

PASSPORT TO MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN WATER PROGRAMMES

Key questions for interventions in the agricultural sector



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CONTENTS

	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
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1	WHY MAINSTREAM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN AGRICULTURE WATER MANAGEMENT?	2
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1.1	Setting the scene	2
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1.2	Gender in water management	4
-----	----------------------------	---

2	ABOUT THIS PASSPORT	6
----------	----------------------------	---

2.1	Purpose	6
-----	---------	---

2.2	The SEAGA approach	8
-----	--------------------	---

2.3	How to use this passport	10
-----	--------------------------	----

2.4	Guidelines for interpreting the results	13
-----	---	----

3	KEY QUESTIONS FOR DESIGNING GENDER-SENSITIVE INTERVENTIONS	19
----------	---	----

3.1	Access to land and water	19
-----	--------------------------	----

3.2	Farming context	24
-----	-----------------	----

3.3	Multiple use of water	30
-----	-----------------------	----

3.4	Management of irrigation systems	35
-----	----------------------------------	----

3.5	Water distribution, irrigation practices and maintenance	39
-----	---	----

3.6	Other environmental issues	46
-----	----------------------------	----

4	GLOSSARY	54
----------	-----------------	----

5	REFERENCES	58
----------	-------------------	----

6	COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS AND PROJECTS	60
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1.1 Setting the scene

As stated in **The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA)** 2010-2011, the agriculture sector is underperforming in many developing countries, partly because women do not have equal access to the resources and opportunities they need to be more productive. Women have less access to agricultural assets, inputs and services and to rural employment opportunities. They operate smaller farms, have fewer livestock and a greater overall workload that includes a heavy burden of low-productivity activities such as fetching water and fuelwood. Women also have less access to education, agricultural information and extension services, technology, credit and other financial services.

Women make essential contributions to the rural economy of all developing countries as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs. On average, they comprise 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. This ranges from 20 percent in Latin America to 50 percent in parts of Africa and Asia, but it exceeds 60 percent in only a few countries. Estimates of the time contribution of women to agricultural activities ranges from about 30 percent in The Gambia to 60-80 percent in Cameroon, while in Asia it varies from 32 percent in India to over 50 percent in China, and in Latin America it is lower, but it exceeds 30 percent in Peru.

Even when rural women are in wage employment, they are more likely to be in part-time, seasonal and/or low-paying jobs. Apart from working as agricultural labourers women also produce the bulk of the food for home consumption, which is not counted in the official production statistics but is a significant contribution to food security.

Female time-use in agriculture varies widely depending on the crop and the phase of the production cycle, the age and the ethnic group, the type of activity and a number of other factors.

Evidence shows that female farmers are largely excluded from modern contract-farming arrangements because they lack secure control over land, family labour and other resources required to guarantee delivery of a reliable flow of produce.

The **gender gap** imposes significant costs on society, in terms of lost agricultural output, food security and economic growth. Promoting **gender equality** is not only good for women but also for sustainable agricultural development. SOFA estimates that, by giving women equal access to productive resources and rural employment as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30 percent. Production gains of this magnitude could reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17 percent, which means 100-150 million people.

Most of the world's 1.2 billion poor people, two-thirds of whom are women, live in water-scarce countries and do not have access to safe and reliable supplies of water. At least 70 per cent of the world's very poor people are rural (IFAD, 2011) and the bulk of these people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

There is also a growing competition for water from different users and sectors, including industry, agriculture, power generation, domestic use and the environment, which makes it difficult for poor people, especially women, to access this scarce resource.

Securing water is critical in achieving food security and improved rural livelihoods in most parts of the world, particularly in arid and semi-arid areas. Despite the key role women play in food security through their knowledge of crop production, local biodiversity, soils and local water resources, they are often excluded from decision-making processes in new agricultural water management systems and other projects and initiatives on natural resources allocation. They have no choice in the kind or location of services they receive. Women's secure access to water and land is central to achieving the Millennium Development Goal 1 (Reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015) and Goal 3 (Promoting gender equality and empowering women).

1.2 Gender in water management

Water management in agriculture has been very effective in raising food production worldwide. Water professionals have been successful in developing and promoting different techniques in the field of irrigation, rainwater harvesting, flood control, watershed management, etc. By doing so, they have managed to improve agricultural production significantly.

Until recently the focus of many agricultural water management projects and programmes has been on technical issues. When it became clear that projects are more successful when the potential users are involved, many adopted a participatory approach trying to involve the water users in the planning and the design of their projects.

However, contrary to the actual situation in many areas, planners, engineers, extension staff and decision-makers still do not perceive women to be farmers. This situation is enhanced by the fact that these professionals are often male and they do not adequately recognize the agricultural work of women. They are less familiar with the specific needs and priorities of women, and might encounter difficulties in targeting them because of specific sociocultural norms. The most common gender stereotype that has guided and shaped many irrigation policies and the planning and design of irrigation systems is that women are primarily housewives and mothers, while men are farmers and irrigators. As a consequence, policies and programmes frequently overlook the knowledge, tasks, needs and requirements of women in agriculture water management.

The International Decade for Action, "Water for Life" (2005-2015) and the UN-Millennium Development Goals both call for women's and men's participation and involvement in water-related development efforts. Access to safe water is considered a basic human right (UN General Assembly Resolution, July 2010) yet today 1.3 billion people are without an adequate water supply and more than double than that lack basic sanitation. It is essential to ensure that both men and women have access to safe and adequate water.

Experience has shown that where irrigation design fails to recognize that women are water users and farmers in their

own right, risks are high that women lose existing access to land or the products of their own labour. Studies carried out in Cameroon, Laos, Nepal and The Gambia have shown that projects designed and implemented with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective.

Gender mainstreaming means taking into account the different implications for women, men, boys and girls of any project, programme or policy. During planning and execution it is important to assess who will benefit and who will lose from the planned intervention, taking into account the different knowledge, needs and requirements of men, women and children of different ages, class and social-economic status so that each one can equally benefit from the specific development intervention and ensure that existing inequalities are not reinforced. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

It is essential to determine what men and women need, what they can and will contribute to, and how they will participate actively in decision-making on the types and levels of service, location of facilities and operation and maintenance. Gathering the experiences and knowledge of both men and women will lead to a better understanding of existing practices and challenges. It will help identify the problems that need to be dealt with first to lead to better investment decisions. It will also assist in identifying possible conflicts among different socio-economic and ethnic groups and ways to prevent or solve them. Better solutions will be found to problems encountered in planning, design, operation and maintenance of water projects. Involving both women and men in decision-making with respect to agriculture water management will create a stronger feeling of ownership and improve their access to, and control over, water services through improved legislation. A more equal and efficient water distribution will also be possible, leading to higher yields, improved food security and the reduction of poverty.

Incorporating gender issues will enable water professionals to make informed choices during planning, design, and construction and operation of water management projects and programmes, which will make water management in agriculture more effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable.

2.1 Purpose

This booklet is developed for field staff involved in the design, implementation, operation and maintenance of water management projects for agricultural production; technicians and agents in local irrigation and extension services, NGOs and local government employees who work at field level, carry out the assessment of the local situation and have contact and negotiate with stakeholders using available water sources. For this reason the guide was given a pocket format, so professionals, practitioners and other field staff can easily carry it with them to the field.

The purpose of the passport is to support them in mainstreaming a gender perspective during planning, implementation and management of agricultural water management projects and programmes. This implies assessing the implications of any intervention on women and men, girls and boys, through a participatory approach, while designing gender-sensitive interventions. The expected outcome is improved performance of water management projects and systems, while strengthening the position of rural women or other disadvantaged groups.

The passport is designed to be a rapid appraisal tool to identify the main gender-related problems and gaps that require attention during the design, implementation and monitoring of a project or programme. If the project is at the planning and design stages it will help to integrate the concerns and needs of men and women in the future services that will be provided to users.

Similarly, the passport can be used in operational projects to identify the gender aspects of existing problems, and provide inputs for an improvement plan with tangible solutions that address the needs and priorities of the water users and the local stakeholders. Six key issues related to water projects or programmes for agriculture are outlined and some questions are formulated for each one of them. Not all questions will be relevant to every project or programme and we therefore advise the user to focus on those questions that are pertinent to the local context and the type and phase of the project. Together

with the target group of the project, the user can propose solutions or corrective actions to the identified problems within the local sociocultural context and available human and financial resources.

This Passport to Mainstreaming Gender in Water Programmes was jointly prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Project: "Mainstreaming Gender Dimensions into Water Resources Development and Management in the Mediterranean Region" (known as GEWAMED) and the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA). The FAO Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division of the Economic and Social Development Department coordinated the preparation of this document, which was developed under the FAO Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Programme.

2.2 The SEAGA approach

The Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) offers an approach to development and emergency contexts based on an analysis of the socio-economic patterns and the participatory identification of men's and women's priorities. It provides an approach and some participatory learning tools that help to better understand community dynamics, including the linkages between social, economic and environmental patterns. The three guiding principles of SEAGA are:

- Gender roles and relations are of key importance for understanding and improving the livelihoods of rural people.
- Disadvantaged and marginalized people are a priority in development and humanitarian initiatives. The differential distribution of wealth affects the poorest and most disadvantaged people in terms of their ability to access and control resources.
- Participation is essential for sustainable development, and all activities must address the needs, priorities and capacities of communities, households and individual household members, men and women.

This passport can be complemented by the SEAGA Irrigation Sector Guide (FAO 2001) that provides participatory tools to integrate the socio-economic and gender issues in the irrigation subsector, to be used in each phase of the project cycle. The guide was written for people who are involved in the planning, design and implementation of irrigation programmes. It provides detailed information on how to apply SEAGA to the four main stages in the project cycle (identification and preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), including a toolkit that can be used for participatory and gender-sensitive irrigation planning, and a short training guide. The SEAGA guide presents a few key questions for analysis and summary for each phase of the project cycle, while the checklist of the passport focuses on six specific elements of gender mainstreaming in agriculture water management.

Other handbooks for use at field, intermediate and macrolevels were developed under the SEAGA programme and these materials can be accessed on the web site:
www.fao.org/gender/seaga

These and other available materials can be utilized to further support the user of this passport in addressing gender inequalities and design gender-equitable water programmes, collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data, assessing and targeting the specific needs of men and women of different age and socio-economic groups, to close the existing gender gaps in agriculture and food security.

2.3 How to use this passport

In each chapter a series of questions is presented to address the gender aspects of the key issue the chapter deals with. For some questions we have included several subquestions, to draw attention to some specific aspects to be considered and to identify the underlying causes of the issue.

Not all questions will be of relevance in every programme and project and therefore the user of the guide is encouraged to first assess the sociocultural context or stage of a project or programme, what is the level of literacy of the target group, what kind of agricultural technology is used, etc. This will help to select the most relevant questions and to understand the specific issues in the context of the project or programme to better focus the assessment with a gender perspective.

The questions in the passport can be used in several ways. When there is not enough time for in-depth surveys, reviews, interviews and collecting data, it can be used as a kind of checklist. By answering the questions, it will trigger the user to think of certain aspects he/she might otherwise not have taken into account. It will also help to identify the areas where additional efforts are necessary to make the project more gender sensitive and to focus the interventions on the priority areas.

If more time is available, detailed information can be gathered from the questions posed. The user of the passport is encouraged to answer the questions referring to different sources of information that could include: review of existing data, focus groups discussions, interviews with leaders and a significant number of members of the households (both men and women) to obtain representative results.

This booklet may also be a guide in the preparation of questionnaires by further developing some questions to obtain a more complete analysis of the local context.

The checklist is by no means intended to gather all the required information for water resources planning and management, as a statistically representative sample, but rather to raise awareness on some gender considerations. It is developed

to have a better understanding of the different implications of the planning and monitoring process on men and women from different socio-economic groups and ages.

In obtaining answers to the questions, it is essential to get the information from the different major social groups of the project/programme area, to ensure that the diversity of views and needs of different groups are adequately addressed, for instance, get information from large, medium, small farmers, tenants and (seasonal) workers. If there are different ethnic groups or religions ensure that they are also in the sample; if farmers use water from different sources (ground water and surface) include all uses in your data gathering; if there are Water Users Associations get the views of the members and the non-members, etc. When doing this, it is important to check if you have got information from several people (women and men) from the identified different groups, (as not all people belonging to one group have the same opinion) and to assess the common factor.

It is also recommended to bring together men and women from the target community with outsiders and other affected stakeholders, so that they can analyse the situation together and identify the main constraints and possible solutions in a participatory manner. For this, it is important to build positive relationships using an attitude of respect for local people and a willingness to learn from those working in the field.

It is also suggested to crosscheck the information, by analysing the context and the specific issue from different perspectives in a process of triangulation. Triangulation is achieved by using different tools to gather information on the same issue (e.g. maps and trend lines to examine environmental changes) and by listening to men and women with different points of view on the same issue (e.g. men/women, old/young, wealthy/poor about water resources). It could be interesting to compare the views of men and women who belong to a group/association versus those who do not. It is recommended to establish multidisciplinary teams with members with different backgrounds and skills for triangulation of perspectives, with

at least one social scientist with experience or training in social issues in the communities. Because many rural women are uncomfortable with male interviewers it is important to include some female team members. More information on the triangulation is available in the SEAGA Field handbook.

The main purpose of using this booklet is to identify situations from a gender perspective that may need corrective actions, even if they affect only a group of women or men of the irrigation systems. Therefore some suggestions are included at the end of each section. However, as the situation depends on the local context, it is not possible to be very specific.

As the passport is expected to promote corrective actions, the user, based on his/her local knowledge, is encouraged to determine, together with the target group, what may be possible within the local sociocultural context and available human and financial resources.

The answers to the questions can be used for different purposes:

- to identify support and constraints for the equitable management of water resources, through the analysis of the environmental, social and institutional patterns;
- to understand the livelihood strategies of different members of the community and their related needs and constraints, and
- to build consensus among different stakeholders about development priorities and corrective actions.

When data are collected, it is important to focus not only on the data but also on the process as a whole to understand whether local knowledge and capacities were enhanced. When data are analysed it is important to verify the information before drawing conclusions, to ensure that the analysis was accurately conducted and everyone agrees with the conclusions.

2.4 Guidelines for interpreting the results

This passport can be used for several purposes and by different kind of users. In the interpretation of the answers to the questions the user should focus on identifying actions required to rebalance the existing gender inequity. Therefore it is recommended to analyse the gathered information in three steps:

- i Identify the central issues from a gender perspective, arising from the answers.
- ii Decide which problems are to be addressed first.
- iii Propose a set of actions to overcome the identified problems.

It is important to ensure that proposed corrective actions are discussed in depth with all the stakeholders concerned and implemented only with their full concurrence to guarantee ownership and commitment to their implementation.

Users of this guide should be aware of the fact that gender disparity is a sensitive issue and the implementation of actions that have limited support from the expected beneficiaries may not be sustainable. It is therefore advised to engage a social scientist or gender expert to take care of these processes.

Some guidance is provided below with regards to the interpretation of the results arising from the main areas of investigation of the passport.

Access to land and water

Does the land and water ownership situation require actions that can be addressed by the project? If ownership cannot be changed, alternative access to land (different forms of renting) and water (disconnect the right to use water from land titles) as well as to provide other resources (livestock, home orchards) to be managed by women can be identified.