



# INCLUSIVE GROWTH: EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN RICE FARMING IN AFRICA

## POLICY BRIEF FOR CARD

# OUTLINE

- Why inclusivity?
- Women & Youth in the Rice Value Chain
- Why Empowerment Matters
- Key Challenges
- The 8 Strategic Recommendations
- Conclusion & Way Forward



# WHY INCLUSIVITY?

- Rice is central to Africa's food security and livelihoods: 9% of the continent's caloric intake
- **The Gap:** Domestic rice production only meets **50–60%** of demand.
- **The Labor Force:** Women and youth provide up to **80% of labour** in some ecosystems but remain "invisible" in policy.
- **The Opportunity:** Closing the gender gap could increase annual crop output by **2–10%** and boost GDP by up to **1.8%**.
- Hence: Inclusion is critical to achieving **CARD's 2030 target of doubling** rice production from **28 million tons** in 2018 to **56 million tons** by 2030 in Sub-Saharan Africa

# WOMEN & YOUTH IN THE RICE VALUE CHAIN

## Production:

Land preparation, planting (sowing, transplanting), weeding & crop management; harvesting

## Post-harvest:

threshing, winnowing, drying, milling, parboiling

## Processing, Marketing:

local marketing, services

- Women & youth are often responsible for **the labor-intensive, low-mechanized activities, requiring time and effort. E.g. transplanting, weeding**
- In post-production activities (aggregation, wholesale, and retailing), participation is lower: 5% to 35%
- Youth drive innovation, mechanization, and digital uptake

# WHY EMPOWERMENT MATTERS



A strategic investment, higher productivity, and income gains



Youth engagement tackles aging farmer populations



Off-farm activities generate **11–40% more jobs**



Inclusive growth strengthens food security & resilience



Fundamental human right and social justice



# KEY CHALLENGES

- **Resource Gap:** Limited access to land ownership, finance, and quality inputs (seeds/fertilizers), mechanization
- **Extension Gap:** Low ratio of extension workers; shortage of female officers; services and approaches often target male "heads of household."
- **Double Burden:** Women manage agricultural labor alongside heavy unpaid care work (cooking, water fetching); limited ability to hire labour
- **Exclusion from decision-making and leadership**
- **Gender-based violence: limited mobility, limited economic importance**
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Yields could drop by **24-45%** without adaptation; Women & Youth lack the tools to adapt

# POLICY GAPS IN NRDS

Gender & youth often acknowledged—but weakly implemented

Few binding targets and accountability mechanisms

Limited gender- and age-disaggregated data

Lack of evidence, competencies and appreciation of opportunities that would be brought about by women and youth empowerment

# THE 8 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **1–2:** Strengthen NRDS systems and data
- **3–4:** Secure rights & deploy gender-responsive innovations
- **5–6:** Invest in infrastructure & extension systems
- **7–8:** Address GBV & promote inclusive leadership

# THE 8 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

## I-2 Strengthening NRDS Systems: Institutionalizing Inclusivity

- **Capacity Building:** Train NRDS task forces in gender-responsive program design, resource mobilization and MEL.
- **Data-Driven Policy:** Institutionalize systems for collecting **gender and age-disaggregated data** to move beyond "gender-blind" planning
  - Use evidence to guide inclusive policies and investments

# THE 8 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

## 3-4 Rights & Innovations

- **Rights & Policies to address disadvantaging customary practices**
  - Guarantee equitable land and resource rights
  - Promote joint titling and land certification
- **Deliver gender-responsive, climate-smart innovation bundles**
  - Socio-Technical Innovation Bundles: Technology alone isn't enough; it must be bundled with social support
  - Ensure women and youth can effectively **access** and **utilize** the technologies

# THE 8 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5-6 Infrastructure & Extension Systems

- **Infrastructure remains key**
  - Invest in irrigation, storage, energy, transport & ICT: ensure inclusive and equitable access
  - Support women and youth entrepreneurship
- **Advisory Services:**
  - Increase the number of **female extension agents**.
  - Leverage **ICT tools** (SMS, radio, videos in local languages) to bypass mobility constraints faced by women.
  - **Farmer service centers:** one-stop-shop access to inputs and technical training.

# THE 8 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

## 7-8 Safety & Leadership

- **Addressing Safety:** create a sector where women can safely manage income and assets without fear of domestic harassment or violence, fostering a sense of security and respect.
  - **Safe Work Environments are productive environments**
  - Integrate GBV awareness into agricultural extension training and link rural programs to support networks.
- **Leadership**
  - Promote women & youth participation and leadership in cooperatives through targeted capacity-building programs, mentorship, and policy incentives to ensure tangible progress.
  - promote inclusive leadership, increase women's voice, and recognize their contribution in the rice sector, making women feel valued and appreciated.

# CONCLUSION & WAY FORWARD

- **Empowerment is an economic necessity, not just a social goal.**
  - Empowering women & youth is a **strategic imperative**; key to productivity, resilience & equity
- **The Path to 2030**
  - Integrate recommendations into NRDS renewal and RRDS
  - Mobilize resources & strengthen partnerships for gender-responsive programming and action



## **Available:**

English version: <https://agra.Org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/card-policy-brief-on-inclusive-rice-farming.Pdf>

French version: [https://agra.Org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/card-policy-brief-on-inclusive-rice-farming\\_fr.Pdf](https://agra.Org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/card-policy-brief-on-inclusive-rice-farming_fr.Pdf)

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION**