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## Gender equality and women's empowerment: IFAD's work and results

IFAD is committed to gender equality. Women embody half the talent and energy at any country's disposal. That's why greater gender equality leads to higher economic growth and better lives.

We work with partners around the world to empower women and build gender equality in rural homes and villages, and at the national and international levels. Much progress has been made, but there is a long way still to go. No country in the world has achieved full gender equality and disparities in the rural areas of developing countries are often particularly acute.

IFAD's Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was approved by the Executive Board in 2012. It is central to the overall goal of IFAD's Strategic Framework 2011-2015 – enabling poor rural women and men to improve their food security and nutrition, raise their incomes and strengthen their resilience.

The gender policy has three strategic objectives:

- to promote **economic empowerment** to enable rural women and men to have equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, profitable economic activities
- to enable women and men to have **equal voice and influence** in rural institutions and organizations
- to achieve a more **equitable balance in workloads and in the sharing of economic and social benefits** between women and men.

### Tracking progress on gender

The IFAD Independent Office of Evaluation introduced gender as a specific evaluation criterion in 2010 to keep track of progress in this vital area. Of projects that closed between 2011-2013, over 80 per cent were rated moderately satisfactory or better on gender.

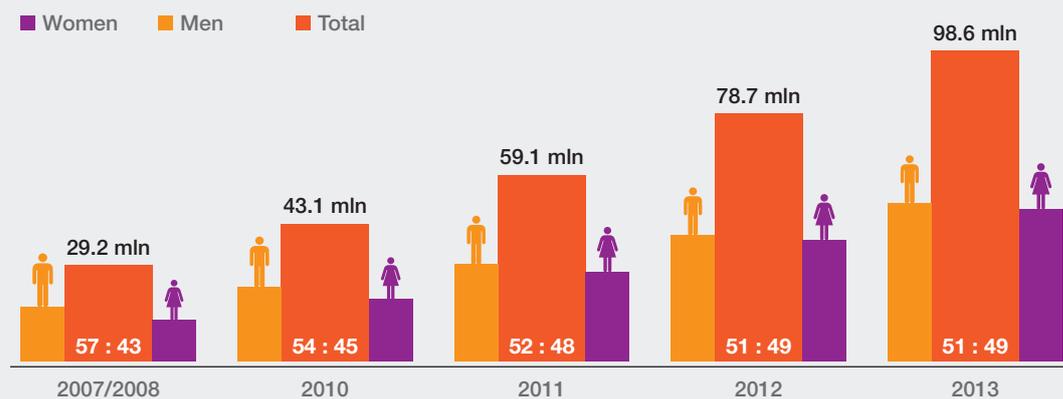
"IFAD operations are very good at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, an area in which the Fund is developing a comparative advantage, a track record and specialization" (see 2013 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations).

## IFAD Gender Awards

The IFAD Gender Awards were launched in 2013 to recognize the IFAD-supported projects that are making the biggest difference to the lives of rural women in each region. The winning projects in 2013 were the Sunamganj Community-Based Resource Management Project in Bangladesh, the District Livelihoods Support Programme in Uganda, the Rural Development and Modernization Project for the Eastern Region of El Salvador, the Western Sudan Resources Management Programme in the Sudan, and the Northern Rural Growth Programme in Ghana. (<http://www.ifad-un.blogspot.it/2013/10/ifads-first-gender-awards-honour.html>)

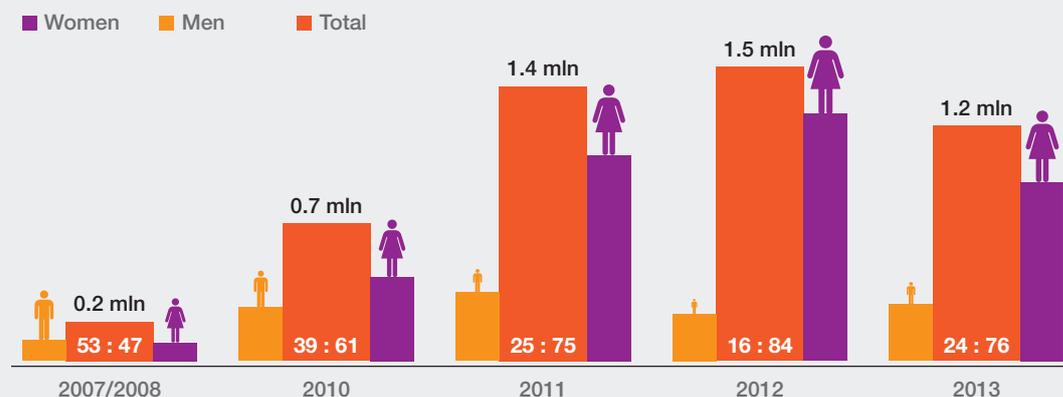
## Results

### Women and men receiving services from IFAD-funded projects



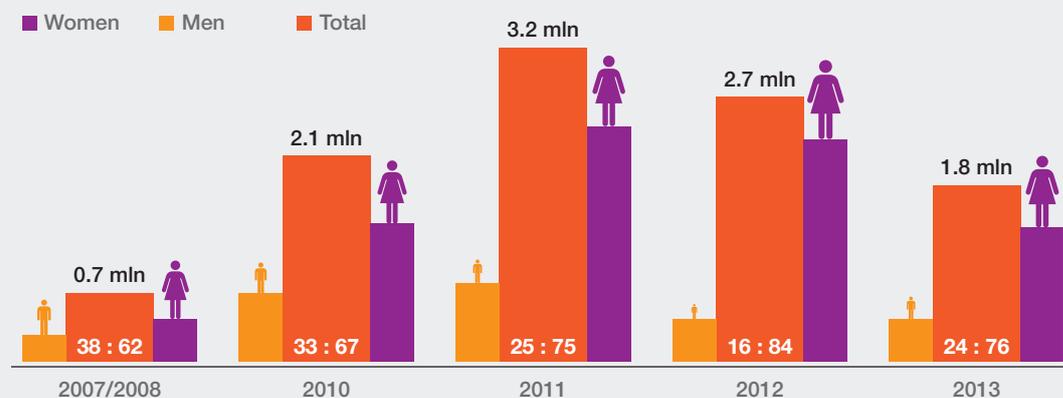
The total number of people participating in IFAD-funded projects rose from 29.2 million in 2007/2008 to 98.6 million in 2013. The proportion of female participants has risen steadily since baseline sex-disaggregated numbers were recorded in 2007/2008, from 43 per cent to nearly half of all participants in 2013.

### Women and men trained in microentrepreneurship and business skills



The total number of people who took training in business skills rose from 0.2 million in 2007/2008 to 1.2 million in 2013. Women's participation in training opportunities rose substantially from 47 per cent in the baseline year to about 76 per cent in 2013. Small businesses run by women play a significant part in rural economies and they can provide women with an independent source of income, empowering them economically and socially.

### Women and men trained in community management topics



Because women play a critical role in community welfare, IFAD vigorously supports capacity-building in this area. In 2007/2008, women accounted for 38 per cent of 0.7 million people trained. In 2013, they made up 76 per cent of 1.8 million.

## Stories from the field

Achieving gender equality and empowering women is a highly complex undertaking. IFAD works with partners to identify and scale up innovative tools and approaches that make a difference. We recognize that engaging with men is a key part of mainstreaming gender issues and achieving transformative change.

### Household methodologies: focusing on people to unlock the 'black box' of the family

2014 is the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). A great deal of attention is being paid to the contribution family farmers make to global food security and to the importance of improving their lives. In some regions, family farms produce up to 80 per cent of the food consumed. From a gender perspective, IFAD is also using IYFF as an opportunity to raise awareness about the significance of what goes on within the family and the need for real change at household level.

Household methodologies are an innovative approach to prising open the black box of the family. They have been developed and adapted by IFAD and partners to shift the focus from things – such as assets, resources and infrastructure – to people, who they want to be and what they want to do. The methodologies build on a growing understanding that very often households are not cohesive, egalitarian units that share resources, benefits, needs and goals. Rather, the women and men in one same family may pursue largely separate livelihoods, engage in different activities and enjoy different status. Despite heavy burdens of labour and responsibility, women often lack a voice in determining household priorities and spending patterns, and addressing their own health care needs.

Efforts to empower women often fail to address their role and status in the home and they fail to engage with men. Household methodologies take the opposite approach. Mentors and group facilitators work with family members to develop a shared vision for their household, to identify obstacles, pinpoint opportunities and draw up an action plan of how to improve their lives. The methodologies are also a particularly effective way of reaching poor households that struggle to access project services.

Household methodologies are now being used in IFAD-supported projects in Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda. About 50,000 people are participating and reporting a wide range of benefits. These include greater resilience in the face of shocks, increased happiness, more girls and boys in school and tertiary education, and increased productivity, incomes and food security. IFAD is leading the drive to scale up household methodologies and they have been included in the design of new projects in Ghana, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mozambique.

### Building women's leadership in The Gambia

Women in The Gambia play a substantial role in farming – accounting for more than 50 per cent of the agricultural labour force. But as in so many other countries, they often struggle with scant resources and insufficient support. IFAD has been working with the Government to empower women farmers and boost their productivity and incomes. Fatou Danso, a trained community health nurse, was the first woman village chief to be chosen in the country. She has made significant changes to women's incomes and to how they are perceived in her village of Kaba Kama, where more than 3,000 people live.

Before Danso became chief, the land was farmed only by men, although the women were responsible for feeding their families. When she became village chief, she also became custodian of the land, and she decided to change things. She divided 4 hectares of land into small plots and invited the women to form a vegetable garden scheme. There are now over 400 members who have



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## Gender within IFAD

In order to effectively promote gender equality in the countries where we work, we also focus on empowering women within IFAD as an organization and on building awareness about gender issues among all staff.

A gender network has been established including gender focal points in headquarters, country offices, project units, implementing partners, consultants and others. Knowledge management and communications on gender have been strengthened. The IFAD gender desk hosts webinars and breakfasts on current activities and priorities, and publishes a regular e-newsletter. Dedicated gender webpages highlight ongoing work and results, and an e-learning course on gender and diversity has been created, which will be available to all staff. (<http://www.ifad.org/gender/index.htm>)

As of August 2014, 59 per cent of all IFAD employees were women and they made up 46 per cent of professional staff and senior management. IFAD provides specific training opportunities to build women's capacity and equip them for work in challenging environments, including leadership skills for women and women's security in the field. More than 300 women have taken up these training opportunities.



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each been given a section to farm. At their weekly meetings, they each contribute to group funds to maintain the land. IFAD has provided seeds, fertilizer and training to help the group get started.

The Gambia now has a total of six female village chiefs – including 80-year-old Aja Haddy Panneh from Njawara village who has spent a lifetime campaigning for gender equality and women's empowerment. The country's first female regional governor – Aminata Siffai Hydara – was appointed in May 2014, another encouraging sign that women's leadership is becoming established in The Gambia.

## Courage Brigades change women's lives

Gender-based violence is endemic in many parts of the world, drastically limiting women's freedom to move, to work outside the home and to take advantage of economic and educational opportunities. Ending gender-based violence is essential in the name of justice, and it is also key to enabling countries to draw on the strengths and skills of their entire population.

In Madhya Pradesh, India, IFAD supported a project by the state government that created so-called Courage Brigades. These brigades teamed up women from self-help groups with men from the village. Going door to door, they worked together to challenge and change attitudes around crucial and contentious issues such as domestic abuse, caste violence and malnutrition.

Within one year of activity, these Courage Brigades have been able to settle the majority of cases within the community. For example, out of more than 180 domestic violence cases, only 5 had to be forwarded to the police. The change in mindsets has enabled women to move more freely in the community. As a result, economic activities managed by women in the project area have increased by more than 170 per cent and girls' enrolment in school has more than tripled.

The Courage Brigade model has been so effective that the state government has decided to replicate it throughout all districts. During the first phase of replication alone, this will reach a population of more than 21 million people.



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