



Photo credit: ESAFF Uganda

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Denouncing gender inequality and raising awareness on its impact – **women voices**

This year's International Women's Day is like no other. Despite the world coming to a halt in many ways because of COVID-19, agriculture continued to thrive. In Uganda, farming employs a massive 66 per cent of the working population and accounts for a quarter of GDP. Women play a vital role in Uganda's agricultural sector and contribute a higher-than-average share of agriculture labour in the region. Females account for 51% of the total population, while males account for 49% (UBOS 2020). They also make up more than half of Uganda's agricultural workforce.

Women, especially those in rural areas, often have limited ability to make critical strategic choices. Much of the evidence suggests that targeting women with relevant information in formats that are both accessible and appealing can change this reality.

Under the theme #ChooseToChallenge indicating that a "challenged world is an alert world, and from challenge comes change", International Women's Day was celebrated on the 8th of March as a symbol of the historical journey of women around the world have taken to better their lives. To commemorate the 8th of March, with support from La Via Campesina, ESAFF Uganda organized women community dialogues in Iganga, Manafwa and Adjumani districts where 94 rural women came

together to highlight the essential role of rural women, celebrate achievements, highlight the hindrances and discuss further actions for change. This was in line with the one voice declaration Against the Virus of Patriarchy and Capitalism, the Vaccine of Feminism and Solidarity!.

“We should educate the girls child and empower them to take up leadership positions that are originally thought to be for only men. Gender inequality will be address faster when we are in leadership.” Mutonyi Elizabeth, small-scale farmer, Manafwa district.

During the community dialogues, women noted that gender inequality is one of the oldest and most pervasive forms of inequality ever since it denies women their voices, devalues their work and makes women's position unequal to men's. Women appreciated that there is a demonstrated positive trend towards women empowerment. However, women's leadership and decision-making participation continue to be limited, yet it remains a top priority and a critical element for achieving gender equality. Women leaders who attended the dialogue also noted that women leaders are more transformational than men leaders since they inspire their team and spend a lot of time coaching and emphasizing teamwork. Despite the fact that some communities appreciate women leaders, people in some communities think that women are not strong enough to lead because of the gender roles at home.

“People in my community appreciate women leaders because we have time for our people, women are trust worthy and highly accountable to the people they lead. We don’t take the trust that people put in us lightly.” Nsubuga Edinance, LC 1 Chairperson, Bulowoza Village, Iganga district.

Further discussions during the community dialogues focused on the unequal power relations and participation in decision-making between women and men, whereby some women testified that decision making at the household level is determined by access and control over resources and assets, opportunities and entitlements. This was evidenced as one of the structural causes of social and political instability that generates poverty. All the women at the community dialogues agreed that gender equality is critical in reducing poverty. Eradicating gender inequalities would drive an upswing in household income and reduce both poverty and inequality.

“We can’t fold our hands and just look on as our fellow women are being oppressed by some cultural norms that promote unequal power relations and patriarchy. As women, we should use the current challenges that we are facing to build resilience against this systematic oppression since the constitution empowers us.” Masudio Margaret, Farmer leader, Adjumani district.

The Government of Uganda is a signatory to several international, regional and has national laws and policies that advance the participation of women in public leadership like the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR), 1325, the Uganda National Gender Policy among others that are focused on promoting and protecting the rights of women enormously increasing effective leadership and participation in the democratic governance.

The women community dialogues agreed on five key policy recommendations:

1. To focus on empowering women at an individual level through ensuring unrestricted access to production resources, challenging harmful customs and providing information and skills that would boost their production and productivity hence improving returns.

2. To highlight the impact and role women have played in agriculture and use such experiences to reduce men's dominance in agriculture. This can influence women's greater involvement and create an opportunity to empower more women in the agriculture sector.
3. To deliberately promote women participation in the paid labour force in the agriculture sector to avoid women labour exploitation. This will make women become economically active and reduce household poverty.
4. To publicly shame any individual, entity or institution that is promoting inequality either directly or indirectly at an individual, household, and institution level, this would improve accountability, which would discourage human rights abuse.
5. To improve agriculture budget and increase access to affordable and favorable financing for women in agriculture, especially during this pandemic, to increase production and building sustainability.

“Today it seems everyone is against the injustice that we face because it’s the International Women’s Day, tomorrow it might be different. As women, we have made recommendations and we shall follow them until our leaders walk the talk.” Timbiti Jane, Farmer leader, Manafwa district.

In conclusion, the women praised the government and partners for always celebrating International Women's Day but expressed concern that it shouldn't be turned into a day of celebrations alone but of actions as well. Every day should be women's day until gender inequality becomes a thing of the past.

Photos from the events: Credit: Rashida Kabanda and David Oming







About ESAFF Uganda

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda is the largest small-scale farmer-led policy influencing movement in Uganda. ESAFF Uganda was established to bring together small-scale farmers into a social movement to build common aspirations, learnings and linkages. ESAFF Uganda which is a membership organisation with members in 54 districts works to enhance the small-scale farmers' ability to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in development processes at local, national and regional/global level. ESAFF Uganda is also part of a bigger network of small-scale farmers' organisations (ESAFF) in other 15 countries in eastern and southern Africa.

For more information, please visit www.esaffuganda.org

Special thanks to LVC for supporting the community dialogues



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