



# Gender & Rural Development

## Participating on equal terms – benefits in agriculture and rural development

Three quarters of all poor people in developing countries live in rural areas. Their livelihoods usually depend either directly or indirectly on agriculture, with women as the main producers of food on farms. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, they produce up to 80% of all staple foods, both those for use in the home and for sale in the market.

In the gendered division of labor, women perform a variety of tasks, including general agricultural work and raising cattle, as well as maintaining the household and family. Their responsibilities range from seed management to planting to processing and marketing of agricultural products. In livestock farming, women feed the animals, clean their stalls and compost manure. When raising poultry, sheep, goats or rabbits, they are responsible for breeding and tending to the animals' health. It is women who cultivate the kitchen gardens, which often sustain the family when harvests are poor. In addition to these tasks, they procure water and domestic fuel. Given the importance and variety of these tasks, women are important bearers of knowledge related to the sustainable use of natural resources, for example strategies for adapting to climate change and conserving agrobiodiversity.

War, disease, death due to HIV/AIDS and the migration of male family members into urban areas or foreign countries are leading to an increasing trend towards the feminisation of agriculture. More and more women are taking on additional roles that were originally performed by men or are assuming sole responsibility for agricultural production. In many partner countries, women have little or no access to or control over land, financial services, productive resources and extension or marketing services. This is usually due to cultural, traditional and legal factors (including customary law). Moreover, women are often underrepresented in rural organisations and institutions, have low levels of education and are poorly informed. This prevents them from having an equal say in decision-making processes to influence policy and strategy at municipal level. Added to this is the fact that women are hardest

hit by the increasing scarcity of natural resources. This is due on the one hand to land acquisition by foreign investors ('land grabbing') and on the other to the negative impact of climate change in terms of increased incidents of drought, flooding and severe weather.

**It is inefficient to ignore the different roles played by men and women in rural development and food security strategies.** Politicians have recognised this fact. As a result, over the past several years, UN member states have entered into a number of commitments. The Rome Declaration on Food Security, resulting from the FAO World Food Summit in 1996, affirms the obligation to promote the equal participation of men and women. The Millennium Development Goals dating from the year 2000 also underline the fact that reducing by half the number of people who suffer from hunger by 2015 will be impossible without gender equality. The 2009 Global Hunger Index emphasises that famine is particularly widespread in areas where men and women do not have equal opportunities.

With its Development Policy Action Plan on Gender 2009 – 2012, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has committed to strengthening the economic empowerment of women generally and, in particular, highlights the need for gender-specific answers to the negative impact of climate change on agriculture. Last but not least, gender equality is a human right and thus a value in itself.



## Burkina Faso: Strengthening women's participation in rural value chains

Eighty per cent of women in Burkina Faso live in rural areas (Institut National de la Statistique et de la Demographie, 2008). They are mainly represented in the labour market as self-employed workers in the informal agricultural and non-agricultural sector. Although the agricultural and land reform enacted in 1996 guarantees women equal access to land, their land rights are in fact restricted. Farmland is traditionally only lent out for cultivation for a specific period by the village authorities (the majority of whom are men). Owing to religious and traditional norms, women are excluded from all village activities that are organised by men. On behalf of BMZ, the GTZ Agricultural

Development Programme supports its partners in Burkina Faso in promoting the transition to a market-oriented agricultural system and thus in enabling comprehensive agricultural growth. The value chains for selected agricultural products (cashews, sesame seeds and cassava) are being elaborated with a focus on processing, which is usually performed by women. Thus, after cassava has been planted (by both men and women), all further processing steps are exclusively handled by women. The preparation and street sale of the traditional cassava dish attiéké gives women another source of income in addition to land-related production. This approach not only explicitly promotes the creation of wealth for women, but generates added value for the country's economic development.

## Equal participation in rural development – what are the starting points?

German development cooperation supports its partner countries in their efforts to improve the political and institutional frameworks for the formal and informal agricultural sector such that men and women can have an equal share in agricultural development. Setting up and expanding rural (women's) organisations optimises production and distribution (e.g. through the joint procurement of new machines). Giving women an equal say in decision-making processes in rural development institutions provides them better access to resources, factors of production such as land and capital, and to markets. The necessary precondition is that gender-specific spheres of responsibility are recognised at an operational level, and that knowledge and skills are enhanced. This not only strengthens men and women

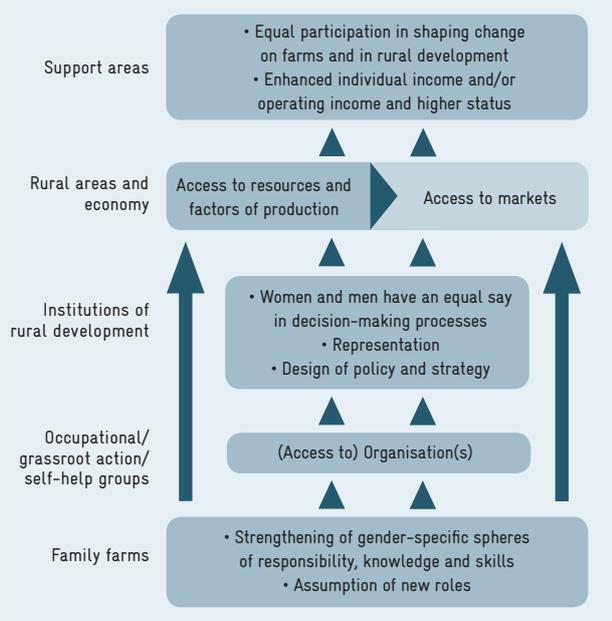
in their roles but also encourages them to assume new roles and responsibilities. This is the only way to ensure that men and women have an equal share in shaping change on farms and in rural development. The results are enhanced individual and/or operating income and a higher status, especially for women (*see diagram below*).

## The role of German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)

Central measures of GTZ include:

- **Capacity development** (e.g. training women as agricultural extension workers, organisational development for female producer groups)
- **Policy dialogue and advice** (e.g. in reform processes concerning land rights, the granting of loans, giving women a say in professional and/or rural organisations)
- **Awareness raising** of participation by women and reducing discrimination against women in agriculture, as well as its effects on productivity
- **Analysing value chains** and helping to optimise them.

## Action and support areas for equal participation in rural development



## Literature & Links

BMZ/GTZ/UNIFEM: *Pathway to Gender Equality: CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs, 2004.*

<http://www.gtz.de/del/dokumente/en-pathway-to-gender-equality.pdf>

GTZ & Gender: <http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/politische-reformen/demokratie-rechtsstaat/9022.htm>

GTZ & Rural Development: <http://www.gtz.de/en/themen/863.htm>

The World Bank: *World Development Report, Agriculture for Development, 2008.*

FAO: *Rome Declaration and Plan of Action, 1996.*  
[www.fao.org/docrep/003/hw3613e/hw3613e00.HTM](http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/hw3613e/hw3613e00.HTM)

The World Bank, FAO, IFAD:

*Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, 2009.*

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