

Ad Hoc Group of International NGOs representatives to FAO residing in Rome

**ROUND TABLE**

**THE RIGHT TO FOOD THROUGH THE RIGHTS TO LAND AND  
WATER FOR WOMEN AND POOR RURAL FARMERS**



**AD HOC GROUP OF INGOs**  
Representatives to FAO  
residing in Rome

Rome, 17 November 2007

**Summary Report**

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### **Background**

The Round Table on *“The right to food through the rights to land and water for women and poor rural farmers”* was presented and organized by the Women’s Working Group of the AD HOC GROUP of INGOs in Formal Status with FAO in Rome on the occasion of the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of FAO Conference.

### **Date**

17 November 2007

### **Venue**

FAO, Rome

### **Objective**

The objective of this event was to discuss the issues of the right to food, right to land and water for women and poor farmers, identify critical areas of concern and make proposals of joint FAO/INGOs activities at international, regional and local levels.

### **Participants**

Representatives of International NGOs  
FAO Conference delegates  
FAO staff

### **Co-chairs**

Bettina Corke - International Alliance of Women (IAW), Chair of the Women’s Working Group of INGOs in Formal Status with FAO in Rome  
Thomas Price - Senior Programme Officer, Strategic Planning Unit, ODG, FAO

### **Speakers**

Marcela Villarreal - Director, Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, FAO  
Ivanka Corti – Former Chair of the UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)  
Margret Vidar - Human Rights Adviser, Agricultural and Economics Division, FAO  
Pasquale Steduto - Chief, Water Development and Management Unit, FAO  
Masha Volodina - World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)  
Marco Randone - Rotary International (RI)  
Stefania Marcone – International Cooperative Alliance (ICA),

## Summary of the interventions

Marcela Villarreal provided an overview of FAO's work on gender issues and noted that a "Progress Report on Implementation of the FAO Gender and Development Plan of Action" would be presented at the 34th Session of FAO Conference.

Ivanka Corti made a presentation on *the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* - a binding treaty that legally obliges Governments to eliminate discrimination against women by granting them legal rights as well as equal opportunities. The Convention constitutes the framework of action to promote the fundamental *human rights* of women. In particular, Dr. Corti focussed on **Article 14** of the Convention dedicated to the rights of rural women:

- to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
- to have access to adequate health care facilities, including family planning;
- to benefit from social security programmes;
- to obtain all types of training and education;
- to organize self-help groups and cooperatives in order to obtain equal opportunities through employment or self-employment;
- to participate in all community activities;
- to have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;
- to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

CEDAW is one of the most far reaching documents in the international law concerning rural women considering that, particularly in developing countries, they are the poorest of the poor, in spite of the vital role they play in the economic and social development of their countries.

Ivanka Corti provided an overview of the CEDAW monitoring process and inquiries on situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights. As far as the art. 14 is concerned, the Monitoring Committee pays particular attention to access to women's land and property rights, discrimination in inheritance, access to resources and credit as well as their full integration in the rural development.

NGOs play a critical role in the CEDAW monitoring process by sending shadow reports on the real situation of women in the countries. NGOs also greatly contribute to dissemination of knowledge about the Convention, informing rural women on their legal rights and offering legal aid.

Margret Vidar updated the participants on where we are now on the right to food, providing an overview of the International law (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), State obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food, FAO's role in ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger, the Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food.

Masha Volodina shared with the participants some lessons from the field on how the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is addressing the right to food, microcredit and non-formal education for girls and young women.

Pasquale Steduto made a presentation on water pricing and agricultural perspective of paying for water.

Marco Randone shared Rotary's International experience of fund-raising and management of water and sanitation projects at the local level.

Stefania Marcone addressed the issues of gender integration in the co-operative movement and society, self-empowerment and the promotion of women through positive actions such as: gender awareness training for women and men; training schemes; career incentives; recruiting and promotion schemes; mentorship programmes; access to decision-making bodies.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

A useful debate led to the following conclusions and recommendations.

Ensuring resources for women and poor farmers in rural and peri-urban areas helps to ensure food security, because the improved role and condition of women and the poor of the world works towards the well-being of all humanity. However women, particularly rural women, are affected disproportionately by hunger and poverty. If we want to address these problems and find solutions, we have to use the legally binding instruments of the international law, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which in its article 14 addresses the different forms of discrimination against women and proposes the respect of their fundamental human rights as well as State responsibilities.

The Round Table participants recommended that the right to food should be intergrated in the article 14 of CEDAW.

Other provisions of international and national law to protect women's access to food, land and other natural resources should be used more.

It is an imperative for the NGOs dealing with problems of food security, right to land and women rights to participate equally in the development of the ways and means to overcome hunger and poverty as recommended in the FAO's Independent External Evaluation report, presented to the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of FAO Conference. Non-governmental organizations should make their members aware of the State obligations and accountability.

### ***For further information***

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## ATTACHMENT 1

*Round Table – Papers and Reference Materials.*

*“Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW” ( its history and progress since its establishment in 1981) with particular reference to Article 14 of CEDAW on Rural Women presented by Dr.. Ivanka Corti. Former Chair of the UN CEDAW Committee.*

[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw)

*“Where are we now on the Right to Food”- presented by Margret Vidar, Human Rights Food Advisor, Right to Food Unit- FAO Rome, [www.fao.org/righttofood](http://www.fao.org/righttofood)*

*“Who Pays for Water – An Agricultural Perspective” presented by Pasquale Steduto, Chief Water Unit, FAO Rome. [www.fao.org/nr/water](http://www.fao.org/nr/water)*

*“Opening the Doors to Equal Opportunity - International Cooperative Alliance and its Gender Equality Committee” presented by Stefania Marcone, Chair of the Gender Equality Committee of the International Cooperative Alliance.*

[www.icacoop/gender/index.html](http://www.icacoop/gender/index.html)

## ***ATTACHMENT 2***

### **FROM THE CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women )**

#### **ARTICLE 14**

- 1-States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of this Convention to women in rural areas.
  
- 2-States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:
  - A. to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
  - B. to have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
  - C. to benefit directly from social security programmes;
  - D. to obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;
  - E. to organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;
  - F. to participate in all community activities;
  - G. to have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.