

PROMOTING BALANCE BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN AGRICULTURE

WHAT IS IT ABOUT ?

While women are indeed present on farms, it is often observed that they are far less involved in advisory activities, seldom have decision-making authority, and are under-represented in the governance of FOs.

In light of this general observation, it is important to support FOs to better understand the role women play within both their family farms and their organizations, and to engage in actions in favour of a better gender balance.

KEY TERMS

GENDER : The social and cultural construction of female and male identities.

EQUALITY : Equality means treating everyone the same by guaranteeing the same rights and opportunities for all individuals, men and women.

EQUITY : Equity aims to correct and compensate for inequalities, by offering resources, opportunities and the same treatment to all individuals, men and women.

INCLUSION : All actions aiming at ensuring the full and equal participation of men and women in all activities by eliminating discrimination and offering them the same opportunities.

BALANCE : A more global objective, where women and men benefit from a fair and balanced representation in society, integrating both equality of rights and specific actions promoting equity and inclusion for both sexes.

STEPS

1 QUESTIONING AND DIAGNOSING THE SITUATION

First and foremost, it is essential to understand the role of women within the context of the intervention.

The role of women on the family farm

- What is the marital and family status?
- How is time allocated in the household?
- How are time and tasks allocated on the farm?
- What are the prevailing social or traditional pressures?

Access to and control of resources

- Access to land, water, and animals: what rights do women have?
- Access to inputs, equipment, and stocks
- Participation in advisory and training activities
- Finance and revenue distribution

The role of women in FOs

- Leadership roles
- Tolerance towards absences from home due to responsibilities in the FO
- Representativeness, quotas
- Freedom of expression and self-confidence to express themselves

2 HOW TO MAKE IT EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

- Raise awareness among the staff, discuss these issues
- Create spaces for discussion and questioning, with moments of single-gender and mixed-gender interactions
- Have the reflex and sensitivity to address this issue without making it a separate topic, but integrate it into every discussion, whether technical, economic, or other
- Rely on allies: leaders, Farmer Leaders/advisors, "good husbands", field advisors... Get everyone involved! Have a third-party mediator ally who addresses this topic in the home.
- And be a bit of a "thorn in the side" in dedicated spaces and in private.

3 TAKING ACTION

IN THE FARMING ACTIVITIES

- Educate husbands and parents: use "model" couples as examples
- Involve both women and men in advisory and training activities, by offering as many activities as possible that are close to home and short in duration
- Ask women what they want to do; make an effort to reach out to them
- In the face of challenges in accessing resources: develop and adapt tools and equipments (e.g., composting, access to inputs, literacy)
- Encourage women to take on responsibilities where they are recognized and/or can be autonomous: e.g., budget management, quality issues, nutrition, specific workshops, etc.
- Highlight the economic value of women's work.

FOR THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN FOs

- Develop training modules on the role of women
- Have a dedicated Committee to coordinate the actions on the topic / a representative to monitor the situation
- Ensure that women are represented on boards of directors and are able to speak in public (public speaking training)
- Involve elected officials in visiting families to help solve issues
- Encourage women to take on responsibilities in areas/tasks where their skills are recognized: e.g., treasurer (good financial managers)



FUNDAMENTALS TO REMEMBER

Gender balance needs to be addressed holistically, taking into account economic, social, legal, and cultural factors. All these factors must be understood in order to take action.

- This is everyone's business; it is not a subject to be dealt with separately, but one that requires everyone's attention at all levels: relay farmers, field advisors, leaders, FOs managers, etc. All these actors must therefore be sensitized about the issue, and then pay attention to women's participation, and develop the reflex to question the place of women.
- Beyond technical, economic, or organizational barriers, sociocultural barriers are significant: changing mindsets and stereotypes takes time. This can be achieved through training and/or highlighting the experiences of inspiring women.
- One needs to be careful not to create opposition, to be diplomatic and, above all, to make men aware that it is in their own interest to better distribute and share tasks, responsibilities, and resources.



Women FOs in Burkina Faso



Woman harvesting tea in Madagascar



Relay Farmer in Burkina Faso

WORDS FROM LEADERS

"It's hard to get people to listen to you, even if you have interesting ideas. You have to be **persistent** and never let anyone walk all over you. My experience and trainings as a leader have helped me."

"My husband has also helped me a lot by supporting me in my activities. He is proud of me and has **confidence** in me"

« Field staff are attentive to farming communities on a daily basis. It is up to them to listen carefully to what women want and **encourage them** to get trained."

"It is more complicated for a woman than for a man to get involved in FOs. You have to know what you are talking about, and to do that, you have to take the time to observe and understand the system in which you are in. That is what gives us **legitimacy** above all else. If you know what you are talking about, people will listen to you."

