



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

## Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition • FSN Forum

### TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Call for submissions No. 202 • 09.10.2024 – 27.11.2024

➤ <https://www.fao.org/fsnforum/call-submissions/community-engagement-rural-transformation-and-gender-equality>

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

#### Community engagement for inclusive rural transformation and gender equality

The objective of this call for submissions is to collect good practices, experiences, and lessons learnt on the use of community engagement for inclusive rural transformation and gender equality. The initiative, organized by the [Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division \(ESP\)](#), seeks to gather insights from a diverse range of contributors, both within FAO and from external stakeholders. Its goal is to share knowledge, foster learning, and guide the scaling up of community engagement and community-led collective action to leave no one behind. The call builds on FAO's past efforts in this area, such as the [Community Engagement Days](#) series of webinars.<sup>1</sup>



**The call for submissions is open until 27 November 2024.**

#### How to take part in this call for submissions:

To take part in this Call for submissions, please [register](#) to the FSN Forum, if you are not yet a member, or “sign in” to your account. Please review the **topic note** to understand the criteria we are considering for this call. If you wish to learn more about community engagement, you may refer to the [background document](#). Once you have completed this submission template, upload it in the box “Post your contribution” on the [call webpage](#), or, alternatively, send it to [fsn-moderator@fao.org](mailto:fsn-moderator@fao.org).

Please keep the length of submissions limited to **1,500 words** and feel also free to attach relevant supporting materials.

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<sup>1</sup> The call for submissions is directly aligned with the thematic components of collective action within FAO's Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), specifically Better Life 1 (Gender Equality and Rural Women's Empowerment), Better Life 2 (Inclusive Rural Transformation) and Better Life 3 (Agriculture and Food Emergencies).

## Template for submissions

<b>Contact person</b>	Name: Bianka Laskovics Organization/Unit: FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) Country: Hungary Email address: bianka.laskovics@fao.org
<b>Name/title of the good practice</b>	FAO's Integrated Community Development Approach in Europe and Central Asia
<b>Where is the good practice taking place?</b> (Multiple selection allowed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Europe and Central Asia <input type="checkbox"/> Latin America and the Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> North Africa and Near East <input type="checkbox"/> Sub-Saharan Africa <input type="checkbox"/> Asia and the Pacific <input type="checkbox"/> North America <input type="checkbox"/> Global
<b>Affiliation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Farmer and producer organizations <input type="checkbox"/> Trade Union <input type="checkbox"/> Informal community-based, farmer-based or self-help group <input type="checkbox"/> Research and academia <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Local/traditional authorities <input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Society Organization <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intergovernmental Organization (e.g. UN system, World Bank) <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Partner/Donor <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
<b>In which sector(s) and context (s) have you used this community engagement good practice?</b> (Multiple selections allowed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Sanitation <input type="checkbox"/> Food production in agrifood systems (please also tick the sub-categories) <div style="margin-left: 40px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Crop cultivation  <input type="checkbox"/> Fisheries and aquaculture production           </div>

	<p> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Livestock</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Forestry</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Agroforestry</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Horticulture</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Apiculture (beekeeping)</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Agroecology and sustainable farming practices</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Soil and water management</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other: _____</i> </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Post-production in agrifood systems (please also tick the sub-categories)         </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Processing and value addition</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Marketing and retailing</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Transporting</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Food loss and waste</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Packaging</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Storage</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Distribution</i> </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____         </p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Equality  <input type="checkbox"/> Climate Action  <input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship and Governance  <input type="checkbox"/> Social Protection  <input type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian and protracted crisis  <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict resolution, peace and resilience  <input type="checkbox"/> Digital innovation  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other sector (please specify) _____ Rural development__         </p>
<p>Who are the <b>financial partners</b> supporting this good practice, if applicable?</p>	<p>EU, ADA, Hungary</p>
<p><b>1.</b> In a few sentences, <b>summarize</b> your community engagement good practice.</p> <p>The integrated community development planning approach aims to involve all community members, including traditionally marginalized and voiceless people, in decisions affecting</p>	

their lives. It involves conducting a bottom-up, inclusive and participatory planning process adapted to the local agroecological and social context. This is usually conducted at the lowest administrative level – the community or the village. The process facilitates the collective preparation of a community development plan (CDP) or community development strategy (CDS). This inclusive and participatory approach is used in the region of Europe and Central Asia (ECA) in the context of specific FAO or donor-funded projects, which last two to four years on average.

**2. What **problem(s)** or **challenge(s)** does your good practice aim to address through community engagement?**

Rural communities in the ECA region are suffering from several constraints hampering agricultural and rural development, livelihoods building and poverty reduction. The overall challenge in the region is not only supporting subsistence and semi-subsistence farmers to increase agricultural productivity, competitiveness and income but also ensuring inclusive growth and enhancing opportunities of participation for both women and men, people in situations of vulnerability and those left behind.

**3. Describe your **good practice** in more detail. Include the main **guiding principles**, the **desired changes or outcomes** you aim to achieve (*Theory of Change*), and the **key phases of implementation**.**

The first step is the identification and selection of the target communities located in rural areas, based on a set of basic criteria, including people's willingness and interest to participate in the process, potential for agricultural development, alignment with government priorities or programmes and opportunities for linkages with other donors. The elaboration of general and specific selection criteria may depend on the country and local conditions. In specific cases, criteria may also include levels of poverty/food insecurity, vulnerability to climate change or other shocks and communities affected by some prolonged crisis. The criteria are set by FAO in close coordination with local experts and are based on desk-research and field visits.

The next step is to conduct a desk-based socioeconomic analysis of the target areas. This collects data and information on the local context, including social, economic, agricultural and environmental conditions and the specific needs and constraints of participating communities, with a focus on smallholder farmers. This is followed by individual interviews of key stakeholders (e.g. mayor, representatives of agricultural service providers or cooperatives) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Specific attention is devoted to ensure inclusion and effective participation of all stakeholder groups in the communities, particularly those traditionally marginalized and voiceless. If deemed necessary, specific FGDs are organized, splitting people into specific groups based on the local context, for example groups of farmers with the same production focus, groups of women and public sector representatives. This helps to make participants more comfortable in voicing their concerns and not feel intimidated or pressured by other dominant opinions.

This is followed by the organization of community development workshops to which all community members are invited. The participation of different sectors (e.g. agriculture, education, tourism) and stakeholder groups (public sector, private sector and CSOs) is essential and is a prerequisite to conduct the process.

At the end of the process, each community consolidates its own CDP or CDS that reflects the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders based on the results of the workshops and FGDs. The core part of the CDP/CDS is the action plans (APs), which include a detailed list of specific planned investments tailor-made for the communities.

4. Who are the **key actors and stakeholders** involved in the design and implementation of the good practice, and what are their respective roles? *Consider local partners, government, local authorities, community radios, civil society, research, the private sector, etc.*

Depending on the country context, the target sites consist of small local communities or villages. The people or groups that participate in the process at community level include smallholder farmers; young people; representatives of groups in situation of vulnerability such as ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities or older persons; agricultural service providers (e.g. extension services); local authorities and public institutions (e.g. schools, kindergartens, vocational schools); private sector representatives (such as local entrepreneurs and food processors); and members of agricultural producer groups and civil society organizations (CSOs). At policy level, the key counterparts are relevant ministries (usually ministries of agriculture and rural development), government agencies, NGOs and academia.

5. How does your intervention ensure **inclusivity and equal and meaningful participation** within the **community**?

To be effective and inclusive, the community development process needs to be closely facilitated and monitored. This is essential to ensure continued, broad and effective engagement at local level. High engagement of locals needs to be maintained during the community workshops and throughout the whole community development process. FAO's experience indicates that the more this kind of consultative and inclusive processes are conducted, the more communities become aware of the process and related benefits, making their participation increasingly active and meaningful.

6. By using community engagement, what **results and impacts** have your good practice achieved?

FAO's experience has been instrumental in influencing national policy for the benefit of communities and smallholder producers. For example, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved a resolution supporting smallholders and small communities\*. The precondition for this support was for the applicants to have a local-level development strategy. Under FAO's project implemented in the Republic of Moldova in 2017–2019\*\*, three communities prepared CDPs, which were considered good examples of local development strategies by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (today Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry) and were shared among other communities throughout the country as models to follow. Moreover, the documentation prepared for the implementation of the small-scale investment measures funded under the FAO project (e.g. the application and the expression of interest forms) were also adopted for use in the design of the national rural development measures.

\*Republic of Moldova. 2020. Government Resolution No. 476. Chişinău. [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=118590&lang=ru](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=118590&lang=ru)

\*\*Support to capacity building on agriculture and rural development policy and implementation of local community development pilot projects. TCP/MOL/3607 <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4eb870fa-ab27-418f-b877-b7f779bd0b5c/content>

**7. Among these results, has the good practice led to improvements in terms of gender equality, women's empowerment, and/or social inclusion?**

The experience so far has shown that rural communities have increased their understanding of and participation in the process, including in terms of benefits accruing to them. This concerns both the CDP/CDS preparation and implementation processes. During the implementation, the prepared Action Plans (APs) are supported by the projects in the form of small-scale demonstration investment measures to test the financial and knowledge absorption capacity of the communities. These can focus on the application of specific equipment, usually supporting agricultural production or processing, or more broadly support rural development (e.g. building or rehabilitating community facilities). The investments should be socially inclusive and mainly for the benefit of the community as a whole.

**8. What are the key lesson learned from your community engagement good practice?**

FAO's experience confirmed that national administration staff need to be directly and actively involved in the implementation of local-level processes for a successful delivery of the projects. It is very important to sensitize the national-level authorities in order to create an enabling environment for the implementation of the process and to ensure its sustainability. The target countries also need to enhance the dissemination of timely and adequate information on financial resources available and on the transparency in the process of resource allocation. In addition, donor coordination is also essential during project implementation to reach bigger impact and enhance the sustainability of the intervention.

**9. Has this practice been replicated in the same context or in different contexts?**

*What are the required conditions to replicate and adapt the practice in another context/geographical area?*

To enhance inclusion and participation, FAO tested and validated the integrated community development planning approach in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova.

**10. How sustainable are the results achieved by this good practice?**

*Describe the key elements that need to be in place to make the initiative sustainable, including enabling environment (legal and policy frameworks and institutions), local ownership, accountability, etc.*

The Action Plans (APs), which are prepared in a participatory way during such community development projects, can be effective instruments to set up territorial governance mechanisms and to attract further national and donor support for community development initiatives. The APs can also be used to develop public-private partnerships, networks or platforms among rural institutions and producer groups serving as linkages between the ministries and local governments.

Another important step in the process is to conduct trainings and workshops at the national level to enhance the technical capacity, knowledge and skills of decision-makers, particularly the staff of ministries of agriculture and other relevant government agencies responsible for agricultural and rural development, policy formulation and implementation, and development planning. This



enhances in-country capacity, ownership and sustainability. Additionally, capacity development activities for rural institutions and extension service providers can enhance the sustainability of such a project.

**11.** Based on the conversations FAO held during the Community Engagement days, a definition of community engagement for empowerment was proposed:

***“Community engagement for empowerment and community-led collective action can be defined as an inclusive and participatory process that enables community members to become active agents of change in decisions affecting their lives, health, and environment. This process develops their capacity to achieve sustainable outcomes for improved rural livelihoods. Embracing a rights-based approach, it prioritizes the agency and participation of all community members, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, caste, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, migration status, or ability/disability. Indeed, inclusive approaches recognize the complexities of overlapping marginalization and discrimination that can exclude different community members from decision-making processes and implement strategies to foster their participation, agency and empowerment.”***

**We invite you to contribute to this definition. What would you add or change?** Please share your thoughts, suggestions, and any additional elements you believe are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of community engagement approaches aimed at community-led collective action for inclusive rural transformation, people’s empowerment and gender equality.

The role of inclusive public policies may be emphasized which can create a conducive environment at national level for enhancing community engagement and community-led action and can ensure their sustainability at the local level.

**12.** Based on your experience, what **gaps or areas for improvement** still need to be addressed in the field of community engagement?

It is important to promote the development and implementation of institutional, policy and legal frameworks which target territorial development, community engagement and empowerment. To achieve this, the engagement of various stakeholders at all levels is necessary by continuous multi-stakeholder dialogue to create the pre-conditions for developing inclusive public policies. In this respect, capacity development of national authorities and rural institutions is essential.

**13.** What do you think is **FAO's role in the field of community engagement**? How can FAO support and enhance interventions like yours, if applicable? *Consider aspects such as policy advocacy, capacity development, funding, technical assistance, knowledge production and sharing, and fostering partnerships.*

FAO’s main role in this process is to support countries in the introduction and implementation of territorial development approaches and community engagement process through technical assistance, knowledge sharing, awareness-raising, capacity development and resource mobilization. Additionally, supporting the establishment of new partnerships between governments, international organizations, donors, civil society, academia and private sector is key. To support these processes, FAO REU is organizing series of Regional Workshops on Integrated Community Development inviting

all relevant stakeholders from REU programme countries to share their experiences and discuss different policy options in this technical area.	
<b>Link(s) to specific references about your good practice (e.g. reports, communication products, videos, articles)</b>	<p><i>Please include attachment(s) or add here link(s) to documents/videos/podcasts/other with specific references.</i></p> <p>The description of this good practice was prepared for the upcoming FAO publication: <i>Case studies showcasing FAO's work on inclusion in programming</i>. A direct reference should be added once the document is published as identical text is used in many cases. With this good practice template, we would like to further promote the FAO Integrated Community Development Approach as well as the mentioned publication.</p> <p>FAO. 2024. Case studies showcasing FAO's work on inclusion in programming, Rome (forthcoming)</p> <p><a href="https://www.fao.org/europe/news/detail/Experts-recommend-an-integrated-approach-to-develop-rural-communities/en">https://www.fao.org/europe/news/detail/Experts-recommend-an-integrated-approach-to-develop-rural-communities/en</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.fao.org/europe/news/detail/integrated-rural-development-improves-prosperity-in-rural-communities/en">https://www.fao.org/europe/news/detail/integrated-rural-development-improves-prosperity-in-rural-communities/en</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/3rd-Regional-Workshop-on-integrated-community-development/en">https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/3rd-Regional-Workshop-on-integrated-community-development/en</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/regional-workshop-on-integrated-community-development-2nd/en">https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/regional-workshop-on-integrated-community-development-2nd/en</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/Regional-Workshop-on-Integrated-Community-Development/en">https://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail/Regional-Workshop-on-Integrated-Community-Development/en</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVKHMd87z2Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVKHMd87z2Y</a></p>