



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

A woman wearing a dark brown knitted jacket and a colorful headscarf with a floral and polka-dot pattern. She is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background shows a rural landscape with a simple building and green hills under a cloudy sky.

## **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT TO RURAL WOMEN ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GENDER ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

A project financed by the Government of Turkey  
under the FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme

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**Project partners and implementing units:** Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Turkey (MFAL), Ministry of Agriculture of Azerbaijan (MoA), FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia (SEC), FAO Partnership and Liaison Office of Azerbaijan, and FAO Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division (ESP).

**Pilot project sites in Turkey:** Antalya, Kars and Kastamonu.

**Pilot project sites in Azerbaijan:** Khachmaz, Salyan and Samukh

This project, started in 2014 under the FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme, was developed to improve services for rural women by enhancing the capacity of institutions and of agricultural extension and rural advisory services staff in Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The project's ultimate objective was to promote rural women's socio-economic integration and enhance their income generation skills, by increasing rural women's capacity and improving the design and delivery of gender-sensitive agricultural extension and rural advisory services.

The project put the utmost emphasis on enhancing rural women's knowledge and skills in agricultural production and related activities. It also emphasized the development of tools and methods to help design demand-focused programmes that effectively respond to the needs of farmers, especially women farmers. In addition, good practices and experiences of the Rural Women Services Unit of the Department of Training, Extension and Publication of the MFAL were shared.

In the long term, it is expected that through more effective targeting, delivery of services and better impact assessment, public extension and rural advisory services will be able to reach rural women more efficiently. Rural women will improve their knowledge, skills and capacities in agricultural production and economic diversification, which will lead to socio-economic development, including rural income generation and improved household food security and livelihoods.

The project also contributed to FAO's efforts in rural poverty reduction, as well as its support for innovation in service provision and infrastructure development for the rural poor.

## Project relevance

In both Turkey and Azerbaijan, agriculture plays a key role in the economy and in rural society. Subsistence and semi-subsistence farming are important features of both countries' agriculture. However, these farms are characterized by low productivity, and only a small fraction of the production is marketed, often at low prices.

Women contribute substantially to family farming activities in both countries, yet their roles are often not recognized. In the absence of specific programmes that respond to women farmers' needs and the constraints they face, rural advisory services often inadequately address their demands. Women's limited access to such services has a negative impact on their productivity and capacity to ensure food security and meet their nutrition needs.

In order to improve the effectiveness of advisory services and enhance the potential of women farmers, a shift is required from the traditional "transfer of technology" approach to extension to the implementation of advisory methods that are participatory, gender-sensitive and demand-driven.



## Facts and figures

### Turkey

- Nearly half of Turkey's total land area is devoted to agriculture (World Bank, 2015).
- In 2015 roughly 20 percent of the workforce was employed in agriculture (World Bank, 2015).
- Thirty-two percent of working women in Turkey are employed in agriculture (World Bank, 2015).
- According to the 2006 census, there are approximately 3.022 million agricultural holdings in Turkey, most of which consist of family farms employing family labour (TurkStat, 2006).
- Women contribute significantly to agriculture, yet their potential is constrained by a number of gender-specific factors, including limited school education and access to credit, low level of participation in producer groups, and heavy household and care work.

### Azerbaijan

- Farms are predominantly small: 90 percent of Azerbaijan's agricultural output is produced on family farms of 3 hectares or less (IFAD, 2014).
- Agriculture employs 37 percent of the labour force in Azerbaijan (World Bank, 2014), including 44 percent of employed women (World Bank, 2013).
- Women, though heavily involved in agriculture, face several gender-specific constraints, such as limited mobility and the heavy burdens of household and unpaid care work.

## Methodology

### Combining capacity development modalities

The project successfully combined different capacity development modalities, including capacity needs assessment, development of training of trainers' material, gap analysis, pilot training of trainers, pilot training of rural women, field visit and study tour.

### Learning by doing

Advisory staff actively participated in the needs assessment of women farmers, and gained a better understanding of women's experiences by facilitating focus groups and conducting interviews and gender analyses. By attending the rural women's trainings, advisers also became "resource people" on gender-sensitive training methods and expanded their technical knowledge on trainings topics.

### Measuring learning

The project emphasized the use of new tools for measuring learning outcomes, and not merely recording the number of people trained, as an important part of a process that addresses capacity development challenges. The methods of knowledge, attitudes and practices survey (KAP) and individual action planning were used to understand the impact of the learning activities on individuals' knowledge, behaviours and practices.

### Voices from the field

"Our branch manager also benefited from the training. So, awareness of our administrators was increased and problems related to female advisers' mobility, such as the lack of a vehicle, were solved."

*Extension staff member from Antalya who participated in the training of trainers in Turkey*



# Needs assessment analysis

The objective of the needs assessment was to understand the gaps in training programmes and the related capacity needs of staff, as well as the challenges of rural women and their knowledge needs. The results of the needs assessment informed the content of the trainings organized for advisory staff and rural women.

## Turkey

In all three pilot provinces, face-to-face meetings and interviews were carried out with vice-governors and provincial directors of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock. To assess their needs, group interviews were conducted with women farmers. The needs assessment also included a questionnaire implemented with 30 extension agents, which provided additional information about current extension mechanisms, opportunities and limitations related to their capacity to provide effective services demanded by women farmers. Another questionnaire was filled in by rural women to identify problems and potential solutions related to their access to rural advisory services. A total of 166 women farmers participated in the survey.

### Survey Results

The needs assessment shows that many rural women have limited school education and that adult women's illiteracy is a concern in some provinces. The extension staff mainly use written documents as training materials, which makes it difficult to ensure that effective learning takes place for all women.

- Given women's child care responsibilities, ensuring that child care is provided during trainings is important.
- Women have limited access to modern information and communication technology (ICT).
- Very few women have access to credit.
- Women's participation in cooperatives or producer groups is low.
- Other difficulties include: heavy workloads; lack of knowledge about farming tools and techniques, including pest and insect treatment; lack of irrigation technology; and insufficient non-farm employment opportunities.



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## Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, the capacity needs assessment was conducted through interviews with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Regional Agrarian Science and Information Advisory Centres (RASIACs). Seventeen rural advisers working in the three pilot provinces were interviewed. The needs of rural women were explored through focus group meetings, where 90 rural women from the three regions participated.

### Survey Results

- Although the major crops vary, men's and women's roles in agriculture are similar across the three pilot regions of Khachmaz, Salyan and Samukh.
- In general, men work outside of the home, and are in charge of irrigation, field crops, agricultural marketing and livestock production. Women are responsible for household work, child care, home vegetable plots, milking and dairy processing, and poultry keeping.
- In all three regions, more than 90 percent of men and women have a secondary school education. Despite this, most women work as unpaid labourers on their family farms.
- In all three regions, responses to questions about employment, land ownership, and participation in trainings indicate that women have unequal access to these productive resources and opportunities.
- There is a need for awareness raising about gender equality and women's rights, and for agricultural training as well.
- Limited mobility, lack of child care services, low numbers of female advisory staff, and lack of awareness about the importance of women's access to rural advisory services were some of the other concerns indicated in the interviews.



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# Training of trainers

As a central element of the project activities, a training of trainers took place in Turkey and Azerbaijan with the participation of 69 extension and advisory staff members from central and decentralized offices of the ministries of the two project countries.

Informed by the context analyses and the capacity needs assessments of advisers and rural women, the trainings took into account the needs and backgrounds of the trainees as well as the main difficulties in delivering advisory services to women farmers.

The ultimate purpose of the training was to raise awareness and understanding among participants about gender relations, why gender equality issues matter in their work, and how to make appropriate and workable changes in the way they operate to tackle these issues.

Through participatory exercises such as daily and seasonal activity calendars, social mapping of women's and men's access to different institutions, stakeholder analysis, needs analysis and SWOT analysis, participants learned how to recognize the gender-specific needs of women and men for advisory services. They also identified the changes required in training and advisory practices to more effectively meet those needs. Participants' feedback from both trainings was incorporated into the final training of trainers manual.

## Turkey

The training of trainers took place from 8 to 11 December 2014 in Antalya, Turkey. Thirty extension staff members (ten from each pilot province) and three representatives from the Ministry's central office attended the training (22 women and 11 men total). Participants improved their capacity to provide gender-sensitive services by working on gender analysis and needs identification and gender-sensitive institutional and stakeholder analysis, as well as gender-aware SWOT analysis.

Participant evaluations stated that the RAS advisers plan to use what they learned. They particularly appreciated learning about participatory methodologies and activities, such as stakeholder analysis and institutional mapping.



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## Voices from the field

"I used to deliver agricultural consultancy and extension services without conducting any needs analysis and research touching upon problems. After your training, I will conduct needs analysis by considering the needs of villages or women farmers and their demands, preferences, priorities and socio-economic characteristics to select agricultural extension topics."

*Extension staff member from Kars who participated in the training of trainers in Turkey*

"Your training has helped me realize the need to identify activities and training time for women farmers through gender division of labour analysis."

*Extension staff member from Antalya who participated in the training of trainers in Turkey*

## Azerbaijan

The training of trainers took place from 5 to 8 April 2016 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Thirty-three advisers attended the training (48 percent women and 52 percent men): 12 from the Guba-Khachmaz RASIAC, 9 from the Salyan RASIAC, 9 from the Samukh-Ganja RASIAC, and 3 representatives from the central office of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Participants learned about key gender concepts as they took part in different gender analysis activities and practiced participatory rural appraisal tools. Trainees also discussed different scenarios with gender challenges related to rural advisory services. In the course of the discussion they proposed tools that would enable them to anticipate and better understand these challenges and decide which approaches and methods would be most effective in overcoming them.

Seventy percent of participants indicated that they would apply what they learned in their work. Many suggested that similar gender workshops should be carried out in the regions. Assessments done using the KAP method showed that trainees felt more confident and knowledgeable about gender issues and using participatory gender analysis tools after the training.

## Voices from the field

"After the workshop I will make better use of visual aids and materials and will also analyse division of labour in the household to be able to promote solutions for removing women's time constraints."

*Rural adviser from Guba region who participated in the training of trainers in Azerbaijan*

"Before this workshop I did not have any knowledge about gender. Participation in this workshop gave me broader knowledge, especially exercises, various discussions and opinions that helped me to increase my knowledge on gender."

*Rural adviser from Samukh region who participated in the training of trainers in Azerbaijan*

# Rural women's training

## Turkey

In Turkey, 30 rural women from the three pilot provinces participated in a training on entrepreneurship, product development and marketing. The topic was identified from the needs assessment analysis.

The training was conducted by national consultants and attended by six extension staff members, who themselves had attended the training of trainers and been involved in carrying out the needs assessment, giving them an opportunity to observe how the consultants organized the training and used participatory methods. Advisers and rural women worked side by side while learning technical information on training subjects.

During the training, concepts on marketing, pricing, promotion and the stages of product development were introduced. Women were also asked to identify factors that hindered their entrepreneurial efforts. A field visit to Nallihan district's successful lace cooperative was included in the training at the request of rural women, who wanted to see a good practice example of women's entrepreneurship. Lacemaking is a traditional handicraft for Turkish women. Today, it provides a valuable income-generating opportunity, as there is a demand for decorative lace in urban markets and lacemaking can be done at home, without expensive machinery or equipment.

Working with rural women during training activities showed the extension staff the importance of carrying out a needs assessment analysis. With these assessments, training content can be designed based on the demands expressed by women in interviews, group meetings and surveys. Rural women's feedback on the training was very positive: in fact, they requested that the training be extended. Participants appreciated the chance to meet and work with both women from other provinces and extension advisers, and found the training useful and relevant to their needs. During the project's closing workshop a representative of the rural women who attended the training reported that, thanks to the training, they have already been able to enhance their marketing through better organization and

understanding of consumer demand, paying attention to traceability requirements and improving the quality of their products.

## Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, 45 rural women participated in a training on animal production and small-scale dairy product processing. In order to enable rural women to attend, training sessions were held in each of the three pilot regions. The topic was selected following the needs assessment, where rural women from all regions expressed interest in learning more about dairy production and processing. Many households in Azerbaijan are engaged in small-scale dairying, but milk production is inconsistent throughout the year, and farmers have limited knowledge about dairy processing. At the training, rural women were particularly interested in learning about the basic requirements for milk processing so that they could sell milk in the market for additional income.

Nine rural advisers who had attended the training of trainers also participated in the rural women's training. They worked alongside rural women to gain new technical knowledge on dairy production, and also had the opportunity to observe the training methods used by the national trainer. The training covered aspects of animal care and all stages of milk processing, from milking to the production of many types of dairy products (e.g. butter, yoghurt and cheese). It also paid special attention to food safety issues. During the closing workshop rural women participants highlighted that, thanks to the training, they enhanced the production of sour cream and butter and learned how to improve hygienic standards in livestock keeping.

## Study tour



The study tour brought participants to Italy to learn about good practices in on-farm diversification and related support services. Identified as an area of interest among rural women in Turkey and Azerbaijan, on-farm diversification in Italy is a well-established sector that includes a wide range of activities such as crafts, on-farm processing, education and agrotourism.





Women farmers in Italy are highly involved in on-farm diversification activities and benefit from special support services. The study tour provided an opportunity for Italian, Turkish and Azerbaijani partners to exchange knowledge and experiences on meeting women farmers' needs related to diversifying their businesses. The very practical study tour combined meetings with representatives of public and private service providers – namely, the Department of Agriculture of the Lazio Region, Donne Impresa of Coldiretti (the women's section of the professional association of family farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs), ONILFA (National Observatory for Female Entrepreneurship and Work in Agriculture), and the Service Centre for Typical and Traditional Products – with visits to two farms where women are engaged in diversified activities. This allowed participants to discuss and learn about the challenges and needs of women and how the services provided contributed to the success of their business. The Italian specialists shared the approaches and methods they use to ensure demand-driven services that focus on women. Participants found the idea of using a common label

and packaging for small-scale farmers' products very interesting. They also thought that on-farm kindergartens and nutrition-related didactic activities for children carried out by farmers were very innovative practices that they would try to promote through their own services.

## Results achieved

According to project objectives, more than 70 rural women were trained on selected subjects based on their needs and priorities.

The project activities put in place elements that have the potential to contribute to upscaling project impacts, by ensuring that in the future many more women are reached with adequate information and through methods of delivery that effectively meet their demands.

These elements include: the training of more than 60 extension and rural advisory staff members in designing and delivering gender-sensitive rural advisory services and the development of a participatory training of trainers manual that draws on experiences and feedback from pilot training participants. The project also created an opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge between the two countries during the study tour and the final workshop.

National ownership of the project was ensured by applying the "CoCoCoCo" approach ("co-diagnose, co-design, co-act and co-learn") to directly involve leadership of the central offices of the two ministries in each phase of the project and its activities.

Constant coordination and consultation between FAO and the national partners have been key to the project's success, allowing it to respond in a timely manner to partners' needs. The project greatly benefited from the technical expertise and experience of the Rural Women Services Unit of the Department of Training, Extension and Publication of the MFAL.





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