Regional Stakeholders Commemorate International Women’s Day under the theme ‘Empower Rural Women: End Hunger and Poverty’

Addis Ababa, 15 March 2012; Today the United Nations System in partnership with the African Union participated in a symposium in commemoration of the 2012 International Women’s Day. The symposium whose theme was ‘Empower Rural Women: End Hunger and Poverty’ was organized by the UNWOMEN Liaison Office to AU and AUC Women Gender and Development Directorate on behalf of the members of the Gender and Development sub-cluster of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) namely, FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNECA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNOAU, and WFP.

The purpose of the symposium was to share innovative strategies and success stories in empowering rural women, and their contribution to ending hunger and poverty.

The highlight of the symposium was the testimony of Ms. Etenesh Daniel a beneficiary of FARM Africa’s Rural Women Empowerment Project in Ethiopia stated: “After training by FARM Africa I started to envision viable economic options. With only two goats provided by the project, which then gave birth to more goats, I increased my income and simultaneously engaged in additional business activities with the loan from FARM’s Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA). In the beginning, my husband opposed my involvement but after observing the change brought to our family he decided to join VSLA himself and now we compete with one another to see who saves more. We brought our income together and managed to buy an ox and a cow and planted ginger, which will hopefully boost my income even more as we harvest. There is enough food in my family and I can afford to buy clothes for my children as needed.”

In attendance at the symposium were the Ambassadors Botswana, Burundi, Cuba, Ireland, Liberia, Rwanda, The Gambia, Togo, Uganda and high level representation from the embassies and permanent missions of Angola, Austria, Egypt, Germany, Libya, Spain, Sweden and Zimbabwe. Also participating were representatives of civil society organizations and the UN System.

In her welcoming remarks, Ms Florence Butegwa, UN WOMEN representative to AU and UNECA appreciated the close collaboration with the African Union Commission, represented by the Women Gender and Development Directorate and Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture. The AUC called for UN System support to countries through Africa’s regional initiatives like the Common Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the African Women’s Decade.

Ambassadors and UN organisations shared some of the good practices from their countries and programmes, and called for greater coordination of effort if rural women are to be empowered.

For further information, please contact:
Ms. Tikikel Tadele
Program officer
Tikikel.alemu@unwomen.org
Tel: ++251-115-549990/91