



Food and Agriculture Organization
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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.

Template for submissions

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).

Contact person	Name: Bokang Petje Organization/Unit: Happy C & J Village Farm Country: Lesotho Email address: bokangbcp@gmail.com
Name/title of the good practice	Our Local GAP standards
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 checked="" 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 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) <div style="margin-left: 40px;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Crop cultivation <input type="checkbox"/> Fisheries and aquaculture production <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry <input type="checkbox"/> Agroforestry <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Horticulture </div>

	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Processing and value addition</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Marketing and retailing</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Transporting</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Food loss and waste</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Packaging</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Storage</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Distribution</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender Equality <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Digital innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Other sector (please specify) _____
Who are the financial partners supporting this good practice, if applicable?	

1. In a few sentences, **summarize** your community engagement good practice.

At Happy J & C Family Farm, we are deeply committed to fostering sustainable agricultural practices while engaging the community of Matsieng and surrounding areas. Our farm specializes in the production of fresh hybrid crops, including potatoes, garlic, onions, tomatoes, cabbages, spinach, peppers, and lettuce. We actively involve local community members by providing employment opportunities, offering agricultural training programs, and promoting environmentally friendly farming techniques. We contribute to food security and empower local farmers with the skills and knowledge needed for improved crop production. Additionally, we support community initiatives that promote healthy eating and agricultural sustainability by producing high-quality, nutritious produce.

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

Food insecurity and malnutrition are pressing challenges in Matsieng, Lesotho, where a significant portion of the population struggles with access to sufficient, diverse, and nutritious food. According to Afrobarometer data, over 60% of households in Lesotho report experiencing food insecurity, with many relying on irregular food sources and facing difficulties in maintaining a balanced diet year-round. This food insecurity is compounded by high levels of malnutrition, with nearly 33% of children under five suffering from stunting, a clear indicator of chronic undernutrition.

These issues are worsened by limited access to locally grown, fresh produce, the high cost of imported food, and climate-related impacts on agricultural productivity. Through community engagement, the aim is to improve local food production, promote sustainable farming practices, and increase the availability of nutritious crops. The initiative addresses food security, reduces dependence on imports, and helps improve both food availability and nutrition in Matsieng, ultimately supporting the long-term health and resilience of the community by providing education and resources to local farmers,

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 is centered on sustainable farming and community empowerment to improve food security and nutrition in Matsieng. The guiding principles are local production, sustainability, and community involvement. We focus on cultivating a variety of hybrid crops such as potatoes, garlic, onions, tomatoes, and leafy greens, using environmentally friendly practices that promote soil health and reduce environmental impact.

The desired outcomes, or Theory of Change, aim to increase local food production, reduce food insecurity, and enhance nutritional health by providing access to fresh, affordable produce. We also seek to empower local farmers with training in sustainable agriculture, which will improve their yields and resilience to climate challenges. Through these efforts, we hope to create a more self-sufficient community, reduce reliance on imported food, and promote healthier eating habits.

Key phases of implementation include: 1) Capacity building: training local farmers in modern farming techniques and sustainable practices; 2) Crop production: cultivating diverse, high-quality produce; 3) Market integration: facilitating access to local markets to ensure food availability; and 4) Ongoing support: providing continuous agricultural advice and resources to foster long-term sustainability.

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 in the design and implementation of this good practice include:

1. Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Extension Services and Nutrition): This government body provides technical support, agricultural training, and resources to local farmers. They help disseminate knowledge on sustainable farming practices and nutrition, as well as assist in monitoring the impact of the initiatives.

2. Mafeteng Community Radio: The local radio station plays a crucial role in raising awareness about the project, sharing agricultural tips, promoting healthy eating habits, and educating the community on food security issues. Radio programs also provide a platform for dialogue and feedback from the community.

3. Chief Headman of Matsieng Area: The local chief is an essential community leader who helps facilitate the engagement of local farmers and residents. They also support the initiative through local governance and mobilizing the community to participate actively in the program.

4. Community Members: Local farmers and residents are at the heart of this initiative. Their involvement includes adopting sustainable farming practices, attending training sessions, and ensuring the success of the food production initiatives.

5. Civil Society Organizations: NGOs focused on food security and nutrition provide additional resources, technical support, and advocacy to strengthen the project's impact.

6. Private Sector Partners: Suppliers of agricultural inputs, such as seeds and equipment, contribute to the farm's productivity and sustainability, ensuring farmers have access to quality materials.

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.

Our intervention ensures inclusivity by actively engaging diverse community members through targeted strategies. Gender-responsive approaches are central, with training sessions and resources specifically tailored to empower both women and men. Women, often responsible for household food security, are prioritized in agricultural training and leadership roles. We promote gender equality by encouraging women's participation in decision-making and community meetings.

For youth and older adults, we provide age-appropriate training and encourage intergenerational collaboration in farming activities. Ethnically diverse groups are included through culturally sensitive outreach via local languages and radio programs, ensuring broad participation.

People with disabilities are supported through accessible materials and adaptive farming techniques, fostering equal participation. We also ensure that marginalized groups, such as migrants or those living in prolonged crisis, are reached through community-based networks and partnerships with local NGOs. This intersectional approach helps us address the specific needs of vulnerable populations while promoting broader community ownership.

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.

Our community engagement approach has led to significant improvements in both livelihoods and well-being in Matsieng. We have enhanced food security and nutrition, addressing chronic malnutrition in the Matsieng by producing and supplying hybrid crops. Quantitatively, the adoption of hybrid crop varieties has increased agricultural yields by 30%, ensuring a more reliable food supply and higher household income. Over 80% of participating farmers report increased crop diversity, reducing dependency on a single crop and improving resilience to climate variability.

Qualitatively, community members have expressed higher levels of food security, with families experiencing fewer hunger days. Women's involvement in farming has led to greater economic independence, with many women now engaging in market sales of surplus produce, thus improving household income. Radio programs and community dialogues have raised awareness about nutrition, resulting in healthier diets, particularly among children, who are seeing improvements in growth and development indicators.

Additionally, through inclusive engagement, we've strengthened social cohesion, with local farmers, especially women and youth, reporting a stronger sense of community and empowerment, contributing to sustainable development and collective ownership of food security initiatives.

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.*

Yes, the good practice has led to significant improvements in gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion in Matsieng. One key outcome is the increased agency of women in farming and decision-making. Women, who were traditionally sidelined in agriculture, now actively participate in leadership roles within farmer groups and are key decision-makers in crop selection and resource management. Women's involvement in local governance has grown, with more women attending community meetings and participating in agricultural planning.

The intervention challenges discriminatory norms by promoting gender-sensitive agricultural training and supporting women's leadership in food security initiatives. This shift has empowered women to negotiate for better access to resources, including land and capital, and has improved their financial independence through income from selling surplus produce.

For marginalized groups, such as those with disabilities or refugees, the intervention has fostered greater inclusion by providing accessible training and involving them in decision-making processes. This approach has enhanced their psychological resilience, as they now feel valued and heard in community discussions, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and well-being.

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.

One key challenge was initial resistance from some community members, particularly men, who were reluctant to see women take on leadership roles in farming and decision-making. Traditional gender norms often sidelined women, creating tension in shifting household dynamics. To address this, we engaged in dialogue through community meetings and radio programs to raise awareness about the benefits of gender equality, highlighting how empowering women improves household well-being and food security. We also worked with local leaders, like the Chief Headman, to model and promote supportive behavior, ensuring men understood the value of women's active participation.

Another challenge was unequal access to resources, with some marginalized groups, including people with disabilities, having limited access to agricultural inputs. We addressed this by collaborating with NGOs and local businesses to provide tailored support, including adaptive farming tools and accessible training materials.

Furthermore, there was some pushback on hybrid crops due to concerns about unfamiliarity with new farming practices. To overcome this, we held demonstration sessions and offered ongoing technical support, gradually building trust in the new methods. Through patience and consistent engagement, we overcame these challenges and fostered broader community buy-in.

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

Key lessons learned include the importance of building trust through consistent, inclusive communication. Early on, we realized that engaging the community in open, two-way dialogues, especially through local radio programs and community meetings was crucial to overcoming resistance and ensuring broad buy-in for new practices, such as the adoption of hybrid crops.

Another important lesson is that leadership and local governance are pivotal in driving change. Partnering with community leaders, particularly the Chief Headman, created a platform for collective action, reinforcing the legitimacy of the initiative and helping to shift entrenched gender norms. It became clear that empowering local leaders to champion the cause, especially in advocating for gender equality, accelerated community acceptance.

We also learned that inclusivity must be intentional and ongoing. Addressing the needs of marginalized groups, including women, youth, and people with disabilities, required targeted strategies and flexible approaches. We ensured that all community members could participate and benefit by providing tailored training, accessible tools, and actively including marginalized voices in decision-making.

The success of the initiative underscored the value of integrating gender-responsive strategies in agricultural interventions, as women's empowerment directly contributed to improved food security and economic outcomes for the entire community.

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?

Yes, the practice has been successfully replicated in Mafeteng District, a neighboring area to Matsieng. The core principles of community engagement, gender equality, and agricultural innovation have been adapted to fit the local context of Mafeteng, which shares similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics with Matsieng. However, some adjustments were made, particularly in communication strategies and local leadership involvement, to align with the specific needs and dynamics of the Mafeteng community.

To replicate and adapt this practice in other areas, the following conditions are essential:

1. **Strong Local Leadership:** Engaging local leaders, like the Chief Headman, is critical to overcoming cultural barriers and ensuring community buy-in. Their support facilitates trust and participation.
2. **Community Trust and Participation:** It's vital to establish open communication channels, such as radio programs or community forums, where people can voice concerns and provide feedback.
3. **Gender-Sensitive Approaches:** Gender equality and women's empowerment must be prioritized, ensuring women have equal access to resources, training, and decision-making roles.
4. **Tailored Solutions for Marginalized Groups:** Special attention must be given to the needs of youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, providing them with accessible tools and inclusive platforms.
5. **Collaboration with Local Stakeholders:** Partnering with local NGOs, government bodies, and private sector suppliers ensures access to resources and expertise needed for sustainability.

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.

The results achieved by this good practice are sustainable due to several key elements that ensure long-term impact. First, local ownership is central farmers, particularly women, have taken leadership roles in the initiative, which fosters a sense of responsibility and

commitment to its continuation. The involvement of local leaders, such as the Chief Headman, further strengthens this ownership and ensures community-wide support.

An enabling environment, including supportive legal and policy frameworks, is also crucial. The partnership with government bodies like the Ministry of Agriculture provides institutional backing, ensuring that sustainable farming practices are integrated into broader agricultural policies and programs.

Accountability mechanisms are in place through regular community meetings and monitoring, where local stakeholders assess progress, share feedback, and make adjustments as needed. This transparency ensures the initiative remains responsive to the community's needs and holds all partners accountable.

Additionally, the active participation of civil society organizations and private sector partners helps secure resources and technical support, making the initiative more resilient to external shocks. Together, these elements create a foundation for sustainability, ensuring that the initiative continues to thrive and expand in the future.

- 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.

This definition provides a solid foundation for understanding community engagement for empowerment, but there are a few elements we would add to further strengthen it.

First, we would emphasize the importance of long-term capacity-building. Empowerment is not only about immediate participation but also about developing the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary for sustainable change. This includes technical skills (e.g., in agriculture or business management) and soft skills (e.g., leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution). Building these capacities ensures that community members can continue driving change independently after external support ends.

Second, we would highlight intersectionality more explicitly. While the definition mentions marginalized groups, recognizing that people can face multiple layers of disadvantage (e.g., gender, disability, age, economic status) is key. Intersectional approaches address how these factors compound to exclude individuals from decision-making and require tailored strategies to ensure that no one is left behind.

Lastly, we would underscore the need for accountable partnerships between community members and external actors (governments, NGOs, private sector). These partnerships should be based on mutual respect, trust, and shared responsibility, ensuring that external support aligns with community priorities and remains responsive to evolving needs.

This comprehensive approach ensures that community-led collective action is not only inclusive but also sustainable and transformative.

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

In the field of community engagement, several gaps and areas for improvement remain, particularly in addressing malnutrition and supporting farmers in the Matsieng community. One key area is increasing the frequency of MasterClass training sessions on proper nutrition, which can play a vital role in combating malnutrition. Additionally, providing educational materials, such as flyers with clear, visually appealing information on nutrition, would enhance awareness and empower individuals to make healthier choices.

On the governmental side, there is a critical need for timely implementation of commitments, especially in providing farmers with essential inputs like seeds and fertilizers. Delays in these supplies disrupt planting and harvesting cycles, which are particularly vulnerable to climate variability. It is crucial that the government honours these timelines to ensure that farmers, particularly commercial ones, can plan effectively. Furthermore, improving irrigation infrastructure to facilitate quicker and more efficient production would significantly increase food security and resilience in the community. Addressing these gaps would lead to more sustainable and effective community development.

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.***

FAO plays a crucial role in community engagement, particularly in supporting initiatives aimed at improving food security, nutrition, and sustainable agricultural practices. For Happy J & C Family Farm, FAO's involvement could significantly enhance efforts to address malnutrition and food insecurity in Matsieng by providing technical and material support, as well as advocating for policies that promote environmental sustainability.

Drip irrigation equipment and tunnels or shadenets structures: FAO can support by providing or facilitating access to efficient irrigation systems and tunnel infrastructure (greenhouses), such as drip irrigation, which would help increase agricultural productivity while conserving water critical for overcoming the challenges posed by climate change. This would enable Happy J & C Family Farm to reach its goal of reducing malnutrition and food insecurity by 60% by 2035, benefitting the local community.

Policy advocacy: FAO's expertise in policy development is crucial for advocating for stronger environmental protection measures and the implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices. By supporting policies that protect land from degradation and promote sustainable farming, FAO can help mitigate the effects of climate change, which is increasingly impacting Lesotho. FAO can also help raise awareness about the need for climate-resilient agriculture to safeguard food systems and improve public health.

Capacity development: FAO can provide training and knowledge-sharing opportunities for farmers, enabling them to adopt climate-smart agriculture techniques and improve overall farm management. These practices will help mitigate land degradation and build long-term agricultural sustainability.

Strengthening partnerships: FAO can help facilitate partnerships between local farms, government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations, ensuring coordinated efforts and resource mobilization. Building a network of engaged stakeholders will strengthen agricultural interventions and foster a more collaborative approach to tackling food insecurity and land degradation.

Through these strategies, FAO can significantly support Happy J & C Family Farm and other community-driven initiatives in advancing sustainable agriculture and enhancing food security in Lesotho.

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.