



CONCEPT NOTE

Feeding the Planet – Empowering Women: the food and nutrition security challenge. Beijing +20 – Women for EXPO 2015

24 September 2014, Conference Room 7 (GA Building), 3:00-4:30 pm

Background

The Beijing Platform for Action identified “*Women and Poverty*” as one of its 12 critical areas of concern and outlines concrete actions to be taken by governments, the private sector, academic institutions, regional bodies and non-governmental organizations as well as the United Nations System.

Referring to the fact that poverty is particularly acute for women living in rural households, the Platform called for actors to formulate and implement policies and programmes that enhance: the access by women agricultural and fisheries producers to financial, technical, extension and marketing services; access to and control over land; access to appropriate infrastructure and technology in order to increase women's incomes and promote household food security, especially in rural areas; and encourage the development of producer-owned, market-based cooperatives.

Now after 20 years, it is a time to take a stock on the progress made and challenges remaining.

Next year Italy will host EXPO Milano 2015, dedicated to the theme “Feeding the Planet. Energy for Life”. In the run up to EXPO 2015, the Women for EXPO initiative was launched with the aim of raising awareness among Governments, civil society and public opinion worldwide on the need to empower women in order to achieve substantial progress in tackling the food security challenge. EXPO Milano 2015 will be a crucial platform for debate on the issue, thus contributing to identifying specific areas of action to enhance the role of women and close the gender gap in food production.

Current Situation

Close to 1 billion of the global population lives in chronic hunger. Statistics for those facing poor nutrition are worse. For the most part, the productivity of rural agriculture is low and, in many cases, suffering a downturn. This underperformance, in part, is because women, in spite of being a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, do not have equal access to the resources and opportunities they need to be as productive as men. Across countries and contexts, women have restricted access to productive resources such as land, agricultural inputs, finance, extension services and technology, and face more difficulty than men in benefiting from public services, social protection, decent employment opportunities and local and national markets and institutions.

Increasing women's access to those resources and services would boost their productivity and generate gains in terms of agricultural production, food security, economic growth and social welfare. According to FAO, if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 - 30 percent. Closing the gender gap in agricultural inputs alone could also lift 100–150 million people out of hunger. In addition, when women control additional income, they spend more of it than men do on food, health, clothing and education for their children. This has positive implications for immediate well-being, long-run human capital formation and economic growth through improved health, nutrition and education outcomes.

Effective strategic policy and programmatic responses are vital to improve rural women's food and nutrition security, build the productivity potential of women smallholder farmers, improve their access to assets, resources and services, and expand their income opportunities and access to high-value product markets. It is also crucial to ensure rural women's participation and leadership in shaping responses to the identified challenges and key policy processes such as the post-2015.

Purpose of the event

The purpose of this side-event is to identify effective strategies to close the gender gap and find answers and solutions to the following questions:

- How far have we come in 20 years? What has been the progress made in terms of mainstreaming gender equality in food and nutrition security –main achievements, remaining knowledge and policy gaps and challenges?
- What are the key strategies to be employed in closing the gender gap regarding food and nutrition security for rural women?
- What type of policies, programmes and financing are effective and required?

Format

The Governments of Italy, Ghana, World Food Programme and International Development Law Organization, in collaboration with UN Women, will organize a high-level event under the title on “Feeding the Planet – Empowering Women”, to support the mainstreaming of gender equality in food and nutrition security. The event will take place on 24.9 in New York, during the opening week of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly. The event will be also part of the Beijing+20 campaign and the Women for EXPO initiative.

Panelists

- *Feeding the Planet: Empowering Women. The Italian Perspective*, by **Hon. Federica Mogherini, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy**
- *Empowering Rural Communities by Effective Access to Markets – The Role of Marketing Boards and Commodity Exchange*, by **Hon. Hannah Tetteh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ghana**
- *Reaching Rural Women: The Key to Food and Nutrition Security*, by **Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director – UNWFP**
- *Closing the gender gap: food security and women's empowerment*, by **Ms. Irene Khan, Director-General – IDLO**
- *Promoting Gender Equality in the context of Food and Nutrition Security, B+20 and post 2015 development Framework*, by **ASG Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women**

English and French interpretation will be provided