



07 November 2023

Dr. Joel Mabalhin

Head, Department of Teacher Education
VSU, Visca, City of Baybay, Leyte

Dear **Dr. Mabalhin**,

The Institute for Strategic Research & Development Studies invites you to a kick-off meeting for a proposed project: *Empowering Future Generations of Farmers: Developing a Gender-Sensitive Education Program for High School Students on Best Farming Practices*. Our colleague from KU Leuven (Belgium), Ms. Alexandra Berndt, will introduce the project on Friday, November 17, 2023 at the ISRDS Conference Room at 9:00-10:00 AM.

The project addresses two core problems in agriculture: The gender problem (women have limited access to knowledge and resources) and the best practices adoption problem (farmers lack awareness of best practices and climate-smart technologies). These issues are structural. It is, thus, desirable to break these structures as early as possible. A suitable point in time is at high school when students have the time and capacity to acquire new knowledge and skills. Young people are more enthusiastic about new technologies than older generations and can inspire their parents to change agricultural production decisions. Furthermore, the necessity for change will dramatically increase for the younger generation since they will carry the burden of climate change and the consequences of their parents' unsustainable farming practices.

At this moment, high school students are not taught much about farming. This means that future farmers learn about farming from their parents, implying that the new generation of farmers risks adopting conventional agriculture like their parents. Furthermore, high school students are not taught about gender roles and gender inequalities. This means that the new generation of male and female farmers risks applying the same structures as their parents—structures that devalue the agricultural, reproductive, and care work of women, exclude women from decision-making processes, and limit women's access to resources and knowledge. Starting as early as possible is, thus, vital to break these vicious cycles. This project aims to add two new courses to the high school curriculum that teach future farmers (high school students in farming regions) about best practices adoption and gender equality.

The proposed project is a joint project between three units of VSU—College of Agriculture, College of Education, and ISRDS. The College of Agriculture provides knowledge on best practices, the College of Education formulates lessons for high school students, and ISRDS coordinates the overall project. School officials and teachers at the *model schools* will be included in developing this new addition to the curriculum since they know their students best.



The ISRDS team looks forward to kickstarting this project with you on November 17th.

Thank you and best regards.

Very truly yours,


LILIAN B. NUÑEZ
Director, ISRDS

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Mission: Development of a highly competitive human resource, cutting-edge scientific knowledge and innovative technologies for sustainable communities and environment.