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Enabling poor rural people  
to overcome poverty

Fifty-third Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

“Equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving  
in the context of HIV/AIDS”

Statement delivered by

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Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address the Commission on the Status of Women today on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

I will focus today's intervention on the priority theme "equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS" and wish to commend the Secretariat for preparing a very good report on the topic.

The sharing of responsibilities between women and men is of concern in all sectors of rural and agricultural development, from working in the fields to fetching water and preparing food. The caring for relatives affected by HIV/AIDS is a particular challenge for rural communities and families. Over the last 10 years, the pandemic has rapidly spread to rural areas and affected the livelihoods of millions of rural people. Many people living with HIV/AIDS are returning to their villages for care when their suffering increases.

Development interventions that focus on strengthening coping mechanisms and the economic empowerment of rural people have been most successful. For example, projects supported by IFAD and the Belgian Survival Fund in Africa (Zimbabwe, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya) are using a twin-track approach that combines economic development opportunities with HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services (for example the "Strengthening Community-organized Responses to HIV/AIDS in Nyagatare district" -- SCORE-AIDS -- in Rwanda). Among the successes of the project was a 70 percent increase in men's membership in associations of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). This outcome is significant because men are traditionally more reluctant to seek the support of PLWHA associations and are more reticent to declare their HIV status openly.

Mr. Chairman,

IFAD welcomes the proposed long-term programme of CSW, in particular the suggested focus on rural women as a priority theme in 2012. CSW has an important role to play in

increasing recognition of the role of rural women as the main producers of food in many parts of the world, especially in the poorest countries, and their contribution to food security and poverty reduction.

In 2008, the global food crisis brought to the fore the centrality of agriculture and the role of small holder farmers, the majority of whom are women, in ensuring food security at the local and national level. The High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, established by the Secretary-General, and the Comprehensive Framework for Action it elaborated, provides a blueprint for action to address immediate food security needs and for promoting longer-term increases in food production and agricultural productivity. CSW may wish to consider the linkage between rural women's empowerment and greater food security under its proposed priority theme for 2012.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2009, IFAD, FAO, the World Bank published the *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*. This milestone publication involved more than 300 contributors and provides an up-to-date understanding of gender issues in agriculture, ranging from water, land, markets, to natural resource management, infrastructure and governance. The three agencies are currently elaborating proposals to put the Sourcebook recommendations into action. At the end of this month, experts from the three agencies WB, FAO and IFAD will gather in Washington and discuss with representatives from the UN system, international financial institutions and the donor community the priority action will make a difference for woman farmers and poor women in rural areas. CSW may wish to utilize the combined knowledge and expertise collected in the *Sourcebook* as an input to the Commission's general work, especially as CSW prepares for its 2012 session.

In closing, I would like to reiterate IFAD's commitment to work with the Commission on the Status of Women to advance the role and status of women as farmers and producers and achieve gender equality.

Thank you.

