

**""Gender Gap Analysis and Action Plan –  
for the Additional Financing for  
Moldova Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Project**

## **1. Objective**

The World Bank Project Team, and more importantly the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of Moldova increasingly recognize that mainstreaming gender analysis into investment projects and program is of critical important to ensuring equitable agricultural growth and to promote and sustainable management of resources. The current Gender Gap Analysis and the gender action plan seeks to enhance equal gender participation and access to the proposed activities in the GEF Additional Financing and has two main objectives:

- Identify the manifestations of gender inequality in Moldova generally and the agricultural sector in particular
- Identify approaches to address existing gender inequality concerns in the implementation of the proposed Additional Financing for the Moldova Agricultural Competitiveness Project to further support soil conservation activities.
- Identify gender-disaggregated indicators to monitor and assess progress in terms of gender mainstreaming into the AF.

The current gender gap analysis and plan is based on the desk review of the extensive existing gender analysis carried out in Moldova and is based on the World Bank analytical framework which focuses on:

- a) Human endowments (such as health and education);
- b) Economic empowerment;
- c) Women's voice and agency.

The approach used to assess and inform the gender approach of the parent Moldova Agricultural Competitiveness project will be adopted and enhanced in the proposed additional financing.

## **2. Summary of Gender Issues in Moldova**

- **Moldova International and Regional Rankings are High**

The most recent Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum (2020) ranks Moldova 23th of out of 153 countries. It has registered important progress across all subindices with the biggest improvement in political participation from 72<sup>nd</sup> in 2018 to 45<sup>th</sup> in 2020; 69<sup>th</sup> to 61<sup>st</sup> in educational attainment and a slight deterioration in economic participation, having gone down from 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> while staying first in terms of health and survival. Moldova continues to have almost universal primary and secondary education completion rates that are equal for boys and girls, and a high university completion rate with 58% of university graduates being female. Gender discrepancies in labor force participation are relatively low and women are slightly more likely than men to hold secure, albeit less well-paid, public sector jobs.

- **Moldova's Legal Framework for Gender Equality**

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and the primary legislation include guarantees of women's rights. Moldova is party to seven of the nine core international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Moldova undertook steps to adopt and amend laws and policies which promote gender equality, including the ‘Law on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men (2006)’, the ‘Law on equality (2012)’, the Law on Preventing and Combating Family Violence (2008), and related legal amendments to this and other 11 laws (2016) to align national legislation to Istanbul Convention. The later introduced, inter alia, provisions for emergency protection orders that allow police officers to isolate the aggressor immediately from the family home for up to 10 days, free legal assistance to victims guaranteed by the state, and ensured state funding for the phone line for 24-hour assistance. It also extends the definition of violence to include stalking, and extends the definition of subjects of violence.

In April 2017, the *National Strategy to ensure equality between women and men (2017-2021)* and its associated *Action Plan* were adopted, which mandate the mainstreaming of gender issues into all public policies and emphasize the need to strengthen institutional capacity at national and local levels.

Law # 71 (April 2016), modifying certain legal acts, introduced for the first time a minimum quota of 40% women for party lists and for the Cabinet. By the same Law, the gender machinery at the national and local levels is to be strengthened. Thus, attributions and responsibilities on coordination of the gender equality were assigned to be executed by the secretaries of the local councils of local public administrations. The responsibilities to designate, ensure and coordinate the work of the gender units belongs to the raion presidents and mayors.

In February 2018, the Government approved the *National Strategy for prevention and combating violence against women and violence against family for 2018-2023*. This Strategy is in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and sets standards for the prevention of gender-based violence, the protection of victims and the punishment of aggressors. The Strategy has a particular focus on increased prevention measures that are crucial to end violence against women and girls. It will be implemented via two national action plans covering the period of 2018-2020 and 2021-2023. The 1st Action Plan for 2018-2020 on the implementation of the *National Strategy for prevention and combating violence against women and violence against family* was approved along with the Strategy.

Finally, the European Union-Moldova Association Agreement (Article 32 (f)) states that the cooperation should involve enhancing gender equality and ensuring equal opportunities between women and men, as well as combating all forms of discrimination and serves as a reference point for promoting gender equality in the country.

- **Moldova’s Major Gender Issues**

Despite a relatively good international and regional rankings, the WB portfolio-wide gender assessment identified the following prevailing gender challenges in Moldova that are to be addressed by the WB Gender Action Plan:

- Economic Opportunities

*Occupational segregation and earnings gap*: Despite evident equality in education and labor force participation data, there are still significantly fewer women in higher-earning sectors and positions. The causes for professional segregation have not been explored in detail but are believed to be largely rooted in social norms perpetuated through the education system, labor market, and media. Expanding women’s access to higher-skilled and higher-earning jobs is particularly important in the current demographic context of declining and aging population and one that can help reduce dependence on social transfers (e.g., for women-headed households and elderly households) in the future.

*Discrepancies in labor force participation:* Women delay for longer their entry into the labor force and take longer breaks from the labor force. There is a substantial difference in labor force participation between women with and without children (20% in 2014, one of the highest rates in Europe). Moreover, a declining share of women return to work after taking maternity leave. Despite provisions in the Labor Code that prohibit gender bias, it exists in the labor market, partly fostered by restrictive maternity leave policies, lack of flexible work arrangements, and scarce childcare options for children under 3.

*Entrepreneurship and livelihoods:* Entrepreneurship can be an important gateway to livelihoods for both men and women, especially in rural areas where employment opportunities are scarcer. Entrepreneurship can give a viable alternative to women who may otherwise opt for migration at a high family and social cost. Women in Moldova are less likely to start a business, and when they do, they are less likely to expand and employ others. In Moldova, female-owned businesses currently represent only about 25% of all enterprises, but evidence shows that female-owned firms produce higher average annual sales than male-owned firms in several industries. In addition, they employ more people, on average, and show a much stronger propensity to provide employment and advancement for other women. There are indications that the attitude of government officials (around frequency of inspections), and even corruption, are disproportionately affecting women entrepreneurs in comparison to male-owned firms. Similarly, there is some indication that banks are treating females unequally to men in defining their loan conditions. The overall picture suggests that, as their firms expand in size, women tend to lose ownership of those firms to males, which may be related to access to and control of capital and power.

#### Agency, Voice, and Gender-based Violence

Women are under-represented in leadership positions in local and national government and the current representation is below international benchmarks. Women hold 22 per cent of seats in the Parliament, and 2 out of 9 Ministers are women, including the Bashkan of UTA Gagauzia. Women are also underrepresented at the local level holding 20.6 per cent of mayor mandates, 18.55 per cent of the seats in district and municipal councils, and 30 per cent in local councils. Roma women and women with disabilities are virtually excluded from representation in public life. Women are also under-represented in decision-making bodies in the private and civil society sectors.

Apart from excluding women from decision-making, this serves to perpetuate gender norms and biases.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Moldova has one of the highest rates in human trafficking (primarily as a source country) and in domestic violence in the region, which indicates both vulnerabilities for women on the labor market, and gaps in public awareness on these issues among both men and women.

#### Healthy Lifestyles and Behaviors

Mortality and morbidity are significantly higher among men, driven by unhealthy lifestyles, road and work-related injuries, and the fact that men access health services at much lower rates than women.

### **3. Moldova's Gender Issues through the Rural Perspective**

---

<sup>1</sup> As an example, in last year's presidential election the marital and motherhood status of one of the leading candidates was an important part of the political and media campaign by her opposition. <http://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-sandu-smears-orthodox-church-pro-eu-candidate-russia/28108474.html>

Since the proposed AF will be focused exclusively on the rural areas, this section will summarize the main gender issues that affect the rural areas and farming. While there is extensive literature on the gender challenges in rural areas, some of it is really outdated. For example, the only agricultural census which provides the gender breakdown of farming size and ownership patterns was carried out in 2011. Similarly, an analysis of the gender roles and access to productive resources in high value chains in agriculture was carried by USAID back in 2011. Other gender reports focused more on the macro-level and did not go into detailed analysis similar to these two assessments. This gap assessment assumes much of the prior analysis to be still relevant even if progress may have been made to close the identified gaps. Those studies have identified the following gender differences over **access and control over productive resources and decision-making profile:**

- **Land.** In Moldova, land can be registered under a man's name, woman's name, name of the head of the household or family name. Generally, there is weak perception about the link between formal ownership and control over land. Women often have usufruct rather than ownership rights to land. Usufruct rights often entail less secure tenure and less ease in disposing of those rights by sale, lending, bequest, or mortgage. The average size of plot registered to men and women differs. Women-headed households often have smaller plots of land than men headed-households. Despite representing one third of total land owners, women hold only about 19 percent of the total agricultural land.
- **Equipment.** While women have access to equipment, but because operation and maintenance of farm equipment is largely a man's domain few women have control over the equipment. Generally, women have lower levels of access to technology because of cultural restrictions on their use.
- **Cash/Income.** Men give income received from farm-related activities to their wives. Women are responsible for managing income generated from farm-related activities. This practice was reported across all farm producers, products and districts survey for the assessment. Women receive the income and then keep it in an accessible and known location within the house or deposit it in a local credit and savings association or bank.
- **Training/Technical Assistance.** Trainings and technical assistance on improved agricultural practices are generally available to both men and women and there are no obvious barriers to participation. However, female participation in such events is usually a quarter or less. This is also consistent with the actual participation rates in the parent project.
- **Access to finance.** Women are often constrained from accessing financial capital because as they lack ownership of assets that can serve as collateral. For example, men typically are the owners of such collateral as farming equipment.
- **Decision making.** Farm-related decisions are most often made jointly between a man and a woman and at times children are also included in the decision-making process. Exceptions to the joint decision-making process were found in the purchases of farm equipment where the man made the final decision. While the majority report joint decisions over use of land, choice of crops to produce and marketing, sometimes either men or women make sole decisions based on their comparative advantage in knowledge and skills.

The same agricultural sector studies identified the gender roles and constraints (summarized in the box below) that prevent women from contributing to improvements in farm productivity and efficiency.

Gender Roles and Relations

Gender-based Constraints

Women are present throughout agriculture value chains in Moldova but with varying tasks and presence at different levels. They are highly concentrated in production (especially planting, weeding, harvesting and animal husbandry), as employees in processing plants, and as sellers in local markets. At the production level, men can fulfill the same tasks as women but dominate tractor/truck driving, loading, and spraying.

Men are more often owners and managers of agricultural businesses such as processing plants and cold storage units, transporters and intermediaries. However, women play an important role in management and decisions related to small agricultural enterprises.

Gender differences in employment opportunities and tasks were linked to differences in access to productive resources, beliefs and perceptions about appropriate roles for men and women, and institutional practices.

Women are often constrained from improving on-farm productivity because of time poverty linked to their household responsibilities and off-farm employment.

Women are often constrained from improving overall quality and quantity of agricultural crops/products because they lack access to information, training and services.

Women are often constrained in decision-making in socio-economic matters related to communal life (representation in decision-making remains below international benchmarks).

#### **4. Gender Action Plan**

The benefits of the additional financing on female beneficiaries are expected to be considerable as the proposed activities are aiming to protect and enhance the productivity of the major asset – agricultural land. While agrarian reform, land tenure and registration, as well as settlement schemes may have contributed to a schemed gender ownership structure, the women’s extensive usufruct ownership rights allows them to enjoy the benefits of the investments equally. In fact, in many households, females are the household budget administrators and closely involved in how family income is distributed.

Changing farming ownership structure in Moldova may be an overly ambitious challenge for the additional financing. However, the AF will contribute to both enhanced economic empowerment and women voice over decision by using communication and outreach channels that specifically target prospective women stakeholders.

Under the proposed AF, efforts for gender-sensitive inclusion of women in SLM activities would be continued and strengthened.

The gender gap in ‘voice over the use of the opportunities and resources offered’ by the proposed AF will be addressed in the following ways: (i) the project’s awareness-raising activities will use communication and outreach channels that ensure pervasive access by women to information, e.g., the information posters will be located in places often attended by women such as the village churches and local shops; (ii) female leaders that are influential in the community will be invited to join the participatory planning and monitoring events; and (iii) timing and methods of participatory planning and monitoring events will accommodate specific needs of women, which generally can afford less time to spend outside of their households due to their care functions.

Gender-based activities will be monitored and reported on by CAPMU, which has solid experience in this area. Regular collection of gender-disaggregated data will feed into the reporting on the project’s gender-specific indicator: *number of women reached with targeted information and gender-based activities*.