

IFAD Gender Awards 2021

Honouring achievements in gender equality and women's empowerment

Philippines, Kenya, Nicaragua, Tunisia and Nigeria



Investing in rural people





Asia and the Pacific

Fisheries, Coastal Resources and Livelihood Project (FishCORAL)

PHILIPPINES

The Fisheries, Coastal Resources and Livelihood Project has improved household incomes in poor coastal communities through developing new business opportunities in fisheries value chains. The project supports local fisher families – in particular through training and savings groups – to give them the know-how and capital to establish enterprises that take advantage of the broad range of economic opportunities across the fisheries sector, from capture to storage, processing and marketing.

A crucial aspect of the project's success has been creating and expanding opportunities for women to become successful entrepreneurs.

Previously, wives and daughters in the fishing community have generally been expected to stay at home and take care of children. However, the project – through targeted activities and approaches – sensitized women and men to the benefits associated with increasing women's involvement in economic activities and allowing them to speak freely in decision-making processes. Indeed, around two thirds of the new livelihood initiatives developed under the project were implemented by women. The project set up aqua-based business schools that delivered modules dedicated to gender equality. These modules created awareness among participants of the benefits of women's empowerment – for the women themselves but for their households as well. This is one of the ways the project was able to transform how women and men interact with each other – the increased status of women in the household and their ability to contribute to household expenses changed their lives. Importantly, a good gender balance in enrolment was achieved in the business schools, with a large number of both women and men involved. Overall, around 60 per cent of those enrolled were women.

The project included separate consultations with women and men to align the project with their challenges and aspirations, as well as consultations with the community as a whole. These consultations were the basis for identifying income-earning opportunities for women, and for promoting equal opportunities and equal voice for women and men.

Significant changes to local norms have been observed. In many cases, male household members are taking on a much larger share of household responsibilities to allow women to dedicate themselves to income-earning activities. Indeed, the share of women involved in economic activities has doubled since the project began – from 20 per cent to 40 per cent. Women have also become more active in participating in community meetings.

One of the results of the community consultations was the establishment of savings mobilization clubs. The clubs have been important in supporting fisher families to save capital for their enterprises and in enabling them to become self-sufficient. They have also been particularly helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic, cushioning families from debt. Seventy per cent of the members of community-based savings mobilization clubs are women.

Sandra Gani, one of the regional project coordinators, described the impact of these gender-transformative activities. “The project has given them the opportunity to create an impact in the society,” she said. “Not just by participating in different activities, but by also providing them with the platform to lead and manage an organization and through this, it proves that women have the power to lead.”

Initial results have been encouraging, with fisher groups set up under the project reporting increases in income of 20-25 per cent already. Families are reporting increased contributions from women to family expenses, which has enhanced their status and decision-making power.

Overall, FishCORAL is promoting gender transformation through a combination of activities that involve both women and men. Improving the skills of women, linking them to entrepreneurship opportunities – as well as working with both women and men to change gender norms – is creating positive and lasting changes in the lives of not only women, but also of their male family members.

Read more about the project:

www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/project/1100001548



East and Southern Africa

Upper Tana Catchment Natural Resources Management Project (UTaNRMP)

KENYA

The Upper Tana Catchment Natural Resources Management Project is focused on two overarching objectives: first, to increase production and incomes of poor rural households; and second, to promote sustainable management of natural resources to maximize the benefits of environmental services for local communities.

Adapting activities to promote rural women's empowerment has been critical in working towards these objectives. Indeed, increasing women's voice and influence over the decisions that affect their lives is a key means of achieving positive, sustainable change. UTaNRMP focused on removing the barriers to achieving this, such as entrenched socio-cultural norms, gender discriminatory business practices, competing demands on women's time, and issues around women's access to productive assets and training.

In promoting income-generating activities through funding and capacity development of local common interest groups (CIGs), mechanisms were put in place to ensure women received a fair share of the benefits. To guarantee a gender balance in the management of mixed-gender CIGs, the project set a cap on leadership positions at two thirds for both men and women, while a minimum of 30 per cent of new proposals for community-funded activities was reserved for women. In addition, at least 50 per cent of training participants were required to be women.

As a consequence, representation in leadership positions for community-funded activities rose sharply for women. Indeed women now make up over half of these positions – compared with less than 40 per cent before the project. Similar improvements were also observed for women's participation in household decision-making on spending income.

Equally important is the way in which the project has reduced women's domestic workloads by offering sustainable, labour-saving alternatives to accessing fuel, high-quality soil and water. Activities such as establishing household biogas stoves and using solar technologies to rehabilitate water facilities, as well as planting trees,

have all helped households access these crucial resources more easily. The amount of time spent sourcing wood fuel has decreased by more than 50 per cent, while over 70 per cent of households now have access to water within one kilometre of their homes.

Since women tend to spend more of their time on activities such as collecting water and fuel, they benefit the most and can devote the time now saved to economic activities. The involvement of men in activities supporting gender equality has also played a part in achieving these changes. With men embracing their new roles in the household, and attitudes changing around the benefits of women's involvement in economic activities, the project has helped transform gender norms.

The use of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in the project's training activities has also been significant in the way it has encouraged both women and men to reflect on social norms and gender inequalities and how these influence household livelihoods and development opportunities. GALS has involved community members in training their peers to reduce the potential for tension and to create awareness of the benefits of reducing gender inequalities. Participating communities have reported that spouses are consulting each other more on key decisions, and resources are shared more equally within families in the vast majority of households.

"It was not easy for me to embrace GALS. But I have come to realize that we have achieved great things since we embraced it as a young couple. We now pool resources and plan together," said Ayub Mukuria, a project participant from Meru County.

Read more about the project:

www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/project/1100001544



Latin America and the Caribbean

Nicaraguan Dry Corridor Rural Family Sustainable Development Project (NICAVIDA)

NICARAGUA

Important legislation on gender equality and women's empowerment informs the implementation of the Nicaraguan Dry Corridor Rural Family Sustainable Development Project – for example, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Gender, Youth and Indigenous Peoples Strategy of the Ministry of Family, Community, Cooperative and Associative Economy (MEFCCA). The project is focused on advancing the economic empowerment of rural women, adopting a three-pronged approach:

- Prioritizing investments that promote women's access to assets and resources for income generation.
- Building women's entrepreneurial capacities and skills linked to the needs of the local jobs market, in particular through partnerships with the National Technical Training Institute (INATEC) and the National Agrarian University (UNA).
- Linking initiatives to improve the diversity of diets with income-generation activities and with building resilience to climate change.

The project provides local families – including many indigenous peoples' families – with training and technical support to focus their activities beyond agricultural production, adding value to their products and developing inclusive marketing strategies. These aspects are all encompassed in strategies, known as family and business plans, which households themselves draw up. Much attention is given to developing creative and non-traditional products. Project participants have come up with many ideas – from backyard garden production to other non-agricultural income-generating activities – a large share of which extend beyond traditional activities.

Women have been placed at the centre of the project's activities. At the same time, the involvement of men has been critical too, in particular in transforming gender relations and challenging norms on the traditional roles of women and men in the family and the community. Indeed, gender equality and issues relating to women's economic empowerment – and to gender-based violence – have been firmly integrated into workshops organized in partnership with MEFCCA, the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) and the National Agrarian University.

Through this alliance, 96 workshops have been organized to train participants in agribusiness development, promote local tourism, prevent violence against women, and use technology to build resilience and adaptation to climate change. Importantly, there was a constructive gender balance in participation in the workshops, with large numbers of both women and men involved – benefiting almost 2,000 families – and women representing 58 per cent of all participants.

Both women and men have expressed appreciation for the opportunities to come together and discuss gender issues in an open and respectful way. For example, in the San Lucas indigenous community, women and men reported benefits associated with the more egalitarian relationships between wives and husbands, especially in terms of more equal sharing of both household tasks and productive work around their farming. More equal gender relationships underpin gender transformation and can only be achieved with both women and men involved.

Changing gender attitudes and norms have been crucial in promoting the involvement of women – alongside men – in the development of family and business plans, as well as other investment plans related to project implementation. Indeed, women have developed more than 60 per cent of the family and business plans, and more than half of the broader territorial plans initiated by the project. Further, the project has actively promoted women’s participation in community fairs, business conferences and local marketing networks. There has also been continuous promotion of women’s participation in producers’ organizations. Consequently, there is greater balance in women and men’s involvement in key business activities, with women now playing a more equal part in negotiating sales and purchases with suppliers of inputs and services, and with buyers in local or regional markets.

Read more about the project:

[www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/dry-corridor-rural-family-sustainable-development-project-nicavida-](http://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/dry-corridor-rural-family-sustainable-development-project-nicavida)



ment
es Associées

Indicateur	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Population totale	100	100	100	100	100
Population urbaine	55	55	55	55	55
Population rurale	45	45	45	45	45
Population de moins de 15 ans	35	35	35	35	35
Population de 15 ans et plus	65	65	65	65	65
Population de 65 ans et plus	10	10	10	10	10

Domaine d'intervention



• Valorisation de l'ensilage par la mise en place d'une unité d'engraissement de chevreaux et d'agneaux
• Installation d'une unité d'élevage de géniteurs de race Alpine pour améliorer la race locale
• Préparation d'un cahier des charges collectives du lait de chèvre afin d'être accès aux subventions de collecte

Near East, North Africa and Europe

Agropastoral Value Chains Project in the Governorate of Médenine (PRODEFIL)

TUNISIA

Barriers to accessing finance have been identified as a major constraint to women being economically active in Tunisia. Extending finance to women was therefore a major focus for the Agropastoral Value Chains Project in the Governorate of Médenine. The project provided women with preferential access to financial products through its beneficiary selection processes, which included specific mechanisms to favour women and young people.

“I am ambitious by nature, I want to try new ideas but when you lack financial means, you cannot get very far with these ideas. The project has broadened my horizons,” said Imen Rezgui, who participated in the project and started a successful camel farming business as a consequence.

Imen’s experience is by no means unique. In fact, the project reached over 10,000 women, with nearly 800 new businesses started as a result. Surveys indicate that the majority of female entrepreneurs participating in the project experienced an increase in income and living standards.

But access to finance was far from the only way the project promoted the economic empowerment of women. In consultations carried out by the project, women indicated their unpaid workloads are extremely heavy. Improved infrastructure has been crucial in reducing the time spent on some household tasks, and to set up the conditions needed to support their business activities. A key part of this has been investing in drinking water facilities closer to women’s homes, including private tanks to collect rainwater. And the development of facilities such as poultry farm buildings to raise productivity and tracks to improve transport and enable entrepreneurs to reach markets has also been important.

Equally significant has been transforming norms in the way women and men interact and share tasks, which has been at the heart of positive change. The first step for successful gender transformation is to ensure women can take part in discussions on an equal footing with men. Indeed, bringing women and men together for constructive dialogue is a cornerstone of positive change. For the PRODEFIL

project, greater participation by women in community life, in decision-making and in development planning has contributed to addressing the norms and traditional attitudes that had generally seen women sidelined in economic activities. Specifically, women have been empowered and equipped to take part in community decision-making processes and to actively defend their own and their families' interests. A key aspect of this transformation has been enabling women to gain access to decision-making power in grassroots organizations on an equal footing with men. The project actively promoted organizations representing women's voices in the local political and economic spheres: specifically, two agricultural development groups and a mutual agricultural services company were set up and run by women for this purpose. This created the conditions needed to enable women to play an active role in preparing community development plans, sector action plans and business plans for promising ideas. In addition, women were strongly represented in the institutional arrangements for project implementation, constituting 70 per cent of the project management unit membership.

Thus far, almost half of the women who started their own business as part of the project report achieving complete financial autonomy. Importantly, the men in the community have welcomed this economic empowerment of women, as they observe the benefits in terms of overall household income. With greater gender equality and cooperation at the household level, women and men are working together in new ways, signalling a brighter future. "With my husband, we split the work. Some tasks are mine, such as taking care of the animals, and he is in charge of product marketing," said, Hayet Awadiya, one of the female entrepreneurs participating in the project.

Read more about the project:

www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/agropastoral-value-chains-project-in-the-governorate-of-m%C3%A9denine





**SPECIAL COMBORITE
MADE**
FROM
**PURE PRO-VITAMIN B1
CASHEW FLOUR**

West and Central Africa

Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP)

NIGERIA

The Value Chain Development Programme in Nigeria has transformed the lives of thousands of rural women, who have become successful entrepreneurs specializing in rice production and processing. The project conducted gender-sensitive analyses of rice and cassava value chains as a first step towards enhancing women's participation. This has resulted in taking into account sources of inequality – such as women's workloads, their (lack of) voice in decision-making processes, and challenges they face in accessing land and other productive resources. The project has advanced gender transformation by adopting participatory approaches to addressing these issues, bringing together women, men and youth, and ensuring spaces for them all to share their perspectives.

The first step in this transformation was the establishment and strengthening of women's groups and linking their members to economic opportunities in the local economy. The groups were formally registered and provided with training in financial literacy and business management. To date, 490 women's groups have been formed, with almost 29,000 women benefiting from membership of these groups.

But before the women could start their enterprises, they needed land. Secure land tenure rights for women and girls is crucial for their empowerment, and for sustainable and equitable rural development more broadly. The women's groups proved critical in addressing this issue. Under the programme, partnerships were set up with these groups, community leaders and the government, with one of the main areas of focus being identifying and securing suitable land for the women. The parties signed an agreement securing ownership of the land for the women, initially for a period of 10 years. This period was subsequently extended midway through the programme, in recognition of the positive results achieved for participating communities.

Support was given to the women's groups in developing the land. Half the required contribution came from the programme, while the government contributed 30 per cent and the women themselves 20 per cent. The land was cleared and parcelled into plots of one hectare for each participating woman. Other key activities to develop the land included planting trees around the perimeter and providing water facilities for drinking, sanitation, and production and processing activities.

The use of innovative technology enabled the women to take advantage of their land. In collaboration with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, which shared knowledge from its projects in neighbouring states, the programme introduced the women to rice processing technology. The women's groups were also linked to rice producers for their supply of raw materials. In addition, roads were built to facilitate the transport of inputs to the farm and final products from the farm to markets. Along with convenient access to water and the use of rice-based briquettes for fuel, this helped reduce the workloads of participating women.

Another crucial aspect of the programme was the creation of networks and forums that connected the women's groups to governance and decision-making processes. This enabled women to sit at the same table as men, and raised men's awareness of the benefits of involving women in debates and decisions. Indeed, transforming gender relations can only be achieved by bringing women and men together and by involving men, as well as women, in approaches to gender transformation. To support their participation, women were given dedicated training in skills such as negotiation and leadership to enable them to advocate for their own interests through these platforms.

The programme has shown how women agri-entrepreneurs are crucial in transforming food systems and making them more sustainable. It has enabled participating women to change their lives significantly. Roseline Amadi, an entrepreneur from Ebonyi State, who participated in the programme, explained: "The [programme] has changed my life and my family has benefited immensely from the change. I now practise agriculture as a business and have people working for me as employees. My family has improved dietary diversity with access to fresh food."

The programme has also helped participants to cope with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic – they have been able to maintain production and jobs during a time of crisis.

Read more about the project:

www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/project/1100001594

Empowering women is a cornerstone of IFAD's work. Women are major contributors to the rural communities where we work but face barriers that inhibit their livelihoods and that of their families. Compared with men, women have less access to resources and services, including land, finance, training, inputs and equipment. In addition to their agricultural work, they are overburdened with domestic chores and caring tasks.






Gender transformation means changing this reality and realizing the full potential of women. It means going beyond the symptoms of gender inequality to tackle the underlying causes of inequalities (norms, attitudes, behaviours) to generate positive and sustainable change.

Promoting gender equality and empowering women is indispensable for eradicating rural poverty and hunger.

That's why IFAD initiated the Gender Awards in 2013: to recognize the achievements of selected projects on delivering outstanding progress in empowering women. The winners will be celebrated on the International Day of Rural Women. Interviews and other sharing opportunities will be arranged to ensure international visibility and opportunities for partners (both within and outside IFAD) to learn from the winners' positive experiences and good practices. One winner is selected from each of the regions in which IFAD operates.



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