

Advocacy > Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Statement to the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women

Every effort addressing the challenges of rural communities must incorporate a gender-transformative approach confronting the sources of inequality between men and women

11/03/2018

As an ECOSOC-accredited nongovernmental organization, Dianova is invited to participate in the annual Commission on the Status of Women held at the United Nations Headquarters in March. Each year, Dianova submits a written statement to the CSW addressing the Commission's priority themes and offering recommendations to governments and other stakeholders.



Rural women are key economic and emotional supporters of their households and communities – photo:

[McKay Savage](#), via Flickr – CC

Women, addiction & violence

Substance Use Disorders & Violence Against Women, a publication by M. de L.A. Lobos Palacios, Psychologist (University of Chile)

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A Call to End Structural Gender Inequality in the Rural Areas

In the occasion of the [62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#), Dianova echoes the unheard voices of millions of rural women and girls and calls

poverty. To start thinking of adequate solutions, it is necessary to end the data gap which is making rural women and girls invisible to statistics, policies and decision-makers, and contributing to the perpetuation of structural gender inequality.

Gender transformative-solutions for rural women and girls

Rural women are key economic and emotional supporters of their households and communities: they represent an average of 43% of the agricultural labor force and yet they often endure double or triple shifts in their roles as primary caregivers and responsible for all reproductive work at home (Women Watch). In addition, in the job market they are frequently subjected to unpaid, underpaid, or undervalued, temporary, unsafe and informal jobs. If this is a common reality in the cities, for women in rural areas the situation is even severer:

- Poor rural infra-structures and lack of care services contribute with maintaining the *status quo* of culturally assigned gender roles and restricts to opportunities for women even farther. To change this reality, **every effort addressing the challenges of rural communities must incorporate a gender-transformative approach in the solutions, addressing the sources of inequality between men and women** in the specific contexts. Programs and policies in this field must have gender-equality and women's rights in the center of its objectives and must understand the gender relations in the community, as well as the specific barriers impeding rural women to fully access the job market.

Revealing the barriers to gender equality for rural women and girls

Rural women's contribution to society is often limited by a variety of well-known reasons, usually in aggravating conditions when compared to rural men or urban women and men, namely: strict gender roles; lack of education and training and of access to seeds, credits and agricultural technologies; discrimination and lack of flexibility in the job market; domestic violence; lack of access to services or trust in the public system, etc. The perpetuation of such unbalanced conditions leads to rural women being globally much more affected by poverty than men, having less access to health and other services, as well as being less educated and more reliant on their partners than their male counterparts. Undeniably, the lack of economic empowerment is an outstanding cause for rural women's subjugation in the private and public spaces, as well as for the lack of representation of their communities in decision-making bodies and at national levels, and for an aggravating vulnerability to domestic abuse:

- In order to make progress and break the cycle of poverty for rural women and girls, the reality in which they live and the needs which this reality generates must be fully understood. While challenges faced by rural and urban women may often overlap, some conditions may be particularly relevant in rural contexts, such as the impact of issues related to land rights, female genital mutilation, and

CSW60 – Statement by Dianova International

Statement submitted by Dianova International prior to the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of

08/03/2015

CSW59 – Statement by Dianova International

Statement submitted by Dianova prior to the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

More on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

isolation. Thus, producing **disaggregated and gender-sensitive data** as well as **data that can capture the specific situations lived by women in rural areas** is a fundamental step to ensure that the particularities of these underlining circumstances are revealed. To achieve this, governments must **engage with grassroots, nongovernmental and non-official data producers and service**

Beyond economic empowerment: creating structural changes for rural women and girls

Achieving economic empowerment is an essential step towards self-reliance, freedom and independence for rural women and girls and their families. Yet, economic empowerment is not enough to end gender inequality in rural places or elsewhere: structural changes are needed to create sustainable gender relations and allow for women and girls to thrive in equal conditions and to achieve emancipation in every aspect of their lives. It is evident that failing to address the broader set of barriers which perpetuates discrimination and gender inequality will continue to deeply harm rural women, also starting at early ages and impacting the present and the future of rural girls.

For instance, in far too many parts of the globe, rural girls have their education affected and often interrupted due to child marriage, teenage pregnancy, lack of transportation, or due to physical and sexual violence at home, in the schools or on the way to schools. Despite progress made in some regions, such structural gender barriers still prevail in many impoverished rural areas, jeopardizing the full development of rural girls, the whole exercise of their childhood, and essentially, their ability to enjoy equal conditions and opportunities to exercise their human rights. There are many ways to provoke change and start achieving concrete progress to end gender inequality and improve the lives of rural women and girls:

- Use effective tools to **raise awareness for gender equality** with all members of the communities and make special efforts to involve the most marginalized in such conversations.
- Provide training on gender quality, participation and communication skills for women in rural regions to **promote women's leadership in public spaces and decision-making fora** in their communities.
- **Remove existing objective barriers for women and girls to be able to access equal opportunities** for employment, tools, seeds and other resources needed for their work; all levels of education in their preferred language; safe transportation; technology; and all ranges of health care services – including psychological support and sexual and reproductive health; and other services, including childcare and employment benefits.
- Incorporate gender equality in schools' curriculum, **train teachers to encourage girls and boys equally throughout their studies**, and provide training for experienced and young women in less traditional jobs.
- **Foster economic opportunities for rural women** by improving their knowledge of agricultural technologies and offering a wide-range of skills training in their own communities.
- **Promote sustainable agriculture practices** to ensure food security and safety, and as a means to promote the development of rural areas. In addition, support

agriculture so it can continue to be an attractive and viable option for young people.

Conclusion

In absolute contradiction with the factual level of importance of the rural sector to feed the entire human population, the mainstream conduct towards these regions and residents has been of absolute neglect. As a consequence, when compared to urban women, rural women and girls living in impoverished areas carry yet an extra layer of vulnerability which often prevents them even further from fully contributing with the development of their community and country.

In this two-fold context, the eradication of poverty can only happen if the empowerment of rural communities comes together with the empowerment of rural women and girls.

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