

## **UN General Assembly informal interactive hearings on the post-2015 development agenda**

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This year marks a momentous occasion, providing a huge opportunity to carve out the development path for the next 15 years. The aspirations of the entire world population demand that the process leaves no one behind, requiring sustainability to be at the core of a just, equitable and inclusive; people oriented rights based development approach.

I speak on behalf of CECOEDECON and represent the voices of the women farmers of India and other developing countries, with specific focus on those relying on meagre means of subsistence. By women farmers I refer to the integrated role rural women play while interacting with their surroundings and nature thus shaping their day to day lives and affecting the local traditions, social beliefs and practices. They are thus central to the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development.

Although the reciprocal relationship these women share with the environment is quite apparent in the rural setting, their contributions are largely unrecognized. While women play the key role in managing the natural resources in a household they are largely left out of the decisions regarding the same. They are responsible for 70-80% of the agriculture work; single handedly manage the livestock; hold the sole load of the domestic food production and for fulfilling the nutritional requirements of the family. They also carry the burden of collecting and managing water and means of energy for the household with almost no support from their male counterparts. In addition the workload of unpaid domestic and care work also lies on women for which they get no financial returns.

Factors affecting environment have severe manifestations on their lives, different in nature from the effects on men and relatively more severe. The threat of Climate change, as is becoming more and more visible from the increasing incidences of climate unpredictability as seen in the past year in Rajasthan the desert state of India, in the form of localised flash floods and droughts episodes, is likely to increase the plight of the women farmers further.

These imposed roles demand all their time and energy. The many multi faceted, complicated and interconnected factors including the lack of control over productive resources, skills, lack of availability of and access to technology and credit and low resilience to risks and shocks affect their livelihood, health, and their social relationships; resulting in a huge opportunity cost for them.

Although giving gender equality and women and girls empowerment precedence in the SDGs as standalone Goal 5 is a huge step forward towards inclusive development, but the lack of incorporation of a strong understanding of the roles and specific needs of women, distinct from those of men; is a major loophole that needs to be plugged to achieve the development envisaged at the end of 2030. For instance there is no mention of the redistribution of domestic and care work in the targets; women's recognition as farmers is another crucial missing element.

I would like to recommend that:

- Indicators look beyond statistical analysis and be substantiated with qualitative effects of context specific underlying aspects, with increased focus on capacities.

- Indicators should be developed based on the understanding of women's poverty that looks at all the hidden factors; and recognizes the human rights of women.
- Indicators should be flexible, subject to revision based on periodic review and sensitive to individual country capacities.
- Effective implementation requires strong and binding commitments and ownership on the part of the government and political will to direct adequate funds for addressing gender issues.
- The participation of CSOs in the country level planning is of extreme importance.
- For effective monitoring of implementation the indicators should focus on the assessment of not just progress and the associated rate but also the extent to which the inequalities and structural causes have been reduced.

Strengthening data collection, use, analysis and sharing requires:

- Periodic collaborative dialogue at different levels to identify meaningful data, their sources and assessment measures.
- Disaggregated data by sex, indigenous groups and other vulnerable communities.
- A robust, accountable and transparent institutional mechanism for implementation of planning; monitoring; and data collection and management.
- Supporting the institutional framework by collaborating with other stakeholders especially civil society for maximising accurate data sources with wider reach.

The effectiveness of the goals calls for a strong collaborative process of implementation, MOI and review; at the national level for planning and gap analysis, regional level for exchange of learning and at the global level for effective partnerships and a holistic review mechanism like the UPR of Human Rights. Women need to be considered in all these integrated processes so that weakness of measuring progress in the MDGs can be done away with.

It is high time that we stop treating women as passive subjects. We need to realise and recognise their immense potential as agents of change and development and internalise their role and our responsibilities towards them as a crosscutting aspect for all the goals. They are not the problem but the solution. The post 2015 development agenda cannot afford to ignore the large pool of resources they provide.

Thank You.