



# International Women's NEWS NOUVELLES Feministes Internationales

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Journal of the International Alliance of Women

“

It is a time to take action  
that responds to the size  
of the problems faced by women  
who live in rural areas.

- Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.  
Executive Director of UN Women

”

# CSW62

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

12–23 MARCH  
2018

## EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EDITORIAL | pp. 5-6**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN BRIEF | pp. 7-9**

**NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTIONS | pp. 10-12**

*Evaluation of the Agreed Conclusions of CSW62*

**ORAL STATEMENT TO CSW 62 | p. 13**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN FOCUS | pp. 14-27**

**CSW62 and IAW Parallel Event - Empowering Rural Women and Girls**

**Focus India: A case for Gender in the Indian Himalayan State of Uttarakhand**

*Dr Manju Kak | pp. 14-17*

**Rural Women's Empowerment - Strategies and Challenges of Women's NGOs**

*Cheryl Hayles, IAW Vice President North America | pp. 18-20*

**Opportunities and Challenges for Rural Women in the Global Community - An Analytical Study with special reference to India**

*Dr. Bhavna K. Joshipura | pp. 21-24*

**Rural Women's Movement, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa**

*Sizani Ngubane | pp. 25-27*

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**Manju Kak** is a social activist in women's issues and has worked in a voluntary capacity in the slums of Delhi while also representing the cause at high levels. Currently, she is Hon. Treasurer of the mammoth voluntary based organization All India Women's Conference [www.aiwc.org.in](http://www.aiwc.org.in) which has been working for the benefit of women and children for 90 years. Earlier she was a development journalist in Women's Feature Service and has written/edited "*Whose Media: A Women's Space*". She is currently a Television Panelist on national channels Times Now and Republic TV for these issues.

Manju Kak is part of the creative world of writer, critic, scholar and artist. Her PhD is in the History of Art from the National Museum, New Delhi. She has explored some unique aspects of Himalayan life: *They Who Walked Mountains* (2002) on the erstwhile Indo-Tibetan Salt trade; edited a book on Russian painter *Nicholas Roerich: A Quest & Legacy* (2011); curated an exhibition of the same name at Jamia University, New Delhi; curated an ethnographic exhibition titled *Kashmiri Pandits, A Vintage Album: The Making of Modern India* (2013) at India International Centre New Delhi and authored the book *In the Shadow of the Devi: Kumaon Himalayas* (2017). Three collections of short stories have won acclaim. They include *First Light in Colonepura* (1992), *Requiem for an Unsung Revolutionary* (1995) and *Just One Life and Other Stories* (2015).

As a painter, her last show was *Ranikhet State of Mind* (2016). Some of her art works are in private and public collections in India and Hong Kong.



## **Cheryl Hayles, Vice President North America International Alliance of Women (IAW)**

In 2017 Cheryl was elected Vice President North America for the International Alliance of Women. She is a member of the Editorial Team responsible for media communication.

Cheryl's commitment to Women's Rights as a leader and supporter has been outstanding. From 2009-2010 Cheryl served as President of CFUW Milton and District, a local club of the Canadian Federation of University Women. She completed two terms as Regional Director for Ontario South (2010-14) with responsibilities for 12 major clubs. She has completed two terms as VP International Relations for the national Board of CFUW. She has said "It was a fascinating portfolio for engagement with international partners in areas that support the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. We must use every advocacy tool at our disposal to create positive change for women's rights".

Her leadership initiatives include the creation and implementation of a Mentorship Program that served women in STEM, Politics and Organizational Leadership. Her International Relations Committee has been a trailblazer in addressing significant issues that affect women internationally. Having led four delegations to the United Nations she is skilled at networking and accessing resources to advance the feminist agenda.

Most recently Cheryl chaired the Ad Hoc Selection Committee responsible for selecting a new Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General for IAW. As a member of the Editorial Team she has been instrumental in the redesign of the new IAW website. Cheryl has a growth mindset focusing on building community, championing diversity and global citizenship. In her role as Vice President North America, Cheryl brings experience with a fresh perspective to the portfolio.



# CONTRIBUTORS



## **Dr. Bhavna Kamlesh Joshipura**

Dr. Bhavna Kamlesh Joshipura is a senior advocate by profession. After graduating from the science stream with a physics major, she did her Masters in Law. She has also studied Journalism, Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. Her doctoral research was on 'The Social Impact of Women Empowerment - A Legal Study'.

Born in Surendranagar, Dr Joshipura was the first woman to be president of Surendranagar Bar Association and to be guard officer of her town. Elected as an independent candidate in the municipality of Surendranagar, she chaired many committees. She was fortunate to work with noted social workers and activists like Arunaben Desai, Pushpaben Mehta, Vinodini Shah and Shanta Tai. She was involved in the rehabilitation of prisoners, the location of missing children and fighting issues concerning the victimization of children and women, becoming a steadfast champion of the exploited. With a mantra of *Self Sufficient Woman, Happy Family*, she started a self employment centre that works to achieve women's social awareness and empowerment, providing free legal advice and help to women in distress and dire need.

As the first woman mayor of Rajkot Municipal Corporation, Dr Joshipura provided strong leadership in social issues including campaigns for 'Save the Girl Child', 'Awareness Against Malnutrition' and 'Nirbhaya cases' (cases of rape).

Under the auspices of All India Women's Conference, capably run projects include a Family Counselling Centre, Multipurpose Women's Welfare Centre, Old Age Home, Family Welfare Centre, Community Health Centre, Adoption of Village, Crèche, Street School and Working Women's Hostel.

Dr Joshipura has presented research papers on the Status of Women at national and international events; she has been involved with national and state government bodies and NGOs in relation to the Harassment of Women and is recognised for her contribution to Women's Welfare. She has earned the status of social scientist and is an authorised mediator recognized by the Supreme Court of India.



**Sizani Ngubane** is the founder and director of the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) based in the province of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The movement was initiated in the 1990s and officially launched by Sizani and a group of 250 indigenous/rural women and youth in November 1998. The Commission on Gender Equality, Commission on Human Rights, National Land Committee as well as the Centre for Applied Legal Studies based within the Wits University were also represented at the event. RWM is now a coalition of some 501 Community Based Organizations (CBO) with a membership of approximately 50,000 women. The members work together across ethnic lines. They work at the village level but also work with their sister organizations at provincial, regional, national and international levels.





### The RWM:

- is a movement by rural women for rural women.
- Is the only grassroots movement leading an intensive campaign for women's and girls' land, property and inheritance rights. Lobbying National Parliament and policy makers for policies that are user-friendly to indigenous women and girls. Sizani has been working very hard to empower rural and indigenous women and give them a voice.
- started with a group of 250 indigenous and rural women and youth and is now a coalition of 501 community based organizations with a membership of approximately 50.000 women.
- Sizani provides training on different pieces of legislation and policies and encourages women and girls to effectively participate in policy making by assisting them to prepare oral and written submissions to be presented before different structures of policy makers within the National Parliament.
- has been leading successful lawsuits against Acts, of government declared unconstitutional because of gender bias.
- campaigned against governmental Bills that created a separate legal system with second class rights for people living in the Bantoustans, in particular women, which have been withdrawn by the government.
- RWM actions in areas where it works have contributed to a decrease of transmitted diseases by 15%; of teenage pregnancy by 10% in the last seven years. A traditional practice of abduction and forced marriage of girls "ukuthwala" has stopped.

Sizani is much more than an activist, she is a human rights defender. Her strong activism has caused many attacks that have put her life into danger. In one of these attacks, her brother was killed. The RWM has had a tremendous impact on the lives of rural women in South Africa, most of all because Sizani is a role model for young girls and women, teaching them through her example to believe in themselves and that women have the power to break through and achieve their aims.

## EDITORIAL

by IAW President,  
Joanna Manganara

### Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62)

More than 4300 representatives from over 600 civil society organizations and 170 Member States attended the 2018 Commission session. These figures represent a steady increase from previous years' participation, showing a growing strength and unity of women's voices around the world.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said progress for women and girls meant changing the unequal power dynamics that underpin discrimination and violence. ***Since his appointment as Secretary General, gender parity in the UN Senior Management Group has been met for the first time, a zero tolerance policy on sexual harassment has been established and an initiative was addressing sexual exploitation and abuse by those serving the UN.***

The Executive Director of UN Women said that it has never been so urgent to hold leaders accountable for their promises for accelerating progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Objectives. Commenting on how the #Metoo and Time's Up movement had demonstrated that change can happen fast, she said that rural women need the Commission to unite around the common cause, urging it to make it a moment of real acceleration, change and accountability.

The President of ECOSOC said that the Commission focus this year on rural women and girls was both timely and well aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Council's work. The Chair of CSW62 Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) said that members had a moral obligation to do more and



do better. The President of the General Assembly said that women must be taken into account in all actions from access to water to closing the pay gap. Empowering rural women would benefit all.

**Rural women make up over a quarter of the world population and the majority of the 43 percent of women in the global agricultural force.**

They are active agents of economic, social change and environmental protection. However, they are in many ways constrained in their roles as farmers, producers, investors, caregivers and consumers. On almost every measure of development, because of deep seated gender inequalities and discrimination, stereotypes and social norms, rural women fare worse than rural men or urban women. For instance, while the globalized pay gap between men and women stands at 23%, in rural areas it can be as high as 40 per cent.

According to General Recommendation (GR) 34 of CEDAW on the rights of rural women, they face structural barriers to the full enjoyment of their human rights, which are overlooked or incompletely addressed in laws, policies, budgets, investments and interventions at all levels across countries.

UN Women has recently released a report called “Turning promises into actions: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.” The report examines progress and challenges in implementing the SDG’s from a gender perspective.

The UN report underlines that progress towards meeting the sustainable development goals for women and girls is unacceptably slow and that unless progress on gender equality is significantly accelerated, the global community will not be able to keep its promise. The report concludes that the focus on women and girls provided by the SDG’s is yet to turn into practice.

**IAW Parallel Event**

*What can women’s organizations, in particular rural women’s organizations do to change the situation? How can they help accelerate progress on gender equality?*

In our view the answer lies in empowering rural women so as to be able to hold their governments and other stakeholders accountable for their commitments to gender equality and human rights.

In our panel we will examine the strategies that

rural women’s organizations follow to empower rural women and the challenges they face. We will also look into their achievements.

We will concentrate on rural women’s organizations in South Africa, India and Canada. We will also look into whether the challenges they face are the same in the developing and the developed world.

We will discuss the initiatives that rural women’s organizations are undertaking to achieve the realization of rural women’s rights, in particular the right to an adequate standard of living, to a life free of violence and harmful practices, to land and productive assets, food security and nutrition, decent work, education and health.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the crucial importance of gender equality and the empowerment of all girls and women in sustainable development (goal 5) as essential for achieving all the interconnected goals and targets. For example, secure access and control over land is a significant determinant of the level to which rural women and girls can enjoy their human rights. The right to secure access and control over land can reduce the impact of discrimination. It can also reduce levels of violence against women and can more generally increase rural women’s and girls social and political status.

We have to support rural women’s organizations to ensure that they can influence policy formulation, implementation and monitoring at all levels of government with a view to enable rural women to hold all duty bearers to account.

We can do that by calling on our governments to create and/or strengthen their gender accountability mechanisms. IAW has been doing that by issuing relevant IAW Declarations on accountability by governments on gender equality and women’s human rights.

We have also to support women activists, in particular rural women human rights defenders who are working relentlessly to claim women’s rights and realize their full potential. The IAW has done so by nominating Sizani Ngubane for the Woman of Distinction award for 2018 given by N60/CSQ NY. Sizani has won the award for the work she is doing with the Rural Women’s Movement in South Africa that she has created in the ‘90s.

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN BRIEF

## Remembrances

compiled by Priscilla Todd | Editor IWNews

### **Alice Yotopoulos Marangopoulos 1917-2018**

*President of the IAW (1989-1996)*

*President of the Greek League for Women's Rights for 30 years and a Vice President and member of the Board for 80 years*



Founder and President of the Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights, Alice Marangopoulos was an influential defender of women's human rights in Greece and internationally. She worked tirelessly through contributions to landmark legislation promoting gender equality and women's human rights. Alice Marangopoulos was a leading criminologist; President, Hellenic Society of Criminology; Board member, International Society of Criminology; Lawyer at the Supreme Court; Vice President, Bar Association of Athens; first female University Rector who served twice as Rector of Panteion University; President, National Commission for Human Rights.

The President of Greece, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, said that Alice Marangopoulos' institutional and political legacy had been an emblematic academic career and a committed and unwavering battle in defence of human rights, in particular women's rights. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece, said her uncompromising struggles during her whole life had paved the way for effective gender equality, establishing a strong example to be followed by present and future generations. Other tributes from the President of The Greek Parliament, Fotini Kouvella the Secretary General for Equality, political parties, trade unions and eminent personalities in Greece and elsewhere expressed compassion for the loss of the most influential women's rights activist.

### **Bettina Corke 1932-2018**

*Individual IAW member from 1964*

**IAW representative to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome, Italy appointed 1996**



Bettina dancing with an African delegate at the 2010 Congress in South Africa

In June we received sad news from Helen Self that Bettina Corke had died.

*Bettina spent her final months in a convent hostel where she was lovingly cared for by the nuns. She had become blind and was unable to find a way to live independently and continue her work, which was central to her life. Some time ago she developed cancer in her jaw, below her teeth, and consequently suffered a lot of pain. She loved IAW and was our representative at FAO for many years, where she was much appreciated. She attended many IAW meetings and contributed forcefully to our discussions. She was always fun to be with and a great friend.*

Under Bettina's guidance, IAW became a registered member of FAO. In 1996 she became an IAW representative to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome, Italy.

Bettina put together an impressive exhibit which included a short history of IAW **A Century of Commitment to Women**. She presented this to great acclaim at the IAW Centenary in 2004. Sadly this work was lost in the 2009 L'Aquila earthquake where Bettina lived for many years.





## Welcomes

After a global search, the International Alliance of Women is pleased to introduce the recently appointed Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General.



**Olufunmilayo Arinola Oluyede**  
*IAW Secretary General*

IAW Secretary General Olufunmilayo Arinola Oluyede, whose formative years and early education took place in London UK, was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1986. She is one of the co-founding/pioneer partners of TRLPLAW (a consortium of international commercial lawyers and arbitrators) operating out of two offices in Nigeria and affiliate offices in the UK and the USA. As Senior Managing Partner, she currently coordinates the International Commercial Transactions unit of the firm and is involved in foreign joint venture/partnership arrangements, business formation, negotiations and high profile arbitral and mediation proceedings locally and transnationally.

Olufunmilayo serves as Council Member of the International Bar Association (IBA) Legal Practice Division and is a member of the IBA Diversity Council; past chair, IBA CL Crimes Against Women Subcommittee and is on the Advisory Boards of the IBA Women Lawyers Interest Group and the IBA African Regional Forum, (past chair). Past chair, International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria, Lagos branch; member, National Executive Council, FIDA Nigeria and life member, FIDA International.



**Tunica Miranda Ruzario - Zimbabwe**  
*IAW Assistant Secretary General*

Her work experience in administrative positions with Zimbabwe United Nations Associations (ZUNA), African Asian Capital (AAC), Mandela Dlamini Associates (MDA), Fiat Group, South Africa, Constantia Multifranchise (AMH) and Kia Northcliff (AMH) have enhanced her communication skills and enabled her to work under pressure while paying attention to detail. All the successes in her professional life indicate she has great skill in working with people of all cultures.

Passionate about gender equality and women's empowerment. Miranda states *"working for IAW will allow her to do more to bring change in societies that do not necessarily empower women with knowledge of their worth, capabilities and offer equal opportunities for women. Being able to educate young girls on SDGs in a developing country has opened my eyes to see that there is more that needs to be done in actually implementing SDGs in their lives and making sure that these goals work for them, especially goals SDG#1 to #6 and that there is sustainability for future generations"*.





CSW 62



Soon-Young Yoon hosted dinner for delegates from left: Cheryl Hayles, Soon-Young Yoon, Joanna Manganara, Olufunmilayo Oluyede, Amanda Keeling, Natalie Kostus, Esther Suter.



IAW meeting held at Greek Mission

IAW and CFUW delegates were welcomed by His Excellency Ambassador Dionyssios Kallamvrezos, Deputy Permanent Representative of Greece to the UN.



**2018 IAW Board Meeting and Seminar**

**Deutscher Frauenring, German affiliate of IAW, is hosting the IAW 2018 Board Meeting in Berlin from 23rd to 29th October 2018.**

Deutscher Frauenring has organised a 2-day Seminar that will be open to the public and aligned NGO alliances (1325, CEDAW, National German Women's Council). The business sessions will be held from 26th to 28th October.

All information about the programme and accommodation is on the IAW website [www.womenalliance.org](http://www.womenalliance.org)

## Evaluation of the Agreed Conclusions of CSW62

This year the language of Agreed Conclusions was more progressive than the one of last year. The stronger outcome of this year is a result of the advocacy by women's, human rights and young people organizations and by progressive states. However, the Conclusions will mean nothing if they are not implemented, so that governments are accountable for the commitments made at the Commission.

What in our view is very important and has been the practice in many Commission sessions is that there are no questions asked about some of the root causes of gender inequalities. In the case of CSW62, the focus was rural women. There was no question asked whether change can occur for women and girls living in rural areas as long as neoliberal policies continue to dominate our world. Where subsidies are cut for rural and marginalized groups in rural areas, where development funding for social services especially the expansion of the health and education services is cut, when governments in turn privatize such social services and the private sector has no motives to go to areas that are not profitable there is no questioning if neoliberal approaches to development policies can bring about change. There is no questioning as well of the economic empowerment of women which is advocated by all governments. Numerous evidence based on research and UN reports demonstrates how markets themselves seem to be structured to perpetuate and exploit economic inequality. For example, in many developing countries, work and employment involve women doing jobs for long hours with very little pay, without social protection, in unsafe working conditions and at risk of sexual harassment.

### How can this process represent empowerment for rural women?

The discussion by many governments around women's access to land and land rights did not recognize their own policies enabling land grabs by big corporations at country level. The same is the case with the discussion about enabling women's access to markets through ICT without recognizing the inequalities women face in the workplace. So there is a lot of hypocrisy by governments which try to mask their indifference concerning rural women's improvement of their standards of life.

There are also increasing challenges that exacerbate the disadvantages and inequalities that rural women and girls face as a result of humanitarian emergencies and armed conflict as

well as the adverse impact of climate change.

Without doing something about these challenges, how can we talk about the empowerment of rural women and girls?

Moreover, the rural is diverse; it is not homogenous and backward as we commonly assumed because of our urban mindsets. The same is the case with women and girls living in rural areas. They are diverse. They also possess knowledge which is valuable, mainly indigenous knowledge. We need to change the lens with which we view them. Without this change of approach, how can we bring change for rural women and girls?

These questions are pertinent and should be answered. The development model should be changed and not reflect neoliberal policies. Member states should listen to CSOs in particular of rural women if they are seriously committed to achieving any development goals.

Another problem that has to do with the shrinking space of civil society for rural women is the denial of visas for many young women to participate in the CSW on the grounds of not being married and not having enough experience abroad represented by the lack of stamps in their passports. This represents a loss of experience in terms of women having their voices heard in a forum that really matters. How can we empower rural women and girls if we do not give them the space to speak up.

### Gains in the Agreed Conclusions

The outcome of the negotiations of the Agreed conclusions of CSW62 was more satisfactory than in the past. One of the big accomplishments is the removal of sovereignty clauses which will set a precedent for future sessions of the Commission (Agreed Conclusions 23 March 2018).

There is a strong emphasis on rural women's participation at all levels of decision making. The conclusions also make reference to women's and girls' voice, agency and leadership. They recognize the critical role played by rural women CSOs, trade unions, enterprises and cooperatives in supporting rural women in all spheres. The Commission also recognizes women's contribution in agriculture, it shows commitment to strengthen and support the critical role and contributions of rural women, including women farmers, and fishers and farm workers, to enhancing sustainable agricultural and rural development, eradicating poverty, achieving food security and improved



nutrition and the economic well-being of their families and communities.

Despite a strong push against SRHR by USA, Russia, the Holy See and other countries, the agreed language of SRHR in accordance with Beijing and ICPD is retained. In addition, the Commission reaffirms universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and recognizes that the human rights of women include the right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on all matters related to their sexuality including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, as a contribution to the achievement of gender and the empowerment of women and the realization of their human rights.

All forms of violence against women and girls which are rooted in historical and structural inequality and unequal power relations between men and women are condemned. The Commission reiterates that violence against women and girls in all its forms and manifestations in public and private spheres, including sexual and gender-based violence, domestic violence and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, are pervasive, under recognized and underreported, particularly at the community level. It expresses deep concern that women and girls in rural and remote areas may be particularly vulnerable to violence because of multidimensional poverty, limited or lack of access to justice, effective legal remedies and services, including protection, rehabilitation, reintegration and health care services. It reemphasizes that violence against women and girls is a major impediment to achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including those living in rural areas, and violates and impairs or nullifies their full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Agreed Conclusions for the first time ensure that pregnant adolescents and young mothers as well as single mothers can continue and complete their education and in this regard, implement and where well applicable revise educational policies to allow them to remain in and return to school providing them with access to health care and social services and support including child care and breastfeeding facilities and crèches and to education programmes with accessible location, flexible schedules and distance education including e-learning and bearing in mind the important role and responsibilities off and challenges faced by fathers including young fathers.



The Agreed Conclusions also ensure stronger language pertaining to comprehensive sexuality education for the first time. The Commission urges governments with the support of international organizations, civil society and NGOs to develop policies and programmes giving priority to formal, informal and non-formal education programmes, including scientifically accurate and age-appropriate comprehensive education, relevant to cultural contexts, that provides adolescent girls and boys and young women and men in and out of school, consistent with their evolving capacities, and with appropriate direction and guidance from parents and legal guardians, with the best interests of the child as their basic concern, information on sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention, gender equality and women's empowerment, human rights, physical, psychological and pubertal development and power in relationships between women and men, to enable them to build self-esteem and informed decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills and to develop respectful relationships.

In addition, a strong language is added on promoting educational and health practices in order to foster a culture in which menstruation is recognized as healthy and natural and girls are not stigmatized on this basis, recognizing that girls' attendance at school can be affected by negative perceptions of menstruation and lack of means to maintain safe personal hygiene, such as water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools to meet the needs of girls.



Another important gain of the Agreed Conclusions is the recognition of the contribution of civil society actors in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms of rural women. The Commission for the first time recognizes women human rights defenders and commits to creating a safe and enabling environment for the defence of human rights and to prevent violation and abuses against them in rural areas, inter alia threats, harassment and violence in particular on issues relating to labour rights, environment, land and natural resources and combat impunity by taking steps to ensure that violations or abuses are promptly and impartially investigated and those responsible are held accountable.

### Concerns about the Agreed Conclusions

- The Commission failed to recognize the diversity of women and girls concerning their sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions.
- Different forms of families are once again deliberately excluded from the text.
- The sexuality of women and girls living in rural areas was a topic that was not discussed. That women and girls living in rural areas include lesbians, transgender and intersex people were not mentioned at all in statements.
- Even the Ministerial Round Tables on access to education did not bring up the subject of comprehensive sexuality education which would enable girls and boys to speak up against proposed early marriages, prevent violence, and have more equal and respectful relationships.
- Concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights, access to safe abortion services, disproportionate maternal mortality rates, no access to preventive screening for reproductive cancers were not discussed.





# Oral Statement to CSW 62



## **IAW and CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women)**

were shortlisted to make an oral statement to the Commission on the Status of Women. The statement was delivered by Amanda Keeling, who works with Women's Electoral Lobby Australia, an affiliate member of IAW.

Honourable Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ministers and civil society members.

I am speaking here today on behalf of the Canadian Federation of University Women and the International Alliance of Women. We welcome the opportunity to address this assembly and we acknowledge the privilege that we have to do so.

Rural women and girls are among the world's most marginalized populations. They have consistently been at the bottom of development measures, and are still facing overwhelming gender inequalities and discrimination.

At this point in history there is an urgency for member states, in collaboration with civil society, to make gender equality comprehensive. Rural women can no longer be excluded from the conversation, particularly racialized women, Indigenous women, migrant women, women from gender and sexual minorities, and women with disabilities.

Based on the research we have conducted among rural women and community organizations, the transportation gap and the lack of available public services are undeniable challenges that

clearly influence a woman's experience in rural settings. Rural women are challenged with reduced access to training, education, employment, child care services as well as health and mental health services; all essential determinants in women's empowerment. Moreover, the isolation, the limited access to safe transportation and support services also increases women's vulnerability to violence.

Strategies to reduce or remove the barriers and to increase the availability of resources and services for women and girls must be prioritized when developing public policy and programs targeting rural and remote areas.

We urge member states to adopt the following recommendations:

- Address mobility barriers by improving public transportation infrastructure and technology infrastructure to increase access
- Create incentives for professional workers to work in rural regions and increase the presence of community based solutions to challenges
- Increase funding to ensure comprehensive, accessible health and mental health services; including sexual and reproductive health
- Ensure that women and girls in rural and remote areas are legally protected, with fair laws, from any form of violence
- Guarantee core-funding for shelters and affordable housing
- Ensure access to quality public education at all levels, including early learning and affordable childcare services to enable rural women to access education opportunities, re-training and employment.

We stay attentive to the outcome of this meeting in generating concerted actions within member states, and we salute the dedication of country representatives, but especially the relentless work of women's organizations across the world in advancing rural women's rights.

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN FOCUS

## Advancing Global Advocacy for Rural Women - Focus India: A case for Gender in the Indian Himalayan State of Uttarakhand.

Dr Manju Kak

**Rural women the world over play a pivotal role in supporting both their family and community towards achieving the acclaimed targets of the MDGs.** However, their own lives are not compensated by their overall wellbeing be it guaranteed basic human rights or positive economic or social structures of the regions and countries they live in. Their work though is a large contributing factor to generating income through rural enterprises, a variety of skilled work and agriculture which fuels local, national and global economies. They are hampered in many similar ways globally but specific cultural and geographical challenges exist on a regional and national scale such as rising crimes against women, increasing poverty, corruption, nepotism, lack of transparency in official functioning, bureaucratic hassles, criminalisation of politics, criminal-politician-bureaucratic entente etc. despite affirmative action being promised through policy making by governments and international bodies. How this is to be translated into a global reality remains a challenge for this century—hence the slogan 50/50.

**In India, rural poverty is a cause of grave concern, denying women even a basic standard of living, be it the right to clean drinking water, food, hygiene, education or adequate shelter. Approximately 70% of India's more than 1.2 billion population lives in villages. There are 6,040,867 villages in India. Moreover, according to the UN "2007 Revision of World Urbanisation Prospects", India will continue to have the largest rural population in the world until 2050. (Hindustan Times, 28.2.2008). Hence here is where change most needs to be seen.**

Though India attained independence in 1947, the rural-urban and the rich-poor divides are still plaguing the country and are a phenomenal challenge to National Planning Bodies now currently rechristened as Niti Aayog. The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), a Government of India organisation, has stated that in 2009-10 and 2011-12, women's employment has taken an alarming dip in rural areas in the past two years. In jobs that are done for 'the major part of the year', a staggering 9.1 million jobs were lost by rural women alone. This is a reflection of the fact that women are no longer getting longer term and better paying jobs, and so are forced to take up

short term transient work. (Varma, 2013). Towards tilting the scale and correcting this gloomy scenario, the previous elected government of the Congress Party initiated the *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act* into providing a positive light to rural women, a scheme that has met with some documented success and is continued by the current government run by the elected BJP Party headed by Prime Minister Modi. Several studies have shown that with the introduction of this Act, many rural women are coming out of their house for the first time to engage in paid employment other than their work in agriculture or as care-givers.

**Agriculture, the mainstay of the rural Indian economy, is no doubt sustained for the most part by the female workforce.** They are the invisible life line of the agrarian rural community life. Traditionally, rural women and girls have to bear the burden of taking care of younger siblings, cooking, engaging in domestic chores, looking after the fodder of the domestic animals in their parents' house.

But India is a country of contradictions. On the one hand, these women are venerated as deities, their spiritual blessings are sought when any work is initiated. On the other hand, **crimes against women and girls** are on the increase at an alarming rate despite the huge public outcry against the heinous rape and murder of a medical student "Nirbhaya" some years ago. In many cases, the perpetrators are known to the victims. **Dowry demands** made on a girl's family at the time of marriage is another bane leading to domestic violence and sometimes death. When the bride's family fails to satisfy these financial demands, the bride is tortured. Even in the Himalayan hill states where traditionally there was the everse custom of offering a "bride price", now dowry is demanded as a prerequisite to a marriage proposal from a girl's family.

According to India's 2011 census, the population of rural women who are literate is 58.8 per cent. But the NSSO, under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation of 2015, stated that in rural areas, nearly 4.5% of males and 2.2% of females completed the education level of graduation and above, while in the urban areas 17 per cent of males and 13 per cent of females completed this level of education.



## CSW 62 and IAW Parallel Event – Empowering Rural Women and Girls

Though primary education is free, parents are not interested in sending girls to school. **Right to Education** has been passed by the Parliament but it is still far from when the right will be a reality for all rural women. There is a negative attitude towards educating the girl child. Village schools are sorely lacking in infrastructure of buildings, teachers and even teachers' salaries are often not paid for months. Simple amenities such as lack of separate toilets for girls in schools, lack of security while travelling from home to school, lack of female teachers in schools, elder sisters' responsibility to look after their younger siblings when both the parents have to work to meet both ends, are some of the reasons behind the high drop-out rate of girls from schools. The much touted free midday meal scheme formulated in order to attract small children to school is beset by corrupt practices which undermine the positive results of the scheme. By and large, organised government corruption in the execution of most of these lofty schemes has become endemic in the system, something which Prime Minister Modi is trying hard to eliminate.

The majority of rural Indian women do not have the right to choose their partner. It is always decided by the family elders and the **marriage is arranged** with an endogamous group, where caste plays a very important role. If the girl wishes to marry someone from other caste or tribe, the traditional leaders of the villages oppose. Especially in states like Haryana, community and caste based Khap Panchayats, or traditional village elders conduct kangaroo courts to provide heinous punishments, even by awarding death to the couple that dares to fall in love outside acceptable caste or religious boundaries. All of this undermines a woman's ability to control her own future.

**The majority of rural women suffer not only from economic poverty but also from 'information poverty'.** There is statistical bias in under estimating the role of rural women in development. Women work for longer hours than men and contribute substantially to family income, yet they are not perceived as productive workers. (*Pankajam and Lalitha, 2005*) They are silent workers who are struggling to complete their household duties from dawn to dusk.

Equal pay for equal work is one of the cornerstones of the gender equality movement the world over but Labour Bureau data show there has been **little progress in terms of parity of salaries for men and women for equivalent**

**work in India.** Even more alarming is the fact that even though wage disparities have always existed in rural parts of the country, in some spheres of activity the divide has widened such as ploughing, digging wells etc. where the disparity in pay is rising from an estimated 70% on higher wages (ploughing work) at the end of 2004-05, to 80.4% at end March 2012 and to 93.6% at the start of 2013-14. Keeping control of the plow and of marketing of produce is a way of controlling agricultural income while using women to perform many other chores like planting, weeding and harvesting. In rural India, very few women have ownership over land or productive assets. This proves to be a roadblock in institutional credit. The majority of the agricultural labourers are women who are mainly assigned manual labour. (*Kurukshetra, 2003*)

### Status of Rural Women in Uttarakhand

Let's take a look at the lives of rural women in the Indian Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, a small land-locked mountainous state in north India from where the hills climb up to mountains of 23,000 feet. It adjoins Nepal and has close proximity to the national capital Delhi, a leading market of the country, and excellent connectivity with neighbouring states. Uttarakhand has abundant natural resources due to hills and forests. Its agro-climatic conditions support horticulture-based industries. The vast water resources available in the state are also favourable for hydropower. Uttarakhand has a robust social and industrial infrastructure, virtual connectivity with over 39,000 km of road network, two domestic airports, 345.23 km of rail routes and an installed power generation capacity of 3,333.35 megawatt (MW) as of January 2018. According to the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), the cumulative FDI inflows during April 2000 to December 2017, stood at around US\$ 652 million.

Yet what has truly changed for rural women? Here it must be noted that this region gained independent statehood in 2000 because of its women. They helped spearhead a movement for self-rule based on respect for their natural resources—a first of its kind. This journey began and gained international recognition through the path breaking Chipko movement of 1973. It was a **feminist consciousness embedded in ecological consciousness** that created an upsurge of non-violent resistance to the cutting of ash trees which made global headlines long before Climate Change was a catchphrase. Village women





resisted the contractors of the Symonds Cricket Bat Company which wished to cut down the trees of the community forest. They `chipkoed' or hugged trees, a symbol of protest that has since become famous the world over. Yes, certainly, the environmental consciousness rooted in their traditions is a cornerstone of all Himalayan women's livelihood patterns. It becomes the ethos of hill-life.

Ironically today, disregard for these age-old traditions is what is causing many environmental disasters. Other problems include the traditional woes of backwardness, illiteracy, poor health and sanitation, lack of transport, over-population, under-employment and environmental degradation through illegal mining, deforestation, corrupt land mafia are just some of the ills that beset hill women. Once there was also the growing menace of organised cultivation of marijuana as families found it a means of boosting their earnings from their meagre landholdings. Distribution of illicit liquor creates a menace as the popular Hindi saying goes "when the sun goes down, hill men become intoxicated."

Though the state has been a reality for some 15 years, it continues to be heavily dependent on central governmental assistance. The participation rate of women in the economy of the state is much higher than several states and also the national average. Largely, India's earlier Five Year Plans focused predominantly on the plains, and the hill districts have been left behind. Subsistence farming was the main economic activity. Due to subsistence livelihood, migration and a remittance economy prevailed which laid a heavy burden on women left behind to manage the homestead. In rural Uttarakhand women are contributing up to 90% of the total work in agriculture and animal care. These facts have been highlighted in a research paper written by Neeta Bora Sharma and Neha Kirti Prasad of Kumaon University. The paper said: *"State women play a crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields, including crop production, livestock, horticulture, post-harvest operations, fisheries etc."* The paper quotes another study that says that the women in the state devote as much as 62.17% of time for outdoor activities, 21.11% for indoor activities and 8.72% for recreational activities. It says that a woman usually works for 16.49 hours on a daily basis, and work related to agriculture and livestock consumes 29.35% of her time.

Working on land and undertaking para-agricultural activities has not led to women

empowerment in the state. Constraints such as being land-locked with huge distances between the markets and resources prevent traditional agriculture from being the lead sector for development. Women are marginalized both inside and outside their houses due to lack of independent economic status and control over income generating resources. Other social ills such as marriage customs, age old superstitious religious beliefs and shamanism create bondage for women.

Today the state faces the challenge of promoting livelihoods to minimise migration through local employment and income generation which would create a higher standard of living for women and opportunities beyond managing land holdings and the daily grind of providing fuel and fodder to eke out an existence. Thus the development strategy for Uttarakhand hills based on developing it as an Organic Green State through infrastructure development, tourism promotion, agriculture diversification, poultry and wool-based livelihoods has been suggested.

## **Some Key Pointers for future economic growth of the State in which rural women can participate if gender centric policies take the forefront**

Growth in capital investments arising from conducive industrial sector-specific policies and generous tax benefits in terms of interest incentives, financial assistance, subsidies and concessions has given a boost towards development but making these gender specific is recommended.

The Uttarakhand Tourism Policy was launched in 2016, which aims at developing the state's image as a safe, secure and friendly destination for tourists. To promote adventure tourism, river rafting has been made tax free in the state. The flow of tourist arrivals in the state reached 29.84 million in 2016. Several hill stations, wildlife parks, pilgrimage places and trekking routes make Uttarakhand an attractive tourist destination, a suitable climate for high-value agriculture, and a pleasant environment due to 60% forest cover. Gender based tourism initiatives as in the "village homestay" initiative are a good move.

The establishment of Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) earth station at Dehradun, Uttarakhand now offers high-speed connectivity. Smaller players are using this to outreach into villages. Several NRI players who have made their





# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN FOCUS

fortunes overseas or elsewhere are returning to give through Mobile Health vans and virtual classrooms.

The Government of Uttarakhand proposed a new scheme of Madhav Singh Bhandari Krishi Syebhagita Yojna, which would boost cooperative farming in the state during 2016-17 but its results are yet to be seen. Women based or run co-ops is an initiative taken up by NGOs and has met with some success so far in interiors. However, government support is yet to be effective on a large scale.

In the state, **Milk production** increased from 1,565.35 thousand metric tonnes in 2014-15 to 1,692.42 thousand metric tonnes in 2016-17. **Egg production** reached 411.91 million in 2016-17, while **meat production** reached 28.4 thousand tonnes.

This has positively impacted rural women in terms of nutrition for themselves and their families but often it is an income generation activity alone.

It is hoped that the **Single Window System** (where all facilities are available in one place), shaped to smooth the clearance of projects under schemes of Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States, National Mission on Food Processing, National Horticulture Board and Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, will encourage more women entrepreneurship in rural areas.

Uttarakhand is being developed as an 'energy state' to tap the hydropower electric potential of over 25,000 MW. This would help electrify remote villages especially prone to difficult weather conditions and poor roads. It might keep the male population home and ensure healthy family lives.





## Rural Women's Empowerment - Strategies and Challenges of Women's NGOs

Cheryl Hayles, IAW Vice President North America

Canada is the 2nd largest country in the world covering almost 4 million square miles, with a population less than California. In that vast landscape the population is concentrated around the Great Lakes and the US border. Which means, the rural areas include small towns of 10,000 or less, the Far North, Native Reserves and Wilderness. Within this demographic of women in rural settings, Indigenous women represent the largest group.

To capture the voices of women who live in rural settings we created a survey that looked at 7 domains: Transportation, Gender Based Violence, Health Care, Education (which includes childcare), Technology, Gender Equity and the Challenges and Opportunities a rural setting offers. There were sub domains such as elder care and further breakdown of subcategories of Health Care.

### Respondents

243 in the Individual Survey - women in Canada only

84 Community Service Organizations

The organizational survey was distributed across Canada, India, Rwanda and the USA in January 2018 and closed on February 2018. The break down of responses was: Canada - New Brunswick (2), Quebec (1), Ontario (3), Saskatchewan (7), Alberta (8), British Columbia (59), USA - California (1), India (1), Rwanda (1) and one Native Band from an unidentified location in Canada or the USA.

Of the 84 community organizations which responded, 59 were from British Columbia (BC). The organizations included representatives from the Peace River District and as far north as Fort Nelson down to the Kootenay and Selkirk areas, the Okanagan, the Caledonian region, the Skeena Valley and Haida Gwaii, the Central BC Coast, parts of Vancouver Island (central west and east coastal areas) and offshore islands in the Strait of Georgia/Salish Sea, as well as the Howe Sound area. These areas are isolated by geography - immense distances, valley areas separated by mountain ranges, and offshore islands requiring either flights or ferries to reach larger population centres. One organization indicated it took a 7 hour drive to reach a larger population centre, and another quoted one and a half hours.

### Transportation

In answer to the question "What are the barriers (if any) to achieving gender equality

faced by women and girls in your rural communities?" lack of transportation received the highest number of responses at 91.4%. Only India, and 4 organizations in Canada did not list lack of transportation as an issue among 75 respondents. Yet one of those did list lack of transportation in answer to the question concerning the two highest challenges to life in rural communities.

**Clearly, the lack of transportation is a barrier to be addressed in improving the quality of life of women who live in rural communities.**

### Health

Inaccessible health services were associated with several determinants mainly:

- Poor transportation infrastructure resulting in long distance traveling in order to access specialist and non-specialist care (pediatrician, psychiatrist, obstetrician /gynecologist, orthopedist).
- Difficulty finding a family doctor.
- Difficulty making medical appointments.
- Long waiting list for consultations and interventions.

Inadequacy between available clinical hours (evenings) and bus schedule (days).

However, regardless of the domain of health studied, these services were hindered by a lack of health professionals available (doctors, social workers, counsellors, specialists).

Mental health services were very limited, there were no local shelters to take care of women or girls with mental health issues. Mental health services were delivered on psychiatry wards or through regional health authority services with a strong focus on pharmacotherapy. Patients needed to travel in to the city or nearby community to get consultation or treatments. There were insufficient qualified resources available to manage mental health crisis, or if there were, they faced long waitlists and not enough access.

Chronic and geriatric health services delivery was similar to previous health domains in terms of delivery of services. Populations with chronic diseases having to travel to see specialists were facing the same transportation challenges. In addition, support for pain management was non-existent «there is only a pain group run once a year through Mental Health and Addictions».



Home care was not very popular and there was no emphasis on social support.

**In summary, rating access to health services seems to be an outcome of poor transportation infrastructures along with a lack of resources and a deficit in health services organization.**

## **Education & Access to Technology**

This section of the survey had 5 questions related to access to child care, cost of child care, opportunities for child care, access to secondary education and access to post secondary education.

In response to whether or not there was access to subsidized child care the answer remains, “not enough”. In Gujarat, India there is an “Aanganwadi” which means a kind of childcare for children ages 9 months to 5 years old. The cost per month for child care in that area of India is \$200 Canadian dollars per month. **The Canadian organizations report that childcare can cost between \$601- \$1,300 per month, at an average cost of \$65 per day.**

On the question of access to higher education, when the organization responses were compared to the individual responses the findings were similar. The individual survey said, “47.33% found community college and university programs to be accessible or very accessible; however, 44.8% said they were accessed with several challenges such as limited offerings at satellite campuses or the need to commute long distances requiring additional expenses for transportation and lodging”. **Organizations reported that in most cases students had access to online courses, community college for a few programs, otherwise they had to leave their communities to attend university or college in the urban centres.**

## **Gender Based Violence**

From the perspective of organizations that largely care for women, it would be expected that these results would be significantly different from the results gathered from the original rural woman survey. For example, 94.5% of the respondents in this survey answered yes to the question “Are there incidents of gender based violence in the community?” This compares to 48.5 % on the individual survey. Similarly, 75% of the organizations agreed that there were women’s shelters in their area while 66% of women in the individual survey were aware of such shelters. Regardless of perspective, the fact remains that gender-based violence is occurring in rural communities and more support needs to be provided for women who are experiencing it. Only 26.5% of the organizations answered yes to the question “Is there sufficient support

and information in the community for women experiencing violence?”

## **Gender Equity**

Question #22 on the survey asked about barriers to the achievement of gender equity in rural communities.

Respondents to this question identified lack of economic empowerment as a very significant barrier to the achievement of gender equity with an impressive 90% agreement rate! One might ask “which came first, the chicken or the egg?” All the other barriers noted in Question #22 contribute to our knowledge of why so many women in rural areas have not achieved economic power. As an example, lack of transportation (91%) and lack of care services for children and the elderly (84%) are seen as very significant barriers to the achievement of gender equity. **If a woman is unable to travel to a job/educational institution or have access to high speed internet it is rather difficult to gain economic empowerment.**

## **Challenges of women in rural settings**

1. Population mass not large enough to have political clout
2. Due to years of abuse and neglect, physical, emotion and financial unhealthiness becomes normalized
3. Lack of positive representation of female role models; “You cannot be what you cannot see”
4. The overwhelming challenge is that of transportation - mentioned in some form or other by 33 agencies.
5. Lack of services of various kinds was mentioned repeatedly, lack of adequate employment services; lack of affordable housing, lack of health care services and access to health care specialists; lack of affordable day care; lack of services for an aging population; long waits for emergency services, and lack of access to educational programs especially post-secondary education opportunities.
6. Poverty was mentioned as a challenge - the cost of living in rural areas especially for food was seen as being more expensive than in the city and lower wages (often the minimum) was a problem.
7. The failure of small businesses due to small market size is a concern
8. Psychological challenges were mentioned several times: outdated attitudes, stigmas, ingrained gender biases, community pressure to not call police when they should be called,



stereotyping and gossip were all mentioned as were the effects of colonization and trauma related to residential schools that faced indigenous people.

9. Repression of disclosures to authority of domestic abuse based on gender and racial discrimination.
10. Geography in the form of long, harsh winter climates was mentioned as a barrier to access to services.

## Opportunities

Overwhelmingly in first place (31) were comments related to community support networks and strong local relationships evidenced by a sense of belonging, closeness to family roots and closer-knit families. This might have a negative connotation, however, as one or two respondents said everybody knows everybody and that can be good and bad! But generally the emphasis was on people helping people, and being able to make a difference in the community because of participation in the networks.

The runner up (16 comments) had to do with the physical environment and its effects - sense of space, fresh air, outdoor recreation opportunities, quieter, slower lifestyle, closeness to nature and greater sense of interdependence. A corollary perhaps was that some saw rural areas as being safer places to raise children.

## Findings

1. Similarities between the issues women in rural areas of Canada face with those of women in other parts of the world
2. Although women in rural areas and far north often live in areas with rich natural resources they do not have adequate infrastructure to support up- to-date technology, transportation, medical care, access to education, employment opportunities and protection from gender based violence.
3. Community based services are not strategically placed to support their well-being and promote gender equality.

## Recommendations to Government

To achieve gender equality and ensure the empowerment of women and girls' in rural and remote regions, United Nations Member states must:

Research and investigate the specific barriers, at every stage of the life cycle, to gender equality faced by women living in rural and remote regions.

Develop specific strategies to address the mobility barriers that prevent access to services by improving public transportation infrastructure, technology infrastructure, improving access to technology, creating incentives for professional workers to work in rural regions and increasing the presence of community outreach workers.

Adopt gender specific and culturally sensitive policies and programs that address inequalities stemming from gender, geography, demographic, ethnic, cultural, and economic differences.

Ensure that women and girls in rural and remote areas are protected from violence by providing direct, long-term and core-funding for shelters, affordable housing, emergency crisis lines and emergency transportation.

## Next Steps for Non Government Organizations

1. Build stakeholder relationships: Connect with the organizations in the local communities to provide support and strategize on advocacy initiatives.
2. Ask rural women what they need and help to build their skills so they can tell their own stories and advocate for themselves.
3. Individuals and organizations have to collaborate to amplify the voices of Women and Girls in rural locations.
4. Advocate for the creation of trauma informed programming for mental health services and violence prevention.
5. Insist on Infrastructure in technology to support access to higher education. Access to the power grid needs to be included in the package.





## *Opportunities and Challenges for Rural Women in the Global Community - An Analytical Study with special reference to India*

**Dr. Bhavna K. Joshipura**

It will not be incongruous on my part to begin my deliberation with a cliché – Rural India is the REAL India.

In order to reach out to the real India, one has to approach rural India in general and the women of rural areas in particular. My began in 1983. However, the sensitivity for it had started developing in 1965 when, as a little girl of the small town of Surendranagar in the Surendranagar district of Gujarat, I used to fetch water from the river and, when the water was scarce, we used to make niches in the sandy riverbed to get water.

When I first started working among the rural women, mingling and talking to them, I realised that some of them were not even aware of their problems. Until 2002, my efforts were not much organized but three decades of work in that area gave me a specific insight to carry out the work.

### **What is rural life in India? A scenario:**

While travelling across the rural and mofussil areas to meet with women workers, cooperatives and workers of specific work areas I used to stop along the roadside whenever I saw women at work and talked with them about their work, their family situation and the day to day problems they had to face in their respective working areas.

Women play an important role in agricultural production, animal husbandry and other related activities such as storage, marketing of produce, food processing etc. As well, they spend almost 10-12 hours per day doing household chores, including fetching of water and gathering of fuel. Large numbers of female labour are engaged in marginal occupations in order to supplement the family income by the collection of fish, small game, firewood, cow dung; by the maintenance of kitchen gardens; by tailoring, weaving and teaching. Quantification of these activities in terms of work hours contributed, or its income generating equivalent, was not attempted or recorded.

### **Challenges for rural woman – a different perspective:**

The overall scenario in rural areas is not neutral to men and women, it favours men against women so gender inequalities still exist in a number of sectors. Indubitably, owing to the efforts of the Government and different social organisations and NGOS, the situation has improved but not adequately.

#### **A. Gender aspect:**

The division of labour is highly sex biased. In rice cultivation, for example, seeding, transplanting, weeding and threshing operations are women's jobs while ploughing is done by men.

#### **B. Access to Education and Training:**

The high incidence of illiteracy amongst females constitutes one of the greatest barriers to their development. It limits their scope of employment, training, utilisation of health facilities and exercise of legal and constitutional rights.

#### **C. Growth of unorganized as well as informal sector:**

There has been a phenomenal growth of the unorganised sector. Given the labour market conditions and the existing socio-economic environment, most of the female workforce is in the informal unorganised sector.

#### **D. Women headed households:**

The number of women headed households is highest among the poor. This is the result of widowhood, migration, desertion or the illness/unemployment/addictive habits of their husbands. The delivery structures normally do not recognise women as head of households.



## **E. Migration:**

Increasing pauperisation in rural areas has led to streams of migration and polarisation between rural and urban areas with a considerable concentration of wealth and social services in the urban economy.

## **F. Health:**

The heavy manual labour performed by women, the shocking working and living conditions, malnutrition, repeated pregnancies and poor quality of health services take a heavy toll of the health of women. They also suffer from other occupational health hazards like postural problems, pain in the joints and similar complaints.

## **G. Invisibility:**

While women carry the primary responsibility of bearing and rearing children, this responsibility is considered secondary to the role of male bread winners.

## **H. Housing/Shelter:**

There is a direct link between income, housing and economic activity; the lack of housing particularly affects women. They are the home makers, doing almost all the household work including child care.

## **I. Childcare facilities:**

Children in these families suffer the effects of poverty and all that goes with it like malnutrition, overcrowding, unhygienic conditions of living, lack of opportunities for education etc.

## **Rural sector**

### **National Data:**

As per the 2011 census, the total Population of India is 1,210.85 million; Rural Population is 833.7 million; Urban Population is 377.1 million. The Work Participation Rate is 39.8 %. The percentage of female cultivators to total workers is 24%; the percentage of female agricultural labour to total workers is 41.1 %.

### **Opportunities:**

- The way the women of rural areas are facing the challenges and providing essential service and support to their entire family substantiates that their innate strength is boundless and that is the major opportunity.
- Rural women possess traditional abilities, skills and talents. For instance, in Kutch, a border district of western India, adolescent girls through to adulthood inherit the art of world famous embroidery and knitting and this is one of the reasons that Kutch has found its place on the global canvas.
- In the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, most of the women, whether literate or illiterate know a sort of thread work called 'jardosi work', a type of knitting and embroidery called 'Khatli work', traditional embroidery, bead work, job work of silver jewellery, diamond work. Especially in the areas around Jamnagar, Vadhwan and Jetpur, the women are well versed in the traditional work of 'bandhani', a sort of art of tie and die and, in the interior parts of the Saurashtra region, women have inherited the art of weaving saris called 'patola'. More often than not, this art work is practised by women only. They get up at around 4 in the morning to do this work. 'Bandhani' and 'Patola' saris are known all over the world.
- Apart from physical strength, these rural women also own qualities like assiduousness and conviction.



- Rural areas contain ceaseless striving and toiling through the strength of women. If this ceaseless strength is honed with skill enhancement and equipped with vocational expertise, one can obtain quite encouraging results. The rural economy is based on agriculture and animal husbandry is its major fraction. Under the current situation, the contribution of women is quite commendable.

## **The Role of NGOs:**

- It can run Balsanskar Kendra (Child Care Centres), Anganwadi (shelters for mother and child) and day care centres for the children of women working in farms far away from their homes or as labourers.
- It can hone the traditional skills of the rural women and, by means of technical mediums/training, facilitate mass production. Also, by organising workshops and training sessions for design and requirements to update traditional skills can elevate them to global standards of production.
- The foremost responsibility of any NGO is to work in the direction of social awareness. For this, it should reach out to small women's groups, learn about their problems through interface, and then effectively work to resolve them. In other words, an NGO should aim to satisfy local needs.
- An NGO can form women farmers' organisations or clubs and provide them with intense training for increasing the production of food grains and how to grow more crops depending on the seasonal cycles. Rural women should be trained how to form such groups, how to maintain the accounts etc.
- Central and State Governments have taken up projects to form Women Self Help Groups. An NGO should take initiatives to help such groups to work effectively.
- The major scope for any NGO is in the area of skills development.
- It can also disseminate information about literacy and health oriented programmes.

We identified an area of operation to carry out our extension programme. It covers 35 villages of the Rajkot district for Community Conversion Action sponsored by UNICEF.

My next task was to develop a model that can convert the challenge into opportunities. It was not that easy but by the grace of God and help and guidance of friends and fellow workers, we developed an effective and sustainable model. In order to break the vicious cycle of challenges we need to focus on their strength and create new opportunities.

## **Unique scheme introduced by Gujarat Government:**

- As per the NSSO Survey, around 92% of the total workforce in India is engaged in the Unorganized Sector.
- To provide for Social Security and Welfare to the Unorganized Workers, the Government of India has enacted The Unorganized Workers Social Security Act in December 2008.
- 

## **Procedure:**

- Registration Forms are made available at the offices of the District Administration and at the Labour and Employment Department at Taluka and District places, with no cost.
- District Administration and the Labour and Employment Department have been authorised to identify the appropriate agency, namely Asha Workers, VCEs, Trade Unions, NGOs etc., to support the registration of Unorganized Workers.
- Data entry of these forms is done by Index-B and is linked with Aadhar to gain demographic details of Unorganized Workers

One unique model to empower poor women has been introduced by the Government of Gujarat.

Gujarat Livelihood Promotion Company Limited (Formed under the Rural Development Department, Gujarat)



# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN FOCUS

## Introduction:

Gujarat Livelihood Promotion Company (GLPC) is the executive arm of Mission Mangalam, the implementation agency for NRLM. It has been registered under The Companies Act, 1956.

- Empowering the poor by organising them into SHGs/Federations/other Collectives.
- Empowering the poor through ensuring access to financial services.
- Augmenting existing livelihoods and enhancing incomes.
- Explore livelihood opportunities through newer ventures in the rural service sector.
- Developing Inclusive Value Chains
- Financial literacy for women so that they can make informed choices.
- Universalisation of SHGs by ensuring that each BPL household has at least one member in a SHG.
- Build federations of SHGs, and register them as formal institutions
- Set up MIS and innovative Monitoring systems

## The five basic guiding principles of Mission Mangalam are:

- Leveraging upon Industry partnerships and corporate MoUs; 'the firm' goes to the community rather than people migrating to the firm.
- Improving the quality of rural products, thereby creating a market for these in urban segments.
- Inclusion of modern technology and processes which result in inverting economies of scale.
- Linking local initiatives to international markets.
- Mass empowerment through ownership of assets (means of production) with producers / producer groups.



## Rural Women's Movement

Sizani Ngubane

I am with the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) of the province of KwaZulu Natal in South Africa as its founder and director. I initiated the RWM in 1990 and it was officially launched in November 18 1998 by 250 indigenous/rural young women and women and some representation of different NGOs.

The RWM is made up of a coalition of 501 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) based in the province of KwaZulu Natal and some parts of South Africa - with a membership of approximately 50 000.

A fundamental principle of the RWM is equal rights to women and men in land, property and inheritance rights as clearly stipulated in the UN Charter adopted by world leaders in 1945, protecting and promoting indigenous/rural girls and women's human rights, attain gender equality in a democratic South African society, to which end we focus our efforts on promoting the indigenous women and girls social, economical and political development of indigenous women/girls including advocating for women's land rights, eliminating discrimination against women/girls including GBV, advancing girls/women's capacities in leadership skills, promoting their participation in the policy-making processes and decisions that affect their lives and amplifying their voices for peace and security at provincial and national levels.

We also do a lot of advocacy work. For example: The RWM, in partnership with its sister organizations like the Legal Resources Centre, took the National Government to the Constitutional Court of South Africa in 2005 to challenge the constitutionality of the Communal Land Rights Act of 2004 which was imposing more power in terms of land rights rested in the traditional authorities. In May 10, 2010 the Constitutional Court declared the Act as unconstitutional in its entirety without reservations.

<http://rwmsa.org/2010/05/11/clra-declared-unconstitutional>

As part of its Human Rights work the RWM fights against forced evictions of widows and daughters from their natal and marital homes by their male relatives in collaboration with the traditional leaders after their fathers and spouses have passed on. RWM fights also against harmful distorted cultural practices performed against indigenous young women and girls.

In August 2015 Ms Beatrice Boakye-Yiadom of the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) (one of RWM funders) visited one of RWM's projects. The women and girls of amaHlubi and eMangweni communities organized a five year celebration of an intensive campaign that eradicated/abolished the harmful cultural practice of ukuthwala (abduction of girls and young women who are tortured, raped and forced into marriages), a practice that has been performed for centuries.

Parents, fathers in particular, are now prioritising to send their daughters to school - not to marry them off in exchange of cows - (ilobolo / bride price) at an early age. New infections of HIV and deaths have declined by approximately 50% according to RWM Home Based Caregivers and a local clinic.

<https://web.facebook.com/rwmsa.rwm>

<https://web.facebook.com/ruralwomensmovement?rdr>

Key barriers faced by the widows, women and girls in our rural communities:

- a distortion of the customs and traditions practiced in rural communities aimed at perpetuating discriminatory positions of power.
- the marginalisation which impedes women and girls in their active contribution in the democratic decision-making process, which consequently creates a barrier for change.
- domestic laws passed at provincial and national levels are, at best, not implemented, when not openly discriminatory towards women's and girl's rights.
- Forced evictions of widows and daughters from their marital and natal homes by their male relatives in collaboration with traditional leaders after their spouses and their fathers have passed on.

Sizani provided examples of distressing personal stories of these barriers.

*She described advocacy work by RWM and the Commission on Gender Equality in the Courts under Amicus Curea (The Jezile). She spoke about threats made against RWM by traditional leaders, local elites and warlords who are striking illegal deals with rich commercial farmers with, for example, bribes of cars and houses in exchange*





*for the allocation of a piece of communities' ancestral land without their consent. RWM trains local communities how to acquire skills on legislations and policies followed by intensive training on the formulation and presentation of oral or written submissions to be presented before law-makers. Sizani described a successful outcome where a community sent a delegation of 25 participants to a public hearing on the Traditional and KhoiSan Leadership Bill. Then, following invited intervention by a provincial government department, meetings for the community and for traditional leaders were convened which lead to the reinstatement of a traditional leader who had been forced to step down.*

The biggest challenges that contribute to all these problems are:

- The legacy of colonial and apartheid policies like the Land Administration Act of 1927 which regarded women and girls as minors who could not even open a bank account in their own names or enter into any contract. The act had been repealed but its legacy still haunts indigenous and rural women and girls.
- Traditional leaders play a fundamental role in sustaining the marginalisation of indigenous women and girls. Their biased interpretation of the customs and traditions of the community decisively contributes to sustain discriminatory practices such as ukuthwala or the refusal of inheritance and property rights of women, through their privileged position. The men, especially the younger generation, are a necessary piece to prolong these unfair practices, either through their active support to the eminently patriarchal or through their omission.
- Additionally, the local, provincial and national legislator, together with the law enforcement forces such as the police and the judiciary are failing to bring change and provide adequate resources and relief to these discriminated sector of their population.

The key actors involved in challenging the problems/injustices are the women and girls affected by the discriminatory circumstances. This is a fundamental point. The RWM approach to these issues is to stop denying their agency and to avoid paternalistic practices. While women and girls remain as the key actors to achieve sustainable change, we must not forget the necessary change of the attitude of men, especially the younger generations, as well as that of the traditional leaders.

Lastly, our program will also continue with our advocacy work that seeks to further sensitize the legislator in order to pass and implement laws that protect, promote and fulfil indigenous women's and girl's independent land, property and inheritance rights, to implement their self-sustainable economic empowerment programs.

## **Strategies and Activities used by RWM to catalyse change**

The main strategy consists of empowering ourselves with the necessary tools to work towards our own emancipation process. We want to encourage ourselves to present our own oral and written submissions before the policy-makers, so that they can advocate for changing the pieces of legislation that are at the source of their discrimination. On a local level, we want us to have a greater involvement in traditional councils. In this manner, we will achieve a widening of women's effective participation in local governance.

Additionally, we seek to reinforce our knowledge on our inheritance and property rights, together with practical expertise related to agricultural activities and other economic areas. By suggesting and creating spaces for developing our own businesses and other economic initiatives, it will become a tool to improve our economic situations.

Lastly, we would like to reinforce the importance of partnering with other women and organisations as a way to effectively accomplish our objectives through cooperation and solidarity.

The main actors (institutions, constituencies and/or key people) we will keep engaging through the above strategies are:

**Women and girl themselves.** RWM strongly believes that it is for us, as women and girls, to step up and challenge our discriminatory position. Our seminars and training are aimed at providing the necessary tools to help start our own emancipatory process offering our external support.

**The role of men, especially the young generation,** is of great importance, as only through their change of attitudes can women eradicate the perpetuation of discriminatory practices. In particular, energies must be spent on working with the traditional leader in each rural community, as their position of power and influence can help in reversing these situations and sustaining such changes for generations to come. The empowerment of these communities should also serve as examples for the local, provincial and national legislator to pass pieces of legislation that further contribute to protect





# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN FOCUS

the rights of indigenous women and girls and consolidate their egalitarian position in respect to young men.

Expected changes include:

WM is aiming that by the end of the year 10% of the women will have their land registered under their name. We also seek to eradicate ukuthwala in the two communities where we will be conducting our work. Through our workshops and seminars, we expect that women and some men gain a better knowledge of their human rights and are able to actively engage with traditional leaders and policy-makers.

Lastly, we aim to positively contribute to the economic development of women through the promotion of initiatives that would improve our economic position and empower us as individuals.

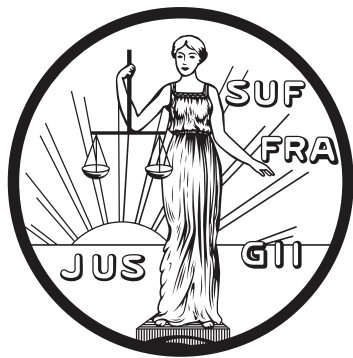
Changes (outcomes) RWM aims to contribute to as a whole:

*Democratic space expanded, inclusive governance and equal political participation of indigenous and rural women sustained*

- More women from diverse groups participate in policy and decision-making processes at all levels, including in contexts of conflict/peace-building
- Rural and indigenous communities are more aware of gendered challenges, and support strategies around operating space for women's rights organisations and human rights defenders

- Duty-bearers strengthen and implement laws and policies regarding indigenous and rural girls/women's political rights and participation.
- Violence against women and girls eliminated and respect for women's bodily integrity and autonomy sustained
- More women and girls access necessary support and services that respect their diverse needs and identities
- More women and girls are aware of and can exercise their rights to bodily integrity and freedom from violence
- Rural and indigenous communities increasingly supports ending Violence Against Women and Girls.
- Duty-bearers improve and put in place laws and policies to prevent and respond to Violence Against Women and Girls.
- Full economic rights and justice for women protected
- More women are aware of their labour and economic rights and organizing in the formal and informal economies
- The public (including policy and decision makers) increasingly recognises indigenous women's economic contributions and rights
- Duty-bearers improve and put in place policies and laws to protect women's economic rights





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