



15 March 2018, New York

Recommended Standards from Civil Society

Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50/50 by 2030: every rural woman and girl everywhere

The sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62), with its priority theme of “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls” offered an opportunity for Civil Society to discuss what the pledge of **Leaving No One Behind** (LNOB) in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will mean towards ensuring that *every rural woman and girl everywhere* is aware of and enjoys all her rights and entitlements and lives a life of equality, opportunity and access. It provided a critical space and opportunity for women and girls living in rural communities to have their voices heard, the realities of their lives described, their needs articulated and their crucial roles in their families and communities properly revealed, acknowledged and supported.

It is within this context that Civil Society, together with UN Women, co-convened a Flagship event: ***Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50/50 by 2030: every rural woman and girl everywhere*** on the 15th of March 2018. This event brought together over 300 women and girls, including those living in rural communities, who represented the most marginalized and neglected categories and sub sects (such as widows/migrants/refugees/indigenous peoples/LBTI/women living HIV/Disability), demanding accountability for gender equality and no impunity for state and non-state actors who breach their legal obligations under domestic and international law to eliminate discrimination against women. The purpose of the intersectional conversations was to lift the blanket of invisibility from the extreme discrimination and injustice that is experienced by women in rural communities, and from their related narratives, and to develop a set of standards and benchmarks that will direct governments’ policy to ensure justice for them and bring them to the forefront of the prosperity Agenda for 2030.

The event noted the root causes of discrimination and the unacknowledged and unaddressed multiple and intersectional levels of marginalization and inequality that widows/migrants/refugees/indigenous peoples/LBTI/women living HIV/Disability face and how these are reinforced by poverty, climate change, disasters and conflicts, especially in rural areas.

Through the conversations that took place on the 15th of March 2018, Civil Society developed recommendations focused on reducing the social marginalization, cultural discrimination, economic deprivation faced by women and girls in rural communities and ensuring the amplification of their political voice.



The recommended standards were based on three core principles:

- A shift from vulnerability to leadership
- ‘Nothing about us without us’
- Government Accountability

“It’s not enough to say that you exist in space. It’s a matter of what are you dealing with? What is challenging in your world? What’s challenging x as opposed to y? and what happens when that woman with a disability is part of the LGBTQI+ community? What happens when they’re a widow? When they are sexually assaulted? Where can we navigate the intersections between these various identities and these various circumstances alike to make that a salient and more powerful conversation in the government and different spaces”. Aria Maria Lorbeti – USA

Civil Society calls upon States and UN Agencies to adopt, establish and implement the following standards that will redress systemic policies that leave women and girls in rural communities behind and serve to bring them to the forefront of the prosperity agenda. *Therefore, Civil Society urges States and Governments to:*

SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN & GIRLS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Ensure that the lived experience of women and girls living in rural areas is reflected in all policy and programs. Women and girls living in rural communities should fully participate in the design, resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs. Rural committees/coalitions and information-communication systems should be created to take the voices of women, girls and people in marginalized communities to the national level and demand accountability from those who represent them in government.
- Develop gender-based methodologies for gathering qualitative and quantitative information, utilizing the knowledge and experiences of the women themselves to drive the progress of good evidence policy and legislative reform.
- Address private sector responsibilities to civil society, and assuredly to women and girls in rural communities.
- Ensure that women at the grass roots are participants in local decision making and are able to draw attention to their various needs in health care, education, training, access to justice, and protection from violence, and demand accountability from those who deny them their rights.



CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN & GIRLS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

- ¹Eliminate patriarchal and harmful practices such as early and forced child marriage, breast ironing, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and discrimination and stigmatization against widows through documenting and disseminating successful strategies and innovative approaches.
- Criminalize all actors who coerce women into harmful traditional practices and deprive women and girls from equality in inheritance, land ownership, property rights, custody of children, and freedom to marry or remarry, and those who are agents in early and forced marriage of the girl child.
- Promote the collaboration of States, governments and UN Entities with faith-based, religious and cultural leaders to address harmful social norms and practices that violate human rights of women.

ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION OF WOMEN & GIRLS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Review and revise all existing policies and develop a plan that can be carefully implemented and monitored to ensure that access to quality education and health is guaranteed for all regardless of gender, race, physical ability or ethnicity or geographical location.
- Scale up funding and replicate programmes from grassroots that promote women from rural communities, including sustainable development policies that recognize women's knowledge, resilience and leadership, especially from widows, indigenous women, migrants, refugees, women living with a disability, women living with HIV, and LGBTI and gender non-conforming people.
- Incorporate gender inclusive budgeting into all budgeting processes.

LACK OF POLITICAL VOICE OF WOMEN & GIRLS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Increase support to civil society through adequate funding to ensure the success of policy and program implementation, to engage in political advocacy at the national, regional and international levels, so that their voices are heard and they can participate in voting and expressing their own advocacy.
- Ensure women from rural communities (in all their diversity) including from NGOs are included in official delegations to the CSW and other related commissions, thus enabling them to participate meaningfully in formal discussions. Take practical measures to observe, document and report periodically on progress on the International Treaties that they have ratified (Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women

¹ <http://femnet.org/2018/02/27/african-womens-csw62-advocacy-position-policy-recommendations/>



(CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Human Rights Council Resolutions and previous CSW Declarations) using UN mechanisms. This should be accompanied by well-resourced action plans with measurable, enforceable solutions with key leadership and management roles held by women-led groups.

- Hold governments to account, under Article 5 of the CEDAW, if they have not used all available means to modify social attitudes that stigmatize and marginalize women.
- Strengthen national, regional and international machineries that support women's organizations to monitor progress so that they can hold governments to account for gender equality commitments. This calls for Women's Rights Organizations to report on progress on Beijing +25 by 2020.

Leaving No One Behind means providing opportunities for girls and women to enjoy the human rights and life experiences they deserve through supportive and implemented policies. It also means breaking the vicious cycle, addressing the intersectionality of all issues and demonstrating that it can be done through thoughtful policy that is well implemented. Closing the gender equality gap and ending poverty is possible, but requires political will with an increased focus on the empowerment of women and girls in rural communities. This includes challenging media stereotypes including by supporting the women living in rural communities as media producers.

In this context, it is imperative to hear the voices marginalized individuals and groups and include them in the decisions that affect their lives, so that **No One is Left Behind**: widows, disabled women and girls, indigenous females, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex women as well as gender non-conforming persons, refugees/migrants, and women living with HIV.

[Please find the report on the event here](#)