



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
11 December 2017

Original: English

---

## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-second session

12–23 March 2018

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

---

\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### **Achieving Transformative Change for Rural Women's Empowerment**

On behalf the Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association, it is an honour to contribute to discussion of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the priority theme, the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty eradication, which is issue important to all of us. The Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association was established by a group of human Rights activist in year 1996. The organization strives to promote, defend and advocate social inclusiveness and a healthy lifestyle among youth women and to empower them to make free and informed choices on matters relating to their political participation and rights. Youth Vision, as a recognized civil society organization, champions the promotion of human rights for youth in Pakistan and has demonstrated its ability as an organization through the successful implementation of projects and programs in relation to its mandate and promotion of gender equality and policy change. Youth Vision relies on intimate knowledge of our project sites and groups, and also of its socio - economic and political environment and poverty and empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges” as its priority theme. The organization worked together with a diverse group of people from different backgrounds and regions including from academia, women's, indigenous and farmers' organizations. Participants recognized the importance of understanding the diversity among rural women on the basis of age, civil status, culture, ethnicity, class, caste and other factors that have to be considered in discussions about rural women's economic empowerment.

Fundamental Human rights & rural Development Association also recognized the important role of indigenous rural women as a specific group. Despite women's critical contribution to rural development and notable improvements in both developing and developed countries, rural women's rights and priorities remain insufficiently addressed in legal frameworks, national and local development policies and investment strategies at all levels. They continue to face serious challenges in carrying out their multiple productive and reproductive roles within their families and communities, in part due to lack of rural infrastructure and essential goods and services. They are at a disadvantage as a result of gender-based stereotypes and discrimination that deny them equitable access to opportunities, resources and services. Local feudal system, natural disasters, poverty and the HIV and AIDS epidemic are other factors that exacerbate their disadvantages.

We also looked at the engagement of young women and men in the promotion of gender equality, and were very much inspired by the ideas, dynamism and creativity of those that contributed to this debate. We were asked to create space for young people at the Commission and in particular to include at least one youth representative in governmental delegations to the Commission. We should make every effort to implement this suggestion so that the leaders of tomorrow are indeed fully involved as we set the agenda for the future.

Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association participants welcomed the Commission's consideration of the priority theme. Rural women and girls constitute a sizeable share of the global population, and are important actors for economic and social development at the local and national levels. Rural women play an important role in agriculture in all parts of the world and carry out a wide range of agricultural and non-agricultural work in addition to domestic tasks, such as caring

for children and the elderly. They play a crucial role in ensuring and promoting food security and nutrition in all parts of the Pakistan. The centrality of rural women to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, is increasingly recognized compared to rural men and boys, and to urban women and girls. Poverty continues to be a predominantly rural phenomenon, with a heavy toll on women and girls. The impact of global crises, including the world financial and economic crisis, volatile food and energy prices and food insecurity, also disproportionately affect rural women.

Lack of and limited access to land and other productive resources remain major obstacles to overcoming poverty and hunger for rural women. A number of countries have adopted legal and constitutional provisions to improve women's access to land, including provisions for land tenure rights and joint land titles for spouses. However, broader gender-responsive land reforms would be required to ensure women's equal access to and ownership of land; lack of land ownership limits women's ability to borrow. Many countries promote access to finance for poor women in rural areas, in particular through microcredit programmes, often combined with financial literacy, entrepreneurship, management and related types of training. Access to loans without collateral, subsidized or interest-free loans, or reserving a specific percentage of bank credit for women, are also effective measures to expand financing. However, for rural women to sustain and expand their businesses and increase agricultural productivity, they need access to mainstream "macro" financial services. Women's cooperatives have been instrumental in providing women with collective access to financial services.

While Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association plays an important role in food production, they continue to face limited access to markets. Some countries have developed programmes to purchase local agricultural produce from family farming for schools, hospitals and other public institutions through governmental entities. Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association are being specifically targeted and are paid good prices for their produce. Increased access of women to information and communications technologies, including mobile phones, can also facilitate women farmers' access to market information and open new markets.

Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association progress has been made in strengthening rural women's participation and leadership in public and political life. Many countries have implemented initiatives to increase the number of women at various levels of government, including through temporary special measures, affirmative action and quotas combined with training for women candidates and elected officials. Yet, more efforts are needed to further increase the representation of rural women in national parliaments, local councils and public administration as well as at senior decision-making levels in all area.

Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association, priorities and needs, including poverty, must be taken into account in the development of gender-responsive policies, resource allocation and planning at both national and local levels to achieve sustainable results. Holding local or national consultations with rural women is one way of ensuring that their priorities are taken into account in policies, budgets and planning, and ongoing dialogue with rural women is key to the effective and beneficial implementation of such instruments International cooperation, and in particular official development assistance, is necessary for the empowerment of rural women.

Yet, donor financing for the rural women remains sparse, and might even be decreasing in the current context of global crises. More efforts are needed to reach the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income and to ensure that rural women benefit from such cooperation. Local initiatives spearheaded by Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association should benefit from international financing. In addition, the entities of the United Nations system should prioritize gender-responsive agricultural and rural development in their support to Member States at the national level.

Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association should also be promoted, as it can be an effective tool for sharing and replicating proven solutions for empowering women, that have successfully integrated the needs of smallholder farmers, in particular women farmers, into national agricultural and rural development policies, should share their experiences with other countries. Good practices could be collected and shared in the context of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association pointed out that the priority theme of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission is directly relevant to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The impact of climate change, including loss of biodiversity, drought and desertification, is particularly severe for smallholder farmers' economic prospects. Rural women's rights and priorities, as well as food and nutrition security, should therefore be strongly reflected in the outcome of the Fundamental Human Rights & Rural Development Association.

We remain fully committed to cooperative closely with UN system and its policies and fully support.

---