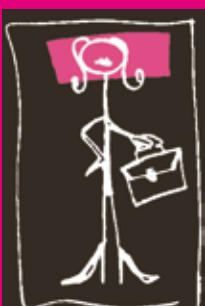


**Commission on Women and Development:
Gender, Empowerment and Food Security group**

**Access to and control of
resources by women:
a challenge for food security**

Recommendations



Towards food security: inequalities to be combated

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FOOD SECURITY

In recent years, whether it has been a crisis involving raw materials (agricultural products, petroleum, etc...), a financial crisis or an environmental crisis (climate change), all these various crises have had an impact on world food security. In 2009, the number of people in the world affected by hunger increased to 1.02 billion, the highest number since 1970. Since last year, more than 100 million people suffering from hunger have been added to this number.

The greatest paradox is that 70% of those living with hunger live in rural areas. And those most affected are women and children. And yet women produce 60 to 80% of food in the countries of the South and are responsible for half the world's food production. (FAO, 2009)

Through their socio-cultural role, they are responsible for growing food crops (the products found on the table every day), for water supplies and the collection and/or production of medicinal plants. It is also they who prepare meals and seek to balance the family diet. What is more, in urban environments, women make a considerable contribution to the household food budget through paid activities. However, to some extent throughout the world and above all in Africa, these women still generally enjoy the fewest rights in comparison with men: such as, for example, access to and control of the land (or furthermore the security to hold this land), access to financial resources, means of production, etc.

As a consequence, women are forced to look for land at some distance, which increases their tasks, and sometime places them in situations of risk (violence, committing misdemeanours through ignorance when they accidentally come upon areas of pasture, etc...). Access to and control of financial resources is also restricted: in African countries, only 10% of agricultural credit is granted to women.

They have little access to agricultural input, whether in terms of products (improved seeds, pesticides, etc.) or tools, since they do not benefit from popularization services, or lack the resources.

What is more, access to and control of time and labour also pose problems. Women have to combine the responsibilities linked to family reproduction and productive work, which means that their days are often overloaded.

Finally, women have little access to information, training, and decision making, and their practical needs and interests are often not taken into account since they are still poorly represented – or not at all – in instances of decision making.

The challenge to be met consists of achieving equality of access to and maintenance of resources for women and men, thus allowing them to contribute jointly to food security, the three central elements of which are: the availability of food, that is to say sufficient food production, economic and physical access to usable food products, and finally nutrition security. Women fulfil important functions in the provision of these three essential elements of food security.

THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AS A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY

In the past decade, the theme of food security has received more and more attention, and strategies to meet this challenge have been developed. The process of the empowerment of women thus logically forms part of the road to the solution, at both the individual and organisational level, by taking into account four components: ASSETS (economic power) – KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW (power to) – WILL (internal power) – CAPACITY (social and political power).

This is why the Commission on Women and Development recommends that **actors*** at all levels give these four components priority in their development policies.

ASSETS

The objective of 'assets' is to achieve equality of women's access to and control of resources, land, time, credit, markets, and technologies that allow them to produce food.

▣ To promulgate and apply laws that grant equal property rights to women and men, and laws on the inheritance of land; to raise awareness amongst traditional chiefs and base populations so that these laws are applied.

▣ To encourage the production and diversification of food crops by means of greater information, action-research, and other popularization activities.

▣ To encourage the development of techniques for the reduction of tasks. To support the equal division of tasks between men and women and boys and girls.

▣ To put social services in place (day nurseries, etc.)

▣ To ensure supplies of drinking water, electricity, and renewable energy.

▣ To improve access to healthcare and nutrition.

▣ To promote the setting up of savings and credit cooperatives under conditions accessible to all members of both genders.

▣ To encourage and support activities that generate income, such as the processing of agricultural food crops and the setting up of rural micro-enterprises.

▣ To involve men and women in the management and organisation of work in the fields and granaries.

▣ To improve transport infrastructure.

▣ To improve the accessibility to and quality of markets by means of better mobility (in terms of access, time, resources and permission) and the promotion of fair trade.

▣ To improve storage infrastructure and preservation techniques.

▣ To promote the certification of organic products.

* ACTORS TO WHOM THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ADDRESSED

▣ = State: national and local governments, technical departments, ministries of agriculture and ministries in charge of the promotion of women's rights, international institutions.

▣ = Customary authorities: customary, religious and traditional authorities.

▣ = Research organisations: universities, national statistical institutes, agricultural colleges.

▣ = Civil society: farmers' organisations, NGOs, women's groups, families, the media.



KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW

The objective of '**knowledge and know-how**' is the creation, distribution and sharing of knowledge, as well as the compilation of statistical data on agriculture that takes gender inequalities into consideration.

▣ To ensure that in research, diagnostics and data collection, all information is differentiated by gender.

▣ To ensure that research takes account of gender-specific questions (violence, access to and control of resources, access to food, identification of food-based discrimination, distribution of diet within the family, identification of customary practices that are favourable and unfavourable to women).

▣ To develop action-research programmes that take into account the specific characteristics of men and women, including:

- > The roles of men and women in agriculture
- > The production and conservation of seeds
- > The impact of climate change on food security
- > The impact of policies of cooperation on food safety and food sovereignty.

▣ To involve men and women in training programmes and campaigns to raise awareness of: gender, laws and rights, nutrition, the functioning of technical departments, sustainable food-crop production, and functional, economic, and political literacy.

▣ To reinforce the capacity of technical departments at national and decentralised level with regard to food security.

▣ To develop and support communication systems that are accessible to rural, suburban and urban populations, and which focus on themes relating to access to and control of resources, nutrition, food discrimination and women's rights.

▣ To organise visits for the exchange of experiences for women and men, in order to promote innovative approaches in both technical and social terms (change in men's/women's roles).

▣ To encourage the promotion of and the capitalisation on the knowledge of women and men regarding ecosystems and traditional crops.

▣ To collect data, differentiated by gender, on agriculture and the three pillars of food security:

- > Availability/Production
- > Accessibility/Markets
- > Utilisation/Nutrition

and make them available to planners, technicians and decision-makers.



WILL

The objective of '**will**' is to bring about a change of mentality towards standards and customs that are favourable to all members of the family, plus support for female leadership.

- ▣ To support the raising of awareness amongst all the actors concerned (local, religious and customary authorities, men, women, and children) of women's rights.
- ▣ To ensure an environment of physical security in order to allow women to take up their functions as growers, managers, processors, traders, etc.

- ▣ To work on women's self-esteem and support the emergence of female leaders.
- ▣ To implement regulations aiming to combat all forms of discrimination against women regarding access to and control of resources (land and means of production), the distribution of food within the family, and food-related taboos.
- ▣ To set up networks of women's organisations.
- ▣ To educate men and young people about respect for women and proper living standards (health, food, etc.).



CAPACITY

The objective of 'capacity' is that civil society – in particular women's groups – should participate in drawing up policies on food security – in other words to support a level of autonomy in states so that they may ensure food security and support sustainable family-based agriculture. To acknowledge the fundamental role of women in food security and to bring about the effectiveness of laws on gender equality.

▣ To examine and re-focus agricultural and food policies so that they defend a system of sustainable family-based agriculture and take account of the special interests of women in the operation of the family, which is not an homogeneous whole.

▣ To regulate the food supply chain in order to protect local agriculture in countries where food security is not guaranteed.

▣ To reinforce the political power of states to regulate markets in order to guarantee the right to food as well as stable and lucrative prices for producers of both genders in a context of great volatility and climatic challenges.

▣ To support the integration of women in power structures, and also their effective participation in rural development and strategies on food security.

▣ To ensure that the gender dimension is taken into account during the drawing-up of budgets (gender-budgeting) by the technical ministries

concerned (agriculture, economy/finance, rural development, environment) and allocating them an adequate budget.

▣ To involve the ministry in charge of the promotion of women in the analysis and drawing-up of national policies on agriculture and food security. To set up links between ministries such as agriculture, rural development, environment, and the ministry for women, by means of inter-ministerial areas reserved for gender analysis among others.

▣ To draw up laws guaranteeing fair access to natural/productive/food resources (the right to food).

▣ To review current fundamental pieces of legislation (Constitution), to verify their application in order to guarantee women and men fair access to and control of natural resources (water, land, biodiversity, etc.), knowledge, credit facilities, and infrastructure.

▣ To promote women's organisations (agricultural and cooperative economic organisations linked to agribusiness).

▣ To strengthen the active participation of women in the organisation and financial management of the production, storage and marketing of agricultural products within agricultural organisations and umbrella organisations.

▣ To encourage greater participation by women in decision-making within the home.

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A publication of the Commission on Women and Development

Release date: October 2010

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0218/2010/36

