



{ Her mile }

Women's rights and
access to land.

The last stretch of road
to eradicate hunger.

March 2010

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“Women play a triple role in agricultural households: productive, reproductive, and social.”

[Gender in agriculture source book - FAO, IFAD, WB, 2008]

{ Executive summary }

One out of seven people in the world is suffering from hunger. ActionAid believes that hunger and malnutrition are not an inescapable natural fact, but the result of precise choices and the consequence of inequalities between rich and poor, men and women. **More than 60% of the hungry are women and children, which is quite a paradox given that it is women who produce 60% to 80% of the food in developing countries,** where the men's employment rates in agriculture is lower than women's. It is women who work the hardest, even during economic crisis. How can these contradictions be explained?

In several countries legislation prevents women from owning and inheriting land, which increases their vulnerability to poverty and exposes them to further discrimination. In many contexts women lose their land rights as a consequence of their husbands' death, in case of separation or divorce, or when forced displacements take place. Generally women cultivate small plots of land with low soil quality, which makes them more exposed to droughts, floods, privatizations and expropriations. **Rural women are also disadvantaged in the access to bank credit and technical agricultural support.** The scarce presence of women in local and national institutions responsible to develop rural programs makes their work and demands underrepresented. Women are more affected by climate change and natural disasters due to their social roles, discrimination and poverty. Yet, **it is women who respond better to climate change,** implementing strategies that are closely linked to local realities, sustainable and shared at the community level.

Land has always represented a source of economic, political and social power. Such power has often ensured control over other resources and groups of people. Owning land or having regular access to it is a factor of welfare and the precondition to have a house, to run economic activities and to create job opportunities. **Land, like other limited resources, is becoming scarce, and therefore even more precious.** Due to an increased demand for agrofuels and to the effects of climate change, the issue of land distribution and redistribution is becoming even more crucial.

Women's right to land has seldom been considered in development debates and rarely been an issue for advocacy initiatives by civil society and farmers' movements. Yet, **where land is more equally distributed and managed between men and women, virtuous circles are fostered in terms of local economic de-**

velopment, child and maternal health, and education. On the contrary, where women's right to own and inherit land is denied, negative spirals of poverty are registered and several socio-economic indicators get worse.

Despite this knowledge and heritage of women's rights in international declarations and conventions, very little has been done in terms of concrete actions and measures. The price crisis of agricultural products and, more broadly, the world economic crisis have sharpened the existing inequalities, amplifying women's vulnerability related to nutrition. **Nevertheless, the food crisis has offered opportunities for transformation of power and production relations between men and women** which however were not adequately seized to foster a more substantial change. Little has been done on the way to end hunger, eradicate the premises of inequalities and give back to women their dignity and food sovereignty.

Women's rights to land and natural resources are the missing link in the analysis of the food crisis and women's empowerment is the factor on which donors have less invested in their response to the increasing number of hungry and malnourished people.

Protecting women's food sovereignty and building their capacity in the agricultural sector is an essential precondition to achieve the 1st Millennium Development Goal, which aims to **halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015.**

Through the **HungerFree Women** campaign, ActionAid went against the mainstream, putting women at the center of the fight against hunger and asking for the acknowledgement of their right to own and inherit the land they cultivate as a political priority in every country. What has been done in the last two years in the rural areas where ActionAid works shows that the last mile to make hunger history is to ensure women full rights in the management of natural resources and rural development.

{ 01 Women are hungry for rights }

1.1 Women's work in rural world

For one person out of seven¹ in the world hunger is a reality. Heads of State and government, UN agencies and civil society have been discussing the issue for decades: causes have been identified, solutions proposed, funds disbursed. Yet, the situation has been worsening². According to ActionAid hunger and malnutrition are the product of precise choices and are not an inescapable natural fact. Hunger results from harmful policies that consider food as a mere commodity and not as a fundamental human right. Due to such policies the hungriest and poorest in the world are - incredibly - the farmers and agricultural workers, that is those food is produced by. Hunger also depends on inequalities between rich and poor and between men and women. According to FAO **more than 60% of the hungry are women and children**³, a further paradox, considering that 60% to 80% of the food in the developing countries is produced by women⁴.

As Table 1 shows, despite the percentage of men and women employed in agriculture decreases between 1997 and 2008 (due to the increasing industrialization of the considered countries), **the percentage of women employed in agriculture is still higher in almost all developing regions**. In the last years, migrations of men towards the cities led to a gradual feminization of small-scale agriculture, with an increasing percentage of women-headed households in rural areas⁵. The relevance of women's agricultural labour can be appreciated if we consider that, for instance, the agricultural sector in Sub-Saharan Africa contributes for 30% of the GNP of the continent, employing from 60% to 90% of the population and producing from 25% to 90% of the income deriving from exports⁶.

At rural level women work mainly on their own, linking their activities to the family needs, and just a small percentage of them - everywhere lower than men's - receives a wage. In Latin America, for instance, only 2.3% of women in agriculture get a wage against 20.9% of men; in Southern Asia salaried rural women are 11.9%, while men are 21.8%⁷.

7 Source: table 8.2 of the Gender Issues in Agricultural Labour module of the *Gender In Agriculture Sourcebook* by FAO, IFAD, WORLD BANK. Data: WORLD BANK. Percentages refer to the total of men and women employed in the agricultural sector. The other categories beyond waged agricultural labour are: self-employed agricultural labour, self-employed non agricultural labour, waged non agricultural labour, non active or not reported.

BOX 1

Women at the center of food security

- > AFGHANISTAN: in some of the poorest and remotest areas of the mountain provinces of Bamiyan, Badakhshan and Nooristan, women are in charge of 100% of the agricultural and breeding activities⁸.
- > UGANDA: it was estimated that women are in charge of 85% of the sowing and of 98% of the food transformation processes⁹.
- > INDIA: women constitute 82% of those in charge of stocking crops and 70% to 80% of those in charge of cattle milking¹⁰.
- > BRAZIL: 90% of the employed in poultry are women¹¹.
- > Women in the African continent spend altogether 40 billion hours per year to fetch water¹².
- > Women constitute 90% of the rice cultivation work force in South-Eastern Asia¹³.

1 The FAO *State of Food Insecurity 2009* report estimates malnourished population in the world at 1 billion and 20 million people. In 2008 the UNDESA Population Division estimates the world population at 6 billion and 800 million people - for synthesis purposes the figure provided here is approximated by defect.

2 In 2007 the number of hungry in the world was estimated around 850 millions; in 2008 the number reached 960 millions to level off at 1 billion and 20 million people in 2009. The food crisis stopped the decreasing trend of the percentage of hungry people. Source: World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2009 - A development Emergency*.

3 FAO, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*, 2006.

4 This figure is frequently quoted in the FAO documents. Amongst the most recent sources in which it is reported: *Policy Brief n° 5, Economic and Social Perspectives*, August 2009. <http://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/ak485e/ak485e00.pdf>.

5 See FAO, IFAD, WB, *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*, 2008.

6 ActionAid, *Five out of ten? Assessing progress towards the African Union's 10% budget target for agriculture*, 2009.

8 ActionAid Afghanistan, *Food for Thought: Analysis of Agriculture Financing in Afghanistan*, 2009. Source: Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Agriculture & Rural Development Sector Strategy (2007/08-2012/13).

9 IFAD, *Gender Strengthening Programme in Eastern and Southern Africa - Uganda field diagnostic study*, 2000.

10 Source: ActionAid India.

11 Shizue Tomoda, *Safety and health of meat, poultry and fish processing workers*, ILO 2000.

12 UNIFEM, *Progress on the World Women*, 2008/2009.

13 FAO, *Gender equity in agriculture and rural development. A quick guide to gender mainstreaming in FAO's new strategic framework*, 2009.

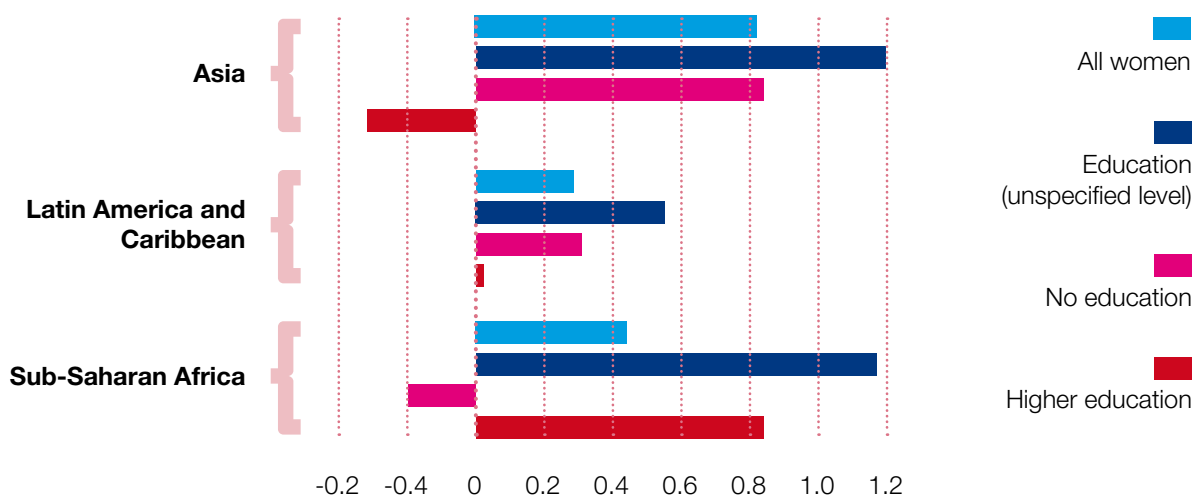
Table 1
Percentage of women and men employed in the primary sector

Source: *Global Employment Trends for Women*, ILO 2009 - data for 1998 and 2007. See tables A6b and 6c "sectoral share in employment, world and regions, males and females (%)". The agricultural sector includes cattling and fishing.

Region	1998		2007	
	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
World	42.9	39.4	36,4	33,1
Eastern Asia, South-Eastern Asia & Pacific	51.6	44.3	41,2	36,4
Latin America and Caribbean	12.6	26.4	9,7	22,1
Southern Asia	74.4	53.7	65,1	41,5
Sub-Saharan Africa	71	65.1	65,1	60,3

Graph 1
Increased rate of female labour force versus 10% reduction of per capita GNP.
Share per region and education level.

Source: FAO, SOFI 2009.



A report prepared for the World Bank reads that "women provide a large proportion of the labour of agricultural production, even though official statistics based on census and survey instruments often underestimate women's work and its contribution to national wealth. Problems persist in the collection of reliable and comprehensive data on rural women's work in agriculture and other productive sectors because of (1) invisibility of women's work, (2) seasonal and part-time nature of women's work, and (3) unremunerated family (mostly women and children) labour."¹⁴

Women represent in fact the majority of the non waged workers both at the rural and urban level. Furthermore, **gender pay gaps** against women workers are registered, and the overall situation determines a slighter women control over the household's income deriving from agricultural self-employed or waged labour¹⁵.

Finally, as Graph 1 shows, women in developing countries tend to work more when the GNP per capita decreases, even if with differences related to their education.

¹⁴ Susana Lastarria-Cornhiel, *Feminization of Agriculture: trends and driving forces* – background paper for the World Development Report (World Bank), 2008.

¹⁵ For a broad reflection on women and men labour in agriculture see the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*, a cura di FAO, IFAD, WORLD BANK del 2008.

1.2 Factors leading to the paradox

If it is women who are mainly responsible for agricultural labour and food security in the rural world, how comes that the majority of the hungry in the world has a female face?

The issue of access to and control over natural resources, land in particular is one of the reasons to explain this paradox. In several countries legislation prevents women from owning and inheriting land, which increases their vulnerability to poverty and exposes them to further discrimination. Even where law ensures women equal rights, implementing mechanisms are missing or traditions and practices that perpetuate gender inequalities are still in place. Where women do not enjoy an equal social status, legislation remains dead letter. Customary law prevails on constitutional or statutory law, often to the detriment of women. Furthermore, in several contexts women lose the rights acquired on the land and natural resources used for their livelihoods as a consequence of their husbands' death, in case of separation or divorce, or when forced displacements or migrations take place. Finally, some cases show how limited land tenure registration makes even more difficult for women to assert their rights on the land they own.

The OECD developed a database on discriminatory institutions against women, analyzing 160 countries through 60 gender discrimination indicators, amongst which land property rights, property rights others than land (such as real estate tenure) and access to bank credit. Table 2 reports data referred to a selection of developing countries.

Land has always represented a source of economic, political and social power. Such power has often ensured control over other resources and groups of people. In rural contexts the status acquired through land property determines the inclusion or exclusion in/from decision-making processes. Being able to claim land property rights or a stable access to land represents a welfare factor and the precondition to get a house, to run economic activities and to create job opportunities. It is often necessary to access water, electricity, health services. In addition to that, land, as other limited resources, is becoming scarce, and therefore even more precious. Due to population growth, increased demand for agrofuels and climate change, the issue of land distribution and redistribution is becoming even more crucial.

BOX 2

Women and land rights

The www.landtenure.info portal provides detailed information on women's access to land and on agrarian tenure systems in Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Colombia, Philippines, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Peru. It was created in 2008 by the International Food Security Network, ActionAid, CERAI, aGter and COPROFAM with the support of the *Land & Water Division* of the FAO. Information collected in this database is about to be merged with other data provided by the FAO on the issue.

Less than 2% of the available land worldwide is owned by women.¹⁶

- In BRAZIL: women represent 57% of the population, but just 11% of the land belongs to them.¹⁷
- In NEPAL: women own just 10.8% of the land.¹⁸
- In UGANDA: just 7% of women owns land and women's right to land is mainly considered as a mere right of use, without the possibility to make decisions (on selling, hiring, changing its use).¹⁹

It is important to underline that these percentages, which however provide an overview of the existing gender inequalities on land tenure, do not reveal much about the use women make of common properties and on the land management at the community level. In this respect the lack of reliable data does not allow to get a complete overview of women's access to land.

¹⁶ IFAD, *Fact Sheet on Women* - www.ifad.org/pub/factsheet/women/women_e.pdf

¹⁷ UNICEF, *The State of The World's Children - The double dividend of Gender Equality*, 2007.

¹⁸ Ghale, Y., *Relations Between Land Rights and Women's Empowerment*, NepalNews.com, www.nepalnews.com/main/index.php/guestcolumn/684-relations-between-land-rights-and-womens empowerment.html

¹⁹ ActionAid Uganda and Uganda Land Alliance, *Biting the feeding hand. Voices of women on land*, 2008.

As acknowledged by the World Bank in its *World Development Report* in 2008: "Earlier interventions to improve tenure security focused almost exclusively on individual titling, but this can weaken or leave out communal, secondary, or women's rights." The safeguard of women's right to land is often reduced to the mere claim of individual titling or, even worse, linked to privatization processes that not necessarily end by advantaging women.

In the *African Women's Report 2009* produced by the Economic Commission for Africa²⁰, the equal access to land for women is included amongst the economic indicators used to compose the *African Gender & De-*

²⁰ For the detailed indicator set, see: Economic Commission for Africa, *African Women's Report: Measuring Gender Inequalities in Africa - Experiences and Lessons from the African Gender and Development Index*, 2009.

Table 2
Discriminatory institutions on women's property rights

Source: Gender, Institutions and Development Database 2009. 2009 data – collected in February 2010.

The database can be accessed from the following link: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=GID2>.

Note: 0 stands for the absence of discrimination ratified at the institutional level, while 1 stands for the maximum level as to factors determining gender inequality. The table below reports those countries presenting values between 0.5 and 1, as a demonstration of the existence of discriminatory elements in social, economic and legislative architectures.

Variable	Access to land	Access to bank credit	Access to other properties
Country			
Afghanistan	0,5	0,5	1
Bangladesh	0,5	0,5	0,5
DRC	0,5	1	1
Ethiopia	0,5	1	0,5
Ghana	0,5	0,5	0,5
India	0,5	0,5	0,5
Kenya	1	0,5	0,5
Liberia	0,5	0,5	0,5
Mozambique	0,5	0,5	0,5
Nepal	0,5	0,5	0,5
Pakistan	0,5	0,5	0,5
Sierra Leone	1	0,5	1
Tanzania	0,5	0,5	0,5
Uganda	0,5	0,5	0,5
Zimbabwe	1	0,5	0,5

development Index. Results vary considerably among the countries considered: as Table 3 shows, Mozambique, South Africa and Ghana are those which engaged most against gender discrimination in agriculture, while the initiatives carried out by Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda appear inadequate.

In the last years, though, some progress has been registered in various developing countries.

- In **LIBERIA** President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf established a Land Commission in August, 2009 that, amongst its duties, should suggest modalities and tools to remove existing barriers to women's land ownership.²¹
- In **KENYA** 95% of land is titled to male individuals²² but in 2005 in the case "Rono vs. Rono" the Appeal Court asserted the gender equality principle granted by the national Constitution, the African Chart and the CEDAW. The Court decided to apply statutory rather than customary law. The sentence was

confirmed in 2008 by the Kenyan High Court that made national and international standards prevail on traditional Masai law in the Ntutu case, allowing a daughter to inherit from her father's estate.²³

- in **CHINA** the 2003 agrarian reform established concrete measures enabling women to benefit from a more equal land distribution.²⁴
- In **SIERRA LEONE** two laws approved in 2007 improve women's conditions with regard to property and inheritance of material assets: the law on traditional marriage registration and divorce, which allows them to acquire and use assets as individuals; the law on the transfer of property, through which women acquire the right to inherit without the agreement of the enlarged family.²⁵

In general women farmers manage **small land plots with scarce soil quality**, which makes them more vulnerable to droughts or floods (phenomena that are growing in number and intensity due to climate change), but also to privatizations and land grabbing. As shown

21 Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Liberia is Writing New History for Its Women and Girls, Delegation Tells Women's Anti-Discrimination Committee Admitting Great Challenges in That Endeavour*, 31st July 2009. Fonte: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/wom1748.doc.htm

22 Fareeda Banda, *Project on a mechanism to address laws that discriminate against women*. Commissioned by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - Women's Rights and Gender Unit. March 2008.

23 In the "Rono vs. Rono" case - a inheritance lawsuit - sons requested the Keiyo traditions to be asserted, which would have deprived their daughters and the widow of the father's inheritance. Source: UNIFEM - www.unifem.org/cedaw30/success_stories

24 ActionAid, *Who's Really Fighting Hunger? AA's HungerFREE Scorecard Investigates why a billion people are hungry*, 2009.

25 Ibidem.

Table 3**Assessing initiatives for women's equal access to land.**

Source: UNECA (indicators from 0 to 2 – maximum score for country = 22). Data processing: August 2009.

	Country					
Assessment criteria	Ethiopia	Ghana	Mozambique	Tanzania	Uganda	South Africa
Legislation	2	2	2	1	1	1
Political engagement	0	2	2	1	1	2
National plans development	0	2	2	1	1	1
Quantitative targets	0	2	2	1	0	2
Institutional mechanisms	1	2	2	1	1	1
Budget	0	1	1	1	1	1
Human resources	0	1	1	1	1	1
Research	0	2	1	0	1	1
Civil society involvement	0	1	2	1	0	2
Information and sensitization	0	1	2	1	1	2
Monitoring & evaluation	0	1	2	0	0	1
Total	3	17	19	9	8	15

in Graph 2, on the whole, women run everywhere less than a quarter of the agricultural activities (the lowest percentage is registered in Asia).

Rural women are also disadvantaged in the **access to bank credit and technical services supporting agriculture** (fertilizer provision, machinery use, special terms for commercialisation and marketing...). In Sub-Saharan Africa the percentage of agricultural loans disbursed to women is about 10% and women receive less than 1% of the credit globally available for the agricultural sector.²⁶

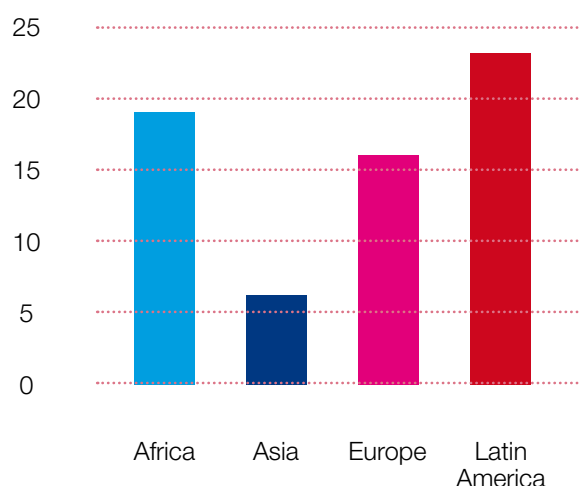
The **limited presence of women in local and national institutions** that develop rural and agricultural programs causes their labour and demands to be scarcely represented. In Zimbabwe, for instance, women constitute 75% of the Zimbabwe Farmers Union but just 5% of the trade union's managers.²⁷ A growing female agricultural activism is registered in countries such as Malawi and Mozambique, but the spaces for discussion and decision-making remain mainly controlled by men, and women farmers' movements are still quite weak and call for a considerable support.²⁸

The feminization of agriculture therefore did not lead

to a rebalancing of gender inequalities, but rather to a further marginalization of women farmers as a consequence of the starting disadvantage they experience in education, access to capital, political representation.

Graph 2**Percentage of agricultural activities owned by women.**

Source: FAO, 2002.



²⁶ FAO, *Gender equity in agriculture and rural development. A quick guide to gender mainstreaming in FAO's new strategic framework*, 2009.

²⁷ ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Women*, 2009.

²⁸ Robin Palmer, *Challenges in asserting women's land rights in Southern Africa*, paper presented to the workshop "Decentralizing land, dispossessing women? Recovering gender voices and experiences of decentralized land reform in Africa" held in Maputo (Mozambique) from the 4th to the 7th of May 2009.

1.3 A problem with multiple consequences

Women's right to land has seldom been considered in development debates and rarely been at the centre of campaigns and advocacy initiatives by civil society and farmers' movements²⁹, despite its relation to systems and processes that perpetrate oppression and economic injustice. Where land is more

equally distributed and managed amongst men and women, virtuous dynamics are fostered in terms of local economic development, child and maternal health, and education. On the contrary, where women's right to own and inherit land is denied, poverty and several socio-economic indicators worsen.

29 See the paper *Social movements, land and agrarian reform and women's rights*, produced by Nancy Kachingwe for ActionAid in 2007.

For instance, together with socio-cultural discriminations, poverty and malnutrition are powerful drives for

“Legal property tenure increases women's opportunities to access credit, generate income and establish a cushion against poverty. It also empowers them in their relationships with their partners and their families, reduces vulnerability to gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS and provides a safety net for the elderly.”

[UNFPA, State of World Population 2007]



HIV/AIDS. In several countries the stigma for a HIV-positive woman is a determinant for the denial of her right to land property and inheritance. A vicious circle where AIDS and poverty are interlinked. In Uganda a FAO research carried out in 2003³⁰ showed that the

household's properties can decrease by 26% after the husband's death and only by 11% when the one who dies is the wife. In Namibia 44% of the widows lost their livestock following their husband's death, 28% was deprived of the crop and 41% of the agricultural equipment.

³⁰ FAO, *HIV/AIDS and Agriculture: Impacts and Responses – Case studies from Namibia, Uganda and Zambia*. 2003.
http://ftp.fao.org/sd/SDW/SDWW/ip_summary_2003-webversion.pdf



Without economic independence and livelihood deriving from the access to land, women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS grows dangerously. Hunger and poverty push several women to prostitution, since it is usually up to them to maintain children. And it is again unequal gender relationships to cause most of these sexual intercourses to be unsafe, which increases women's exposure to HIV.

Several studies³¹ showed that women who have land to cultivate and a safe place for living, do have a higher decision-making power within their household. Access to natural resources and the ability to manage the products of their labour give women a stronger self-esteem and confidence in the future. The consequent social and economic empowerment enables women to **protect themselves from domestic violence** and from abuses and discriminations³². Women are also the most burdened with the care of people living with HIV/AIDS, therefore ensuring them adequate nutritional levels and self-sustenance ability indirectly contributes to the survival of the sick people they look after. Finally, reducing hunger and food insecurity decreases vulnerability to infection and, in case of HIV-positive people, increases the effectiveness of treatment.

The 2009 report *The Challenge of Hunger: focus on Financial Crisis and Gender inequality* produced by Welthungerhilfe, Concern Worldwide and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) offers a comparison of the world hunger index with the gender inequality index highlighting how **high levels of malnutrition are linked to low levels of women's literacy and health**. The introduction to the Italian edition reads: "*Where serious discriminations towards women and girls remain, food insecurity undermines the basis of every opportunity of economic, social and human growth [...] Reducing gender inequalities in key sectors, especially education and health, is therefore essential to decrease the levels of malnutrition.*"³³

It has been proved that together with education and income, access to land, training and credit for agricultural activities gives women a higher decision-making power within their households and communities³⁴, facilitating

the individual and collective empowerment process. Several studies demonstrated that **food security, rural development and women's education are inter-linked**:

- > a study of the late '90s on 17 Latin American countries proved that rural poverty would have increased more than 10% if farmers' households had not benefited from the income deriving from women's labour, most of which agricultural;³⁵
- > the World Bank estimated that if Sub-Saharan African women had equal access to the inputs from the agricultural sector (training, credit, equipment, fertilizers...), crops could increase by a percentage ranging from 6% to 20%;³⁶
- > a study on 63 countries carried out by IFPRI found that the increase in agricultural productivity deriving from a higher women's access to education contributed to the decrease by 43% of malnutrition between 1970 and 1995.³⁷

Women's role in agricultural production is essential to ensure an adequate nutritional standard for entire households and communities, as well as to ensure a source of income. **Safeguarding food security for women and developing their capacity in the agricultural sector is then an essential condition for the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goal**, which aims to **halve the proportion of those suffering from hunger by 2015**.

31 See: FAO, *Gender, property rights and livelihoods in the era of AIDS*, 2008; Action-Aid, *Securing women's right to land and livelihoods a key to ending hunger and fighting AIDS*, 2008.

32 The report *Right to food and nutrition watch - who controls the governance of the world food system?* produced by Brot für die Welt, ICCO, and FIAN International - referring to a study on Brazil - states that "violence, especially on women, represents a serious threat to the right to life and health with interconnections on the realization of the right to food."

33 Available at the following link: www.ifpri.org/publication/2009-global-hunger-index. Edited by K. Von Grebmer, B. Nestorova, A. Quisumbing, R. Fertziger, H. Fritschel, R. Pandya-Lorch, Y. Yohannes. Italian edition by Vera Melgari and Stefano Piziali.

34 Rosalind Eyben, Naila Kabeer, Andrea Cornwall for IDS (Institute for Development Studies), *Conceptualising empowerment and the implications for pro poor growth. A paper for the DAC Poverty Network*, 2008.

35 IFAD's regional poverty assessment prepared by the Latin America and the Caribbean Division, Chile, 2000.

36 World Bank, *Gender Equality and Millennium Development Goals*, 2003.

37 Lisa C. Smith, Lawrence Haddad, *Explaining child malnutrition in developing countries: a cross-country analysis*. IFPRI 2000.

1.4 The Italian situation at a glance

It is not surprising that the World Rural Women's Day - falling on the 15th of October - is largely unknown and seldom celebrated: in industrialized countries, rural world is perceived as more and more distant. Rural women are even farther from the collective sense of things, media's attention, decision-making centres and from those who take decisions on development. Violations of their rights are often downgraded to cultural facts or local traditions. Their economic activities are labelled as "women's jobs", and not taken into account for measuring the national wealth. In order to contribute to a renewal of interest on the issue, let us have a look at our country.

The productive structure of developed countries employs most of the population in the industrial sector and services. Therefore it is not surprising that **in Italy out of 100 women workers a little more than 3 are employed in agriculture**, a percentage definitely far from those of developing countries. Of the whole workforce employed in the agricultural sector **women are 39.1%**, a little bit over European average (37%)³⁸, but however under the men's percentage. A gender gap in the running of farms can be noted: out of 3 farms just one is run by a woman. Yet, the Italian situation is one of the best in Europe since, according to Coldiretti, in 2008 Italy won the European primacy for number of women running factory farms: 267.000³⁹. Also in Italy, just as in most of the South of the world, **women-run farms are on average smaller** than those run by men, with negative effects on economic performance, if compared to the whole of the farm factories.⁴⁰

In the last ten years our country has also been witnessing a **feminization of the sector**, which - still according to Coldiretti - is *"also resulting from the strong innovation of the sector with the expansion of side activities such as product transformation, wellness, educational farms and services to the people [...]. The ability to match market challenges with environmental care and the quality of a life in touch with nature seems to be one of the reasons for the growing women's interest in agriculture. Their engagement is in fact particularly significant in the most innovative and multifunctional activities as proved by the leading role women played in the build up of associations for promoting traditional national products."*⁴¹

In Italy too, a **lower women's access to capital, land and technologies** is registered: the ISTAT states that the so-called factorial endowment (credit, land

and machinery) for women is on average equal to 60% of the men's one. *"The woman-run farm is less involved in integration and coordination processes that enhance production; sale is still tied to traditional patterns, despite social capital endowment is on average higher. Constraints derive not much from the difficulty of matching the different roles played in the family farm, rather from the diffidence and scepticism that traditionally surround a woman when she relates to the outside world as a businesswoman."*

Associazione Donne In Campo⁴² is one of the few European realities that have been celebrating the World Rural Women's Day for several years, joining the appeals and pronouncements of the IFAP (International Federation of Agricultural Producers) Committee of Women Farmers in the name of the common claims shared by Northern and Southern women in terms of gender equality in agriculture.

Some studies⁴³ notice a **greater effectiveness of the farms run by women** compared to those run by men, even in contexts that differ for their cultural and socio-economic features. Beyond quantitative performance data, references are made to the attention women pay to biodiversity, environment, food quality, qualitative improvements, reconciliation between production and natural processes.

38 Source: ISTAT, *Donne della terra: i loro "numeri" per e nell'agricoltura*. 13th January 2006 Conference Proceedings.

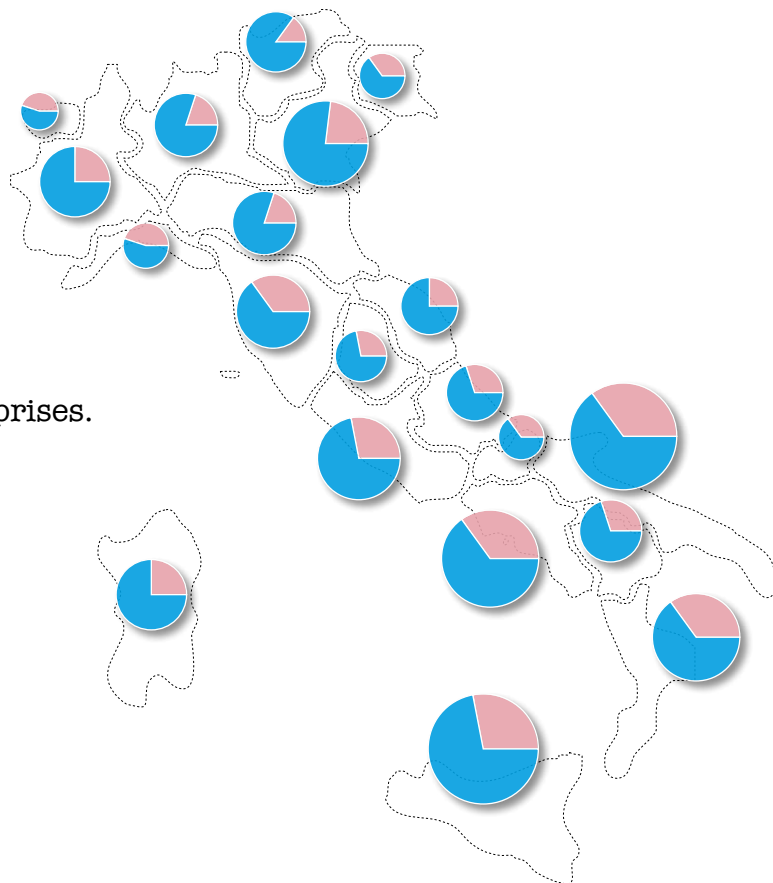
39 Source: www.agricolturaitalianaonline.gov.it

40 Veronica Rondinelli, *L'imprenditoria femminile nel settore primario: alcune indicazioni dell'indagine sui risultati economici delle aziende agricole dell'anno 2002*. ISTAT.

41 Ibidem.

42 Associazione Donne in Campo is a branch of the Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori (CIA). Through active groups of women entrepreneurs and public officers, it promotes women's entrepreneurship, supports women entrepreneurs' networks, coaches and develops entrepreneurship models or alliances and designs initiatives to improve the ability and capacity of women in rural areas and to promote their inclusion in the governing bodies of factories and associations. It is also committed to maintain rural traditions, preserve territory, environment and biodiversity, and develop social services in rural areas.

43 Erasmo Vassallo, *Presenza della donna, contesto socioeconomico e performance dell'agricoltura in un approccio regionale*. 2006.



Graph 3
Distribution of rural women-run enterprises.

Source: ISTAT, 2003.

Legend

Number of factories (2003)

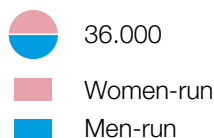


CHART 1

Migrant women employed in Italian agriculture

Excerpt from "Gli immigrati nell'agricoltura italiana" edited by Manuela Cicerchia, Pierpaolo Pallara. INEA 2009.

"Female migration and its impact on agricultural labour in rural areas are quite difficult to analyse with respect both to the overall migration and to the youth migration [...]. It has very peculiar features compared to the male one and it can be clustered for nationality, activities, place of settlement. These processes have just recently begun to concern the Italian rural context, thus it is impossible to evaluate the dynamics related to primary sectors and areas. It is easier to figure out the impact they could have on the socio-economic dynamics of these territories. All over Europe the trend of female migration is increasingly growing, reaching 54% of the total. This trend is particularly significant also in Italy where - despite **a lower percentage of arrivals (48%) than the rest of the EU countries** - the foreign female presence has grown by 74% in terms of residence rights and by 48% in terms of residence permits between 2000 and 2005 (ISTAT, 2005). [...]

The estimate today is that 1/5 of the women migrants lives in rural areas. [...] Building on data from different statistic sources, primary sector employs 36% of the women present in Italy, while 27% of the women migrants deals with domestic work. Of course these estimates do not take into account irregularities and undocumented jobs, therefore strongly warping the daily reality which shows different situations, with foreign women mainly employed as caregivers but also working, beyond agriculture, in the manufacturing and trade/service sectors.

Women employed in agriculture are more than 420.000, equal to 44% of the foreign workforce in the primary sector. Women are particularly present in Southern agriculture (Campania and Calabria) where the demand for seasonal labour and unqualified workforce (being picking the main activity) is stronger and the offer for other economic sectors smaller. These are areas where people with residence permit only are far more than resident foreigners and therefore the demand for temporary jobs is higher.

Particularly interesting is the figure referred to self-entrepreneurship among migrant women in the agricultural sector. About 38% of the farm factories started by a foreigner is run by a woman. This confirms the high potential of migratory phenomena in the Italian primary sector (Unioncamere, 2008)".

1.5 Scripta manent, but oblivion persists

Despite the abundance of analysis available, just a small portion of this knowledge turned into concrete actions and measures. **Both civil society and governments or donor countries rarely acted to change discriminatory laws, unfair administrative systems and unequal traditional practices towards women.** Thus, despite several national and international legislative references, poor rural women often remain rightless people.

CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁴⁴, approved in **1979** by the General Assembly of the United Nations and binding for the 186 States which ratified it, acknowledges that rural women play a key role in ensuring food security to their families and communities and that, at the same time, they are discriminated in accessing water, land and credit. **Article 14** requires member States 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; (c) to benefit directly from social security programmes; (d) to obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal; (e) to organize self-help groups and co-operatives; (f) To participate in all community activities; (g) to have access to agricultural credit and loans; (h) to enjoy adequate living conditions.”

For women farmers, the articles of CEDAW aiming at removing discriminatory legislations and the factors that cause women's legal status to be dependent from their marital condition or from their family relationships are essential. Finally, CEDAW demands the elimination of stereotypes and traditional practices leading to discriminatory customs in the rural world.

States which ratified CEDAW must present reports on its implementation every four years: the Committee receiving and reviewing them can formulate specific recommendations if the information provided by the States

or the measures put in place to eliminate discrimination are considered inadequate. Civil society can complete the overall picture providing additional documentation⁴⁵ and what comes from the conclusions that the Committee delivers to the State at the end of the review. Investigation phase can include guidelines relevant to define the so called Country Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP⁴⁶) as well as the reports monitoring the advancement of the Millennium Development Goals. Finally, since 1986 the Committee has been formulating general recommendations to enhance its messages on cross-cutting issues. Though there is no specific recommendation on women's land property rights, a reference can be found in the 1994 recommendation on equality in marriage and family relationships. The Committee asked the States to include information on statutory and customary systems in place for inheritance; it stated again women's right to land especially in agrarian reform processes and beyond marriage. Furthermore, in the recommendation 16 of 1996, the Committee required the States to collect statistics on unpaid women's labour in rural and urban family business and to take measures to ensure women workers adequate social security and services.

What was said in the previous paragraphs shows how far CEDAW is from being applied with regard both to the article 14 and the other principles referring to women farmers in the fields of health, education and participation to decision-making processes. The scarce knowledge of CEDAW implies that in several countries governments do not feel enough pressure to put recommendations in place and to deliver the reports to the Committee on a regular basis. Even when they do, women's associations are often not consulted or informed. On the other hand, the Committee has few binding powers and the reservations the State can express on some articles slow down the progress towards women's empowerment and gender equality.

Women employed in agriculture are therefore also weakened by the overall uncomplete application of the Convention.

44 The Convention consists of a preamble and 30 articles identifying specific areas of discrimination and indicate ways to eliminate it. In particular, CEDAW demands to remove discrimination that prevents women's participation in public and professional life and in decision-making processes, to contrast gender based violence and to commit against the widespread acceptance of the stereotypes linked to traditional roles of men and women in family and society, thus encouraging an equal representation of men and women. The most comprehensive website available in Italian on CEDAW is www.womenin.net/web/cedaw/home where, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Convention, a platform of organizations coordinated by ActionAid collected resources and information.

45 In the latest years the FAO has committed to collect and present specific documentation for some countries on article 14 and produced several publications supporting civil society's additional reports in order to raise more prominently women farmers' issues. See for example: FAO, *CEDAW - Guidelines for reporting on Article 14*, 2005.

46 In 2002 the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) carried out a review of 13 PRSPs in Central and Western Africa: just two of them specifically mentioned the issue of women's access to land. The research was extended to other 18 countries three years later. Results are more encouraging since 11 strategic documents mention gender dimension in relation to access to land. References can be found on the paper available at the following link: www.icarrd.org/icard_doc_down/Issue_Paper1.pdf

BEIJING PLATFORM OF ACTION

The Beijing Platform for Action (dating 1995) is another valuable document for the reduction of inequalities in the rural environment. Beijing is also considered the operational plan to fulfil CEDAW. Paragraph 35 commits the States to ensure women an equal access to economic assets such as land, agricultural credit, technologies, specific training. As for CEDAW, the fulfilment of what agreed during the 4th Women's World Summit is marked by delays and, beyond that, the Platform for Action approved in Beijing is not a binding international treaty.

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of this document, occurring in 2010, the United Nation member States were invited to answer a survey on the progresses registered so far since 1995. Among the questions asked there is the following: *"What is the impact of climate change and of the energetic and food crisis on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment? Is there any measures in place to support women farmers?"*.

Deeper considerations will be possible only after the 54th session of the *Commission on the Status of Women* - closing on March, 12th - when national and regional documentation will be presented and reflections shared with international agencies and NGOs

OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL REFERENCES

- > The **Final Declaration of the Convention on agrarian reform and rural development** (ICARRD) held from the 7th to the 10th March 2006 in Porto Alegre⁴⁷ restates that a sustainable and safe access to land, water and natural resources is a crucial factor in the fight against poverty and for a sustainable development, especially in the context of agrarian reforms. It also underlines the need for administrative reforms to ensure women the same property rights, credit, capital, union rights and access to official documentation and technologies.

- > The **VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food**, approved by the **FAO** Council in 2004⁴⁸, contain several indications on gender equality in relation to the issues of food and management of natural resources. They are meant as a tool to accelerate the achievement of the 1st MDG. They require States to include a human rights-based and non discriminatory approach in their poverty reduction strategies, in order to ensure substantial equality between men and women. They also encourage the consultation of women farmers' organizations for the definition of rural development strategies and promote food aid distribution through women in order to ensure that food is used to satisfy domestic needs.
- > In the **PROTOCOL to the AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA** - approved by the African Union Assembly in 2003 - articles 15 and 19 explicitly refer to women's right to access natural resources, agricultural credit, technical training and adequate food.
- > The **Resolution 22/2003 of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights** restates the duty for States to ensure women's right to own and inherit land and encourages the integration of the gender perspective in the work of the Commissioner.⁴⁹

- > References to the importance of ensuring land property rights for women also appear in the 1998 **ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER**.

47 The Director of FAO Jacques Diouf, presented ICARRD with these words: *"the main objective of the Conference is to establish a forum to share knowledge, experience, successes and difficulties regarding the agrarian reforms carried out in different countries in every continent, and to reflect together on the future of rural development. [...] One of the main lessons learnt from the history of agrarian reform throughout the world is that any processes which are not participatory, which fail to listen to all those who have something to say on such a crucial issue as local development ultimately come to grief."*

48 In the Final Declaration of the latest World Food Summit (November 2009), States confirmed their commitment to follow the Guidelines and its contents see their first application in the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

49 Document available at: [www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.RES.2003.22.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.RES.2003.22.En?OpenDocument)

CHART 2

Excerpts from the Beijing Platform of Action, 1995

Paragraph 35. Ensure women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, inter alia, by means of international cooperation.

Paragraph 51. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services and their minimal participation in the decision-making process. Poverty can also force women into situations in which they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Paragraph 55. Particularly in developing countries, the productive capacity of women should be increased through access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, technical assistance and training so as to raise their income and improve nutrition, education, health care and status within the household. The release of women's productive potential is pivotal to breaking the cycle of poverty so that women can share fully in the benefits of development and in the products of their own labour.

Actions to be taken to achieve the objectives of the Platform:

- > enable women to obtain affordable housing and access to land by, among other things, removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women, especially those living in poverty and female heads of household;
- > formulate and implement policies and programmes that enhance the access of women agricultural and fisheries producers (including subsistence farmers and producers, especially in rural areas) to financial, technical, extension and marketing services;
- > provide access to and control of land, appropriate infrastructure and technology in order to increase women's incomes and promote household food security, especially in rural areas and, where appropriate, encourage the development of producer-owned, market-based cooperatives;
- > mobilize to protect women's right to full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies;
- > undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies;
- > enhance, at the national and local levels, rural women's income-generating potential by facilitating their equal access to and control over productive resources, land, credit, capital, property rights, development programmes and cooperative structures.



“As the global economic crisis continues to unfold, let us commit to increasing investments in the resources, infrastructure and services which would ease rural women’s workloads and release their time and energy for engagement in the labour market and public life. As we near the UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December, let us make sure that rural women are part of the process and that the outcome addresses their contributions, priorities and needs.”

[Ban Ki Moon – United Nation Secretary General, 15th October 2009]

{ 02

The response to food crisis tastes bitter for women }

2.1 Women are the worst hit by the crisis

The **food crisis hit the world headlines** between the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008 (despite the global food situation has been chronic for at least two decades): few months after the sharp rise of the prices of the agricultural products, some international organizations and NGOs started to highlight the different impact of the crisis on women⁵⁰.

- > In April 2008 the Committee for Asian Women (CAW) declared that the rise of food prices had a direct impact on **women working as street vendors** (82% of the employed in the sector) causing many of them to look for other jobs, and thus adding to their daily workload.⁵¹
- > A study carried out in March 2009 in five countries pointed out that the food crisis led to **an increase of prostitution** among adolescents and young women in Kenya and Zambia. The interviewees in both countries, in rural and urban areas, declared they had to look for new income-generating activities, beyond housework, care and livelihood. In all the communities surveyed by the research it was found that **when food is scarce, it is always men or male children who have the priority and never women**, even when pregnant or breastfeeding.⁵²
- > Empirical FAO research reported to the Committee on World Food Security in September 2008 that the rise of food prices weighed more on **women-headed households**, since they generally spend a greater share of their income on food than those headed by a man. Furthermore, the obstacles that women usually have to face in food production in terms of access to natural resources prevented them from increasing their harvest, which would have allowed them to share in the benefits of the higher sale prices. Graph 3 shows the difference in the household welfare registered in women-headed

households compared to men-headed ones after a price increase.⁵³

In a nutshell the food price crisis and, in general, the world economic crisis acted on the existing inequalities within households, decision-making seats and poverty contexts, amplifying and sharpening women's vulnerability in terms of nutrition.⁵⁴

Even if the international food prices started to decrease in the second half of 2008, in several countries the situation has not yet improved. According to FAO estimates dating November 2009⁵⁵, 31 countries demand external assistance for food needs and 13 are in an unfavourable situation in terms of current crops. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, declared: *"Maybe it will be April 2010, maybe April 2011, but we will have a new food price crisis because the direct causes of the 2008 spike are still there. [...] The small producers [who are known to be mainly women, editor's note] have no choice but to go through the large commodity buyers, the large food processors, the large retailers to get access to this high value market. They are in a very weak bargaining position, and their ability to get a fair price for their produce is very little."*⁵⁶

50 Amongst the first documents circulating on the web, see: *The effect of the food crisis on women and their families* edited by Women Thrive Worldwide in May 2008.

51 "According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), women make up some 730 million of the Asia-Pacific region's total workforce. But close to 65 % of female workers earn a living in the "vulnerable" and "informal" sector, where there are no steady wages or social benefits." Declaration taken from the article by Marwaan Macan-Markar for IPS, Food Crisis Adds to Women's Burden, 26th April 2009.

52 Institute of Development Studies (UK), *Accounts of Crisis: Poor People's Experiences of the Food, Fuel and Financial Crises in Five Countries - Report on a pilot study in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya and Zambia*, March 2009.

53 FAO, Committee on World Food Security – 34th session, 14th/17th October 2008, *Assessment of the world food security and nutrition situation*.

54 ODI, Background Paper - Rebecca Holmes, Nicola Jones, Hannah Marsden, *Gender vulnerabilities, food price shocks and social protection responses*. August 2009.

55 FAO, *Crop Prospects and Food Situation*, November 2009 - <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/ak340e/ak340e00.pdf>

56 See the 17th November article quoting his declarations at the following address: www.reuters.com/article/idUSLH70163320091117

Graph 4

Impact of a 10% increase in food prices on female and male headed households.

Source: FAO, 2008.



2.2 Since 2008 to date: broken analysis, lame answers

Seen the crucial women's contribution to agriculture and, at the same time, the discriminations suffered by women farmers in terms of access to natural resources and the gender impact of the food crisis, the expectation should be that of **an institutional response attempting to redress the basic inequalities and the causes of the feminization of hunger**. The food crisis has actually offered some opportunities for the transformation of power and production relations between men and women, which however were not adequately seized to foster a more substantial change.

In a medium-term analysis of the response given by 58 countries to the crisis, FAO found that a gender analysis is rarely scheduled and that only in 12 cases specific agricultural development actions are proposed. Issues such as women's empowerment in decision-making processes or access to land are seldom mentioned and references to the gender dimension appear mainly with regard to maternal health and nutrition.⁵⁷

Eight international conferences in two years (see Chart 3) have certainly moved ahead in terms of global governance of the right to food. Yet, despite having restated the pledge and will to end hunger, they set few concrete and measurable commitments in terms of funding to agriculture, which has been considerably decreasing in the last thirty years (see Graph 5).

Existing studies estimate **the global annual funding need for food aid, rural social protection and agricultural development in an amount between 25 and 40 billion dollars**, in order to maintain the progresses towards the achievement of MDG 1. The HLTf required the donor countries to double the percentage of aid to be invested in food security and agricultural development from current 3% to 10% in five years (and beyond if necessary) to reverse the trend of disinvestment from the sector⁵⁸.

57 FAO, Gérard Viatte, Jacques De Graaf, Mulat Demeke, Takashi Takahatake, Maria Rey de Arce, *Responding to the food crisis: synthesis of medium-term measures proposed in inter-agency assessments*. 2009.

58 High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, *Outcomes and Actions for Global Food Security. Excerpts from Comprehensive Framework for Action*, July 2008; www.un.org/issues/food/taskforce/pdf/OutcomesAndActionsBooklet_v9.pdf.



“Although the current situation calls for an urgent national and international response, urgency is not an excuse for misguided policies that fail to address the gender implications of the crisis. Instead, decision makers should take this opportunity to incorporate what is known about women’s roles in agricultural production and household welfare, and the specific challenges they face, both to craft more effective policy responses and to enable women to respond better to the current challenges and opportunities.”

[Agnes Quisumbing, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Lucy Bassett - Helping women respond to the global food price crisis]
IFPRI Policy Brief 7, October 2008

CHART 3

Chronicle of the international actions on the food crisis

- > End 2007: creation of the FAO initiative on soaring food prices (ISFP)
- > April 2008: establishment of the *High level task force on the global food security crisis* (HLTF)⁵⁹ in order to ensure a consistent and comprehensive response. The task force develops the **Comprehensive Framework for Action** (CFA), a shared strategic framework including short-term and long-term goals. In the same month the global report of the *International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development* (IAASTD) is presented, as a result of a four-year research with the contribution of 400 researchers, consultants and experts from civil society. Brought to the attention of 64 governments and acknowledged by 58, the report calls all the institutional and non institutional stakeholders for a greater concern on small-scale, sustainable agriculture, comprehensive of the social and economic dimensions⁶⁰.
- > June 2008: organization of the High Level Conference on food security and climate change at the FAO in Rome, where the *Declaration on world food security* is adopted, calling for an increase of the agricultural production and of the research in the agrobusiness sector, and for a decrease of the commercial restrictions. The Secretary General of the FAO, Jacques Diouf asks for 30 billion dollars to ensure the right to food.
- > July 2008: G8 Summit in Japan, where leaders declare to have disbursed more than 10 billion dollars since January 2008 and commit to reverse the decline of official development aid in agriculture and to monitor the implementation of their commitments in support of the HLTF through an ad hoc experts group.
- > January 2009: high level meeting on food security in Madrid. Agreement is reached on the urgency of involving all relevant stakeholders, included civil society, corporations, researchers and regional organizations in the response to the crisis. The Madrid Declaration acknowledges the issue of global governance and international coordination among the different stakeholders, beyond giving a final boost towards the **reform of the Committee on World Food Security** (CFS).
- > April/October 2009: deep engagement of civil society and food agencies in the reform of the CFS that is approved by member States on the occasion of the World Food Day. The text of the reform assigns the Committee extensive power for coordinating interventions and for setting policy setting; it also offers a platform for an enlarged constituency of civil society and private sector.
- > July 2009: G8 Summit in L'Aquila where the report on the progresses made by the G8 in the response to food crisis is presented as agreed the year before. The **L'Aquila Food Security Initiative** is launched⁶¹ by 26 States and 14 international organizations: a disbursement of 20 billion dollars in three years is agreed.
- > September 2009: during the 64th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations a side event in collaboration with Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, is organized to move forward with what agreed in L'Aquila.
- > November 2009: the third **Summit on Food Security** takes place in Rome. The commitments taken on the occasion of the Italian G8 are restated and the role of the Committee on World Food Security revitalized and enhanced. Diouf brings forward the proposal of investing 44 million dollars in aid, agriculture and agricultural infrastructures in order to eradicate hunger by 2025.

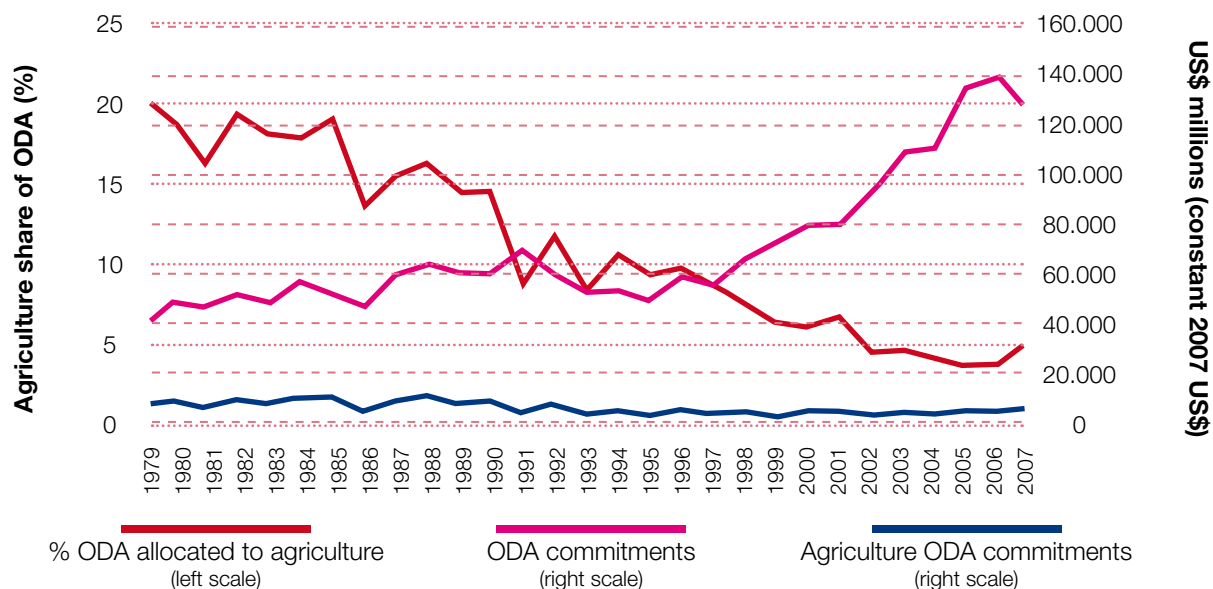
⁵⁹ The task force is composed of the leaders of the specialised agencies of the United Nations (FAO, IFAD, WFP), of the World Bank, of the International Monetary Fund, of the OECD and of the WTO and of some members of the UN Secretariat. The task force is led by Ban Ki Moon and coordinated by the special rapporteur for food security.

⁶⁰ See the website of the initiative: www.agassessment.org

⁶¹ Approved by the G8 and by Algeria, Australia, Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Libya (Presidency of the African Union), Mexico, The Netherlands, Nigeria, China, South Korea, Senegal, Spain, South Africa, Turkey, the Committee of the African Union, the FAO, the IFAD, the IEA, the ILO, the IMF, the OECD, the HLTF, the WFP, the WB, the WTO and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Biodiversity/Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research.

Graph 5**Annual Official Development Assistance (ODA) – commitments and investments in agriculture.**

Source: OECD/FAO 2009 - From the FAO document, *The investment imperative*, 2009. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/018/k5986e.pdf>



In order to understand whether and to what extent the gender dimension has been included in the response to the increased hunger in the world, it is useful to analyse at least some of the official documents produced by the international community and states since the outbreak of the food crisis two years ago.

The **COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK of ACTION**

(CFA) includes the development of gender-sensitive social protection programmes; investments for women employed in agriculture and for their access to productive assets; actions addressing women (especially if pregnant and breastfeeding) as a vulnerable group; the enhancement of the information and monitoring systems through more sex-disaggregated data and gender variables.

However not enough changes were noticed⁶² in the practices and attitudes of staff tasked at national level to implement what stated by the CFA. Gender mainstreaming has been only partially realized, as shown by the still low participation of women in agricultural development processes at national and international level. Among the reasons for this phenomenon a study of the International Centre for Research on Women identifies the following: *“Decision makers continue to regard women as home producers or “assistants” in farm households, and not as farmers and economic agents in their own right. The development community also still lacks some key data on women’s participation and roles in agriculture to better devise and refine*

*programs. Past efforts to target women in food security and agriculture also have led to an association of women as “marginalized and vulnerable,” which in turn has prompted the development community to adopt welfare approaches more often than economic development and empowerment approaches.”*⁶³

Among its eight main recommendation areas the **International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)** includes action on gender inequality, which results a key factor in determining the access/denial to rural technologies and agricultural innovation. It is stated in fact that sometimes it is the agricultural development itself that enhances unfavourable patterns and situations for women. States are therefore demanded to develop institutions, legal systems, social policy tools and methodologies that minimize gender inequalities and expand opportunities for men and women. The agro-ecologic approach adopted by the IAASTD entails an actual shift in the response to the food and climate crisis and this is why several resistances to the application of its recommendations are still registered.

The **G8 DECLARATIONS**

The official documentation of the 2008 **Japanese Summit** contains no references to the feminization of hunger, to the impact of the food crisis on women and to the urgency to invest in their crucial role in the response to the crisis. In 2009 the L'Aquila Joint Statement on global food security states:

62 ODI, Background Paper - Rebecca Holmes, Nicola Jones, Hannah Marsden, *Gender vulnerabilities, food price shocks and social protection responses*. August 2009.

63 R. Mehra and M.Hill Rojas, *Women, Food Security and Agriculture in a Global Marketplace. A significant shift*. ICRW, 2009.

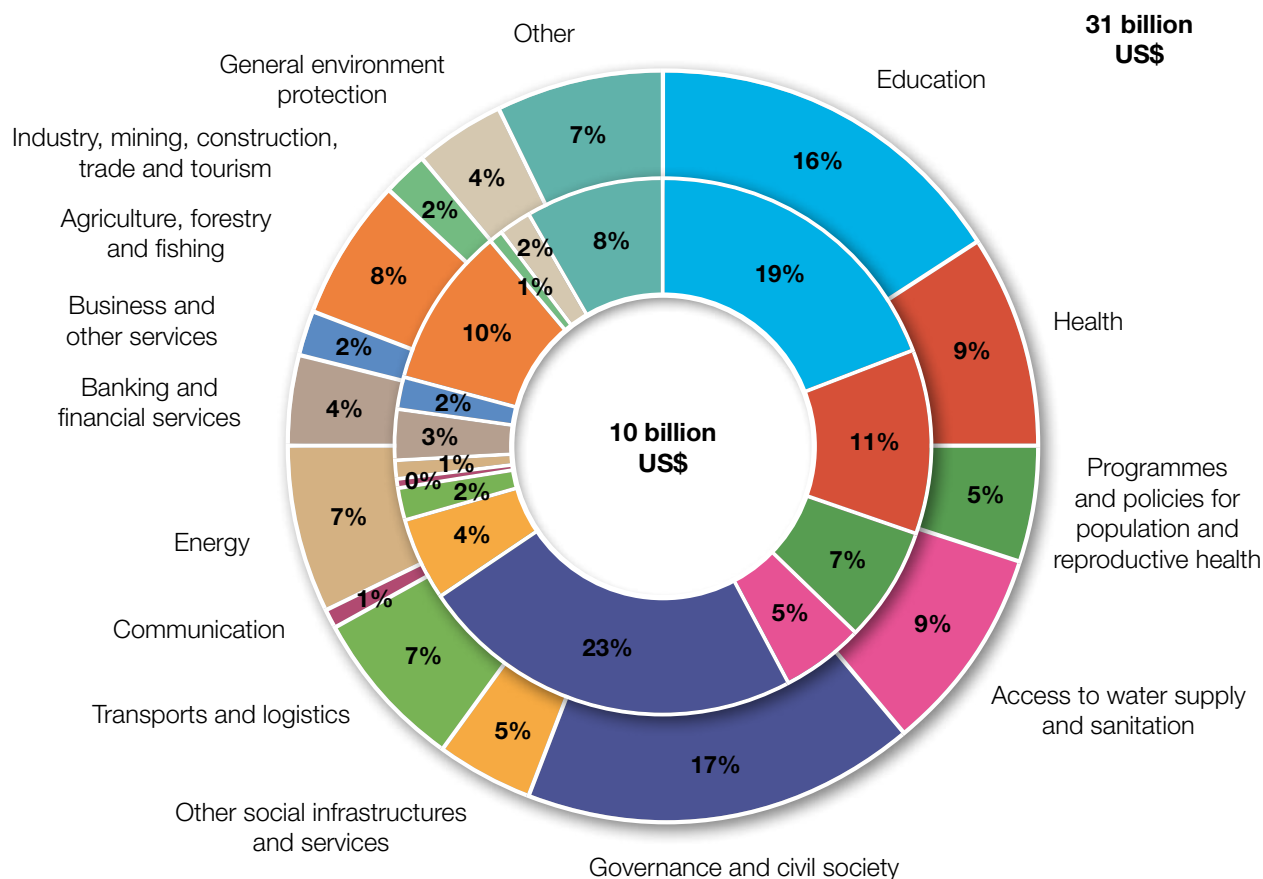
Graph 6

DAC Members' Bilateral ODA focused on gender equality by sector.

Source: OECD/DAC - *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's empowerment*, May 2009. Amount of the annual commitments for 2006/2007.

[Statistics based on the reporting of the DAC members reporting on the Gender Equality Policy Marker, 2006-2007]

Note: the outer circle reports the sector breakdown of the bilateral ODA as analysed through the Gender Equality Marker (31 billion US\$). The inner circle provides information on the sector breakdown only for bilateral ODA that "tests positive" for the Gender Equality Marker, that is focused on gender equality (10.2 billion US\$).



"We see a comprehensive approach as including: [...] emphasis on private sector growth, smallholders, women and families [...];"

"National and regional strategies should promote the participation of farmers, especially smallholders and women, into community, domestic, regional and international markets."

"Building on the experience of FAO, IFAD and other Agencies, special focus must be devoted to smallholder and women farmers and their access to land, financial services, including microfinance and markets."

The report presented to the experts group on the issue⁶⁴ refers that the G8 acted for the promotion of local food supporting women's cooperatives through the promotion of typical crafts and traditional agro-food products. Italy remarks its investment on the participatory approach in the identification and implementation

of rural development programmes through the empowerment of women.

It is difficult to assess what it has actually been done so far by G8 members following the commitments taken in L'Aquila, and previously in Toyako. **It is quite certain, however, that reality is pretty far from declarations and commitment.** The Italian case is revealing: on several occasions it has appeared that our country's share of the 20 billion dollars in three years agreed in L'Aquila would be 450 million dollars. However there is no formal disbursement act in this respect, and meanwhile Italy has accumulated a 270 million euros debt as to the annual amount of food aid it had committed to ensure since the 1999 London Convention⁶⁵. Among the Italian Cooperation active projects listed in the food aid thematic area, currently the only one specifically mentioning women as a target group is the one

64 Report available at the following link: www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8_Allegato/G8_Report_Global_Food_Security_1.pdf

65 Source: ActionAid, *Cala il sipario sulla Presidenza italiana del G8. Il verdetto di ActionAid di un anno di lotta alla povertà*, 28.12.2009 www.actionaid.it/it/media_center/comunicati/comDetail.html?IDCOMUNICATO=28%20dicembre%202009. See also the Senate of the Republic: *Discussione delle mozioni nn. 140 e 214 sulla partecipazione dell'Italia alla Convenzione sull'aiuto alimentare. Approvazione delle mozioni nn. 140 (testo 2) e 214 (testo 2)* - 10th December 2009.



Photo: Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures/ActionAid

developed in the Adrar and Inchiri regions in Mauritania, which started in March 2007 and is scheduled to end in 2010. The second of the two main axes of the initiative is addressing pregnant or breastfeeding women with symptoms of malnutrition and aims to open Community Food Centres⁶⁶. On the other hand, the scenario is altogether concerning for our country which will not exceed 0.16% ODA/GNP in 2009⁶⁷.

Due to the persistence of incomplete data and gender analysis, **it is extremely difficult to assess whether the will towards a more rigorous inclusion of gender perspective in agricultural support and in the response to the food crisis** - expressed by the G8 in their latest summit - **will turn into precise funding and concrete actions.**

The OECD is engaging in the monitoring of the donor countries' disbursements, while the FAO Committee on Food Security is tracking and assessing the interventions made according to the L'Aquila Food Initiative. Graph 6, which refers to 2006/2008, highlights that only 10% of official development assistance of the DAC members⁶⁸ - which has gender equality among its priorities - has agriculture as the main intervention area.

66 The overall amount of the project is 4.8 million euros, the management is bilateral and the form is ordinary donation. Source: www.cooperazioneallosviluppo.esteri.it/pdgcs/italiano/iniziativa/search_iniziativa.asp

67 See CINI, *Finanziaria 2010. Che fine ha fatto la cooperazione allo sviluppo?*, October 2009. www.cininet.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/CINI-Paper-Finanziaria-2010-Short-Final21.pdf. On the occasion of the Council of Europe in May 2005, the EU countries (Italy included) agreed to reach 0.51% in the ratio of official development assistance to gross national product by 2010 and 0.7% by 2015.

68 DAC, *Development Assistance Committee* is the institution through which the OECD deals with development cooperation.

2.3 Those who have tried to lead on gender equality

One of the most prominent initiatives that have recently tried to translate commitments for greater gender equality in the rural world is the realization of the **Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook**, resulting from the joint efforts of FAO, IFAD and World Bank. More than 700 pages of analysis, data, case studies and methodologies are organized in 16 modules addressing issues such as food security, rural finance, land/water/natural resources management, rural infrastructures and services, climate crisis and disasters, agricultural labour through a gender perspective. A tool meant to be useful for practitioners but also important for the message it conveys and for the very moment when it was launched: in October 2009 in Washington and Rome; it was sent to hundreds of organizations, experts, Ministries of Agriculture, donors' agencies, technical UN staff. Besides, the reflections emerging from the seminars where the Sourcebook's analysis were presented will be included in the 2010 FAO's annual report on the state of food and agriculture (SOFA).

The **World Bank set itself the following goals to be achieved by the end of 2010:**

- at least half of its agriculture and rural development projects in Africa will have to include specific gender actions;
- at least half of all its agriculture and rural development projects will have to use gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation tools;
- at least half of its projects on land administration and management will have to include gender-sensitive actions.

According to the same institution, the projects that at the end of 2009 had included elements of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation were about 31%. Countries where gender analysis had already been carried out in rural and agricultural projects funded by the World Bank were: Kosovo, Gaza Strip, Vietnam, Nigeria, Mali, Ethiopia and Zambia.

The Sourcebook raised the **interest of the Inter-American Development Bank, the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA)⁶⁹, the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA)⁷⁰, the Canadian Development**

Agency (CIDA) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which is planning a consultation in this respect involving private sector.

Increasing attention was also paid by the **US administration**: the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton underlined several times that women's empowerment is a crucial factor of economic and, in particular, agricultural development⁷¹. At the conclusion of the annual meeting of the *Clinton Global Initiative* in September 2009, the head of the US diplomacy presented Obama's initiative on food security. The third of its five guiding principles is explained as follows: *"We will also put women at the heart of our efforts. We have seen again and again - in microfinance and other programs - that women are entrepreneurial, accountable, and practical. They invest their earnings directly in their families and communities. [...] So women are a wise investment. And since the majority of the world's farmers are women, it's critical that our investments in agriculture leverage their ambition and perseverance."*⁷²

A session of the seminar organized by the USAID in July 2009, attended by part of the technical staff of the US development agency, was dedicated to the integration of the gender dimension in the agricultural projects. In the document *Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative*⁷³ among its priority actions the US government includes the increase of productivity and the access to market by small producers, women in particular. Among the investments to be funded by the US: those addressing women farmers' needs and promoting awareness of the role of women in the growth of the agricultural outputs at every level.

The analysis on the 2010 US financial bill provided by the association *Women Thrive Worldwide*⁷⁴ reports evidence of this new approach. The *Foreign Operations Bill* allocates 1.17 billion dollars to programmes for women's food security and agricultural development (thus incrementing considerably the 2009 figure of 698 million dollars) and clarifies that 20 million dollars must be made available for programmes aiming to enhance women's leadership in recipient countries.

69 The Danish cooperation had already included in the 2008 information toolbox *Gender Equality* a detailed information file on gender dimension in agriculture, with case studies of funded projects and guidelines for a gender approach to rural development.

70 The Swedish cooperation includes in its 2008 annual report the support to the agricultural programme in Zambia (for a total amount of about 27 million euros in 4 years) where it worked for women's access to resources and for a more equal distribution of domestic work between men and women. It also points out that its contribution to IFAD in 2008 contributed to the translation of the food agency's strategies into more consistent gender equality policies. Source: SIDA, *Results in Development Cooperation*, November 2009.

71 See for instance *Seeding a safer world* in The Guardian online, 16th October 2009, and the speech held on the occasion of the 2009 International Women Day.

72 See www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/09/129644.htm. In the introduction Clinton had outlined the traits of the typical small farmer using the feminine *"But let me begin by asking you to consider the daily life of the world's typical small farmer. SHE lives in a rural village in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, or Latin America. She farms a piece of land - land she does not own. She rises before dawn and walks miles to collect water - if there is water to be found. She works all day in a field, sometimes with a baby strapped on her back. If she's lucky, drought, blight, or pests don't destroy her crops, and she raises enough to feed her family - and maybe even has some left over to sell. [...] Everyone else is as poor as she is."*

73 Document available at the link: www.state.gov/s/globalfoodsecurity.

74 *International Women's Programs and U.S. Spending in 2010: An Analysis by Women Thrive Worldwide* available at the link: www.womenthrive.org/images/thrive_analysis_fy10_sfops_bill.pdf.





Finally, at least some of the civil society's declarations to urge donors and international organizations to step forward must be mentioned.

- > The **African women's and feminist civil society** was actively engaged in the inclusion of more precise actions and more binding commitments to ensure women land property rights in the review of the *Framework and guidelines on land policy in Africa* occurred in March 2009.
- > During the Civil Society Forum before the World Food Summit in November 2009, the **Coalition of Women in Agriculture** demanded the full participation of women in the management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all rural development programmes and projects; the promotion of biodiversity and local seed variety for a sustainable development; a greater accountability to women by the reformed CFS. In the same days a similar positioning came from the **Network of Women Ministers and Leaders in Agriculture** which gathered with WOCAN, the IFAD and Heifer International⁷⁵.

⁷⁵ WOCAN, Women Organising for Change in Agriculture. See documentation available on the website www.wocan.org.

2.4 Land grabbing, agrofuels and climate change: the deteriorating context

It is widely shared among researchers and experts that the effects of climate change are and will be differently distributed among regions, as well as generations, age and income classes, men and women. Developing countries are currently absorbing 99% of the casualties and 90% of the economic losses due to natural meteorological disasters, as shown by Graph 7.⁷⁶

Women are and will increasingly be affected by climate change and its consequent disasters due to their social roles, to the discrimination they suffer and to their poverty.⁷⁷ Since women in developing countries are largely responsible for the agricultural production but are also the majority of the hungry population, the impact of climate change is particularly relevant for them. Estimates are that, due to the droughts deriving from climate change, crops depending from rainwater could be reduced by 50% by 2020 in some African countries and by 30% by 2050 in Central and Southern Asia⁷⁸. Furthermore, some researches claim that an increase in temperatures between 2° and 3° Celsius will cause risk of malnutrition for 30 to 200 million people.⁷⁹ Developing countries could lose 11% of their arable land with a subsequent decline of agricultural production, and 65 developing countries will lose 280 million tons of potential cereal production.⁸⁰

On the other hand it has been equally proved that **women are those who better respond to climate change through strategies linked to the local dimension, sustainable and shared at the community level.**⁸¹ It is therefore crucial to support them in their adaptation strategies through a sustainable agriculture perspective that encompasses productive differentiation, equipment and structures for rainwater collection and crop stocking, and to prioritize bio-agriculture decreasing the use of chemical fertilizers.

On the occasion of the Conference of Parties held in Copenhagen in December 2009 a growing interest was registered on the link between gender and climate change. In June 2009 the text negotiated in Bonn within the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) contained several references to the gender dimension and specifically to women, plus a reference to CEDAW.

Among the more active countries in the promotion of the gender perspective during the COP15 negotiations, Ghana established a dedicated focal point within its national agency for environmental protection, who has been working in close collaboration both with Ghanaian civil society and the Ministry of Women Affairs on the response to desertification. Besides, Ghana introduced gender-sensitive indicators in its national plan for climate change adaptation, and finally developed a disaster risk reduction and management programme with sex-disaggregated guidelines.

The months before the global meeting in Copenhagen witnessed a greater participation of women from academia, science, civil society and governments, even though only 15% of the authors of the official evaluations by the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* is made by women⁸². However, as it was underlined by women's organizations⁸³, in their final communiqué, the text of the agreement, yet gender-sensitive, did not entail much, given the absence of a comprehensive, consistent and concrete result in the response to climate change. For instance, referring to funding, **ActionAid had identified the amount needed for developing countries to face climate change in 200 billion dollars (132 billion euros) per year, 100 billion of which to be spent for adaptation measures.** ActionAid asked the European Union for a contribution of 35 billion euros a year until 2020 (in addition to the current ODA commitments)⁸⁴. **In the absence of precise financial commitments, ActionAid considered the COP15 a serious failure.**

The food crisis, besides being related to climate change, was also deeply linked to the **recent increase in the agrofuel production**⁸⁵: a study, remained confidential but whose main contents were circulated by a prominent British newspaper, estimated that land diverted from food production to biofuel accounted for 75% of the increase of the food prices⁸⁶. More prudent estimates report an incidence between 20% and 30%. Anyway, **between 2008 and 2009, 15 to 20 million hectares of land in developing countries (about twice the Italian forest area) were bought by foreign investors to get agricultural produce for exports or agrofuel processing.**⁸⁷

76 Global Humanitarian Forum, *The Anatomy of a Silent Crisis*. 2009.

77 ActionAid analysed the issue in the report *Non sono cose da donne. Prospettive di genere al G8 del 2009*.

78 Source: IPCC. *Summary for Policymakers. Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr.pdf

79 Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change, 2006. www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stern_review_report.htm

80 FAO e IIASA. *Impact of Climate Change, Pests and Diseases on Food Security and Poverty Reduction*, 31st Session of the Committee on World Food Security 23rd-26th May 2005.

81 See for instance the report *We Know What We Need* produced by ActionAid in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in 2008.

82 Source: UNFPA, *State of world population 2009. Facing a changing world: women, population and climate*.

83 The women's and feminist constituency from civil society in Copenhagen included among the others: WECF, GENDERclimateChange, WEDO, LIFE.

84 ActionAid, *Rich countries' climate debt and how they can repay it. An ActionAid rough guide*, October 2009.

85 Agrofuels or biofuels are fuels derived from the processing of agricultural products such as wheat, soy, maize, jatropha, oil palm, sugar cane. Biofuels are seen by many as the solution to pollution, as substitutes of the traditional fossil fuels (petrol, diesel).

86 Secret report: *biofuel caused food crisis*, www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jul/03/biofuels.renewableenergy, 3.07.08.

87 Source: ActionAid, *Let Them Eat Promises: How the G8 are failing the billion hungry*. 2009.

Graph 7

Unequal responsibilities and disproportionate impacts.

In the upper map the area of countries that contributed the most to climate change (according to the 2002 carbon emissions) was enlarged. Lower map widens the dimensions of the countries where the probability of dying for the effects of climate change is higher (according to the data on climate change mortality in the late 1900 provided by the World Health Organization).

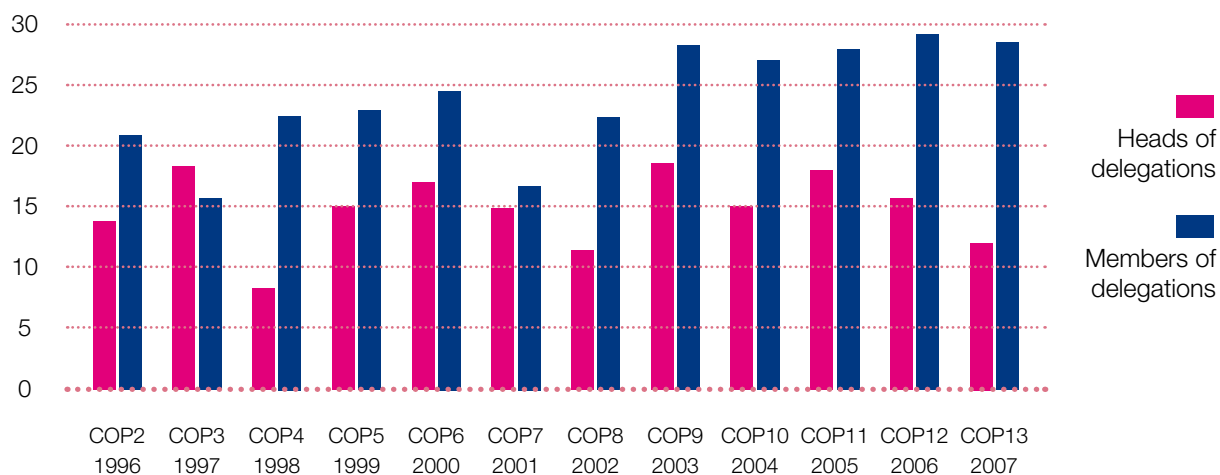
Source: Patz, J. and others. *Climate Change and Global Health: Quantifying a Growing Ethical Crisis*. 2008; World Health Organization, *Protecting Health from Climate Change: World Health Day 2008*. 2008.



Graph 8

Percentage of women in the delegations of the UN Conferences of Parties.

Source: Lebelo, D. and G. Alber, *Gender in the Future Climate Regime*. GenderCC - Women for Climate Justice. [UNFPA, *The state of the world population. Facing a changing world: women, population and climate*, 2009]



In the year of the food crisis outbreak, agrofuels production increased by a quarter compared to the previous year⁸⁸: when it was essential to focus on how to feed millions of people affected by the soaring food prices, feeding cars was preferred. To explain this competition between food and transports just think that the production of 50 litres of bio-ethanol requires 232 kilos of maize⁸⁹, that is the amount needed to feed a child for a whole year.

Estimates are that agrofuel production will increase, also considering EU and US policies⁹⁰. Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana and Ethiopia have recently witnessed the arrival of British, German, Dutch, Swedish and Italian biofuel producers.⁹¹

The Ghanaian government devised an ambitious plan for the increase of agrofuel production and investments. Unfortunately many of these decisions were made without the consultation of local communities, which in several cases were deprived of their land being classified as “marginal”, despite women use them for the cultivation of the Karite nut trees, an important source of income for the local population in the rainy season. Similar problems were registered in Senegal where women are being deprived of land considered marginal but serving instead as sources of wood and forest products, besides generating additional income or food.⁹²

Unequal power relations among the States seem to add to unfair gender relations at local level. FAO itself warns from possible dangers deriving from this phenomenon: *“Selling, leasing or providing concessional access to land raises the questions of how the land concerned was previously being utilized, by whom and on what tenure basis. In many cases, the situation is unclear due to ill-defined property rights, with informal land rights based on tradition and local culture. While much land in sub-Saharan Africa may currently not be utilized to its full potential, apparently “surplus” land overall does not mean land is unused, unoccupied or unclaimed. Its exploitation under new investments involves reconciling different claims. Change of use and access may involve*

potentially negative effects on local food security and raise complex economic, social and cultural issues”.⁹³ In this context the expression **“land grabbing”**,⁹⁴ started to be used with reference to the misappropriation of lands made possible by the lack of provisions for local communities’ informed consent or equal compensations in case of land expropriation in the contracts signed between governments and corporations⁹⁵ for the concession of even wide plots of land.

88 Source: FAO, *Global cereal supply and demand brief, Crop Prospects and Food Situation*, 2009, www.fao.org/docrep/011/ai481e/ai481e04.htm. FAO, *Cereals, Food Outlook*, 2009; www.fao.org/docrep/011/ai482e/ai482e02.htm

89 See ActionAid, *Meals per gallon. The impact of industrial biofuels on people and global hunger*, February 2010.

90 The EU directive for the promotion and use of renewable energy adopted in April 2009 demands that by 2020 20% of the energy used by member states must derive from renewable sources, with a 10% binding target for transports, which potentially supports the agrofuel production. In 2006, EU and US subsidised agrofuel corporations through 13 billion US\$. The *Global Subsidies Initiative* estimated the amount of subsidies between 2006 and 2012 in 92 billion dollars.

91 ActionAid, *Food, Farmers and Fuel: Balancing Global Grain and Energy Policies with Sustainable Land Use*, 2008 <http://www.actionaid.org/docs/agrofuels.pdf> and for an overview of the Italian corporations investing in the sector see Nicola Borello, *Chi paga il prezzo dei carburanti verdi* in Limes, December 2009.

92 Source: ActionAid, *Food Farmers and Fuel*.

93 FAO, Issue briefing, *Foreign Direct investment: win-win or land grab?*, 2009.

94 Figures refer of an arable land area of 37 to 49 million acres between 2006 and 2009. Source: Oakland Institute, *The Great Land Grab. Rush for World's Farmland Threatens Food Security for the Poor*, 2009. Edited by Shepard Daniel and Anuradha Mittal.

95 A broad overview of the states involved in the buying and selling of arable land is provided by the IFPRI's study *“Land Grabbing” by Foreign Investors in Developing Countries: Risks and Opportunities*, April 2009. www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/bp013all.pdf



ActionAid's recipe



3.1 A gender approach to agricultural development

ActionAid chose a rights-based approach which, for the issue we are analysing, requires **women's rights to be included in broader frameworks of rights, policies, institutional mechanisms and socio-economic situations**. A close relation among hunger, poverty and gender inequality that unfolds at the family/private level and is reflected at the community/public level is thus acknowledged.

Therefore ActionAid action aims to **change the unequal power relations** that exclude women from the management of natural resources and marginalize them from the spaces where discussions and decision-making on rural development take place. ActionAid optioned to go beyond a welfare approach - only aimed at alleviating poverty situations - through an **approach based on empowerment, awareness-raising and women's initiative and capacity building**.

ActionAid's rural development programmes encourage women to bring forward their demands for the enforcement of their right to food by decision-makers. At the same time ActionAid invests in women's and girls' education in a long-term information and sensitization work at community level. The organisation is engaged in the enhancement of those practices that restore women's rights and dignity.

This is done through the creation of spaces and opportunities for women's leadership, as well as through the facilitation of horizontal exchanges and collaborations among women's organizations at different levels. **At the same time ActionAid tries to question a market-based only rural development model listening to women farmers' priorities and grounding feminist and gender analysis in the language and practices of rural development.**

3.2 The HungerFREE Women project

Women's empowerment is the factor upon which donors invested the less in their response to the growing number of malnourished and hungry people. With the international campaign *HungerFree Women*, ActionAid went against the mainstream **putting women at the heart of its action for food security** and prioritizing the acknowledgement of women's right to property and inheritance of the land they work in every country. What ActionAid did in the last two years aimed to witness that hunger will not be made history until women are given a leading role, with the same rights in the management of natural resources.

In 2006 ActionAid took part to the *International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development* (ICARRD), supposing that the strongest recommendations on property rights brought forward by women would be taken in charge by governments and UN

food agencies. However what was identified as crucial to fight and eradicate hunger, such as equal and gender-sensitive agrarian reforms, fell into oblivion. This is why, within the HungerFree campaign launched by ActionAid in 2007, the idea and the opportunity of putting women's rights back at the core of the fight against hunger was developed. In **2008** the HungerFree Women project originated to:

- > **strengthen alliances** with rural women's groups and associations in the South, prioritizing the enhancement of women's leadership and participation;
- > **collect evidence of discriminatory laws**, of the absence of legal protection or lack of implementation of existing legislation on women's right to own and inherit land;



- > **include women farmers' needs and rights** in national, regional and international agendas, within meetings, fora and summits that discuss on food;
- > **give media visibility** to women farmers' ongoing struggles in order to inform, sensitize and foster North-South and South-South solidarity.

HungerFree Women developed a common platform of action where ActionAid's programmes in the South and their partners could develop their own campaigns and local/national initiatives. Among the countries that participated in the campaign: **Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Uganda, Vietnam and Zimbabwe** along with organizations that joined ActionAid on this campaign in Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Peru, Paraguay and Nicaragua. Starting on the 15th of October 2008 - International Rural Women's Day - some **80.000 women** in more than 20 countries organized marches and rallies to claim their right to own land.

Although in different local contexts, all the mobilizations shared these common goals:

- > ensure more land and natural resources for women, through specific public allocations in land redistribution;
- > allow women to enjoy their property rights and their women's and farmers' rights through the elimination of discriminatory laws and policies;
- > make governments accountable for the protection and promotion of women farmers' rights, against the concentration of productive assets in the hands of elites, multinational corporations and the private sector.

Through a long preparation process **the participation of the poorest and most marginalized** women, who bravely spoke out, was achieved in several countries. In many cases the mobilization kick started research projects and more in depth analysis that led to the design of manifestos indicating precise and measurable changes needed.

In some contexts, members of parliament and governments were open to this initiatives, listened to women and made concrete pledges for the future. As a positive result, HungerFree Women allowed small

women farmers' organizations to get in touch with broader networks, and these strategic alliances led to the achievement of goals otherwise impossible through individual actions. Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean women's organizations were involved in Brazil and Haiti, and indigenous women's groups in Peru; in Nicaragua the presence and work of the *Central American International Food Security Network* was strengthened; in Paraguay the first women farmers' organization could be established and in Chile the work with rural women within the *Via Campesina* movement built synergies with sensitization initiatives against violence. The words of Magui Balbuena from the CONAMURI (National Coordination of Rural and Indigenous Women) association in Paraguay are significant: *"The campaign Mujeres por un Futuro Sin Hambre (Spanish translation for HungerFree Women) has been an excellent opportunity for us to get visibility. We are the only organization of indigenous women farmers and we are now experiencing an historic moment. After 61 years of deprivation of our productive assets this campaign is giving us the chance to show what the reality is and to prove the Government that we women represent the majority of the poor"*.

Since the issue of the access to land is interrelated to other problems, **in its messaging the campaign included references to "land grabbing", to new climate change challenges, to the increase of biofuel production** at the detriment of the food one and to the funding of the agricultural sector by States and donor countries. ActionAid has always been aware of the complexity of the land issue, of how agrarian reforms generate even bloody conflicts, of how the demand for land can often be reduced to and mistaken with mere individual titling, and how some of the identified solutions are often resulting in a worsening of the farmers' situation, especially women's. Nevertheless we considered essential to face these challenges and take sides with women farmers to support their claims, their activism and their local mobilizations. Participated actions in all countries led to **change patterns specifically designed for each context**.

3.3 Women marching forward: the case of India

Despite the demographic and economic growth of urban areas, the livelihood of 68% of the Indian population depends on land related activities. The caste system treats the Dalits (word standing for “oppressed people”) as untouchables: India counts about **100 million Dalit women** who represent 16.3% of the female population and the majority of the agricultural workforce in the country. Few of them own land (estimates are 2% to 3%) or have titling on natural resources, despite the article 21 of the Constitution acknowledges land as a fundamental asset. These women usually go hungry everyday and face further challenges such as untouchability and sexual violence: a triple burden of caste, class and gender. **For Dalit women the right to land is the right to life.** Land is not a commodity, but a precondition for survival.

ActionAid work with HungerFree Women in India built on a previous campaign led by the APDS (Andhra Pradesh Dalit Samakhya) association, which in 2007 mobilized Dalit women in five districts of Andhra Pradesh. Since then to spring 2009, **7000 acres of land have been granted to 5000 women** and some successes have also been recorded in Tamil Nadu and Bihar. These positive outcomes encouraged Dalit women activists all over the country to turn local claims into a national campaign. The decision was taken in a national consultation organized in 2008 by Dalit Academy and ActionAid who gathered about 80 Dalit activists and leaders of ActionAid’s partner communities from 12 Indian states.

HungerFree Women in India asked the Government to provide each Dalit woman in the country with 5 acres of arid land or 2.5 acres of wet land.

According to the statistics of the Ministry for Rural Development 39.14 million acres of wet land and 51.36 million acres of dry land are available in the country. However, the Government has always said that there is no land available for the untouchables. From Simla in the Himalaya to Bangalore in the South, from the desert of Jaipur to Guwahati in the North-East, thousands of women gathered, talked of all the wrongs they suffered with regard to the access to land and the right to food, drew up manifestos that served also as a platform for dialogue with the 2009 candidates to the political elections, and marched to be visible and involve other women in the struggle for land.

Among the complaints expressed by the Dalit women, also the negative effects of the privatization of natural resources and the expropriation of lands and forests which forced many indigenous women to migrate to find food and shelter. The Special Economic Zones, in particular, grant a total tax exemption for the corporations working there, which entails

a loss for the State (not always resulting in a benefit in terms of investment and development in the area), beyond grabbing of land that could be used for agricultural purposes.

The Chief Executive of ActionAid India, Professor Babu Mathew, said: *“Men must understand this claim. Women are important members of our society. Letting them own their land will contribute to end discriminations and social inequalities”*. Referring to the link with the violence that untouchable women suffer, he added: *“We cannot struggle against the dominant classes and the bureaucracy if we remain divided and inconsistent within our households. Being violent at home will not help the cause in any ways”*.

ActionAid encouraged more than 27.000 formal requests for land by women. **4895 women obtained what they asked for a total amount of 8000 acres distributed.** In Tamil Nadu the High Court established that Dalit women’s right to land must be enforced. Kalliammal, a woman farmer from the Kattupaiyur village in Tamil Nadu, said: *“Now I have my own land plot and I harvest enough to feed my family for the whole year. I am respected by my husband and son because this land is entitled to me. And one day my daughter, too, will be able to inherit this plot of land”*. Nagalakshma, 34 years old, from the Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh, echoes: *“Thanks to what we gained, now I am aware of my rights and I can claim them with authority and without fear”*. Yerrampalli Suseelamma from a village in the Cuddapah district in Andhra Pradesh had to wait for one year to get a legal document acknowledging her titling on her own plot of land and she finally received it in October, 2008. Thus, once achieved her goal, Yerrampalli joined APDS to support other women in their claims, took part in the marches organized in 2009 and her words witness the success of the campaign: *“Say land and women will join in”*.



{ R ecommendations }

Two years after the outbreak of the food crisis and five years before the deadline for achieving Millennium Development Goals, let us bring women's rights at the heart of the debate on hunger.

ActionAid recommends donor countries, the G8 and Italy in particular to put women farmers' rights at the core of their response to the food crisis, realizing what stated in the CEDAW, in the Beijing Platform of Action and in the ICARRD Final Declaration. In particular ActionAid asks Italy to:

1 **adequately fund the agricultural sector and the rural development** through bilateral and multilateral aid:

- a. maintaining the 0.7% ODA/GNP goal to be achieved by 2015 as per the European goals;
- b. clarifying how it will contribute to the funding pledged within the Aquila Food Initiative to reach its share of 450 million dollars in three years;
- c. increasing agricultural funding with an allocation of at least 10% of the total aid amount, according to what proposed by the UN High Level Task Force on the global food security crisis;
- d. ensuring that funding will sustain the developing countries' national plans in support of agriculture, through coordination and negotiation processes among donor countries, national domestic plans, UN agencies and civil society, as demanded by the ownership and alignment principles of the Paris Declaration and by the Accra Agenda on aid effectiveness;

2 **ensure that these funds will have gender equality and women's empowerment at their core:**

- a. supporting rural development projects oriented to sustainable agriculture within bilateral cooperation initiatives and prioritizing the allocation of resources to women farmers' as demanded by the International Assessment of Agricultural knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD);
- b. promoting projects aimed at the harmonization of customary laws with statutory laws on property rights, marriage & divorce and inheritance;
- c. supporting women farmers' associations claiming their right to land property and inheritance and promoting their participation in institutions and bodies for coordination and elaboration of national plans against hunger and in the international fora debating on rural development;
- d. integrating gender perspective with analysis and adequate indicators in all rural development projects, following the guidelines of UN food agencies and reporting to the gender monitoring and evaluating systems of the OECD/DAC;

3 **act in consultation with the other donor countries, international organizations and the G8 members** to:

- a. support the creation of databases with sex-disaggregated data in agricultural sector at national, regional and international level, so that policies and programmes are properly oriented, monitored and evaluated;
- b. ensure that the Task Force on the global food security crisis and the *Aquila Food Initiative* bring women's rights to land and food security at the heart of their work;
- c. emphasize gender inequalities in drafting the *Global Plan of Action on Food Security* by the reformed *Committee on World Food Security* and women's rights to land in the ICAARD follow-up process and in the Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food;

4 **endorse a moratorium on the further expansion of biofuel production** until the United Nations have fully assessed their impact worldwide and are able to ensure the respect of the human rights of the communities involved and the respect of the environment where they live;

5 **limit the carbon emissions and increase the funds for the adaptation and mitigation** of the effects of climate change in order to reach the overall annual amount of 132 billion euros from now to 2020, making it actually accessible for women.

Acronyms

AA	ActionAid
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAW	Committee for Asian Women
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CFA	Comprehensive Framework for Action
CERAI	Centre of Rural Studies and International Agriculture
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIA	Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori / Italian Confederation of Farmers
CINI	Coordinamento Italiano Network Internazionali / Italian Coordination of International Networks
CONAMURI	Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indígenas / National Coordination of Rural and Indigenous Women
COP	Conference of Parties
COPROFAM	Confederación de Organizaciones de Productores Familiares del MERCOSUR / Confederation of the Family Farmers' Organizations of MERCOSUR
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HLTF	High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
ICARRD	International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
IDS	Institute for Development Studies
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFAP	International Federation of Agricultural Producers
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEA	Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria / National Institute of Agrarian Economy
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISTAT	Istituto nazionale di Statistica / National Institute of Statistics
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization
WOCAN	Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management

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Women's rights and access to land.

The last stretch of road to eradicate hunger.

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ActionAid is an international anti-poverty agency whose aim is to fight poverty worldwide. Formed in 1972, for over 30 years we have been growing and expanding to where we are today - helping over 13 million of the world's poorest and most disadvantaged people in 42 countries worldwide. In all of our country programmes we work with local partners to make the most of their knowledge and experience. We work with them to fight poverty and injustice worldwide, reaching over 13 million of the poorest and most vulnerable people over the last year alone, helping them fight for and gain their rights to food, shelter, work, education, healthcare and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. Our partners range from small community support groups to national alliances and international networks seeking education for all, trade justice and action against HIV/AIDS. Our work with these national and international campaign networks highlights the issues that affect poor people and influences the way governments and international institutions think. We constantly seek new solutions and ask ourselves how we can make the greatest impact with our resources. We make the most of our skills and abilities by working at many levels - local, national, regional and international.

Women's Rights. Women and girls are the poorest of the poor because of the extreme forms of discrimination that persist in many parts of today's world. Women are often not allowed to own property or keep the money they earn; as farmers they get the most marginal land and as workers they are trapped in the worst jobs for the least pay. More girls than boys are denied education. Men still have a monopoly on decision-making at every level from village councils to national government, so even when policies are introduced to help the poor, they often ignore the needs of women. Men's power over women often costs women their lives. Women are more vulnerable to HIV infection because they are not able to insist on protected sex, even when they know their partner is infected. Men often use physical violence to reinforce their power over women and girls. Yet despite all this, women are powerful forces for change, amazingly determined and resourceful in their fight to achieve a better future. Every time a family has good food to eat and clean water to drink, every day that a child arrives at school or a sick person makes it to the clinic, it's usually a woman who has fought for this small, daily victory over adversity. The best way to end poverty is to strengthen women in their own struggles, helping them to unleash their own potential to change the world.

