Focusing on Rural Women in a Sustainable Development Goals Framework

Discussion No. 96 from 4 to 18 February 2014

“Globally and with only a few exceptions, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men for every MDG indicator for which data are available.” (Interagency Task Force on Rural Women, Fact Sheet on Rural Women, 2012)

On Thursday 6 February, the Rome-based Agencies (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Programme (WFP), will host a side-event focusing on rural women in an SDG Framework at the Eighth session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals held in New York.

This mini-consultation is aimed at stimulating wider discussion on the topic of rural women. While the consultation is not designed to feed information directly into the event itself, the inclusive approach of the Open Working Group encourages debate on subjects related to each session.

Rural women everywhere play a key role in supporting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being. They contribute to agriculture and rural enterprises and fuel local and global economies. As such, they are active players in achieving the MDGs.

Yet, every day, around the world, rural women and girls face persistent structural constraints that prevent them from fully enjoying their human rights and hamper their efforts to improve their lives as well as those of others around them.

Poor rural people face multiple forms of deprivations and discrimination. Rural women, in particular, face major barriers to access productive resources and face disadvantages and exclusion rooted in the power inequalities associated with gender roles, leaving them disproportionately represented among the rural poor.

This side event will support the Eighth Session of the OWG’s focus on “Promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women’s empowerment”. It will explore ways to ensure that a post-2015 development agenda improves the status of rural women through a rights based approach and the implementation of improved policies, strategies and targeted interventions, underpinned by strengthening governance and relevant institutions. It will discuss,
inter alia, priorities for improving rural women's livelihoods, access to justice and legal rights, economic empowerment, and access to decision making at all levels, and thus show how improved conditions of women in rural areas can help to achieve all development goals. Emphasis will be put on targets and indicators supported by gender disaggregated data to better monitor progress in rural women's lives.

The Panel will include senior representatives of the three organizing partners, an organization of rural women, and at least one representative of a national government.

Your thoughts and views addressing the subject of rural women would be a valuable addition to the online discussion ahead of the side-event at the Open Working Group. We are eager to receive your responses on the following questions:

1. If you could make an intervention at the side event on rural women at the 8th session of the Open Working Group in New York, what would be its key message?

2. Rural women are often described as critical agents of change in discussions on sustainable development goals. To what extent would the achievement of food and nutrition security for rural women help accelerate sustainable development?

3. Of the many facts or stats recorded on rural women, which one do you consider to be the most revealing?