

IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment



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There is evidence that economies with greater gender equality have higher economic growth and offer a better quality of life for all. Gender equality includes equal access to opportunities and to benefits.

IFAD is firmly committed to empowering women and to working with families, communities and countries to build gender equality at every level. In 2012 the organization's Executive Board approved the IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The policy is central to the overall goal of IFAD's Strategic Framework 2011-2015 – enabling poor rural women and men to improve their food security and nutrition, raise their incomes and strengthen their resilience.

Strengthening gender equality has multiple benefits. Greater gender equality:

- makes a major contribution to improving household food and nutrition security and reducing child malnutrition
- contributes to inclusive economic growth that lifts people out of poverty

- increases household income and assets, and benefits everyone in the household
- develops the skills base of rural communities
- helps protect the natural environment
- increases the impact, relevance and effectiveness of development interventions
- makes development projects more sustainable.

Women are major players in the agriculture sector, in household food and nutrition security, and in natural resource management.

- In the agriculture sector, they work along the value chain from the field to the market – in their own enterprises, in family activities and as employees.
- They also engage in a mix of non-farm and income-generating activities, as part of their strategy to diversify their livelihoods and household nutrition options.
- Poor rural women are both stewards and users of natural resources. They possess knowledge that

is distinct from that of men and complementary. They also depend on natural resources for water and fuelwood, and use natural products for economic and medicinal purposes.

Despite their multiple roles, women have significantly less access than men to the assets and services that would enable them to increase their productivity and reduce their workload. In addition, they are under-represented on natural resource management committees and in user groups.

Gender gaps can also disadvantage men. In some parts of the world, the gender gaps are reversed, with boys having less access to schooling than girls. Similarly, rapid socio-economic changes in certain areas might expose men more than women to the risk of job loss or underemployment.

Thus, changes in both men's and women's roles and relations are a prerequisite for gender equality. The challenge is to ensure equal opportunities for women and men to engage in development activities, in terms of



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opportunity to participate as well as to share in the benefits. Nevertheless, inequalities are largely experienced by women and selective interventions are needed to level the playing field for them.

IFAD's gender equality policy directly addresses these key issues and draws on over 30 years' experience.

Three strategic objectives

The gender policy has three strategic objectives:

- Promote economic empowerment to enable rural women and men to participate in and benefit from profitable economic activities.
- Enable women and men to have equal voice and influence in rural institutions and organizations.
- Achieve a more equitable balance in workloads and in the sharing of economic and social benefits between women and men.

Five action areas

The strategic objectives will be implemented through five action areas. Action areas 1 to 3 relate to IFAD's core activities, while action areas 4 and 5 relate to IFAD institutional structures and resources for policy delivery. The outputs for each action area are as follows:

- Action area 1: Gender equality and women's empowerment issues are addressed systematically in IFAD-supported country programmes and projects.
- Action area 2: IFAD's contributions to advocacy, collaboration and partnerships, and knowledge management on gender equality are improved.
- Action area 3: The capacity of partners to address gender issues in agriculture and rural development is strengthened.
- Action area 4: Corporate approaches and procedures that support gender and diversity balance are developed.
- Action area 5: IFAD's corporate systems for human and financial resources, and monitoring and accountability fully support gender equality and women's empowerment.

How will IFAD deliver the policy?

IFAD will:

- Address gender equality as a cross-cutting theme, including in its policies.
- Take into account differences that exist among women – age, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic category – and the dynamics in gender roles and relations.
- Use gender analysis to understand the different roles, interests and priorities of women and men, and tailor policies, programmes and projects accordingly.
- Implement, when necessary, women-focused activities to address existing imbalances in economic and career opportunities, decision-making and workloads.
- During project identification and design, focus efforts on providing young rural women with economic and social development opportunities.
- Apply continuous learning and analysis based on field experiences to develop more effective approaches and to generate information for evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue.

Find out more about what this means in practice and read the full policy at www.ifad.org/operations/policy/policydocs.htm

On the same webpage, see also *IFAD Targeting Policy: Reaching the rural poor*, and *IFAD Engagement with indigenous peoples*.