes with regard to gender relationships, especially in terms of landownership and the division of labour. Women can now exert more control over household assets and income and the management of resources is increasingly being shared. Some women reported that their husbands are now contributing more to farming activities and household-related tasks. Important changes have been documented in households known to have strong gender inequalities and high incidences of domestic violence. There has also been an improvement in the quality of the coffee, which in turn has led to increased incomes and improved trust among different value chain actors. Women have gained status in the value chain, becoming leaders in the Bukonzo Joint cooperative and GALS champions who are paid to promote the methodology in other communities.

Gender equality issues have been addressed at all levels of the value chain, and improved gender relations are noticeably contributing to greater efficiency along the whole chain.

Example 2.4.E – Latin America’s *concurso* methodology: Group recognition of women’s leadership

The *concurso* (competition) methodology has been widely used throughout IFAD projects in the Andean region. The approach includes a competitive assessment of business proposals from a committee of community members, including women, to determine eligibility for IFAD funding.

The committee allocates the funds it receives and tracks effective implementation of the project over time. The approach is considered fair and equitable, stimulating women’s participation and motivating them to improve their business proposals and learn from each other. *Concursos* can include men and women, with balanced selection of proposals, or they can involve only women to boost women’s entrepreneurial capacity.



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One of the projects that adopted the methodology is the Management of Natural Resources in the Chaco and High Valley Regions Project in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which aims to reduce rural poverty and the deterioration of natural resources in these regions. This project supported activities that explicitly targeted women only – such as competitions among women entrepreneurs – and focused on women’s requests for technical assistance and business proposals.

The project has provided 14,334 women with access to rural non-financial services, and through the *concurso* approach has enhanced women’s entrepreneurial skills, motivated their participation, developed their family leadership, increased their knowledge, provided them with the confidence to speak in public, and upgraded their status within organizations and their communities. A total of 157 competitions for women have been held, and 90 women’s organizations have been represented.

Example 2.4.F – FAO’s support to women as active community players in the Pakistan earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation process

Following the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, many men left the region in search of employment, leaving women behind to face the reconstruction operation. FAO implemented a project to assist the Government of Pakistan’s Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority and its partners in restoring people’s livelihoods in the aftermath of the earthquake. The project involved increasing the number of women at the local decision-making level for watershed management. To boost women’s role, gender-disaggregated data were collected to identify their priorities and vulnerabilities, particularly those of women who had become widows or heads of household.

A set of courses was delivered on roof-water harvesting systems, improving kitchen gardens and reducing erosion through specific techniques. The women were then able to increase their household incomes. The project also provided capacity-building on gender-sensitive planning to local government agencies involved in the rehabilitation process so that women would be included in local decision-making. The representation of women in watershed management committees rose substantially and, in partnership with key stakeholders in the reconstruction process, women were able to establish the priorities for watershed activities, including their implementation and supervision.

Women in the earthquake-affected area of Pakistan now account for at least one third of committee members. Among communities and local decision-makers, understanding and consideration of the benefits of gender balance in courses of action has substantially improved.

Behavioural change and capacity development to foster women's participation and leadership within producers' organizations

1. Feminine versus masculine attributes in leadership

Example 3.1.A – Leadership with a purpose: The RWLP in Nepal

The two-year Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP) covered five districts in central Nepal where various climate change programmes are concentrated, directly channelling resources to the district level (e.g. Local Adaptation Plans of Action – LAPAs). In doing so, the RWLP enabled women to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the climate change programmes and to tap into the available resources.

Capacity-building and training were provided to women in leading roles at the local and national levels, policy frameworks were reviewed, and advocacy was fostered through the media and at relevant international events.

The programme was initiated in collaboration with the All Nepal Peasants' Federation, an umbrella association of smallholder farmers, and two federations of grass-roots women's organizations (HIMAWANTI and AASTHA). The objective of these federations is to promote solidarity among rural women at the grass-roots level to enhance their participation in decision-making processes, facilitate their access to natural resources and ensure the equitable distribution of resources and the benefits that these resources offer.

To strengthen the capacity of rural women and their associations, a training-of-trainers approach was adopted, providing a cascade effect from trainers to women leaders at the district and rural organization level. The training covered not only negotiating skills, confidence building and self-development activities, but also the technical assistance required for natural resource management and other areas relevant to agriculture. Part of the capacity development was directed at supporting women's access to LAPA earmarked funds available at the district level, which the women were not aware of or able and confident enough to obtain.

The RWLP has substantially benefited from the concept of "leadership for what", which aims to ensure that leadership objectives are linked to existing opportunities to motivate women to strengthen their leadership skills. Access to LAPA funds and natural resource management provided a strong reason for women to become leaders and gain empowerment. Training helped women leaders and their groups to obtain access to local-level resources allocated to women, and to other resources for their benefit.

Training and togetherness made women more confident and capable of advocating their priorities, and opened their eyes to the possibilities around them. Sharing and discussing of issues and aspirations has provided many incentives for the creation of women's groups. Empowered women who can act as leaders in these groups have proved to be essential in guiding and supporting other members. Women leaders from both HIMAWANTI and ASTHA deemed acquiring the ability to mobilize local State and non-State resources for women's issues as the most important outcome of the RWLP.

In fact, the success of the programme has gone beyond the local level: some beneficiaries at the grass-roots level are now involved in the women's leadership circles (WLCs), promoted by Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN) in Nepal and other countries. WLCs provide a national platform for women to develop leadership skills, promoting regular dialogue between women policymakers and professionals and women farmers/rural women for more responsive policy design and implementation to benefit rural women. Through the WLCs, the RWLP has been able to link women to policymakers, boost their role as leaders in the community and enable them to practise their newly acquired skills.

As a result of the project, the attitudes of communities have significantly changed, paving the way for long-lasting effects on women's lives. Women have learned to look at themselves outside the roles of mother, wife and daughter-in-law, and have become respected as members of their communities, often developing income-generating activities. The programme has also encouraged women to take more interest in their communities, become more informed, and participate actively by voicing their opinions and demanding the services and resources that they need to improve their livelihoods.

2. Need for role models and women in leadership positions

Example 3.2.A – First woman village chief in The Gambia

In the Participatory Integrated Watershed Management Project (PDHRA) in Kaba Kama in the Upper River region of The Gambia, Fatou Danso has not only become a wealthy producer but is also the first woman to become a village chief in her country. This success has had an impact on people's perception of rural women. The main innovation that she has introduced in her village of more than 2,000 inhabitants is the land allocation system that has been developed to promote women's access to land.

Because Gambian law assigns responsibility for the allocation of land to the village chief, Fatou Danso has influenced the fairer distribution of land to women, based on their indispensable roles in producing food crops and ensuring household food security. An area of 4 hectares was allocated to a group of 12 women who were active in horticulture. Each woman was assigned a piece of the land on which to work. Ms Danso solicited PDHRA's support to improve operating conditions on the plots, particularly through the provision of seeds, fertilizer, agricultural advisory services and financial management training.



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This intervention has increased production volumes by more than one third and the quality of vegetables has also improved. Part of the production output was allocated to consumption, with surpluses sold on nearby markets. As a result of the additional income that the women are able to control, they have become more independent and are now able to make their own decisions on what the money should be used for, with priority going to the health, clothing and education of their children.

Ms Danso is a role model of women's leadership. PDHRA is now applying these practices, together with local authorities and other village leaders, to encourage rural women's leadership and to improve women's access to land.

Example 3.2.B – SEWA: Peer support and inspiration for women leaders in India and Africa

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was established in India in 1972 as a union of self-employed women workers in urban and, later, rural areas. Its goal is to eradicate poverty among women. Poverty is considered to be a form of violence against women, preventing them from having equal rights and resources. SEWA promotes women's leadership, based on self-reliance, autonomy, capacity to influence and mutual support. It also aims to inspire other women to become leaders.

To improve women's self-esteem and entrepreneurship, SEWA organizes them into local self-help groups, through which they can address the economic, social and educational challenges that they face. SEWA provides various services to self-employed women workers and their organizations, such as microfinance, trade facilitation centres and access to rural distribution networks. The union also establishes linkages between women's organizations and public-private service providers, while lobbying for policies and regulations that improve the status of women at the local to national levels.

SEWA relies on its strong beliefs in the roles and values that its women leaders should hold: grass-roots leaders should be regarded as trustworthy so that women will feel at ease with them in discussions; and leaders are people who are capable of building confidence within their communities and who can connect members to the services that SEWA offers. Women members are invited to take part at the decision-making level of self-help groups, encouraging them to be proactive and to assume the skills necessary for leadership roles.

SEWA offers women leadership pathways through a progressive approach that relies on well-structured and multilevel organization. The empowerment process begins by offering capacity development activities, and progresses into the basics of financial management, to enable women to participate actively in decision-making within households and local groups. Women can then advance from the grass-roots to responsible roles in higher-level organizations and unions.

SEWA has been very successful in its outreach strategy, promoting its model among development practitioners and African organizations, and contributing to the design of supporting interventions. Through FAO, the Governance, Autonomy, Integration, Needs-based (GAIN) methodology has been adopted in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Mali (see Example 2.4.C) to support the transformation of local POs into autonomous economic players. This methodology resulted from FAO's elaboration of SEWA's experience and leading principles of governance (member-centred), autonomy (financial and decision-making), integration (linking needs, capacity and access to resources) and needs-based (demand-driven activities and initiatives).

3. Involvement of men

Example 3.3.A – The RWLP in Nepal: Inviting men on board

The Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP) in Nepal encourages men to take part in programme activities, together with women, to address the issue of traditional roles and to change perceptions regarding power balances and the acceptance of women as leaders. Women leaders identified men who could be or had been supportive of their causes and included these men in training activities. The requirement was that 25-30 per cent of training participants should be men. Twelve of these men were then selected and organized into an informal network for promoting women's leadership within their communities.

Example 3.3.B – Campfire conferences for men in Zambia

Campfire conferences for men apply an approach in which village men regularly gather around a bonfire, usually from 18:00 to 22:00. The concept of bringing men together in an informal setting is based on a traditional practice, as men in many parts of Zambia often socialize at night, drinking beer and holding discussions, while women are prevented from socializing during the evening because of strong cultural norms. The campfire conference approach turns this exclusionary practice into a positive gain for women, using the campfire meetings as outreach to men for sharing positive messages in support of gender equality and women's empowerment.

During the campfire conferences, men are encouraged to discuss topics that centre on gender equality and the right of women to become leaders, developing a core group of gender-sensitive men who can raise awareness of women's issues such as gender-based violence and the effect of HIV/AIDS on women's participation in national development. The Zambia Men's Network now uses the approach of campfire conferences, and functions as an advocacy group to ensure that cross-cutting issues affecting women in national and community affairs are addressed from men's perspective.

Example 3.3.C – The participatory forestry approach in Afghanistan: Sensitizing men to enhance their recognition and support of women's role in natural resource management

FAO applied the participatory forestry approach in its Initiating Participatory Forestry for Sustainable Livelihoods in Afghanistan project. The project's goal was to improve local forest management practices by promoting women's technical competences and inclusion in decision-making processes. The approach aimed to increase communities' awareness of how women can acquire the necessary skills to improve the livelihoods of the entire community, including through forest management.

FAO's participatory forestry approach recognizes women as legitimate partners among other stakeholders, including men users of forests, civil society, local government and the private sector. Including women in forestry issues can reduce and resolve conflict. Through the project in Afghanistan, women received combined support and technical training on raising forest and home-based nurseries. At the same time, the project stimulated women's participation in field-level workshops and the formation of women's forest management committees. These achievements were made possible by seeking the permission and collaboration of men members of forest management committees.

The sensitization strategy proved key to gaining the broader support of men in the community (a particular challenge in Afghanistan). Men's attitudes towards women have changed: women's role in forestry management is now recognized and supported by their male counterparts, and women have become active participants in local decision-making processes.

4. Building pathways to women's leadership; ensuring adequate support to women's rise to leadership

Example 3.4.A – Pan-African Forum of Rural African Women

In 2013, the *Plateforme Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale* (PROPAC – Subregional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa) organized the Pan-African Forum of Rural African Women in Cameroon, creating a framework for annual dialogue and consultation. The event attracted 100 rural women members of the Pan-African Farmers' Organization, whose member organizations include the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation, PROPAC, the Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa, the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions, and the *Union Maghrébine des Agriculteurs*. Representation also included cooperatives, women's associations and networks, professional agricultural organizations (agrosilviculture, pastoral and fisheries sectors) and African NGOs.

The Pan-African Forum was organized in response to recommendations from the Cairo Platform for Action for the Development of Women Entrepreneurship in Africa, held in Egypt in 2009, and resolutions that emerged from the Farmers' Forum meetings organized by IFAD in 2010 and 2012. The goals are to develop regional networks of women leaders and increase the visibility of women's roles and contributions in agriculture, food security, nutrition and poverty reduction. The 2013 Pan-African Forum also provided a platform for promoting women's involvement and participation in policymaking in relation to agriculture. Messages and joint areas of action for the International Year of Family Farming were agreed.

List of examples, clustered into key issues and characteristics	Sources
Enabling environment	
1. Dedicated spaces for women's participation at the policymaking level Example 1.1.A – Regional level: IFAD support to REAF/MERCOSUR Example 1.1.B – National and international levels: Women's leadership circles	http://www.mercosur.int/ http://www.ifad.org/farmer/2012/progress_report.pdf http://www.reafmercosul.org/ http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/leadership_programme.pdf http://www.wocan.org/news/wocan-organized-global-meeting-womens-leadership-circles-nairobi-kenya#sthash.Nlgtk3Hk.dpuf
2. International or dedicated events for representing rural women's interests and voices Example 1.2.A – International level: Special session for women at IFAD's 2010 Farmers' Forum Example 1.2.B – The RWLP beyond national borders: Supporting rural women's participation in international forums Example 1.2.C – First Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists	http://www.ifad.org/farmer/2010/doc/concep_e.pdf http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/leadership_programme.pdf http://ifad-un.blogspot.it/2010/11/powerful-results-of-global-gathering-of.html
3. Building the case for women to become leaders: generating evidence-based knowledge Example 1.3.A – FAO's <i>State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11</i> : Why supporting gender equality is smart Example 1.3.B – Building knowledge: Grant to AGRA Example 1.3.C – Building knowledge about young, rural Latin American women in the twenty-first century: The <i>Nuevas Trenz</i> as programme Example 1.3.D – Increasing awareness of women's role in the fishery sector	http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e00.htm http://agra-alliance.org/ <a 019="" docrep="" href="http://www.nuevastrenzas.org/es/
 http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/i3553e/i3553e.pdf

List of examples, clustered into key issues and characteristics	Sources
PO structure 4. Establishing the best structure for POs (formal/informal, mixed/women-only) Example 2.1.A – Empowering women through Dimitra Clubs Example 2.1.B – Informal savings and loan associations in Mozambique: Building financial skills and self-confidence Example 2.1.C – Transition from informal to formal groups: Women fishmongers in Benin	http://www.fao.org/in-action/community-listeners-clubs-empower-rural-women-and-men/en/http://operations.ifad.org/documents/654016/d6949908-44ff-4c22-898e-3aa7b329abff http://operations.ifad.org/documents/654016/02747d9c-644e-44f9-9830-45e8c46dc866
5. Internal arrangements and mechanisms for promoting women's participation and leadership in POs (quotas, fees and gender plans) Example 2.2.A – Innovative fees structures of WASAA Example 2.2.B – The RWLP in the Philippines Example 2.2.C – The RWLP in Senegal	http://www.wasaa.net/ http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/egm/Penunia-EP-12-EGM-RW-Oct-2011.pdf http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/leadership_programme.pdf http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/leadership_programme.pdf
6. Value chain development interventions for promoting women's leadership in POs Example 2.3.A – IFAD's Roots and Tubers Market-Driven Development Programme in Cameroon: Making a difference by building awareness of women's economic importance in value chain development Example 2.3.B – Gender-sensitive value chain development in Guatemala	http://www.fidafrique.net/rubrique139.html http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/public_html/eksyst/doc/prj/region/pl/guatemala/prodever.htm http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/lessons/gals.htm http://www.fidafrique.net/rubrique121.html http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3127e/i3127e.pdf http://bukonzojointcoffee.com/ http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/lessons/gals.htm http://ifad-un.blogspot.it/2012/09/a-learning-route-in-rwanda-and-uganda.html http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/gender_andean.pdf http://www.fao.org/forestry/34297-065ff1406280d957e10a6d08947dc9019.doc

List of examples, clustered into key issues and characteristics	Sources
PO structure 7. Supporting organizational change to enable women's leadership Example 2.4.A – Household methodologies for rural transformation and women's empowerment: The Gender Action Learning System Example 2.4.B – Niger's <i>Project de Promotion de l'Initiative Locale pour le Développement à Aguié</i>: How to recognize women's contribution to agriculture Example 2.4.C – FAO's Governance, Autonomy, Integration, Needs-based (GAIN) methodology: Improving governance of the Women in Action union in Mali Example 2.4.D – Bukonzo Joint coffee cooperative in Uganda: Self-developed solutions to change the behaviour of groups Example 2.4.E – Latin America's <i>concurso</i> methodology: Group recognition of women's leadership Example 2.4.F – FAO's support to women as active community players in the Pakistan earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation process	http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/lessons/gals.htm http://www.fidafrigue.net/rubrique121.html http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3127e/i3127e.pdf http://bukonzojointcoffee.com/ http://www.ifad.org/gender/learning/lessons/gals.htm http://ifad-un.blogspot.it/2012/09/a-learning-route-in-rwanda-and-uganda.html http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/gender_andean.pdf http://www.fao.org/forestry/34297-065ff1406280d957e10a6d08947dc9019.doc
Individuals' Capacities 8. Feminine and masculine attributes in leadership Example 3.1.A – Leadership with a purpose: The RWLP in Nepal	http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/leadership_programme.pdf
9. Increasing the numbers of role models and women in leadership positions Example 3.2.A – First woman village chief in The Gambia Example 3.2.B – SEWA: Peer support and inspiration for women	http://operations.ifad.org/web/ifad/operations/country/project/tags/gambia/1152/project_overview www.sewa.org

List of examples, clustered into key issues and characteristics	Sources
Individuals' Capacities	10. Involving men to gain their buy-in and support to women as leaders Example 3.3.A – The RWLP in Nepal: Inviting men on board Example 3.3.B – Campfire conferences for men in Zambia Example 3.3.C – The participatory forestry methodology in Afghanistan: Sensitizing men to ensure their recognition and support of women's role in natural resource management 11. Building leadership pathways: fostering networking among rural women Example 3.4.A – Pan-African Forum of Rural African Women

Annex II - The toolbox

Tools and methodologies for assessing and stimulating organizational change in support of women's leadership

1. Proportional piling: inequalities at a glance

Proportional piling is a quantification technique that is widely used in the Participatory Rural Appraisal approach. It is an interactive method that employs visual and tangible objects to generate discussion and stimulate immediate understanding of differences in workloads. The ultimate aim is to upgrade women's status and promote their leadership within the household. The main advantages of the technique are that it can generate a swift comprehension of the inequalities in workloads between women and men, and it serves as a baseline and monitoring tool, particularly where illiteracy rates are high.

There are various ways in which this tool can be applied, and it can be included as a standard practice for analysing the workload allocation within households, as adopted by the Send a Cow household methodology in Ethiopia. Illustrations that represent productive and reproductive activities in the household are drawn on the ground or on cards. Respondents have a fixed number of beans (50 or 100) to allocate to each activity in proportion to the responsibility of each household member (i.e. man, woman, girl child, boy child).

This technique is more quantitative than simple ranking systems because it allows a wider range of emphasis. Data generated by this method are both numerical and subjective, and are owned by the household members themselves. Proportional piling has proved to be an immediate and effective way for household members to recognize the work burdens of others, setting the ground for more equitable allocation of responsibilities and improving women's status and leadership within the household. (For further information, see <http://www.ifad.org/gender/tools/gender/appendix.pdf>)

2. Producers' organizations and change: the Closing the Gap methodology

The Closing the Gap methodology was developed by IFAD as part of its Regional Programme to Consolidate Gender-Mainstreaming Strategies in IFAD-Financed Projects of Latin America and the Caribbean (PROGENDER, 2000-2003). It is now widely used across IFAD's portfolio throughout the region. The methodology has proved to be an effective tool, enabling organization members to assess the gender sensitivity of their structures and guiding them in developing and monitoring a strategy for promoting women's active membership and leadership.

The methodology measures the degree of gender equity achieved by rural organizations, including POs. The tools included in the methodology are used to obtain data from not only the organization's board of directors, but also from its women and men members, in relation to: (i) the level of gender equity attained by the rural organization; (ii) the reasons why gender equity has not been achieved in certain aspects; and (iii) potential affirmative actions that could reduce existing gender gaps and foster women's roles in decision-making and leadership. Use of the methodology can be facilitated by technical staff, or directly by members of rural organizations. Twenty-four questions represent the basic tool, which can be adapted to specific socio-cultural contexts. The responses to these questions provide a baseline that represents the present situation and is used as the basis for outlining affirmative actions towards gender

equity and women's leadership within the organization and monitoring progress every six months. The baseline is also used to measure the impacts of the gender equity and women's leadership strategies that are implemented by interventions.

Use of the methodology raises awareness within organizations on gender equality issues, and facilitates the implementation of specific interventions. Groups that have implemented it have matured into more inclusive and gender-balanced institutions. In most cases, the presence of dynamic women members – and men leaders who are committed to gender equality – has paid off in terms of improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Members are also more willing to encourage women to become leaders, men are more open to accepting women's authority, and women are more prepared to take on leadership roles.

IFAD organized learning routes in October 2011 and January 2012 to disseminate this approach across several projects in Latin America, Africa and Asia. (For further information, see <http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/cerrando.pdf>)

3. The Gender Balance Tree from the GALS methodology

The Gender Balance Tree is a powerful tool, developed in the framework of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology, which supports bottom-up change in gender equity and women's empowerment. The tool aims to raise men's awareness of workloads, sources of income and expenditures within the household. It helps to identify change strategies and combines several tools for collecting gender data and information (e.g. access/control profiles and time schedules) into a single tool. Its most important feature is that it is developed by household members themselves, who then own the results of the analysis and the way forward.

The Gender Balance Tree not only facilitates analysis but also identifies the immediate and long-term commitments that participants will need to make to improve the gender balance; foster women's leadership and increase household well-being through more efficient division of labour; increase productive expenditure; and ensure a more equal distribution of ownership and decision-making. A significant advantage of the tool is that household members, including those who are illiterate, have the opportunity to draw their own Gender Balance Trees, participating in the exercise and assessing the results. The following are key steps in using the tool:

1. Identify who contributes the most to the work of the household by drawing activities and the people responsible for them at the tree roots (women, men, children).
2. Identify who spends most on the household by drawing expenses and the people responsible for them in the tree branches.
3. Identify who benefits the most from household income.
4. Identify inequalities in ownership and decision-making by drawing them on the tree trunk.
5. Decide whether the household tree is balanced.
6. Decide priority areas for improving the gender balance of the tree by drawing them as the fruits.

The Gender Balance Tree has been more useful than gender stereotypes in clarifying and quantifying broad gender inequalities in work contributions and control over income and expenditures. Solutions are developed from within the household and organizations can complement the change strategies with additional services, particularly aimed at providing the skills required to promote women's leadership. (For further information, see http://www.galsatscale.net/_documents/GALS@Scale_1_3_Gender%20BalanceTree.pdf)

4. The Governance, Autonomy, Integration, Needs-based methodology

The Governance, Autonomy, Integration, Needs-based (GAIN) methodology was developed by FAO based on experiences gained from the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India and several POs in West and Central Africa.

As described in Example 2.4.C of Annex I, the objective of this methodology is to facilitate a bottom-up approach towards change within an organization, so as to enable the organization to become more autonomous and economically efficient and to boost its income generation. GAIN combines a participatory assessment of the organization by its members with an analysis of its operating environment, which then triggers a gradual process towards economic self-empowerment and leadership.

GAIN includes three main steps:

- (i) Assessment of the PO structure and the economic and institutional environment, in three phases:
 - internal assessment with members with regard to the PO's economic activities, capital and production assets, links to markets, structure and governance;
 - consultation and validation of the assessment by the PO's economic and institutional partners; and
 - reconciliation with the PO's vision, and development of a strategy for strengthened partnerships.
- (ii) Development of an action plan by the PO members.
- (iii) Implementation and monitoring of the action plan.

GAIN was inspired by the principles that made SEWA particularly successful in India:

(i) effective governance based on members' ownership and accountability; (ii) empowerment of the organization and its members through strengthened human and financial resources, ultimately leading to autonomy; (iii) an integrated approach that takes into account the living conditions (e.g. health, education) and economic status of members; and (iv) priority to the needs of members.

GAIN considers that women's equitable inclusion, participation and leadership are essential for promoting the efficient and autonomous governance of POs. It directly supports women's inclusion in the action plans. (For further information, see <http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3127e/i3127e.pdf>)



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