WOMEN ARE KEY TO POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty, 70% are women; 60% of the chronically hungry people are women and girls; and, 70% of the world’s blind are women suffering from trachoma in communities with limited access to water. Between 40-80% of women in developing countries are affected by increasing scarcity of fuelwood.

In poor communities, women and girls spend on average 2-20 hours per week fetching water and collecting firewood. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation jeopardize their livelihood by increasing their workload, affecting their health and reducing their opportunities. This is a huge constraint to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Women are the nexus of agri-nutrition-health through their roles as plant gatherers, home gardeners, plant domesticators, herbalists, medicinal plants’ collectors and seed custodians. Their knowledge of biodiversity and its values for meeting the food, fodder, fuel-wood, medicine, clothing, transportation and shelter needs of their families is crucial for securing the subsistence and development needs of the poorer segment of society. The 20-30% increase in farm yields that women could achieve, if given the same access to productive resources as men, could play a key role to food security by reducing the global number of hungry people by 100-150 million.

Women produce, select and save up to 90% of seeds and germplasm used in smallholder agriculture and also play key roles in the multiplication, improvement and storage of seeds. In many countries they have been managing the interface between wild and domesticated species of edible plants for thousands of years. They are also main guardians of livestock diversity and play an important role in water management and forestry.

Women:
• Have different and complementary knowledge than men
• Are different in the way they perceive, think, their choice criteria, preferences, needs, practices and uses of biological resources
• Receive, organize and transmit their knowledge and skills by different means, and respond differently.

Biodiversity is the cornerstone of the work, belief systems and basic survival of many women, who traditionally use various
Mainstreaming the roles of women, their knowledge, concerns, needs, preferences and uses of biological diversity and ecosystem services as integral dimensions of decision making, design, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs and activities is a cross-cutting issue and crucial for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Accounting for women’s perspectives in terms of their relationship to biological resources and ecosystems, and ensuring their full participation in their management can play a huge role in reversing environmental degradation, improving governance, and helping policy-makers design more effective approaches to promote better understanding of biodiversity and achieve the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 for the welfare of current and future generations.

**TARGET 14**

By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.