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Gender equality action for climate-resilient food systems and agriculture

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I. Introduction

Worldwide, the climate crisis is accelerating faster and more severely than anticipated. The IPCC sixth assessment report predicts that the world will reach 1.5 degrees of warming in two decades, and collective action is urgently necessary to build gender-responsive and climate-resilient food systems.

Climate change and agriculture are interrelated: climate change affects agriculture (adaptation aspect), as agriculture influences climate change (with GHG emissions and mitigation aspect). The so-called AFOLU sector (including agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors), accounts for 20-25% of GHG emissions, where food systems account for even 30-40% of GHG emissions.

Rural women and men increasingly face the challenge of having to adapt their production systems in the context of climate change and natural resource depletion. Growing evidence exist to demonstrate that climate change affects men and women in different ways, often increasing women's vulnerabilities and gender inequalities. The major gender-differentiated impacts of climate change in rural areas include the following: i) greater food and nutrition insecurity, affecting particularly women; ii) increased workload of women and girls to collect water and firewood; iii) limited land ownership for women, who have fewer endowments and entitlements to help them absorb shocks; iv) lower access to climate-smart agriculture (CSA) technologies and practices; and v) the gender differentiated impact of disasters and migration.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, people face additional stressors, with disruptions in food security and livelihoods, and greater gender inequalities:

- 83 to 132 million additional people will experience food insecurity as a direct result of the pandemic (2/3 from low-income countries), with women more likely to be affected¹.
- During the pandemic, female employment has declined by 5 per cent, compared with 3.9 per cent for men. Nearly 90 per cent of women who have lost their jobs have subsequently left the workforce – a far higher rate of inactivity than for men².
- Women play a key role in producing, processing and trading food and agricultural products, and the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their activities more severely.
- Women and girls are at increased risk of gender-based violence.
- Increase in the workload of women across their multiple roles in productive, reproductive and community spheres.

The vulnerability to climate change is related to the capacity of men and women to adapt, access resources, services, local institutions, information and alternative livelihood options, and impact decision-making processes and power dynamics that have a bearing on the distribution of resources and endowments. While

¹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en>

² ILO. 2021. *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2021*. Geneva, ILO. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_795453.pdf.

climate change has proven to exacerbate gender inequalities, it has also brought about situations where women were able to demonstrate their potential as leaders and agents of change and resilience building.

II. FAO's support to member countries

To address gender issues, FAO supports the adaptation of agro-ecological practices to the local socio-economic context and the inclusion of special measures tailored to women and youth.

FAO assists countries and strategic partners in making the transition to climate-smart agriculture in a gender-responsive way, through the adoption of an integrated approach that simultaneously addresses various structural gender issues. This involves advocacy for equitable land tenure, access and control rights, and socially and access to environmentally sustainable technologies and decent employment opportunities for both women and men.

FAO provides support in mainstreaming gender issues in climate policy in the agriculture sectors, especially in the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions to the UNFCCC, National Adaptation Plans and National Agricultural Investment Plans. To ensure the operationalization of gender-responsive policies, activities include collection and analysis of gender indicators, policy support, awareness raising and capacity development to formulate and implement gender-responsive climate-smart agriculture projects and programmes, development of innovative climate smart technologies and practices, and promotion of women's participation in global, national and local decision-making spaces.

Another focus is to increase women's roles and benefits from agri-food value chains, while addressing the nexus between gender, climate change and value chains. This involves enhancing the participation of women smallholder farmers in climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts for more resilient food systems. A more detailed description of FAO's work is provided below.

a) Collection, analysis and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data

FAO supports national and international partners with the collection and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data to identify and address the barriers that men and women face in adapting to climate change, and monitor the gender related impacts. For example, about the adoption of conservation agriculture practices, this entails gathering the perceptions of male and female farmers, and ensuring their adequate participation in testing these practices. The analysis considers the extent to which women control the income produced from any agricultural practice, the time required until benefits are realized and what are the gender roles in production systems and in decision-making over technology adoption.

In Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, FAO has supported the collection of sex-disaggregated data to monitor and report on the barriers and incentives to which men and women respond to for adopting climate-smart practices. Special attention was paid to ensure gender balanced participation in the programme, by involving women in the selection of locally adapted climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices and making sure that these would not increase their work burden. Gender aspects were also inserted into the Kenya's Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action for the dairy sector and were addressed in the national CSA guidelines of Tanzania.

b) Adoption of gender-transformative approaches

In recent years, increasing efforts focused on the adoption of gender-transformative approaches (GTAs) to increase the gender-responsiveness of climate finance, and enhance the resilience of households, communities and agrifood systems. Special attention is geared towards valuing women's work and reducing their triple work burden in the productive, reproductive and social spheres.

The final aim of GTAs is to transform the unequal power relations, discriminatory formal and informal institutions and the mindset of individuals and organizations, to improve the lives of men and women in rural communities. The GTAs address the underlying social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequalities, which are rooted in discriminatory social, economic and formal/informal institutions, policies and laws.

For example in Senegal, the resilience of people to climate change was enhanced through capacity development of communities and women through two innovative gender-transformative and people-centered approaches – the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and the Dimitra Clubs. These involved strengthening agro-climate information and communication systems, and setting up a climate resilience fund for scaling up the project achievements. FFS are non-formal education processes characterized by hands-on group learning in the field that builds on local knowledge systems, tests and validates scientific concepts, and fosters group cohesion and community decision-making. The Dimitra Clubs constitute a community-led and gender-transformative approach that facilitates rural community empowerment. In sub-Saharan Africa, they triggered changes in gender roles as well as substantial improvements in rural livelihoods, climate change adaptation, nutrition, social cohesion, and community governance³.

FAO's work on GTAs in agriculture, rural development and food security addresses the unequal workloads between men and women including unpaid care and domestic work; women's participation in decision-making in households, communities, institutions, and organizations (both as members and leaders); protection of women and girls against gender-based violence; and other aspects of well-being such as access to essential services.

Some lessons learned by FAO in fostering gender-transformative adaptation, as part of the work undertaken to achieve the climate goals and commitments established through policy instruments such as the NAPs and NDCs, include the following:

- importance of raising gender awareness, as part of the process to implement the commitments towards gender equality in climate action;
- need for strengthening the national capacities to design and implement gender-responsive and gender-transformative interventions;
- importance of investing in the leadership and negotiation skills of women and youth so they can equally participate in international and national debates and in planning the response to climate change and mitigation strategies;
- making gender targets more visible and concrete;
- importance of involving gender and youth experts in negotiation and policy-making processes.

c) Addressing intersectionality in climate action

FAO pays particular attention to intersectionality and considers the multiple and simultaneous threats and discriminations faced by the most vulnerable populations through: mainstreaming age, gender and ethnicity issues in its policy support and programming; supporting climate finance mechanisms for the adoption of youth, gender and indigenous peoples policies; and organizing fora and other high-level events to provide multistakeholder dialogue spaces. The involve representatives of Governments, Indigenous Peoples, Afro-

³ The GEF. 2021. *Strengthening Climate Resilience through People Centered Approaches: Farmer Field Schools and Dimitra Clubs in Senegal*. Good Practice Briefs—2021/1. https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF_GoodPracticesBriefs_Senegal_r2%20%281%29%20%281%29.pdf

descendants, women's organizations, migrants organizations, UN agencies and international organizations and promote solutions to address the effects of climate change on specific groups.

d) Capacity development and policy support

FAO has made gender integration in climate change programmes a priority as enshrined in its corporate Strategy on Climate Change and has developed a series of normative and capacity development materials on gender and CSA tailored to policy-makers, project staff and researchers working in rural and agricultural development and resilience building. For example, it has developed the *Gender in Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)* as Module 18 of the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*. It has recently published *Good Practices for Integrating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Climate-Smart Agriculture Programmes*, in collaboration with CARE International, as well as a *Training manual How to Integrate Gender Issues in Climate-Smart Agriculture Programs* and the *Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook* (link to materials is included in the references).

FAO provides assistance to countries in mainstreaming gender into climate policy, through the NDCs and the NAPs. As part of the Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag) programme, FAO has organized training and disseminated knowledge products and analytical tools to countries to strengthen their capacity to address the gender dimensions of climate adaptation in agriculture. Under the "Scaling up implementation of the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender" and its Gender Action Plan (Enhanced GAP) in Agriculture and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)", FAO supports countries to develop gender-responsive climate policies and actions in agricultural sectors and promotes and encourages gender balance and women's leadership at different levels, specifically in the UNFCCC processes. FAO works to provide training to national partners on how to ensure meaningful and impactful engagement of women and youth in the UNFCCC negotiation processes, particularly the GAP and KJWA. FAO is also supporting the integration of gender in climate related non-formal education programmes and national education curricula for youth (WAGGGS, YUNGA).

FAO was granted formal accreditation to the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, and supports countries to design, implement and scale up projects carrying distinct benefits for gender equality. For many years FAO has been collaborating with different international partners, such as the World Bank, IFAD, CARE and others, as well as national institutions to identify and disseminate gender-responsive climate-smart technologies and practices; and supported the development of methodologies to assist academic institutions (including CGIAR and CCAFS) in conducting gender-responsive climate change research.

Numerous awareness raising and training activities were organized to strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians and major stakeholders to design and implement policies, legal frameworks and investments that address the nexus between gender equality, climate change and agriculture.

e) Strengthening the resilience of rural women and men

FAO is helping countries to identify and address the root causes of vulnerabilities in individuals and communities and to build the local capacities to reduce the impact of climate change, by enabling affected populations to become more resilient and recover faster from climate related shocks. This work implies considering the specific needs and capacities of male and female farmers when applying risk-sensitive technologies and practices; introducing social protection measures; providing policy advice to design gender-responsive policies and strategies; and investing in gender equality and the social and economic empowerment of women and girls.

Special efforts are also made to provide income-generating opportunities and to enhance the technical and leadership skills of women and girls. For example, FAO has been delivering the cash-for-work programme in Somalia as a short-term intervention to assist vulnerable populations, such as pregnant and lactating women, with temporary employment in public projects such as clearing nurseries or community service, as part of the recovery and resilience building. This type of programme helps affected households to meet their food requirements and funnel cash into the local economy, while building or repairing assets and infrastructure.

FAO also focuses on empowering women in value chains in Small Island Development States (SIDS). For instance, FAO collaborated with the Pacific Community to promote the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into climate-resilient agriculture planning and programming in Pacific countries. This involved gender assessments of selected agrifood value chains likely to be affected by climate change risks in several countries. Under its subprogramme on "Empowering women in food systems and strengthening the local capacities and resilience of SIDS in the agri-food sector", FAO contributes to building the knowledge and evidence base on gender, agrifood value chain development, and climate-resilient agriculture in SIDS.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

FAO's main experience and lessons learned in supporting countries with the NAPs and NDCs have shown that gender equality considerations are not sufficiently integrated yet into NAPs and NDCs and more concerted efforts are still required by governments, the UN and the civil society for addressing gender concerns in climate action. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- Gender issues are considered at the design stage of adaptation planning, including the formulation of specific interventions targeted to women and girls and the most marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- Budgets need to be elaborated with a gender lens, taking into account the gendered dimensions of climate change impacts and allocating adequate resources (both human and financial resources) to implement the gender-related work.
- The implementation of NDCs and NAPs require the engagement of ministries of gender/social welfare/women's affairs at national and sub-national levels. This engagement needs to be substantive in steering committees but also at implementation levels.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems must take into account the gender differentials, through the collection, analysis and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data, and the inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators to monitor gender-related results and impacts.
- It is also crucial to ensure a gender balanced participation of women and youth in the UNFCCC negotiations so that their specific needs and interests are adequately addressed.
- The economic empowerment of women in agrifood value chains is a proven strategy to build more resilient and inclusive food systems and increase women's coping and adaptation capacities.

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Online available courses

- Gender in Climate-Smart Agriculture Projects (FAO, World Bank and IFAD)
- Open Online Course on Gender and Environment (uncclearn.org)