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Advancement of women

Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/181, the present report provides a review of policies and programmes undertaken by Member States and United Nations entities to strengthen the rights, resilience, livelihoods and well-being of women and girls in rural areas and to advance the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report also contains a review of progress made by Member States in implementing Assembly resolution 78/150 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls for realizing all Sustainable Development Goals. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolutions 78/181 on the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas and 78/150 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls for realizing all Sustainable Development Goals, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of both resolutions at its eightieth session. In the present report, the Secretary-General reviews progress made in achieving gender equality and improving the situation of women and girls in rural areas since the seventy-eighth session. As cascading crises threaten advances in gender equality, the report highlights efforts by Member States, the United Nations system and other actors to respond to the challenges facing women and girls in rural areas and to create enabling conditions for the realization of their rights, resilience, livelihoods and well-being.

2. The present report provides a comprehensive overview of efforts to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, in particular national efforts to improve the situation of women and girls in rural areas by: (a) investing in and strengthening rural women's economic empowerment; (b) improving rural women's access to and control of land, water and other natural resources; (c) ensuring the food security and nutrition of rural women and girls; (d) building the climate and environmental resilience of rural women and girls; (e) ensuring the full and equal participation of rural women and girls; and (f) strengthening the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender statistics.[1] The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

3. Member State commitments to gender equality and women's rights and empowerment are enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, among other instruments. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the agreed conclusions of the sixtieth (E/2016/27-E/CN.6/2016/22), sixty-first (E/CN.6/2017/L.5), sixty-third (E/CN.6/2019/L.3), sixty-fifth (E/CN.6/2021/L.3), sixty-sixth (E/CN.6/2022/L.7) and sixty-eighth (E/CN.6/2024/L.3) sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women serve as guidance for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development constitutes an overarching and transformative framework that brings attention to the imperative of rural development and the empowerment of rural women and girls. In the 2030 Agenda, Member States are called upon to invest in sustainable agriculture and fisheries and to support women farmers, herders and fishers in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries.

5. The priority theme of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women was "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls". In the agreed conclusions, the Commission

[1] Submissions were received from 21 Member States (Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Burkina Faso, Chad, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Lebanon, Namibia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Ukraine, Uruguay and Zimbabwe), one regional body (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and eight United Nations agencies (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations University).

called for Member States to overcome persistent gender inequalities, discrimination and structural barriers and to support the rights, well-being and resilience of rural women and girls (E/2018/27). At its sixty-seventh session, the Commission reviewed the implementation of the agreed conclusions (E/CN.6/2023/4).

6. In article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, States Parties agreed to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against rural women. In its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recognizes that rural women in both developing and developed countries are deeply affected by poverty, economic and political exclusion, climate change and natural disasters, and lack of access to infrastructure, services and social protection, and that rural development policies continue to overlook women's rights and priorities, including those of women farmers and migrant women workers employed in agriculture.

7. In its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee notes that rural and Indigenous women are directly affected by the impacts of climate change and disasters as food producers and agricultural workers. Their climate resilience is compromised by insecure land tenure, poor land quality and out-migration of men, which leaves them to shoulder farming responsibilities on their own. Climate-related resource scarcity also increases their exposure to violence.

8. In its general recommendation No. 39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls, the Committee calls upon States Parties to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against Indigenous women and girls living in rural, remote and urban areas and to enable the realization of their rights to effective participation in political and public life; land, territories and natural resources; food, seeds and water; a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; culture, education, work and health; and access to justice and effective remedies in case of violations.

9. In the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, adopted in 2018, the Human Rights Council recognized that peasants and other people living in rural areas have the right to land, individually and/or collectively, including the right to access, sustainably use and manage land, water bodies, coastal seas, fisheries, pastures and forests, to achieve an adequate standard of living, to have a place to live in security, peace and dignity, and to develop their cultures. The Council also called upon States to ensure that peasant women and other women working in rural areas enjoyed without discrimination the right to equal access to, use of and management of land and natural resources, and equal or priority treatment in agrarian and land reform and land resettlement schemes.

10. The General Assembly, in its resolution 76/300 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, recognized the threat that biodiversity loss, climate change, desertification, environmental degradation and unsustainable development pose to the enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations, in particular women and girls, and the importance of gender-responsive action and women's and girls' participation, decision-making and leadership to safeguard the environment.

11. The thirtieth anniversary review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlighted rural women's disproportionate poverty, illiteracy, share of unpaid care and domestic work, and vulnerability to environmental degradation and climate change, and the urgency of enabling sustainable livelihoods, employment opportunities and outcomes, and access

to social protection, public services, sustainable infrastructure and productive resources.[2]

12. At the United Nations Food Systems Summit, held in 2021, gender equality was recognized as critical for transforming food systems. It was highlighted that the transformation of food systems must benefit all, in particular women and girls. In 2023, the Secretary-General, in his call to action for accelerated food systems transformation, emphasized the need to integrate food systems strategies into national policies, strengthen governance and promote the participation of women, young people and Indigenous communities.

II. Data and trends

13. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is the most comprehensive and visionary agenda for gender equality and women and girls' human rights, and is key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite some gains in reducing gender inequalities, progress is slow and fragmented. Women and girls are at a disadvantage as wealth and income inequalities grow in and between both developed and developing countries.[3] Achievement of the Goals by 2030 is severely off track, with only half the necessary data available for monitoring progress.[4] No country has comprehensive data on all 52 gender-specific indicators across the 17 Goals. The global average data availability for these indicators stands at 56 per cent. Performance is better, at 68 per cent, for the indicators under Goal 5, on gender equality. Of the 18 indicators under Goal 5, only 2 are close to target globally, and 4 others are far or very far from target.[5]

14. Global extreme poverty declined from 10.5 per cent in 2015 to 8.5 per cent in 2024, with some 700 million people living below $2.15 a day.[6] The goal of reducing extreme poverty to 3 per cent by 2030 is unlikely due to the polycrisis – the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate and environment emergencies, escalating conflicts and cost-of-living, food, fuel and debt crises – which disproportionately affects women and girls.[7] Extreme poverty in the poorest countries is 1 per cent higher than in 2019,[8] and higher overall for women than for men at 9.8 and 9.1 per cent, respectively.[9] Poverty especially affects older women, given their lower levels of economic participation, lower wages, patchy social protection and greater likelihood to be widowed without a pension, compared with men, leading to increased economic insecurity in old age.[10]

[2] See E/CN.6/2025/3.
[3] See E/CN.6/2025/3.
[4] *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024* (United Nations publication, 2024).
[5] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024* (New York, 2024).
[6] World Bank, "Poverty headcount ratio at $2.15 a day (2017 PPP) (% of population)"; and World Bank, *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report 2024: Pathways Out of the Polycrisis* (Washington, D.C., World Bank).
[7] See A/79/210.
[8] World Bank, *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report 2024*.
[9] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*.
[10] *World Social Report 2023: Leaving No One Behind in an Aging World* (United Nations publication, 2023).

15. An estimated 43 per cent of the world's population,[11] or nearly 3.5 billion people, live in rural areas, as do 80 percent of the extreme poor.[12] Over 1.2 billion people, about half of whom are women, are employed in agrifood systems.[13] Globally, a quarter of employed women work in agriculture, including forestry and fishing,[14] which remains the most important employment sector for women in low-income and lower-middle-income countries, even if most jobs are informal, low-paid, low-skilled, labour-intensive and vulnerable.[15] Some 4 billion people live in households reliant on agrifood livelihoods[16] and are therefore highly vulnerable to the effects of economic, environmental and climate shocks and their gendered impacts.[17]

16. In a worst-case climate scenario, 158 million more women and girls could be pushed into poverty by 2050, and 236 million into food insecurity, compared with an additional 131 million men and boys.[18] The gender gap in moderate or severe food insecurity widened significantly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 1.4 percentage points in 2019 to 3.6 in 2021, as women's livelihoods and incomes diminished and unpaid care and domestic work intensified. The gender gap decreased to 2.3 points in 2022 and 1.3 points in 2023, close to pre-pandemic levels, but persists. Food insecurity and extreme poverty remain deeply rooted in rural areas, with disproportionate impacts on women, young people and Indigenous Peoples.[19]

17. Due to the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination to which women and girls, in particular rural women and girls, are subject – on the basis of sex, age, income, location, marital and head of household status, race or ethnicity, culture, Indigenous status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and as women affected by HIV/AIDS, women with disabilities, and women migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons – they were at greater risk of rising poverty, food insecurity, violence and exclusion well before the polycrisis.[20] Virtually every global gender and development indicator in the previous decade showed that rural women lagged behind rural men and urban women and men.[21]

18. Entrenched gender inequalities also mean that women and girls lack access to the sustainable infrastructure, public services and social protection they need, particularly in rural areas.[22] Despite progress in social protection – 52.4 per cent of the world's population is now covered by at least one social protection benefit, compared with 42.8 per cent in 2015[23] – marked disparities in social protection adequacy and quality occur between rural and urban areas, with rural women and girls

[11] World Bank, "Rural population (% of total population) in 2023", World Bank Open Data. Available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS. Latest figure available, a decline from 66 per cent in 1960.

[12] See A/78/238.

[13] Benjamin Davis and others, *Estimating Global and Country-Level Employment in Agrifood Systems*, FAO Statistics Working Paper Series, No. 23-34 (Rome, 2023).

[14] World Bank, "Employment in agriculture, female (% of female employment) in 2023", World Bank Open Data. Available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.FE.ZS. The most recent year available, a decline from 43 per cent in 1991.

[15] FAO, *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems* (Rome, 2023).

[16] Davis and others, *Estimating Global and Country-Level Employment*.

[17] See A/79/210 and E/CN.6/2025/3.

[18] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*.

[19] FAO and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024: Financing to End Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in All its Forms* (Rome, 2024).

[20] UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015).

[21] See E/CN.6/2023/4.

[22] See E/CN.6/2024/4.

[23] International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition* (Geneva, 2024).

least covered.[24] Gender gaps in global legal and effective coverage remain substantial. Women's effective coverage for at least one social protection benefit lags behind men's coverage, at 50.1 and 54.6 per cent, respectively. Just 28.2 per cent of working-age women are legally covered by comprehensive social security systems, compared with 39.3 per cent of men.[25]

19. The intensification of women's paid and unpaid care and domestic work during the polycrisis, including caring for children, the sick and the elderly and household provisioning, has been compounded in rural areas by limited access to social protection, care and health services and to clean, safe and affordable water, sanitation and energy.[26]

20. Although the share of the global population with safely managed drinking water increased from 69 per cent in 2015 to 73 per cent in 2022, 1.8 billion people still lack drinking water on-premises, with women and girls responsible for water provisioning in two thirds of households. Women and girls spend 250 million hours per day on water collection, over three times more than men and boys, in the 53 countries with available data.[27] An estimated 3.5 billion people, or 43 per cent of the world's population, still lack access to safely managed sanitation, with rural areas disproportionately affected. However, limited progress has meant that in most of the 50 countries with data, over 80 per cent of women and adolescent girls have a private place to wash and change during menstruation.[28]

21. Global access to electricity and clean fuels and technologies for cooking improved between 2015 and 2022. The number of people without access to electricity declined from 957.5 million people to 685 million, while the number without access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking declined from 2.7 billion to 2.1 billion. Urban-rural divides have also narrowed, except in sub-Saharan Africa, where the deficit in energy access in rural areas grew from 376 million in 2010 to 473 million in 2022, and only 7 per cent of rural households have access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking, compared with 40 per cent in urban areas.[29] Although these data are not disaggregated by sex or gender, women and girls are most affected by lack of access, given prevailing gender roles and household power relations.[30]

22. Discriminatory laws, policies and practices impede women's full and equal participation in the economy and society. Across 190 countries, women have less than two thirds of the legal rights that men enjoy.[31] While 164 of 180 countries analysed explicitly recognize women's rights to own, use and make decisions about land on equal terms with men, only 29 per cent guarantee these rights in law and practice. In 62 per cent of countries, women are restricted in claiming and protecting land assets because of patriarchal social norms and customary, religious or traditional laws and

[24] ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future* (Geneva, 2021).
[25] ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26*.
[26] See E/CN.6/2025/3.
[27] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*.
[28] UNICEF and World Health Organization, *Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2000–2022: Special Focus on Gender* (New York, 2023); World Bank, "People using safely managed sanitation services, urban (% of urban population)" and "People using safely managed sanitation services, rural (% of rural population) in 2022, World Bank Open Data. Available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.SMSS.UR.ZS and https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.SMSS.RU.ZS, respectively.
[29] International Energy Agency and others, *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2024* (Washington, D.C., 2024).
[30] UN-Women and UNIDO, *Gender Equality in the Sustainable Energy Transition* (New York and Vienna, 2023).
[31] World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024* (Washington, D.C., 2024).

practices, and in the remaining 9 per cent, women do not have the same legal rights as men to own, use or control land.[32] The proportion of women who own or have secure rights to agricultural land ranges widely across countries, from 6.6 per cent to 57.8 per cent.[33] Fewer women than men have ownership and secure tenure rights in 40 of the 46 countries with available data.[34] In 43 countries, equal inheritance rights are still not granted to surviving spouses, which means that widows are often dispossessed of property and left destitute, and in 41 countries, daughters lack the same inheritance rights as sons.[35]

23. Gender parity in primary education completion has been achieved in most countries,[36] although gender gaps remain in some regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, and progress has been reversed in countries such as Afghanistan.[37] In 2023, 28.2 per cent of women aged 15–24 were not in education, employment or training, compared with 13.1 per cent of men aged 15–24.[38] The share of women graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics has stagnated at 35 per cent for the past decade.[39] Women and girls from the poorest households and in rural areas have been left behind. Less than 1 per cent of poor rural women finished secondary education in a sample of 20 countries.[40] The gap in upper secondary school completion rates between the poorest rural girls and the richest urban girls ranges from 11.5 to 72.2 per cent in 29 countries with recent data. Persistent poverty, increased unpaid care and domestic work, long distances to schools and the absence of improved household drinking water and electricity are among the barriers preventing rural girls from completing primary and secondary school.[41]

24. Bridging the gender digital and financial divides in rural areas remains a challenge. Although the gender gap in bank account ownership declined between 2011 and 2021, from 9 to 6 per cent, most unbanked adults in rural areas of developing countries are women.[42] Mobile phones enable rural women to access online banking, agricultural extension programmes and other services. Advances in low- and middle-income countries show that 83 per cent of women own a mobile phone, 61 per cent own a smartphone and 63 per cent have access to mobile Internet, with the gender gap in mobile Internet use declining from 25 per cent in 2017 to 14 per cent in 2024. However, progress among rural women is significantly less than that of urban women

[32] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Social Institutions and Gender Index: SIGI 2019 Global Report – Transforming Challenges into Opportunities* (Paris, 2019).
[33] FAO, *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*.
[34] FAO, *Tracking Progress on Food and Agriculture-Related SDG Indicators 2023* (Rome, 2023).
[35] World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024*.
[36] Raja Bentaouet Kattan and Myra Murad Khan, "Closing the gap: tackling the remaining disparities in girls' education and women's labour market participation", World Bank Blog, 9 March 2023.
[37] United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Global Education Monitoring Report 2022: Gender Report – Deepening the Debate on Those Still Left Behind* (Paris, 2022).
[38] World Bank, "Share of youth not in education, employment or training, female (% of female youth population) (modeled ILO estimate)" and "Share of youth not in education, employment or training, male (% of male youth population) (modeled ILO estimate) in 2023", World Bank Open Data, available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.FE.ME.ZS and https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.MA.ME.ZS.
[39] UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024*.
[40] FAO, *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*.
[41] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*.
[42] Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and others, *Global Findex Database 2021: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resilience in the Age of COVID-19* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2022).

and men overall due to connectivity, affordability, literacy and digital skill constraints.[43]

25. With the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at risk, renewed attention and investment in gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is urgent. The challenges that rural women and girls face merit clear and effective responses to ensure their rights, resilience, livelihoods and well-being.

III. Enhancing the rights, resilience, livelihoods and well-being of women and girls in rural areas

A. Investing in and strengthening rural women's economic empowerment

26. Member States reported on initiatives to bolster the economic empowerment of rural women and their communities through support for sustainable livelihoods, enterprises and cooperatives.

27. Member States considered rural women and girls in their national plans and strategies. In Albania, the strategy on agriculture, rural development and fisheries (2021–2027) addresses gender equality and provides for grants for men and women farmers. The national gender and development strategies of Andorra cover all women, given the country's size and the homogenous distribution of the population. In Burkina Faso, the national strategy for the promotion of women's entrepreneurship (2016–2025) emphasizes the specific needs of rural women and girls. In Chile, the strategy for women's economic autonomy (2022–2026) highlights the experiences of rural women, women migrants, Indigenous women and women living with disabilities. In Colombia, the women's economic autonomy programme targets the gender digital divide affecting rural women. In Jamaica, the national policy for gender equality (2011–2030) is intended to alleviate poverty among rural women. In Lebanon, the national strategy for women (2022–2030) emphasizes rural women's digital literacy and business development. The third national gender equality and equity policy of Namibia (2025–2035) focuses on both urban and rural areas. In the Republic of Moldova, the programme for promoting and ensuring equality between women and men (2023–2027) takes into consideration the situation of rural women.

28. Member States invested in the economic empowerment of rural and Indigenous women and their communities. In Chile, the second rural women's cultural heritage exhibition, held in 2024, showcased the cultural and agricultural diversity of rural and Indigenous women, while the rural women programme supported agro-silvo-pastoral and artisanal enterprises, reaching over 3,000 peasant women and small farmers, 40 per cent of whom reported income gains. In El Salvador, the MercaMujer fair promotes local economies and urban and rural women entrepreneurs. In Namibia, the EntreprenHER programme supports women micro-entrepreneurs and farmers to build businesses, create jobs and improve incomes. Romania contributed two best practices to the WE GREEN project, which is intended to empower rural women through green social entrepreneurship.

29. Other countries support entrepreneurship and income-generation through grant-making or microcredit programmes. In Chad, the microfinance development support project in support of women and youth entrepreneurship (2021–2026), funded by the African Development Bank, facilitates financial services for rural women. In

[43] Global System for Mobile Communications Association, *The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025* (London, 2025).

Colombia, a development fund for rural women has been operational since 2002. In Ukraine, the eRobota programme provides grants to farmers for greenhouses, horticulture and viticulture, with women the main beneficiaries. In Saudi Arabia, the sustainable agricultural rural development programme provided 2.4 billion riyals ($640 million) between 2019 and 2024 to small farmers and rural producers, benefiting 57,400 women and 20,000 men. In Zimbabwe, the Women's Development Fund, the Zimbabwe Community Development Fund, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Corporation and the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank all support rural women's entrepreneurship.

30. The power and efficacy of rural women organizing themselves in self-help groups, cooperatives and movements has been well documented worldwide,[44] and countries are promoting women farmers' organizations and cooperatives. In Türkiye, the women's empowerment strategy and action plan (2024–2028) strengthens rural women's enterprises and cooperatives, building on the over 100,000 women farmers trained in cooperative practices since 2004. In Ukraine, the dairy business development project (2014–2024) supported small and medium-sized dairy production and improved service delivery through women's agricultural cooperatives. In Tunisia, a cooperative of women artisans was established and members provided with training, including on developing new products and marketing through trade fairs. The project improved working conditions and led to a fivefold increase in women's average incomes.[45]

31. Member States are promoting young rural women's economic empowerment, in particular the school-to-work transition. Across 20 countries, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Skills4Girls initiative aims to address the challenge of 1 out of 4 girls (compared with 1 out of 10 boys) between the ages of 15 and 19 who are not in employment, education or training by developing girls' skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and social entrepreneurship, targeting girls in both rural and urban areas. In Burkina Faso and Chad, the World Bank-funded Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project, established in 2015, promotes young women's economic empowerment through support for secondary school completion.

32. The United Nations system supports rural women's economic empowerment and digital inclusion. Chile, together with the United Nations system and the private sector, launched the three-year Connected Communities initiative in 2024 to bridge the gender digital divide in rural areas by improving Internet access and digital skills. In El Salvador, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funds the Rural Adelante programme to improve rural livelihoods and incomes, targeting both women and young people. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) "Fish Waste to Fashion" project in Cabo Verde supports rural women's livelihoods through fish-leather production while reducing environmental waste in the blue economy. The FAO and International Trade Centre initiative on empowering women and boosting livelihoods through agricultural trade aims to remove gender-based constraints in the agrifood sector and promote women's engagement in the African Continental Free Trade Area. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) run a programme on rural women's economic empowerment in areas of armed conflict in Colombia. The United Nations Industrial Development

[44] ILO, *Strengthening Women's Cooperatives: The Experience of SEWA Cooperative Federation* (Geneva, 2024); and La Via Campesina, "From local to global: women of La Via Campesina strengthen the fabric for food sovereignty and eco-social justice", 24 June 2025.

[45] IFAD, "Fostering women's prosperity: creative Tunisia project sparks economic empowerment in Tunisia", 27 September 2023.

Organization (UNIDO) West Africa Competitiveness Programme in Ghana empowered over 1,000 rural women working in the shea value chain.

B. Improving rural women's access to and control of land, water and other natural resources

33. Member States are introducing gender-responsive changes in laws, policies and practices in favour of rural women's land rights and their sustainable management and use of land, water and other natural resources.

34. Some 110 Member States enacted laws on women's land and inheritance rights, including women's registration of property rights and joint titling.[46] UN-Habitat and the Global Land Tool Network support joint spousal land registration, registration of women single heads of households, and women's leadership in land governance in Nepal, Uganda and Zambia. Such policies and practices confer legal recognition and ownership rights and ensure enhanced economic security for women. However, only 29 States regularly publish sex-disaggregated data on property ownership; such data are critical for policies to rectify gender inequalities in land and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.[47]

35. Member States and United Nations agencies are supporting women's rights, access to and sustainable management of land and resources, including forests, fisheries and water. In Burkina Faso, the rural land ownership certificate has benefited rural women since 2010. In 2024, Colombia launched a special land allocation programme for rural women to reduce gender inequalities in land access and to strengthen the autonomy of peasant women. Colombia also invests in women shellfish harvesters to boost the sustainability of livelihoods and marine ecosystems. In Guatemala, the land fund strategic plan, adopted in 2024, takes into consideration rural and Indigenous women. The Honduras national strategy for forest restoration (2023–2030) prioritizes gender equality across all initiatives. In Uruguay, the women's land initiative has supported gender equality in access to and use and control of land since 2022.

36. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) integrates gender transformative approaches in Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Kyrgyzstan, the Niger and Uganda to increase recognition and protection of women's land rights. Between 2017 and 2024, UN-Habitat supported access to drinking water in 189 settlements across three provinces in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, benefiting over 125,000 individuals, 54 per cent of whom were women. UN-Habitat worked with the Lao Women's Union to increase women's participation in water supply management and reduce the time women spend fetching water.

37. The Stand for Her Land Campaign is closing gaps on women's land rights, with 200 partners globally, including UN-Women. Supported by Germany and others, Stand for Her Land coalitions in Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda promote community engagement to address discriminatory norms, elevate grass-roots women's leadership and advocate for legal reforms and implementation and integration of women's land rights in global frameworks, including the Rio Conventions.

[46] World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024*.
[47] Ibid.

C. Ensuring the food security and nutrition of rural women and girls

38. Member States have taken steps to address the food security and nutrition challenges of women and girls in rural areas, including through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ancestral crops.

39. Chad, in collaboration with the European Union, FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP), is implementing a programme to strengthen the resilience of food systems (2022–2027) to support the recovery of rural populations following shocks, with women accounting for over half of those benefiting. In Chile, a project to rebuild and restore greenhouses for rural women affected by natural disasters in 2023 has helped over 3,200 women family farmers to boost horticultural production, community food security and market incomes. In El Salvador, a cookbook was published in 2023 with over 50 recipes from Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, with a view to preserving ancestral foodways.

40. In Cambodia, the CAPFISH-Capture post-harvest fisheries development project (2018–2025), funded by UNIDO and the European Union, is intended to strengthen rural women's representation and leadership in fisheries, increase incomes and improve food safety practices and household nutrition. Over half of the enterprises that have achieved compliance with the Cambodia Quality Seal are led by women.

41. In 2024, the joint programme on accelerating progress towards rural women's economic empowerment, implemented by FAO, IFAD, UN-Women and WFP, reached nearly 34,000 people, including over 30,000 rural women in Nepal, Pacific island States, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Tunisia and the Niger. The programme advanced food security, with over 2,000 kitchen gardens established and significant increases in yields, incomes and businesses. In Rwanda, maize yields increased fivefold, dietary diversity among women of reproductive age rose from 15.8 to 45.3 per cent and women's business ownership from 15 to 26.6 per cent, while childcare cooperatives created by and for women allowed for greater peace of mind and productivity, underscoring the programme's growing impact on rural women's economic power, leadership and resilience.

42. The Committee on World Food Security, at its fifty-first session held in October 2023, endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition, highlighting the progressive realization of the right to adequate food from a gender perspective, which is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 2 on zero hunger and Goal 5 on gender equality. The Committee, FAO, UN-Women and other partners are raising awareness, visibility and knowledge of the Guidelines and supporting their uptake and implementation at the regional and national levels.

D. Building the climate and environmental resilience of rural women and girls

43. Member States reported on measures to increase the climate and environmental resilience of rural women and girls, including innovative approaches to climate change adaptation in agriculture and forestry and local applications of sustainable energy solutions that support promising enterprises and reduce unpaid care and domestic workloads.

44. In Albania, the Resource Environmental Centre, supported by the UNDP-Adaptation Fund Climate Innovation Accelerator, promotes a collaborative model of climate change adaptation that reduces the labour burdens of men and women farmers and encourages high-school students to support community agriculture rather than

emigrate. A community solar-powered irrigation system distributes water equitably, replacing seasonal wells, and a high-capacity shredder processes branches pruned from olive trees, producing organic mulch and fertilizer that retains soil moisture, and avoiding the 1.44 m3 of carbon emissions produced annually from burning pruned branches.[48]

45. Algeria launched a capacity-building programme for rural women in 2023, part of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia's regional initiative to promote small-scale renewable energy applications in rural areas of the Arab region. Similarly, the United Nations University's Innovate for Clean Agricultural Technologies project is intended to advance the economic empowerment of women and young people in rural areas of selected African countries by promoting low-cost, clean energy technology solutions that increase agricultural productivity and incomes for smallholder rural farmers while supporting women-led start-ups and reducing unpaid care and domestic work.

46. In Chad, the Chadian women for resilience to climate change project (2025–2030), funded by Canada, is intended to strengthen the adaptative capacities of rural women and their communities, applying nature-based agricultural solutions to address water stress and seasonal variability in the peanut and sesame sectors, conserve biodiversity and strengthen women's land and environmental rights with the support of committed local, customary and institutional authorities. The IFAD commercial smallholder support project in Viet Nam (2016–2024) reached over 35,000 women across two provinces, led to the establishment of nearly 1,300 community groups and over 700 self-help groups with strong women's participation in management, and promoted equitable ownership and sustainable use of forest resources and technologies and practices for climate change adaptation.

47. In Guatemala, the gender and climate change action plan, adopted in 2024, covers both urban and rural areas and includes a gender perspective to addressing climate change. In Jamaica, the 2024 commemoration of the International Day of Rural Women included a youth forum featuring performances by rural girls, who called for climate resilience and agricultural sustainability. In Uruguay, rural women involved in the guardians of the land initiative cultivate and care for land, build support networks, share knowledge and promote solutions from a gender and climate resilience perspective.

48. FAO published a report entitled "The unjust climate: measuring the impacts of climate change on rural poor, women and youth", which provides critical information on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on rural women, based on over 100,000 households in 24 countries across five regions and 70 years of geo-referenced rainfall and temperature data, allowing for evidence-based interventions and scaling of localized solutions. In 2024, UN-Women published a working paper entitled "Advancing gender-responsive synergies across the Rio conventions: gender equality at the intersection of climate action, biodiversity protection and sustainable land management", in which it analyses the interlinked impacts and opportunities for rural women and girls in the face of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation.

E. Ensuring the full and equal participation of rural women and girls

49. Member States are taking steps to ensure the full and equal participation of rural women and girls in decision-making, policy dialogues and governance by supporting rural women's leadership through different means, including gender quotas. While

[48] United Nations Development Programme, "How Albania's farmers are embracing eco-friendly tech to overcome climate challenges", 14 May 2025.

countries reported overall improvements in women's participation and decision-making, few initiatives specifically involved rural women and girls.

50. In 2024, Chad created a national framework for the consultation of women living in rural areas to bring together women's organizations to reflect, defend common interests and make key decisions. In Chile, the civil society council for the period 2024–2026 is composed of 15 members, including three rural women, five women from the regions, two women migrants, two women carers and one trans woman, and is an autonomous consultative body on human rights, while the national round table for rural women helps to align policies and programmes with the interests, needs and demands of rural women.

51. Lebanon formed a national network for women in local decision-making in 2024 to promote women's and girls' rights and gender mainstreaming in laws and policies. An analysis of district, municipal, city, communal and village council elections in the Republic of Moldova conducted in November 2023 showed that women were more likely to participate and be elected in villages and communities, in accordance with the 40 per cent gender quota mandated in the Electoral Code. In Romania, Act No. 100/2024 on developing a regulatory framework for accreditation, licencing and evaluation of social services provided for the involvement of beneficiaries, including rural women, in evaluating and monitoring service quality. In Zimbabwe, the women in leadership and decision-making strategy, adopted in 2023, encompasses rural women and development. The country's 30 per cent gender quota system for national and local elections has been extended to 2033, supporting the participation of rural women in local government, with the share of women councillors increasing from 13 per cent in 2018 to 42 per cent in 2023.

F. Strengthening the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender statistics

52. Member States filled some critical gaps in data and statistics on rural women and girls, including on economic empowerment and gender-based violence.

53. Countries are improving data collection and analysis to better understand the social, demographic, economic and environmental situation of rural women. In Chile, the fifth national survey on violence against women, conducted in 2024, included a subsample on rural areas for the first time, which revealed that rural women are subject to higher levels of psychological, physical or sexual violence, with 33.6 per cent of rural women experiencing such violence at least once in their lifetimes, compared with 31 per cent of urban women.

54. In Guatemala, the national survey of living conditions carried out in 2023 covered Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators, with information on poverty and inequality disaggregated by urban/rural areas or gender, but little data disaggregated by both. In Zimbabwe, the 2023 livelihoods assessment included a gender-specific module to assess the time spent by women and girls collecting water and firewood.

55. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leverages regional cooperation to improve the situation of women and girls in rural areas, including through the gender data and statistics analysed in the *ASEAN Gender Outlook 2024*, which tracks progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

56. FAO, as the custodian agency for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.a.2 (proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control), provides

technical support for country data collection and reporting. There has been steady improvement, with a total of 84 countries having reported by December 2024.

57. The Integrated Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute, was applied in IFAD project evaluations across six African countries in 2024. The Index could help to incorporate women's empowerment and gender parity measures into data collection systems and track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.[49]

58. Strengthening gender data and statistics is an underreported area overall. Key data on land and resource rights and tenure security, time and energy poverty, and unpaid care and domestic work of rural women and girls warrant increased attention and investment. According to a review of 108 statistics laws worldwide by UN-Women and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, only 32 per cent of statistics laws mandate disaggregation by sex or gender, the first step towards gender statistics, pointing to the urgency of modernizing statistics laws to support accessible gender data disaggregated by relevant variables, including rurality.[50]

III. Conclusions and recommendations

59. Member States are making efforts to improve the situation of women and girls in rural areas, even as the polycrisis has entrenched gender inequalities and, in some cases, exacerbated urban-rural divides. Since the issuance of the previous report in 2023 (A/78/220), levels of extreme poverty and food insecurity have declined, although they remain of concern for the realization of the rights, resilience, livelihoods and well-being of rural women and girls. The submissions from Member States demonstrate their commitment to increasing rural women's economic empowerment, yet rural women's and girls' unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities and their participation and leadership in decision-making, policymaking and governance received comparatively less consideration. Greater focus is needed on ensuring rural women's and girls' food security and nutrition, climate and environmental resilience, rights and access to land, water and other natural resources, and digital and financial inclusion. Gender data and statistics merit greater attention and investment to obtain sufficient quantitative and qualitative information on rural women and girls for evidence-based policies and implementation and to track progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Efforts across sectors and themes that show promise should be multiplied and scaled up for real change. Rural development policies and programmes must be transformed to meet global climate, environmental and financial challenges and build the resilience of rural women and girls to withstand present and future crises.

60. Member States are encouraged to implement the following recommendations, presented for consideration by the General Assembly, to improve the situation of women and girls in rural areas:

(a) **Take action to implement existing commitments to gender equality and the rights and empowerment of rural women and girls in all their diversity, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and relevant recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the United Nations Declaration**

[49] Carlo Azzarri and others, "Adapt, assess, progress: integrating measures of women's empowerment into rural development projects", IFPRI Blog, 13 May 2024.

[50] PARIS21 and UN-Women, "Legal frameworks for gender data across countries: status and opportunities", 2025.

on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, General Assembly resolution 76/300 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aligned with the six transitions for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, namely food systems, energy access, digital connectivity, education, social protection and jobs, and climate change, while ensuring the full inclusion of rural women and girls;

(b) **Design, develop and implement gender-responsive agricultural and rural development policies and programmes that are informed by and respond to the needs and priorities of rural women and girls;**

(c) **Advance just and equitable food systems transformation in line with the Secretary-General's vision announced at the United Nations Food Systems Summit, with the full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels of rural women and girls, including women farmers, fishers, pastoralists and agricultural workers;**

(d) **Take decisive action to eliminate the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence facing rural women and girls by addressing structural barriers and discriminatory social norms and ensuring that no one is left behind;**

(e) **Promote rural women's economic empowerment by realizing their right to work and rights at work, building their capacities and skills to manage enterprises and cooperatives, facilitating formalization and ensuring their financial and digital inclusion;**

(f) **Enact and implement policies to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities by promoting sustainable livelihoods, decent work and income security in rural areas to enhance the well-being and resilience of rural women and girls;**

(g) **Promote the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of food security and nutrition for rural women and girls in all their diversity;**

(h) **Recognize, reduce and redistribute rural women's and girls' unpaid care and domestic work and promote rural women's decent paid care work by investing in gender-responsive public services, universal social protection, sustainable energy, water and sanitation, transport and infrastructure, and time- and labour-saving technologies in rural areas;**

(i) **Develop and adopt gender-responsive strategies and budgets to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of rural women and girls to respond to the adverse impacts of climate change and recover from economic, social, environmental and health shocks and crises;**

(j) **Build the resilience of rural women smallholder and subsistence farmers to climate change and environmental degradation by recognizing ancestral, Indigenous and modern technological practices and knowledge, including agroecology, and strengthening access to markets, extension and financial services, and climate risk insurance and information to engage in climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable natural resource management;**

(k) **Value and support the critical role and contribution of rural women, including Indigenous women, in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, traditional crops and biodiversity for present and future generations as an essential contribution to food security and nutrition;**

(l) **Design, reform and implement laws, policies and investments to realize rural women's full and equal rights to, access to, control over and ownership of land, water and other natural resources, tenure security and equal inheritance, as well as participation and leadership in resource governance;**

(m) **Support rural young women's and girls' participation and leadership, their ability to complete their education and training, and young women's participation in the labour market on equal terms with young men;**

(n) **Invest in gender-responsive universal social protection systems, including social protection floors, that ensure the income security of rural women and girls over their life course and cover rural women in informal employment;**

(o) **Ensure the provision and affordability of healthcare services for rural women and girls through universal health coverage that includes access to sexual and reproductive health and rights over their life course;**

(p) **Support social, economic, political and scientific institutions to study gender-differentiated impacts of biodiversity loss, climate change and environmental degradation on rural women and girls, and to develop robust, gender-responsive evidence, tools, databases, methodologies and policy analyses to respond to and mitigate these impacts;**

(q) **Increase the capacity of national statistical offices and other relevant institutions to collect, analyse and disseminate data disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics and produce gender statistics to support policies and action to improve the situation of rural women and girls and monitor and track implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

61. **The United Nations system and other international organizations are encouraged to support Member States to implement, measure and monitor the foregoing recommendations at all levels.**