

## Women's Leadership Circles for Agriculture and NRM (WLCAN)

### Background

Women's Leadership Circles for Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WLCAN) is a national level platform to develop women's leadership, promote regular dialogue between women policy makers/professionals and women farmers/leaders/ entrepreneurs, and to create new spaces for women farmer's voices to be heard at policy levels.

National level WLCAN evolved out of the project "Support to the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders in Agriculture" supported by IFAD in 2010. In the 18 month period the project was able to achieve some key outcomes such as, members of the network were able to participate in various ministerial events and one of the members was also awarded the prestigious Africa Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable End of Hunger, after being nominated by the Network's Steering Committee.

Despite these achievements there were few challenges such as the turnover of ministers and getting active participation of the members. It was realized that there is a great opportunity to develop the network around WOCAN's national-level WLCAN that will be linked to regional and global advocacy. At the national level, logistically it is easier to bring farmers and high level women leaders together, for specific dialogues that do not require travel and can be more easily organized through existing relationships between WOCAN members and national level government and private sector officials.

The national level WLCAN will have the opportunity to advocate at the global level through WOCAN's membership on the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for Environment (NWMLE). The goal of NWMLE is to enhance representation and involvement of women in decision-making in the areas of environment and sustainable development at all levels. WOCAN plans to host the Annual Global Meeting of the WLCAN during the NWMLE High Level Gender Forum.

### Key Principles of WLCAN

- All members are women (although men can be invited as participants, to provide specific inputs and information)
- Participants should be from various agriculture and natural resource management sectors and organizations, and from diverse groups
- WLCAN meetings cannot be organized without the participation of women farmers
- Opportunities should be maximised for women farmers to both set the agenda for the meetings and to facilitate the discussions during the meeting
- All participants should be provided with opportunities to voice their opinions

## **Guidelines for WLCAN**

### (i) Membership Guidelines

Membership should comprise a mix of:

- Women Farmers/Leaders/Entrepreneurs
- Women policy and decision makers at local, district, provincial and national levels
- Women professionals

### (ii) Coordination Guidelines

Coordination of Women Leadership Circles for Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WLCAN):

- WLCAN is organized by WOCAN coordinators and WOCAN Members
- Coordinators are responsible for documenting and reporting to WOCAN Secretariat in Bangkok, Thailand
- WOCAN is able to provide guidance and mentorship to the coordinators and/or facilitators, if required

### (iii) Meeting Guidelines

- 20-25 members/participants attend each meeting
- Travel for members and participants to attend the WLCAN meetings can be supported by Government agencies, project and farmer producer groups
- The location and venue of the meeting should be discussed and agreed by all members, and should be alternated between capital/major cities and rural locations
- It is recommended that members use their offices to host the meetings
- Relevant organisations (comprising both women and men) can be invited as participants, to provide specific inputs and information
- Meetings should be held regularly and every 2-3 months

### (iv) Getting Started/Early Agendas

- As an early activity in the life of a WLCAN, it is recommended that a small group of members from the WLCAN work together to conduct a summary review of policies in their region relating to Agriculture and Natural Resource Management – this will identify gaps and inform future agendas

## **Steps to Organize the WLCAN**

### Step 1: Identifying Partners

- Identify women farmers/leaders/entrepreneurs and women policy makers/decision makers/professionals to become members
- Develop a plan of action for the WLCAN
- Identify opportunities for further engagement with policy makers.

### Step 2: Policy Analysis (recommended)

- Identify gender gaps on policies related to agriculture and natural resource management

- Discuss strategies for effective implementation of policies
- Develop action plan for advocacy.

Step 3: Should be decided in consultation with all the members

## Outcome

An active network comprising women farmers, leaders, entrepreneurs, policy makers, decision makers and professionals that is able to influence policy development and implementation.

## Code of Conduct

- An enabling environment must be created for women farmers to effectively participate and speak freely without intimidations
- The focus of the WLCAN is to *listen* to the women farmers
- Farmers should facilitate the discussions and be involved in setting the agenda
- All participants should get opportunity to voice their opinion

## Key Questions for WOCAN Members Interested in Coordinating a WLCAN

- Can you identify groups of women farmers with advocacy capacity?
- Do women farmers have the means to travel to meeting venues?
- Are there any funding sources available from project/government to support the travels of the women farmers?
- Can decision makers travel outside of the capital for meetings in a regular basis?

For more information go to <http://wocan.org/programs/advocacy> or contact [info@wocan.org](mailto:info@wocan.org)