



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.¹



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.

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

¹ 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

Contact person	Name: Dr. Isaac Okyere Organization/Unit: West Africa Regional Shellfish Knowledge Hub, Center for Coastal Management, University of Cape Coast, Ghana Country: West Africa (Regional) Email address: iokyere@ucc.edu.gh
Name/title of the good practice	Women-led Rights-based Shellfisheries Co-management
Where is the good practice taking place? (Multiple selection allowed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Europe and Central Asia <input type="checkbox"/> Latin America and the Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> North Africa and Near East <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sub-Saharan Africa <input type="checkbox"/> Asia and the Pacific <input type="checkbox"/> North America <input type="checkbox"/> Global
Affiliation	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research and academia <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Local/traditional authorities <input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civil Society Organization <input type="checkbox"/> Intergovernmental Organization (e.g. UN system, World Bank) <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Partner/Donor <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
In which sector(s) and context (s) have you used this community engagement good practice? (Multiple selections allowed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Sanitation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food production in agrifood systems (please also tick the sub-categories) <input type="checkbox"/> Crop cultivation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fisheries and aquaculture production <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry

	<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> <input type="checkbox"/> Post-production in agrifood systems (please also tick the sub-categories) <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> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other _____</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender Equality <input type="checkbox"/> Climate Action <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other sector (please specify) _____
Who are the financial partners supporting this good practice, if applicable?	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
<p>1. In a few sentences, summarize your community engagement good practice.</p> <p>Our team is working with shellfishing communities and local university, government, and civil society organization partners to scale a women-led, rights-based, integrated approach to shellfisheries co-management across 11 coastal countries in West Africa. Together, we are developing an evidence base for this approach with participatory site-based research in Ghana and The Gambia, and have created the West Africa Regional Shellfish Knowledge Hub to establish a community of practice for dissemination and application of good practice across the region (see link to Knowledge Hub webpage in attachments). This work has secured</p>	

improvements in women's empowerment and sustainable shellfisheries management, including the granting of exclusive use-rights for women's associations in Ghana and The Gambia.

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

Shellfisheries resources in estuarine ecosystems across West Africa are mainly harvested by women, whose livelihoods are closely associated with this activity. These livelihoods largely fall within the small-scale fisheries sector but often go unnoticed in official fisheries statistics and management efforts. Thus, these women shellfish harvesters are presented with both the challenge and the opportunity of leading the protection and sustainable use of their resource. Women shellfish harvesters within the region have started to communicate with each other in ad-hoc and project supported exchanges to learn about successful approaches to manage shellfish and mangrove ecosystems. So far, these exchanges have been limited, but with continued support have begun to evolve into a more vibrant network of practice.

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**.

Our good practice's theory of change is if implementation of women shellfishers empowerment, shellfishery and mangrove co-management, and adjacent landscape food production systems is integrated, then shellfishery and mangrove health, dietary diversity, and shellfisher livelihood resilience will improve. The key approaches for achieving these outcomes are women's empowerment, gender-sensitive shellfish co-management, mangrove co-management, and landscape food systems. Women's empowerment focuses on the promotion of use-rights for shellfishery resources, organizational development of women's shellfishing associations, and livelihood development to promote resilience during no-harvest periods. Integrated mangrove shellfisheries co-management focuses on the development of co-management plans using a Toolkit approach (see Toolkit in attachments) in partnership with relevant government authorities and with each given specific rights and responsibilities relating to information and decision-making, resource use, and enforcement. The ecosystem approach brings in a larger stakeholder base beyond the women shellfish harvesters and supports the protection of mangrove resources as critical for shellfish and broader ecosystem health. A landscape food systems approach includes assessment of the adjacent landscape of estuarine ecosystems, particularly in the context of improving food resilience because shellfish are not typically consumed in high quantities and also experience closed harvest seasons. Lastly, a major overarching component of our approach is the sharing and scaling of success through peer-to-peer learning and exchange, and the development of a regional community of practice through the West Africa Regional Shellfish Knowledge Hub, hosted at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, an academic institution with a regional mandate to promote research, teaching, and outreach.

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.*

The key actors and stakeholders of this good practice are women shellfish harvesters; shellfishing communities more broadly; local women's associations, civil society groups, and traditional government authorities; fisheries departments and ministries; and universities across the region.

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

Describe how your intervention includes and engages different groups within the community. Consider aspects like gender, age, ethnicity, disability status, livelihoods, and other specific conditions (e.g., people living in prolonged crisis, migrants, refugees). Explain how your intervention engages diverse segments of the rural community. Highlight the specific actions or strategies you use to reach these groups. If applicable, mention if your intervention uses specific approaches such as gender-responsive, gender-transformative, intersectionality, or other methods to ensure inclusivity and gender equality.

This good practice is stakeholder and women-led at its core, engaging those most reliant on shellfishery resources and striving for improved resilience for them and their dependents.

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

Please provide specific examples and evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of your intervention, focusing on both qualitative and quantitative outcomes related to livelihoods and well-being improvements.

The TRY Oyster Women's Association in The Gambia became the first women's association in Sub-Saharan Africa to be granted exclusive use-rights to a fishery in 2012. In 2020, the Densu Oyster Picker's Association in Ghana became the second. These cases of co-management are among the few examples for women in fisheries in Africa that have empowered women as primary producers in wild-caught fisheries, rather than only as fish processors. As of 2024, two new women-dominated shellfishing associations are working towards formal registration and the drafting of their own co-management plans in The Gambia and Ghana. Since 2017, over 16,000 mangrove seedlings have been planted by women shellfishers with support from a local male-dominated brush park fishing association in restoration efforts in Ghana. Shellfish harvesters from Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo, Nigeria, The Gambia, and Ghana have participated in in-person study tour exchanges to promote empowerment, advocacy, and shared lessons for sustainable shellfishing sectors and livelihoods.

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

*Describe the **behavioral changes** in terms of gender that the good practice promotes, emphasizing agency, leadership, and participation in local governance. Include efforts to challenge discriminatory norms and unequal power dynamics. Highlight also how the intervention has supported the well-being (including psychological resilience) of marginalized groups and enhanced their inclusion and participation in decision-making processes.*

(see above to response to Question 6)

8. What **key challenges** did you encounter while implementing the **community engagement activities**, and **how did you address them**?

Include any resistance from communities, pushback, or issues related to unequal power dynamics, if applicable.

A key challenge which informed the beginning stages of the development of this good practice was the lack of a knowledge base on the scale and scope of shellfisheries and shellfish harvest across West Africa. This was addressed with the first ever participatory regional assessment of shellfisheries in 11 coastal West African countries from Senegal to Nigeria (see assessment report in attachments). The regional assessment revealed a near total dominance of women along the entire shellfish value chain and highlighted that women stood to benefit from improvements made at any node along the chain and thus be incentivized towards sustainable resource management.

Another key challenge is the potential threat of increased shellfishery resource value leading to the displacement of women from the sector as the opportunity for economic gain becomes more attractive, a trend seen in other women-dominated fisheries. The promotion of legally recognized exclusive use-rights for women's associations is the main approach to safeguard against this.

9. What are the key **lesson learned from your community engagement good practice?**
(see above to response to Question 8)

10. 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?

The approach has been replicated in four sites across The Gambia and Ghana, and features learning and knowledge exchange across West African coastal countries.

11. 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.

This good practice is the product of a decade-long partnership between a United States University, a West African University, a Ghanaian NGO, Ghanaian and Gambian civil society groups and women's associations, and a multilateral research institution based in Sub-Saharan Africa. Co-management plans have been officially endorsed and exclusive-use rights have been legally gazetted by local traditional authorities and national governments in The Gambia and Ghana. The West Africa Regional Shellfish Knowledge Hub has been established at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. All of these promote local ownership and sustainability of good practice outcomes. However, the nature of this good practice is the connection and empowerment of stakeholders across a vast geographic range who are traditionally underrepresented and under resourced, and as such, will require sustained funding and support.

12. 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 prioritization of community-identified needs could be added.

13. Based on your experience, what **gaps or areas for improvement** still need to be addressed **in the field of community engagement**? Capacity development for resource user associations, and especially women-led resource user associations to robustly represent their constituencies and act effectively as co-management entities.

14. 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. All of the roles noted are relevant for FAO support of women-led rights-based shellfishery co-management.

Link(s) to specific references about your good practice (e.g. reports, communication products, videos, articles)

Please include attachment(s) or add here link(s) to documents/videos/podcasts/other with specific references.

<https://westafricashellfishhub.ucc.edu.gh/>

<https://westafricashellfishhub.ucc.edu.gh/publication/empowering-women-for-shellfish-management-food-security-and-biodiversity-conservation-in-estuarine-ecosystems-of-west-africa-english>

<https://westafricashellfishhub.ucc.edu.gh/publication/the-estuarine-and-mangrove-ecosystem-based-shellfisheries-of-west-africa-spotlighting-women-led-fisheries-livelihoods>