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 onebehind.Thecall 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 27November 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 itin 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**.**

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[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: Tapan Kumar Karmaker Organization/Unit: RDRS Bangladesh Country: Bangladesh Email address: executive.director@rdrsbangladesh.org
Name/title of the good practice	**Community-Led Participatory Planning for Local Development**
Where is the good practice taking place?(Multiple selection allowed)	☐ Europe and Central Asia ☐ Latin America and the Caribbean ☐ North Africa and Near East ☐ Sub-Saharan Africa ☒ Asia and the Pacific ☐ North America ☐ Global
Affiliation	☐ Farmer and producer organizations ☐ Trade Union ☐ Informal community-based, farmer-based or self-help group ☐ Research and academia ☐ Government ☐ Local/traditional authorities ☐ Private Sector ☒ Civil Society Organization ☐ Intergovernmental Organization (e.g. UN system, World Bank) ☐ Resource Partner/Donor ☐ Other (please specify)

In which sector(s) and context(s)have you used this community engagement good practice? (Multiple selections allowed)	☐Education
	☒Health and Sanitation
	☒Foodproduction in agrifoodsystems (please also tick the sub-categories)
	    ☒*Crop cultivation*
	    ☐*Fisheries and aquaculture production*
	    ☐*Livestock*
	    ☐*Forestry*
	    ☐*Agroforestry*
	    ☐*Horticulture*
	    ☐*Apiculture (beekeeping)*
	    ☐*Agroecology and sustainable farming practices*
	    ☐*Soil and water management*
	    ☐*Other: _____*
	☐Post-production in agrifoodsystems(please also tick the sub-categories)
	
	    ☐*Processing and value addition*
	    ☐*Marketing and retailing*

	☐*Transporting*
	☐*Food loss and waste*
	☐*Packaging*
	☐*Storage*
	☐*Distribution*
	☐Other _____
	☒Gender Equality
	☒Climate Action
	☒Citizenship and Governance
	☐Social Protection
	☐Humanitarianand protracted crisis
	☐Conflict resolution, peace and resilience
	☐Digital innovation
	☐Othersector(please specify) _____
Who are the **financial partners** supporting this good practice, if applicable?	Cordaid, EC, DCA, CoS

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

RDRS Bangladesh has made significant progress in social development and empowerment, particularly at the grassroots level through its community-based Federation, which amplifies the voices of rural communities. The organization has advanced women's empowerment by establishing women's forums within each Federation, enabling women to participate in decision-making at the family and local government levels. RDRS has also implemented several innovative agricultural practices, such as the Pusti Bari initiative to improve nutrition, promoting short-duration rice varieties, creating rice banks to address seasonal food shortages, and encouraging tree planting for environmental sustainability. In flood-prone char areas, they use sack gardening to protect crops. Additionally, RDRS focuses on producing zinc-enriched rice to combat nutrient deficiencies. The Sara Bangla Krishak Society (SBKS) of FAO, won the prestigious 2023 FAO Achievement Award for its impactful contributions where RDRS Federation Group were part of it.

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

Community engagement ensures that local needs and priorities are addressed, fosters trust, and promotes inclusivity. By involving marginalized groups in decision-making, providing clear communication, and overcoming collaboration barriers, projects can create sustainable, community-driven solutions. Effective engagement also helps reduce resistance to change by aligning initiatives with the community's aspirations and building mutual understanding.

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 intervention is guided by key principles such as inclusion, transparency, empowerment, collaboration, sustainability, cultural sensitivity, continuous learning, gender mainstreaming, and adaptive management. These principles ensure that diverse community voices are heard, that solutions are sustainable and adaptable, and that gender equality is integrated into all stages of the

process.

The theory of change focuses on achieving sustainable and inclusive development through community ownership and empowerment. The pathway to change includes immediate outcomes like increased community engagement and intermediate outcomes such as strengthened local capacities, leading to long-term, community-driven development.

Key phases of implementation include:

1. **Preparation and Community Entry**: Conduct stakeholder analysis, build trust, and train facilitators in participatory methods.
2. **Needs Assessment**: Use participatory tools to identify community needs and priorities, ensuring inclusion of marginalized groups.
3. **Co-Design of Solutions**: Host collaborative workshops to design initiatives, prioritizing actions based on community consensus.
4. **Implementation**: Partner with local organizations and governments, providing capacity-building to empower community-led actions.
5. **Monitoring and Adaptation**: Use participatory monitoring tools to track progress and adapt strategies based on community feedback and gender inclusivity indicators.
6. **Advocacy and Awareness Building**: Raise awareness about inclusivity and gender equality through media and storytelling.
7. **Sustainability and Handover**: Transition leadership to the community, establish sustainable structures, and work with policymakers to integrate successful practices into formal policies for broader replication.

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

Successful community engagement relies on collaboration among various stakeholders. Local partners provide essential contextual knowledge and facilitate communication between communities and external actors. Governments and local authorities create policies, allocate resources, and ensure alignment with broader development goals. Community media, like radio, raise awareness and foster ongoing dialogue. Civil society organizations advocate for inclusivity, mobilize communities, and ensure accountability. Community members are central to the design and implementation of practices, promoting ownership and sustainability. Research institutions offer evidence-based insights, while the private sector contributes technical expertise, funding, and innovative solutions. International organizations and donors provide financial support, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives, promoting scalability and replication of successful practices.

5. How does your intervention ensure **inclusivity and equal and meaningfulparticipation** 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.

RDRS prioritizes gender equality with gender-responsive measures, such as scheduling activities to suit women's needs and adopting a gender-transformative approach to challenge cultural norms. By conducting participatory assessments and using tools like surveys and focus group discussion (FGDs) ensure active participation of marginalized groups, including elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrants, and refugees. Targeted outreach through culturally appropriate communication ensures accessibility for all, including formats like braille and sign language.

Capacity-building programs, including leadership training for women and skills development for

youth, empower marginalized groups to take leadership roles. An intersectional approach considers the overlapping vulnerabilities of gender, age, and disability, offering services like childcare and transportation. Inclusive decision-making is promoted through representative bodies and participatory tools like community scorecards, ensuring ongoing accountability. The intervention also adapts to the needs of displaced populations by providing psychosocial support and mobile services.

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.

A comprehensive approach to community engagement focuses on inclusivity and participatory assessment. Baseline assessments should include consultations with diverse groups, such as women, youth, ethnic minorities, and marginalized populations like refugees. Gender-responsive and culturally appropriate communication strategies are essential, with accessibility measures for individuals with disabilities. Building trust through collaboration with community leaders and grassroots networks encourages broader participation. Capacity-building programs, leadership opportunities, and gender-transformative approaches empower marginalized groups, promoting their involvement in decision-making. An intersectional approach considers overlapping vulnerabilities, addressing needs like childcare or transportation for specific groups. Inclusive decision-making bodies and ongoing feedback mechanisms ensure all voices are heard. Regular monitoring and adapting interventions based on inclusivity indicators ensure sustained engagement and effectiveness.

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.*

The initiatives focus on promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion. Agricultural and social interventions enhance women's access to education, healthcare, and economic resources, while policies and guidelines ensure equal opportunities in employment and leadership. Women are encouraged to participate in traditionally male-dominated sectors, develop leadership skills, and gain financial independence through microfinance and entrepreneurship. Efforts are made to include marginalized groups in decision-making processes. Behavioral changes are supported by training women in negotiation and self-advocacy through mentorship programs and promoting increased female representation in local governance. It aims to challenge discriminatory norms, promote shared domestic responsibilities, and redistribute resources to ensure equality. Marginalized groups benefit from psychological resilience support, inclusion in decision-making, and tailored training programs, empowering them to become active participants in their communities.

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.

Community participation is crucial to help individuals build confidence, gain knowledge, and develop new skills by engaging in decisions that affect their lives. Cultural sensitivity plays a key role in reducing stereotypes, fostering intercultural understanding, and enhancing social responsibility. For students, active engagement in community activities not only enriches their learning experiences but also aligns coursework with real-world outcomes, incorporating agency personnel and site visits to connect theory with practice.

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

Community engagement strengthens social ties, fosters collaboration, and aligns initiatives with local needs, leading to more resilient and prosperous communities. It enhances trust, boosts economic development, and improves relationships between schools and the community, ensuring a more inclusive and supportive environment. Ultimately, it leads to better outcomes by involving the community in decision-making and addressing real needs.

10. Has this practice been **replicated** in the same contextor in different contexts?
    What are the required conditions to replicate and adapt the practice in another context/geographical area?

The practices implemented by RDRS Bangladesh, particularly in rural development, women's empowerment, and inclusive agricultural initiatives have the potential to be replicated in other contexts or geographical areas, but several factors must be considered. Replicating this model involves addressing specific local conditions and tailoring approaches, so that they are culturally, economically, and environmentally appropriate. To replicate and adapt RDRS's practices, it is essential to conduct thorough needs assessments, adapt interventions to local conditions, and involve all community groups in the planning and implementation phases. A participatory approach that includes both community members and local organizations is crucial for sustainability and success.

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.

Several interconnected factors that ensure sustainability include local ownership, where community engagement, capacity building, and cultural relevance ensure the initiative meets local needs and can be independently maintained. Accountability and transparency are critical, with effective monitoring and evaluation, clear roles and responsibilities, and financial accountability to build trust and attract further support. Financial sustainability is achieved through diverse funding streams, cost-effectiveness, and revenue generation. Resilience to external factors is supported by risk management strategies and adaptability. Partnerships and networks that foster multi-stakeholder collaboration and knowledge sharing also contribute to long-term success.

12. Based on the conversations FAO held during the Community Engagement days, a definitionof 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 proposed definition of community engagement for empowerment is comprehensive and well-aligned with the principles of inclusivity and participatory processes. However, I would suggest a few additions and refinements to enhance its clarity and depth, ensuring it reflects a holistic understanding of community-led collective action for rural transformation, empowerment, and gender equality.

The definition of community engagement for empowerment can be strengthened by incorporating several key elements. First, recognizing the value of local knowledge and cultural context is crucial, as communities often hold deep insights into their own challenges and solutions. Intergenerational engagement should also be emphasized to foster mutual learning and strengthen resilience across age groups. Additionally, addressing power dynamics within communities is important to ensure marginalized voices are heard and their agency is recognized in decision-making. Long-term sustainability and accountability mechanisms should be incorporated to ensure continuous empowerment, especially in rural contexts. The integration of gender equality and social inclusion must also be explicitly addressed, ensuring that all marginalized groups, including those based on disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and migration status, are included.

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

Effective community engagement requires addressing key areas to ensure inclusivity and long-term impact. This includes promoting diverse representation by including marginalized voices in decision-making and leadership roles, ensuring equitable access to resources like technology and funding, and fostering sustained engagement to build trust. Cultural competence training helps practitioners connect authentically with diverse groups, while encouraging youth participation brings fresh perspectives. Capacity building empowers communities to engage meaningfully, and addressing power imbalances ensures communities have genuine influence. Tailored, context-specific strategies and clear communication are essential, alongside continuous collaboration, learning, and adaptation to meet evolving community needs.

14. What do you think is **FAO's role in the field of community engagement**? How can we 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 promoting inclusive community engagement through various forms of support. It can advocate policies that empower marginalized groups and create an enabling environment for community-led development. FAO also strengthens the capacity of local partners, communities, and governments by offering training and technical support in areas like participatory planning and leadership development. Additionally, FAO helps secure funding for community engagement projects, overcoming financial barriers that hinder project scalability and sustainability. Its technical expertise in fields like sustainable agriculture, food security, and climate change adaptation enhances the effectiveness of community interventions. FAO also generates and shares knowledge through research and case studies to improve community engagement practices. Furthermore, FAO fosters partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector, creating synergies and improving resource mobilization to address complex challenges like poverty and food insecurity. Through these efforts, FAO significantly contributes to building inclusive, resilient rural communities.

Link(s) to specific references about your good practice (e.g. reports,	https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IDL7ehW6xI3qvO18LH8kT5Kuul7r_c58?usp=drive_link

communication products, videos, articles)	