



Farming as Equals

How supporting women's rights and gender equality makes the difference

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“70% of the world’s farmers are women, but most programmes that offer farmers credit and training target men. This is unfair and impractical”.

Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFSI	Aquila Food Security Initiative
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AU	African Union
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAPS	Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy
ICARRD	International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LASIP	Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Program
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAA	Food Acquisition Programme
PFA	Beijing Platform for Action
PRONAF	National Programme for Strengthening Family Agriculture
PRS	Lift Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy
SNV	Netherlands Development Agency
SOFA	The State of Food and Agriculture
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEF	World Economic Forum

Executive summary

Smallholder farmers currently produce 90 per cent of food in Africa and around half of all food worldwide¹. Across the developing world, women account for 60 to 80 per cent of these farmers². Yet, the majority of people going hungry worldwide are women and girls³. So, the very women who are producing our food are the ones who are most likely to go hungry.

One key reason for this is that agricultural policies are simply not supporting smallholder farmers. Even where smallholder farmers do get support, a huge gender gap exists in terms of what women receive in relation to men. Women farmers, have less access than men to productive resources and government support, even though they make up the majority of farmers. For instance, as Table 1 shows, women receive only 5 per cent of extension services in many developing countries. This has a crippling impact on women's ability to lead empowered lives and achieve basic human rights.

Although a justice and human rights issue in its own right, the gender gap in agricultural support also has a devastating impact on poverty, hunger and economies at large across the developing world. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation recently estimated that bringing the yields on the land farmed by women up to the levels achieved by men would increase agricultural output in developing countries between 2.5 and 4 per cent. This increase in production would in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by between 12–17 per cent or a minimum of 100 million people.

Despite such evidence, almost all agricultural policies assume farmers are men. Recent analysis on how agricultural resources are allocated confirms that stark gender inequalities which limit the support women receive tends to be the norm rather than the exception. Yet alternatives exist.

Why this report is useful

These examples clearly show the positive impacts that aid given to women smallholder farmers can have on women's rights, gender equality and women's food security.

This report also shows donors how to invest in women farmers with a gender equality and Human Rights Based Approach. Fulfilment of women farmers' rights is a huge result in itself, and helps countries to achieve their International Commitments on Women's Rights as shown by the case studies. The case studies also show considerable positive impacts on food security and the eradication of poverty.

Extensive work by ActionAid with women smallholder farmers across the developing world has highlighted that investments which work for women always follow three critical steps:

- Put women first
- Analyse and confront unequal power relations
- Advance women's rights⁴

This report takes seven concrete examples of policy interventions which highlight good practice for focusing on women, and combines this with wider evidence to draw out key lessons for delivering stronger outcomes for women smallholder farmers.

It then looks at the current role that different institutions and donors are playing in supporting women, concluding with concrete steps that donors and multilateral initiatives can take to start putting women's rights and gender equality at the heart of their agricultural policies.

The findings

At present, agricultural aid – at the multilateral, bilateral and national levels – is playing a major role in ensuring the continuing neglect of women farmers. Previous studies have shown that gender issues are incorporated into less than 10 per cent of ODA to agriculture⁵.

Of \$US12.9bn agricultural aid from 2002-2007, only 13 per cent was reported by donors as including a focus on gender⁶. ActionAid's analysis has shown that no donor appears to have a strategy of overwhelmingly targeting women farmers with their agricultural aid and there is virtually no direct funding for women farmers' organisations⁷.

Looking at a variety of donors and institutions we find that women are discussed throughout policies in terms of their responsibilities for food security, nutrition and improving children's health. However, most institutions fail to recognise the important links between gender inequality, women's rights, food (in)security and women's work in agriculture.

Specific policy commitments for investing in women smallholder farmers and their rights are practically non-existent. Where mention is made of women farmers, there are very few budget lines allocated and no methods of analysing, monitoring and measuring these initiatives.

What more is needed?

There are three main policy pitfalls that explain why so little aid money to date has reached women smallholder farmers:

- Assuming farmers are men and that all women are the same;
- Ignoring women's unpaid work;
- Instrumentalising women – exclusively or primarily focusing on women as a means to deliver broader social gains rather than for reasons of gender equality or women's empowerment in their own right.

These three pitfalls result in women smallholder farmers facing a series of distinct challenges, including a lack of rights to land; difficulty accessing water, fuel and infrastructure; lack of access to credit; lack of access to extension services; difficulty accessing markets; difficulty participating in farmers' associations or other means of taking collective action; inappropriate or problematic social protection policies; and a lack of or inappropriate and unusable technical support.

Conclusion and recommendations

Building on lessons and learning from examples of what is already working for women farmers and their rights is key. This report shows the difference a fresh approach can make. It also shows how starting from the needs and priorities of the women who do our farming is both practical as a process and delivers in terms of outcomes.

This year offers many opportunities for donors and international actors to make sure their agricultural support works better in supporting women farmers.

Donors are already working to deliver on the Aid Effectiveness Agenda through the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. This contains specific guidelines on gender equality. It is essential that the opportunities which exist on the Aid Effectiveness Agenda and the Busan summit in 2011 are used to address the huge gender gaps in aid spending.

Global food prices are currently soaring and reached record levels during January 2011, surpassing the heights of the 2007/8 food crisis. France has given food price volatility a prominent place on the G20 agenda in 2011. While the G8 must ensure they are delivering on previous commitments to support women smallholder farmers through the 2009 L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, which for the first time saw the G8 acknowledging the need to shift towards greater co-ordinated responses in support of smallholders and women. Investing in women farmers and their rights must also be a central policy plank in the G20's agenda to tackle food price volatility.

Supporting women farmers can help them mitigate the worst impacts of rising prices on themselves, their communities and their countries.

Recommendations for the G8 and G20

- The G8 must deliver the 2009 G8 L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) commitment to mobilise \$US22 billion in new assistance for agriculture and commit to increasing co-ordination and investment to smallholders farmers and fulfil its commitment to support women by specifically ensuring investments work for women farmer's rights and empowerment.
- G20 governments must seek additional resources to empower and fulfil the rights of women smallholder farmers who provide the bulk of food consumed in developing countries and thus are the best defence against future food crises.
- G20 leaders must also find new ways to fund extra resources to empower and fulfil the rights of women farmers. For example, by levying a tax on food commodities traded by speculators.



Mage Maonga, a local farmer, harvesting rice in Mlaviwa village, Malawi

CREDIT: SVEN TORFINN/PANOS PICTURES/ACTIONAID

Recommendations for donors

Donors can make sure their investments in agriculture specifically support women farmers and improve their aid effectiveness by:

- Increasing the share of their agricultural assistance that supports women farmers and improves the gender impact of their food security policies and spending through the use of tools such as gender budgeting and collection, and monitoring of sex-disaggregated data;
- Committing to fulfilment of Article 14 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on women's rights to ownership of, access to, and control over land;
- Committing to ensuring that agricultural aid better adheres to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness when they meet for the Fourth High Level Conference on aid effectiveness later this year in Busan;
- Expressing support for progressive agrarian reforms involving land tenure for smallholder farmers, in particular women rights to own, access and control land;
- Co-ordinating their assistance behind country-led agriculture plans by providing support via bilateral programmes which support country plans - such as CAADP national plans - or via a multilateral fund, such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP);
- Ensuring space is created at the decision-making level of these global funds for women farmers organisations' meaningful and constant formal participation in the creation, implementation and monitoring of national plans that reflect their needs and rights.

Introduction

Smallholder farmers currently produce 90 per cent of food in Africa and around half of all food worldwide⁸. In developing countries, between 60 per cent and 80 per cent of these smallholder farmers are women⁹. Yet, they are the ones who are most likely to go hungry¹⁰.

One key reason for this is that agricultural policies and agricultural aid – at the multilateral, bilateral and national levels – are neglecting smallholder farmers in general and women in particular. Table 1 shows recent analysis on how agricultural resources are allocated, highlighting stark gender inequalities in spending¹¹.

Table 1: Gender Inequity Driving Resource Misallocation¹²

Other research has confirmed that this misallocation is the norm rather than the exception:

1. ActionAid's *Fertile Ground: How governments and donors can halve hunger by supporting small farmers* report found that agriculture budgets have overwhelmingly failed to focus on women smallholder farmers, and nearly all agricultural policies ignore the needs and rights of women.
2. ActionAid's *HungerFREE Scorecard 2010: Who's really fighting hunger?* demonstrates the devastating costs of not investing in smallholder farmers, and poor women farmers in particular¹³.

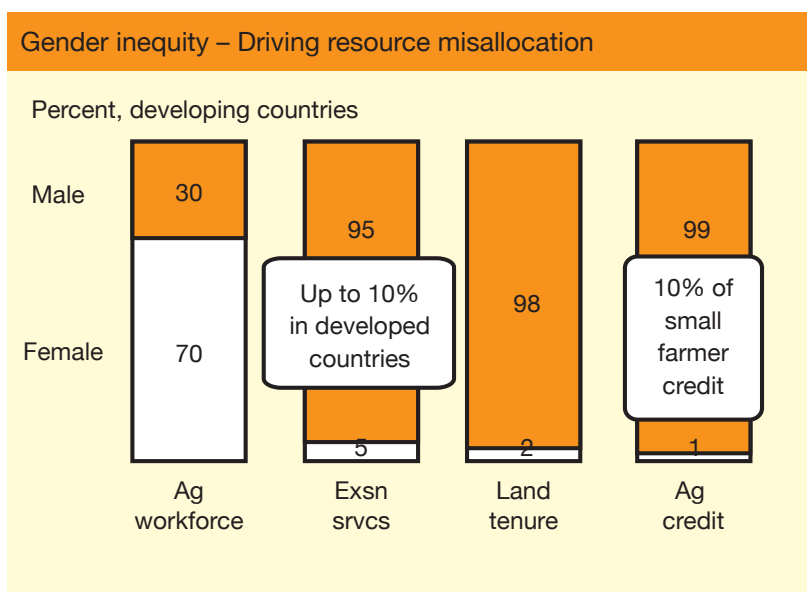
Yet alternatives exist. This report aims to showcase some of the good practice already in progress to demonstrate how supporting women smallholder farmers can make a difference. Its aim is to guide donors' agricultural support in a way which will mean that donors can effectively support countries' initiatives to support women farmers' rights.

Section 1: What is working? Uses seven case studies to demonstrate how supporting women smallholder farmers makes a difference – to women's rights, gender equality, women's food security and women smallholder farmers.

Section 2: What more is needed? Describes the key steps to delivering stronger outcomes for women smallholder farmers.

Section 3: How are donors doing? Evaluates how well donors are coping with the realities, needs and priorities of women smallholder farmers.

Section 4: Recommendations that suggest next steps.



Source: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Section 1: What is working?

The seven cases provided below demonstrate the different ways in which agricultural policies can make a significant impact on women's lives. These cases also highlight the difference it makes to support women smallholder farmers – to women's rights, gender equality and women's food security. They also suggest additional reforms and investment that can be made by donors to dramatically and efficiently deliver development outcomes, including gender equality and food security.

Donors are already working to deliver on the Aid Effectiveness Agenda, which is comprised of five key principles (Box 1)¹⁴ included in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action.

In addition, donors are also committed to achieving women's rights and gender equality through a number of complementary mechanisms and conventions – in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA). Both of these have specific commitments related to agriculture, land and rural women (Box 2).

BOX 1: THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE AID EFFECTIVENESS AGENDA

Ownership: Developing countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improve their institutions and tackle corruption.

Alignment: Donor countries align behind these objectives and use local systems.

Harmonisation: Donor countries co-ordinate, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication.

Results: Developing countries and donors shift focus to development results and results get measured.

Mutual Accountability: Donors and partners are accountable for development results¹⁵.

BOX 2: ARTICLE 14 OF CEDAW

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetised sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:
 - (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
 - (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
 - (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;
 - (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;
 - (e) To organise self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;
 - (f) To participate in all community activities;
 - (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;
 - (h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications¹⁶.



Busisiwe Mpulo harvests maize on the farm of a relative in Emmaus District, South Africa

CREDIT: JAMES OATWAY/PANOS PICTURES/ACTIONAID

Beijing Platform for Action (PFA)

The *Beijing Platform for Action (PFA)* offers a fully comprehensive approach to agriculture and land, acknowledging that women's unremunerated work is particularly undervalued and under-recorded in agriculture.

Strategic objective H3 – generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information – has a specific action point on agriculture:

'(i) Improving data collection on the unremunerated work which is already included in the United Nations System of National Accounts, such as in agriculture, particularly subsistence agriculture, and other types of non-market production activities'¹⁷.

Bringing these two agendas together demonstrates how the Aid Effectiveness Agenda can be used as a framework for achieving broader commitments to women's rights and gender equality in the context of investing in agriculture. The table below plots the five aid effectiveness principles and then shows how the key commitments to gender equality and women's rights from CEDAW and the PFA can be mapped on to these.

It includes additional guidelines specific to the Aid Effectiveness Agenda such as the *DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the Optional Module on Gender Equality*¹⁸.

Table 2: Mapping women farmers's rights commitments onto the Aid Effectiveness agenda

	CEDAW Article 14	Beijing PFA Strategic Objective H3	DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Optional Module on Gender Equality
Ownership			Support broad based national ownership of the development agenda and strengthen the capacity of different stakeholders	Gender equality and women's empowerment are grounded in a systematic manner in national development strategies
Alignment	Take into account particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas		Greater use made by donors of constitutional and other legal instruments, international commitments and obligations, and national, regional, provincial and sectoral strategies, including those related to gender equality and women's empowerment	
Harmonisation			Donors and partner governments co-ordinate and work together to fund and support interventions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment	
Managing for Development Results		Improved data collection on unremunerated work, and other types of non-market production activities	Results-oriented Performance Assessment Frameworks will yield better information on the quality of results when they include measurable results indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment	Data is disaggregated by sex
Mutual Accountability	Women participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels		Development or improvement of accountability mechanisms, indicators, data collection and processes to hold both donors and partner governments to account for their work to reduce gender gaps and empower women	Mutual accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment

In addition, extensive work by ActionAid with women smallholder farmers has shown that 'good practice' can be defined as those investments which do three things:

1. Put women first
2. Analyse and confront unequal power relations
3. Advance women's rights¹⁹

Applying these three principles to the commitments set out in Table 2 provides us with ten indicators for defining best practices in meeting women smallholder farmers' needs, rights and priorities. These ten indicators can be used by donors in their own agricultural policy frameworks and processes.

BOX 3: INDICATORS FOR DEFINING BEST PRACTICE IN SUPPORTING WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

1. **Diversity & discrimination:** Policies take diversity into account and work towards the elimination of discrimination against women in rural areas
2. **Participation & decision-making:** Women participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels
3. **Strategic links:** Policies are linked to broader national and international strategies for women's rights and gender equality
4. **Roles & responsibilities:** Women's multiple roles in agriculture are taken into account, including unremunerated work and non-market production activities
5. **Budgets & targets:** Specific budget lines and targets are developed in relation to women's rights and gender equality
6. **Access & control:** Women have equal access to and control over land, assets and natural resources
7. **Women farmers' organisations:** Policies support women farmers' organisations and promote their active participation in decision-making processes at the community and policy level
8. **Agricultural services:** Women have equal access to agricultural services such as training, extension and credit
9. **Gender tools:** Expected results are calculated using gender impact assessments and impact is measured in terms of its outcomes for women's rights and gender equality
10. **Sex-disaggregated data:** Agricultural data is disaggregated by sex and calculates women's unremunerated contributions.

The following seven case studies use the ten indicators to illustrate examples where aid has been well invested and is already making a difference to the lives of women smallholder farmers.

Liberia

Good practice example: a Southern government investing in women smallholder farmers' rights

The Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP) identifies priority areas for investment by aligning national objectives with the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). These objectives are embodied in Liberia's national vision and goal for the agriculture sector as stated in the Lift Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), as well as the food and agriculture sector vision contained in the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS).

The Programme has four major sub-programmes, of which the most relevant for women smallholder farmers is the second – Food and Nutrition Security. This sub-programme then includes six components, of which the last is the 'Special women and youth initiative', with a specific budget line of \$10m out of a total \$95m investment for the Food and Nutrition Security sub-programme.

The objective of this initiative is to 'empower women as agricultural producers and value chain producers and value chain creators and increase youth involvement in agricultural related activities by 50 per cent by 2015'. In order to achieve this, it has a number of related activities, the first three of which focus on women:

- (i) Support women's role as agricultural producers and participants in the creation of rural value chains;
- (ii) Promote women's participation in new economic areas;
- (iii) Strengthen the institutional framework to address gender issues in rural policies and programmes and remove social barriers that limit the contribution and participation of women.

Best practice indicators met:

- Policies take diversity into account and work towards the elimination of discrimination against women in rural areas
- Women's multiple roles in agriculture are taken into account, including unremunerated work and non-market production activities
- Specific budget lines and targets are developed in relation to women's rights and gender equality

Lessons for donors:

This example shows how investing in women smallholder farmers can be integrated into broader food security goals and objectives. Liberia is a great example of setting aside concrete resources and linking economic empowerment activities with broader gender equality programmes. We do not yet know what the impact of this new initiative will be, so it will be important to monitor this.

Brazil

Good practice example: a Southern government implementing public policies contributing to alternative farming by women

Brazil has three main relevant policy initiatives that can be highlighted as examples of good practice. Although these initiatives do not necessarily target women in a concrete way and some have experienced problems in implementation, many women smallholder farmers have benefited from them. They are worth exploring here as innovative examples of enhancing food security.

First, the National Programme for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF) is a rural credit programme that aims to support smallholder farms. It has a specific component for women (PRONAF - Mulher), which aims to encourage applications for agricultural credit from rural women.

Second, the Food Acquisition Programme (PAA) is linked to the national 'Hunger Zero' strategy and aims to link smallholder farming to poor people living in hunger. The PAA involves government contracts with smallholder farmers which guarantee a fair price for produce, which is then provided to nurseries, hospitals and other public institutions. The PAA guarantees quality food and promotes local consumption and production. Women smallholder farmers have been proactive in accessing this programme, in particular women's groups that produce fruit pulp.

Third, a recent national policy guideline recommends that 30 per cent of food consumed in schools comes from family or smallholder farmers. This represents a good opportunity for smallholder farmers to have a market for their produce and guarantees good quality food for children. Women smallholder farmers need to be brought into the initiative to ensure they benefit.

Best practice indicators met:

- Policies take diversity into account and work towards the elimination of discrimination against women in rural areas
- Women's multiple roles in agriculture are taken into account, including unremunerated work and non-market production activities
- Women have equal access to agricultural services such as training, extension services and credit

Lessons for donors:

Linking local production and consumption enhances the effectiveness of food security initiatives. Supporting smallholder farmers can decrease malnutrition and hunger. These practices could be enhanced further by including concrete initiatives with budget lines for targeting women smallholder farmers and promoting gender equality.

Guatemala

Good practice example: Women farmers mobilising for land rights and participating in government processes.

Women in Guatemala have been mobilising for land rights since the beginning of the peace process in 1993, led by the Alianza de Mujeres Rurales (Rural Women's Alliance). With support from a range of international groups, the Alianza has made significant progress in women's rights to land in Guatemala through the process of co-ownership. It has participated in national level advocacy work with the Rural Development Law – demanding its approval and implementation – and has generated changes in legislation on women and land²¹. The Alianza has demonstrated that women's fulfillment of their right to land is connected to women's decision-making capacities in terms of production, diversification and income-generating activities such as handicrafts and alternative economies.

Best practice indicators met:

- Women participated in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels
- Women have equal access to and control over land, assets and natural resources
- Policies support women farmers' organisations and promote their active participation in decision-making processes at the community and policy level

Lessons for donors:

The example of Guatemala shows how the participation of women's organisations in agricultural policy leads to more equal outcomes in terms of land rights and access to resources. At the same time, if land reforms are carried out in tandem with broader empowerment programmes then women's decision-making power can be enhanced. Investing in rural women's organisations supports the achievement of these goals.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Good practice example: a Southern government in collaboration with donors investing in women smallholder farmers' rights in a situation of conflict

Key priorities of the DRC's agricultural strategy include increasing smallholder productivity, strengthening group marketing capacity, developing markets for smallholders and promoting a smallholder-friendly policy environment.

The programme emphasises women's participation in order to promote sustainability: 'by encouraging women to join existing organisations and supporting the creation of women-only organisations, the programme expects to achieve a 50 per cent average female participation rate in participating farmer organisations²².

As part of this process, ActionAid supports rural women's organisations to mobilise around the dual claims of protection from sexual violence and support for women farmers as the main producers of the country's food²³. Training programmes such as that run by Women for Women International meanwhile offer rural women education, income-generation skills and rights awareness training²⁴.

Best practice indicators met:

- Women participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels
- Specific budget lines and targets are developed in relation to women's rights and gender equality
- Policies support women farmers' organisations and promote their active participation in decision-making processes at the community and policy level

Lessons for donors:

Even in situations of conflict and high levels of violence, governments can focus on investing in women smallholder farmers. Setting targets of 50 per cent participation by women is a clear way to demonstrate a commitment to women's rights. In order to ensure the maximum impact, policies can make links between women's capacity for agricultural production and other context-specific challenges, such as sexual violence in the DRC.

Bangladesh

Good practice example: a Southern government responding to the needs of women smallholder farmers' rights in the context of climate change adaptation

In order to respond to the emerging challenges of climate change adaptation, ActionAid Bangladesh established an action research project. The aim of the project was to facilitate grassroots communities' participation in the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Adaptation Plan through a bottom-up process.

Although gender equality and women's rights were not the explicit focus of the project from the outset, women were specifically targeted through the research process in order to guarantee their participation and contribution – twenty out of twenty six research groups were women-only.

This meant that issues of specific concern to women were raised and integrated into the policy feedback process.

During the project, issues such as the contested definition of a 'farmer' in Bangladesh emerged. In response, the project highlighted the need to acknowledge the different sub-sections of farming in policy in order to demonstrate the ways in which women are contributing. By listening to and acting on women's self-identified needs, ActionAid was able to advocate for more appropriate and sustainable solutions to climate change adaptation.

Best practice indicators met:

- Policies take diversity into account and work towards the elimination of discrimination against women in rural areas
- Women participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels
- Women's multiple roles in agriculture are taken into account, including unremunerated work and non-market production activities

Lessons for donors:

Integrating women's needs and knowledge into the planning of infrastructural support creates more time, space and mobility for women to participate in other activities. When women are taken seriously as farmers in their own right with specialist knowledge and skills, they tend to have more space to negotiate in the household and community. This example shows clearly how actively soliciting women's input at all stages of policy design and implementation leads to more effective and more equal outcomes.

India

Good practice example: OECD donor investing in agricultural training to empower women farmers

From 1981 to 2005, DANIDA supported a large-scale pioneering project providing agricultural training courses for women farmers in four states in India. The main objective was to enhance the performance of women farmers from small and marginal farms in their role as agricultural producers.

In order to achieve this, women from small and marginal farms were offered training in a combination of agricultural and marketing skills related to food security and income generation. In the process, the training activities served to empower the participating women.

All projects aimed at integrating female staff into the Departments of Agriculture and mainstreaming gender within the General Extension Systems. Agricultural training was found to produce an income as well as empower the female beneficiaries of the project.

All four projects combined agricultural training and extension with women's empowerment. Two out of three women reported having a greater role in decision making after the training both in farm-related and family matters. The projects have thus brought about some degree of gender transformation at household level²⁵.

Best practice indicators met:

- Policies take diversity into account and work towards the elimination of discrimination against women in rural areas
- Women's multiple roles in agriculture are taken into account, including unremunerated work and non-market production activities
- Women have equal access to agricultural services such as training, extension services and credit
- Agricultural data is disaggregated by gender and calculates women's unremunerated contributions

Lessons for donors:

Dedicated and specialist training for women alongside broader empowerment training leads to a significant improvement of women's roles in agriculture. Actively recruiting female staff to departments of agriculture and extension services ensures that women are more likely to access agricultural services. When women smallholder farmers are trained in an appropriate and effective way their decision-making power is increased and gender inequality is challenged.

Rwanda

Good practice example: improving gender sensitive delivery in the agricultural sector

In September 2010 UN Women – in collaboration with the Rwandan Gender Monitoring Office and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock – held a workshop in Kigali on gender and democratic governance in the agricultural sector, with a focus on enhancing gender-responsive service delivery. More than 50 participants from government agencies, development partners, civil society and non-governmental organisations attended the workshop.

The workshop sought to enhance collaboration between partners at the national and local level, as well as with donors. Participants agreed on a number of recommendations, including on improving gender-sensitive indicators on access to services, building the knowledge of extension workers and service providers on gender dimensions in agriculture, and raising the awareness of women farmers of existing opportunities and services²⁶.

Best practice indicators met:

- Policies take diversity into account and work towards the elimination of discrimination against women in rural areas
- Policies are linked to broader national and international strategies for women's rights and gender equality
- Women have equal access to agricultural services such as training, extension and credit
- Expected results are calculated using gender impact assessments and impact is measured in terms of its outcomes for women's rights and gender equality
- Agricultural data is disaggregated by gender and calculates women's unremunerated contributions

Lessons for donors:

Collaboration between different government departments and civil society actors can significantly improve gender-sensitive delivery. Initiatives that target women smallholder farmers are more likely to be successful if they are developed alongside gender equality institutions at the national and local level.



Grace Akurut weeds her orange garden in Palisa District, Uganda

CREDIT: JAMES AKENA/ACTIONAID

Conclusions

These case studies offer examples of good practices in supporting women smallholder farmers. Each meets some of the ten key indicators, and provides lessons for meeting the others. Much can be done to improve these initiatives, and to maximise their impact on empowering women smallholder farmers. The next section suggests how.

Table 3: Gender checklist of the ten indicators for investing in women smallholder farmers

	Diversity & Discrimination	Participation & decision-making	Strategic links	Roles & responsibilities	Budgets & targets
Liberia: a Southern government investing in women smallholder farmers' rights	√			√	√
Brazil: a Southern government implementing public policies contributing to alternative farming by women	√			√	
Guatemala: women farmers mobilising for land rights and participating in government processes		√			
DRC: a Southern government in collaboration with donors investing in women smallholder farmers' rights in a situation of conflict		√			√
Bangladesh: a Southern government responding to the needs of women smallholder farmers' rights in the context of climate change adaptation	√	√			
India: OECD donor investing in agricultural training to empower female farmers	√				
Rwanda: improving gender sensitive delivery in the agricultural sector	√		√	√	

Access & control	Women farmers' organisations	Equal access	Gender tools	Gender disaggregated data
		√		
√	√			
	√			
		√		√
		√	√	√

Section 2: What more is needed?

The last section described seven examples of agricultural investments that are meeting the best practice criteria for supporting women smallholder farmers. This section summarises lessons from the wider evidence on key lessons for delivering even stronger outcomes for women smallholder farmers.

There are three main policy pitfalls that explain why so little aid money has reached women smallholder farmers to date.

1. Which 'women', which 'farmers'?

In spite of all evidence to the contrary, women are still often not explicitly recognised as farmers in most policy discussions. Indeed, many documents on agriculture mention 'farmers' and 'women' as if they were two entirely separate categories. This stems in part from the lack of acknowledgement of women's multiple roles in agriculture – how women 'grow food, sell food, buy food, prepare food'²⁷.

Women farmers are invisible to policy-makers as they are not the most 'productive' farmers, because they usually do not own the land they farm and often produce food primarily to meet household needs.

Women's work in agriculture is generally not counted, measured or valued. Statistics on women's yields, women's technology adoption rates and women's use of inputs are rarely reported. The problem is not just that there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data, which urgently needs to be addressed, but is also about what is considered important and valuable in data collection methodologies and methods.

As Ransom and Bain argue:

*'The failure to fully account for women's contribution and participation is due to a combination of factors including not acknowledging women's work as an economic activity, ideological resistance at the institutional and individual levels in valuing the contributions of women in agricultural production systems, gender inequitable relationships that make women an exploitable labor population, and having no enforcement mechanisms for ensuring gender equality is implemented in practice'*²⁸.

The blanket use of the term 'women' in the policy literature is unhelpful in designing development interventions in complex and highly unequal societies. It is vital to recognise the differences between women in both policy and advocacy, or there is a danger of making some women's work (paid and unpaid) even more invisible and perpetuating the false distinction between 'women' and 'farmers'.

2. Unpaid work

There is an almost complete absence of discussion in policy literature in women's unpaid work and the politics of domestic and care work. This issue is key to improving conditions and outcomes for women farmers and therefore central to interventions on agriculture and smallholder farmers.

Women conduct unpaid work in agriculture by collecting water and fuel; caring for children; assisting other family members who are ill or disabled; cooking and cleaning; and working on the family farm without remuneration²⁹.

It is essential to recognise and account for this unpaid work as it significantly shapes and structures the ways in which women are able to access resources generally and also for the farming that they do. Furthermore, it is directly linked to women's productivity and their abilities to actively participate in associations, including farmers' associations, and to mobilise for their rights.

3. Instrumentalising women

The way that women are presented as both the most vulnerable to hunger and the most responsible for food security and nutrition leads to a troubling precedent of establishing a broad range of responsibilities for women whilst neglecting to link this reality to a human rights framework.

Women's vulnerability to hunger and responsibility for food security and nutrition are not natural or inevitable conditions. Both conditions are socially constructed and actively maintained through power, privilege and inequality.

We need to remember that women are made vulnerable to hunger and that responsibility for food security and nutrition does not belong to women separately – it belongs to citizens (men and women), states and international organisations. Nevertheless, in most countries food production and food provision are considered to be women's responsibilities. It is very important not to lose sight of the fact that this responsibility emerges from unequal gendered power relations. Women should not have to bear the burden of resolving the world's food crisis. Governments should deliver on the fulfilment of the right to food to their citizens without overburdening women with food security and agricultural policies that do not take them into account and try to redress this power imbalance.

Presenting an argument for investing in women smallholder farmers solely based on the 'multiplier effects' that this will generate in food security is a short-termist and dangerous precedent. A wealth of research on contemporary development strategies demonstrates that instrumentalist approaches to gender equality and women's empowerment are very unlikely to lead to progressive or transformative outcomes. To achieve gender equality and women's rights, equality needs to be understood and advocated for as a human rights issue in its own right, and not only or primarily as a means of achieving other strategic development objectives.

BOX 4: THE FEMINISATION OF AGRICULTURE?

In smallholder agriculture, the traditional gender segregation of tasks in agricultural and livestock production is becoming blurred. Women are taking over more of the agricultural tasks once done by men such as land preparation, and they are investing more work in cash crop production. Off the farm, large-scale production of non-traditional agricultural exports (or high value agricultural exports) offers wage-work opportunities in fieldwork, processing and packing. Much of this work, in contrast to traditional agricultural export production, is done by women who are generally employed for limited periods of time.

There is a strong gender segregation of tasks in the fields, processing plants and packing plants. Women do the labour-intensive tasks and men do those tasks that entail strength or involve machinery. In addition, men predominate in the limited number of permanent positions and in supervision and management. While women have increased their work time in agricultural production, there has been little change in the gender division of labour within the household with regard to reproductive work: men are not assuming reproductive and domestic tasks, even as women are increasing their participation in on-farm and off-farm productive activities³⁰.

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These three pitfalls result in women smallholder farmers facing a series of distinct challenges.

4. Women's rights to land:

Despite producing much of the world's food, women farmers still own less than one per cent of the land. What women farmers need is to move from 'mere land access rights' to having 'concrete land control rights', in line with Article 14 of CEDAW on the right to livelihood, land, water and food³¹.

It is also important to take into account differences between women through class and other social structures, and to recognise that power and gender imbalances are at the core of the denial of women's rights to land. These imbalances can be confronted by specifically focusing on women's rights to land and natural resources within policies, laws, programs and strategies³².

Emerging challenges such as land grabbing and converting land for biofuels increase women's risks of losing or not having ownership, control and access to the land and natural resources they need and use³³.

5. Water, fuel and infrastructure:

The burden of fuel and water collection reduces the amount of time women can spend in paid work and increases the probability that they will be involved in more informal forms of employment. Helpful interventions include those that ensure water is free and located close to homesteads and farms, and that men and women have equal participation in the decision-making processes of community management structures for water and fuel. Projects that span both domestic and productive uses are more likely to take into account gender concerns and women's specific needs and priorities³⁴.

6. Lack of Access to Credit:

Even though they are the majority of farmers, in Africa women farmers receive less than less than 10 per cent of small farm credit³⁵. In many ways this stems from the lack of recognition of women as farmers as outlined above.

Also, women's ability to obtain credit is limited by collateral requirements; high transaction costs; limited education and mobility; social and cultural barriers; intermittency of employment and the nature of women's businesses³⁶.

However, it is important to be cautious in this area – while access to public credit is vital, credit arrangements that will not drag women smallholder farmers into unmanageable debt are essential.

7. Extension Services:

Women in Africa currently receive between five and seven per cent of all agricultural services³⁷. Extension services are often provided by men officials to men farmers on the erroneous assumption that the message will trickle 'across' to women³⁸. These services need to be tailored to the specific and diverse needs of women farmers and also value women's work as smallholder farmers, their food production and their indigenous knowledge.

8. Access to markets:

This is a serious constraint for women smallholder farmers. Issues to be considered include modes of transportation; harassment due to high cost of permits; time burdens because of caring responsibilities which then affect selling prices; potential household conflict; appropriation of crops by men once they enter into the market economy³⁹. As such, interventions to support women's access to markets need to be highly sensitive to these and other context-specific issues.

9. Collective Action:

Support for the sensitisation and mobilisation of women farmers is vital for ensuring gender equality and women's rights in agriculture. However, a number of challenges inhibit and structure women's ability to participate in farmers' associations. There is a need for institutional mechanisms that allow women to join groups and remain active members, such as allowing non-household heads and non-land owners to be members; schedule meetings to accommodate women's workloads including their domestic and care responsibilities; ensure that poor women have opportunities to voice their concerns; solicit women's feedback in monitoring and evaluation⁴⁰.

In addition, more concrete strategies are needed for reaching individual and often marginal farmers who have not joined farming associations⁴¹.

10. Social Protection:

Social protection can be a useful mechanism for bridging the gap in women's access to resources, but to be useful to women smallholder farmers, it needs to complement agricultural reform policies with investments in initiatives such as food ration systems, pensions, child support, free school meals, employment guarantees. It should be noted that social protection measures have often been criticised for reinforcing gendered roles and responsibilities⁴². While necessary for mitigating food crises, social protection measures should not be seen as a replacement for an effective, responsible public welfare system.

11. Technical Aspects:

A gender equality and women's rights approach also needs to be adopted when looking at technical issues and services such as agricultural inputs, soil fertility, new varieties and technologies and agricultural research. Women smallholder farmers have very specific needs, which are often not the same as men's. For example, though they are suitable for men, the irrigation equipment and ploughs designed for smallholder farmers are often too heavy or are otherwise inappropriate for women, who tend to use hand-held hoes.

Agnes Topola and her husband Justin, both members of a community-based agricultural organisation supported by ActionAid in Malawi

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Conclusion

Three key pitfalls – forgetting that women are farmers and that there are differences between women; ignoring women’s unpaid work; instrumentalising women – result in women smallholder farmers facing a series of distinct challenges.

These pitfalls and challenges are best understood as interlinked issues which both result from and reinforce gendered inequalities

at the household, community, national and global levels. They undermine women’s rights and also depend on gender inequality to gain traction. As such they offer a useful reminder of how starting from the realities, needs and priorities of the women who actually do our farming is both practical as a process and delivers in terms of outcomes because this is what stops the cycle. The next section evaluates how well donors are doing in their efforts to meet this challenge.

Section 3: How are donors doing?

As the previous sections outlined, supporting women smallholder farmers requires looking at the broader conditions under which the majority of women farmers work. The situation of women smallholder farmers is grounded in inequalities in households, communities, states and the global economy.

In order for interventions to be effective and equitable, a double focus is needed: on addressing women farmers' needs and priorities, and on tackling gender inequality in agriculture. In both cases, the priority of women's rights is key. For example, agricultural policies would need to overcome discrimination in access to resources, as well as introduce new services and technologies that respond to the specific needs of women farmers, in order to be effective.

The following section compares how certain bilateral and international organisations have specific policies that address women farmer's needs, or have explicit policies on the gender gap in agriculture. It looks at whether women smallholder farmers are established as a clear priority, and tied to specific targets and budgetary allocations. This investment is discussed in terms of gender equality and women's rights and tied in to broader institutional/national gender strategies.

Global/regional institutions

Previous studies have shown that gender issues are incorporated into less than 10 per cent of ODA to agriculture⁴³. Of \$US12.9bn agricultural aid from 2002-2007, only 13 per cent was reported by donors as including a focus on gender⁴⁴.

The *Fertile Ground* report by ActionAid concluded that no donor appears to have a strategy of overwhelmingly targeting women farmers in their agricultural aid and there is virtually no direct funding for women farmers' organisations⁴⁵.

A forthcoming report by UN Women (2011), *Progress of the World's Women*, finds that while women's work in agriculture is essential to food security in many countries, less than six per cent of foreign aid for agriculture goes to women⁴⁶ globally.

World Bank

The World Bank acknowledges that women 'play a major role in the survival strategies and the economy of poor rural households' and specifically lays out the need for gender disparities to be addressed⁴⁷.

'Gender inequalities result in less food being grown, less income being earned, and higher levels of poverty and food insecurity. Agriculture in low-income developing countries is a sector with exceptionally high impact in terms of its potential to reduce poverty. Yet for agricultural growth to fulfil this potential, gender disparities must be addressed and effectively reduced'⁴⁸.

In the *Agriculture Action Plan*, women and gender are not mentioned in 'what we will help our clients do', but feature in 'how we will do it'. 'Focus on the Ultimate Client, Especially Women' is the second of six actions:

'In many countries women dominate agricultural production. We will give specific attention to increasing their access to assets (particularly land), finance and services. The actions will link with the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP), with efforts to mainstream the GAP into our agriculture program over the next three years'⁴⁹.

However, there are no clear guidelines, targets or budget allocations to track this and to ensure that the Gender Action Plan is mainstreamed into agriculture, which lets down their overall record.

BOX 5: ASSESSING POLICIES ON WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

Gender equality and women's rights are essential components of a human rights based approach to development. When donors make arguments for investing in women smallholder farmers, it is important that this is recognised as a goal in its own right, for reasons of human rights and justice, rather than because it is a means of achieving other development outcomes, such as food security, nutrition or productivity. Moreover, decades of research in gender and development have shown that meaningful and sustainable results in terms of gender equality and women's rights can only be achieved when a gender focus is at the core of development interventions.

European Union

The *Communication to the Gender Action Plan* states that 'agricultural and food security strategies must clearly address the differing constraints faced by rural women, since in certain developing countries they are responsible for up to 80 per cent of basic food production'⁵⁰. However, there are no clear guidelines or targets for taking this forward.

Women are largely absent from the *Food Facility* documentation, except for in relation to nutrition and health⁵¹. The *Food Security Thematic Programme*, despite being a good step towards recognising the role of agriculture on Food Security and identifies 'gender' as a 'cross-cutting issue', does not include any attempt to set out how this will be tackled or any resource allocation for ensuring this⁵².

In the *Communication* on this Strategy, the *EU Food Security Framework*, it is noted that a specific investment in women will be required⁵³. However, as with the other EU documents, there is no specific guidance on this or clear prioritisation of women farmers.

The latest version of the new blueprint for the EU's development policy, the *Green Paper on Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*, currently places a lot of emphasis on agriculture but with no mention on investing in women smallholder farmers' rights, this must be addressed in the forthcoming final version.

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO):

The FAO has a strong gender focus and is one of the only institutions with an operational plan for gender mainstreaming. In the FAO's new strategic framework (2008-2013) gender equity is one of the Organisation's key objectives for the next 10 years and falls under Strategic Objective K - 'gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision-making in rural areas'.

Some of the achievements in this area include: promoting gender-sensitive policy and planning in 30 countries; a training programme which has enhanced both staff commitment to gender mainstreaming and the skills needed to carry it out; and a network of senior-level focal points in the Organisation's technical units to mainstream gender in all FAO's technical programmes⁵⁴.

The strategy also sets out some clear expected outcomes of mainstreaming gender into programmes for agriculture and rural development:

'K1 - Rural gender equality is incorporated into UN policies and joint programmes for food security, agriculture and rural development;

K2 - Governments develop enhanced capacities to incorporate gender and social equality issues in agriculture, food security and rural development programmes, projects and policies using gender-disaggregated statistics, other relevant information and resources;

K3 - Governments are formulating gender-sensitive, inclusive and participatory policies in agriculture and rural development;

K4 - FAO management and staff have demonstrated commitment and capacity to address gender dimensions in their work'.

The FAO should be highlighted as an institution with a thorough practice of gender mainstreaming, which sets clear targets and resources to achieving this.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

IFAD is another institution with a clear operational plan for gender mainstreaming. The *Framework for Gender Mainstreaming* outlines a 'three-pronged strategy':

- Expand women's economic empowerment through access to and control over fundamental assets
- Strengthen women's decision-making role in community affairs and representation in local institutions
- Improve the knowledge and well-being of women and ease women's workloads by facilitating women's access to basic rural services and infrastructure

As with the FAO, a series of operational objectives are given in order to monitor the progress of gender mainstreaming:

- Results-based Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes (COSOP) integrate gender concerns
- Project and grant design fully integrates gender concerns according to the Key features of Gender-Sensitive Design and Implementation
- Project and grant implementation ensures gender-equitable participation in and benefit from project activities
- Supervision/implementation support gives attention to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment
- Project completion reports pay attention to gender mainstreaming/women's empowerment⁵⁵

Setting specific and measurable targets along with budget lines is the only way to ensure that gender is taken seriously. As such, IFAD should be highlighted as an institution with good practices in this area.

Bilateral donors

Donors are committed to promoting gender equality and women's rights in all aspects of development co-operation through obligations to fulfil CEDAW and the PFA. Many have also signed the Optional Module on Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness to ensure that Paris commitments are carried out with gender equality and women's rights in mind.

Denmark

Denmark's reputation as a strong advocate for gender equality does not come through in its policy commitments to women and agriculture. In the *DANIDA Strategy for Development Policy* published in 2010, gender equality is one of five political priorities.

'Gender equality is a fundamental right that cannot be qualified, and it is, moreover, essential to development. Lack of gender equality results in a large unutilised economic potential'.

However, the Strategy makes no specific mention of rural women or women farmers. Agriculture is discussed several times as an important area for innovation but no explicit link is made between women, gender equality and smallholder farmers⁵⁶. This is a missed opportunity. However, while these links are not visible in DANIDA's policy documents, a number of specific projects targeted towards gender equality and/or women farmers have been carried out, one of which was outlined earlier in Section 1 (India case study).

France

In the three main policy documents on agriculture – *Agriculture and Food Security; Shaping Sustainable Futures*; and *AFD and Rural Development* – no mention is made of women, gender or women farmers. This is out of line with the majority of donors and institutions, which at the very least acknowledge the importance of women farmers in agricultural policy. In the *AFD Annual Report 2009*, there is only one mention of gender equality, in reference to MDG3⁵⁷. The *Report* contains several references to women's health and maternity projects but nothing on gender mainstreaming, equality or anything specific on women and agriculture.

Greece

It is very difficult to access detailed information on Greece's specific approach to gender and agriculture. Gender equality is highlighted as a 'cross-cutting issue' in development policy, yet it usually appears only as a secondary objective in gender related projects. At the same time, there are very few procedures for monitoring or evaluating the impact of gender equality.

Italy

The recently published *Gender Guidelines* highlight agriculture in Point 2 – rural development, environmental protection and food security:

- Take into account social and economic inequalities between men and women that prevent security for communities, families and countries. These inequalities must be considered in rural development initiatives
- Have as an objective equal access for men and women farmers to natural resources and rural development opportunities in all initiatives aimed at improving food security and sustainable agriculture
- Collect data and information useful for understanding gender differences in access to natural resources and rural development and food security programmes
- Support women's movements in women farmers' organisations that work for rights to land in terms of access, ownership and inheritance

These guidelines are quite strong as they refer to multiple dimensions of inequality and are clear on what should be done. However, most of these processes do not have sufficient evaluation, monitoring and follow up processes. Moreover, there are no specific resources allocated to these activities, particularly in terms of specialist human resources for monitoring implementation. This means that there is no way to gauge how much of development funding for agriculture and rural development actually targets women and gender equality.

Netherlands

The 2008 document *Agriculture, rural economic development and food security* frames Dutch policy for support to agriculture and food security abroad, and makes specific reference to the diverse roles of women in agriculture. It states that '*the Netherlands is committed to promoting equal opportunity and equality of women and girls in access to natural resources, water, land use and land rights, loans, technology and decision-making*'⁵⁸.

However, the document does not explain what this general commitment actually means for the interventions linked to the five proposed policy tracks, nor is the commitment to equal opportunities and rights for women and girls translated into financial commitments that entail a specific investment in women smallholder farmers. Central to the policy is the acknowledgement that the economic position and the policy influencing power of small holder farmers – both men and women – and their organisations should be strengthened. However, the policy fails to recognise which particular challenges, needs and rights of women small holder farmers should be addressed for those interventions to deliver on the commitment to make a difference for both men and women smallholder farmers.

Spain

The latest *Plan Director 2009-2012* outlines Gender in Development as one of five major commitments, and Rural Development and the Fight Against Hunger as one of six 'emerging priorities'. In contrast to the approach of the majority of donors, women's empowerment is stated to be 'an end in itself – as well as a means – for the complete implementation of rights'. Gender in Development is outlined as a 'double priority' for AECID, as being both a cross-cutting priority and a specific sector priority.

Again in contrast to most donors, a specific budgetary allocation target is set for gender – 15 per cent of ODA by sector to gender and reproductive health programmes (9 per cent to gender and 6 per cent to reproductive health). At the same time, it is stated that 10 per cent of ODA will be allocated for the promotion of rural development and fight against hunger⁵⁹.

In the *Gender Equality Strategy*, the links between gender equality, rural development and the fight against hunger are developed more substantively. The document is worth highlighting here, as this is one of the only specific gender equality strategies available for agriculture. The Strategy sets out a number of concrete objectives in this respect:

Formal equality

- Legislative adaptation of gender and food sovereignty
- Women's participation in fight against poverty and hunger plans, programs and projects and the control of GAD based approach natural resources
- Situation studies

Real equality

- Nutritional security and health protection
- Access to agricultural production
- Economic access to food
- Civil and political rights: access to land property and commercialisation and participation in decisions⁶⁰

Of particular interest, from a gender equality perspective, is the distinction between 'formal' and 'real' equality, a recurrent theme in Spanish equality policies at all levels, which should be noted here as a useful distinction for work on gender and agriculture.

Sweden

Sweden has a long-standing reputation as an investor in gender equality. *Sweden's Development Policy 2008* includes a discussion of unequal gendered power relations, sexual difference, gender equality in reproductive health, LGBT rights and identities. This puts it ahead of other countries and institutions, and reflects Sweden's overall progressive approach to gender equality. Women farmers are mentioned specifically in relation to rural development in a gender equality framework, highlighting the links between gender equality and women farmers:

'As women comprise a majority of the labour force in small-scale agriculture in most developing countries, support for rural development can also act as an investment in gender equality between men and women'⁶¹.

UK

Between 2003 and 2009, just two per cent of Department for International Development (DFID) agriculture projects had gender equality as their 'principal' objective. Over one third (36 per cent) had gender equality as a 'significant' objective. 62 per cent of projects did not have gender equality as either a 'principal' or 'significant' objective. The 2010 *The Neglected Crisis of Undernutrition: DFID's Strategy* makes a welcome break with these documents and puts a strong emphasis on the role of women in achieving nutrition security.

It also mentions women farmers and calls for 'gender-sensitive economic policies (e.g. agricultural policies to enhance nutrition outcomes and to promote greater equality of access by women farmers and food producers to land, credit and farm inputs)'⁶².

At this stage, it is too soon to say whether this is a significant or permanent turn in direction for DFID as there are still no clear budget lines or targets for reaching women farmers and promoting gender equality in agriculture and rural development.

USA

It should be acknowledged that the commitment to international development has increased significantly under the Obama administration, with the new strategy being widely praised by civil society. Within the stated priorities of the US government, agriculture has taken a central development role – which is a welcome departure from previous administrations record of spending only on food aid.

There is currently no comprehensive USAID gender strategy, although one is being developed, which is a very welcome step.

The *Feed The Future* initiative recognises the relationship between women and food security. *Feed The Future* can be praised for its concrete plans and specific objectives in a range of different areas. It also offers some guidance on gender as a cross-cutting priority, with clear commitments outlined in the *Guidelines*. These commitments are complemented by a series of objectives:

- Ensure that women, as agricultural producers, have equal access to assets, inputs, and technologies
- Expand the involvement and participation of women in decision-making at all levels and in all institutions
- Ensure the interests of women and men are reflected in all FTF policies and programmes and those of the host country's CIP [Country Investment Plan]

In order to achieve these objectives, a number of targeted investments are specified:

- Support the incorporation of gender best practices
- Implement consultation as a tool for gender integration
- Promote monitoring and evaluation of the gender impacts of our investments
- Develop approaches to target men and women with agricultural interventions
- Improve targeting of financial services to women⁶³

The USA can be praised for its specific attention to women farmers and in particular the targeted investments.

Jesica Mhango, from the Coalition of Women Farmers selling her produce at Lula market in Ntchena village, Malawi

CREDIT: GRAEME WILLIAMS/PANOS PICTURES/ACTIONAID



Conclusions

Looking at a variety of donors and institutions we find that women are discussed throughout policies in terms of their responsibilities for food security, nutrition and improving children's health. However, most institutions fail to recognise the important links between gender inequality, food (in)security and women's work in agriculture.

Specific policy commitments for investing in women smallholder farmers are practically non-existent. Where mention is made of women farmers, there are very few budget lines allocated and no methods of analysing, monitoring and measuring these initiatives.

For almost all institutions, the approach towards gender and agriculture follows the dominant instrumentalist perspective. As outlined above, notable exceptions to this include, FAO, IFAD, Sweden and Spain. Lessons can be learnt from these institutions on how and why to promote gender equality and women's rights in agriculture in their own right.

Recommendations

Women smallholder farmers produce the majority of the world's food and yet lack access to the land, credit and the support they need to maintain themselves in this work. In fact, the majority of those who go hungry worldwide are women and girls. The reason for this is that, in general, agricultural policies and agricultural aid – at the multilateral, bilateral and national levels – are neglecting women smallholder farmers and their rights.

Pockets of good practice by donors do exist. This report has discussed seven such cases, which highlight the difference it makes to support women smallholder farmers – to women's rights, gender equality, women's food security and women smallholder farmers.

Building on lessons of what is already working for women must be a starting point for addressing the stark gender gap in agriculture. This report shows the difference a fresh approach can make. And it offers four lessons on how starting from the needs and priorities of the women who do our farming is both practical as a process and delivers in terms of outcomes:

1. **Farmers are women:** the majority of smallholder farmers are women and they produce the bulk of the world's food. Their needs are different to men's and sometimes each other. Policy processes and subsequent investments need to account better for these facts and to specifically work to target women farmers.
2. **Gender inequality is a challenge:** women smallholder farmers routinely face gender inequality and discrimination, which create distinct challenges for them. In order for interventions to be effective and equitable, a double focus is needed: on addressing women farmers' needs and priorities, and on tackling gender inequality in agriculture.

3. **Women's rights make a difference:** interventions which directly tackle the power inequalities women smallholder farmers face are effective in transforming their lives. There is value and there are results in understanding and promoting women's empowerment as a human rights issue in its own right, and not just because this may achieve other development goals.
4. **Women need to be supported to organise:** Many women farmers are unable to 'demand' services adequately, and are not organised in farmer groups. Until women farmers are included in the design of programmes and allocation of resources and services, they are unable to demand that these meet their needs. Supporting women, through effective organising in farmers associations and organisations, is critical to building their voice and power in policy-making.

How can donors better focus their agricultural aid on women farmers?

Donors are already working to deliver on the Aid Effectiveness Agenda through the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. Within this, there are specific guidelines on gender equality including the *DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* and the *Optional Module on Gender Equality*. It is essential that the opportunities provided by the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan later this year are used to address the huge gender gaps in aid spending.

In addition, donors are also committed to achieving women's rights and gender equality through a number of complementary mechanisms and conventions – in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA). Both of these have specific commitments related to agriculture, land and rural women that donors should support.

With global food prices reaching the highest levels on record during January 2011 and surpassing the heights of the 2007/8 food crisis, France has given food price volatility a prominent place on the G20 agenda in 2011.

While the G8 must ensure they are delivering on previous commitments to support women smallholder farmers through their 2009 L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, which for the first time saw the G8 acknowledging the need to shift towards greater co-ordinated responses in support of smallholders and specifically women. Investing in women farmers must also be a central policy plank in the G20's agenda to tackle food price volatility. Supporting women farmers can help them mitigate the worst impacts of rising prices on themselves, their communities and their countries.

ActionAid urges donors to begin to develop specific policies, budgets and tools which will enable them to target women farmers, specifically. On the African continent, it is also important that these are coupled with increasing the effectiveness of aid in support of country CAADP plans. African countries have made important commitments to agriculture through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Plan (CAADP). CAADP is an African initiative which is based on country-owned 'compacts' for agriculture. The initiative also commits signatory countries to increasing spending on agriculture to 10 per cent of GDP and reaching an agriculture growth rate of 6 per cent. In return, donors would increase their spending behind these compacts.

The CAADP process has already made enormous contributions to revitalising African agriculture. However, donors have still not fulfilled pledges to finance CAADP investment plans which ActionAid perceives as a major obstacle in terms of the potential of the process to uphold the interests of the poor. Very little aid is available in support of country plans through CAADP or through the plans which have been submitted for donor funding to the new Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP).

As well as resources needing to increase, new money must be directed towards supporting smallholder and women farmers. And while CAADP firmly focuses on supporting smallholder agriculture, ActionAid believes there is scope for a greater focus on women within this. As such, we are also urging African leaders to place a stronger focus on women within their CAADP plans.

Recommendations for the G8 and G20:

- The G8 must deliver the 2009 G8 L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) commitment to mobilise \$US22 billion in new assistance for agriculture and commit to increasing co-ordination and investment behind smallholders farmers and to fulfil the commitment to support women by specifically ensuring investments work for women farmer's rights and empowerment.
- G20 governments must seek additional resources to empower and fulfil the rights of women smallholder farmers who provide the bulk of food consumed in developing countries and thus are the best defence against future food crises.
- G20 leaders must also find new ways to fund extra resources to empower and fulfil the rights of women farmers. For example by levying a tax on food commodities traded by speculators.

Recommendations for donors:

Donors can make sure their investments in agriculture specifically support women and improve their aid effectiveness by:

- Increasing the share of their agricultural assistance that supports women farmers and improves the gender impact of their food security policies and spending through the use of tools such as gender budgeting and collection, and monitoring of sex-disaggregated data.
- Committing to fulfilment of Article 14 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on women's rights to ownership of, access to, and control over land.
- Committing to ensuring that agricultural aid adheres better to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness when they meet at the Fourth High Level Conference on aid effectiveness later in the year in Busan.
- Expressing support for progressive agrarian reforms involving land tenure for smallholder farmers, in particular women rights to own, access and control land.
- Co-ordinating their assistance behind country-led agriculture plans by providing support via bilateral programmes which support country plans - such as CAADP national plans - or via a multilateral fund, such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP), and that space is created at the decision-making level for women farmers organisations meaningful and constant formal participation in the creation, implementation and monitoring of national plans that reflect their needs and rights.

ENDNOTES

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“Our mission is to foster a world where the woman who farms is also a woman with educational opportunities, political access, and a voice at the negotiating table. A woman with a market environment that favours a fair return on her investments of equipment, seeds and labour. A woman who benefits from the land, credit and new technologies that will increase production”

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General



Farmer Ana Marccos Tuaia and her son, Marcos Azarias Magule, tend to their lettuce crop in Samora Machel, Mozambique

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ActionAid is a partnership between people in rich and poor countries, dedicated to ending poverty and injustice. We work with people all over the world to fight hunger and disease, seek justice and education for women, hold companies and governments accountable, and cope with emergencies in over 40 countries.

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