

Gender equality and empowerment through access to  
land, inheritance and  
natural resources in the Comoros

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# The Comoros (Background)

The Comoros are part of the Small Island Developing States.

Composed of 4 Islands, the Comoros are located in the Indian Ocean.

The Comoros are well committed to Gender Equity and Equality. Thus, a National Policy for Gender Equity and Equality (PNEEG) was developed in 2008 and updated in 2017, considering new challenges related to gender, particularly those mentioned in SDG5.

# The Comoros Presentation

- During the last census of 2017, the Comoros had 742,287 inhabitants, of which **49.88% were women**, compared to 575,660 inhabitants with **50.35% women** in 2003.
- This decrease in the proportion of women can be explained by the increase in the number of women emigrating outside the archipelago in search of decent work.
- Currently, the population is estimated at 800,000 inhabitants with more than 51% of women

## SDG5

“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” is a cross-cutting issue for all of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals”



Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

# Importance of gender equity and equality for Sustainable Development

- Equality between women and men is one of the major challenges of human development in the world.
- Equality is not only a political and ethical issue, but also a guarantee of the effectiveness of development policies.
- By strengthening the rights of women and girls, all of humanity progresses.
- Hence the efforts to be made for the empowerment of women and girls for effective sustainable development.

# The National Policy for Gender Equity and Equality (NPGEE), and gender inequalities in the Comoros

Despite the efforts made, in particular,

- the updating of the NPGEE
- significant (inter)national legal commitments in terms of Gender Equality

significant challenges to their effectiveness persist in the archipelago and gender inequalities persist as well

# Themes addressed in the PNEEG

- Gender and Transport Infrastructure
- Gender, Energy and Food Cooking
- Gender, Economic Management and Public Finance
- Gender and employment
- Women's entrepreneurship
- Gender, Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock
- Gender and climate change
- Gender and poverty
- Gender, Health and Nutrition
- Gender, access to drinking water and sanitation
- Gender-based violence
- Gender and Access to Justice
- Gender and Governance

# PNEEG implementation constraints

Despite the efforts made at the political & regulatory level, the progress made in education, health and sanitation, the challenges are still enormous, and it is difficult to clear the hurdles to women's empowerment.

These challenges are linked to the social and economic weight, the patriarchal cultural background that are concealed by matrilineal filiation and the fragility of the socio-economic context, which make it difficult to reverse heavy trends of poverty and gender inequality



# Women and the labor market

- Women are very poorly represented in the labour market and the glaring under-representation of women in the political sphere characterizes the archipelago.
- However, the 2018 Constitution recognizes the right of women to have access to political bodies and in 2017, the Assembly adopted a bill establishing a quota of 30% of women in nominative and elective positions but which has not been enacted.

# Women, lever of Agriculture

Comorian women are well represented in agriculture.

They actively participate in the development of the agriculture and livestock sector.

Working women mainly work in this sector, which provides a third of GDP (31.8% in 2017).

The proportion of women who are active has been evolving for a few years and reached 63.01% in 2018 while the proportion of men was at 52.4%, women are indeed increasingly numerous in the agricultural sector.

# Women, lever of Agriculture

As Comorian society is matrilineal, property goes to women, especially land and houses, which favors them in their position as owners. Women landowners generally practice food crops and produce firstly for their own consumption and then, for income generation (to a lesser extent). They organize themselves into agricultural cooperatives in the regions and help each other at all levels.

# Women, lever of Agriculture

Various associations and/or projects try to support these women in improving their productivity or in opening new markets.

These initiatives encourage them to register land and access credit. They feel more secure. They introduce materials and improved seeds and carry out agricultural extension. In terms of animal husbandry, women mainly practice poultry farming.

They are beginning to invest in cash crops, especially vanilla and ylang ylang (for essential oil production)

# Women and the protection of biodiversity

- In all the villages, there are associations for the protection of the environment and women actively participate in the protection and enhancement of land (forests), coastal (coastal materials and mangroves) and marine (fish and other marine species) and associated ecosystems.
- They also work as eco-guards in terrestrial and marine protected areas.

# The encountered difficulties

- These women often work in remote areas and in very difficult conditions.
- The transport of agricultural products is thus done on their back, on their head and "on foot" for 91.94% of women farmers in Anjouan and 96.23% in Moheli, despite advances in road infrastructure.
- This situation maintains the difficulty in agricultural work, food insecurity and poverty of the rural population with differentiated impacts on women and men.

# The encountered difficulties

- The disadvantages linked to the status of Comorian women further weaken rural women.
- The precariousness of their jobs is amplified with the effects of various shocks, including those resulting from climate and health change.
- Finally, the mechanization of agriculture which could lighten the tasks and reduce the time of their execution, has not yet entered the customs.

# Advantages

- This work fully contributes to their fulfillment and empowerment
- Projects and other institutions are increasingly interested in the activities of rural women and provide them with support
- Some NGOs are mobilizing to support them in training on adaptation to climate change and some are introduced to smart agriculture





Thank you

Merci

Asante