

UN launches new initiative to empower rural women and girls



Women lag far behind men in access to land, credit and decent jobs. Photo: UN Women

27 September 2012 – The United Nations today launched a programme to empower poor rural women through economic integration and food security initiatives.

“Accelerating Progress Toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” is a five-year initiative that will focus on improving food and nutrition security, increasing rural women’s incomes, enhancing leadership and participation in rural institutions, and creating a more responsive policy environment at national and international levels.

“When women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership, opportunities and choices, economies grow, food security is enhanced and prospects are improved for current and future generations,” said Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women ([UN Women](#)).

The programme will be carried out jointly by UN Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)), and the World

Food Programme ([WFP](#)). It will be implemented initially in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda.

Women make up 43 per cent of the agricultural work force worldwide, and as much as 70 per cent in some countries. Often working longer hours than men, rural women are also the caregivers who look after children, the elderly, and the sick. In addition, many are small business entrepreneurs and investors who dedicate most of their earnings to the well-being of their families and societies.

However, most rural women and girls still face more obstacles than men in gaining access to public services, social protection, decent employment opportunities, and markets and other institutions.

“Together, UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP will generate synergies that capitalize on each agency’s mandate to advance gender equality,” UN Women said in a [news release](#). “When women are empowered - economically and socially - they become leaders and agents of change for economic growth, social progress and sustainable development.”

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