



17-18 February 2014

# The Farmers' Forum

in conjunction with the thirty-seventh session  
of IFAD's Governing Council



## REPORT OF THE SIDE EVENT

### “MOVING FORWARD: BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING”

#### Strengthening women's participation and influence in farmers' organizations

Special event on the occasion of the Fifth global meeting of the Farmers' Forum  
Rome, 17 February 2014

#### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

IFAD has had a long standing commitment to promoting rural women's leadership, particularly in producers' organizations (POs). In 2010, a special session on “Promoting women's Leadership in Farmers' and Rural Producers' Organizations” was held prior to the Farmers' Forum and a statement highlighting key issues was delivered to the Governing Council. Subsequent initiatives have included the Rural Women's Leadership Programme (RWLP)<sup>1</sup>, funded by the Government of Norway, to strengthen the capacity of grassroots women leaders in Madagascar, Nepal, the Philippines, and Senegal to engage in their local context, as well as at national and international levels.

#### THE EVENT

A total of 23 women FAFO participants, including four executive committee members, plus 14 observers, one permanent representative to the Rome-based agencies, and 16 IFAD staff spent two hours in lively debate, sharing experiences about the challenges and enabling factors in enabling women to become leaders. Recommendations were made on how IFAD should support women to become leaders and ensure that their voices are heard, and key messages to be raised during the main sessions of the Farmers' Forum were noted. The main findings from the group discussions are presented below.

In opening the event, Kevin Cleaver, IFAD Associate Vice President and gender champion, reflected on the disconnect between the key role women play in agriculture and their poor representation in decision-making at all levels, from the household to rural organizations, and policy-making. He congratulated the women leaders attending the FAFO, highlighting how they represent role models and spokespersons for rural women throughout the world. He noted that IFAD is keen to understand how the Fund can better work with farmers' organizations to support women's leadership, from the grassroots upwards, and to amplify the voice of women farmers at the policy table.

Clare Bishop-Sambrook, Senior Technical Advisor on gender, targeting and social inclusion, recognised that the Farmers' Forum and the International Year of Family Farming both represent opportunities for reasserting the importance of ensuring rural women have adequate voice and decision making capacity. However, ensuring women's participation is challenging. For example, the number of women participants in FAFO has remained at around 25 since 2010, typically representing around 30 per cent of participants. It has not been possible to maintain the target of women representing 40 per cent of total participants that was achieved in 2010. Interestingly, women have stronger representation among the observers, where they represent around 45 per cent.

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<sup>1</sup> IFAD (2014) Rural Women's Leadership Programme, Madagascar, Nepal, the Philippines and Senegal, Good practices and lessons learned (2010-2013) [http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/leadership\\_programme.pdf](http://www.ifad.org/gender/pub/leadership_programme.pdf)

## 1. Unpacking the pathway of leadership: “from home to Rome”.

Participants described their experiences in growing from being leaders of smallholder organizations, to the federal/national level and – ultimately – the international level. They identified enabling factors and challenges encountered at different steps of their pathway,

Key enabling factors included:

- a. Skills and capacities
  - Education and training to ensure adequate capacity to access and make good use of leadership positions.
  - Self-confidence and personal drive, particularly a passion for their profession in agriculture, which is a strong motivator to engage in associated organizations and decision-making processes.
  - Economic empowerment can be a first step into having a voice.
- b. Household and community
  - Favourable cultural norms and support from family and the community are essential to encourage women to take up active roles in the public space.
  - Role models within the family shape the mind-set of whether it is possible for a women to be a leader. An empowered mother or other female relative acting as a leader can inspire younger women to believe they can become one.
  - A supportive spouse – coupled with a reallocation of workloads within the home - enables a woman to get out of the home, attend meetings and engage in public activities.
- c. Grassroots groups and PO level
  - POs managed with transparency and good governance provide a suitable environment for the development of women leaders.
  - The solid presence of women members in a PO is instrumental in creating consensus and the enabling environment to support women to become leaders.
  - Leaders should be elected because of their abilities; nevertheless quotas for women leaders can be used as a strategy to create critical mass. Representation in management can be strengthened if key positions are alternated between a woman and a man.
  - Linking and networking with other women leaders strengthens outreach of voice and messages.

Key challenges included:

- When women are economically dependent on their husbands, it is difficult for them to take autonomous decisions on objectives they want to pursue.
- Women leaders often have the double burden of work (economic and home), even as a leader.
- Men feel threatened and this may result in gender-based violence.
- It can be difficult for women to have the chance to talk in mixed groups.
- The number of challenges increase as women progress up the leadership ladder; higher up, the stereotypes and barriers are stronger, and the more effort it takes to overcome them – both in terms of skills and time required.

### Voices of women leaders

“I was lucky. My mother was the leader of the labour union. I was raised with her as a role model and with the absolute conviction that women are - or should be – leaders.”

“I had to have a rebellion to make space in meetings, which were led by men, even to talk about issues relevant to women.”

“I come from a reality where my mother had to ask my father’s permission to get outside the kitchen and go to the living room.”

“Even when I was asked to join the Farmers’ Forum, I wondered ..should I really go? Should I really leave my house, my children and my husband at home?”

“In my organization, women were always allowed to join but they were completely invisible, incapable of talking and incapable of realizing that their issues should be raised and addressed.”

“When I returned to the village after I had completed my studies, I joined a women’s organization with my mother. A former classmate from school told me that I shouldn’t work in the fields because farming wasn’t a job for someone with an education.”

“Men are realizing that the time has come for women to join leadership positions.”

“A woman has the right to be in the society and to be with other women. Let’s not sit back; let’s come together and share our experiences, and let’s talk if we want to have a better living.”

“Break the paradigm and be what you want to be.”

## 2. Opportunities to better support women in becoming leaders and making their voices heard

- Sensitization and awareness raising is fundamental for both men and women in order to change their mind-set and overcome stereotypes regarding women in leadership. Demonstrate the benefits of women in leadership positions through sharing success stories between POs and undertaking exchange visits. Engaging with men is fundamental to ensure the sustainability of any change.
- Adequate support for capacity development of women as leaders. As they move into leadership at national and international levels, they require additional technical knowledge, lobbying and advocacy skills, as well as the ability to converse in international languages such as English, French or Spanish.
- Foster peer to peer learning, sharing role models and personal histories. Women leaders play an important role in supporting their members, encouraging and motivating them to go further, especially the youth.
- Create opportunities for women and youth, to ensure they gain an effective space and their concerns are given high priority.
- Quotas may be needed in the face of entrenched gender inequalities in order to complement bottom-up collective action by women.
- Ensure dedicated funding to support women's leadership in mixed organizations is not diverted to other activities.

### **A rural woman leader**

#### *Who is she?*

She is passionate,  
She is committed  
And strong in the face of adversity.

She is creative,  
She is courageous  
And believes in her own abilities.

She is ambitious for her beliefs,  
She is eager to learn  
And keen to share.

#### *And what does she need?*

She needs her family to believe in her,  
Her fellow members to appreciate her leadership,  
And opportunities to enable her to flourish.

She is our inspiration!

## 3. Key messages for the Farmers' Forum and IFAD

- FAFO to strive for participation rates of 50 per cent women and 30 per cent youth in the 2016 global meeting.
- Ensure adequate attention to gender issues within FAFO:
  - Respect the quota for women's participation in FAFO in all panel discussions, working groups and leadership positions during FAFO activities.
  - Include a one-day special event for women or a working group session in 2016.
  - Host a networking event for women during the FAFO period.
  - Include gender on the agenda of the regional consultations preceding FAFO, ensuring dedicated sessions.
- Support women within POs involved in IFAD operations. Potential areas of work include:
  - Work on leadership pathways, training leaders to move up the steps of PO aggregation.
  - Support the establishment of women and youth wings.
  - Support the development of women-friendly services within POs, in order to increase their participation in income generating activities, build up their asset base and strengthen their economic empowerment.
  - Scale up the capacity-building and training of women leaders in POs, building on the achievements of the Rural Women's Leadership Programme.
  - Establish a global fund or special programme for supporting women in POs.
  - Support dialogue and the establishment of regional women's networks and the organization of regional fora. One option could be to work with the PanAfrican rural women's meeting organized by PROPAC in 2013 to develop a pan-African network of women leaders.
  - Organize learning routes to share experiences of women's leadership, investigating alternative governance mechanisms within POs, as well as businesses providing more equitable access to benefits. For example, repeat the Morocco learning route, selecting experiences of women entrepreneurs to be showcased.

## Annex I – Participants at gender side event

NAME	ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY	
<b>FAFO PARTICIPANTS</b>			
1	Veronique Ndri	ANOPACI	Ivory Coast
2	Smita Bhatnagar	SEWA	India
3	Innocentia Thwala	SNAU	Swaziland
4	Jane Ngulube	NASFAM	Malawi
5	Altantuya Tseden-Ish	NAMAC	Mongolia
6	Natalia Iañó	WFFP	Spain
7	Ika N. Krishnayanti	Aliansi Petani Indonesia (API)	Indonesia
8	Josephine George Francis	FUN	Liberia
9	Kadiatou Keita	CNOP-G	Guinea
10	Maria de Los Santos Munoz Carrasco	La Surenita	Honduras
11	Evelyn Nguleka	ZNFU	Zambia
12	Aleyda Aragón	AMC	Nicaragua
13	Shanta Manavi	ANPFA	Nepal
14	Dolores Hortense Kinkodila Tombo	CFR-PROPAC	Congo
15	Felicitas Ndong Bindang	FNOCGE	Equatorial Guinea
16	Elizabeth Nsimadala	UCA	Uganda
17	Margaret Nakato	WFF/KWDT	Uganda
18	Fatma Ben Rejeb	UMAGRI	Tunisia
19	Maria Elena Rebagay	AFA	The Philippines
<b>FAFO PARTICIPANTS / STEERING COMMITTEE</b>			
1	Estrella Penunia Banzuela	AFA	The Philippines
2	Alessandra da Costa Lunas	COPROFAM	Brazil
3	Elizabeth Mpofo	ZIMSOFF	Zimbabwe
4	Elizabeth Atangana	PAFO	Cameroon
<b>FAFO OBSERVERS</b>			
1	Lani Eugenia (panellist)	PAUNTANI	Indonesia
2	Alberta Guerra	Action Aid	Italy
3	Edith Van Walsum	ILEIA	The Netherlands
4	Elke Stumpf	GIZ	Germany
5	Chelsea Graham	WFP P4P	
6	Winrose Nyahuthii Mwangi	Huairou Commission/GROOTS Int. / Laikipia Women Development Initiative	Kenya
7	Becca Asaki	Huairou Commission/GROOTS Int	
8	Petronella Van der Pasch	Agriterra	The Netherlands
9	Mary M. Njoroge	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)	Kenya
10	Maris Gavino	WOCAN	
11	Cielo Baez		Colombia
12	Vanya Walker-Leigh	World Rural Forum	
13	Aziz Geeorjeet	NERRDP / Hasaka	Syria
14	Ika Krishnayanti	API	

## WOMENS' NETWORK OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

- 1 Christina Grieder, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to FAO, IFAD and WFP

## IFAD GENDER FOCAL POINTS

- 1 Elizabeth Ssendiwala IFAD / ESA Nairobi Office
- 2 Martina Huonder IFAD / APR
- 3 Khadidja Nene Doucoure IFAD / WCA Dakar Office

## IFAD STAFF

- 1 Tim Ledwith IFAD / COM
- 2 Daniela Cuneo IFAD / COM
- 3 Beate Stalsett IFAD / COM
- 4 Zak Bleicher IFAD NALO
- 5 Sabine Pallas IFAD / ILC
- 6 Juan Moreno IFAD / LAC
- 7 Anne- Laure Roy IFAD / PTA
- 8 Mariam Odenigbo IFAD / PTA
- 9 Giulia Castro IFAD / PTA
- 10 Tom Anyonge IFAD / PTA

## GENDER TEAM

- 1 Clare Bishop-Sambrook IFAD/PTA
- 2 Beatrice Gerli IFAD/PTA
- 3 Maria Hartl IFAD/PTA
- 4 Valentina Camaleonte IFAD/PTA
- 5 Chiara Romano IFAD/PTA
- 6 Silvia Sperandini IFAD/PTA

## Annex II – Agenda of Gender side event

<b>AGENDA</b>	
<b>18:00</b>	<b>Welcome</b> by Kevin Cleaver, AVP and IFAD gender champion
<b>18:15</b>	<b>Moving forward</b> Group discussion (English, French or Spanish). <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Based on your personal experience, what made it possible for you to become a woman leader? What were the main challenges you encountered and how did you tackle them?</i></li><li>2. <i>How could an organization like IFAD support you in overcoming such challenges and pave the way for women to access leadership positions and make their voices heard?</i></li></ol>
	<b>Wrap up and closure</b>
<b>19:15</b>	<b>Refreshments and networking</b>
<b>19.45</b>	Bus to hotel for FAFO participants and observers