



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Empowering people and strengthening rural organizations



NEPAL

Nepal- Village of Bhagawoti
Kaledhara. Farmers' Field
School female members
working in the fields trying
new agricultural techniques..
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When poor rural people are part of an organized group or network, it multiplies their chances of escaping the poverty trap for good. Through cooperatives, producer organizations and networks, they can improve their bargaining power and access to markets. They can also participate in and influence decision-making processes and the formulation of national policies that affect their livelihoods.

By working closely with countries, FAO helps to empower poor people, including women and youth, and strengthen rural organizations, such as cooperative and producer organizations. FAO firmly believes that by increasing poor people's access to resources, services and markets, and by giving them a voice in policy development, rural communities will be able to move out of poverty and improve their livelihoods.



Strengthening forest and farm producers' organizations to reduce rural poverty in Guatemala

Agroforestry is one of the main sources of food and income for forest producers and family farms in Guatemala. Yet, forest and farm producers often lack access to resources, markets, services and skills, and often are excluded from decision-making tables. Through the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), FAO is helping them increase their bargaining power, strengthen their organizations and enhance their business skills, which ensures their participation in policy development processes.

FAO is also collaborating with the Federation of Cooperatives of Verapaces, to open an agroforestry business school for rural women and youth. This will strengthen at least 38 cooperatives and 25 000 forest and farm producers as they learn about new business models and share with each other their own farming experiences. Producer organizations now benefit from improved access to resources, markets, services and finance, including forest management incentives. They also actively participate in policy dialogue and find more employment opportunities.



GUATEMALA

Founded in 2009, the National Alliance of Community Forest Organizations of Guatemala aims promote sustainable management and conservation of forests by local communities. ©FAO/Rubi

At policy level, FAO continues to support the government of Guatemala to create an enabling environment for forest and farm producers, and indigenous peoples to increase their income and achieving food security. In 2015, FAO's support led to the approval of the Probosque Law. Formulated with the support of the FFF and the active participation of the National Alliance of Community Forest Organizations of Guatemala (Alianza), the new law assigns 1% of revenues from the national budget to forest producers for the next 30 years. Overall, 7.5 million people will benefit from this law, which is expected to improve the livelihoods of around 1.5 million families. .



Empowering women farmers in Nepal

In Nepal, women farmers face many barriers to improving their productivity and income. Barriers come in many forms and include cultural traditions that limit their access to resources, such as land and agricultural inputs. In fact, many women do not own any land themselves, and work on family farms owned and managed by their husbands or male relatives. Because of this, women reap few of the financial benefits of their labour. Through the United Nations Joint Programme

on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women, FAO has trained and coached smallholder women farmers in Nepal to improve their agricultural productivity, food security and income.

Through a variety of skills training, the Joint Programme has helped Nepalese women join forces, improve their bargaining power and their access to market. One example of the beneficiaries of the programme is The Laliguras Women Farmers' Group, which lies in the Sindhuli District of south-eastern Nepal. The Group regularly meets to discuss their concerns and find solutions to a wide range of problems. The Programme also helped women increase their yields by teaching them about crop diversification, access to credit for higher yields and to new markets. Now the women are able to produce enough food for their families and sell their surplus at the market.

Boosting the aquaculture sector through better organizations in Colombia



In Colombia, small-scale aquaculture producers contribute over 60 percent of the national fish production. However, their limited resources, poor technology, scarce managerial skills and poor access to markets are curbing their growth.

FAO, together with the Ministry of agriculture and rural development and the National authority of fisheries and aquaculture, has worked on the formulation of the National Sustainable Aquaculture Development Plan, to foster the development small-scale producers in the sector.

One of the main objectives of the plan was to create a National Aquaculture Extension Service, to help small producers boost their business. This project trained 12 community facilitators in the villages of el El Dorado and El Castillo, who, in turn, trained 48 “self-extension workers” (these are farmers trained as extension workers within the community that technically assist other members in their aquaculture activities).

Over a period of 18 months, six farmer organizations in four territories, have reached a sustainable level of good governance and distribution of tasks. Improving farmer organizations has helped to increase productivity and competitiveness in the aquaculture sector as well as achieving long-term sustainability. Most importantly, the project has strengthened the social bond among farmers, who have seen their incomes increase. As a result, two of the organizations have created a revolving seed fund for contingencies and working capital for its members..



GUATEMALA

Members of the National Alliance of Community Forest Organizations of Guatemala.
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NIGER

A group of women from a Dimitra club.
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Niger: transforming rural women's lives through Dimitra clubs



Niger is experiencing a quiet revolution. Its protagonists call themselves the Dimitra clubs, and are informal groups of women and men who regularly meet to discuss and find solutions to common problems. The village traditional authorities also play their part after the discussions to confirm the best solutions. The methodology is both simple and innovative, and has proven to be efficient and transformational bringing about change of behaviours and gender roles and relations. Exchanges and achievements of the clubs are broadcast using ICTs and solar powered radio to inspire other communities.

Supported by FAO, this gender-responsive and community-driven approach is helping to eradicate hunger and poverty by improving individual and collective agency and gender equality. It enables the most vulnerable, in

particular women and youth, to participate and have a voice that counts in development process.

Thanks to the Dimitra clubs, women in the Dantiandou commune, for example, obtained the right to inherit land. They were also able to negotiate with male landowners and community authorities to obtain licences to buy land so that they could grow vegetables. Women can now speak up and express their views publicly, participate in decision-making at community level and even run for public office.

Today, there are about 1 500 of these clubs in Niger alone, accounting for 45 000 members (two thirds are women and girls) and their numbers are on the rise. They are a powerful way to strengthen individual and collective agency, which is needed to challenge discriminating norms and expand the choices and freedoms available to all people. In the Banizoumbou village, the women Dimitra Clubs were able to negotiate with the village leader and land owners 4 ha of land for 99 years. Since then, the women have been cultivating the field, consuming, selling the produce and putting a part in their cereal bank, this way improving their income, diets of their families and social protection.

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