



Caribbean

KEY GENDER ISSUES

The relatively high per capita GDP of the Caribbean countries masks the poverty and inequality concentrated in rural areas. Unemployment and lack of economic opportunity are widespread in the rural Caribbean and drive many people – especially women – to migrate to urban areas or abroad. Tourism, the most important economic activity in nearly all the countries, only marginally benefits their populations, and while the demand for food generated by tourists has stimulated production in rural areas, it has also driven up food and land prices.

Gender violence remains a serious problem in the region, notwithstanding the efforts in many countries to pass legislation for the protection of women. In Haiti, 20 per cent of women in relationships have been the victims of physical or sexual abuse perpetrated by their partner,¹ while in Barbados and in Antigua and Barbuda, the figure is 30 per cent, and in Suriname, 69 per cent.² In Guyana, it is estimated that at least one out of every three women has been the victim of gender violence.³ Violence also makes women less able to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS; in 2012, more than 0.4 per cent of Caribbean women were infected with the virus, and their infection rate has been rising throughout the region.

Economic empowerment

Women continue to be responsible for family food security, growing food in home gardens or working in cottage industries in the manufacture of clothing and the sale of seafood or produce. The lack of economic opportunities in the region is particularly hard on women, 18.9 per cent of whom were unemployed in 2013 versus 10.3 per cent of men.⁴ Market liberalization⁵ in the countries of the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM),

and the consequent increase in agricultural imports, has undermined the key role that women have traditionally played in the sale of agricultural products.⁶

Unemployment drives people to migrate to tourist areas and to wealthier countries such as Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. Grenada ranks third worldwide in terms of emigrants abroad (67.3 per cent); Saint Kitts and Nevis, fourth (61 per cent); and Guyana, fifth (56.8 per cent). These migrants generate high remittance flows, much of which is channelled to rural areas; remittances in the Dominican Republic represent 40 per cent of GDP, and in Haiti, 18 per cent.⁷

Migration, combined with other factors, has led to an increase in the number of rural households headed by women and women who operate farms.⁸ In the Dominican Republic, the percentage of such households rose from 28.0 per cent in 2002 to 35.3 per cent in 2007. Households headed by women are also the poorest, since they have less access to land or access only to less productive land, as well as less access to credit and technology; in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 96 per cent of poor households are headed by women, and in Barbados, 60 per cent. Regarding access to land, in the Dominican Republic, only 24,772 out of 243,104 landowners are women [2002], while in Trinidad and Tobago, the figure is only 2,802 out of 19,051 [2004].⁹

Voice and participation

Despite the essential role of women in agriculture and family food security,¹⁰ the level of participation by the region's women in decision-making in the home and in farmers' organizations is still very low.¹¹ In Haiti, for example, almost 40 per cent of rural households are headed by women, but women are not equitably represented in the management of producers' organizations or community development groups.¹² A number of studies in the region show a direct association between women's lack of access to decision-making bodies and the invisibility of women's contribution to the economy through their work in the home and the community.¹³

Women's representation in Caribbean national parliaments began increasing in the 1990s, moving up from 12 per cent in 1990 to 17 per cent in 2012. In 1998, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) established a 30 per cent minimum quota for women parliamentarians, which in most cases has not been met.

Workloads and benefits

In the Caribbean countries, there is a very inequitable distribution of unpaid domestic work, as well as the care of children and the elderly, who remain women's responsibility.¹⁴ In Guyana, limited access to running water and electricity directly affects the time that women, whose workday ranges from 14 to 18 hours, devote to chores.¹⁵ Furthermore, the aging of the population is increasing the burden on women,¹⁶ who are expected to care for the elderly.¹⁷ This situation is exacerbated by migration, which unravels family support networks, and by the lack of day-care facilities. In 2006, the 13 CARICOM countries had only 682 day-care centres between them, and 87 per cent of these facilities were privately run.¹⁸

IFAD STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Bridging the gender gap in community organizations in Guyana

In Guyana, the Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Development Project worked to boost the productivity of grassroots community organizations by developing organizational capacities, promoting the values of equality and improving gender relations.

As a first step, the “Bridging Gaps” methodology was used to analyse the gender situation, enabling the members of these organizations to prepare a diagnostic study. From 2011 to 2013, 354 men and 458 women from 41 grassroots community organizations applied this methodology, determining the steps that should be taken to encourage women’s participation. In addition, 27 organizations received training in workshops on gender, domestic violence, self-esteem, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and environmental education. These workshops were so successful that 95 per cent of the participants reported that their ability to counsel their families had improved. The high degree of interest resulted in the spontaneous training of trainers, since several participants took it upon themselves to pass on the training they had received to their community.

This intervention strategy fostered women’s membership in grassroots community organizations and access to the benefits derived from economic activities. In a second phase, 103 women and 119 men from these organizations received training to design a strategic development plan for their organization and its productive activities. Furthermore, thanks to a counterpart donation, enterprises owned by beneficiaries with limited resources, such as women, were given opportunities for development.

Women can become leaders: raising awareness and building capacity in Grenada

In Grenada, the purpose of the Market Access and Rural Enterprise Development Programme is to strengthen the capacity of rural organizations in terms of organization and human and social capital. In order to achieve this, one of the programme’s strategic lines of action has been to identify gender inequalities and determine the specific steps needed.

On the one hand, the “door-to-door” approach was used to encourage women and youth to attend informative meetings; on the other, campaigns were launched to raise awareness about leadership and the role of women, which is normally associated with reproductive activities in the home.

To date, 208 women have joined farmers’ organizations and received training in leadership and organizational management. In addition, 302 men were sensitized to gender issues, making them more accepting of women leaders and of more equitable mechanisms for organizational decision-making.¹⁹

Better irrigation systems reduce women's workload in Haiti

In Haiti, the Small-scale Irrigation Development Project had a rehabilitation and water storage infrastructure component. Within the framework of its gender strategy, the objective was to reduce women’s workload by providing greater access to irrigated land and adaptive primary transformation technologies, among other things.

Thanks to the rehabilitation of the watersheds, a stable year-round water supply was maintained, enabling 650 households to cultivate their own gardens, enjoy greater food security and substantially increase their income. Greater availability, easy access and closer proximity to water helped decrease the workload of women, who now spend less time hauling water.

Furthermore, by establishing quotas for representation, the project ensured the participation of women’s groups, together with local authorities and other beneficiaries, in local decision-making bodies in strategic locations. Since Haitian law does not promote women’s land ownership or their possession of land in irrigated areas, this measure represents a real step forward in women’s involvement in decision-making and more equitable resource use.

IFAD GENDER POLICY
Strategic objective 1:
Promote economic empowerment to enable rural women and men to have equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, profitable economic activities.

IFAD GENDER POLICY
Strategic objective 2:
Enable women and men to have equal voice and influence in rural institutions and organizations.

LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

IFAD has implemented numerous projects in the Caribbean region that work in different ways to achieve gender equality. Among the lessons learned and good practices in the region, the following are worth mentioning:

- **The economic empowerment of women must be accompanied by activities to raise awareness about gender issues in the community and producers' organizations** in order to combat stereotypes and guarantee women's access to project activities and benefits. Many of the projects have adopted a sequential strategy that begins by raising awareness (though the "Bridging Gaps" tool, for example) and later, conducting economic development activities and assisting groups that now allow women to participate on a more equitable basis.
- **The presence on the project team of women and men with training in gender issues facilitates implementation of the gender strategies.** In some cases, the presence of women on committees for resource allocation and the definition of financial products has made it possible to remove barriers to women's access to credit.
- **Economic empowerment is more effective and sustainable when it goes hand in hand with specialized technical assistance to women.** The specific training process should take into consideration factors such as limited education and the traditional structure of gender roles. Implementing a support strategy that includes training in functional literacy, the drafting of business plans and a knowledge of mathematics and financial management is therefore very effective.

IFAD GENDER POLICY
Strategic objective 3:
Achieve a more equitable balance in workloads and in the sharing of economic and social benefits between women and men.

Sun-drying cacao beans in Belize.



OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND ONGOING CHALLENGES

Despite the achievements and good practices mentioned above, women in the region still face a multitude of challenges, among them:

- **Lack of economic opportunity and problems in diversifying their sources of income are a regionwide problem for rural populations in the Caribbean**, especially in the island nations. The additional obstacles that women face (e.g. lack of access to credit and other inputs and an excessive workload due to their greater responsibility in reproductive activities) make it very hard to design sustainable, profitable economic empowerment activities in which they can be involved.
- **Many of the region's statistical systems do not provide a breakdown of data by sex, age or geographic location (rural and urban) or detailed information** about production systems, women's livelihoods and remittance flows in rural areas. This makes it very hard to analyse the socio-economic situation of rural women in the Caribbean and develop appropriate gender strategies.
- **Gender violence continues to increase in the Caribbean and seriously impacts the situation of women**, with extremely negative consequences for their health and economic empowerment and decision-making capacity in both the community and the home. Addressing the causes and effects of gender violence is a basic prerequisite for the efficacy of any rural or urban development strategy.

A woman farmer checks her aubergine plants in the Dominican Republic.



THE STATISTICS AND WHAT THEY SHOW

With the exception of Cuba and Grenada, all the countries in the Caribbean region fall below the average on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI), a multidimensional indicator that reflects variables such as health, education and income. According to the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), Cuba and the Dominican Republic rank in the top 10 among the 86 countries that are not members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which suggests a remarkable commitment on the part of the institutions of both nations to tackle gender inequalities. Cuba also surpasses all the other countries on the Gender Inequality Index, indicating that Cuban women enjoy better reproductive health and greater access to the labour market and empowerment (see Table 2).

Advances in maternal health in the region have been very mixed. For example, considerable progress has been made in Grenada, while the situation has stagnated in Haiti. There is a visible employment gap between women and men, especially in Guyana, where the employment rate for women is 42 per cent versus 79 per cent for men. However, the data are not disaggregated by rural and urban areas, and official statistics frequently underestimate women's employment because it is often in the informal sector or consists of unpaid domestic work (see Table 3).

Table 1: Key development indicators across the region

Country	GDP per capita (current US\$) (2012)	Life expectancy at birth (years) (2011)		Literacy rate, ages 15-24 (2010)	
		Female	Male	Female (% of females)	Males (% of males)
Belize	4,577**	78	75	-	-
Cuba	5,383*	81	77	100	100
Grenada	7,485	77	74	-	-
Guyana	3,584	73	67	-	-
Haiti	771	63	61	-	-
Dominican Republic	5,736	76	71	98	96

Source: World Bank database (2008-2012), <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>. Accessed 18-19 July 2013.

Notes:

*2011 data.

**2008 data.

Caribbean countries with activities currently supported by IFAD



Table 2: Human development and gender inequality across the region, 2012

Country	Human Development Index (HDI)• (186 countries) Source: UNDP	Gender Inequality Index (GII)•• (148 countries) Source: UNDP	Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)••• (86 non-OECD countries) Source: OECD
		Valor	Clasificación
Belize	96	0,435	79
Cuba	59	0,356	63
Grenada	63	-	-
Guyana	118	0,490	104
Haiti	161	0,592	127
Dominican Republic	96	0,508	109

Sources: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) HDI; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Gender, Institutions and Development Database 2012; SIGI; UNdata 2012. Accessed 18-19 July 2013.

Notes:

• The HDI is a composite measure of health, education and income, and an alternative to purely economic assessments of national progress (e.g. GDP growth). Source: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>.

•• The GII is a composite measure that reflects inequality in achievements between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. The index ranges between "0", which means women fare equally well, to "1.0", which indicates that women fare as poorly as possible in all dimensions measured. Source: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>.

••• The SIGI was launched by the OECD Development Centre as an innovative measure of the underlying drivers of gender inequality. It captures discriminatory social institutions such as early marriage, discriminatory inheritance practices, violence against women, son preference, restricted access to public space and restricted access to land and credit. Source: <http://genderindex.org/ranking>.

Table 3: Key gender indicators across the region

Country	Maternal mortality ratio (modelled estimate, per 100 000 live births) (2010) Source: World Bank	Women's access to land* (2012)	Women's access to bank loans** (2012)	Labour participation rate, ages 15+ (2011) Source: World Bank	
		Source: OECD	Source: OECD	Female (% of females)	Male (% of males)
Belize	53	-	-	48	82
Cuba	73	0	0	43	70
Grenada	24	-	-	-	-
Guyana	280	-	-	42	79
Haiti	350	0,5	0,5	60	71
Dominican Republic	150	0,5	0,5	51	79

Sources: World Bank database (2008-2012), <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>; OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database 2012; SIGI; UNdata 2012. Accessed 18-19 July 2013.

Notes:

* Women's legal and de facto rights to own and access agricultural land: 0: Women have equal legal rights with men to own and access land; 0.5: Women have the same legal rights to own and access land, but are restricted due to discriminatory practices; 1.0: Women have few or no legal rights to access or own land, or access is severely restricted by discriminatory practices.

** Women's legal and de facto access to loans and credit: 0: Women have equal rights to access credit and bank loans with men; 0.5: Women have rights to access some kinds of credit (e.g. microcredit), or have equal rights but face discrimination in accessing bank loans and credit; 1.0: Women have few or no rights to access bank loans or credit, or access is severely restricted by discriminatory practices.

ENDNOTES

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LINKS

IFAD policy on gender equality and
women's empowerment
http://www.ifad.org/gender/policy/gender_e.pdf

IFAD is a financial institution and
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