

## **Feminist Collective Statement**

### **Human Rights Council 3<sup>rd</sup> Session**

#### **Working Group on the Rights of Peasants and People Living in Rural Areas**

[SAFA](#) (South Asian Feminist Alliance for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) in partnership with other organisations (PWESCR, India; CSRC Nepal; ANANDI, India; Women's Action Network, Sri Lanka; Mauj Development Foundations, Pakistan; Fundación Plurales, Argentina; Colectivo de Mujeres del Chaco Americano, Argentina; Nagorik Uddyog, Bangladesh; COAST Trust, Bangladesh; UBINING, Bangladesh; Narigrantha Prabartana, Bangladesh and Peshraft Foundation for Human Rights, Pakistan) drafted a statement to present its position about the realities and challenges being faced by rural women in the region to realise their human rights. We welcome and take the opportunity to present our collective statement to the Working Group on the Rights of Peasants and people living in Rural Areas in its third session of the Human Rights Council being held from 17 – 20 May 2016.

All over the world and mostly the rural women from Global South play an essential role in supporting their households, domestic works, agriculture works like crop production and livestock care, provide food, water and fuel for their families, and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being. In addition, they also carry out a vital role in reproductive functions in caring for children, older persons and the sick. These all works done by women are mostly unpaid, despite the fact they play a key role for the improvement of rural economies. The structural cause and patriarchal norms, values and practices do not consider women as individual right holders, workers and key players for the economic development of countries by increasing their gross domestic products.

We the collective, strongly demand that the state should ensure rural women's access, ownership, control including participation and decision making in the governance and management of productive and natural resources (like Land, water, forests, livestock, credit and energy) and should also take affirmative action in having women's access to education, skill and science and technology. The state should adopt/reform law, policies and programmes for the advancement and promotion of women's livelihood and economic empowerment as a prerequisite for sustainable development achieving substantive equality (SDG-5) and decent work (SDG-8).

We would like to highlight some of the following issues and recommendations being presented to the WG during the session.

- 1. Recognise Rural Women as a Peasant** – a worker, a food producer.

- States should recognise, rural women as farmers and workers. States should ensure that there is no discrimination in women's access, ownership, use and control over resource rights.
- States should reduce and redistribute their unpaid work. To reduce women's time burden States should provide basic services – housing, water, sanitation, education, health, fodder, institutionalised child care facilities, energy (including domestic energy for fuel and fodder) and better technology options.

## **2. Rights to life and Right to an Adequate Standard of Living**

- States should recognise rural women as individual right holders and not just as members of households or dependents of male breadwinners. Rural women should receive entitlements as individuals.

## **3. *Right to Social Security***

- States should provide comprehensive universal social security to all women. Social security should be universal, but not uniform, ensuring specific and multiple vulnerabilities; and special temporary measures for socially and economically excluded groups including single women, female-headed households, migrants and migrant workers; Dalit, tribal; sexual and gender minorities; women with occupational stigma and women in conflict areas.
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## **4. *Right to Health and Sexual and Reproductive Rights:***

- State should protect and ensure women's bodily integrity and autonomy. Sexual and reproductive health and rights of rural women must be protected and freedom from violence should be ensured. Also include comprehensive sexuality education and information for young people and adolescent girls.

## **5. *Right to Education:***

- Rural women have less access to formal schooling and education systems due to various reasons which affects their access to job market and employment opportunities later in life. They usually dropout from school at the secondary level because they are needed at home to do chores or are thought to be of marriageable age. Attacks on girl's schools by extremists also force parents to take them out of schools. School curriculum is not gender-sensitive and perpetuates patriarchy. Lack of sanitary facilities and toilets also hinder girl's education. Additionally, sexual harassment is also a very important factor that prevents girls from accessing education.

## **6. *Right to Fair and Just Conditions of Work:***

- There is worldwide recognition that agriculture, together with mining and construction, is a particularly hazardous sector. Women are exposed to serious risks while engaging in agricultural activities - due to exposure to pesticides and other agrochemicals causing poisoning, death or in certain cases work-related cancers. The nature of their work – examples include rice transplanting, prawn peeling, etc - also places them at greater health risks.

## **7. Rights to Means of Agricultural Production or the Right to Livelihoods:**

- States should recognise, promote and protect rural women's right to livelihoods including opportunities for employment (paid work).
- Rural women should have *individual rights* over productive resources (including natural resources) for sustainable livelihoods - irrespective of who they are and where they come from. States should ensure access, ownership, control and management including decision-making power of productive resources and its outputs. This includes land, water, forests, livestock, credit, energy, technology, knowledge, education, skills.

## **8. The Right to Land and territories (Natural Resources):**

- States should undertake equitable distribution of land, water and forest to support livelihoods of women peasants and prevent dispossession of resources from peasants to corporations
- States should ensure equal and engaged participation of women in all decision making processes around issues connected to resources including land. States should remove barriers to ensure women's participation in all aspects of local governance and decision making.

## **9. Rural Peasant Women and Markets**

- States should ensure equal access and participation in markets– both for labour and goods. Rural women should have opportunities to gain better skills and knowledge to participate in markets equally and for their upward mobility. Should have access to credit, loans, subsidies

## **10. Rural Peasant Women and Migration and Conflict:**

- Militarization and invasion of multi-national companies in the name of development in developing countries has tremendous negative impact on rural women's lives and livelihoods. States should ensure internally displaced Women (IDP) displaced from their land are able to return to their original habitat.

## **11. Rural Peasant Women's Access to justice and political participation.**

*For More, please find the attached comprehensive statement.*

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The Women's Major Group (WMG) was created as one of nine Major Groups after the 1992 UN Conference on Environment & Development held in Rio. This list serve of the WMG provides information on the Post 2015 & SDG process (incl. Finance) as well the Environment processes (UNEP). The Organizing Partners (OPs) rotate periodically. The current WMG OPs for the Post-2015 process are Women Environmental Programme (WEP) Nigeria, Global Forest Coalition (GFC), based in Colombia, Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) based in USA, Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) Netherlands, International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC) based in USA, Equidad de Género, based in Mexico and Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law & Development (APWLD) based in Thailand. The co-facilitators of the WMG at UNEP are currently Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development, GFC and focal points Soroptomists Kenya, WECF, APWLD and Earth Care Africa.

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