

**Inter-American Institute
for Cooperation on Agriculture**

Directorate of Technical Cooperation

STRATEGY FOR

**Gender and
Rural WOMEN in
Agricultural
Development and
RURAL Territories**



We intend to apply a gender equality and sustainable development approach that would not only allow for understanding the diversity and distinguishing characteristics of rural women, but would also contribute to identifying the issues that hinder their full development.

We understand that a true gender-based approach necessarily involves incorporating women's experience, knowledge, interests and needs in order to empower them. That is the road we must follow to transform unequal social and institutional structures into equitable, fair structures for both men and women.

We are certain that, through our technical cooperation, we will contribute to empowering rural women and fostering more equitable, profitable and competitive social inclusion in agricultural processes and rural areas.

Our resolute commitment—which remains unchanged and becomes stronger with time because it forms a substantial part of IICA's spirit—is to drive and contribute to the urgent development of solid, long-term public policies for the benefit of women living in rural areas.

Manuel Otero
Director General

Bridging gaps... Capitalizing on existing potential

Nearly 100 million women live in rural areas across the Americas. In Latin America and the Caribbean alone, there are close to 60 million rural women who, despite progress achieved, continue to be at a disadvantage compared to rural men and urban women. These gaps—which prevent rural women from taking full advantage of existing potential—are very diverse and include the following:

- their insufficient inclusion in economic, social and development processes, which is generally due to women's low empowerment levels as well as their limited access to resources (credit, land, training opportunities, information, technology, etc.), education and quality jobs;
- their low organizational level;
- their low participation in decision-making platforms; and
- their invisibility: there is a lack of qualitative and quantitative information on rural women, which makes it difficult to ascertain their situation and make adequate decisions that meet their needs and interests.

Rural women are rendered the most invisible and face the greatest disadvantages compared to other groups. Indigenous women and women of African descent, who represent close to 20% and 23% of the total number of rural women, respectively, face even greater gaps.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) recognizes the fact that, in order to fulfill its mission, it must foster gender equality and the incorporation of youth into agricultural and rural development processes.

Our mission

*To encourage,
promote and support
our Member States
in their efforts to
achieve agricultural
development and
rural well-being
through international
technical cooperation
of excellence.*



Through programs, cooperation modalities, instruments and various initiatives, IICA will aim to overcome the challenge of improving conditions for rural women and bridging existing gaps.

The greatest challenge is expanding rural women's ability to take full advantage of existing potential, while also improving their quality of life and that of society as a whole.

This is not a new topic for IICA, which has more than 30 years of experience in this field (see Annex). Over the past three decades, the Institute has provided cooperation to its Member States in a number of ways, including through regional assessments, policy making, regional programs to drive progress in matters related to gender and rural women, technical cooperation programs and projects, affirmative action, partnerships with multiple organizations, as well as the development of analyses, methodologies and various instruments. This has enabled us to develop a vision for work in this area, at the various levels at which the Institute develops its initiatives (hemispheric, multi-country, national and territorial levels).

The Strategy



I. Introduction

Since its foundation more than seven decades ago, IICA has acted as a bridge between all of its member countries, supporting them in their efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being, as well as building channels of understanding through technical cooperation. In doing so, the Institute has continuously adapted to the evolution of agriculture in the hemisphere, by addressing its challenges and opportunities.

IICA's mission and vision are based on a number of values, including respect for political, economic, social, cultural and environmental diversity as well as gender equality and equity, which is promoted in its internal institutional management as well as in the technical cooperation it provides.

As part of its effort to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being, IICA has established four strategic objectives, which are described in its 2018-2022 Medium-term Plan (MTP)¹:

1. Increase the contributions of the agriculture sector to economic growth and sustainable development.
2. Contribute to the well-being of all rural dwellers.
3. Improve international and regional trade for countries in the region.
4. Increase the resilience of rural areas and agrifood systems to extreme events.

To achieve these objectives, the Institute has created five hemispheric action programs, which will lend uniqueness to IICA's vision; channel the Institute's programmatic actions toward the identification of cooperation actions through the design and implementation of projects; and provide technical advice and assistance to governments and other social and economic stakeholders involved in agricultural and rural life in the Americas. Additionally, the Institute has identified two cross-cutting issues: innovation and technology as well as gender and youth.

Within this framework, as part of the Institute's efforts to incorporate gender and youth as a cross-cutting issue in its institutional work, and in order to guarantee the effective and sustainable achievement of the proposed strategic objectives, the Institute has established this **"Strategy for Gender and Rural Women in Agricultural Development and Rural Territories"** for the period 2018-2022².

¹ IICA's Medium-term Plan is available at the following link:
<http://repositorio.iica.int/bitstream/11324/7192/1/BVE18040249i.pdf>

² The Strategy for Gender and Rural Women in Agricultural Development and Rural Territories is the result of joint work and discussions with IICA's technical teams across the hemisphere as well as with international specialists on this topic.

II. Purpose and strategic objectives

The purpose of this Strategy is to achieve progress in improving women's status in rural territories from a multidimensional perspective, and, particularly, to improve women's role in agriculture, which can serve as a legitimate means for driving changes in gender relations through greater equity.

To this end, IICA has identified the adoption of a gender perspective as one of its institutional objectives, with the aim of achieving greater equity in rural areas through an innovative vision and concrete affirmative actions.

Affirmative actions will allow for achieving the following specific objectives:

- Acknowledge and value women's role and importance in rural territories, as a key aspect in the development of our countries and the creation of fairer societies.
- Urge States to promote public policies and affirmative action that would allow for reducing inequality between men and women in rural territories.
- Drive efforts aimed at bridging gaps between men and women with respect to access to resources, rural services, productive support and opportunities.
- Facilitate rural women's participation in decision-making platforms at the community, national and international levels.

III. Frame of Reference



International frame of reference

The incorporation of the principle of gender equity into IICA's technical cooperation actions and instruments is aligned with institutional mandates and commitments of an international nature, including the following:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of the United Nations, adopted in 1979. Article 14 of the convention refers specifically to rural women.
- The Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 and the Regional Conferences on Women organized by ECLAC, which developed a series of guidelines that facilitated the incorporation of gender equity and equality issues into public policies in the countries. IICA is an observer member of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean; as such, it participates in the annual preparatory meetings of the Board of Directors, as well as in the Conference itself.
- The mandates originating from the Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas - Quebec 2001, specifically those that refer to the protection of the environmental foundation, rural sustainable development and agricultural management. The Action Plan also includes mandates that promote gender equality and the recognition of cultural diversity as driving forces for equitable development; investments in capacity building; and efforts to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and younger generations.
- Along with the global community, the Institute shares the responsibility to promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, established in Rio de Janeiro in 2015, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP23) held in Bonn, Germany, in 2017, which included a Gender Action Plan and an Indigenous Peoples' Platform.
- IICA is Co-Chair of "Women 20" (W20), the G20 group that fosters gender equity, in its work on rural women.

Internal framework

At the institutional level, IICA has assumed a number of commitments on the issue of gender equity and equality, which include the following:

- By means of Resolution No. 342 (1999), the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the Institute's highest-level governing body, instructed the organization to incorporate the gender perspective into its institutional system, making any necessary legal, regulatory and operational changes, and into the institution's technical cooperation actions and instruments.
- In 2002, within the framework of the Inter-American System, the OAS General Assembly adopted Resolution AG/RES 1853 (XXXII-O/02), "Implementation of the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality," in which it called for work on the issues to be continued (CIM/RES. 209/98 and AG/RES. 1625). In 2014, it adopted AG/RES 2831 (XLIV-O/14), "Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality and Strengthening of the Inter-American Commission of Women," in which, among other things, it requested a status report on the work carried out. As a result, the Institute submits annual reports to the CIM on its activities aimed at the promotion of equity and the development of rural women, and participates in the regular sessions of the Commission's Executive Committee, and in its biennial Assembly of Delegates.
- The general objective of IICA's Gender Policy (2016) is "to institutionalize the gender perspective and gender equity approach in internal management and the technical cooperation provided to member countries." Guidelines are established both for technical cooperation and for institutional management.
- In its 2018-2022 Medium-term Plan (MTP), the Institute made gender and youth one of its two cross-cutting issues.



Key concepts

Outlined below are the key concepts proposed in this gender and rural women strategy. As is the case with most definitions of this kind, these concepts are under permanent discussion both internally and outside IICA, making it possible to continually improve it in aid of greater gender equity.

Gender

We agree with the definition proposed by the United Nations (UN), that gender *"refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man..."*³

Gender equity

A series of measures to compensate for historical disadvantages that prevent men and women from equally enjoying the benefits of development and having equal access to decisions, opportunities and power.

Gender equality

Acknowledgement of the fact that women and men must have equal rights and conditions, allowing them to realize their full potential in order to contribute to political, economic, social and cultural development.

Such equality does not mean that women and men are the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

Rural women

A broad category that refers to women who live in the countryside, it takes into account the diversity of such women, the definition of a geographical space that encompasses the variety of rural territories that exist, and the women's relationship with their surroundings that has to do with natural resources (land, water, forest, etc.).

They are thought of as being permanent contributors to different agricultural and rural development processes, and forming part of diverse social groups and classes, age and ethnic groups, production systems, types of labor relationships and agroecological spaces.

Empowerment

Process that leads to the attainment and development of capacities that enable people to access positions of authority and decision-making positions, and to gain control over their lives. This process leads to changes in the way people think, cultures, institutional structures, and the distribution of resources within organizations and societies.

Gender mainstreaming

The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, policy or program, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, initiatives and programs. Thus, gender mainstreaming ensures that women and men benefit equally from the development process or that at least inequality is not perpetuated.⁴

³ UN Women Training Center. Gender Equality Glossary. Available on 18 October 2018 at: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=g&sortkey=>

⁴ UICN, PNUD, GGCA. 2009. Training manual on gender and climate change. Available for download on 2 November at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/9355>.

Two Approaches

This strategy is based on two approaches in particular, which are described below:

Sustainable human development (SHD) approach⁵

This combines two definitions (human development and sustainable development) into one single concept. Sustainable human development (SHD), adopted by the international community, continues to evolve as it is developed further by the different thematic conferences of the United Nations. In the Rio Declaration (1992), it was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Thus, it incorporates the need to achieve environmental sustainability, considering the future of the planet and of humankind. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (1995) reflected a new consensus on the need to place humankind at the center of the concerns with regard to sustainable development and the commitment to eradicate poverty, the promotion of full and productive employment, and the promotion of social integration.

Gender Approach⁶

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2004), the gender approach is a tool, a category of analysis based on sex and gender variables, that makes it possible to identify the different roles and tasks that men and women perform within a given society, project, office etc., as well as the asymmetries, power relationships and inequities that exist. It also helps to identify the causes and to formulate mechanisms for bridging the gaps, as it does not consider women or men to be the problem, but rather the social construction of relationships based on power and exclusion.

The gender approach also helps to explain and expand aspects of the situation that had not been considered previously, and is applicable to all areas of life: work, education, the personal sphere, etc. Analyzing the situation from this standpoint therefore makes it possible to develop a deeper understanding of development processes and contribute to the transformation of inequities.

In the final analysis, as well as being a concept and a tool, gender is also a political option, because it highlights the fact that the situation is different for men and for women, with women at a serious disadvantage, and constrains us to work for the transformation of inequities.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. 2007. Secretariat of State for International Cooperation. Directorate General for Development Policy Planning and Evaluation. Available for download (in Spanish) on 18 October 2018: http://intercoonec.aecid.es/Documentos%20de%20la%20comunidad/Estrategia_G%C3%A9nero.pdf

⁶ United Nations Development Programme. 2004. Cómo elaborar una estrategia de género para una oficina país. San Salvador, El Salvador. Available for download (in Spanish) on 18 October 2018: <https://www.k4health.org/sites/default/files/Como%20elaborar%20una%20estrategia%20de%20genero%20para%20pais1.pdf>

V. Strategic Directions

In order to drive concrete measures, affirmative action and to agree on instruments that will ensure that the purpose and objective of the Strategy are achieved, seven (7) key implementation measures are proposed, each with their respective lines of action. They are outlined as follows:

Implementation Measure 1. Generate quantitative and qualitative information on gender relations, the status and needs of rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean, with a view to increasing awareness about their importance and about existing inequalities.

This will entail identifying, measuring, analyzing and highlighting the importance of rural women, their living conditions, and the inequalities and discrimination that they face. Having recognized this, it will then be possible to devise affirmative actions that will assist in bridging the existing divide between men and women and empowering the latter to contribute to decision-making at the personal, and also the social and policy levels.

Lines of Action:

- Assess the extent of rural women’s role in development, in order to recognize the value of the different activities in which they are engaged, their status, living conditions, roles and occupations, inter alia.
- Identify indicators and instruments that will enable us to quantify gender-related achievements.
- Analyze gender relations in rural areas and identify inequalities between men and women and between women in different areas (urban and rural).
- Promote improvements in generating quantitative and qualitative information on rural women.

Implementation Measure 2. Develop and propose actions to ensure the financial independence of rural women.

Some of the key elements that perpetuate inequitable and unequal relationships between men and women are women’s lack of a personal income, and the failure to recognize their work and the time that they spend on production activities. Working for greater recognition of the role of women in the dynamics of rural economies and agriculture has the potential to contribute extensively to fostering changes in gender relations and the generation of income by and for rural women.

Lines of Action:

- Enable economic access by intensifying production and driving innovation to ensure optimum sustainable use of the production resources and assets managed by rural women.
- Foster entrepreneurship (MSMEs, the popular economy, the social economy, inter alia) among rural women, to enable them to assume positions of leadership in the productive, social, economic and technological sphere.
- Provide conditions and mechanisms to enable equal access by women to credit, including introducing credit rating measures that rely on alternative types of information to determine the creditworthiness of businesses run by rural woman, whether as individuals or as groups.
- Recognize and assess the value of women's caregiving activities as a precursor to driving actions to enable them to have more time for themselves, to exercise their rights to personal development and to be able to engage in income-generating tasks, within and/or outside of their family units or farms.

Implementation Measure 3. Foster the incorporation of women into decision-making forums on rural issues, in general, and in particular on agriculture.

Incorporating a gender perspective into development processes will mean assessing all the consequences of planned activities on the lives of men and women. Thus, in devising new policies and implementing programs and projects, we must take into account how each group is being affected, from their own perspective. One of the main ways of ensuring that all perspectives are incorporated is to enable rural women to express and communicate their opinions in discussion forums, and to present and analyze public policy proposals.

Lines of Action:

- Promote the capacity development of rural women, by empowering them and enabling their active participation, so that they may be effectively included and involved in local, territorial and national discussion and policy-making forums.
- Facilitate and pave the way for the participation of rural women in policy-making spaces and mechanisms at the regional level, such as forums, integration mechanisms and international councils, inter alia.
- Strengthen and publicize human rights-related frameworks, agreements and mandates at the international level, which firmly support gender equality, in order to ensure the effective and proactive participation of rural women in decision-making forums, based on consensual agreement.
- Promote equal participation of both genders in decision-making, consultation and discussion forums.

Implementation Measure 4. Contribute to policy development and innovation in institutions (public and private) for the benefit of rural women, at both the national and international levels.

When developing public policies for rural development, community welfare and competitiveness, the issue of gender must include a focus on rural women. This will require the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of management processes for public policies, with a view to ensuring that gender equality is incorporated at all levels and in all areas.

Lines of Action:

- Strengthen programs to support rural women that address their needs and the rights to which they are entitled, in keeping with Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

- Support member countries in designing and implementing agricultural and rural development policies that ensure gender equality.
- Promote planning, monitoring and evaluation of policies, plans and projects with a gender focus.
- Enable rural women, in particular, women of African descent and indigenous women, to benefit from integrated and gender sensitive social policies that provide social protection and improve standards of living.
- Contribute to strengthening national and community institutions, by increasing their commitment to gender equality.

Implementation Measure 5. Strengthen capacities, and in particular, the ability of rural women to access education.

We must increase actions and information programs that allow rural women to access and make the best use of production resources and support services, such as credit, technology and technical support, among others.

Lines of Action:

- Promote the financial education of rural women.
- Promote incentives for rural women and young people to access higher education and technical training in agricultural fields.
- Improve the production innovation, value added, business management and agricultural entrepreneurship capacities of rural women.
- Introduce adult education programs to eliminate the marked educational inequalities between older rural men and women, particularly those involved in family farming.
- Preserve and reproduce rural women's traditional knowledge and skills, so that they may be validated, adapted and applied in other rural contexts.
- Improve rural women's ability to use and exploit information and communication technologies as tools to access knowledge, enabling them to better tackle daily problems and to capitalize on their strengths.

Implementation Measure 6. Generate and consolidate social organization processes that empower women, in a bid to create more inclusive and equitable societies.

In including this implementation measure, IICA is recognizing the importance of promoting and strengthening the active participation and leadership of rural women in establishing various types of organizations and social networks (groups, associations, production and marketing cooperatives or hubs; savings and credit groups; agro-industries); and also mixed entities, such as associations, unions, federations, and community coordinating mechanisms, such as rural development councils⁷, which have been increasingly strengthened, thanks to the efforts of women in different areas.

Lines of Action:

- Promote a gender focus in community organizations, strengthening organizations in which women are already involved.
- Encourage rural women to assume leadership of community organizations, without increasing their share of the work load.
- Assign or increase funding for rural women and thereby strengthen their cooperatives, enterprises, organizations and value chains.

⁷ These entities have different names, depending on the institutional structure of each country. For example, in Honduras and the Dominican Republic they are known as Grupos de Acción Territorial (Territorial Action Groups); in Guatemala they are called Núcleos de Gestión Territorial (Territorial Management Hubs); in Brazil they are called Colegiados Territoriales (Territorial Associations); and in Uruguay they are Mesas de Desarrollo Rural (Rural Development Committees).

VI. Keys for implementation

Gender mainstreaming in Technical Cooperation Programs

In its 2018 – 2022 MTP, IICA has included gender as a cross-cutting issue in its five hemispheric actions programs and in the activities of its 35 Delegations:

- Bioeconomy and Production Development
- Territorial Development and Family Farming
- Climate Change, Natural Resources and Management of Production Risks
- Agricultural Health, Safety and Food Quality
- International Trade and Regional Integration

Drivers of the cross-cutting Gender approach

- Establishment of knowledge management networks in these areas.
- Forging and strengthening of strategic partnerships to enable more effective actions.
- Horizontal cooperation to foster collaboration among countries.
- Collaboration with private sector entities and civil society organizations.

Technical Cooperation Instruments

- Development and adaptation of gender-focused concepts and methodologies, for specific application in technical cooperation actions.
- Design and application of public policies with a gender or rural women focus.
- Strengthening of public sector institutions to address this issue.
- Promotion of capacity building and ongoing public awareness efforts.
- Technical and policy forums and discussions.
- Public-private sector dialogue and collaboration.
- Agricultural development and investment planning that incorporates a gender and equality perspective.

VII. Annex

Three decades of experience

IICA's work on the issue of rural women and gender began in the late 1980s and has formed part of its activities ever since. Over time, the vision of the activities carried out has changed.

Some of the most important initiatives undertaken by the Institute are as follows:

- 1990-1995. Working in tandem with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), IICA conducted a regional assessment with information from 18 countries on the true participation of rural women in agricultural and food production in the region. The work was carried out under the program "Analysis of Agriculture Sector Policy and Women Food Producers in Latin America and the Caribbean," which began in 1992 under the partnership.
- 1993-1995. Regional Program of Joint Action involving IICA and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) – Communication, gender and sustainable development. This initiative used specific communication and training tools to promote the coordination of communication, sustainable development and gender approaches in governmental and nongovernmental organizations involved in rural development in Central America.
- 1997. Creation of the Hemispheric Program for Gender Equity and the Entrepreneurial Development of Rural Women (PADEMUR), to promote projects that afforded women access to productive assets.
- 1998. Gender in Sustainable Rural Development Program, in collaboration with the SIDA.
- 1999. In Resolution No. 342, adopted by the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA), the Institute's highest-level governing body, the organization was instructed to incorporate the gender perspective into its institutional system, making any necessary legal, regulatory and operational changes, and into the institution's technical cooperation actions and instruments.



- 2000-2010. IICA promoted a series of actions in the countries and participated in regionwide joint actions with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), carrying out assessments and regional strategies. It also produced concept papers and technical notes on the relationship between the gender approach and the territorial approach to rural development.
- 2010. IICA placed emphasis on the role of women in food security and launched the International Forum of Women in Agriculture, where it presented the document Policies to strengthen the contribution of women to agriculture and food security.
- In 2009, IICA promoted the design of the Central American Strategy for Rural Area-based Development (ECADERT), subsequently providing technical support for its implementation that has included the development of the cross-cutting focal area of "Equity and social inclusion in rural territories."
- Between 2010 and 2018, IICA's efforts continued with the implementation of the International Seminar "Rural women: a cornerstone of the development and sustainability of family farming, held in San Jose, Costa Rica.
- In 2018, a new administration took office at IICA and is lending strong support to the issue of gender and rural woman. Six months were devoted to the development of a basic frame of reference on rural women in agriculture and rural territories; the book "Warriors – Rural Women Around the World: 28 Enlightened Voices" was published, with articles by leading figures and photographs by Sebastião Salgado; a joint initiative was implemented with the Vogue Brasil magazine for the publication of a special edition on rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean; and a photographic exhibition - "The Soul of Rurality" - was held with support from Vogue Brasil and other firms. This year, the International Day of Rural Women was celebrated with simultaneous events held at Headquarters and a number of IICA delegations in the countries. The Institute also participated in the discussions of Women 20, serving as Co-Chair of the Segmento de Mujer Rural, and helping to identify the challenges that need to be addressed and are of strategic importance for the G20.

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IICA

