



Improving the Lives of Rural Women and Girls

Women now make up 43% of the world's agricultural labor force, as much as 60% in the developing world and 28% in the US. They will produce the next generation and will determine the future of the world's food security. They are seriously under recognized, discriminated against, often unpaid and too often violently abused. Major changes must be made to address those issues for women and girls today, with consideration for subpopulations such as migrants, widows, disabled persons, and ethnic, religious, and indigenous minorities.

Establish an Equitable Legal Framework

1a. Incorporate the **human rights and development framework** into national, regional and local legislation to abolish gender discrimination, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking with special attention to early and forced child marriage and harmful traditional practices.

1b. **Abolish discriminatory laws** relating to birth registration, land ownership and the right of all women including widows, to own, inherit, bequeath and manage their own assets.

1c. **Establish accountability mechanisms** to ensure that women and girls are included in all levels of decision making and are provided equitable access to the justice system, human rights based and gender responsive social services, education, health, sanitation, transportation, infrastructure and clean water.

1d. **Collect sex-disaggregated data** in agriculture, food supply, health and education, analyze data from a gender perspective, and develop gender-sensitive tools to improve the agricultural and business sector in rural areas.

Ensure Equal Access to Health Services

2a. Ensure that women and girls have nearby access to high quality **gender-specific health services**, which include reproductive, maternal, obstetric, pediatric, dental and geriatric care.

2b. Invest in **rural hospitals**, clinics, and other local health infrastructure by working with community groups to recruit, train, and retain medical professionals who focus on servicing rural communities.

2c. Provide rural women and girls with **training**, support and supervision to sustain community based health programs, while expanding **broadband** and other technologies to facilitate remote access to doctors and vital medical information.

2d. Adopt the **Mental Health Gap Action Program** to obtain funding to combat mental, neurological, and substance use disorders and improve the availability and affordability of preventative care for women and girls in rural areas.

2e. Standardize **health education** for rural families to include nutrition, health issues and best practices for improving local sanitation systems while protecting the environment and adjusting to climate change.

Facilitate Gender-Sensitive Education

3a. Assure **safe passage** to schools as well as **sanitary facilities** for rural girls to guarantee equal access to primary and secondary education

3b. Combat **stereotypes** and cultural norms that interfere with girls' school attendance by perpetuating unequal care and household responsibilities for rural girls.

3c. Encourage specialized agricultural, technical, and **vocational training** for women and girls to expand their employment opportunities.

3d. Improve **educational programming** by incorporating human rights training, numeracy, and financial literacy and expand access for women and girls for training in new ICT technologies.

Provide Safe and Fair Working Environments

4a. Create more favorable working conditions for women with investments in rural **infrastructure** including roads, safe transportation, dependable electricity, and open ICT access to facilitate engagement in markets and promote economic growth.

4b. Recognize rural women as **vital food producers** and crucial contributors to food security, and provide equal access to financial services and credit for land, seeds, and fertilizers as well as training to adapt to climate change and natural disasters.

4c. Minimize exposure of rural women and girls to **pesticides** and household **pollutants** such as charcoal stoves and kerosene lamps by investing in clean technologies in the agricultural workplace and household.

4d. Ensure that women's work at home, in the fields, or on the job is recognized and **paid equitably**, and as a step towards this goal, promote the inclusion and participation of women and girls in all levels of governance and civil society.

The aim of the US Women's Caucus at the UN is for progressive US-based NGOs to have a larger, louder, smarter voice at the United Nations through means such as written statements, reviews of UN documents, and joint recommendations to the US Mission, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and other UN bodies. Membership in the US Women's Caucus is open to US-based NGOs and individuals who are committed to the principles of CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. Contact us at uswomenscaucus@gmail.com. More information is available at uswomenscaucus.org