



## **Gender Equality in Rural Advisory Services**

### **A GFRAS Working Group**

#### **Concept Note**

##### **1. Introduction**

Increasing gender equality in access to rural advisory services has the potential to make important contributions to a fairer playing field for men and women, and to provide women with their right full potential to contribute to and benefit from economic opportunities in the agricultural sector. Moreover, equal opportunities for men and women are an important precondition for increasing productivity in small-holder farming in most developing countries. Recent publications have emphasised the need for increased gender equality in the agricultural sector<sup>1</sup>. Several organisations are concerned with the lack of results in this area and are therefore seeking guidance on how rural advisory services can fully roll out their potential for inclusion of women into the process of agricultural development on equal terms with men<sup>2</sup>.

The role of GFRAS is to provide policy guidance and advocacy regarding more effective rural advisory services based on evidence. It has therefore been decided by the GFRAS Steering Committee to increase attention to gender equality in RAS and work towards being able to provide guidance and advocacy in this area. In order to do so, GFRAS has established a working group consisting of experts with relevant experiences, expertise and interest to support GFRAS in forwarding the aim of gender equality in Rural Advisory Services. The present Concept Note outlines the purpose, objectives and activities for the working group over the next period 2013 to 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> FAO. 2011. *Women in Agriculture - closing the gender gap for development*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization; Quisumbing, Agnes R., and Lauren Pandolfelli. 2009. Promising approaches to address the needs of poor female farmers: resources, constraints and interventions. *World Development* 38 (4):581-592; World Bank, FAO, and IFAD. 2009. *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook. Agriculture and Rural Development Series*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Charman, A. J. E. 2008. "Empowering Women Through Livelihoods Orientated Agricultural Service Provision. A Consideration of Evidence from Southern Africa". UNU-Wider Research Paper No. 2008/01. Helsinki: UNU-Wider; Commonwealth Secretariat. 2001. "Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Rural Development. A Reference Manual for Governments and Other Stakeholders". London: Commonwealth Secretariat; Davis, Kristin, Ephraim Nkonya, Edward Kato, Daniel Ayalew Mekonnen, Martins Odoendo, Richard Miiro and Jackson Nkuba. 2010. "Impact of Farmer Field Schools on Agricultural Productivity and Poverty in East Africa". IFPRI Discussion Paper 00992, June 2010. IFPRI Knowledge, Capacity, and Innovation Division. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

## 2. Rationale

### 2.1 Gender equality is a high priority goal for development and also smart economy

The UN Millennium Development Goals, placed gender equality as a top priority for global development. The third goal: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN<sup>3</sup> placed particularly strong emphasis on providing equal opportunities to education and health including reproductive health. Lately there has been much attention also on women's equal economic opportunities and women's role in agricultural production is becoming a centre of attention in this perspective, as well as in the perspective of improving food security and nutritional status for poor families. The World Development Report 2012 concludes that *"gender equality is a core development objective in its own right. It is also smart economy as it can enhance productivity, improve development outcome for the next generations and make institutions more representative"*<sup>4</sup>. Yet, a recent survey by OECD-DAC<sup>5</sup> of aid committed by DAC members to gender equality and women's empowerment in the economic and productive sectors found that this amounted to USD 4.6 billion on average per year in 2007-08. This represents only one-fifth of total aid in these sectors. Only a small share of this USD 4.6 billion is targeted at gender equality or women's empowerment as the main objective (2%)<sup>6</sup>.

### 2.2 Gender equality is particularly crucial for food security and reduction of hunger

In the agricultural sector, it is estimated that if women had equal access to productive resources, they could increase their yields on their farms by 20 to 30%, which would potentially raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2,5 to 4% and reduce the number of undernourished people in the world by 12 to 17%. As an example of the enhancement of productivity, the World Development Report for 2012 presents the calculation from Malawi and Ghana that equal access to inputs and services would increase maize yields alone by 11 to 17%<sup>7</sup>.

Women's roles in agricultural production are important all over the world, but particularly so in developing countries. On average, women's labour comprises 43%<sup>8</sup> of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, ranging from about 20% in Latin America to almost 50% in Eastern and South-eastern Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Women participate both as wage labourer in commercial productions, with work in the family farms or their own farms. It should be noted that estimates of women's participation in agricultural work should be treated with caution as data on women's work on family and their own farms are rarely available. More intensive surveys of women's work contributions on small scale farms often find these to be much higher. In many African countries, it is thus normally stated that 80% of farm labour is provided by women and girls.

Another strong concern related to gender equality in agriculture is the widespread malnutrition of children in the developing countries. Several cases have documented that increasing gender equality in terms of education, women's rights to resources and participation in decision making can improve the nutritional status of families – also that women's access to effective extension services that address issues of nutrition both through increasing knowledge and working with improved farming systems oriented towards improved and sustainable food production can play a strong role in improving nutrition status of families.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<sup>4</sup> The World bank; 2011; World Development Report 2012 – Gender Equality and Development

<sup>5</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee

<sup>6</sup> OECD-DAC; 2011; Aid in Support of Women's Economic Empowerment; Issues Paper 2

<sup>7</sup> For Ghana: 11 to 16% and for Malawi 17%

<sup>8</sup> FAO, 2011; Women in Agriculture, Closing the gender gap for development; The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11

### 2.3 Women's roles in agriculture have increased but women have strong constraints to increasing production

Over the last few decades, women have expanded and deepened their involvement in agriculture in many developing countries. They increasingly shoulder the responsibility for household survival and respond to economic opportunities in commercial agriculture. This happens as rapid changes in the agricultural sector in many parts of the world makes smallholder production less viable and men therefore to a high degree migrate into other sectors and away from the rural areas. Women are then left with the farm responsibility alone and take over men's tasks such as land preparation and cash crop production. However, as this is happening, there have been almost no changes in the patterns of landownership and in women's access to agricultural services, credits, inputs and technologies. Hence, the problems of low productivity and of producing adequate food on the smallholder farms are reinforced.

Women therefore face great constraints in taking advantage of economic opportunities in the agricultural sector. A recent Issues Paper from DAC Network on gender equality<sup>9</sup> lists the constraints. As compared to men, women:

- Operate smaller farms
- Keep fewer livestock and mainly of small stock type
- Have greater overall workload
- Have less access to innovation and productive assets and services
- Are much less likely to purchase inputs such as fertilisers, improved seeds and mechanical equipment
- Have weaker property rights and tenure security and therefore reduced incentives to invest in their land
- Are poorly represented in the leadership of rural organisations
- If employed, are more likely to be in part-time, seasonal and low-paying jobs
- Receive lower wages for the same work

### 2.4 Agricultural advisory services are often male biased

When looking at this list of inequalities and inequities between men and women in farming, it is clear that one essential gap for women's opportunities is the lack of access to rural advisory services, which, if well developed and strategically targeted, would have the potential to contribute to addressing several of the above issues for women. It is therefore unfortunate that most extension services mainly approach male farmers<sup>10</sup>. Most development policies have so far automatically assumed that farmers are men and extension concepts are designed along this assumption both in terms of targeting employment of staff and content of the services.

A study by FAO from 1988-89 in 97 countries thus showed that only 5% of extension resources were directed at women and 15% of extension personnel were women. There are no newer global figures available for the attention by extension to women, but over the past two decades there have been several efforts to overcoming gender biases in advisory services. The overall impacts of this, however, have been limited. The limited impact is a result of the fact that the broader policy and institutional environment are not equitable. Gender inequality in the agricultural sector is deeply rooted in gender relations that are crucial for farming: Gender relations at family, household and community levels, land and property rights, access to credit and financial services, to agricultural inputs, to advisory services, markets etc. Advisory services are therefore seriously constrained in overcoming the biases.

<sup>9</sup> OECD; 2011; Women's Economic Empowerment; Issues Paper, DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET)

<sup>10</sup> Doss, Cheryl R. and Michael L. Morris. 2001. "How does gender affect the adoption of agricultural innovations? The case of improved maize technology in Ghana". *Agricultural Economics* Vol. 25: 27–39; Meinzen-Dick, R., Agnes R. Quisumbing, J. Behrman, P. Biermayr-Jenzano, V. Wilde, M. Nordeloos, C. Ragasa, and N. Beintema. 2010. Engendering agricultural research. In *IFPRI Discussion Paper No. 973*, edited by IFPRI. Washington D.C.: IFPRI; Doss CR. 2001. Designing Agricultural Technology for African Women Farmers: Lessons from 25 Years of Experience. *World Development* 29(12): 2075–2092.

A study from Uganda on examining linkages between poverty and gender noted the following issues affecting extension in reaching women<sup>11</sup>:

- Lack of access to and control of land results in women having far less interest than men in investing in expanded or intensive agricultural production and hence they are less interested in the extension messages related to such topics
- Women have limited opportunities to access extension services in situations where culture dictates restrictions in movements outside the domestic sphere
- Women's daily workload leaves no time to seek services that are only available in the public sphere
- Extension messages are not responsive to strategic agricultural activities, interest and responsibilities of female small-scale farmers

These are common issues confirmed by several other studies from different regions.

### **3. The Working Group**

#### **3.1 Purpose and objectives**

The working group is established with 26 specialists within the fields of gender equality and rural advisory services (RAS) representing a wide range of roles: Researchers, educators, development partners and RAS practitioners (see list of members in Annex 1). Several other experts have indicated that they want to be part of the working group. The group thus represents a strong resource of knowledge and experiences in gender equality in RAS and commitment to enhance this.

The purpose of the working group is to create an effective global voice for commitment to increased gender equality and women's empowerment through increased access to and participation in Rural Advisory Services. This will be pursued by supporting the GFRAS mission and functions of advocacy with regard to gender equality in rural advisory services.

The objectives of the working group are to:

- Spearhead gender mainstreaming<sup>12</sup> in GFRAS and its regional networks
- Increase awareness and knowledge on the importance, issues and experiences of gender equality in rural advisory services as brokers of information and linkages
- Provide GFRAS with evidence based recommendations for policies and approaches that effectively promote increased gender equality in rural advisory services
- Provide linkages to opportunities for advocacy for GFRAS that will promote commitments at policy levels
- Provide a platform for networking and interaction for strengthening capacity on aspects of gender equality in rural advisory services

#### **3.2 Current knowledge and experiences**

From the experiences that exist in the group and members' networks, it can be concluded that there is a great deal to gain from enhancing gender equality in access to rural advisory services. It is also clear that several pilot projects and studies, where inclusion of women has been successful, provide solid evidence that it is possible to increase women farmers' capacity and knowledge through relevant and effective advisory services and that this pays extremely well off in terms of increased agricultural pro-

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<sup>11</sup> Danida 2008; Preparatory study of U-growth component Gender Equality for Rural Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction

<sup>12</sup> "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated".

duction, household food and nutritional security and reduction of poverty at that level. There are several different tools for gender analyses available, which means that there are good possibilities for continued collection of evidence from gender-focused programmes and practises that can improve our knowledge of what works, where, when and for whom and why.

There are documented experiences related to gender-sensitive approaches and practises such as farmer field schools, participatory methodologies in working with women's groups, business training of women and use of radio and other ICTs for providing knowledge and information to women.

Some initiatives have experiences related to addressing gender biases in RAS institutions. The experiences show that success first of all requires strong and affirmative gender targeting and monitoring and that methods are applied to match supply of services with women's actual needs. This is crucial since women and men usually have different roles and responsibilities as farmers and therefore are engaged in different types of agricultural activities. The proper matching appears to be closely linked to representation of women in decision making in the RAS institutions. The experiences with quota enforcement are mixed. In some cases it works and in others it does not because the quota is not fulfilled.

Most experience confirms that women extensionists in many contexts are important for reaching women farmers with services. In terms of building capacity of women staff, there are challenges related to extension being attractive as an occupation for women. There are, however, experiences with different types of incentives for women staff in organisations, right from providing a gender sensitive working environment to direct financial incentives for women to work in extension.

There are fewer documented experiences in successfully addressing issues related to power and rights of women and in some contexts these become great obstacles to women's participation in RAS. The group, however, does have knowledge of cases where rural women's access to legal services has contributed to their economic empowerment, just as some few organisations have managed to facilitate fairer gender relations in households and communities.

Climate variability is predicted to bring about significant changes in agricultural production and production systems. This will have enormous implications for the poorest and most marginalised communities and especially women. The need to provide a gender focus has been highlighted as part of a package of Innovative Approaches to Climate Smart Agriculture as a priority area for intervention to enhance gender equity and equal opportunities for women and men to benefit from new technologies and farming techniques. Currently there is little evidence and information on how women are being supported in the context of climate variability which calls for re-thinking the role that RAS can play.

### **3.3 Addressing issues of commitment and ownership**

As pointed out above, there are numerous experiences of pilots and projects that have made important breakthroughs in terms of providing relevant advisory services to women as well as men, whereby women have been able to increase their food production and in many cases their incomes through agricultural production. In some instances, the increased knowledge and capacity of rural women have even tended to improve their status in households and communities, and thereby contributed to social and economic empowerment.

However, looking beyond the pilot interventions, it is striking that a major issue constraining gender equality in agriculture is the lack of sustainability when it comes to up-scaling/mainstreaming of the concept of gender equality in access to services. This is strongly connected to the lack of commitment at all levels to the goals of gender equality as well as lack of local ownership. When the commitment is

lacking, the deeply rooted cultural constraints will not be challenged and they therefore remain strong obstacles to women's participation.

Commitment to gender equality in rural advisory services relates directly to motivation, which in turn often comes from accountability. Those cases where results have been positive have always been subjected to strong affirmative gender targeting and monitoring and women farmers' participation in decision making and planning of the services<sup>13</sup>. The gender targeting and monitoring has the effect that it creates the necessary motivation of the RAS systems to reach both women and men equally, whereby the focus on women can be sustained. However, for long term sustainability it is important that the RAS systems embrace systems for women's representation in decision making as well as funding mechanisms that can support accountability to both women and men.

The main focus of the working group will be on creating awareness and commitment to gender equality at high levels of decision making in rural advisory services – with national authorities, rural advisory organisations' management, development partners and development research in advisory services. At the same time, the working group will continue to develop and share knowledge on systems that enhance accountability to women users.

### **3.4 Organisation and Governance of the working group**

The working group will consist of the 26 individual members of which 15 participated in the first start-up meeting. The working group will include individual members based on their expressed interest and capacity to contribute to the work of the group. It will include members of the GFRAS regional networks to ensure that it is responsive to regional and national concerns. The group may select small core groups for specific tasks as needs arise. The work will be facilitated by a consultant contracted by GFRAS, who will be responsible for facilitating the process and acting as a secretary for the group.

The working group will meet annually in face to face meetings to coordinate and follow up on the activities and thereby continue to act as a reference group to the implementation of the activities suggested in this CN and also assist in fundraising for its financing.

The group will have reference to and receive the necessary supervision from the GFRAS Executive Secretary and other assistance required from the GFRAS Secretariat.

## **4. The way forward – proposed activities**

The proposed activities for the period 2012 to 2014 are the following:

### **4.1 Create a knowledge sharing platform**

To exchange available information and for discussion of collaboration, a web-forum for interactive sharing and discussion between working group members will be created and linked to the GFRAS website. This will include a web directory of organisations working in this topic.

During the period, the web-forum will progress and widen its scope to become the basis for a web-forum to be accessed by professionals and policy makers for decision support advice on policies and practises for increasing women's access to and benefit from rural advisory services.

The web-forum will be designed and set up by the GFRAS secretariat and the working group members will use it for interactive sharing of knowledge and experiences, manage e-conferences and provide linkages to relevant initiatives and organisations.

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<sup>13</sup> An example would be from Farnworth, C.R.; 2010; Gender Aware Approaches in Agricultural Programmes: A study of Sida Supported Agricultural programmes; Sida Evaluation 2010:3



#### **4.2 Development of conceptual paper on gender equality in RAS**

In order to support the advocacy for commitment to gender equality in rural advisory services, the first issue to address is to increase awareness and understanding of what this means conceptually and for the planning and implementation of the services.

Therefore a paper will be prepared that defines and explains the concept of gender equality in advisory services and summarises the existing experiences. This will be based on the current knowledge in the working group and its environment of documented experiences. The paper can eventually have the form of a Policy Brief for GFRAS.

ToRs for this will be prepared by GFRAS secretariat and a core group will prepare the paper together with the facilitator.

#### **4.3 Gender mainstreaming of GFRAS**

Gender equality will be mainstreamed in GFRAS. This first of all means including a gender perspective into the GFRAS Long Term Strategic Framework, Work plan and M&E system. It will mean assessing the implications for women and men of any part of the planned actions, including the governance and operational framework. The strategy should thus include a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the functions, governance and operations of GFRAS.

This will be done by the GFRAS Secretariat, eventually through a consultancy. The gender mainstreamed documents will be shared with the working groups for comments and contributions.

#### **4.4 Assisting regional networks in mainstreaming gender in their work**

As part of the gender mainstreaming of GFRAS, a dialogue will be initiated with the regional networks in order to identify the issues, challenges and priorities in gender equality in the different regions. This was started at the GFRAS annual meeting 2012 during the progress reporting from the working group and the following discussions. The discussions showed that many RAS organisations in both Asia and Africa are struggling with finding ways to reach women, through gender policies in their organisations or through different types of gender sensitive practises. Almost all agree that there is a strong need to increase the number of women professionals in this area, but also that it requires addressing a number of issues to make the environment attractive and enabling for female professionals – in some areas more than others. Several organisations expressed the need for assistance in designing gender sensitive RAS interventions and also for the monitoring systems required to follow the results.

Base on expressed demand, the working group will act as a sparring partner/sounding board to the regional networks and other working groups under GFRAS on issues of gender equality, such as the groups on capacity building, policy, and extension evaluation to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed and get sufficient attention in the work and outputs of the groups. This could result in the establishment of a virtual Help Desk for the regional networks and the working groups on issues pertaining to gender equality.

#### **4.5 Develop the ideas of a parallel initiative to AWARD for women extensionists**

One of the overriding challenges in gender equality in rural advisory services is the eminent lack of women staff within this sector. Numerous experiences find huge challenges in making this occupation attractive to women. In this regard, the concept of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) is interesting to consider.

AWARD is a project of the Gender & Diversity Program of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). AWARD is a professional development programme that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

AWARD fellows benefit from a two-year career development programme focused on establishing mentoring partnerships, building science skills, and developing leadership capacity. The fellowships are awarded on the basis of intellectual merit, leadership capacity, and the potential of the scientist's research to improve the daily lives of smallholder farmers, especially women.

The possibilities for either creating a parallel initiative to this for women extensionists or for a career programme for African women extensionists to become part of AWARD will be explored. The latter solution will have the limitation that it will then only cater for women in extension in Africa. The possibilities will be explored by the GFRAS Secretariat and working group members as appropriate, as a consultation with AWARD and partners interested in such. The working group has members that are part of AWARD and can therefore provide the required links for communication.

The questions to explore in the first round are:

- Who would be interested in this initiative?
- Which regions are interested?
- Who would be interested to fund such initiative?
- Is there interest within AWARD to extend their mandate to include extensionist careers?
- What are the relevant options?
- What are the pros and cons of the different options?

After the first exploration of options, the working group can create a small core group to formulate recommendations to take this forward.

#### **4.6 Identifying research needs related to gender in RAS**

The working group is an extremely relevant forum for identification of research needs related to gender equality in RAS. At the same time it also has the linkages necessary to assist GFRAS in presenting these to the relevant research organisations. The first parts of this can be conducted as an e-discussion on the knowledge platform – which can lead to final recommendations to be discussed at face to face meetings. The list of prioritised research needs can be listed on the knowledge platform as way of dissemination, but should be further promoted by the GFRAS secretariat and the working group members in their own organisations. Examples of areas that can be explored for research in the future include:

- Addressing power and right: In combination with other efforts to enhance women's voice in households and society and secure property rights, rural advisory services can contribute through:
  - Provision of legal advice on property rights and on legalising business operations
  - Facilitating negotiations of more equal gender relations in families, households, communities and workplaces
- Choice of approaches and methods: There are indications that some approaches and methods are particularly appropriate to reach women:
  - Participatory approaches can target women better and increase their innovation
  - ICTs may have a particular potential for reaching women if the current gender biases in access are effectively addressed<sup>14</sup>
- Correcting biases in advisory service institutions:
  - Strong and strategic gender targeting in the design and implementation of RAS
  - Gender monitoring for staff

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<sup>14</sup> Farm Radio International and Farm Radio Malawi have documented promising lessons on the same



- Building capacity and numbers of women extension staff like it is done for women scientists in the AWARD programme<sup>15</sup>
- Securing representation of women in decision making in the RAS organisations
- Expanding the reach of RAS
- Building demand from women – for example by supporting women farmers’ organisations or by supporting women’s participation in farmer organisations<sup>16</sup>
- The roles of different types of RAS actors (government, civil society and private sector) on gender equality in the services

#### **4.7 Facilitate regional networks’ contribution to the next GCWA (2015)**

The working group will in collaboration with the Gender in Agriculture Partnership (GAP) facilitate regional dialogues to identify GCWA regional priorities on RAS and track their implementation up to the next GCWA (2015).

### **5. Related initiatives**

There are several organisations that have started initiatives and show interest in the issues around gender equality in agriculture. Some examples are listed here:

- African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) has recently completed a review of case studies on targeting women advisory service providers in capacity development programmes<sup>17</sup>. The review provides recommendations to AFAAS on how to promote and use the best practises [www.afaas-africa.org](http://www.afaas-africa.org)
- OECD has raised attention to women’s economic empowerment – and hereunder also agriculture through the DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) which is an international forum where experts from development cooperation agencies meet to define common approaches in support of gender equality <http://www.oecd.org/dac/genderequalityanddevelopment/>
- WB, FAO and IFAD have a Gender and Rural Development Thematic Working Group (GENRD) that has developed a website containing resources and information: [www.genderinag.org](http://www.genderinag.org). This is a tool to help practitioners integrate gender into all phases of project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and completion
- GFAR <http://www.egfar.org> has initiated the Gender in Agriculture Partnership (GAP). The GAP is bringing together the CGIAR (Diversity & Gender, IFPRI/CRP2 and AWARD); UN agencies - FAO-ESW (Rural Institutions and People’s Empowerment); IFAD; UN Women and the World Bank and technical agencies and NGOs including IDS, ICRW and DIMITRA to address gender, GAP is working through the Regional Fora of national research systems e.g. APAARI, FARA and AARINENA
- Global Conference on Women in Agriculture, held 13 to 15 March 2012 in New Delhi, India. The conference was organised by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) with support from GFAR under the Gender in Agriculture Partnership. In the conference was included a session chaired by GFRAS on engendering agricultural research, education and extension [www.gcwa.in/](http://www.gcwa.in/)

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<sup>15</sup> AWARD is a project of the Gender and Diversity Programme of the CGIAR that aim to strengthen the research and leadership skills of African Women in agricultural sciences through providing fellowship programmes for female African scientists

<sup>16</sup> World farmers organisation recently (November 2011) developed a policy position paper : Rural Women: Policies to help them Thrive

<sup>17</sup> AFAAS, 2011; A review of case studies on targeting women advisory service providers in capacity development programmes: Final report. AFAAS, Kampala, Uganda and FARA, Accra, Ghana

- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has an internal working group on gender and agriculture
- The CGIAR Gender and Diversity Programme assists the CGIAR centres in recruitment, advancement and retention of women scientists and professionals  
<http://www.cgiar.org/consortium-news/gender-and-diversity-a-time-for-change/>
- The CGIAR recently formed a network of researchers working on gender and agriculture with their fifteen new global research programs. For more information see <http://www.cgiar.org/our-research/research-on-gender-and-agriculture/>
- International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) is conducting several research projects and has resources related to gender in agriculture<sup>18</sup> and has recently developed the "Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index <http://www.ifpri.org/publication/womens-empowerment-agriculture-index>
- International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) assisted by the CGIAR Gender and Diversity Programme is mobilising applications from women scientists and professionals to prepare a review of literature on gender, climate change and crop-livestock systems
- [www.genderinvaluechains.org](http://www.genderinvaluechains.org) is a platform created and maintained by Agri-ProFocus Learning Networks. The platform aims to increase the gender sensitivity of value chain oriented sustainable rural economic development programmes through fostering exchange between professionals worldwide
- SDC's Agriculture and Rural Development Network (a+rd Network)<sup>19</sup> identified targeting of women in rural advisory services as an important challenge that needs to be addressed and carried out an e-discussion in September 2011, which resulted in a Brief no 1. That highlights practical gender issues to consider when planning and implementing rural advisory services<sup>20</sup>  
[http://www.sdc-foodsecurity.ch/en/Home/Focus\\_areas/Rural\\_advisory\\_services](http://www.sdc-foodsecurity.ch/en/Home/Focus_areas/Rural_advisory_services)
- SDC's e+I Network has recently organised an e-discussion on Women's Economic Empowerment in Making Markets Work for the Poor. A discussion paper was prepared by Linda Jones on behalf of the M4P Hub and the discussion has been synthesised in a short paper<sup>21</sup>  
<http://www.m4phub.org/news/Womens-Economic-Empowerment-in-M4P-Synthesis-of-the-e-discussion-with-SDCs-e-i-network.aspx>
- USAID is giving grants for Innovations in Gender Equality (IGE) to promote household food security to increase women's leadership in the agriculture sector, improve women's utilisation of technology to raise agricultural productivity, strengthen gender equality in land, credit and other agricultural policies and achieve other measures to enhance nutritional outcomes for women and children
- Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) is an initiative funded by USAID and has recently produced a Technical Note on Applying Gender Responsive Value Chain Analysis in Extension and Advisory Services <http://www.meas-extension.org/>

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.ifpri.org/book-20/ourwork/researcharea/gender>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.sdc-foodsecurity.ch/>

<sup>20</sup> Carter, J. and Weigel, N.; 2011; Targeting Women in Rural Advisory Services (RAS), a+rd Network Brief No 1

<sup>21</sup> Women's Economic Empowerment in M4P Projects Synthesis of the e-discussion of SDC's e+I network from 19 March to 10 April 2012

- FANRPAN has been conducting the project Women Accessing Realigned Markets (WARM) which has strengthened women farmers' ability to advocate for appropriate agricultural policies and programmes. The project used an innovative tool, Theatre for Policy Advocacy, to engage leaders, service providers and policymakers, encourage community participation, and research the needs of women farmers<sup>22</sup>
- The Gender Research in Africa into ICTs for Empowerment (GRACE) project was initiated in 2005 involving 14 research teams in 12 countries. The GRACE project focuses on gender research into ICT for empowerment, uncovering and exploring women's experiences of empowerment in the context of their gendered, social, cultural, economic and political realities. It involves the network of research teams in Africa, and introducing the project to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, adding 6 countries and 14 teams to the Network. <http://www.grace-network.net/>

The many related initiatives show the strong attention to the issues related to women's roles in agriculture and women's economic empowerments from many partners in development. It includes initiatives by research, development partners as well as networks of practitioners dealing with development of gender sensitive practises in RAS and value chain development. The value that the GFRAS working group will add to these initiatives will be to pull together the particular concerns raised from GFRAS network partners regarding women's access to agricultural advisory services with the research findings in this respect and vice versa raise the attention in research institutions and provide direction to the priorities regarding research in this area. Moreover, the working group will provide links between GFRAS and the above initiatives and will thus ensure that the experiences and lessons from the initiatives are well integrated in the knowledge base of GFRAS and also that the information can flow from GFRAS to these initiatives on issues of gender equality in RAS.

Compiled 25 October, 2012 by

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d00959/WARM\\_brochure\\_20090824.pdf](http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d00959/WARM_brochure_20090824.pdf)