



## **African Women's Advocacy Position & Policy Recommendations**

on the CSW62 Priority Theme:

*“Challenges and Opportunities in  
Achieving Gender Equality and  
Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls”*

**Review Theme:** *“Participation in and access  
of women to the media, and information  
and communications technologies and their  
impact on and use as an instrument for the  
advancement and empowerment of women”*



In a bid to strengthen African women's participation and contribution to the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62), FEMNET and NGO CSW/Africa in partnership with UN Women and other partners, convened a *Regional Strategy Meeting of Civil Society* in Johannesburg in October 2017. The convening mapped out key strategies for comprehensive and substantive participation of women and girls living in rural areas. A wider civil society participation pre, during and post CSW62 was also agreed upon. Three *National Assemblies in Kenya, Malawi and Cameroon* of women living in rural areas were held prior to the regional convening to amplify the voices of rural women and girls to ensure meaningful participation and recognition of their role in shaping and contributing to broader sustainable development agendas. Following this in February 2018, a wider *Regional Pre-CSW62 Strategy Meeting of women's rights organizations* was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The above processes culminated in a **common advocacy position and policy recommendations** with key messages to be used to lobby governments prior to and during the CSW62; the common position and the regional strategy meeting are key tools in sustaining advocacy momentum and the exchange of ideas, information and strategies beyond CSW62. The *Pre-CSW62 Strategy Meeting* brought together national, sub-regional and regional representatives of women's rights organizations, UN agencies and partners working and supporting the work of women's rights organizations in East, West, North, South and Central Africa.

**The consensus recommendations of the Addis Ababa convening that will be presented at the global CSW62 convening in March 2018 are as follows:**

**A. Strengthen normative and legal frameworks and eliminate laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls living in rural communities**

- 1. Adopt effective measures to reduce infrastructural barriers, high illiteracy rates, violence against women and girls overall inequality in distribution of health resources and increase access to comprehensive SRHR information and services for women and girls living in rural areas.** SRHR is inextricably linked to the attainment of broader developmental goals. The recognition is enshrined within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through specific targets (3.7 and 5.6). Realization of SRHR for women and girls living in rural areas is key towards the achievement of Africa's Agenda 2063 aspirations for structural transformation and inclusive development for all. Ensure there is comprehensive pathways for addressing violence against woman and girls living in rural areas by providing standard operating procedures, safe houses/shelters, referral pathways, psychosocial support, reintegration into communities, comprehensive care and treatment and link to economic empowerment. Women and girls living in rural areas face all forms of violation and abuses that go unreported due to lack of information, services, long distance traveled and in some cases they are forced to go back to the perpetrators who are not brought to book or protected by the family or traditional leaders. We call for member states to put in place adequate safeguarding mechanisms to end violence against women living in rural and marginalized communities.
- 2. Calls for the mainstreaming of SRHR** in women's empowerment programmes in rural settings with special reference to young, poor, and women living with disabilities and women living with HIV/AIDs and survivors of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and fistulas. Remove legal, policy and administrative barriers to infrastructure, education, gender equality, distribution of health resources for human resources and commodities. Ensure access to affordable, available, accessible, non-judgmental and quality comprehensive SRHR services and information including age appropriate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), family planning, contraceptives and safe abortion. Ensure adequate financing for SRH services especially youth friendly services and stigma-free HIV testing including free screening for non-communicable diseases and treatment. Eliminate patriarchal and harmful practices such as early and forced child marriage, breast ironing and female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C). Collaborate with faith based, religious and cultural leaders to address harmful social norms and practices. Call on States to meet and surpass the minimum 15% (Abuja Declaration) allocation of national budgets.

- 3. Recognize and address the disproportionate burden of HIV and AIDS on adolescent young girls and women which is characterized by a feminized epidemic and sustained by gender inequalities and structural barriers to access to services.** Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information, education and services, compounded by vulnerability from harmful cultural and social norms, African women and girls especially in the rural areas continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the HIV burden and face challenges to access and adhere to treatment and care services. We call for government to accelerate gender-responsive HIV prevention, care and treatment programs and policies that do not criminalize women and girls in their diversity and ensure that they are supported to achieve viral suppression.

## **B. Implement economic and social policies for the empowerment of women and girls living in rural communities**

- 1. Invest and commit resources towards the empowerment and advancement of the rights of women and girls living in rural areas and create an enabling environment for their full and meaningful participation in the formulation of inclusive economic and development policies.** Frame women's economic empowerment and justice to include their access to and control over economic resources such as land, access to decent work, control over their own time and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels not just at micro but also macro levels from the household to international institutions and policy spaces. Ensure policies include effective measures to link women's produce and goods to regional and global markets and protect and prioritize domestic production. Ensure meaningful involvement and engagement of women and girls living in rural communities at all levels of community economic empowerment project design, process cycle phase and data collection processes.
- 2. Adopt integrated and intersectional approaches to women's economic empowerment and justice.** Recognize the intersectionality of unpaid care work, agroecology and the rural economy. Establish alternative national models of women's livelihood which recognizes the intersectionality of issues for women living in rural areas and respects the indivisibility of their rights, in particular the intersectionality of unpaid care work, violence against women, agroecology, market access and women's economic empowerment. Integrated strategies, will secure decent livelihoods, economic justice and end all forms of violence against women. Additionally, there is a strong need to provide a forum for women entrepreneurs living in rural areas to collectively address their barriers and access to timely trade information, quality training, as well as access to national, regional and global markets and value chains.
- 3. Generate and proactively publish data** along open data standards for all aspects of life for women and girls living in rural areas. Data should be disaggregated by gender, age, economic quintile, geographic location and

include qualitative data that tells lived realities and experiences of young women and girls. Technology and data are key to ensuring women are not left behind. Data is key to getting an accurate picture of gaps for meaningful interventions. It supports evidence-based, effective policy interventions. Ensure the meaningful involvement and participation of women and girls throughout data collection processes including policy advocacy. The Africa Data Consensus guides and pushes for a stronger approach to inclusive data to inform policy makers. Emerging initiatives such as Equal Measures 2030 works to ensure that there are connections made between data and evidence on the lives of women and girls informing development of actions.

4. **Promote tax justice through progressive fiscal policies at national and global levels.** Taxation is universally agreed to be one of the most sustainable and predictable sources of financing for the provision of public goods and services as well as being a vital mechanism for addressing inequality, including gender inequality. When illicit financial flows (IFFs) are rampant in a country, they contribute to preventing governments from fulfilling their human rights obligations and specifically to women and girls by limiting their resource base. Africa continues to lose a conservative figure of \$50 billion annually from illicit financial flows which would otherwise contribute to addressing gender inequality especially for women and girls in rural areas. We therefore call for the creation of a global UN tax body which will help curb this phenomenon. Additionally, we call for progressive national tax systems that ensure fair collection and equitable distribution of public revenue.
5. **Establish transparent affirmative action initiatives to empower women living in rural areas through public procurement.** Public procurement forms a large majority of African governments' expenditure, creating a significant market opportunity and unique fiscal route for women-owned businesses and inclusive economic growth. Proactive disclosure, usability and accessibility of procurement related data and information as relates to the planning, award, implementation and oversight of public contracts set aside to empower women will strengthen accountability and overall effectiveness of affirmative action economic goals.
6. **Recognize, value, reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work;** including through universally accessible, affordable, quality gender-responsive public social services. It is important to include the unpaid work of women as carers, farmers, producers and processors in gender-sensitive women's economic empowerment programmes and policies. Governments must measure and reflect unpaid care work in the national GDP; and ultimately, increase budgetary and resource allocation for effective implementation of policies to address unpaid care work, exploitative domestic work intensify data and evidence to track unpaid care work, agroecology and ratified mechanisms on violence against women at community and national levels.

7. **Protect and guarantee women's right to land, land tenure security and access to natural resources.** Take effective measures to curb widespread gender discrimination that systematically hinders secure access to and ownership of land and other productive resources for women living in rural areas. Ensure equality in rights of inheritance between female and male children. This will enhance livelihoods of women and girls as well as advance meaningful economic empowerment.
8. **Support women living in rural areas individually and collectively to access and control quality trainings for value chain,** equipments and comply with the international and national standards to access markets within and outside their countries.
9. **Transform existing agricultural policies, fully embracing climate resilient sustainable agriculture(CRSA)** as an alternative model that is economically viable, addresses the specific needs and protects the rights of women, and is environmentally sustainable; this includes attention to corporate accountability as well as public agricultural financing and budgeting.

### **C. Strengthen the collective voice, leadership and decision making of women and girls living in rural communities**

1. **Adopt concrete measures and meaningful engagement to leverage rural women's agency and address the under representation of women and girls living in rural communities in politics, policy and decision-making at multiple-levels from households to regional and global policy spaces and institutions.** Tailor and implement comprehensive measures to eliminate existing barriers and ensure the full, equal and effective participation of women, young women and girls in decision-making and leadership at all levels. In addition, it is important to strengthen individual and collective leadership skills and competencies.
2. **Take action on existing commitments to provide opportunities and strengthen capacity of women and young women** (including refugees and IDPs) to actively and meaningfully participate in national planning, policy design, implementation and budgeting as well as in responses to shocks, conflict and humanitarian crises all of which impact their livelihoods and wellbeing. Ensure women and girls in rural areas are respected and recognized as equal citizens and benefit from all forms of development so as to meet and enjoy their full potential. Call for women and girls in rural areas to have easy access to civil registration.
3. **Support the leadership, collective action and bargaining of women and especially young women in farmers groups, enterprises and civil society organizations** to address their needs and priorities in economic and political decision-making and policy formulation so as to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

4. **Properly resource, affordable, quality education systems including in STEM related fields and public participation mechanisms** that support meaningful engagement for policy influencing of women from community levels to national, regional and international levels. This will advance inclusivity rural women and girls living in rural areas in shaping macroeconomic and scientific processes and decisions and promote.

**D. Participation and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women**

1. **Promote the use of new information and communication technology** by women and girls in rural communities, increase the publication of open data that relates to this vulnerable group and ensure that this data contributes effectively to improving their lives. New information and communication technology will also help collate testimonies that can in turn influence policy processes.
2. **Strengthen prevention and response mechanisms to technology assisted violence against women.** Promote public awareness on technology assisted violence against women.
3. **Improve capacity and technical competence** of duty bearers on substantive investigation, collection and presentation of evidence and prosecution of perpetrators of technology assisted violence against women.



NGO CSW/Africa is one of the regional forums of Non-Governmental Organization Commission on the Status of Women established in 2013 as a substantive committee under the auspices Conference of NGOs (CoNGO). NGOCSW/Africa was created to increase the effectiveness of African Civil Society participation in the Commission on the Status of women. Since its establishment NGO CSW/Africa has provided leadership to African women in mobilizing women to participate in CSW and ensuring that women effectively engage and contribute to processes leading up to, during and after the Commission. Members of NGO CSW/Africa include FEMNET – African Women’s Development and Communication Network, FAS - Femmes Africa Solidarité, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), AAWORD/AFARD, Eastern Africa Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI), Servitas Cameroon and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF).  
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WITH APPRECIATION:



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