



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



UN agencies commit to put rural women at centre stage of development



18 October 2011 –

Two United Nations agency chiefs today committed to work together to empower rural women through investment in education, economic integration and security initiatives.

At a meeting in Rome, Michele Bachelet, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), discussed ways in which their agencies can collaborate to enhance the livelihoods, assets and decision-making power of rural women as a way out of poverty.

“I firmly believe that an investment in women is an investment in our future,” Mr. Nwanze said during his meeting with Ms. Bachelet.

“Empowerment benefits not only the women themselves, but also their families and communities. Malnutrition and mortality rates drop when girls have better access to education. And more importantly, women re-invest in their communities and in their future,” he said.

Ms. Bachelet, who is also a former president of Chile, has been vocal about investing in rural women since she took office last year, and said the inter-agency partnership should focus in particular on increasing women’s production capabilities.

“Available data suggests that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 per cent, lifting 100 to 150 million out of hunger,” she said.

“It is encouraging to know that we can count on strong partners like IFAD and work together to improve the situation of rural women,” she added.

For his part, Mr. Nwanze [highlighted](#) IFAD’s increasing investment in rural women as part of its strategy to eradicate poverty, noting that “almost 50 per cent of IFAD’s funding now goes directly to women, reaching an estimated 16.8 million poor rural women.”

The two agencies have already started a joint project developing a \$3 million initiative to support rural businesses owned by women in Latin America. The ‘Latin America Broadening Economic Opportunities for Rural Entrepreneurial Women Programme’ will specifically target women of African and indigenous descent in Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

Investing in rural women has become increasingly important to policy-makers as evidence mounts on their potential to spur development and economic growth in societies. Last week, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon called on the international community to give them the same access to productive resources as men, noting that the benefits would ‘reverberate’ even further into other areas such as education, health and nutrition.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Investing in rural women will slash hunger and poverty, Ban says](#)