Dear colleagues, partners and friends,

We’re thrilled to share the JP GTA’s review of the year 2023. This will be the last of our annual reviews, as we continue to wind down activities ahead of the Programme’s closure in December 2024.

The year 2023 was an exciting one. In our two focus countries, Ecuador and Malawi, FAO, IFAD and WFP finished piloting various methodologies to test the JP GTA’s theory of change for gender transformative programming. Two Learning Routes – in Malawi and Brazil – immersed participants in host experiences and increased their awareness of the potential of applying a gender transformative lens to development initiatives for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture. Meanwhile, the launch of the ‘Guidelines for measuring gender transformative change in the context of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture’ added an important resource to the knowledge base available to gender experts and programme specialists seeking to assess the impact of their projects and programmes.

Interactions between the three Rome-based Agencies were strengthened thanks to close collaboration at national, regional and global levels to elevate the reach and impact of knowledge products, events, capacity building initiatives and policy engagement processes. The JP GTA has positively impacted the work of the RBAs, influencing their institutional culture to embrace gender transformative approaches (GTAs) and strengthening synergies between them, and contributed to the EU’s Gender Action Plan III by providing knowledge, tools and frameworks that can enable EU-funded external actions to be implemented with a gender transformative lens.

As we celebrate past achievements, the team is also defining the contours of a new programme that builds on the work of the JP GTA. To inform this new programme, the JP GTA in early 2024 commissioned a stocktaking exercise on the GTA landscape. Summarizing the comments of several interviewees, the stocktake found that “despite holding explicitly transformative objectives and robust internal architectures to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment, almost all people interviewed (…) indicated – directly or indirectly – that the adoption within their organizations of these objectives has not permeated all sectors, units or people.”

There is clearly broad recognition of the importance of embedding gender transformative objectives within the working culture of development organizations, but challenges persist. The Rome-based Agencies are well-placed to identify pathways and solutions by leveraging the scope of their mandates and the scale of their operations.

For now, we extend a big “thank you” for your ongoing support in creating meaningful change for women and their families and communities.

The JP GTA Team
Knowledge generation

Guidelines for measuring gender transformative change in the context of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture & ‘At a glance’

The Guidelines, developed by the JP GTA and the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform, include step-by-step guidance to formulate qualitative and quantitative indicators of gender transformative change to help gender experts and food security, agriculture and nutrition programme specialists in their efforts to design, implement, monitor and evaluate gender transformative interventions. They also present an overarching framework for measuring gender transformative change, including key dimensions and a socio-ecological model for identifying spheres of influence.

Full Guidelines: English | Spanish  At a glance: English | Spanish
FAO paper: Changing rural women’s lives through gender transformative social protection

This paper published by FAO aims to orient the future policy, research and programmatic work of governments, practitioners and partners on the adoption of a gender transformative approach to social protection to improve results on rural poverty reduction, food security and nutrition. It critically examines the scope for social protection to be gender transformative and discusses the available evidence on gender transformative impacts of social protection.

Read more & download

IFAD-Procasur Learning Route in Malawi: Knowledge products on GTAs

In May-June 2023, IFAD and Procasur in the framework of the JP GTA organized a six-day Learning Route on GTAs in the district of Blantyre in Malawi. Based on an extensive mapping of IFAD-funded projects offering lessons and good practices of gender transformative programming, two case studies were selected as the host experiences during the Learning Route. These learning materials provided the context and the conceptual framework for the Learning Route.

Thematic introduction to GTAs | Compendium of GTAs in Malawi

JP GTA-Procasur Learning Route in Brazil: Knowledge products on GTAs

These knowledge products were prepared in the context of the Learning Route on GTAs organized in Brazil in October 2023 by the JP GTA and Procasur. The Learning Route was aimed at exchanging experiences and strengthening capacities to integrate GTAs in rural development projects to improve food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture. The ‘bitácora’ incorporates case studies visited and lessons learned, while the final report explains the six-day tour in more detail.

Bitácora | Final report

WFP social norms study in Ecuador: Good practices and lessons learned

This study capitalizes on WFP’s experience using innovative methodologies for gender norms analysis under the JP GTA in Ecuador. The study engaged more than 800 people, of which 73 percent women, in family farming in the provinces of Imbabura and Manabí. It applied the Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET) in the initial phase of development of an educational-communication strategy for social and behavioural change.

Read more & download (in Spanish)

FAO issue brief on GTAs and small-scale fisheries

This issue brief published by FAO aims to highlight the benefits of adopting GTAs in small-scale fisheries projects and initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. It serves as an introduction for stakeholders wishing to gain an initial understanding of how to embed GTAs in fisheries programming.

Read more & download
Country-level activities

During 2023, the JP GTA achieved progress towards more sustainable agrifood systems in Ecuador and Malawi, brought about by integrating GTAs into the projects, working modalities, policy dialogues and institutional culture of the Rome-based Agencies, partners and local participants at the country level.

ECUADOR

In Ecuador, the JP GTA worked to reduce the gender gap and barriers faced by rural women in family farming and across the value chain, enhancing their economic autonomy, control over resources and decision-making. It supported the implementation of Ecuador’s National Agricultural Strategy for Rural Women through the conceptualization, establishment and roll-out of ‘Rural Women’s Roundtables’ at the local level, all the while strengthening synergies between the Rome-based Agencies to jointly collaborate with key partners, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. As a result, the government is now preparing the country’s first intersectoral policy on rural women in agrifood systems to reduce hunger, combat poverty and strengthen sustainable agriculture.

The JP GTA also supported the Ministry to introduce 22 gender-sensitive indicators into the collection of statistical information on individual producers in eight value chains by sex-disaggregating working hours to highlight gender gaps and inform policy design. This information is publicly available via Ecuador’s Agricultural Public Information System.

Dimitra Clubs

What started as a pilot project in the canton of Chone in September 2022 has gained recognition in rural areas for its successful approach to community engagement and dialogue. A year after FAO’s Dimitra Clubs were launched in Ecuador, a Forum was organized where over 80 participants and spokespersons of the 20 Dimitra Clubs spoke about the positive changes they have observed in their communities. Representatives of the local municipality of Chone, prefecture of Manabí and national government presented a collective manifesto in which they declared their intention to continue the Dimitra Clubs methodology. The municipality of Chone has now included it in the next four-year plan of the recently re-elected mayor’s office.

Fanny Manique from the community ‘Menos Pensado’ in Chone is a member of the Reinas Obreras, Ecuador’s first female-only association of beekeepers, which participated in the local Dimitra Club as well as the social norms diagnostic study organized in the framework of the JP GTA, alongside other capacity building and awareness raising workshops. “Before, we were selling our honey along the highway. Now, thanks to the training and support we received from FAO, we have increased sales,” said Fanny. “Using technology is easy and quick, and it’s the best thing that could happen to a small business like ours.”

She has also started growing her own organic food in one of the community gardens supported by FAO through the JP GTA. She comments that the training she received, together with the support of national and local governments, has allowed her to provide organic food for her family and community. “These community gardens promote the consumption of healthy food and help us both at home and in the economy. We hope to continue having this support,” she said, proudly presenting her harvest.
The objectives of the Joint Programme in Ecuador go hand in hand with the Ministry’s priorities, and contribute in an inclusive manner to addressing the priorities of agricultural women producers to promote a dignified life for their families.”

Eduardo Izaguirre, former Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Ecuador (2023)

associations and organizations to achieve gender transformative change. The first training for 17 rural organizations and government institutions in 2022 resulted in an increase in women’s leadership, better access to productive resources, greater economic autonomy for women, and a more equitable distribution of tasks in organizations and within homes.

Rosalía Vega is a member of an association of cocoa producers where she is in charge of receiving cocoa from the other members of the organization for drying, prior to marketing. Having participated in the ‘Cerrando Brecha’ training workshop organized by IFAD under the JP GTA in 2022, she is now successfully replicating the knowledge in her organization and promoting the inclusion of female members in various activities. “We rural women are sometimes afraid of speaking in public or taking on managerial roles. Thanks to the training provided by IFAD, we discovered the inequalities that existed in our cocoa organization, which is made up of 60 percent women and 40 percent men. Now we have been empowered and many more women occupy management positions,” said Rosalia.

Learning Communities

The Learning Communities implemented by WFP in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock were based on training modules related to strengthening community businesses and plans, awareness of gender-related issues, sustainable agrifood systems, and access to productive and financial resources, among others. More than 400 rural women and men from the provinces of Imbabura and Manabi benefited from these learning tools, and hundreds of women have been connected to new markets and events to promote their produce. In addition, the tools are now freely accessible to others interested in enhancing their sustainable agriculture and nutrition practices with a gender transformative perspective.

“The training we received from WFP and its partners on farm diversification has been a fundamental help for us women to improve earnings and guarantee nutritious food and good health for our families,” commented María Calderón, one of the participants.
MALAWI

In Malawi, the JP GTA aimed to enhance the economic autonomy of women and youth through improved financial inclusion by piloting a social norms diagnostic study and implementing gender transformative methodologies. Good results have led to strengthened collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and key partners in the country.

Individual- and community-level methodologies

The IFAD-funded Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders and Enterprise (FARMSE) Programme and the Programme for Rural Irrigation Development (PRIDE) incorporated GTAs at various levels: working with women and their families through household methodologies, with Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLAs) through the Financial Action Learning for Sustainability at Scale (FALS@Scale) methodology, and with communities through Gender Dialogue Sessions and Theatre for Development. Furthermore, these projects involved government departments responsible for community development in capacity building activities to ensure alignment with national development priorities.

Learning Route

Building on its experience in Malawi, IFAD partnered with Procasur to organize a Learning Route on GTAs in the region of Blantyre in May-June 2023. The experience brought together 23 gender specialists and project technical teams from 13 countries (the Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nepal, the Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia and Uganda) representing 12 IFAD-funded projects, as well as members of FAO’s and WFP’s Malawi country offices.

The Route helped participants to increase their awareness of gender transformative methodologies and how they differ from other frameworks and approaches; to learn how rural development interventions can integrate gender transformative programming in their operations throughout the programme cycle; and to analyze pathways of change, results and impact at different levels. Over the course of six days, participants exchanged knowledge and experiences with their local hosts under the IFAD-funded Programme for Rural Irrigation Development (PRIDE) and the Ultra-Poor Graduation Component under the FARMSE Programme.

Dimitra Clubs

FAO collaborated with two local NGOs, the Rights Advice Centres in Mangochi and the Good Health Organization in Kasungu, to implement its Dimitra Clubs in ten villages in the district of Mangochi and ten Group Village Heads in the district of Kasungu. The Clubs saw a series of successes, such as the enrollment of 32 children in a newly built nursery set up by the Dimitra Club in the village of Kapala after the economic

“I was very impressed by what is done in Malawi, and I am even more convinced than before that closing the gender gap is key for sustainable development.”

Philippe Remy, Country Director (Tunisia), IFAD

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downturn following the COVID-19 pandemic had rendered many parents unable to pay the monthly fee to cover the teacher’s salary. As a result, the Kapala Dimitra Club stepped in, collecting monthly contributions from its affiliated VSLA to cover the teacher’s honorarium.

Two Forums were held in Kasungu and Mangochi respectively with local stakeholders, government officials and representatives of the ten Dimitra Clubs in each district to exchange experiences and lessons learned. Each Dimitra Club prepared an exhibit reflecting its perceived greatest achievement, such as the construction of school buildings and sanitary facilities, the preparation of land for farming, the production of compost manure, and access to adult and early childhood education.

VSLAs

As part of its gender transformative programming in Malawi, WFP promoted asset creation with a focus on dietary diversity, reduced workload for women, and better hygiene and sanitation to reduce the disease burden at household level. VSLAs were a key component in increasing access for women and youth to financial resources, savings and income-generating activities, thereby addressing issues of women’s financial inclusion.

WFP provided support through monitoring to over 2,000 VSLAs and ensured that they are creating economic independence for members, most of whom are women. A floods impact assessment conducted by WFP after Cyclone Freddy hit Malawi in early 2023 showed that the majority of households involved (64 percent) had engaged with VSLAs to obtain loans, which was even higher compared to 2022 (51 percent).

Financial inclusion

Knowing the extent to which access to products and services of formal financial institutions is key to women’s and youth’s financial inclusion and economic autonomy, FAO in the context of the JP GTA facilitated dialogue sessions in July and August 2023 that brought together members of VSLAs – mainly women and youth – with financial institutions in the districts of Mangochi and Kasungu in Malawi. During the session, the VSLA members expressed concerns about difficulties in accessing and servicing loans. Issues discussed included generic loan offers, unsuitable loans for women and rural communities, stringent collateral requirements, high interest rates and a lack of proactive education on loan processes in rural areas. The financial institutions presented case studies of women’s groups in similar situations who successfully accessed and repaid multiple loans.

“I'm delighted that the project [JP GTA] organized this dialogue session. We look forward to the financial institutions’ training on the loan products they introduced us to today, to kickstart our business plans by December. We are ready to take these loans, and our VSLA has a strong history of timely repayments of loans from other sources.”

Lezita Mtalimanja, Chairwoman of Chisomo VSLA, Malawi
Capacity development and learning

Learning Route in Brazil

To provide a hands-on direct learning experience, the JP GTA collaborated with Procasur to organize a Learning Route in northeastern Brazil in October 2023 aimed at exchanging experiences and strengthening capacities to integrate GTAs in rural development projects to improve food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture.

The Learning Route brought together an intercultural group of 21 participants from 12 Latin American and African countries (Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, and Sao Tome and Principe). Participants included representatives of governments, farmers’ and women’s organizations, United Nations agencies and the European Union. Over the course of six days, they visited initiatives of women’s groups and rural communities in the northeastern states of Rio Grande do Norte and Pernambuco, where GTAs have successfully improved access to basic services and resources, increased the diversity of their crops and enhanced food security for families.

Another Learning Route, organized by IFAD and Procasur in the framework of the JP GTA, took place in Malawi in May-June 2023. Read more under the ‘Country-level activities’ section.

E-learning course on gender transformative and intersectional approaches

The JP GTA supported the development of an e-learning course in Spanish on gender equality and its intersections with ethnic, racial, age and regional considerations in rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, targeting governments, international and civil society organizations, academics, development experts and students. The course aims to answer questions such as: Why adopt gender transformative and intersectional approaches in projects and programmes? How to design projects and programmes with gender transformative and intersectional approaches? It offers practical tools to design, implement, monitor and evaluate a project or programme with gender transformative and intersectional approaches for rural areas and provides examples of relevant methodologies and strategies.

Since being launched, over 1 200 people have completed the course mostly from Ecuador, Colombia and Mexico, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Ecuador has made course participation compulsory for all employees, while other governmental institutions in Latin America are also promoting it.

In my country, we have an action plan for the transformation of food systems that seeks to strengthen the traditional agricultural system. We will also work on incorporating a gender transformative approach to highlight the fundamental role of rural women.”

Leidy Vásquez, representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia
Launch event: ‘Guidelines for measuring gender transformative change’

The JP GTA and the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform worked closely together to develop Guidelines aimed at enhancing the capacity of research and development partners from the Rome-based Agencies as well as the European Union, the CGIAR, and other organizations to design, implement, monitor and evaluate gender transformative interventions.

During the launch event for the ‘Guidelines for measuring gender transformative change in the context of food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture’, a dialogue panel between IFAD’s Silvia Sperandini and the CGIAR’s Els Lecoutere discussed ongoing activities to spark gender transformative change and challenges encountered in measuring gender transformative change in their programmatic work.

The Guidelines were also presented during a capacity development workshop at the annual CGIAR gender research conference ‘From Research to Impact: Towards just and resilient agri-food systems’ that took place in New Delhi in October 2023.

WFP brown bag events

Drawing attention to the importance of gender transformative programming, WFP in the framework of the JP GTA focused two of its monthly ‘Gender Equality Brown Bag’ sessions in June and October 2023 on topics close to the heart of the Joint Programme: the potential of innovative approaches to trigger gender transformative change in agrifood systems, and lessons learned from applying the Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET) in Ecuador.

WFP’s monthly Brown Bag sessions provide a platform for knowledge and experience sharing between WFP offices, aiming to boost internal awareness among staff of gender gaps and available tools to enhance gender equality in the organization’s work. For these two sessions, colleagues from FAO and IFAD were also invited to join.

Value chains training

The JP GTA collaborated with FAO’s Gender Team and the Community of Knowledge Practice for Women in Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems (WeCaN) to build the capacity of 20 development practitioners and service providers during a four-day virtual training workshop on gender transformative and climate-resilient dimensions of agricultural value chains. This adapted training curriculum is one of many examples of how the JP GTA is working with various teams, units and divisions within the Rome-based Agencies to embed GTAs in their programming, policy dialogues, working modalities and institutional culture.
JP GTA – JP RWEE joint internal knowledge exchange sessions

The JP GTA and the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP RWEE) – which is implemented by FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women – hosted two joint internal peer-to-peer workshops to share experiences and learnings on GTAs and social norms change tools that have been applied in the two Joint Programmes. A total of around 60 colleagues from eight countries joined the virtual sessions to learn about a range of tools: the social norms diagnostic study conducted by the JP GTA in Ecuador, the Dimitra Clubs methodology applied by the JP RWEE in Niger, the Gender Action Learning System implemented by the JP RWEE in Nepal, and the FALS@Scale as well as other gender transformative methodologies piloted by the JP GTA in Malawi.

Policy support and institutional engagement

The Rome-based Agencies supported important global policy initiatives, maintaining momentum to ensure that a gender transformative lens is applied in high-level policy dialogues. Within each agency, the uptake of GTAs in institutional strategies, roadmaps, action plans and guidelines continued to increase.

For instance, GTAs were prominently featured in FAO’s flagship report on ‘The status of women in agrifood systems’ where they were hailed as a cost-effective solution to enhance gender equality. WFP’s Cash-based Transfers Policy (CBT) specifically targeted women to increase food security and nutrition, and the annual country reports under WFP’s Country Strategic Plans use four new indicators that seek to demonstrate gender transformative change. Meanwhile, IFAD senior managers championed the value of gender transformative programming to achieve more meaningful and sustainable development outcomes and create lasting positive changes in rural communities.

Máximo Torero, Chief Economist, FAO

Committee on World Food Security Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality

An important milestone in 2023 was the endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) during its 51st session, providing a starting point for the global community to begin implementation. The coordinated action of the Rome-based Agencies was fundamental, with the JP GTA participating in the negotiation process and offering a strategic platform for action for implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

European Union Working Group on the Gender Transformative Approach

Seeking to strengthen collaboration with European Union institutions and Member States, JP GTA team members contributed to a session focused on agriculture, food security and nutrition of the European Union Member States’ Working Group on the Gender Transformative Approach to present the work of the Joint Programme. They highlighted forthcoming tools on measuring gender transformative change and presented the latest updates from the CFS negotiations on the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition.
16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence present an annual opportunity for collaboration and coordinated action between the Rome-based Agencies. In 2023, the closing ceremony was hosted by FAO and featured statements by high-level representatives who noted the importance of making women active agents of change.

“For IFAD, combating GBV is about creating spaces where women are active agents of change, breaking free from the shackles of gender-based violence. Together with the Rome-based Agencies, we recognize that traditional responses often fall short. So, thanks to the collaboration and financial support of the European Union, FAO, IFAD and WFP are implementing the [JP GTA] that challenges discriminatory social norms and applies inclusive transformative methodologies to demonstrate how it is possible to enable change.”

Guoqi Wu, Associate Vice-President, IFAD

“I would end by acknowledging the EU-RBA Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition. We learned from colleagues in Ecuador about its implementation. These are the sorts of initiatives that we really want to support, all together, going forward.”

Chiara Adamo, Head of Unit (Gender, Human Rights and Democratic Governance), DG INTPA, European Commission

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