

# **“Gender & Sustainable Agriculture Initiative : Towards a research for more effectiveness of International Agreements”**

By Mrs RAHAINGO VOLOLONA Mireille, Agronomist  
Rural Development Policy Unit  
**Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock  
MADAGASCAR**

## **Abstract**

*“PRODUCING WITHOUT DESTROYING”, such could be the title of a programme that should come out of this Workshop I. Concrete examples such as slash and burn practices, better use of food production... , could be considered.*

*Both the World Summit on Sustainable Development held lastly in Johannesburg (South Africa) and The World Food Summit held in Roma (Italy), respectively ten years after the 1<sup>st</sup> World Summit in Rio de Janeiro and five years after the first one, remind us that up to now, international agreements are not so successful. That does not prevent us from keeping numerous resolutions, yet.*

*Of course, these events express an international political willingness to tackle poverty and its various problems, to achieve a real and sustainable development and to try to ensure food security. However, in practice, programmes are more difficult to realise and results are not so easy to obtain, particularly in rural areas.*

*The role of women is very often mentioned but has not been achieved. Yet, radical positive change depends on them. As far as they do not participate fully, no success can be expected. Generally, in our countries, it can be noticed that either at the highest or the middle or the bottom levels, appropriated strategies should be found so that real improvement can be obtained more speedily. How can we proceed ? By considering a multidisciplinary approach, a gender approach and a local approach which only but surely, can lead us to a sustainable agriculture, in a harmonious and speedy way.*

*So, for more effectiveness of recommendations especially about women, block factors should be analysed and outcomes should be found out. A multidisciplinary team including researchers – technical, natural and social fields, policy makers, extension workers, specialists in communication, especially users (of course some women!) starting from case studies, surveys and analysis can really contribute to achieve the goals aimed at by the “Millennium statement”. That is why this 1<sup>st</sup> joint IFS-CODESRIA Workshop I is important and welcome.*

## **1. Background of Madagascar**

### **1.1. Overall Economic Environment**

Madagascar has been under structural adjustment for 20 years now. In the past and until 1996 (except for the 1988-90 period), Madagascar experienced an economic growth quite inferior to demographic growth. With a 1.3% annual GDP growth in adjusted prices between 1984 and 1996, the per capita income dropped by 1.4% per year during that period. Subsequently, the reforms implemented within the structural adjustment programs resulted in a 4.3% average annual growth of the GDP between 1996 and 2000 (1.6% GDP growth per capita). For the 1999-2001 period, the Government strategy described in the PPF focused on reforms and initiatives aiming at accelerating growth, while preserving macro-economic balances.

Madagascar is part of the poorest countries group. Poverty index was 59% in 1985, peaked at 74% in 1993, and came down to 69% in 1997 and to 67.3% in 1999. Income per capita is now US \$230. In 1999, the population distribution was as follows: 74.5% in rural areas and 25.5% in urban areas. In 1997, the low-income group represented 80% of the population and rural poverty remained very severe.

The debt burden is high. It has improved recently, however. In 1999, foreign debt service largely represented 12.4% of export earnings, 27.4% of tax earnings and 3% of GDP. Other improvements include:

- the annual inflation rate dropped from approximately 50% in 1995 to 5.9% in 1999
- the growth rate was 4.8% in the year 2000, resulting in a 2.2% real income growth per capita
- the investment rate increased from 11% of GDP between 1995 and 1998 to 16.2% in 1999-2000.

These improved outcomes are the result of significant efforts undertaken by the Government in economic policy and structural reforms, including (i) civil service reform and privatisation of state-owned enterprises, (ii) the improvement of the economy competitiveness, (iii) the promotion of a good governance, (iv) the promotion of local investment, (v) the opening to foreign investment, (vi) the development of regional trading, (vii) measures to take account of environmental impact, (viii) measures to improve the poor's access to social welfare, (ix) the formulation of a risk and disaster management strategy especially in vulnerable zones and (x) the improvement of the security environment. Madagascar has also undertaken the process of decentralisation through the setting up of Autonomous Provinces

The encouraging results scored so far must be strengthened and improved, however. The Government is now putting increased emphasis on poverty reduction. It has launched a participatory process for developing a poverty reduction strategy as part of the PPTTE Initiative.

## **1.2. Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy**

An interim version of the poverty reduction strategy document (DSRP) was issued in November 2000. The government strategy aims at achieving high economic growth and improvement of the quality of life for the population. The growth rate targeted by the DSRP (6.3%) should double the GNP in 2011, resulting in a per capita GNP growth of more than 40% (from US\$ 230 to US\$ 336). The indicators for quality of life would considerably improve: level of monetary poverty, schooling, health indicators (death rate, life expectancy), access to quality care, access to drinking water, etc. The objectives for these social indicators are specified for the short- and the medium-term within the framework of the action plans developed for the 2001-2003 period.

The broad directions for achieving these objectives include:

- Pro-poor economic growth policies;
- The development of primary essential services (education, health, drinking water,) and the widening of the security net for the benefit of the most vulnerable layers of the population;
- The setting up of an institutional framework favourable to economic growth and poverty reduction and capacity building to improve governance and relations between the government and the civil society.

As part of this strategy, the rural sector is a matter of special concern for two reasons: first poverty in the rural areas is severe, and second economic growth and of poverty reduction will not be achieved without a steady increase in agricultural production. The rural development sector is far from meeting its potential. The strategy calls for a strong and sustainable growth in the sector at an average rate of 4% per annum during the 2001-2003 period.

In 2000, the rural sector contributed to about 43% of GNP and 40% of exports. It employs 75% of the population. In spite of efforts made, growth in the sector remains insufficient to reduce widespread poverty in rural areas. Some sub-sectors such as fishing and fish farming, intensive aviculture, have made strong gains in the recent past.

The Government is convinced of the key role of agriculture in the poverty reduction strategy. It is strongly committed to fast growth in the sector and to providing the poor with the means of having jobs, increasing their income, and having access to land and credit.

## **2. Rural Development Objectives and Strategies**

### **2.1. Overall Objectives**

The objectives assigned rural in the DSRP are to:

ensure food security;  
contribute to the acceleration of economic growth;  
reduce poverty and improve living conditions in rural areas;  
promote the sustainable management of natural resources;  
promote training and information as a means to increase production.

The DSRP aims at reducing poverty in Madagascar from 70% to 35% in 2015. The main indicators set for the rural sector include (i) raising the average GDP to about \$ 400 per capita by 2015; (ii) maintaining the agricultural sector annual growth at 4%; (iii) reducing the share of agriculture to 25% of GNP in 2015; (iv) increasing labour productivity by 2.4% p.a.; (v) increase the delivery of basic services.

## **2.2. The implementation framework for the rural development policy: the PADR**

Based on a global and participatory process, the Government formulated an Action Plan for Rural Development (PADR). This action plan provides the framework for the implementation of the rural development policy.

A decree defined the institutional set-up for the PADR, which includes an Orientation and Validation Inter-departmental Committee (CIOV), a Permanent Steering Committee (EPP), Central Thematic Groups (GTC), and Regional Development Task Forces (GTDR). Five groups are represented in GTDRs, local ministries concerned by rural development, local authorities (elected representatives, members of parliament, civil servants from the territorial administration), non governmental organisations, the rural project execution agencies and producer organisations.

Implementation of the rural development policy through the PADR allows for improved co-ordination among sub-sectors, including among government services, the involvement of all rural development actors, and taking account of the needs emanating from regions and sub-regions. It also allows for consistency among projects.

The first steps at national and regional levels within the framework of this PADR resulted in the formulation of a baseline and the major directions for rural development, including programs and actions. The rural development strategy includes five major directions (Annex 1):

Ensure a good management of the rural world by defining and implementing institutional reforms and the regulatory framework  
Promote the emergence of partners in rural development  
Increase and promote agricultural production in an optimal way, including sustainable management of resources and infrastructure  
Ensure sufficient food availability in each region  
Develop social infrastructures to improve access to basic services.

### **2.2.1 Ensure a good management of the rural world by defining and implementing institutional reforms and the regulatory framework**

a) Improvement of the PADR institutional framework including clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities of rural development actors

The Government will pursue the ongoing institutional reforms to achieve a better distribution of responsibilities among partners in rural development. The principles of divestiture and of streamlining government activities apply. Government will continue to support production, provide an overall sense of direction and manage human and financial resource in the public sector. Production and trading activities are the responsibility of the private sector, including farmer organisations.

Decentralisation will allow for improving services to the rural population. Budget management will be rationalised to improve the balance between operating costs and personnel expenses, and increase allocations to local units.

The Technical Committee for the Restructuring of Public Services (CTRSP) is in charge of implementing this institutional reform. The setting up of the autonomous provinces and provincial authorities is a major step in the reform.

Implementation of the strategy requires improvements in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of development actions and programs at the regional level. Within this framework, the Government has initiated the decentralisation of decision making. Indeed, reinforcing the role of regional structures and improving co-ordination within the rural development sector require decentralised structures endowed with real decision-making autonomy, so as to take account of local conditions and to involve all actors.

The involvement of all actors in the formulation of the rural development policy required a new mechanism of decision making in the PADR framework to give all partners a voice, while maintaining a government capacity to co-ordinate. To ensure the involvement of the civil society, the private sector and particularly the poor, the Government is committed to reinforce their representation and their decision-making capacity. The PADR reflects a policy of giving increased responsibilities to the regions.

In view of the multiplicity of partners, the ongoing decentralisation requires enhancing the national capacity for dialogue and co-ordination (policy, objectives, method, learning from experience, information sharing) that should contribute to improved co-ordination among rural sub-sectors and related ministries.

The GTDRs (twenty of them covering the whole territory) represent regional venues for dialogue and rural development co-ordination. They will have to work in close relation with the communes and villages. GTDRs constitute the key implementation mechanism of the PADR at the regional level. The GTDRs should facilitate a bottom-up approach. An audit of the GTDR performance (2001) would be carried out with a view to reinforce their operational capacity.

Privatisation public enterprises in the rural sector will be pursued (Hasyama, Sirama, Siranala, or CPR, CMS, fish farming stations...).

b) Establishment of a favorable regulatory environment for rural development

A favourable regulatory environment will be established for the rural sector, including adjusting guidelines for water user associations and non-mutualist institutions, standards (marketing, export), tax system, and land tenure, etc...

The tax system related to agricultural activities, including production, inputs, and transportation system will be revised to provide incentives for growth in the sector. Measures already taken have eliminated economic distortions in inputs. In 2000, adjustments were made to taxes on imported rice set at 35% (import duty 15% and VAT 20%) provide exemptions on inputs for agriculture. Methods of making these measures sustainable will be studied to promote the development of the marketing and distribution sectors,

The private sector as well as farmer enterprises and organisations need regular information on markets and prices. A functional network will facilitate the flow of information.

The Government will pursue trade and investment liberalisation, particularly in the regional initiative framework in which Madagascar is participating. Open bidding procedure have been generalised for the transparent management of grants (agricultural and food produces, inputs, farm equipment). The import management will be transparent (imported volumes, customs duties actually applied). To promote exports, export quality standards will reflect international requirements.

### **2.2.2 Promote the emergence of partners in rural development**

#### a) Modernising agriculture and developing private initiatives and know-how

Consistent with the refocusing of the role of the State, the Government will support and encourage the involvement of producers, the private sector and the civil society in the development actions as partners in rural development. This implies a process of role change and emergence of private actors (peasants, associations, POs, farmer centres, co-operatives, NGO, private operators...).

As professional actors, agricultural organisations (associations, groups, co-operatives, unions) will be increasingly involved in providing services, including training, information, and extension. A diagnosis of the current POs (2001) will assess their involvement. Financial resource will be made available to POs and inter professional organisations (tax refunds) allowing them to carry out extension and to contract directly with public or private partners.

The marketing of agriculture inputs by private operators (private veterinarians, traders) and farmers organisations will be promoted. Training will improve the capacity of these agents to provide good advice to users.

Education and training constitute a full fledged production factor, and a key growth vehicle. Technical and professional training will be reinforced

Financial control capacities will have be reinforced in view of the increased availability of funds at the local level.

#### b) Production and export diversification

Production development and diversification in growth sub-sectors (animal farming, fishing, fruit and vegetables) will permit to diversify and increase income of producers and exporters. On the basis of regional potential, a growth pole strategy will be developed with support from downstream operators to encourage the development of secondary income generating activities (crafts, forest gathering sub-sectors, tourism, fishing, others, ...)

#### c) Financing the rural sector in a sustainable way

Less than 3% of producers have access to credit. The strategy requires a significant promotion of bank and micro-finance institutions in rural areas, with particular attention to women needs. APIFM is responsible for the promotion of mutualist institutions.

### **2.2.3 Increase and promote agricultural production in an optimal way, including and sustainable management of resources and infrastructure**

#### a) Application of appropriate technologies

To reinforce knowledge transfer and the innovation and modernisation capacity in the rural sector, the research, training and extension institutions and partners, will work in close synergy. Closer ties between research programs and farmers' needs will be developed in the context of decentralisation. Recourse to a broader range of service suppliers including, public services, private operators and NGOs, will be encouraged for extension, including through contracting services by beneficiaries.

Dissemination of technical references in agro-biology must be intensified. As far as cultivation systems are concerned, development research will continue in close co-ordination with producers. Common fertilisation procedures are valid in relation to agricultural, ecological, social and economic conditions (see 3.2.2. Production poles), but private distribution networks must be improved.

To enlist support and participation in rural mass, public information on rural development will be reinforced through various media.

b) Environment preservation and rational management of rural areas

The Government has been working for several years on several issues for integrating the environmental dimension into farm development. Government agencies (forestry, animal breeding, environment, farming, research) are seeking to develop acceptable alternative solutions to the slash-and-burn practice ("tavy") and bush fires for grazing. The connection between the watershed management and performance of main irrigated areas demonstrates the need to address environment issues in designing rural development policy (see 3.2.3. Vulnerable zones).

The direct link between the degree of vulnerability of the populations and the degree of deterioration of the environment that characterises some underprivileged regions justifies a differentiated strategy for these vulnerable regions, encouraging a sustainable management of natural resources [forestry, support to downstream sub-sectors and off-farm activities (see 2.2.2)].

All development actions are henceforth articulated and monitored while taking in account the environmental dimension. Each new project is thus subject to an impact assessment while each government agency has an environmental unit.

Actions in favour of the environment will continue to benefit from an important effort with the support of partners. The involvement of the poorest rural populations and a permanent dialogue giving them responsibilities in protective actions will be the essential actions in this area.

Secure land tenure is a prerequisite for the sustainable management of hydro-agricultural and environmental resources. Actions in this area will be intensified, notably by reinforcing decentralised departments and the setting up of a private network of surveyors. The formulation of a land tenure policy allowing to give rural actors security remains a high government priority. SFR procedures will apply to irrigated areas.

c) Introduction of organisation, management and infrastructure development mechanisms.

Mechanisms for sustainable management and maintenance of production infrastructures (GCV, terraces, vaccination stands) and irrigated areas must be developed. The transfer of area management to water user associations must be intensified. This will require institutional capacity building of the users or agencies in charge of infrastructure maintenance. As for non-transferred structures, maintenance funds will be set up and provisioned in a sustained way.

Criteria for selecting areas to be rehabilitated have been defined to ensure sustainability and durability conditions for future water investments. A global approach for water and soil resource management that integrates watershed dimension will be favoured.

#### **2.2.4 Ensure food availability in all regions**

a) Ensuring food supply stability and sustainability

Ensuring food security is a major objective. Food supply must be ensured everywhere and at all times. The fact that some service roads, especially country tracks, are impassable is a major constraint. The supply of inputs, equipment and staple goods is hindered. The development of rural transport is part of the Transport Program in Rural Areas (PTMR), now in progress. Particular emphasis is given to the opening up of production zones by rehabilitating and maintaining country tracks. Highways must be graded to facilitate rehabilitation and maintenance at national, provincial or village level as well.

b) Getting ready for emergency

To face emergency situations (cyclones, drought, locust invasion or diseases such as African swine plague,...), natural disaster forecasting, surveillance and alert systems will be reinforced, including capacity at the local level. A national risk and disaster management system will be implemented. Funding for repairing damage due to natural disasters is to be set up and provisioned in a sustained way.

### **2.2.5 Developing social infrastructure to improve access to basic services**

The Strategy Document for Poverty Reduction (DSRP) specifies the actions to carry out within the sector of education, health, access to water and other welfare services.

a) Access to drinking water

The Water Code must be supplemented so as to take into account the different uses of water. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the National Committee for Water and Sanitation will be given the responsibility of setting up a master plan for village hydraulics.

b) Availability of basic social services

The National Program for Education and Training Improvement PNAE II (1998-2003) and the Master Plan for the Health Sector (1998-2000) constitute the main orientations in health and education matters. The implementation of these programs is done through ongoing projects.

c) Improvement of housing conditions

Programs concerning rural electrification and improvement of the regulatory framework for sanitation will improve welfare. The Government will adopt a policy for facilitating housing improvement, including appropriate incentives, taking into account rural conditions. The security of households and operators will be reinforced by creating autonomous security units (DAS) and providing logistic support to "police force".

## **2.Rationale**

The World Summit on sustainable development held lastly in Johannesburg (South Africa) from 26<sup>th</sup> august to 4<sup>th</sup> September 2002, i.e. ten years after the 1<sup>st</sup> World Summit in Rio de Janeiro, has just ended with numerous resolutions, yet.

Of course, this event expresses a great political willingness to tackle poverty and its various problems, to achieve a real and sustainable development. However, in practice, programmes are more difficult to realise and results are not so easy to obtain, particularly in rural areas.

In Chapter IV on "Protection and management of natural resources in order to aim at social and economic development", the preponderance of agriculture and the primordial role of women at different levels is mentioned in the 38<sup>th</sup> article. The World Food Summit held in Roma (Italy), five years after the first one, is quite similar about great resolutions.

As a matter of fact, in spite of great efforts, increasing the role of women has not been achieved. Yet, radical positive change depends on them. As far as they do not participate fully, no success can be expected.

Generally, in our countries, it can be noticed that :

- \* At the highest level, women are not so numerous and very few of them have access to key functions ;
- \* At the middle levels, they are not in sufficient number and are unable to provide the "bottom and up" relationships required ;
- \* At the bottom level, they are so many but without any significant power (either for discussions or for actions).

It can be explained by several reasons such as shyness, complex, lack of self reliance, lack of competence, lack of time, sometimes misogynous attitudes, traditions and so on.

So, for more effectiveness of recommendations especially about women, block factors should be analysed and outcomes should be found out. A multidisciplinary team, starting from case studies, surveys and analysis can really contribute to achieve the goals aimed at by the “Millennium statement”. That is why this 1<sup>st</sup> joint IFS-CODESRIA Workshop I is important and welcome.

### **3. Workshop issues**

- As far as Madagascar is concerned , several Ministries are involved in a Rural Development Plan of Actions (PADR) (such as the Ministries in charge of the rural development, the one responsible for researches ...). That is just a general framework but the most important fact is that its contents are really applied. All that is related to a sustainable agriculture is already specified there. Nevertheless, in our opinion, three essential points must be considered :
  - \* A multidisciplinary approach : very often, all actors only work in their own field and never meet on a common ground, whereas all contributions should be complementary and the approach cyclical in order to come to a solution together.
  - \* A gender approach : up-till now, importance has not been given to the fact of distinguishing different categories of actors. However, women’s role at different levels in the channels of production has a great impact on the expected outputs.
  - \* A local approach : most of the time, the recommendations that are given do not take the reality into account, when ensuring proximity services should be one of the best ways of answering the local users’ needs.
  
- Concerning communication, a lot has already been achieved lately, so it would really be a pity not to benefit from them. Communication itself has been the object of various researches, which proves all disciplines are interrelated. Research processes should depart from the real needs that have been expressed at the basis and must come back to the users. Concretely, to the extent that there are a lot of women in the agriculture production, they are mostly concerned at various degrees and different levels. What are their problems in order to come to a sustainable agriculture ? What messages have been given to them ? Through which channels ? What evaluation has given the feedback ? Extension and research programmes, if they differently address men and women, young and old people, different speakers and actors of development, especially if they are not co-ordinated, would not be efficient at all. Interventions should be better oriented toward the aimed targets and the strategies should be more appropriate. Specialists in communication for rural development can contribute in the matter and can be a link between research and development. Besides, the concept of “Gender and development” and “Sustainable agriculture” are more and more widespread and taken into consideration. In short, all disciplines should be integrated.
  
- It is difficult to agree on which research fields should be given priority, either at the regional, national or local level. That is why recommendations are always rather general. However, changes can be brought according to the “watch words” proper to the leaders of each country. Thus, in Madagascar, “harmonious, speedy and sustainable” are the keywords stated by the President of the Republic. In my opinion, these words really show the worry of coming to a sustainable agriculture.
  - \* Harmonious, by integrating various disciplines and by linking the researcher to the users,
  - \* Speedy, by highlighting research abilities and the results already got but which have not been issued nor exploited,
  - \* Sustainable in applying the solutions that have been experimented before extension. Programmes of research have always been criticised for being long and expensive, for not being used to a large extent. According to me, what is related to food security and does not damage the environment must be given high priority and it is still worth considering for the forthcoming years.

