

# Gender Issues in Agricultural Water Management

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# Background

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- Women make essential contributions to the rural economy of all developing countries
- Gender patterns vary based on the prevalent social, religious, cultural, political and economic factors in the region
- Lack of gender inclusivity has contributed to the underperformance of agriculture sector in developing countries
- 43% of the agricultural labour force globally are women
- Common gender stereotype assumes women as primarily caregivers, while men as farmers and irrigators
- Stakeholders frequently marginalize women in agriculture water management.



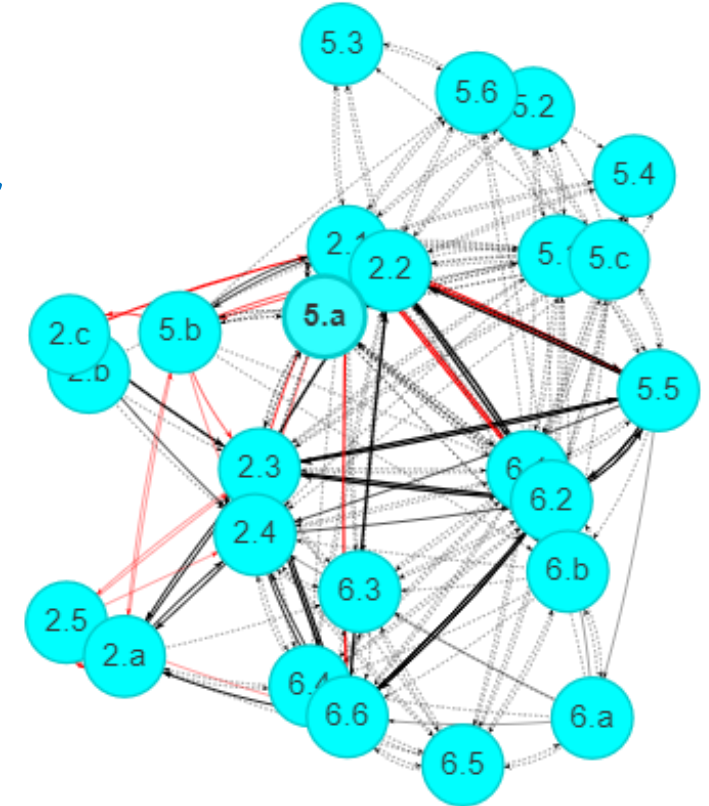
Source: FAO (2019)

# Sustainable Development Goals



*To achieve food and water security which corresponds to the goal 2 of zero hunger and SDG 6 of clean water and sanitation, achieving SDG 5 of gender equality is paramount.*

The interlinkages between these SDGs present the synergies and tradeoffs between the SDG2, SDG 5, and SDG 6.



# Gender, water and the SDGs

- Productive and profitable agricultural sector will help attain the SDGs
- SDG Targets relating to water are unlikely to be achieved unless gender perspectives are integrated into planning and implementation activities
- Improved water services will give women more time for productive endeavors
- Giving women more autonomy will provide them more opportunities for personal development
- Convenient access to water and sanitation facilities reduce risk to women and girls while gathering water



Source: ADB (2019)

# Women's Role in Water Management

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- Important stakeholders in agriculture water management
- Crucial in the utilization, conservation and management of natural resources in rural areas
- Often responsible for drinking water collection, family hygiene/health, subsistence farming, watering of livestock among other activities
- Involved in agricultural labour as well as off-farm economic activities, both of which require water access and sound water management
- Contribute to food security
- In absence of males in the household, in addition to their own role, women take on the men's activities in the farm as well



# Addressing Asymmetric Gender Roles In Agriculture



Source: ISARD (2020)



- Higher labour burden than men
- Mostly employed in part-time, seasonal and/or low-paying jobs
- Gender-specific responsibilities, ownership and rights are different; however, policies mostly do not consider this
- Patriarchal structures assumes men as the natural choice for the leader

# Addressing Asymmetric Gender Roles In Agriculture

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- Restricted mobility due to social, economic and cultural norms
- Limited involvement in the decision making or irrigation – drainage planning
- Deemed lesser productive



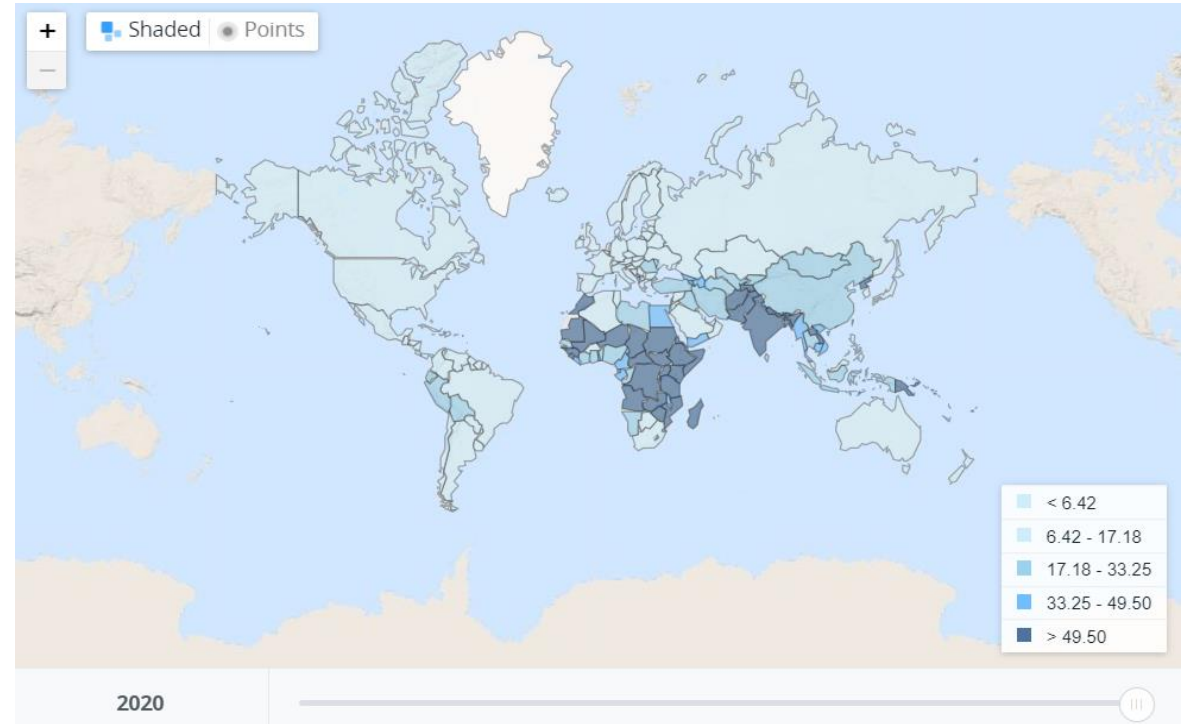
Source: FAO (2019)



# Women in Agriculture



Women in Agriculture in India at a Glance (World Bank, 2019)



Employment in agriculture, female (% of female employment) (World Bank, 2020)

**Generally, there is a lack of gender disaggregated agricultural data. However, these figures are representative of the ground situation.**

# Key Issues in Water and Agriculture

- **Water Security**
- **Food security**
- **Migration**
- **Technology, capacity and productivity**
- **Water governance and institutions**



Source: FAO (2019)

Source: UN Habitat(2020)



# Limitations for Women

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- Under-representation in decision-making
- Skewed benefits, rights and obligations for females
- Low access to adequate education, agricultural information
- Less access to agricultural assets, land and water resources, inputs, training and extension services and to rural employment opportunities
- Less access to technology, credit and other financial services
- Unequal pay wages, discrimination



Source: FAO (2019)

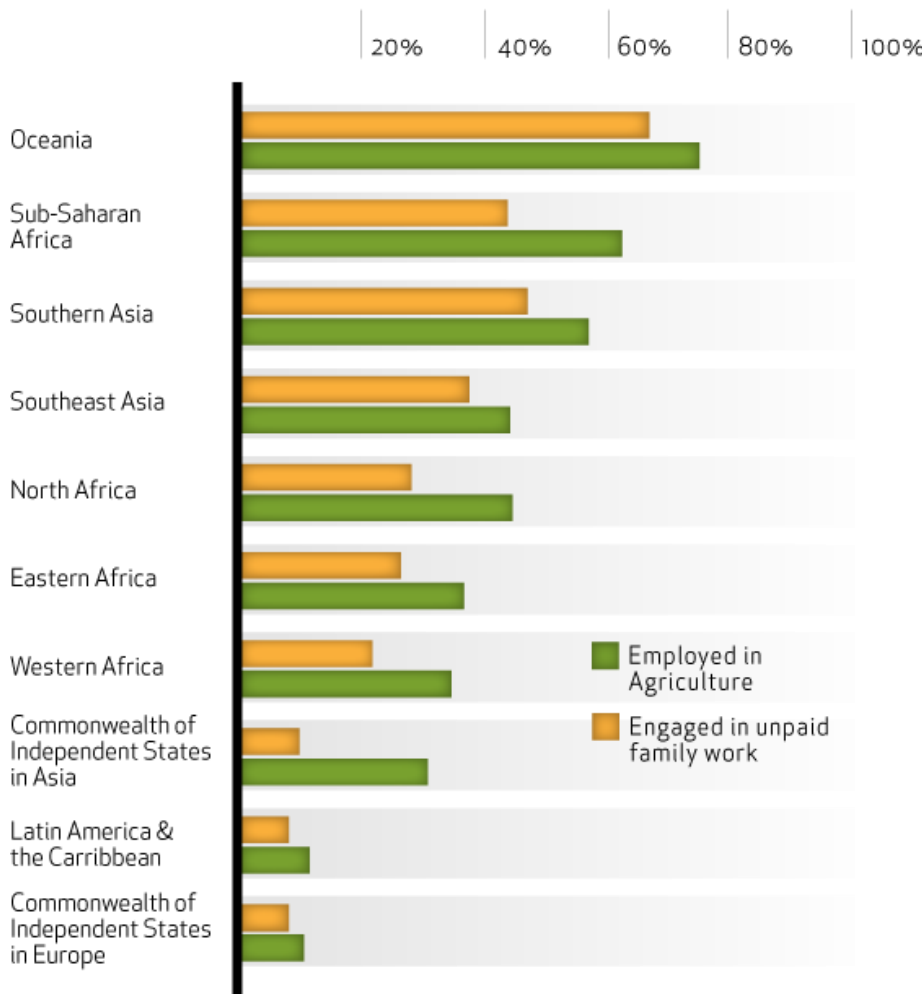
# Limitations for Women

- Gender division of labour
- Lesser access to economic opportunities than men
- Less Participation in irrigation management training
- Under-representation in agricultural market; restricted access to market off-takers
- Low access to information and knowledge
- Poor collaboration opportunities
- Women tend to be more risk adverse than men
- Water fees poses burden on women

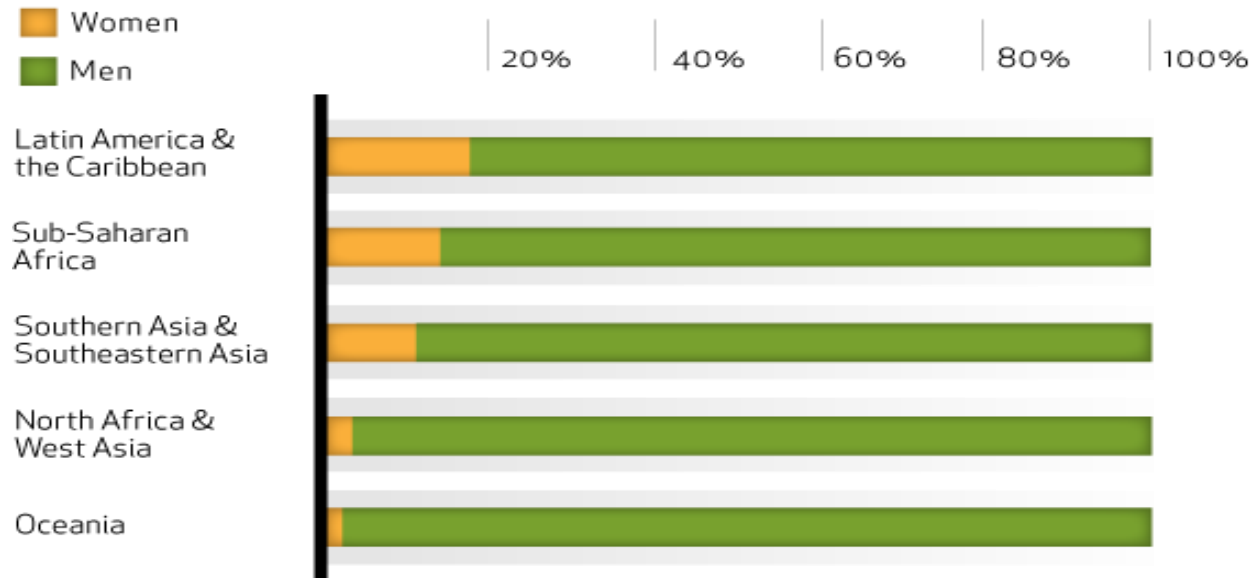


Source: CGIAR (2019)

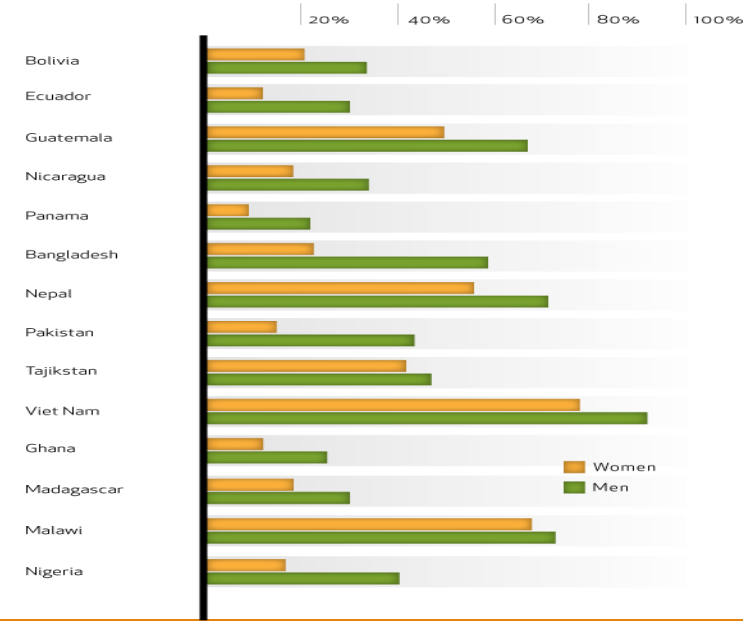
**WOMEN EMPLOYED IN AGRICULTURE & ENGAGED IN UNPAID FAMILY WORK, 2007 (%)** Source: UN, FAO



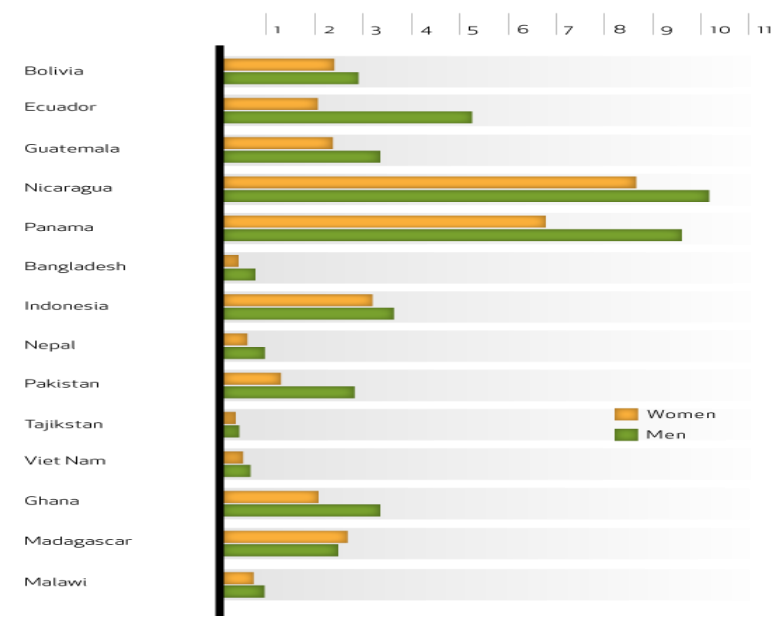
**SHARE OF MALE & FEMALE AGRICULTURAL HOLDERS IN MAIN DEVELOPING REGIONS (%)** Source: FAO



**FERTILIZER USE BY FEMALE- AND MALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS, BY HOUSEHOLD (%)** Source: FAO



**RURAL HOUSEHOLD ASSETS, AVERAGE FARM SIZE (HA)** Source: FAO



# Recognizing Gender Sensitivity

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**Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water**

‘This pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldom been reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources. Acceptance and implementation of this principle requires positive policies to address women-specific needs and to equip and empower women to participate at all levels in water resources programmes, including decision-making and implementation, in ways defined by them.’



# Way Forward

- Initiation of policy dialogue and targeted stakeholder interventions
- Gender-balance in policy making bodies needs to be constitutional obligation
- Promote gender equality and women's rights through gender mainstreaming at each institutional level and reducing the wage gap
- Promote women education, enhancing participatory skills development and gender-responsive extension and advisory services
- Promote women empowerment through group formation, access to credit, agricultural information and technology transfer
- Enabling access to finance, technology, information and market opportunities for women
- Instituting programs for building capacities of women, especially dealing with agricultural water management
- Combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims
- Implementation and governance support to promote gender-based equitable development
- Support developing ecosystems that facilitates women entrepreneurs



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THANK YOU

