



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](#)

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).

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

Contact person	Carolina Bernardes Scheidecker Mandú Inovação Social Brazil parceria@mandusocial.org
Name/title of the good practice	Transforming Family Farming and Integral Education – A Brazil Villages Program
Where is the good practice taking place? (Multiple selection allowed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Europe and Central Asia <input checked="" 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
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 type="checkbox"/> Research and academia <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local/traditional authorities <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Sanitation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food production in agrifood systems (please also tick the sub-categories) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 <input type="checkbox"/> Apiculture (beekeeping) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agroecology and sustainable farming practices <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Soil and water management <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Post-production in agrifood systems (please also tick the sub-categories) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Processing and value addition <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and retailing <input type="checkbox"/> Transporting <input type="checkbox"/> Food loss and waste <input type="checkbox"/> Packaging <input type="checkbox"/> Storage <input type="checkbox"/> Distribution <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Improving Marketing Access <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender Equality <input checked="" 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?	Mosaic Instituto (Brazil) and The Mosaic Company Foundation (U.S.)
<p>1. In a few sentences, summarize your community engagement good practice.</p> <p>The Villages Program supports the prosperity of family farming in vulnerable communities, enhancing social development and rural quality of life. Developed with family and community engagement, the program strengthens agricultural skills through the growth of family farmers autonomy and quality of life to ensure long-term impact. Family farmers and territory organizations participate in a tailored three-year journey focused on three pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agriculture: Boosting productivity through low-impact practices, farm planning, and market access. ● Water: Improving water access and efficiency with irrigation technologies to reduce waste. ● Integral Education: Offering workshops for farmers, creating school gardens, and providing educational materials to deeply engage the community. 	
<p>2. What problem(s) or challenge(s) does your good practice aim to address through community engagement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gender inequality within the families. ● Limited access to technical knowledge and agricultural infrastructure. ● Rural poverty and social inequality and vulnerability. ● Insufficient access to water resources for farming. ● Lack of educational integration promoting sustainable practices. 	
<p>3. Describe your good practice in more detail. Include the main guiding principles, the desired changes or outcomes you aim to achieve (<i>Theory of Change</i>), and the key phases of implementation.</p>	

Guided by the principles of family and community empowerment, sustainability and inclusivity, the program was designed to transform lives by **fostering quality of life, food security, prosperity in rural areas.**

Through a three-year, multi-phase journey, the program aims to equip participants with **practical skills and knowledge that empower them to become resilient and self-sustaining.**

The technical training and hands-on support offered cover areas such as **advanced farming techniques, efficient water use, and the development of environmental awareness.**

The desired outcome is the transformation of the smallholder family farmers in their behavior towards the value and potential of their family labor: from selling what they produce towards producing what sells and, with that in mind, achieving their own goals of food security and improved quality of life. This shift indicates these families become centered in their sustainability by being able to identify and make use of their full productive capacity.

The program is constituted by a 3-year cycle.

1st Year - Cycle 1: Initiation

- Evaluating and Selecting Families
- Planning Production and Rural Properties Design
- Implementing Infrastructure Technologies

2nd Year - Cycle 2: Acceleration

- Enhancement of Technologies
- Personalized Productive, Commercial & Management Technical Assistance towards Sustainability and Entrepreneurship
- Family strengthening oriented to Integral Development

3rd Year - Cycle 3: Graduation

- Family strengthening oriented to Integral Development
- Technologies & Productive consolidation
- Commercial and Financial Management towards sale
- Achieving productive paradigm shift: autonomous investment by the family

Local synergies are strengthened through strategic partnerships with public agencies and local associations and that actions are sustainable. Educational components are equally integral to the program's success, from advice and individual mentoring in the field to each agricultural family until workshops and accessing didactic materials as online content and consultancy. These resources

have proven effective in engaging the families and fostering their commitment to day-by-day activities towards more autonomous practices.

By integrating these elements, the Villages Program establishes a comprehensive framework for **sustainable rural development, emphasizing community ownership, capacity-building, and long-term impact.**

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.*

- Community Family Farmers: central agents who implement and benefit from project practices.
- Mosaic Instituto/The Mosaic Company Foundation: creator of the methodology successfully implemented in India, providing investment, support, and resources.
- Local Government and Educational Institutions: Schools participating in the implementation of gardens and curriculum development.
- Mandu Social: Technical partner responsible for local implementation and management.

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.*

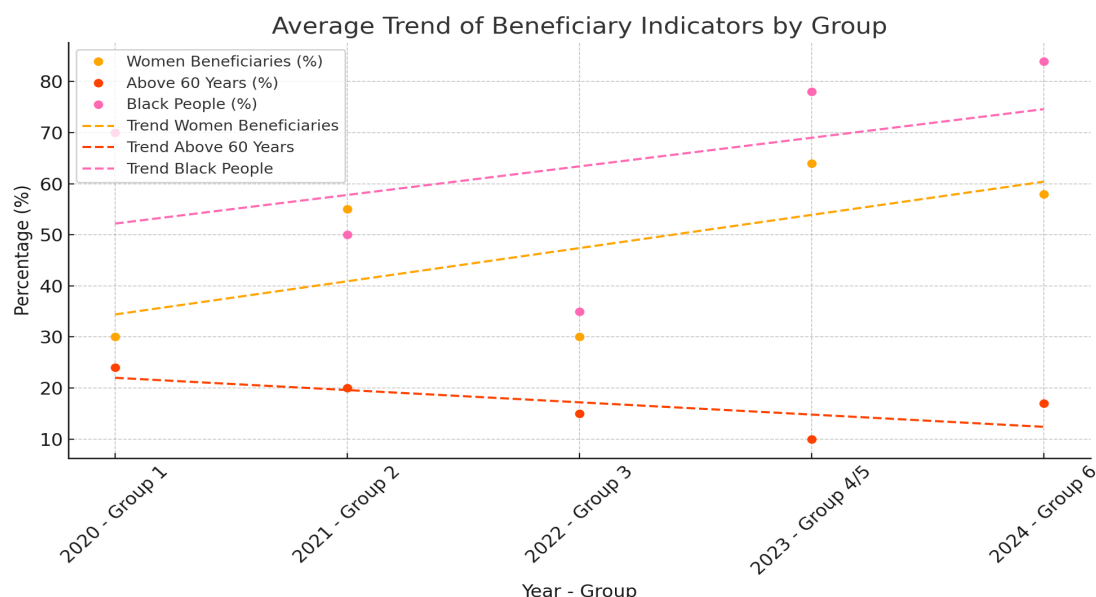
The Program has maintained a strong focus on diversity and inclusion, as reflected in the demographic composition of our beneficiaries.

Across all six groups from 2020 to 2024, a significant percentage of the participants have been women, black individuals, and older adults over 60. On average:

- Approximately 47% of the participants are women.
- Around 27% of the participants are over 60 years old.
- About 58% of the participants are black individuals.

2020 - Group 1	2021 - Group 2	2022 - Group 3	2023 - Group 4/5	2024 - Group 6
17 farmers	23 farmers	20 farmers	42 farmers	19 farmers
✓ 30% women are beneficiaries	✓ 55% women are beneficiaries	✓ 30% women are beneficiaries	✓ 64% women are beneficiaries	✓ 58% women are beneficiaries
✓ 24% > 60 years old	✓ 20% > 60 years old	✓ 15% > 60 years old	✓ 10% > 60 years old	✓ 17% > 60 years old
✓ 70% are black people	✓ 50% are black people	✓ 35% are black people	✓ 78% are black people	✓ 84% are black people

- The average income of Village families are 1 - 2 salaries (R\$ 1,200.00 – R\$ 2,400.00). In Brazil, 4 to 5 people are part of a family in a vulnerable situation.
- 50% of Village families are beneficiaries of government program aimed at vulnerable population



The Program also supports economically vulnerable families, with most households earning between 1 and 2 minimum salaries (R\$1,200 to R\$2,400) and 50% of the families receiving government assistance for vulnerable populations. By prioritizing these demographics, we ensure that those who may face systemic barriers have equitable access to resources, training, and opportunities to improve their livelihoods.

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.*

Increased Productivity: Over five years, the Villages Program has achieved an average productivity increase of 139%, operating in 3 municipalities, enabling continuous production throughout dry and rainy seasons. This is possible thanks to access to rationed water via cisterns, drip irrigation systems, mechanized bed preparation, and essential inputs like seeds, seedlings, tools, and occasional pesticides. The program encourages crop diversification and increases production volume, expanding the productive potential of rural properties. Farmers also receive training in essential management, practices for horticulture, annual crops, and fruit cultivation, including agroecological techniques like low-cost pest-repellent solutions.

Economic Empowerment: Improved productivity and water efficiency have doubled family incomes, significantly enhancing household earnings. By optimizing production, families increase their output and income, bolstering economic resilience.

Enhanced Water Access: The program has added 800,000 liters of water supply through efficient systems. Since 2020, it has facilitated the construction of 23 cisterns and 40 drip irrigation systems, ensuring a stable water source for farming, especially during dry seasons.

Educational Growth: Two school gardens and the training of 45 teachers have sparked student interest in agriculture, providing hands-on learning and inspiring future farmers.

Beyond these measurable results, the program's personalized support strengthens families' capacity to thrive, boosting confidence and self-esteem as they see tangible improvements in their lives.

Evidence: video testimony [watch](#) and photos below;

RESULTS ACHIEVED – 2022/2023 - Areas benefiting from the project in Barreiras/Sao Desidério (BA)

Top: 1) Valter Alves, 2) Nailton and 3) Eunice; bottom 4) Mateus, 5) Ivanilse and 6) Fernanda



Top: 1) Gilcivanio, 2) Maria Neide and 3) Maronita; bottom 4) Juraci, 5) Deusildo and 6) Vanessa



RESULTS ACHIEVED 2022/2023 - Areas benefiting from the project Balsas (MA)

Top: 1) Lindomar, 2) José Ribamar and 3) Vital; bottom 4) Elias, 5) Itamar and 6) José Ferreira



Top: 1) Deusdite, 2) Severino and 3) João Batista; bottom 4) Maria da Graça, 5) Eva and 6) Fernando



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.

Although women play essential roles in family farming alongside their husbands, cultural norms often undermine their leadership. At the beginning of each cycle, husbands may subtly resist allowing their wives to lead activities with the project team. The program addresses this by focusing on strengthening the couple's partnership, delegating and guiding activities for both husband and wife. This process is carefully managed, respecting each family's boundaries. The team is trained in active listening to build trust, fostering new roles for women and addressing gender inequality. As a result, women now make up 55% of beneficiaries, highlighting the program's commitment to gender inclusivity.

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.

Challenge	Solution
Cultural resistance to new technical guidance	To address this, the project offered continuous, hands-on consultancy and advice, allowing farmers to gradually incorporate new techniques in ways that aligned with their existing practices and routines. This approach fostered trust and facilitated the adoption of innovative, yet accessible, agricultural methods.
Water accessibility	The project introduced accessible, low-cost and custom made water management tools, including cisterns and efficient irrigation systems (drip irrigation), to optimize water use and mitigate the impact of dry spells.
Reduced family labor due to rural exodus	The program focused on engaging young family members and local labor into the planning and implementing of the program

and lack of family succession

interventions, involving each member in an activity most related with their personality traits, generational profile and family roles.

The program team technical consultancy and workshops engage all the family in the aim of preventing the young generations to seek low security employment in the field or in the city.

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

A major strength was the trust-based relationship built with farmers and the local Department of Agriculture, enabling open communication and alignment with project goals. The program's design specifically addressed family needs, ensuring relevant and impactful support. Consistent delivery of resources like cisterns, irrigation kits, and garden beds strengthened program credibility and trust. The educational component, including school gardens, was widely accepted by teachers and students, integrating environmental education effectively. However, as a new initiative in a competitive territory, the program required careful navigation to establish its identity and foster cooperation with established stakeholders.

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 Villages Program model was developed by The Mosaic Company Foundation and has been active in India for 16 years, changing the lives of more than 200,000 families in 290 villages. The model was adapted to Brazil in 2020. While solutions are customized to local needs, the core goal remains transforming vulnerable communities through family farming, water management, and education. Effective replication requires understanding local agricultural practices, community engagement, and collaboration with stakeholders like government and schools. Flexibility and a committed technical team ensure the program adapts to each area while upholding its foundational principles.

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.

Shift in Productive Behavior: Farmers have adopted more rational, innovative approaches to production. With access to efficient irrigation technologies like drip tapes, they now conserve and use water mindfully. The shift to year-round production has increased their output beyond rainy seasons, while crop diversification has opened opportunities for market expansion and resilience.

Shift in Managerial Behavior and Marketing Aptitude: Training has empowered farmers to adopt strategic planning and resource management, increasing their autonomy and confidence. They now understand the production cycle and financial management better, enabling informed decisions on costs and sales. Enhanced marketing skills allow them to competitively structure sales strategies and thrive in local markets.

Improved Quality of Life: Education and training have positively impacted families, encouraging smarter consumption, income analysis, and savings. These skills are vital for financial stability and improving quality of life for the farmers and their communities.

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.

Community engagement is based upon family farmers who of their productive and commercial capacity and are assertive into optimizing their own capacity and enhances collaborative practices to overcome territories inequalities and challenges, such as logistic ones.

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

Structuring public policy networks that truly enable an integrated approach to addressing vulnerabilities that prevent families from investing in rural properties.

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 an important role in community engagement by acting as a platform for sharing successful experiences and case studies from diverse countries, as demonstrated by this call for submissions. This approach democratizes access to impactful knowledge, allowing organizations around the world to learn from each other's experiences and adopt best practices. Additionally, FAO can enhance community engagement by organizing events that foster connections between local initiatives and potential investors. These networking opportunities bridge the gap between community projects and the resources needed to scale them, creating impactful partnerships. Through policy advocacy, FAO can further support community-led rural transformation by championing policies that prioritize sustainable agricultural practices. In these ways, FAO continues to be a catalyst for community-led change, ensuring that successful models are accessible, adaptable, and supported for lasting impact.

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.

[Partnership with public authorities](#)

[Podcast: Interview with the Program Manager](#)

[News & articles](#)