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CSW Side event

***Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50/50 by 2030: every rural woman and girl everywhere***

Concept Note

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Date: March 15, 2018

Half day event: 10.00am – 3.00pm

Venue: TBC outside UN premises

**Priority Theme of CSW62:** “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”.

**Review Theme:** Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women

**Introduction**

The CSW 62, with its priority theme of “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls” offers a critical opportunity to discuss what the pledge of Leaving No One Behind, in the SDG achievement will mean in terms of ensuring that every rural woman and girl everywhere, is aware of and enjoys all her rights and entitlements and lives a life of equality, opportunity and access.

UN Women’s Civil Society Division, in collaboration with key partners, will convene a dialogue with civil society, rural women leaders and activists along with other stakeholders, to discuss, *Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50/50 by 2030: every rural woman and girl everywhere*. The side event will be an interactive discussion with civil society and key partners to discuss policy standards necessary in *Leaving No One Behind*, and what this means for rural women and girls, with all the intersectional complexities of widowhood, marital status disability, sexual



orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, indigenous and ethnic identities, age, refugee or migrant status. It is hoped that the recommendations of policy standards will advocate for accountability mechanism and implementation standards for governments and will inform policy to ensure that the most marginalized women and girls are brought to the forefront of the SDGs gender justice agenda.

## Context

Since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000 and their implementation through the years, there has been progress in some countries and a common will across the world to advance a more sustainable form of development<sup>1</sup>.

As a result, the concept of “Leaving No One Behind” was adopted in 2015 as an underlying human rights based guiding principle for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This new principle seeks to encourage development stakeholders, governments and policy-makers to recognize the existence of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination including the deeply patriarchal and misogynist structures, such as the justice system that constrain individuals in their life choices and opportunities. “Leaving No One Behind” means that governments must commit to, and be held accountable for, making sure that inequalities based on discrimination are recognized and tackled, and that development strategies will benefit the most marginalized first. As such, the new goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda can only be attained if “the furthest behind is reached first”.

However, as the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, mentioned: “the world has also faced a dramatic rise in inequalities within and between countries, and the concentration of wealth and power in fewer and fewer hands. Many people, particularly the poorest and most marginalized, are being excluded from development and falling farther and farther behind. This only breeds frustration and mistrust and undermines progress and peace”<sup>2</sup>.

He has also further amplified the call for greater emphasis on conflict prevention and the need to also ensure efforts are made to address the nexus between peace, development and

<sup>1</sup> United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (2016) “Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development” United Nations: New York, pVI  
<https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (2016) “Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development”. United Nations: New York, pVI  
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humanitarian action at a time when women and girls remain the most vulnerable but also to support their leadership in conflict prevention and as first-responders.

In line with the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform For Action and its review reports and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the principle “Leaving No One Behind” has opened a door for dramatic transformative progress in the lives of women and girls worldwide<sup>3</sup>. As set by the SDG 5 on the empowerment of women and girls, the Planet 50/50 by 2030 Agenda for gender equality must prioritize the empowerment of rural women and girls, and especially those who are more likely to suffer from intersecting forms of discrimination such widows, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LBTI) women, migrant, refugee and displaced women and indigenous women.

### Rationale

The priority theme of “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls” is particularly pertinent given the manifestation of rising gender inequalities that are evident in the lives of rural women and girls across the world. For instance, informal settlements and rural areas have a huge population of women and girls living in poverty. Rural areas due to unequal growth paradigms and inequitable access to resources and infrastructure suffer inherently from multi-dimensional poverty. Within this vulnerable region amongst the most vulnerable are women and girls as they are left furthest behind from the shared benefits of social, political and economic development. Past development strategies and agreements have not adequately translated into any actions that work towards tackling the underlying reasons for why rural women and girls in particular continue to stay on the margins. These strategies in rural areas remain intricately tied with the active participation and collective action of all genders. Even though women play a crucial role in the rural economy through their contribution to the agriculture production process and in their crucial social and economic roles as key supporters of family and other dependents as agents of change, their equitable participation in rural development remains minimal. Their role in decision-making and in leadership positions within these development processes remains negligible. This unequal participation in socio economic growth is not only unfavorable to women and girls but also has negative effects on household dynamics and on the rural economy itself.

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<sup>3</sup> UN Women (2017) The Fund for Gender Equality Thematic Factsheet: “Leaving no one behind” in Action. UN Women: New York, p2. <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/3/leaving-no-one-behind-in-action>>



Rural communities, especially rural women and girls are often deeply excluded in discussions that are aimed at their own development and that of their communities, countries and the world they live in. Rural women and girls experience social and economic injustices that are a result of global and local policymaking, intersecting with entrenched patriarchal practices, deep inequalities and multiple discriminations including law enforcement sensitivities that often results in their marginalization.

Although there is evidence of progress, there has been no meaningful and lasting change in the lives of rural women and girls. The pernicious challenges include insecure land tenure, rapidly urbanizing societies, the negative impact of climate change, lack of women on decision making platforms both in public and private spheres due to social exclusion and marginalization, illiteracy and low economic status, lack of access to financing and technology low health status and a brutal market driven growth paradigm. The power dynamics of the media and communication systems which can perpetuate gender stereotypes as well as contribute to violence must also be tackled by ensuring a shift in the power of media systems into the hands of women. While rural women and girls remain marginalized they will not be able to contribute to and communicate gender inclusive development, conflict prevention early warnings and prevention measures, disaster preparedness and protection strategies.

Urgent Action is needed now given that 2030 is less than 15 years away. Closing the gender equality gap and ending poverty is possible, but it requires political will; and focus on rural women’s empowerment that is necessary for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, it is our obligation to do things differently and this means first and foremost sharing power with those left behind.

## The Event

The objective of this event is to discuss standards and benchmarks to leave no rural woman and girl behind in the implementation of the SDG Agenda.

The proposed side event is framed with the human rights principles of participation of rural women and girls as rights holders. The Beijing Declaration and Platform For Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its subsequent General Recommendations, provide a strong and detailed basis to analyze progress



and barriers to the achievement of rural women’s human rights across different issues. Thus, the event will attempt to answer the following questions:

- Why do rural communities suffer from exclusion?
- What does Leave No One Behind mean?
- What constitutes exclusion?
- Who is excluded and why?
- What constitutes inclusion?
- What are the minimum standards for “leave no one behind” in the implementation of the SDGs?
- How can Civil Society hold Governments accountable on Leaving No One Behind in the implementation of the agenda towards 2030?
- How can governments ensure equitable growth in rural communities?
- How can civil society change the growth paradigm to make it inclusive?

**The Leaving No One Behind** event will create a space for geographically diverse, intergenerational and intersectional critical dialogue:

- on finding solutions and recommendations that address unequal and unjust systems and policies that pose barriers to achieving the full rights and empowerment of rural women and girls
- for amplifying the needs, realities, lived experiences and aspirations of rural women and girls in all their diversity in policy-making, during and beyond CSW62
- for fostering collaboration, enhance partnerships and strategic networking among diverse groups of rural women and girls to strengthen the voices and leadership of rural women and girls
- for facilitating solidarity among participants towards long term commitment to lobbying decision makers to recognize and respond to the experiences and suggestions of rural women and girls in response to SDG implementation
- ^To replicate the best practices that have reflected and incorporated the lived experience needs and aspirations of rural women and girls

**Objective of the event**

- To recommend a set of policy standards and benchmarks (Including indicators) on how the implementation of the SDGs will ensure that no one is left behind.

**Main outcome**

- Civil society and rural activist recommendations for a set of standards and benchmarks for policy makers to follow as they engage on the road towards achieving Agenda 2030.



- A space for mobilization towards a potential global women’s conference in 2020 as the 25th year commemoration of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 5th year mark to review the SDG implementation.

### Proposed Constituency

The event is seeking to ensure that rural women and girls represent themselves and share their knowledge, leadership, strategies and experiences on how not to be left behind. The event will ensure that intersectional and intergenerational discussions are observed at every level. Rural women and girls are not a homogenous group. Rural women can be small farmers, pastoralists, fishers and peasants. They can also be girls, young parents, widows, indigenous women, some with disabilities, others living with HIV or other diseases, some heading households, others child brides and women of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expression or sex characteristics.

As such, the following constituencies of women and girl activists will be part of the dialogue: Widows, Indigenous, LGBTI, Disability, Migrants, Refugees, and Internally Displaced People among others. The participants will mainly be drawn from rural communities including those in conflict settings and those living with HIV/AIDs. Discussions will include issues of Peace and Security, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Female Genital Mutilation, Early, Forced and Child Marriage, Violence against Women and Girls including violence motivated by homophobia and transphobia, Widowhood, Safe and accessible water and hygiene, Migration, access to technology, Climate Change, Food security, food sovereignty and Land Tenure. Discussions will seek to unravel the multiple vulnerabilities and multi sectorial discriminations that they face

Efforts will focus on wide and comprehensive regional representation and diversity.

### Proposed Format:

This side event will endeavor to ensure that marginalized rural women and girls and other groups, are able to participate in the event, not only physically but also virtually. The event will include intersectional and intergenerational conversations ensuring that the issues of marginalized rural young and elderly women are spotlighted. Interactive discussion formats are proposed.

There will be time dedicated to discussing the review theme for CSW 62 - Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women – and how media, ICT and technology can serve to Leave No One Behind.



## Event Process

Critical points to observe:

- Each panel will be intergenerational
- Balanced regional and geographic representation, representatives (individuals, organizations, and networks), diverse educational backgrounds (Formal/Informal) and language.
- Diversity on each panel where possible in the form of Gender Identity and Expression, Sexual Orientation, Sex Characteristics, Race, Caste, Faith, Ethnic, Marital status, Socio Economic status and age.
- Story telling/short films precede each segment to break the discussions
- Each segment will discuss and recommend a set of minimum policy standards

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