



General Assembly

Distr.: General
17 July 2025

Original: English

Eightieth session

Item 72 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Right to participation of peasants

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, Carlos Duarte Torres, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution [54/9](#).

* [A/80/150](#).



Report of the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, Carlos Duarte Torres

Summary

The Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas examines the central role of peasants and rural workers in global food systems and highlights the importance of their meaningful participation in decision-making processes that have an impact on their lives, environments and livelihoods. Using the framework of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, the Working Group outlines how peasants' legal rights, including participation, are crucial for achieving social justice, environmental stewardship and sustainable development. It analyses systemic barriers and documents good practices across the world whereby legal empowerment, capacity-building, inclusive governance and advocacy have reinforced peasants' and rural workers' participation.

I. Introduction

1. Peasants and rural workers are the backbone of our societies, playing a vital role in sustaining livelihoods, ensuring food security and upholding fundamental rights. Globally, small-scale food producers and rural workers produce over 70 per cent of the world's food, despite often having limited access to land, finance and resources. Smallholder farmers manage more than 80 per cent of the world's farms, while small-scale fisheries contribute nearly half of the fish consumed by humans, and pastoralists steward vast rangelands critical for biodiversity and cultural heritage.¹ Their work underpins rural economies and provides essential nutrition for billions.

2. According to estimates, 90 per cent of all people directly dependent on capture fisheries work in the small-scale fishery sector.² Therefore, small-scale fisheries play a crucial economic, social and cultural role in local economies and help to achieve food security.

3. The centrality of peasants and rural workers in societal existence and prosperity renders them a critical part of the solution to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.³ Across the globe, peasants are on the front lines of climate adaptation, developing and sharing agroecological practices, conserving seeds and biodiversity and promoting sustainable food systems that can mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and restore ecosystems.⁴ Their lived experience and traditional knowledge are indispensable for crafting effective responses to these intertwined threats, making their meaningful participation in decision-making at the international, national and local levels not just a right, but a necessity.

4. Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas defines a peasant as someone “who engages or who seeks to engage alone, or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence and/or for the market, and who relies significantly, though not necessarily exclusively, on family or household labour and other non-monetized ways of organizing labour, and who has a special dependency on and attachment to the land”. Acknowledging this diversity, the Working Group applies this full understanding of rights holders under the Declaration (A/HRC/57/51, sect. IV.B) although, for brevity, it refers to them as “peasants and rural workers” in the present report. The Working Group recognizes the special relationship between peasants and rural workers and the land, water and nature where they live and work and on which they depend for their livelihood. It shares the conviction of the General Assembly of the need for greater protection of the human rights of peasants and rural workers and for a coherent interpretation and application of existing international human rights norms and standards in this matter (see preamble to the Declaration).

5. In the present report, the Working Group therefore explores the critical role of peasants and rural workers in public decision-making and their right to participation in such decisions that affect their lives, livelihoods and environments. Drawing on its 2025 call for inputs,⁵ the Working Group highlights systemic obstacles faced by

¹ See www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S259033222400589X.

² See <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/edffbf8c-81e5-4208-a36f-334ff81ac10f/content>.

³ See [www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/The implementation of the UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people w.pdf](https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/The%20implementation%20of%20the%20UN%20Declaration%20on%20the%20rights%20of%20peasants%20and%20other%20people%20w.pdf).

⁴ See <https://viacampesina.org/en/2024/01/peasants-at-the-frontline-of-the-climate-struggle-share-testimonies>.

⁵ All submissions can be found on the Working Group's web page (www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-input-global-trends-challenges-affecting-peasants-and-other-people). Throughout the report, references to the information used from specific submissions will generally be cited as “Working Group submissions”.

peasants and rural workers and presents good practices that have strengthened their participation in public decision-making. In line with Human Rights Council resolution [54/9](#), the report is aimed at supporting the dissemination and replication of these practices.

II. Legal framework

6. The right to participation is a cornerstone of international human rights law. It is essential for the dignity, agency and empowerment of all individuals, including peasants and rural workers. Given their central role in food systems and as agents of environmental stewardship, it is important to ensure the meaningful participation of peasants and rural workers in decisions that affect their lives, lands and livelihoods.

7. The right to participation is understood as the ability of individuals and groups to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives. It is enshrined in article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and elaborated in various provisions under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It is also provided for in the Declaration and in the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

8. The provisions under article 25 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantee the right to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections, and protect the right of citizens to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in their country. These rights are to be exercised without unreasonable restrictions, ensuring inclusivity, equality and transparency in public life.

9. The right to participation is not merely a procedural formality but a foundational pillar of democratic governance and human dignity, enabling people to shape the public life of their society (see [CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.7](#)). Whether through voting, standing for office, engaging in public debate or accessing public service, participation ensures that governance is not imposed from above, but built from the collective will of the people. Importantly, people take part in the conduct of public affairs by exerting influence through public debate and dialogue with their representatives or by organizing themselves, empowered by their freedoms of expression, assembly and association (*ibid.*, para. 8).

10. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights pointed to the requirement of equal opportunities for all, especially marginalized groups, to participate in economic, social and cultural life (see [E/C.12/GC/20](#)). In the context of cultural rights, the Committee emphasized that participation is both a right in itself and a means for realizing the right to take part in cultural life (see [E/C.12/GC/21](#)). States are therefore required to consult meaningfully with affected communities in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.

11. In its general comment No. 26, the Committee makes the right to participation a central theme in the context of land rights, explaining that States must ensure that all affected individuals and communities, especially marginalized groups, are actively involved in decisions that affect their land, livelihoods and cultural life ([E/C.12/GC/26](#), paras. 7–9 and 13).

12. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, a legally binding treaty that protects both individual and collective rights of farmers, affirms in article 9 that States should take measures to protect and promote farmers' rights, including the right to participate in making decisions at the national level on

matters related to the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

13. Participation is essential for the realization of all human rights as it empowers people to influence decisions that affect their lives, promotes transparency and accountability and helps to ensure that policies and programmes are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people.

14. Besides the normative nature of participation, its fundamental importance is underlined by the lives and livelihoods of peasants and rural workers who are highly dependent on public policies, especially related to land, food, trade, finance and the environment. Participation strengthens the agency of peasants and rural workers and empowers them to influence policies and programmes that shape their lives, countering historical patterns of oppression, marginalization and exclusion.

15. The participation of peasants and rural workers, who reportedly feed 70 per cent of the world's population,⁶ is especially crucial due to their high concentration in the contemporary food system. At the farm level, seeds, crops and other inputs increasingly connect peasant households to a handful of global agriculture businesses.⁷ The accumulation of vast tracts of land by a few global corporate landowners further fuels the growing rural and coastal inequality.⁸ Just six firms control 58 per cent of the world seed market, with intense firm-level concentration observable in agro-chemicals, farm machinery and livestock genetics and pharmaceuticals.⁹ Compounding this, a handful of countries are responsible for the world's production of staple food, grains and fertilizer, rendering food-importing countries vulnerable not only to interruptions of supply but also to price volatility, inflation and conflict (see [A/76/237](#) and [A/HRC/52/40](#)).

A. Enhancing participation through the Declaration

16. The Declaration affirms the dignity, contributions and specific vulnerabilities of peasant populations and establishes a comprehensive framework to protect their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It is the most comprehensive international instrument recognizing and detailing the human rights of peasants and rural workers.

17. Central to the Declaration is the right to participation, recognized as a fundamental aspect of ensuring that peasants and rural workers are meaningfully involved in decision-making processes and can influence decisions affecting their lives, lands, livelihoods and ecosystems. It empowers them, emphasizing that participation must be active, free and meaningful, particularly in matters related to land and environmental governance, food systems, biodiversity and climate action, thereby reinforcing their agency in shaping policies that have an impact on rural development and sustainability.

18. The Declaration underlines that peasants disproportionately suffer from poverty, hunger and malnutrition, as well as from the effects of environmental degradation and

⁶ See www.etcgroup.org/sites/www.etcgroup.org/files/files/etc-whowillfeedus-english-webshare.pdf and www.etcgroup.org/files/files/31-01-2022_small-scale_farmers_and_peasants_still_feed_the_world.pdf.

⁷ Jennifer Clapp, "Concentration and crises: exploring the deep roots of vulnerability in the global industrial food system", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 50, No. 1 (2023).

⁸ FIAN, *Lords of the Land: Transnational Landowners, Inequality and the Case for Redistribution* (June 2025).

⁹ ETC Group, *Food Barons 2022: Crisis Profiteering, Digitalization and Shifting Power* (September 2022), available at www.etcgroup.org/content/food-barons-2022.

climate change, further stressing underlying factors that make it difficult for them to defend their rights and make their voices heard. In this context, affectedness-based argumentation is aimed at allowing peasants to participate in decision-making so that the outcomes of decisions can be shaped to be more in their favour. Alternatively, a vulnerability-based approach allows them to identify ways in which the existing order fails to work in their favour and accords them an unequal amount of privilege and power, while also showing why a response is required and even indicating what that response should look like.¹⁰

19. More specifically, article 2, para. 3 elaborates on the right of peasants to be heard and provides that “before adopting and implementing legislation and policies, international agreements and other decision-making processes that may affect the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with peasants and other people working in rural areas through their own representative institutions, engaging with and seeking the support of peasants and other people working in rural areas who could be affected by decisions before those decisions are made, and responding to their contributions, taking into consideration existing power imbalances between different parties and ensuring active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of individuals and groups in associated decision-making processes”.

20. The right of participation for peasants in the Declaration is particularly reinforced for empowering peasant women (art. 4) and explicitly extended to issues such as natural resource management (art. 5, para. 1), peaceful human rights defence (art. 8, para. 2), self-organization and collective bargain (art. 9), participation in the formulation of public policies (art. 10, para. 1) or in decision-making (art. 10, para. 2) that affect these communities, especially those related to their land (art. 11, para. 2), access to justice and legal assistance (art. 12), their health in the workplace (art. 14, para. 1), agri-food policies (art. 15, para. 4), seeds (art. 19, para. 1) and scientific policies focused on agricultural production (art. 25, para. 3), among others. These provisions establish the right of peasants and rural workers to participate, directly or through their representative organizations, in the elaboration, implementation and assessment of policies, programmes and projects affecting their lives, lands and livelihoods.

21. The right to participate in public affairs cannot be considered in a vacuum. The effective exercise of this right requires an environment in which all human rights, in particular the rights to equality and non-discrimination, to freedom of opinion and expression and to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, are fully respected and enjoyed by all individuals.¹¹ Participation is also interdependent on and interlinked with other rights, such as the rights to land, food, water, health, education, development, the environment and cultural life.

22. The Declaration recognizes participation as a collective right, reflecting the communal nature of rural life and the importance of collective action in defending peasants’ rights and interests. It reflects the social reality of peasants and rural workers, whose participation is both an individual and a collective right, rooted in the principles of dignity, equality and non-discrimination. Furthermore, it guarantees access to resources for peasant communities and their right to participate in the exploitation of such resources, as well as the right to participate in decisions on

¹⁰ Corina Heri, “Justifying new rights: affectedness, vulnerability, and the rights of peasants”, *German Law Journal*, vol. 21, No. 4 (2020). pp. 719 and 720.

¹¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs”, p. 6, available at www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/PublicAffairs/GuidelinesRightParticipatePublicAffairs_web.pdf.

internal and local issues related to resource management, thereby strengthening the community's enjoyment of economic, social, cultural and political development.¹²

23. The right to participation goes beyond symbolic inclusion; it must be active, free, meaningful and informed. Peasants and rural workers must have real opportunities to shape decisions that affect their lives, whether participating individually or through representative organizations such as unions, cooperatives or associations. For participation to be effective, timely and accessible information must be available in formats and languages that communities can understand. True participation spans the entire decision-making process – before, during and after the development of policies, laws or projects. It must also be inclusive, ensuring that the voices of women, Indigenous Peoples, young people, older persons and others in vulnerable situations are equally respected and heard. Lastly, the right to participation also includes a collective dimension, recognizing the power of communities to organize and advocate together in the defence and advancement of their rights.

B. Levels of participation

24. The right to participation has different implications at the local, national, regional and international levels. At the local level, peasants and rural workers should have the opportunity to participate in community decision-making processes, such as village councils, local assemblies and development committees.

25. At the national level, peasants and rural workers should be able to engage with government authorities and participate in the formulation of policies, laws and judicial processes that affect their rights and interests. States must ensure legal, institutional and practical mechanisms for participation in policymaking, development planning and the implementation of laws and programmes affecting peasants and rural workers. Peasant voices must be heard in national development strategies and policies on land reform and the environment.

26. The right to participation also covers the formulation and implementation of policy at the international and regional levels, because such decision-making has an impact on national legislation, policies and practices.¹³ Therefore, decisions at the supranational level should be accessible and made in a transparent and accountable manner, with the participation of peasants and rural workers who will be affected by the decisions.

27. Peasants and rural workers should therefore be encouraged to take part in meetings of international organizations, mechanisms and forums at all stages of decision-making that address issues related to agriculture, trade, food security and sovereignty, rural development, climate change and human rights. The Declaration encourages States and international organizations to facilitate such participation. The United Nations has continuously stressed the importance of an enabling environment free from reprisals or intimidation for meaningful participation at the international and regional levels (A/HRC/49/42, para. 36).

28. The triple planetary crisis has a profound impact on peasants and rural workers, threatening their rights and livelihoods through land dispossession, environmental degradation, declining soil fertility, water scarcity and increased risks from extreme

¹² See www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/The-UN-Declaration-on-the-rights-of-peasants-as-a-tool-for-promoting-collective-rights.pdf, p. 12.

¹³ See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/PublicAffairs/GuidelinesRightParticipatePublicAffairs_web.pdf.

weather, undermining food security and forcing many from their land.¹⁴ At the same time, agroecological practices led by peasants can restore ecosystems, enhance resilience and reduce emissions, offering pathways to address all three dimensions of the crisis.¹⁵ Traditional food production and agroecology undertaken by peasants and Indigenous Peoples contribute vastly to agrobiodiversity, sustainable use and conservation.¹⁶ Agrobiodiversity, in turn, plays an important role in food security, nutrition and providing livelihoods for peasants. Empowering peasant voices ensures that global solutions are sustainable, socially just and grounded in the needs of those most affected.¹⁷

C. State obligations

29. Under international human rights law, States have a tripartite obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to participation. To respect this right, States must refrain from interfering with individuals' or a group's ability to engage in public affairs, including through censorship, intimidation or exclusion. Some of the practical recommendations¹⁸ that underpin this obligation include: removing legal barriers by repealing or amending laws and regulations that unjustifiably restrict the participation of peasants and rural workers, such as those limiting freedom of expression, assembly or association; addressing non-discrimination by ensuring that the participation of peasants and rural workers is not hindered by discrimination; refraining from practices that intimidate, harass or penalize peasants and rural workers for participating in public affairs; and safeguarding civil space by avoiding arbitrary restrictions on peasant and civil society organizations that facilitate participation.

30. To protect the right to participation, States must safeguard individuals and communities – especially marginalized ones – from third-party interference, including corporate or private actors that may suppress or undermine participation. Recommendations that reinforce such protection obligations include:¹⁹ regulating the private sector by adopting measures to prevent private entities from undermining public participation; establishing independent bodies to monitor, investigate and address violations by third parties; providing accessible and effective remedies for individuals or groups whose participation rights are violated by non-State actors; and ensuring the safety and protection of activists and others promoting participation.

31. Finally, to fulfil the right, States are required to adopt positive measures such as establishing inclusive legal frameworks, ensuring access to information and creating institutional mechanisms that enable meaningful and informed participation in decision-making processes at all levels. Other practical recommendations to reinforce the obligation to fulfil include:²⁰ building capacity by providing education and training to empower all segments of society, particularly peasants and rural workers,

¹⁴ See <https://viacampesina.org/en/2015/09/peasant-agriculture-is-a-true-solution-to-the-climate-crisis>.

¹⁵ See www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/solutions-for-restoring-europes-agricultural-ecosystems and https://viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/05/primer_english_print.pdf.

¹⁶ Zainab Lokhandwala, "Peasants' rights as new human rights: promises and concerns for agrobiodiversity conservation", *Asian Journal of International Law*, vol. 12, No. 1 (2022).

¹⁷ See www.southcentre.int/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/PB-98-1.pdf and www.observatoriodeltierras.org/cop16-and-peasants-the-great-transformation-of-the-21st-century.

¹⁸ OHCHR, "Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs".

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

to engage effectively in public affairs; guaranteeing public access to relevant information and ensuring transparency in decision-making processes; supporting peasants and rural workers by facilitating their work and that of civil society organizations and grass-roots movements that encourage participation; and monitoring and evaluating by regularly assessing the effectiveness of participation mechanisms and adapting them to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness.

32. Participation rights must therefore be guaranteed for peasants and rural workers on a non-discriminatory basis, ensuring that all individuals have equal opportunities to take part in the conduct of public affairs, vote and access public services. Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination have an especially devastating effect on the right to participate in public affairs ([A/HRC/49/42](#), para. 49). States must take proactive measures to remove legal, institutional and social barriers that prevent marginalized groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, minorities and Indigenous Peoples, from participating meaningfully in decision-making processes.²¹ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights called on one State Party to “progressively guarantee all peasants access to support programmes and agroecological solutions without discrimination, respecting the choice of each person, in accordance with the ... Declaration” ([E/C.12/GIN/CO/1](#), para. 40). Addressing non-discrimination is therefore not only a legal obligation but also essential for inclusive, representative and democratic governance.

D. Obligations of non-State actors

33. While States are the primary duty bearers, non-State actors such as private companies, transnational corporations, civil society organizations, international organizations and international financial institutions are also responsible under international human rights law for respecting and promoting the right of peasants and rural workers in public decision-making.

34. Non-State actors should respect peasants’ participation rights by refraining from actions that hinder or undermine peasants’ ability to participate in decision-making processes that affect their rights, land and livelihoods. They must not intimidate, harass or penalize peasants or their organizations for engaging in public affairs or advocacy.

35. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that one State Party ensure that business entities, including their suppliers, are held accountable for violations of economic, social and cultural rights, paying particular attention to Indigenous Peoples’ and peasants’ land rights, environmental impacts and expropriation in the context of establishing and operating special economic zones, mining, logging and real estate and infrastructure projects ([E/C.12/PHL/CO/7](#), para. 13).

36. Non-State actors should respect and, where possible, support the formation and functioning of peasant organizations, cooperatives and unions, which are crucial for collective participation and representation. When developing projects, policies or standards that affect rural communities, non-State actors should actively consult peasants and their representative organizations, ensuring that their views are genuinely considered in decision-making. They should provide timely, accessible and relevant information that may affect them, thus enabling informed participation.

²¹ Sarah Joseph and Melissa Castan, *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Cases, Materials, and Commentary* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

37. Private sector actors are expected to abide by human rights, including the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,²² and to conduct due diligence to identify, prevent and address any adverse impacts that their activities may have on peasants' and rural workers' rights. Non-State actors are expected to cooperate with State mechanisms to ensure that peasants and rural workers have access to effective remedies.

38. Civil society, academic institutions and international organizations should empower peasants and rural workers, raising awareness, building capacity and advocating for inclusive participation mechanisms at the local, national and international levels. All non-State actors should foster open and constructive dialogue with peasant communities, respecting and welcoming cultural differences and addressing structural barriers to participation.

E. Extraterritorial obligations

39. Extraterritorial obligations refer to the responsibilities of States to respect and protect human rights beyond their own borders.²³ In the context of the right to participation, this means that States should ensure that their actions, including those of their corporations and other entities, do not have a negative impact on the participation rights of peasants and rural workers in other countries. States must therefore regulate and hold accountable corporations domiciled in their territory for actions affecting participation rights abroad.

40. States should also cooperate with each other to promote and protect this right at the international level. They must ensure that their actions in international organizations, trade and investment agreements and development assistance do not undermine the participation rights of peasants and rural workers in other countries. They should promote the participation of representatives of peasants and rural workers in international decision-making, including in United Nations bodies, climate negotiations and trade and investment forums.

III. Challenges and barriers to participation

41. Peasants and rural workers face numerous and deeply entrenched barriers to exercising their right to participate in public decision-making, which significantly limits their ability to influence policies and actions affecting their lives and livelihoods. One critical impediment is the challenge of effective communication and access to information. Many communities speak local dialects that are not reflected in official communications, creating linguistic barriers that prevent meaningful engagement. This issue is compounded by limited Internet connectivity and insufficient resources for the translation and dissemination of information, thereby widening the digital divide and excluding such communities from online consultations and vital policy discussions. To overcome these challenges, States and relevant actors must ensure that information is accessible in local languages and delivered through appropriate channels by investing in infrastructure to bridge the connectivity gap.

42. Moreover, the lack of inclusion results in initiatives that fail to address the specific needs and priorities of peasants and rural workers, undermining the efficacy and legitimacy of rural development strategies. Addressing this deficit requires States to proactively engage peasants and rural workers throughout all stages of formulating

²² See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf.

²³ See www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Maastricht-ETO-Principles-ENG-booklet.pdf.

policy regulations, ensuring that their input shapes both the content and implementation of relevant measures.

43. The suppression of freedom of expression and the imposition of bureaucratic hurdles further restrict peasants and rural workers from making their voices heard and contributing constructively to policy discussions. Access to justice remains a crucial area in which they encounter serious difficulties, which in turn undermine their ability to safeguard their rights and seek remedies for violations. Such challenges underscore the urgent need for comprehensive legal and institutional reforms to ensure that justice systems are transparent, impartial, accessible and responsive to the specific circumstances of peasants and rural workers.

44. Besides discrimination, unequal power dynamics in decision-making are exacerbated by the dominance of powerful sectors, notably agribusiness. The influence of large corporations and energy and extractive industries often eclipses the voices of small-scale food producers, with multi-stakeholder initiatives frequently privileging corporate interests over those of rural workers. This corporate capture of governance spaces undermines transparency, accountability and equitable representation. To counterbalance these disparities, governance frameworks must be reformed to guarantee the recognition of peasants as rights holders and to foster inclusive platforms that enable their meaningful involvement in decision-making processes.

45. Overcoming the barriers to the participation of peasants and rural workers demands a concerted multilevel effort to ensure inclusivity, transparency, equity and accountability in public decision-making processes. Recognizing peasants and rural workers as distinct rights holders, protecting their freedoms, providing access to justice and redressing power imbalances are key to enabling their full and meaningful participation.

A. Challenges linked to the implementation of the Declaration

46. The effective implementation of the Declaration continues to face a number of critical challenges across different national and regional contexts. These challenges reflect both structural obstacles and a lack of political will, resulting in the limited visibility, integration and operationalization of the Declaration's provisions in law, policy and practice.

47. Building on the Working Group's earlier consultations on the implementation of the Declaration,²⁴ interesting variations of peasants' participation can be seen across regions.²⁵ In Africa, reports showed persistent barriers such as linguistic obstacles impeding the effective participation of rural populations, as well as the limited impact of public policy on peasants and rural workers. In the global South, there was a recurring concern about lacking awareness of the Declaration, with institutional disengagement and a lack of measures to enhance the political participation of marginalized rural populations. In Eastern Europe, linguistic access issues persist and significant obstacles to meaningful participation remain. Western Europe reported the continued marginalization of small-scale farmers and agroecology advocates in policy spaces, often due to entrenched institutional interests. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the consultation and participation mechanisms available to rural

²⁴ See www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/implementation-united-nations-declaration-rights-peasants-and-other-people.

²⁵ See www.observatorioidetierras.org/peasants-political-rights-consultation-and-enhanced-participation.

communities are often non-binding, resulting in final decisions that overwhelmingly favour the interests of larger landowners and commercial actors.

48. The Working Group's consultations focusing on participation point to a core difficulty lying in the limited diffusion of the Declaration in rural and Indigenous communities. In many parts of the world, peasants and rural workers remain unaware of their rights. Without awareness, it becomes nearly impossible for affected communities to claim and defend them. State institutions have yet to become familiarized and take deliberate steps to integrate the Declaration into national frameworks, and there is an absence of concrete legislative or political measures aimed at promoting it. This situation underscores the need for Governments to invest in public education, the translation of the Declaration into local languages and the integration of human rights education into local and national curricula.

49. In several countries, parliamentary initiatives intended to promote the implementation of the Declaration have yielded limited concrete outcomes, largely due to insufficient engagement from executive authorities. Legislative intentions often remain unrealized when they are not accompanied by corresponding administrative actions or political prioritization.

50. Reversals in policy commitments to peasant rights further exacerbate these challenges. In some countries, recent political shifts have led to the systematic rollback of public policies supporting rural communities.²⁶ Such regression underscores the importance of maintaining long-term institutional frameworks and legal safeguards, which are less vulnerable to changes in political leadership.

51. Even where the Declaration is nominally supported, significant gaps exist between policy aspirations and actual implementation. Furthermore, implementation efforts led by government institutions remain limited, relying largely on civil society and peasant organizations to carry the burden of promoting the Declaration. Governments need not only recognize it formally in national policy frameworks but must also allocate dedicated resources and establish institutional mechanisms to oversee and coordinate its implementation.

52. Financial constraints present another substantial barrier, especially in underresourced regions. Without sufficient financing at both the national and regional levels, Governments are unable to sustain long-term programmes aimed at promoting and protecting peasant rights. To address this, it is crucial that States allocate adequate budgetary resources for awareness-raising, technical assistance, land rights protection and the establishment of participatory mechanisms that enable rural workers to engage in decision-making processes effectively. Development partners and international financial institutions must also support these efforts.

53. A further and growing concern relates to the rise of "multi-stakeholder initiatives" as models for global governance. These platforms, often structured to include corporate actors on an equal footing with States and civil society, have been criticized for diluting the human rights obligations of Governments and legitimizing the growing influence of corporate interests in areas traditionally governed by public institutions.²⁷ Such regrettable initiatives supplant intergovernmental processes, particularly in the area of food governance, where they blur the lines between public interest and corporate agendas. This shift risks undermining human rights-based approaches and democratic accountability, particularly when diverse actors with

²⁶ Working Group submissions.

²⁷ Working Group submissions. See also [www.fian.org/files/is/htdocs/wp11102127_GNIAANVR7U/www/files/FoodSystems_Directionality%20report_final\(1\).pdf](http://www.fian.org/files/is/htdocs/wp11102127_GNIAANVR7U/www/files/FoodSystems_Directionality%20report_final(1).pdf).

vastly unequal power and resources are treated as if they were equals at the negotiation table.

54. The Working Group urges States and international organizations to regulate and assess the influence of corporate actors in multi-stakeholder spaces, with a view to preserving the primacy of public interest and human rights. Participation frameworks must be restructured to empower rights holders, particularly peasants, as protagonists in decision-making processes.

55. Ultimately, ensuring the impact and relevance of the Declaration requires a determined, multilevel commitment to its integration into national legal systems, public processes and international governance mechanisms. Governments must enhance awareness of the Declaration, develop robust domestic frameworks for its implementation, provide financial and institutional support for participatory structures and uphold the central role of human rights in all processes. Only through such coordinated and sustained efforts can the rights and dignity of peasants and other rural workers be fully realized, protected and enforced.

B. Individuals and groups in vulnerable situations

56. In accordance with articles 2, para. 2, and 3, para. 3, of the Declaration, the Working Group has paid particular attention to the rights and special needs of those peasants and rural workers who are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and abuse, including older persons, women, young people and children. Measures to eliminate conditions that cause or help to perpetuate such discrimination should address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against peasants and rural workers (see [A/HRC/57/51](#)).

57. Structural discrimination presents another formidable barrier. Systemic racism, classism and criminalization restrict the ability of peasants and rural workers to engage equally in public affairs.

58. Women peasants and rural workers often encounter gender bias, discrimination and unequal access to resources and opportunities. For example, women from rural and peasant communities in Honduras have been identified by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as facing repression, discrimination and violence linked to their political participation ([CEDAW/C/HND/CO/7-8](#), para. 26).

59. They frequently face hunger, malnutrition, poverty and dispossession and suffer violence and exclusion from decision-making and power structures. These barriers limit their participation in political, economic and social spheres, despite legal frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality. Cultural norms and patriarchal structures further exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult for women to have their voices heard and influence decision-making processes.

60. Women own less than 15 per cent of the world's agricultural land.²⁸ They represent fewer than 5 per cent of all agricultural landholders in North Africa and West Asia, while in sub-Saharan Africa they make up an average of 15 per cent.²⁹ Peasant women and girls are most vulnerable to the poorly regulated use and effects of toxic substances from agribusiness, extractive production and agriculture, which can have an impact lasting generations (see [A/79/163](#)).

²⁸ See www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-06/DDD%20factsheet.pdf.

²⁹ See www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/commission-on-the-status-of-women-2012/facts-and-figures.

61. Weak enforcement of gender equality laws hinder women's participation. Despite legal frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality, enforcement is often lacking, leaving women marginalized and unable to fully participate in decision-making processes.

62. According to article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, States are required to "take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families", "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas" and ensure them the right to "participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels", "participate in all community activities" and "organize self-help groups and co-operatives". Notably, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that one State Party incorporate the principles contained in the Declaration into legal and policy instruments regarding rural women (see [CEDAW/C/COL/CO/9](#)).

63. There are commendable examples in favour of women peasants. Latin American movements have pioneered models of greater gender equity since the 1980s. Many organizations established women's secretariats and commissions and, in some cases, became autonomous peasant women's organizations. For example, the Latin American Coordinator of Peasant Organizations early on established the tradition of holding women's assemblies before major conferences to ensure that women's voices would be heard and represented.³⁰ At its third conference, in Bangalore in 2000, La Via Campesina reformed the composition of its coordinating committee so that each region would be represented by one male and one female member.

64. The Rural Women's Assembly represents a compelling example of a grass-roots, self-organized initiative that effectively promotes the right of rural women, including women peasants, to participate in public affairs. Spanning 11 countries in the Southern African Development Community region and with over 150,000 members, the Assembly brings together smallholder women farmers, peasant producers and members of mixed peasant unions to collectively advocate for land rights, food sovereignty, climate justice and gender equality. Through national and regional assemblies, seed fairs and participatory campaigns, it creates inclusive platforms in which rural women can articulate their priorities, engage with policy makers and influence decision-making processes.

65. The La Via Campesina Asia Women's Assembly, held in September 2024, stands as a notable example of a regional initiative that fosters solidarity, political education and collective empowerment among women peasants.³¹ Bringing together over 60 women leaders from 14 countries across Asia, the Assembly created a space for rural women to share experiences, deepen their understanding of intersecting systems of oppression and strategize collectively for transformative change.

66. The case of forestry management committees in South Asia shows that "a critical mass of 'women-in-themselves' can make a notable difference even without a 'women-for-themselves' social consciousness".³²

67. Older peasants and rural workers often face ageism and stereotyping. They can be socially isolated and suffer from a lack of social protection, especially if

³⁰ Saturnino Borras and Marc Edelman, *Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements* (Practical Action Publishing, 2021), p. 51.

³¹ See <https://viacampesina.org/en/2024/11/lvc-asia-women-united-in-solidarity-to-learn-about-our-shared-struggles-against-capitalism-neoliberalism-patriarchy-and-colonialism>.

³² Bina Agarwal, "The power of numbers in gender dynamics: illustrations from community forestry groups", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 42, No. 1 (2015).

heightened by gender and race discriminations. These challenges are compounded by poor literacy and limited access to technology and services, which restrict their ability to engage in community and policymaking processes. In addition, older persons may struggle with physical mobility limitations and health issues that further hinder their participation.

68. A promising good practice for promoting the right to participation of older peasants and rural workers can be found in a popular education toolkit developed jointly by FIAN International and La Via Campesina designed to break down the Declaration into accessible, practical themes and to enhance the capacities of rural people's movements, including those of older peasants, to understand, claim and advocate for their rights.³³

69. Young people and children often struggle with tokenism, whereby their participation is not taken seriously. They face barriers such as a lack of awareness of their rights, limited platforms for meaningful engagement and adult-centric decision-making processes that overlook their perspectives. This marginalization prevents them from contributing effectively to discussions that affect their future.

70. There is a growing sentiment within the international peasantry that young people in rural areas, in both developed and developing countries, do not want to farm or fish any more. At the same time, there is increasing concern among young people in rural and coastal areas who want to farm or fish about the increasing inaccessibility of land or fishing areas due to financial or other barriers. There is strong evidence that, as land has become scarce and more expensive worldwide, more young people who may want to start farming cannot afford land.³⁴

71. Empowering youth peasant participation is illustrated by the first small-scale fishing youth activist school held in Asia.³⁵ Bringing together young people from diverse peasant, fisher and pastoralist backgrounds, the school provided a dedicated space for young people to build skills, exchange experiences and deepen their involvement in food sovereignty movements. Participants engaged in leadership development, strategic dialogue and collective action planning, enhancing their capacity to advocate for their rights and influence agricultural policy both locally and within international forums.

72. Indigenous Peoples face systemic exclusion from decision-making processes that affect their lands, cultures and livelihoods. They encounter barriers such as lack of recognition, limited access to political platforms and the dominance of external interests, which undermine their right to self-determination and participation. In addition, historical injustices and ongoing discrimination continue to marginalize Indigenous voices. It is no coincidence that the Declaration reaffirms the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and emphasizes that it applies to Indigenous Peoples who work in rural areas, and ensures that the application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas does not disregard specific legislation on Indigenous Peoples.

73. The Working Group urges targeted efforts to create inclusive, equitable and supportive environments that empower Indigenous Peoples to participate meaningfully and effectively in all aspects of society. Ensuring that the voices of

³³ See www.fian.org/en/new-pop-ed-booklet-on-rural-peoples-access-to-resources-and-means-of-production-2.

³⁴ Saturnino Borrás and Marc Edelman, *Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements*, p. 52.

³⁵ See www.foodsovereignty.org/first-ssf-youth-activist-school.

Indigenous Peoples, peasants and rural workers are heard and respected is crucial for achieving sustainable and just development outcomes.

C. Good practices to advance peasants' rights and participation

1. Institutionalizing peasant participation and influencing policy frameworks

74. The effective implementation of the rights enshrined in the Declaration requires the development and reinforcement of good practices that promote inclusive governance, equitable access to resources and meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Across various national contexts, promising initiatives reflect the potential of the Declaration to inspire transformative policy actions that uphold and protect the rights of peasants and rural workers.

75. The national fisheries policy of the United Republic of Tanzania, developed in 2015, demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusive management in the fisheries sector. By explicitly prioritizing gender equality, the policy has enhanced the role of women in fisheries governance and public decision-making processes. This has not only advanced women's empowerment but also contributed to more effective and equitable management of fisheries resources, in line with the objectives of food sovereignty and community resilience.

76. Similarly, in Kenya, the implementation of participatory budgeting mechanisms by the Kenyan Peasants League illustrates how local governance platforms can be leveraged to strengthen peasant participation in public resource allocation. By enabling rural communities to influence the planning and distribution of county-level budgets, this practice fosters transparency, enhances accountability and ensures that development priorities reflect the needs and voices of peasants and other rural constituencies.

77. In Spain, significant progress has been made towards realizing the right to food. The institutionalization of binding food councils, the regulation of fair prices and the protection of access to land and water resources constitute important policy measures that address structural inequalities in food systems. These initiatives ensure that peasants and rural workers have secure and sustainable access to productive resources, enabling them to live in dignity and contribute effectively to national food systems. The participatory nature of food councils provides a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue and coordination, reinforcing democratic food governance.

78. In Belgium, the Government has established mandatory consultation mechanisms and transparency rules and allocated adequate public funding to support the participation of civil society. These policy tools are essential to enabling civil society and peasant organizations to engage meaningfully in legal and policy processes, communicate their demands and hold public authorities accountable.

79. The Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism under the Committee on World Food Security offers a unique space for the direct participation of rights holders, especially peasants, rural workers and Indigenous Peoples, in shaping global food policy. The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, are an example of a progressive policy instrument aimed at protecting the human rights of small-scale fishers and promoting their participation in decision-making processes affecting them and protecting the environment.

80. In 2022, the High Court of Kenya, in a lawsuit filed by the Kenyan Peasants League against the Government's decision to lift a ban on genetically modified

organisms, issued a landmark ruling in favour of peasants, on the grounds of violations related to their right to participation, which is protected by the Constitution of Kenya and article 10 of the Declaration.

81. A notable example of effective peasant participation is demonstrated by the Indonesian Peasants' Union in the legislative process surrounding the country's rice policy. On 6 May 2025, the Union was invited to a public hearing by Commission IV of the Indonesian House of Representatives, where it directly addressed the challenges and conditions faced by peasants in relation to rice and corn procurement during the harvest season.³⁶ This practice demonstrates how State institutions and peasant organizations can collaborate to ensure that agricultural policies are genuinely responsive, equitable and rooted in the lived experiences of rural communities.

82. Another good practice is found in Nepal, where the Government formally recognized the importance of peasant participation in shaping agricultural policy and securing land rights. Through regular consultations, peasants, family farmers, women farmers and various rural groups have engaged directly with State authorities, members of parliament and human rights bodies.³⁷ These inclusive processes have enabled peasant communities to contribute to the formulation of the national agenda on food sovereignty and agrarian reform, reflected in progressive policies and constitutional guarantees for peasants' rights. The Nepalese experience demonstrates how institutionalized participation and dialogue between the Government and grass-roots movements can advance the right of peasants to be heard and involved in decisions that affect their livelihoods.

83. These initiatives underscore the importance of aligning national policies with the provisions of the Declaration and creating institutional mechanisms that protect and promote the rights of peasants and rural workers. States are encouraged to adopt and strengthen similar inclusive, participatory and rights-based approaches, adapting them to their local contexts to ensure the full realization of the Declaration's standards. By adopting and expanding such good practices, countries can ensure more equitable and sustainable development outcomes for their rural communities.

84. Peasant-led initiatives have played a vital role in creating more enabling environments for the recognition and participation of peasants in governance and policymaking. In Colombia, peasant organizations used the legal mechanism of *tutela* in 2018 to successfully advocate for the recognition of peasantry as a distinct social and legal category. This action led to a landmark Supreme Court decision mandating State institutions to define "peasantry". Subsequently, the reform of article 64 of the Constitution allowed peasants to be recognized as a group deserving special constitutional protection. These efforts paved the way for the inclusion of peasant issues in the national development plan and policy instruments that uphold their rights, particularly in relation to land, food and women's rights.³⁸

85. In Switzerland, the creation in 2019 of the Coalition of Friends of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants has strengthened advocacy for the national and international implementation of the Declaration.³⁹ By submitting reports during the

³⁶ Working Group submissions.

³⁷ See <https://participedia.net/case/the-national-land-rights-forum-peasant-led-advocacy-for-land-rights-in-nepal>.

³⁸ Geneva Academy, "The right to land and other natural resources", research brief, November 2020, p. 5.

³⁹ Geneva Academy and others, "Switzerland's foreign policy and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants", research brief, available at <https://defendingpeasantsrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Switzerlands-Foreign-Policy.pdf>.

country's universal periodic review in 2023⁴⁰ and advocating before the Federal Parliament,⁴¹ the Coalition has enhanced awareness of peasant rights and supported proposals such as establishing a fund to facilitate peasant participation in United Nations processes.

86. In Indonesia, localized initiatives such as the food sovereignty areas (“kawasan daulat pangan”) showcase how communities can operationalize the rights affirmed in the Declaration.⁴² These peasant-managed zones promote agroecology, collective land governance and direct producer-consumer links, ensuring that rural populations play a central role in shaping their food systems and influencing local policy frameworks in line with food sovereignty principles.

87. Likewise, in the Philippines, the Agricultural and Rural Development Knowledge and Policy Platform has improved peasant participation through inclusive, rights-based communication strategies.⁴³ Within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming, it facilitates dialogue between small-scale farmers and government actors, using community media and participatory planning to ensure that marginalized voices – particularly those of women and older peasants – are reflected in national policies on agriculture and fisheries.

88. These examples demonstrate that, when peasants and rural workers organize and are supported by State institutions, they can effectively influence public policy and institutionalize rights at multiple governance levels.

2. Peasant mobilization and empowerment

89. Strengthening the right to participation of peasants requires comprehensive and integrated strategies that empower rural communities economically, socially and politically while ensuring meaningful engagement at all levels of governance. Across regions, peasant-led initiatives illustrate how a combination of economic support, institutional recognition and advocacy networks can create an enabling environment for peasant participation.

90. In Colombia, the Joint Commission for Peasant Affairs, regulated by decree 1004/2024, provides a participatory platform for interaction between the State and peasant communities, as a crucial step in consolidating agrarian reform and comprehensive rural reform.⁴⁴

91. Brazil offers examples of how institutional support and economic organization can advance peasant rights. Government-backed programmes such as the programme for strengthening family farming promote solidarity economies and cooperativism among rural workers. The Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, a prominent and successful peasant movement in Brazil, exemplifies the empowerment of peasants and rural workers through grass-roots mobilization, land reform and participatory governance. Brazil also demonstrates good practices through the use of

⁴⁰ See www.cetim.ch/wp-content/uploads/UPR-2023-Switzerland-FOD-UNDROP-in-CH-Foreign-Policy-21.9.2022.pdf and www.cetim.ch/wp-content/uploads/UPR-2023-Switzerland-FOD-UNDROP-in-CH-National-Policy-21.9.2022.pdf.

⁴¹ Working Group submissions.

⁴² See <https://viacampesina.org/en/2025/06/building-a-solidarity-economy-in-indonesia-peasant-cooperatives-and-urban-poor-unite-for-food-sovereignty>.

⁴³ See https://asianfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Fostering-the-engagement-of-smallholder-farmers-and-fishers-in-the-policy-processes-and-program-development-within-the-context-of-UNDFF_The-Case-of-ARDKPP-in-the-Philippines-Abridged-version.pdf and <https://comdevasia.org/comdevasia-in-action/fostering-the-engagement-of-smallholder-farmers-and-fishers-in-the-policy-processes-and-program-development-within-the-context-of-undff-the-case-of-ardkpp-in-the-philippines>.

⁴⁴ See www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=247997.

participatory mechanisms, including rural councils, national forums, public consultations and marches, that promote sustained interaction between peasant communities and State authorities, increasing accountability and shaping equitable rural development agendas.

92. Madagascar offers a contrasting yet complementary model by embedding the voices of rural communities directly in policymaking processes.⁴⁵ Policies shaped through active local involvement are more likely to reflect the realities, priorities and needs of those they intend to serve, thus reinforcing the core principles of participation and self-determination under the Declaration.

93. At the international level, civil society organizations have underscored the need for more robust frameworks that ensure transparency, accountability and autonomous participation in the United Nations system. Within this context, the call for increased financing to support the implementation of the Declaration in developing countries is particularly urgent. Without adequate national and regional investment, participation mechanisms remain underresourced and ineffectual.

94. Furthermore, international mobilization has proven to be pivotal in redefining human rights in ways that align with the lived experiences of peasants. The global coalition that led to the adoption of the Declaration, including alliances between peasants, Indigenous Peoples, environmentalists and food sovereignty movements, exemplifies the transformative potential of grass-roots advocacy.⁴⁶ Far from being passive recipients of rights, peasant movements have reconfigured human rights from the bottom up, using them as tools to challenge structural inequalities and reshape global governance.⁴⁷

95. Examples of successful peasant mobilizations include international litigation to validate new interpretations of long-recognized rights; self-identified community organizations using the language of rights to unite the struggles of peasants all over the world, and public campaigning for new international instruments to shift the contours of human rights; and invoking internationally recognized rights to change public discourses in policy arenas from the local to the global level.⁴⁸

96. Significant gains have also been made at the national and local levels,⁴⁹ including the creation of organic markets and food assistance programmes in Brazil, agroecological policy uptake in India and institutionalized food policy councils in Canada. In Chile and Mexico, grass-roots advocacy succeeded in imposing taxes on unhealthy food, while in West Africa citizen juries and deliberative dialogues have helped communities to hold corporations and State actors accountable for decisions affecting land and food systems.

⁴⁵ Working Group submissions.

⁴⁶ Marc Edelman, *Peasant Politics of the Twenty-First Century: Transnational Social Movements and Agrarian Change* (Cornell University Press, 2024); Corina Heri, “Justifying new rights: affectedness, vulnerability, and the rights of peasants”, p. 21; and Anne Shattuck and others, “Life on the land: new lives for agrarian questions”, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 50, No. 2 (2023), p. 506.

⁴⁷ Valentine Granet, “The human right to land: a peasant struggle in the human rights system”, *Human Rights Law Review*, vol. 24, No. 3 (2024), pp. 20 and 23.

⁴⁸ Lorenzo Cotula, “Between hope and critique: human rights, social justice and re-imagining international law from the bottom up”, *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law*, vol. 48, No. 2 (2020), p. 476; and Priscilla Claeys, “From food sovereignty to peasants’ rights: an overview of Via Campesina’s struggle for new human rights”, in Henry Saragih (ed.), *La Via Campesina’s Open Book: Celebrating 20 Years of Struggle and Hope*, available at <https://viacampesina.org/en/la-via-campesina-s-open-book-celebrating-20-years-of-struggle-and-hope>.

⁴⁹ See www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/LongFoodMovementEN.pdf, sect. 2.

97. Moreover, multilevel and multi-scale organizing has been recognized as a critical strategy for sustained impact, allowing peasant movements to respond to the cross-border nature of systemic challenges facing food systems.⁵⁰ As rural communities continue to confront the impacts of climate change, land grabs and industrial agriculture, engagement across local, national and global arenas remains a vital element of rights-based governance.

98. In light of these experiences, States are encouraged to adopt integrated approaches that combine economic empowerment, institutional support for participation and active engagement with grass-roots voices. States should ensure that adequate funding mechanisms, legal protections and inclusive practices are in place to uphold the principles of the Declaration, enabling peasants to exercise their rights fully and participate in shaping the future of agriculture, food systems and rural development.

3. Capacity-building and legal empowerment

99. The effective implementation of the Declaration relies heavily on capacity-building efforts that equip rural communities with the knowledge, tools and platforms necessary to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes. Across diverse national contexts, peasant-led initiatives and civil society partnerships have demonstrated how legal education, localized training and rights awareness contribute to strengthening participation and advancing the rights of rural people.

100. In Brazil,⁵¹ La Via Campesina and its partners have created a training course to build legal literacy among peasant leaders and strengthen grass-roots legal advocacy efforts. These examples illustrate the important role of legal education in promoting autonomous engagement and participatory governance.

101. At the global level, the Masifundise Development Trust has promoted the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication as a tool to raise legal and human rights awareness among fishing communities. By offering training on the application of the guidelines, particularly in relation to environmental sustainability and participatory governance, the initiative fosters greater involvement in decision-making at multiple levels.

102. In Cuba, the Campesino-to-Campesino policy showcases how peer-led, agroecological models rooted in peasant knowledge can translate into public programmes that promote food sovereignty and collective governance.⁵² This participatory approach reinforces the Declaration's core principle of peasants' protagonism in shaping sustainable food systems.

103. Legal empowerment has also been central to land governance reforms. In North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, legal guidance is provided and dialogue is facilitated between local authorities and rural populations.⁵³ Community "open days" have become effective forums for enhancing transparency and accountability in land-related decision-making.

104. Community-based education plays a similar role in Mozambique, where the Machamba do Camponês agroecological schools foster practical learning in

⁵⁰ John Gaventa and Rajesh Tandon (eds.), *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion* (Zed Books, 2010), pp. 3–30.

⁵¹ Working Group submissions.

⁵² CETIM, "Universal Periodic Review of Cuba: CETIM highlights good practices on peasants' rights", 6 December 2023, available at <https://defendingpeasantsrights.org/en/universal-periodic-review-of-cuba-cetim-highlights-good-practices-on-peasants-rights>.

⁵³ See www.heks.ch/sites/default/files/documents/2021-10/Factsheet_2021_HRBA.pdf.

sustainable agriculture.⁵⁴ These schools enhance food security and climate resilience while empowering rural communities through knowledge exchange and collective action.

105. Several initiatives further demonstrate how peasant advocacy influences political structures. In Belgium, the Mouvement Action Paysanne's peasant towns charter translated the Declaration into local policy proposals for municipal authorities, enabling grass-roots engagement in the 2024 communal elections.⁵⁵ In Uganda, the Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum promoted the Declaration at the local council level, leading to its adoption and a commitment to raising awareness of rights across the Mityana district.⁵⁶

106. In Ecuador, sustained activism by Coordinadora Nacional Campesina Eloy Alfaro and allied organizations resulted in the ratification of the Declaration by the National Assembly in 2023.⁵⁷ This national milestone was achieved through a combination of legislative dialogue, community mobilization and persistent civil society engagement, demonstrating the transformative power of organized peasant movements.

107. In India, the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha continues to lead efforts to secure fair prices, resist corporate control in agriculture and protect land and seed sovereignty.⁵⁸ Although participation mechanisms for rural and marginalized communities remain limited, organizations such as Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha have advanced grass-roots advocacy and policy engagement through decades of struggle.

108. These commendable examples demonstrate that investment in education, legal empowerment and rights awareness is essential for enabling the full participation of peasants and rural workers in shaping policies that affect their lives. States are encouraged to support and expand such initiatives, ensuring that capacity-building is an integral part of national strategies to implement the Declaration. This includes increasing financial and institutional support for peasant organizations, embedding human rights education in rural development programmes and creating accessible mechanisms for participatory governance across sectors.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

109. The Working Group affirms that the right to participation is integral to the dignity, agency and empowerment of peasants and rural workers worldwide. The Declaration provides a robust legal and normative framework, recognizing peasants and rural workers across gender, age, ethnicity and all forms of rural activity as key rights holders and crucial agents of sustainable food systems, climate adaptation and environmental stewardship. Despite these advances, significant barriers persist, including structural discrimination, unequal resource distribution, exclusion from policymaking and a lack of transparency and accountability in governance.

110. It demonstrates that genuine and meaningful participation – encompassing consultation, free and informed consent and direct engagement in all decisions that

⁵⁴ See www.fao.org/agroecology/database/detail/en/c/1295900.

⁵⁵ See https://defendingpeasantsrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/ccp-map_siteweb.pdf.

⁵⁶ See <https://defendingpeasantsrights.org/en/empowering-rural-communities-through-undrop-the-actions-of-esaff-uganda>.

⁵⁷ See <https://defendingpeasantsrights.org/en/ecuadorian-peasants-win-ratification-of-undrop-by-their-legislative-assembly> and <https://hunter.cuny.edu/artsci/anthropology/research/peasants-rights-project>.

⁵⁸ Working Group submissions.

may affect the rights and livelihoods of peasants and rural workers – is not only a foundational right protected under international law, but also a necessary precondition for social justice, environmental sustainability and equitable rural development. Good practices identified across various States and regions underscore how supportive legal frameworks, targeted capacity-building and open, inclusive dialogue platforms can reinforce participation and drive transformative change.

111. Upholding the right to participation of peasants and rural workers is central to the realization of all human rights, social justice and global sustainability. The Working Group calls for continued vigilance, robust action and genuine partnership among all duty bearers to ensure that no rural voice is left unheard and that peasants and rural workers can exercise their rights in full dignity and equality.

112. The Working Group recommends that States:

(a) **Urgently align national laws, policies and institutional frameworks with the principles and specific obligations contained in the Declaration, ensuring that the participation of peasants and other rural workers is active, free, effective, meaningful and informed at all levels of decision-making;**

(b) **Guarantee that consultations with peasants and rural workers precede all legislative, administrative and policy measures affecting rural communities, especially in areas concerning land, seeds, water, biodiversity and climate action;**

(c) **Systematically implement mechanisms for free, prior and informed consent, along with transparent and accountable participatory structures, including the representation of women, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized groups;**

(d) **Invest in capacity-building, legal empowerment and civic education of peasants and rural workers concerning the Declaration and related rights and secure resources for peasant- and rural worker-led organizations to engage in policy dialogue;**

(e) **Establish national action plans to implement the Declaration, with measurable benchmarks and regular reporting requirements, to be developed in participatory processes;**

(f) **Uphold and protect the right of peasants and rural workers to organize, collectively bargain and peacefully advocate for their rights, and take all necessary measures to address discrimination and safeguard land, the environment and livelihoods from corporate capture, land grabs and/or other exploitative practices.**

113. In addition, the Working Group makes the following recommendations to non-State actors:

(a) **International organizations, intergovernmental bodies, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector should advance peasants' and rural workers' rights by supporting the realization of the Declaration at all levels;**

(b) **International organizations and financial institutions should integrate the Declaration into their human rights due diligence policies and compliance programmes;**

(c) **The private sector and project developers must respect human rights standards, enable transparent supply chains, fully engage peasants and rural workers in environmental impact assessments and consult them on all corporate activities likely to affect their rights and environments.**

114. Furthermore, the Working Group makes the following recommendations to peasant and rural workers' communities and organizations:

(a) Peasants and rural workers are encouraged to further strengthen their collective action, advocacy and engagement in local, national and international decision-making;

(b) Continued capacity-building efforts, legal literacy and alliance-building, especially across social movements, Indigenous Peoples, women and young people, are vital to amplifying voices and defending rights;

(c) Representative institutions should document and share successful participation practices, engage in constructive policy dialogue and monitor the implementation of the Declaration, working to hold States and other actors accountable.
