



UN Working Group Demands Urgent Action to Uphold Rights of Rural Women

GENEVA – October 15, 2025 – On the International Day of Rural Women, the UN Working Group on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas issued an urgent call to action, demanding States and corporations end the systemic discrimination, violence, and economic exclusion faced by rural women worldwide. Despite producing over 70 percent of the developing world's food supply and leading climate adaptation efforts, peasant women and other women working in rural areas (rural women) remain among the most marginalized groups, facing profound violations of their fundamental human rights.

The Working Group's recent reports to the Human Rights Council* and the General Assembly** detail how rural women are the backbone of global food systems, yet their contributions are systematically ignored and undervalued. They perform essential labor in agriculture and fisheries—sowing, harvesting, processing, and marketing—while also shouldering the critical unpaid work of caring for families and communities. Furthermore, they are guardians of traditional knowledge and biodiversity, conserving seeds and managing vital ecosystems. Rural women's contributions to societies and economies extend beyond production—they are culture-bearers, educators and community organizers, whose participation and leadership in decision-making processes are essential for achieving social justice, food sovereignty, and climate justice.

"Peasant women and other women working in rural areas are leaders in the fight for social, food, and climate justice, yet they are denied their rightful seat at the decision-making table," said a spokesperson for the Working Group. "Their work provides the foundation for rural economies, and their sustainable farming methods are essential for our planet's future. On this International Day of Rural Women, we celebrate their immense contributions and stand in solidarity with their struggles for the dignity and rights they are guaranteed under international law."

Despite their vital roles and contributions, rural women confront multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on their gender, location, social and economic class, ethnicity, culture, and religion. These injustices are direct violations of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP) and the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which both guarantee equality before the law and freedom from discrimination.

Multiple and Intersecting Rights Violations

The Working Group's findings highlight a stark reality:

- **Economic Invisibility:** Deep-seated patriarchal norms often render rural women's agricultural labor invisible, treating it as an extension of domestic duty rather than formal work. This leads to undervaluation and denies them access to fair wages and social protections.
- **Denial of Land Rights:** Discriminatory laws and customs block rural women from owning, inheriting, and controlling land. Without secure land tenure, they are vulnerable to forced evictions and displacement, a threat now amplified by increasing corporate land grabs and financial speculation.
- **Exclusion from Resources:** Because their work and rights to land go unrecognized, rural women are often barred from accessing essential credit, equipment, markets, and agricultural support services.
- **Heightened Vulnerability:** The worsening climate crisis disproportionately impacts rural women, as droughts and extreme weather affect their ability to produce food and secure water, adding to their heavy burden of care. Migrant women workers in rural areas face even greater risks, including sexual and gender-based violence.
- **Attacks on Human Rights Defenders:** Rural women who organize and defend their communities' rights to land and resources face severe reprisals. They are targeted with intimidation, slander, criminalization, and violence—including murder—often with impunity for the perpetrators. This creates a climate of fear that allows rights violations to continue unchecked.
- **Exclusion from decision-making:** Rural women are frequently unable to, or denied opportunities to participate meaningfully in structures and processes where decisions shaping their lives, lands, livelihoods and environments are made. These conditions heighten women's vulnerability to gender-based violence, thereby reinforcing a vicious cycle of deprivation and harm.

"The exclusion of rural women traps them, their families, and their communities in a destructive cycle of poverty, food insecurity, and violence," the spokesperson continued. "When a woman defending her land is silenced, it is a loss for all of us. States have a clear duty to dismantle these oppressive structures and ensure a safe and enabling environment for all rural women."

A Call for Immediate and Collective Action

The Working Group calls upon States to integrate UNDROP into national constitutions and legal frameworks, and to repeal discriminatory laws that prevent women from owning, inheriting, and controlling land, and implement programs to secure their tenure. Furthermore, States should prevent gender-based violence, ensure access to justice, and guarantee equal access to productive resources, credit, markets, and training. Finally, they should expand universal social protection



systems for rural women and ensure their meaningful representation in all decision-making processes, especially those related to national climate plans.

The Working Group calls on international financial institutions and the private sector to respect human rights standards, enable transparent supply chains, fully engage peasant women and rural women workers in environmental impact assessments, and consult them meaningfully on all financial and business activities likely to affect their rights and environments. Furthermore, they should incorporate mandatory, independent human rights impact assessments that reference UNDROP, the UN Guiding Principles Business and Human Rights and all other relevant business and human rights instruments as a prerequisite for financing of projects affecting rural areas.

Civil society should strengthen collective action, advocacy, and solidarity across social movements to advance the implementation of UNDROP. Civil society must monitor rights violations, support advocacy and litigation, and continue building capacity through legal literacy and public awareness campaigns.

The Working Group stands in solidarity with rural women worldwide and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring their voices are heard, their rights are protected, and their dignity is upheld. Achieving social justice, environmental sustainability, and equitable rural development is impossible without the full realization of their rights.

ENDS

* [A/HRC/60/33](#)

** [A/80/180](#)

*The [Working Group on Peasants and other people working in rural areas](#) is comprised of five independent experts from all regions of the world. The Chair-Rapporteur is **Carlos Duarte** (Colombia); other members are, **Shalmali Guttal** (India), **Davit Hakobyan** (Armenia), **Uche Ewelukwa Ofodile** (Nigeria) and **Geneviève Savigny** (France).*

The Working Group was established for three years in 2023 by the Human Rights Council in resolution A/HRC/RES/54/9 to promote global recognition and protection of the rights of peasants and rural workers, particularly in the context of poverty, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. The resolution underscores the importance of addressing systemic inequalities, securing access to land, seeds, water, and biodiversity, and ensuring that peasants participate in decision-making processes at all levels. It also



provides assistance in the implementation by States of the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas](#).

*The Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups are part of what is known as **Special Procedures** of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.*

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