



EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN: COMBATING GENDER INEQUALITY IN AGRICULTURE

Rural women, who make up a significant proportion of the world's poorest, face compounded challenges due to gender-based discrimination. Particularly, in Africa and Asia, women disproportionately bear the burden of food insecurity and have limited access to resources, services and opportunities, a situation further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Prioritizing gender equality in agriculture is essential to effectively address these challenges. Key barriers are faced by rural women at various levels, including the policy, institutional and community levels. Additionally, socio-cultural norms perpetuate gender inequalities by restricting women's mobility and economic opportunities.

Recognizing the need to challenge these norms and address the barriers to unleash the economic potential of rural women, the subprogramme focused on expanding women's socio-economic opportunities by combining gender responsive and transformative interventions in four countries that exhibit pronounced gender inequalities in agriculture: Cambodia, Kenya, Senegal and Uganda. In addition, the gender transformative approach of the Dimitra Clubs (DCs) was integrated in 62 projects of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in ten additional Least Developed Countries.



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The subprogramme fostered, between 2019 and 2023, gender mainstreaming in rural development and poverty reduction policies, strategies and programmes across national processes. It promoted approaches to improve rural women's economic empowerment, agency and stronger voice within communities. The key approaches adopted were the Women's Empowerment - Farmer Business Schools (WE FBS) and the Dimitra Clubs (DCs). The first, developed by FAO with partners, targeted women's economic empowerment in commercial farming, while tackling deep-rooted gender inequalities in households and communities.

Recognized as a GTA, it benefited over 18 000 rural individuals (60 percent women) in Cambodia, Kenya and Uganda. The second, pioneered by FAO at the community level in Cambodia, Kenya and Uganda, and scaled up in Senegal, directly reached 4 062 rural people (60 percent women and 20 percent youth). In addition, through the scaling up in other projects and countries, an additional 195 000 rural men and women benefitted from the DC approach. It was recognized as a landmark community led and gender transformative model challenging gender discriminatory norms and enhancing social cohesion through inclusive consultation processes with rural communities.

KEY FACTS

Latest Approved Budget
USD 3 710 000

Duration
September 2019–December 2023

Resource Partners
Multilateral, Donors of the Flexible Voluntary Contribution (FVC)

Beneficiaries
Rural women and girls engaged in subsistence farming and agri food value chains (especially those living in poverty and facing gender-based barriers to their economic advancement); rural men/boys and marginalized groups of the communities, regardless of their age, health status and ethnicity (in the DCs component); stakeholders involved in agricultural and rural development, including community and Civil Society Organizations, producer groups and women's associations

IMPACT

The subprogramme directly reached about 213 000 individuals, with over 60 percent being women and at least 20 percent young people across four regions: Africa, Asia, the Near East, and Latin America and the Caribbean. It made significant strides in reducing the gender gap in agriculture by prioritizing the empowerment of rural women and acknowledging their crucial role in rural development and decision-making processes. Between 2019 and 2023, the subprogramme contributed to fifteen national processes aimed at mainstreaming gender in rural development and poverty reduction policies, while promoting approaches to improve rural women’s economic empowerment, agency and voice within communities. It significantly contributed to generating knowledge and evidence on GTAs, providing valuable guidance for their implementation and disseminating insightful lessons learned, which can inform the scaling up of such approaches.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ACTIVITIES

- Supported two national processes in Cambodia, the first focused on mainstreaming gender in policy and legal frameworks, while the second emphasized GTAs and their institutionalization;
- Contributed to the development of the Agricultural Sector Gender Policy in Kenya and facilitated capacity development of public service providers;
- Contributed to the institutionalization of the DCs approach in Senegal by integrating the approach into the activities of the Fédération Nationale des Producteurs Cotonniers and advocating for its recognition by the Agence Nationale de Conseil Agricole et Rural;
- Established collaborations and partnerships with national and district local governments across all target countries;
- Organized a global South–South capitalization workshop in Kenya in May 2023, which enhanced the capacities and knowledge for upscaling and institutionalizing the WE FBS;
- Promoted and implemented the DCs approach in ten additional countries, including Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Haiti, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and the Syrian Arab Republic.
- Engaged, as part of the WE-FBS initiative, 798 trainers and facilitators in Cambodia, Kenya and Uganda, reaching over 10 000 producers (60 percent women). For the DCs component, 160 facilitators were trained on the approach implementation, including for enhancing the capacities of 13 000 club leaders (60 percent women and 20 percent youth), who then cascaded the training to about 195 000 club members.
- With the Amplio Talking Books used in Uganda, the subprogramme reached over 8 000 people, including producers and their family members, across 50 Farmer Field Schools and Watershed Management Groups.



Project Title

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition

Project Code

FAO: FMM/GLO/138/MUL

Contact

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Partners

Cambodia: Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries and provincial departments in the Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey provinces; Ministry of Women’s Affairs and provincial departments in the Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey provinces; Village Support Group. **Global:** International Center for Tropical Agriculture; Network AMPLIO; Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Italy. **Kenya:** Farm Forestry Smallholder Producers Association of Kenya; Action Aid International Kenya; World Vision Kenya. **Senegal:** Agronomes et Vétérinaires sans Frontières; Fédération Nationale des Producteurs Cotonniers; Agence Nationale de Conseil Agricole et Rural. **Uganda:** Environmental Alert; Amot Farmers Development Association Ltd.

Partnerships and Outreach

For more information, please contact: Reporting@fao.org

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