

WORLD FOOD DAY

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Headquarters, Rome

Arzu Ozyol, President of BPW Turkey, prepared this report to share the knowledge with BPW Members about the importance of women in food security and nutrition, as discussed on the World Food Day, at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Rome, on October 17, 2011.

Introduction:

I had the big honour to be part of the opening ceremony of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Rome on behalf of Business and Professional Women International (BPWI) with President BPWI Freda Miriklis ; President of BPW-Italy Eufemia Ippolito and the BPWI representative of FAO Ms. Christina Gorasjki Visconti and many others very distinguished guests as her excellency Michelle Bachelet.

Evaluation:

This report is prepared to share the knowledge with BPW Members about the subjects that reflect the importance of women in food security and nutrition, discussed during the 1st day panels.

All people should access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet needs for a healthy and active life. Food security is built on three foundational pillars as food availability, access to food and food utilization. Women play a vital role across all three pillars. While in Africa more than 50% and in East Asia 44% of women work in agriculture, the average ratio women in agriculture throughout the world is never lower than 35%. Therefore, In order to ensure food security and nutrition, it should be required to protect women's rights and to improve their social and nutritional status as well.

Evidence shows that women are responsible for half of the world's food production and in most developing countries, rural women produce between 60–80% of the food. Women also have an important role in establishing sustainable

use of resources in small-scale fishing communities, and their knowledge is valuable for managing and protecting watersheds and wetlands. Shortly, women are involved in every stage of food production. Although men usually plough the fields and drive draught animals, women do most of the work involved in sowing, weeding, fertilizing and harvesting the staple crops – such as rice, wheat and maize – which allows for more than 90 % of the rural poor's diet. Women's contribution to secondary crops, such as legumes and vegetables, is even greater. Most of these crops are grown in home gardens, tended almost exclusively by women. Moreover, in poor regions, food security is often dependent on women's subsistence production to feed the population. For example, in Kenya, women are 75-89% of the agricultural labor force. In Tanzania, women are 80 % of unpaid family labor in agriculture. Livestock is the primary subsistent activity used to meet household food needs as well as supplement farm incomes. Mostly women are engaged in cleaning of animal, sheds, watering and milking the animals as well. Labor Survey of Pakistan 2006-07 disclosed that stall feeding of animals is carried out by 31% of females, whereas, milking, milk processing carried out by 58% and preparing dung cakes are carried out by 90% of females. 90% women are involved in shed cleaning and 85% in collection of farm yard manure. Watering is also performed by the 69% of females. Males, however, share the responsibility of taking care of sick animals. It is evident that the women are playing a dominant role in the livestock production and management activities. Poultry farming is one of the major sources of rural economy. The rate women in poultry farming at household level is the central in poultry industry. Even though rural women are not using modern management techniques, such as vaccination and improved feed, but their poultry enterprise is impressive and so, in every year, income from poultry farming has been rising. In order to generate more and more income, rural women often sell all eggs and poultry meat and left nothing for personal use. Due to poverty and lack of required level of proteins most of women have got a very poor health. Most of women suffer from malnutrition.

Doubtless, the conditions for the women working in agriculture especially in rural areas of under developed and developing countries are tragic. Regardless of whether they are young, old, pregnant, ill, or whether the weather is hot or cold, or the route is safe or not, numerous women in the world are forced to walk ten to fifteen kilometers every day, often barefoot, in order to find water; and they frequently suffer physical attacks. To illustrate better what women do in order to fulfill their traditional duties despite waterborne diseases and the

weight of water they carry, it is estimated that the sum total of the distance covered by women walking to find water only in South Africa is twelve times the distance between earth and the moon. A study in Africa found that, women transport 26 metric ton kilometers per year compared to less than 7 for men.

In places far away from water resources, girls are not sent to school and used as unpaid workers in water carrying alongside their mothers. Research conducted on the issue shows that schools without lavatories have a negative effect on girls' registration for school and their attendance to classes. Ten percent of African girls either do not attend to school during their menstruation period or leave the school altogether in their puberty as a consequence of the lack of clean and private sanitation in schools. Coping with menstrual hygiene or defecating in the open is not only embarrassing; it also renders girls and women vulnerable to attacks and rape. A recent study estimated that 4 women were raped every 5 minutes in Congo (2011). Such women are also disproportionately affected by natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, as a result of gender inequalities regarding political and economic status, human rights, education and health. Women have high death rates in disasters, as they often do not receive warnings or other information about hazards and risks. Their mobility in disasters may be restricted or affected due to cultural and social constraints. Gender inequality can complicate and extend the time for women's recovery, for example, if women do not receive timely care for trauma experienced in disasters.

Each year, more than 2.2 million people in developing countries die from preventable diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. The social and environmental health costs of ignoring the need to address sanitation (including hygiene and wastewater collection and treatment) are far too great to ignore. On the other hand, diseases related to the lack of water and sanitation cause great health problems also in children. The death rate of mothers and newborn children is increased by the failure to provide the necessary hygiene during pregnancy, the birth and the period immediately following the birth. The babies fed with baby bottles under the lack of clean water run a far greater risk of being contaminated by waterborne diseases compared to breast-fed babies. In approximately every 15 seconds, another baby dies because of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, typhus, cholera and dysentery. In reality, the data on child death rates have a closer relationship with the data about lack of access to water and sanitation than

many others have, including general poverty data and the data on access to health services. Each day 6000 children die because of diseases related to unsafe water. It should also be noted that women are primarily responsible for patient care.

Despite such a huge contribution of the women, women's ability to add value is very limited although their time burdens is very high with respect to the men do the same job. The first reason of this confirmation is the lack of technology and poor equipment impedes owned by women. In the Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic only 5% of women used technology where the 48% of men used technology. Secondly, Land is likely to be owned by women. Shockingly, women hold title to less than 20% of the world's private land. Studies cited in Deere and Doss indicate that women represent just 5% of registered landholders in Kenya in 2006. Besides the problem in the means of access to land, extension services are critical for the women due to the lack of access financial sources and training opportunities as well.

The first key factor in agriculture is that laws and policies guarantee equal rights for men and women to own and control assets such as land, and to receive services such as health, education, extension and credit. Doubtless, to ensure well-qualified female candidates for senior positions in public and private agricultural organizations, it is required to provide an access to qualitatively and quantitatively high qualified training programs for the young girls formally and as a second chance for the women. Secondly, water, sanitation and other forms of basic infrastructure services, including transport for the household are critical complementary inputs and largely provided by women and girls should be taken into consideration and the emergence need of them should be reflected to local, national, regional and global policy making processes.

Multilateral, bilateral and national institutions made concerted efforts to identify and improve upon gender biases existing in statistical data collection methodologies, concepts and definitions that contributed to the statistical—invisibility of women's involvement in agriculture data. Previously, policies for agricultural development often narrowly focused on agricultural production growth, overlooking the importance of human resources and the social welfare aspects of agricultural development. Statisticians in these countries have become more aware of the importance of producing sex-disaggregated agriculture data

for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of effective and sustainable agricultural development policies and programmes. Because, the collection of sex-disaggregated data in food security and agriculture information system is critical, and provides the foundation for gender-focused data analysis and for the better understanding of gender related constraints and more gender-aware policy decisions. All the policies requires an understanding of the gender dimensions at stake and the inclusion of gender lens, in the absence of this approach, policies will continue to have unanticipated impacts and so to provide sustainable development becomes an inaccessible illusion.

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