

# Women in Development: The Land O'Lakes Experience



## Diversity And Inclusion At Land O'Lakes, Inc.

Land O'Lakes is a high-performing organization built on the foundation of a diverse and inclusive workforce, with individuals and teams working to blend a wide range of talents, experience and perspectives in pursuit of shared purposes. We believe a culture that strengthens this foundation is essential to unlock individual potential and build business success.

We are deeply committed to diversity and inclusion. In 2008, the Land O'Lakes Senior Steering Team developed a diversity and inclusion commitment statement, simultaneously launching a large scale effort to promote and integrate these values into all aspects of the business.

The diversity and inclusion initiative is a key element of the company's "Best Talent" strategy.

In 2009, Land O'Lakes launched the Women's Leadership Network. More than 400 active members meet regularly to network, coach, mentor and empower each other. Strong support from Land O'Lakes' CEO and other senior executives demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to a culture that encourages women to succeed and thrive in the workplace.

## Gender at Land O'Lakes International Development

For over two decades, Land O'Lakes International Development Division (IDD) has been committed to gender integration in our strategies, operations and programs. A gender taskforce, composed of staff from multiple departments and practice areas, provides strategic direction and thought leadership in this area.

By using a gender lens in program design and implementation, we seek to (a) maximize access to program benefits by all beneficiaries, (b) maximize economic growth and other positive benefits to all members of the household and community, and (c) ensure higher standards of excellence in design, implementation and results that meet the needs of program participants regardless of what is required by the donor.

**Consistent with this commitment, IDD has been intentional in integrating gender considerations into our operations and programs in the following ways:**

- **We analyze how cultural gender attitudes and practices impact agricultural practices**, household decision-making, women's and men's relative access to services, and other factors that could impact the success or failure of the program. We then design and implement interventions that address gender-related constraints.
- As women and girls are an under-served population in much of the developing world, **we provide services that are tailored to specifically target them** with productive assets, direct financial and food assistance, guidance and support, training and technical assistance, and support to create producer groups, cooperatives, associations, and agribusiness enterprises.
- **We encourage women (including our own and partner employees) to move into training, leadership and management roles** that enable them to reach out to and empower other women and support them in improving their lives, livelihoods, and families.
- Gender-related attitudes and practices are culturally deep-seated, yet often impact how household income is spent, who owns productive assets, how children are cared for, and the roles of household members. **We conduct trainings that build greater awareness of gender constraints and barriers**, and promote equitable decision-making among women and men. Such trainings have also resulted in improved productivity and higher incomes for participating households.
- Together with our implementing partners, **we integrate gender into program activities and demonstrate that doing so makes a difference** in the lives of women and men, and in program effectiveness. As most farmers in the developing world are women, gender integration is critical to the success of agriculture and food security programs.

Targeting women and girls signifies a commitment to addressing the gender constraints that they face. Reaching women and girls in our programming demonstrates the extent to which we have addressed these constraints.



**Female Afghan Extension Agents working on a Land O'Lakes program discuss how best to reach female farmers and secure community support**

Land O'Lakes International Development has a well-developed monitoring and evaluation system that includes a standard set of division-wide performance indicators, four of which are specific to gender and all of which are disaggregated by gender. Because gender is a critical cross-cutting issue in agricultural development, we have made the strategic decision to track this information even when it is not contractually required by the donor. Doing so allows us to monitor the impact of programming and modify our approach as needed.

# Case Examples Of Gender Integration In IDD Programming

*The cases below span nearly two decades of Land O'Lakes development work. They demonstrate IDD's efforts to take gender seriously and incorporate it intentionally into programming.*

**Lithuanian Women Farmers' Association (1993-1998).** The Lithuanian Women Farmers' Association is a non-governmental organization whose function is to provide support to rural women. The number of chapters rose from 20 in 1994 to more than 100 in 1997, and membership increased to more than 2,000 women. Land O'Lakes provided technical assistance to improve the Association's structure, enabling it to achieve national stature.

Land O'Lakes developed socially-oriented programs that targeted rural women on a county-wide scale. For example, "Woman to Woman" gave Lithuanian women a channel through which to access assistance with a variety of rural social problems. Members of the Association were trained to identify social problems and their ramifications within rural communities.

Eventually the Association was able to advocate for its initiatives and work with the government to address problems of rural women. The Association also developed and presented a policy paper on women's social conditions in rural Lithuania to the women's caucus in Parliament. It advocated for expanded educational activities on substance abuse in schools and for increased government assistance for substance abuse counseling services accessible to rural populations.

Structural changes occurred at the national level as the leadership developed a work plan involving regional and local chapters, which provided input for curriculum development. The division of labor was strengthened as roles and responsibilities were clarified and chapter officers were trained in organizational management and leadership skills.

**Albania Dairy Improvement Campaign (1993-2000).** The Campaign had three phases, the goals of which were to: 1) Help rural women increase their knowledge to improve the health of their cows and improve rural incomes by increasing the quality and quantity of their milk; 2) Foster small rural businesses and support democratic institution-building through the creation of non-governmental organizations to advocate for women's issues and support dairy producers in Albania; and 3) Improve milk collection systems.

Over the duration of the program, Land O'Lakes formed a network of 8,000 women farmers that disseminated assistance from Albanian and international development groups. Collaboration with these groups provided access to credit, potable water and farm machinery, thereby expanding the opportunities offered to women. Successful establishment of credit unions based on women's savings groups was an especially significant result. The Campaign collaborated with other projects and donors who found it beneficial to use the network to distribute information and opportunities offered by their organizations.

Another important result of the program was the formation of four NGOs, among them, the Law and Women's Rights Association. With guidance from Land O'Lakes, the Association received grants to conduct seminars on issues of concern to rural women, such as health and land ownership rights. The Association impacted legislation on the privatization of land by ensuring that women's names were on the land title and that they must agree in writing to the sale of land.

Women's cooperatives and associations in Russia, Palestine, South Africa, Nigeria, and the West Bank have been the recipients of farmer-to-farmer volunteer assistance since the late 1980s. Through these assignments, Land O'Lakes provided technical and leadership training to over 300 women farmers. The volunteers' assistance has resulted in expanded and strengthened membership of women's cooperatives, increased fundraising capacity, and increased income for women.

**Accelerating Economic Growth in the West Bank (1997-2000).** Through a gender analysis, Land O'Lakes found that cultural and social norms surrounding gender interaction shaped how project interventions could reach women, the main milk handlers and caretakers of goat and sheep in the West Bank. Since Middle Eastern men are not able to meet easily with women, Land O'Lakes trained and employed female extension agents to facilitate access to female farmers and to address their needs in a culturally appropriate framework. After the training, women seemed more inclined to change farming practices and have strong influences on farm management decisions. By the end of the program, Land O'Lakes had provided extension training on sheep and goats to 123 women in 23 villages.

In coordination with the Cooperative Development Program and the WorldWide Farmer-to-Farmer Program, Land O'Lakes supported the formation of three women's cooperatives in the West Bank. Among them was the Nweimeh Young Women's Cooperative, which Land O'Lakes helped form after realizing that many women in Nweimeh sought activities to fill their free time. With Land O'Lakes assistance, the cooperative's membership grew to 28 women. Bee hives were purchased and the cooperative eventually opened multiple bank accounts to hold membership fees and profits from income generating activities such as selling honey.

**School Feeding Programs in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malawi (2000-2015).** The greatest positive impact of these programs has come from dramatically improved enrollment and attendance rates, particularly among girls. With a strong incentive to attend school regularly and nutritious foods to eat, girls are less likely to drop out of school or marry early, they are more likely to be literate, and they are better equipped to reach their full potential and lead productive lives. The program in Bangladesh increased female attendance to achieve gender equity in schools with a 49:51 ratio of boys to girls and in Malawi, the percentage of girls attending classes increased by 70 percent after only four terms of program implementation. Prior to the Pakistan project, less than 20 percent of girls were enrolled in school in Ghotki district, the lowest rate in the entire country. At the conclusion of the program, enrollment of girls in primary schools increased by nearly 200 percent and the nutritional status and physical health of all school children had significantly improved.

Our program in Bangladesh also involved community-based Parent-Teacher Associations that worked to ensure educational quality and accountability of snack distributions. These PTAs often prevented children from dropping out of school due to the social pressure for early marriage. In 2010, Land O'Lakes will continue to implement many of these same activities through a program to provide locally produced cereal bars.



***In Pakistan, Land O'Lakes distributed benches as part of our school feeding programs, removing one of the barriers to girls' education.***

Recognizing that a lack of separate girls' lavatories was impeding girls' attendance in Bangladesh and Indonesia, modern latrines with individual bathroom stalls were built for female students. In Malawi, organic gardening training activities were implemented as part of a sustainability plan. Profits from surplus products were used to buy uniforms for girls and demonstration plots provided them with agriculture training.

**Cooperative Development Program (2001-2010).** Land O'Lakes is the implementer of a Cooperative Development Program in Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa, Uganda, and the Dominican Republic. In Tanzania, Land O'Lakes worked with 12 dairy farmer groups, of which eight were women's groups, to form a Savings and Credit Co-operative Society. The credit line helped the groups acquire inputs, increase production services and market their dairy products in a profitable way. It also helped women dairy farmers overcome constraints in obtaining access to financing. One of the groups, the Kijimo Women's Group, began their activities in 1996 with 12 members and very limited resources. Land O'Lakes assisted the group to organize and officially register. Registered members of the group eventually increased to 150. CDP trained Kijimo members on how a cooperative can be an instrument for empowerment and development, as well as the advantages of maintaining a savings and credit union within a cooperative framework. The Kijimo Women's Group then joined the credit union, which facilitated their access to a line of credit to further expand their business.



*The women of the Kijimo Women's Cooperative listen intently at one of their regular meetings*

**Kenya Dairy Development Project (2002-2008).** An overarching focus of the Kenya Dairy Development Project was to encourage greater participation by women in all aspects of business through the dairy value chain. The project trained over 50,000 women farmers, achieving a target of 35 percent women participants. Training events were planned to take place considering the availability of women, who are responsible for a variety of other tasks such as cooking meals and caring for young children. To promote sustainability, farming families were encouraged to share the benefits of dairying with all participating family members.

A significant component of the project was the pilot of Farmer Field Schools (FFS), which bring together farmers with common problem to seek own solutions guided by a trained facilitator. The schools are participatory learning platforms where community members gain better decision making and technical skills through involvement in specific dairy activities. By their very nature, FFS influenced gender patterns and relationships. Active participation in FFS was found to facilitate positive changes in gender roles by encouraging increased involvement of women in decision-making around family income and other issues. Participation in FFS also led to significant behavioral changes in men, who became more comfortable helping women with work and sharing household labor tasks. Women acquired skills to effectively articulate technology needs to influence what is adapted. Finally, FFS also influenced trainers' perceptions of gender roles—both women's and men's views on technology, society, and economics were heard equally by FFS trainers. These findings and others were critical in the development of FFS as a gender friendly methodology for use in farm extension services and as a general development methodological tool. The FFS model has been successfully implemented in various countries in Africa.

**Zambia Dairy Development Program (2004-2009).** Between 2004 and 2009, Land O'Lakes implemented a program that increased household food security and livelihoods of 829 female headed households and women participants (one-third of all program beneficiaries). The program's specific gender objectives were to: ensure equitable participation by men and women in program activities; guarantee equitable access to productive resources for both men and women; and, create an enabling climate for women to play an effective and broad role in all program activities. The program thus deliberately ensured that program services reached a significant number of poor rural women and improved the food situation of women who were heads of households and rural women in general. The program ensured that there was a minimum of 30 percent "active" female representation in farmer associations. This was a significant achievement in a country where dairy farming is a predominantly male-oriented livelihood activity—often women were forbidden from entering cattle byres because it was believed that the chemicals used in cattle dips could prevent pregnancy.

One of the most critical findings of the program was that active involvement of women in decision making leads to improved food security at the household level. As women were given title to cows, they often more effectively used the income they derived from the animals to provide food for the household and other basic family needs. Generally, the women took better care of their animals than did men, as they stayed close to home caring for their children, and thus devoted more time to tending their cow. In some program areas, gender trainings were conducted on joint household decision-making between women and men. In these areas, productivity and incomes were higher than in other areas as labor was shared equally, and decisions regarding the use of incomes were made jointly.

**South Sudan Livestock Development and Dairy Cooperatives Program (2005-2009).** In South Sudan, Land O'Lakes provided technical assistance and training to pastoralist Taposa women to improve their milk handling techniques. The program targeted women, as they are the typical caretakers of animals, although their husbands own them. Land O'Lakes assisted the women to set up milk collection centers installed with solar fridges. After installing a batch pasteurizer and sealing machine, one of the cooperatives assisted by the program now markets fresh milk and yogurt. This cooperative was the first organization to produce processed and packaged milk products in South Sudan.

**Ethiopia Dairy Development Project (2005-2011).** Women's empowerment is a cross-cutting theme of the Ethiopia Dairy Development Project and so the project is taking a robust approach to ensure that women receive the knowledge and skills necessary to reap the economic and social benefits of their labor. Land O'Lakes has engaged more than 350 female farmers and 14 women-owned commercial dairy farms, which now serve as model farms for existing and future dairy sector investments. Seventy-five percent of milk technicians trained and certified by the project have been women, whose livelihoods and household incomes have improved. Land O'Lakes has also been working with dairy cooperatives to increase women's participation, membership, and leadership. Women now account 28% of the membership and 11% of the leadership of the dairy cooperatives which has increased since start-up.

In Ethiopia, due to the increase in sustainable income, PLHIV women's participation in household decision-making, especially on household expenses and income management, has improved greatly. Land O'Lakes has strengthened the capacity of 36 community associations of PLHIV, 60% of whose members are women. Through business development skills, cooperative management, and technical dairy skills trainings, these associations have reported improved capacity to function as organizations, increased membership, and improved status within their local governments and communities. An all-women PLHIV association in southern Ethiopia has utilized book-keeping and cooperative management skills to improve their accounting and management systems to provide better and more timely services to their members.

EDDP has supported nearly 8000 PLHIV, of which more than 60 percent are women and adolescent girls. A value chain analysis identified nine dairy IGAs, with considerations of PLHIV and women's abilities, interests, access to land or other resources, labor intensity, childcare and household responsibilities. Labor and time requirements were thoroughly examined to identify IGAs appropriate for PLHIV women. Beneficiaries have reported up to a 50% increase in household income as a result of engaging in dairy IGAs.

**Kenya Food for Progress (2006-2010).** Gender was a key component integrated into the USDA-funded Kenya Food for Progress (KFP) program. Program interventions were designed keeping in mind the needs of women within a cultural context. In Kenya, as in most African countries, women and children are the primary fetchers of water and firewood. Depending on the availability of these resources in a given area, this task can take hours every day. Working directly with nearly 13,000 women, KFP facilitated the rehabilitation of communal water schemes to provide increased access to water to beneficiary households. The program also supported beneficiaries in reducing their reliance on firewood and invest in biogas production for cooking. In collaboration with biogas production dealers, KFP facilitated trainings and installation. Both the water schemes and the biogas method were enthusiastically embraced by women participants. The efforts ultimately freed up hours each day for them to spend on other important activities, including dairy production.



*A woman returns home from the Mweleki water point, constructed through the Kenya Food for Progress program.*

**Malawi Dairy Development Alliance (2007-2010).** In Malawi, Land O'Lakes implements a public-private partnership to assist more than 7,500 dairy farmers, of which 40% are women-headed households practicing dairy farming. To date, over 1000 women have received a pass-on heifer. These women earn approximately \$1,200 per year from dairy farming alone, a 250 percent increase from what they previously earned through subsistence farming. The majority of women use the additional income to diversify their children's diets, pay for school fees, uniforms and medical care, and purchase fertilizers to increase their subsistence crop yields so that they have 12 months of food security.

Another important component of Land O'Lakes' work in Malawi is gender training for dairy farmers. In 2009 and 2010, Land O'Lakes trained 537 women and 466 men during 21 sessions on Gender Issues and How it Affects Dairy Farming, which was adapted from the Government of Malawi's Ministry of Gender's training materials. Land O'Lakes staff have been trained extensively by Ministry staff and the program has successfully integrated gender messaging into all field activities on both a formal and informal basis. Communicating the importance of understanding gender to make dairy farming more lucrative for families is a key role of the Land O'Lakes field staff in Malawi.

**Kenya Dairy Sector Competitiveness Program (2008-2013).** The Kenya Dairy Sector Competitiveness Program seeks to increase smallholder household income from the sale of quality milk. Business development services, including training on strategic planning, leadership, and contract development, are provided to farmer groups by the program—of the nearly 150,000 farmers who benefit from program interventions, an estimated 40 percent are women. KDSCP uses a market approach to encourage women to participate in service provision as a business and actively seeks out women team leaders as program facilitators. Capacity building services by the program have so far assisted nearly 40,000 dairy farmers, of which 20 percent are women.

The program has also put in place several gender interventions that seek to build the capacity of women, including: Increasing the number of women groups benefitting from the program and supporting them to seek financial support from women funds; Encouraging the establishment of sole women enterprises to supply inputs; Facilitating the development of strategic business plans for women to sustain their dairy businesses; Creating awareness of business opportunities in dairy farming by facilitating exchange and study tours for women; Understanding the multiple roles done by women in dairy and designing training programs and activities suitable for them to help improve their dairy enterprises.

**Dairy Development for Fallujah Women (2009-2010).** Land O'Lakes worked with women in Iraq to help them gain the skills needed to become effective dairy producers. These women, in turn, will train other women, increasing household incomes through dairy production and reducing their economic and social insecurity. In 2009, a Land O'Lakes dairy consultant traveled to Iraq to work with 21 Iraqi widows. He used demonstrations and pictographs to impress upon women the importance of proper udder preparation, milking procedures, sanitation and milk handling, and disinfection of equipment. He also encouraged class participation and discussion: a new pedagogy which the women took to immediately. Seven trainings were conducted in the villages of Saqlowiya and Amariya, including field trips to two farms for on-site instruction. Each trainer committed to working with 10 more women in her community.

**Dairy Enhancement in Eastern Province (2009-2012).** Dairy Enhancement in Eastern Province (DEEP) seeks to increase economic opportunities for participating dairy farmers by connecting the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka to value-added business opportunities both within and outside the region. DEEP was designed with a gender perspective—women in the Eastern Province comprise seventy percent of the workforce and play a major role in the care and management of livestock. DEEP fosters active participation of women in all training activities including in the management of milk producer groups and milk collection centers.

The DEEP baseline study included a gender analysis, which aimed facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the regional gender context and issues. The main objectives of the gender analysis included: Identify gender related issues which may affect the project implementation; Provide a more precise definition and understanding of women's roles, responsibilities, participation, and vulnerability in the dairy industry and dairy as the significant source of income; Identify opportunities for Land O'Lakes to expand, alter, or sensitize program activities to increase the parity of program benefits as they are accrued by males and females; Assess and validate the targets that the program intends to accomplish with regard to women's participation and potential impacts on their livelihoods; and, Strengthen the program's Performance Management Plan so that it better reflects the program impact on beneficiaries, particularly women.

### **Strengthening and Accessing Livelihoods and Opportunities for Household Impact (2009-2014).**

The Strengthening and Accessing Livelihoods and Opportunities for Household Impact (SALOHI) MYAP in Madagascar strives to mainstream gender concerns through and across project activities in order to ensure greater gender equality. During the design phase of the SALOHI program, partners examined the needs of men and women to analyze gender inequities in access to services and resources, division of labor, control over resources and decision-making at the household and community level. As a result, women are the specific focus of several interventions including food distribution, village savings and loan groups, and urban female-headed household beneficiaries.



**Members of a VSL in Madagascar review their financial records**

While cash crops are traditionally managed by men, we encourage women to participate in the decision making of these activities (and the use of its revenue) and to produce a larger variety of crops for family consumption. The project will strengthen the capacity of the target population to manage small savings and the provision of small loans to community members through VSL activities. While this component will be open to all community members, it is specifically targeted towards women. Women in Madagascar are more interested in and better able to manage small credit activities. They are the ones normally in charge of ensuring that daily needs of the families (schooling, food purchases, clothing, etc) are met.

**Minnesota Headquarters:** 1080 W. County Road F, MS 5120, Shoreview, MN 55126 U.S.A.; Phone: 1-651-494-5142

**Washington, D.C.:** 1800 North Kent Street, Suite 901, Arlington, VA 22209 U.S.A.; Phone: 1-703-524-1739

**Nairobi:** Westlands off Peponi Road, Peponi Plaza-A3, Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya; Phone 254-20-374-6034