



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Gender equality and women's empowerment in rural transformation: from evidence to public action

Vanya Slavchevska, Tacko Ndiaye, Mariola Acosta, Maurizio Furst, Clara Park, Omnia Rizk, Ilaria Sisto, Erdgin Mane

Social Policy Officer, FAO's Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP)





Moving towards resilient and inclusive rural transformation (RITI)

The classic view of
inclusive rural
transformation (de
Janvry)

AND efforts to ensure
inclusion of poor
households, women,
indigenous peoples...
(IFAD 2016, 2019; FAO
2017)

2.3. Inclusive agricultural and rural transformations defined

Stages of transformation	Processes
Asset building	Access to land and human capital for the landless and SHF
Green Revolution	Adoption/diffusion of new seeds and fertilizers for staple crops
Agricultural Transformation	Ag diversification toward high value crops Water control for extended labor calendars Development of value chains and contracting
Rural Transformation	Growth of the rural non-farm economy/ADLIS Mechanization and land concentration Territorial rural development
Structural Transformation	Rural-urban migration Urban-based industrialization and services

→ Suggests a sequence toward modernization/transformations:
Assets-GR-AT-RT-ST



A lot of progress as processes of structural and rural transformation led to

- Rapid economic growth,
- Fed the world,
- Massively reduced poverty and
- Improved welfare and standards of living globally



Yet are proving unsustainable and unjust

- Poverty and hunger reduced but in recent years stagnating
- Increase in negative health outcomes associated with changes in diet
- High cost of global warming, climate change, destruction of natural resources and biodiversity
- Late transforming countries face different set of constraints and opportunities
- Inequality between and within countries across multiple dimensions
- **Marginalization and disempowerment of key populations: Indigenous Peoples and women**



This study

Reevaluates how gender and intersecting dimensions of power are integrated in models of structural and rural transformation, as these models are also adapted to address the urgent challenges to development posed by climate change and nutritional transitions

Argues that we must **place gender equality and women's empowerment as central objectives** for an inclusive, just, and resilient transformation of rural areas and agrifood systems



It requires a fundamental shift in perspectives

Avoiding setting up any implicit hierarchy of issues, approaches and knowledge

- Gender equality must not be treated as a subset of poverty reduction, economic growth or rural transformation
- Gender is not solely an “enabling conditions” or “enabler”.
- Recognize diverse perspectives -- women’s voices, knowledge, preferences

Gender power inequalities and discrimination are embedded even in governance structures and reflected in:

- policies, investments, and even data that are collected.

Attention to gender equality and women’s empowerment can be a ‘buzz’ word but it can also open important opportunities that benefit and empower women and other marginalized social groups



Research approach

A narrative review of the literature

Research question:

1) How do rural and structural transformation processes along with initiatives to address climate change and nutrition transitions challenges influence changes in women's empowerment and livelihoods?

- Productivity and livelihoods interventions
- Climate interventions
- Nutrition interventions

2) How is gender reflected in policies, agricultural investment plans, data?

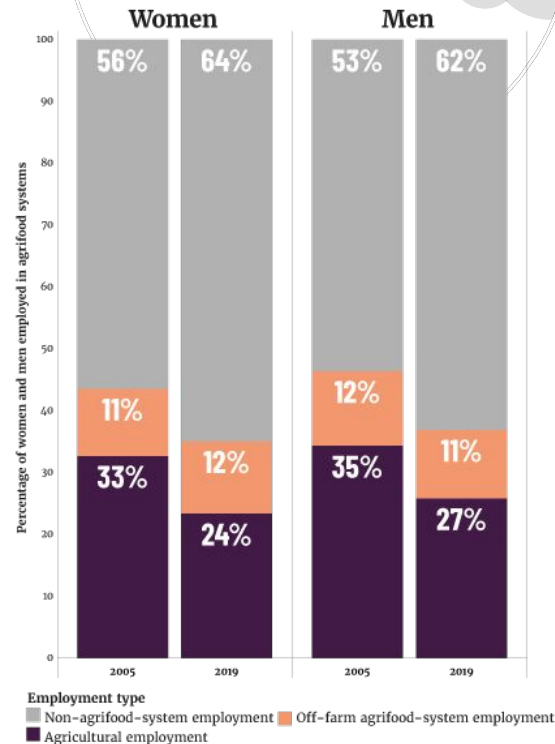


The status of women in agrifood systems

Agrifood systems are a major employer for women esp. in LMIC

Women remain disadvantaged in both agriculture and off-farm employment

- The gender gap in farm productivity of **24%** (Anríquez et al.)
- A gender wage gap of **18%** in agriculture and **16%** in non-agriculture employees (Benali et al)
- Male-run enterprises make **more than twice** as much in



Source: Costa, V. et al (forthcoming). *Women's employment in agrifood systems*. Background paper for The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems report, 2023.

Climate change

Across low- and middle-income countries, **climate shocks and disasters have a negative effect on the achievement of gender equality**, affecting women's economic independence and social rights (Eastin, 2018).

- **Increased work burden** (Tallman et al., 2023), **differential effects on work in agriculture** (Lee et al., 2021; Nico & Azzarri, 2022) and **migration options** (Djoudi et al., 2016)
- Increased vulnerability to **violence** (Sanz-Barbero et al., 2018, IPCC 2022); **negative effects on girls' education** (Agamile & Lawson, 2021; Björkman-Nyqvist, 2013), **early and forced marriages** (Carrico et al., 2020)



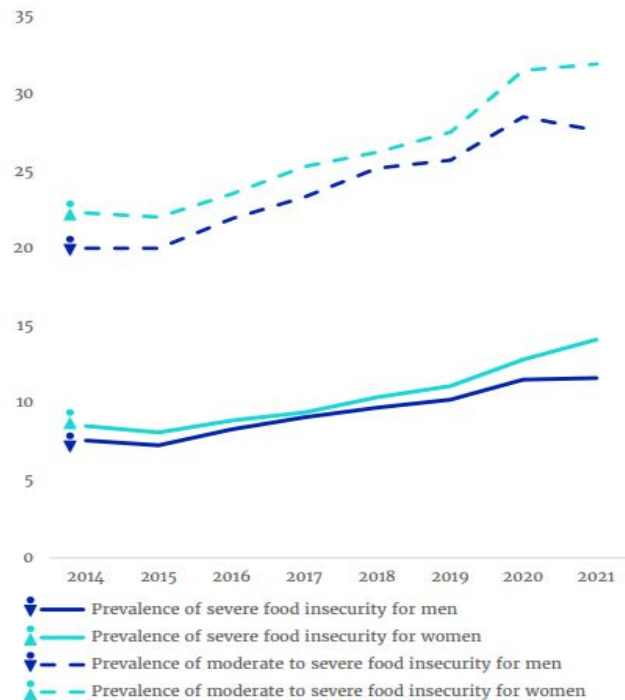
Food security and nutrition

Women are more food insecure than men in every region and the gap has widened since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic

Healthy diets particularly in rural contexts are unaffordable, especially for women

- A study from India found that the cost of affordable diet comprises approximately 80–90% of daily wages of female unskilled laborers; and 50–60% of daily wages of male unskilled laborers (Raghunathan et al., 2021)

Prevalence of food insecurity (%)



Source: FAOSTAT



Placing GEWE as fundamental in inclusive and resilient rural transformation: key levers



1. Addressing gender gaps in unpaid domestic and care work

On average, women spend **4.2 hours** a day on unpaid domestic and care work...

...while men spend **1.9 hours**

Women's unpaid care and work burden:

- **limits women's productivity and well-paid off-farm employment opportunities** (e.g. Jayachandran, 2021), and
- has **implications for child nutrition**

- **Agricultural interventions** are consistently found to **add to** women's, men's, and children's **time burdens** (Johnston et al., 2018).
- **Successful approaches** to address these inequalities:
 - improved infrastructure (e.g. rural childcare centers);
 - labor-saving technologies;
 - gender-transformative approaches that promote more equal sharing of the unpaid domestic work.

2. Eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence

Women earn less than men in both agriculture and non-agriculture not only because of differences in education and occupation (Benali et al., forthcoming); but also **for doing the same activity** (de Brauw et al., 2021; Jayachandran, 2015)

- A study from New Delhi showed that, compared to men, women chose lower-quality colleges, spent more money on commuting and travelled longer time to feel safer (Borker, 2018).
- When women move into sectors traditionally dominated by men, they may experience a higher risk of gender-based violence (Castañeda Carney et al., 2020; Fröcklin et al., 2013).

Successful approaches require interventions at multiple levels.

- Legislation is the first step but often not enough because of gaps in implementation
- Social and psychological empowerment interventions reduce gender-based violence, but the evidence around economic empowerment interventions is ambiguous (Keith et al., 2022)



3. Women need resources too

- Women are less likely to own land or have secure rights over land (FAO, 2023)
- They lag behind men in the adoption of agricultural technologies (Rola-Rubzen et al., 2020)

....

Successful approaches:

- Various
- In the process of commercialization and the integration of smallholders in global value chains, it is important to safeguard women's control over assets.

4. Women are important agents of change and not mere victims of climate change

- **Increased representation** of women in national parliaments has been correlated with the implementation of **more stringent climate change policies** (Mavisakalyan & Tarverdi, 2019).
- However, **women's voices remain underrepresented in climate decision-making spaces** at different levels (EIGE, 2021; Pearse, 2017; Picard, 2021).
 - the participation of women in national delegations to UNFCCC increased from 30% in 2009 to 38% in 2021; women are head of only 13% of delegations (WEDO, 2022).

5. Engaging with fathers, parents-in-law for better nutrition

1. Women's empowerment is consistently found to enhance household food security and children's nutrition, but **putting the burden of better nutrition on women is unconscionable**
2. Tensions between women's paid employment and their time for resting and child care can have unintended negative consequences for nutrition
3. **Benefits of engaging with fathers, parents-in-law and other family members** on maternal and young child nutrition and health have been well-documented over the last decades (Martin et al., 2021); yet nutritional interventions mainly target mothers
4. Attention to women's own food security, nutrition and health is important, and not only when they are mothers.



Moving from evidence to public action



Policy and legal frameworks are slow to integrate GEWE

- **An analysis of 83 agricultural policies shows** that most acknowledge women's constraints and roles in AFS but there is insufficient inclusion of explicit GEWE goals, limited ambition of interventions, and insufficient consideration of discriminatory social norms, GBV and other intersecting challenges such as climate change
- **An analysis of 102 National Food System Transformation Pathways** from low and middle income countries shows: 19 did not have any gender, and 44 presented a very low or low prioritization of gender

Gender is insufficiently addressed in national and regional agricultural investment plans (NAIPS and RAIPS)

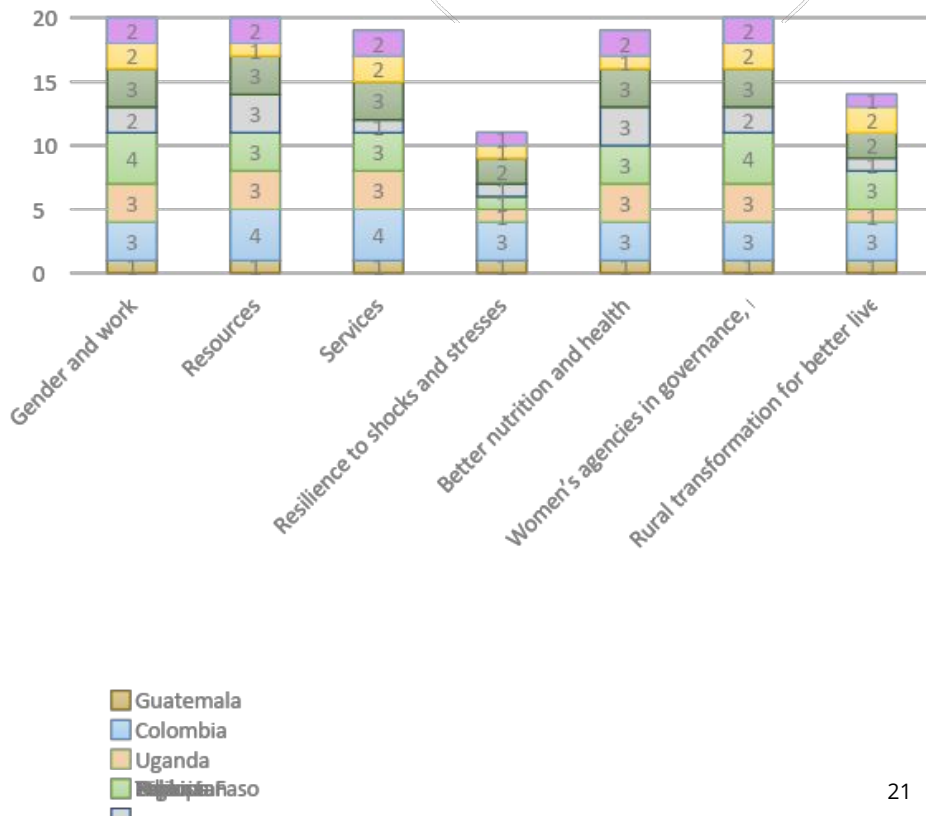
- ✓ Most **NAIPs 1st generation did not prioritize gender-inclusive goals or targets at the overarching policy level.**
 - ✓ GEWE disconnected from the main policy framework, and included within program components.
 - ✓ M&E programs largely ignored GEWE
 - ✓ No explicit gender assessments to inform the elaboration of the NAIP
 - ✓ Women's groups, national gender machinery, and GFPs not adequately involved
- ✓ **Significant improvement in the 2nd generation of NAIPs/RAIPs** but gender is insufficiently addressed in the investment plans, targeting and indicators

Despite the wide availability of data, none of the countries analyzed successfully translated the evidence into sound implementation mechanisms

Gender was better integrated in employment, resources and policies, followed by services and nutrition (Figure 1).

Gender was often overlooked with regards to rural transformation for better lives (including non-farm activities) and resilience

Integration of gender in rural transformation dimensions in NAIPs

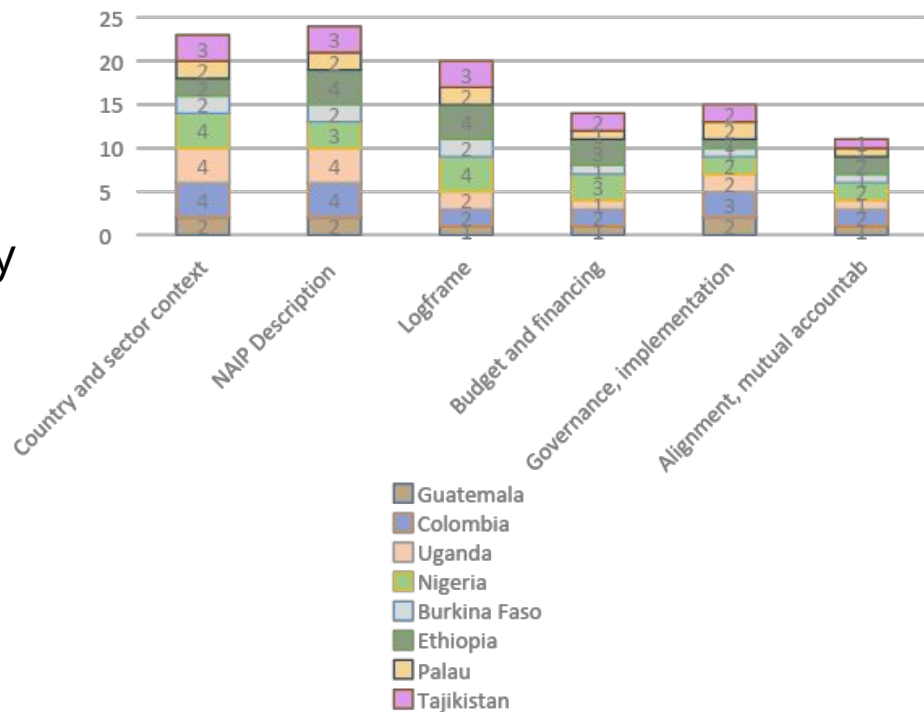


Gender considerations “evaporate” in the mechanisms for implementation of the vision and plan

Gender better mainstreamed in the description of the context in the country and sector, the description of the NAIP and its components, and the logframe.

Gender poorly mainstreamed sections related to “budget and financing”, “governance, implementation and coordination” and “alignment and mutual accountability”

Gender integration in the sections of the NAIPs document



Conclusion

- ✓ A disproportionate focus on the **“inclusion of women and girls in existing systems versus the transformation of systems and structures** to break cycles of inequality.” (UN, 2023)
- ✓ **“High strategic orientation at the level of planning national policies and strategies** for GEWE, with a **lesser orientation at the implementation stage** of plans and policies involving crafting and implementing **finance and revenue strategies, legislation, and regulations”** (UNDP, 2023).
- ✓ **Mainstreaming** gender has not yielded appreciative successes.



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Thank you!



Via delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy
+39 06 57051



GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

Many other successful initiatives:

- ✓ GRB in OECD countries is growing, with over **60% applying gender budgeting**
- ✓ Rwanda systematically mainstreams gender in the regular planning and budgeting process; **climate change and gender – from 0.4% in 2009 to 4.6% in 2020.**
- ✓ Tanzania has created a **Citizen's Budget** in collaboration with CSOs





OTHER INITIATIVES

Progressive taxation: tax **exemptions** or reductions to improve inputs supply to women, tax exemptions for women-led/owned businesses and tax **concessions** for women-owned properties, etc.

PPP: Gender commitments are increasingly integrated into PPP legal and regulatory frameworks, and in the project cycle of individual PPP projects

Integrated National Financing Frameworks : Cohesive nationally





AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES: SPECIAL EC REPORT ON GM IN EU BUDGET, 2021

- ✓ **CAP accounts for more than 30% of EU funding. EAGF accounts for around three-quarters of the CAP** (€300 billion in the 2014-2020 MFF). "It is the **single biggest programme under the EU budget**" (EC, 2021)
- ✓ Basic payment scheme for farmers, green direct payments and a payment for young farmers.
- ✓ Difficult to assess the effects of direct payments on gender equality." **No data on the proportions of payments that go to women and men** was collected.
- ✓ However, country case studies show **significant gender gaps in opportunities to participate and benefits**. E.g. in 2019: in Sweden, **16% women applicants who received only 7%** of payments; In Ireland, **women owned 10% of eligible land but received only 8%** of payments.