



SCALING-UP GENDER-RESPONSIVE RURAL DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

Accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women

THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

Women are central to the development of rural areas and to national economies. They make up at least 43 percent of the agricultural workforce worldwide and more than 70 percent in some countries. By improving rural women's access to resources and opportunities, food security and nutrition can be enhanced for current and future generations.

To address this challenge, a Joint Programme is currently underway led by FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UN Women and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The Joint Programme focuses on four key goals: improving food and nutrition security, increasing rural women's incomes, enhancing leadership and participation in rural institutions as well as creating a more gender-responsive policy environment at local, national and international levels. Throughout the pilot period – which began in 2012 and will last five years – some 75 000 rural women and girls are expected to see advances in their agricultural productivity and positive changes in their livelihoods. Around 400 000 households and community members are expected to benefit.



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THE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTION

In seven countries worldwide – Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda – networks and experiences are being shared to provide a powerful platform to advance the economic empowerment of rural women.

Each of the four participating UN agencies contributes to the Joint Programme by mobilizing its expertise and comparative advantage to work together to ensure good practices are applied and expanded. FAO brings to the Programme its strong technical expertise on women's empowerment in agriculture. WFP provides innovative food aid interventions to support economic and social development. IFAD contributes its co-financing of governments' investment programmes in rural areas. UN Women brings its global mandate on gender equality and partnerships with national women's organizations to the table.

THE SOLUTION EXCHANGE

Gender equality and rural women's empowerment are central to FAO's mandate to reduce rural poverty and achieve food security for all. With FAO's support to national governments, several countries have now adopted national food and agriculture policies and action plans that fully integrate women and men's aspirations and needs.

Partnerships play a crucial role in increasing the impact of development interventions, and as such are FAO's key mode of operation. Joint action



to identify concrete steps to scale-up successes and field innovations are already happening, with SSC at the helm of such activities. Information and technologies are being shared, and capacities are being strengthened to ensure that the countries involved have full ownership of the process and the knowledge transferred to implement interventions that effectively empower rural women.

LESSONS LEARNED: NIGER

Niger faces regular droughts, insurgencies and widespread poverty. Subsistence agriculture and pastoralism are the predominant economic activities, occupying more than 80 percent of the workforce. With at least 4.2 million people classified as food insecure, increasing the resilience of vulnerable rural groups is a major priority.

In Niger, FAO's Dimitra Clubs are the entry point of the Joint Programme's activities, as stated by Ms Idi Halimatou Moussa, the National Coordinator of the UN Joint Programme. These clubs are groups of women, men and youth – mixed or not – that meet regularly to discuss priorities and the challenges they face in their daily lives, make decisions

and take collective action to solve their problems, using their own resources and community radios stations.

In the framework of the Joint Programme, the Dimitra Clubs are helping to empower women by giving them opportunities to voice their opinions, discuss their challenges, develop self-confidence and leadership skills and together with men take action to resolve their problems.

"You can only have empowerment if there is strong female leadership giving women a voice. Women have used solar and crank radios and mobile phones to share knowledge and experiences. They need more support from the outside and from their families. So, discussions take place in the villages and are broadcast via rural community radios to the entire region. In this way, women identify their own problems and their own solutions. The FAO Dimitra Clubs methodology can be scaled-up through SSC and Triangular Cooperation," said Moussa.

POTENTIAL FOR UPSCALING

Evidence shows that the FAO Dimitra approach is highly effective in closing the gender gap, as it provides rural women with access to water, land, information, services and training opportunities. This is crucial for them to increase agricultural productivity, enhancing growth and accelerating the development prospects for current and future generations. Through engagement with local and national governments to develop and implement interventions, policies and laws that promote equal rights, rural women can benefit from more gender-sensitive practices and regulatory frameworks and make a stronger contribution to inclusive economic growth. By maximizing SSC, FAO stands better placed to expand similar projects and ultimately to meet the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



CONTACT US

Interested partners are invited to get in touch with FAO for more information.

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