



**Rural
Women's
Assembly**

*We are the Guardians of Land,
Life, Seeds and Love*

Submission on the Implementation and Dissemination of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)

Introduction

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) represents a critical international framework for the recognition and protection of the rights of peasants and rural workers, especially in the context of climate change, food insecurity, and gender inequality. As civil society organizations such as the Rural Women Assembly (RWA) engage with this Declaration, it becomes essential to assess its dissemination, adoption, and implementation across ten countries, including South Africa, Tanzania, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Swaziland, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique and Madagascar. This submission addresses the key questions regarding the measures taken to disseminate the Declaration, the progress made in implementing it, challenges encountered, and future priorities for enhancing its impact on the lives of rural people.

1. Dissemination of the Declaration

One of the core responsibilities of RWA and similar organisations has been the dissemination of the UNDROP Declaration to ensure that rural communities and other relevant stakeholders are aware of its provisions and can advocate for their rights. The RWA developed a UNDROP booklet, which serves as an advocacy tool, unpacking the various rights and provisions of the Declaration in a simplified and accessible format. The booklet has been translated by RWA into several languages spoken across different regions, including Swahili and Malagasy, to ensure that peasants and rural workers can engage with the content in their native languages.

In **South Africa**, the UNDROP booklet was translated into four different languages to cater to the linguistic diversity of the country. This effort reflects the commitment of civil society to ensure that rural communities, especially those often marginalized due to language barriers, can access and understand their rights. Despite these efforts, official government involvement in the dissemination process remains limited, and broader translation into minority languages has not yet been fully realized. Nonetheless, the booklet has been widely distributed by RWA across rural regions, empowering communities to understand and engage with their rights as defined by the Declaration.

Tanzania has seen similar efforts, with RWA translating the booklet into Swahili, the country's national language. This has allowed for widespread dissemination among smallholder farmers and rural workers. The translated booklet has been used in various training programs, where RWA has educated communities on land rights, climate justice, and traditional seed preservation. However, while civil society has taken the lead, the government has yet to fully integrate these efforts into its own policies or national dissemination strategies.



**Rural
Women's
Assembly**

*We are the Guardians of Land,
Life, Seeds and Love*

In **Lesotho**, on the other hand, no measures have been adopted by the government to sign UNDROP. The RWA booklet has not yet been translated into the country's minority languages. Civil society is actively advocating for the government to recognize and adopt the Declaration, but progress has been slow. The lack of resources and official support has hindered broader outreach efforts in the country, making the translation and distribution of materials a key challenge.

Zimbabwe presents a more mixed scenario. RWA Zimbabwe has been at the forefront of disseminating the UNDROP booklet, ensuring that it reaches rural communities. Over 4,000 members have been trained using this booklet, particularly focusing on land rights, food sovereignty, and the preservation of traditional seeds. Despite these efforts, government engagement remains limited, with RWA still advocating for more formal recognition of the Declaration by state authorities. The distribution of the booklet has allowed for a significant increase in awareness, though the challenge remains to secure further support for more comprehensive dissemination and policy alignment.

Madagascar has translated the booklet into Malagasy, ensuring that it reaches the country's rural population in their native language. While this effort has helped raise awareness among peasants and rural workers, similar to other countries, the absence of direct government involvement has limited the overall impact of these efforts.

2. Training and Awareness-Raising Activities

Training and awareness-raising are central to RWA's approach to implementing UNDROP across the region. The organization has taken a proactive stance in educating rural communities about the rights they are entitled to under the Declaration. Through workshops, advocacy programs, and community meetings, RWA has worked to ensure that peasants and rural workers understand the importance of land rights, food sovereignty, and traditional seed preservation. Educational material has been developed and distributed at all 10 countries. This has been a tool for raising awareness.

In **South Africa**, RWA has been highly active in conducting training sessions that unpack the provisions of the UNDROP Declaration. The translated booklet has been a central tool in these activities, allowing RWA to educate rural women on their rights. These training sessions often focus on issues such as land rights, climate justice, and sustainable food production, empowering women to take active roles in leadership positions within their communities and advocate for policy changes.

Tanzania has also seen considerable efforts from RWA in terms of training and awareness-raising. The translated booklet has been used in various workshops where RWA has educated communities about land rights, climate justice, and traditional seed systems. These activities have been critical in raising awareness among rural workers about their rights under UNDROP, ensuring that they are equipped to advocate for change at both the local and national levels.



**Rural
Women's
Assembly**

*We are the Guardians of Land,
Life, Seeds and Love*

In **Zimbabwe**, RWA has developed an advocacy toolkit based on the UNDROP booklet, which has been used to train over 4,000 people on land rights, seed sovereignty, and climate resilience. This has helped build the capacity of rural communities to engage with local authorities and advocate for policy changes. These training activities have also extended to engaging with government ministries, where RWA has presented the Declaration as a framework for promoting the rights of rural workers.

Lesotho and **Malawi** have seen fewer formal training sessions, largely due to financial constraints and limited government involvement. However, RWA continues to work on raising awareness at the community level, where efforts are focused on educating rural workers about their rights through informal workshops and community meetings. These countries face significant barriers in terms of resource availability, which has limited the scale and reach of their awareness-raising activities.

3. Progress and Difficulties in Implementing the Declaration

Despite significant efforts RWA, the implementation of UNDROP has been met with a variety of challenges across the region. The lack of government engagement, financial constraints, and resistance to policy changes have all limited the impact of the Declaration.

In South Africa, a significant challenge has been securing the participation of rural women in decision-making bodies related to land rights and food sovereignty. While RWA has successfully empowered rural women to take leadership roles in land committees and other governance structures, ensuring their voices are included, ongoing difficulties persist. Engaging with government officials remains particularly problematic, as many demand allowances for transport and meals before attending meetings. This practice creates barriers for civil society, making it challenging to engage consistently with government representatives on UNDROP-related matters.

Tanzania has seen some progress in raising awareness of the Declaration among local government officials, although the broader integration of UNDROP into national policy remains a challenge. RWA's advocacy efforts have focused on building relationships with local authorities, with some success in raising awareness about land rights and traditional seed systems. However, financial constraints and limited political will have hampered more comprehensive policy implementation.

In **Zimbabwe**, RWA has made significant strides in advocating for land rights and seed sovereignty, with active participation from rural communities in these critical discussions. However, government involvement has been limited, and RWA continues to push for formal recognition and adoption of UNDROP by state authorities. Progress has been hindered by financial constraints, largely due to the lack of government support and budget allocations for the implementation of UNDROP, making it difficult to expand the reach of these initiatives.

Lesotho and **Swaziland** have encountered significant resistance from their governments, with neither country formally adopting the Declaration. Civil society efforts in these



Rural
Women's
Assembly

*We are the Guardians of Land,
Life, Seeds and Love*

countries have been hampered by a lack of resources and government support, making it difficult to raise awareness of UNDROP or advocate for its implementation.

4. Legislative, Administrative, and Policy Measures

While civil society organizations have made significant efforts to promote UNDROP, legislative and policy changes at the national level remain limited. In many countries, the government has been slow to adopt or implement the provisions of the Declaration, leaving civil society to carry the burden of advocacy and awareness-raising.

In **South Africa**, the Department of Agriculture has engaged with RWA on several occasions, but concrete policy changes have yet to be implemented. Civil society continues to push for legislative reforms that align with the provisions of UNDROP, particularly in areas related to land rights, food sovereignty, and climate resilience. However, the slow pace of government action remains a significant barrier to progress.

In **Tanzania**, RWA's advocacy efforts have led to some positive engagement with local government officials. However, legislative reforms remain limited, and the government has yet to fully integrate the provisions of UNDROP into its national policies. Civil society continues to play a crucial role in raising awareness and advocating for changes that would protect the rights of rural workers.

Zimbabwe has seen similar challenges, with RWA advocating for the integration of UNDROP into national policies on land rights and seed sovereignty. While there has been some engagement with government ministries, much more needs to be done to formalize these discussions and translate them into concrete legislative reforms.

5. Engagement with State Authorities and Human Rights Mechanisms

Civil society organizations, particularly RWA, have made efforts to engage with state authorities and human rights mechanisms to promote the integration of UNDROP into national and regional activities. However, this engagement has been met with varying levels of success.

In **South Africa**, RWA has engaged with provincial government authorities, though the implementation of UNDROP-related resolutions has been limited. The organization continues to advocate for more robust government involvement in the dissemination and implementation of the Declaration.

In **Tanzania** and **Zimbabwe**, RWA has worked with ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture to raise awareness of UNDROP and promote its integration into national policies. These efforts have included presenting the Declaration to state authorities and linking it to other international treaties. However, government support remains sporadic, and civil society organizations continue to face significant challenges in securing broader government involvement.



**Rural
Women's
Assembly**

*We are the Guardians of Land,
Life, Seeds and Love*

In **Swaziland**, attempts to engage with both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Human Rights Commission have been met with resistance, highlighting the need for stronger regional and international advocacy to push for government accountability in the implementation of UNDROP.

6. Participation of Peasants and Rural Workers in Policy Development

A key element of UNDROP is the participation of peasants and rural workers in the development of policies that affect their lives. However, in many countries, this participation remains limited.

In **South Africa**, RWA has successfully advocated for the inclusion of rural women in leadership roles within land committees and other governance structures. This has allowed rural women to have a say in policy development processes, particularly in areas related to land rights and food sovereignty.

In **Zimbabwe** and **Tanzania**, smallholder farmers and rural workers have been involved in advocacy efforts, particularly around issues such as traditional seed preservation and climate justice. However, their participation in formal policy development at the national level remains limited, with much work still needed to ensure that their voices are included in key decision-making processes.

7. Priority Issues for the Implementation of the Declaration

To ensure the successful implementation of UNDROP across these countries, several priority issues need to be addressed. First, greater government engagement is essential. Civil society cannot bear the full burden of advocating for and disseminating the Declaration. Governments must take a more active role in translating the provisions of UNDROP into national policies and ensuring their implementation.

Second, resource allocation remains a significant barrier to progress. Financial constraints have limited the ability of civil society organizations to conduct widespread training and awareness-raising activities. Increased support from international organizations and donors is essential to overcome these challenges.

Finally, legislative reforms are needed to align national laws with the provisions of UNDROP, particularly in areas related to land rights, seed sovereignty, and food security. Civil society must continue to push for these reforms while working closely with international bodies to ensure that governments are held accountable for their commitments under the Declaration.