

DOCUMENT

Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment

Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty—Status, trends and gaps.
 Published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the International Labour Office; Rome, 2010

This review is by
Nilanjana Biswas
 (nilanjanabiswas@yahoo.com),
 independent researcher


Seventy per cent of the world population consists of rural communities, subsisting on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock for their livelihoods. The poorest within these communities are often women and young girls—the very ones who hold the socioeconomic fabric of rural communities together. How can the deepening poverty of rural communities be addressed? Can rural employment help to lift women out of poverty? What keeps rural women tied to positions of economic disadvantage? What impact are the changing patterns of rural employment in a rapidly globalizing world having on the lives of women and men? How can policy help poverty alleviation and equitable growth?

Addressing such questions, this report is an assessment of how gender might determine “differentiated pathways out of poverty” in rural areas. An outcome of a global workshop jointly organized by three international agencies—the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Labour Office (ILO)—it presents the “latest thinking” on the gender dimensions of rural and agricultural employment. The report rests on the cornerstone of the United Nation’s Decent Work Agenda, which calls for the creation of better jobs both for women and men, social protection for all rural workers, the uniform application of labour standards, and the promotion of equitable and representative rural institutions.

Although the fisheries sector has not received specific consideration, because of

the many commonalities between women’s work in the fisheries and in other core sectors of the rural economy, the report has much to offer by way of insights and lessons. In most regions of the world, rural employment is highly segmented with women disproportionately employed in low-quality jobs lacking dignity and social protection. There is a consequent gender differential in earnings, with women earning much less than men for a given type of work. Women put in many more hours into unpaid rather than paid work due to competing demands of care responsibilities and non-market tasks which diminishes women’s total labour income and keeps them chronically exhausted.

Impacting sharply upon rural employment are global trends including financial and food crises, increasing out-migration, the feminization of rural activities, international trade, the diversification of rural economies and also, child labour. As a result, patterns of rural employment are changing, but even so, certain entrenched gender inequalities often only grow deeper. In the context, what are the policy options?

The report takes the view that for policies to be effective, they need to be designed effectively not as standalone measures but as a set of mutually reinforcing strategies. The cornerstone of effective policy must be the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda: fundamental rights, including the right to collective bargaining, employment creation for more and better quality jobs, social protection for the work environment to be safe and secure, and finally, social dialogue, in ways that represent women fully in organized collectives and unions. In this context, the report highlights the efforts of the post-harvest fisheries operators in the Gambia as a fine example of grassroots participation in the elaboration of national policy. This report is available at: www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1638e/i1638e00.htm 



PUBLISHED BY
 Chandrika Sharma for
 International Collective
 in Support of Fishworkers
 27 College Road
 Chennai 600 006
 India
 Tel: (91) 44 2827 5303
 Fax: (91) 44 2825 4457
 E-mail: icsf@icsf.net
 Web site: www.icsf.net

EDITED BY
 Nilanjana Biswas
 ILLUSTRATIONS BY
 Sandesh
 (sandeshcartoonist@gmail.com)
 DESIGNED BY
 P. Sivasakthivel
 PRINTED AT
 Nagaraj & Company Pvt. Ltd.,
 Chennai

Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards a sustainable

fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.