

# FRA PRESSER FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

GLOBAL THEME: RURAL WOMEN RISE AND CLAIM YOUR BASIC RIGHT TO  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## WHAT IS THE PLIGHT OF RURAL WOMEN?

OCTOBER, 2022



gain  
Global Alliance for  
Improved Nutrition



Kyambogo University  
Knowledge and Skills for Service

**For immediate release: Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, Kampala**

### PREAMBLE

Aware that Uganda is an agrarian country, with agriculture as the main economic activity contributing about 26% of the country's GDP and employing approximately 69-77% of the population, of which over 50-77% are women. Hence women, particularly rural women play a crucial role in stabilizing food security in Uganda. Despite of their enormous contribution, they are still grappling with hunger and malnutrition.

**RECALLING**, that Uganda has ratified and made commitments to several regional and international instruments notably; The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the African Union Declaration on Land issues, the Sustainable Development Goals Specifically Goal 5 which provides for achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls,

**Recognizing**, the tremendous and constant support rendered by the Government of Uganda to ensure the needs of rural women are met through both legal and pragmatic approaches.

**Rallying** behind 2030 Sustainable Development Goals agenda of ensuring that 'No one is left behind and **The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas 2018** that recognizes the dignity of the world's rural populations, their contributions to global food production, and the 'special relationship' they have to land, water and nature, as well as their vulnerabilities to eviction, hazardous working conditions and political repression. **We would like to recognize the tremendous contributions of Rural Women in our societies today and Call upon them to Rise and Claim their basic Right to sustainable development.**

As stated by Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "*There is no development strategy more beneficial to society as a whole - women and men alike - than the one which involves women as central players,*" it is therefore apparent that women and sustainable development are intertwined.

**Concerned that** much as all women face similar challenges, the situations and intensity of occurrences encountered by women in urban areas and rural areas vary. Rural women encounter gender inequalities relating

to land holdings and other economic resources, food insecurity, negative socio-cultural norms, access to basic social services, political representation, weak bargaining power in households and have unequal opportunities in education, employment.

It is upon this backdrop that FRA would like to join the rest of the world on the 15th of October 2022 to celebrate the International Day of Rural Women under the theme: ***Rural Women Rise and Claim your basic Right to sustainable development.***

We wish to draw the attention of all stakeholders to the following concerns affecting rural women.

### **1. Lack of access, ownership and control over land and other productive resources**

Land is a primary resource in agricultural production and yet women own only 7% of it nationally. Whereas 70% to 80% of the agricultural cultivation is done by women, less than 20% control outputs. This glaring disparity between access, control and ownership of land has perpetuated income inequalities among rural women and kept them in a vicious cycle of poverty. It has been argued that if rural women had more access to productive resources as men, they would increase yields on their farms by 20-30%.

Land is still largely registered in the name of males and when land transfers are made it is mostly made to another male beneficiary. Practices and attitudes that promote male-only inheritance rights, limited investment in women

economic skills and participation on productive resources reduces women economic self-reliance leading to gender inequalities and perpetuates gender based violence against women.

Therefore, disparities in the ownership of, access to and control of productive resources and services has a negative effect on rural women's productivity and food security.

### **2. High levels of Hunger and Malnutrition among Rural Women**

Rural Women are acknowledged as major producers of food. They are responsible for half of the world's food production in most developing countries producing between 60% and 80% of the food; they are responsible for the nutritional wellbeing of their families. Unfortunately, they still remain overrepresented among those who are food insecure with 60% of the total 2.6 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity being women and girls. Food security in Uganda is attributed to high poverty rates, natural calamities, high fertility rates, price fluctuations, lack of education, landlessness and this has perpetuated to gender inequalities that are prevalent to date.

### **3. Burden of Unpaid Care work**

Women often experience heavier time and work burdens, spending, on average, 48 hours a week on unpaid domestic and care work, compared to 36 hours for men (Landesa, 2020).

Rural women play a major role in stability of families and communities due to their huge contribution to care work. Most times this effort is not rewarded, and this perpetrates income

inequalities in societies. Even for those who contribute in informal and formal sector, they are at most times poorly remunerated and have to balance between their social roles and the roles they play in the formal and informal sector. Worst of it, the unremunerated work performed by rural women consumes much of their time. UNDP reports, 53% of the world working hours are for women and 47% for men but much of women's work is not rewarded with cash. And yet in Uganda, the agricultural sector employs 81% of the female labor force compared 67% of men and in rural areas, the gender pay gap is as high as 40 per cent.

Whereas there are numerous efforts to change the narrative on the burden of unpaid care work on women with some actors calling for legislation to that effect, this has not been effectively supported by majority of society.

#### **4. Rural-urban migration by rural women**

Uganda registers high influx of women from rural areas to the big cities in the country thus high urban population growth. This becomes problematic in that the city is constrained and unprepared to take up the rising population and yet demands keep putting pressure on the existing urban resources.

Rural-urban migration has also led to labor shortage in agriculture in rural areas and yet the rural areas in Uganda are dominated by agriculture supporting 89% of the rural population livelihood.

The 2014 Uganda National Census presents 66 percent of the 1.4 million internal migrants to have permanently settled in urban centers of the country. They have ended up being exposed to

poor living conditions and yet these cities may not easily adjust its standards to meet those of the migrants. The urban policies of cities favor the rich with little or no consideration to the urban poor.

#### **5. Negative Social Norms**

Embedded in Uganda's family system is patriarchy with males holding authority in main spheres of life especially the social life. This has left women and girls under the mercy of their male counterparts. The situation is even worse with rural women where patriarchy is still a deep rooted system of operation.

The rural women are subjected to various negative social norms such as gender based violence, female genital mutilation, excessive dowry requirement, widow inheritance, property inheritance, teenage pregnancies and child marriage. These social norms have led to denied justice for rural women and subjected these women to male dominance as well as perpetuating psychological torture.

#### **WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:**

- Deliberate effort is made towards women's economic empowerment particularly in promotion of access to sustainable credit, extension services, skilling and education.
- Transformative Social Norm Programming to instill positive social norms among rural communities as this will reduce gender disparities.
- Implementation of policies and laws that protect rights of women particularly rural women towards access, control, and

ownership of productive resources such as land and other land-based resources.

- Undertake advocacy for integration of gender transformative approaches in land administration processes.
- Re-considering identification of strategies towards enhancing access and the sustainability of livelihoods engaged in by rural women like agriculture with over six hundred million rural people deriving their main source of income, work and food directly from agriculture.
- Providing social services and amenities in rural areas to create an enabling environment in the rural settings to mitigate the practice of unplanned migration of rural women to town.

## CONCLUSION

The rallying call behind the theme is very timely in ensuring sustainable development in the face of the economic recovery amidst the global pandemic of COVID19. This should be an opportunity for all stakeholders to design approaches to sustainable development with rural women at the forefront.

However, as we set our general call to the issues and concerns that rural women are still grappling with, it is our plea that we channel our efforts to unite into ensuring issues encountered by these women are brought into the public arena and design mitigative measures to be put in place for future interventions.

**IT IS REFUTABLE THAT WOMEN ARE  
AGENTS OF AGRI FOOD TRANSFORMATION  
IN UGANDA AND THE WORLD AT LARGE**



**CASCADE**

*For more Information, contact:*



Food Rights Alliance  
Plot 82 Muteesa 1 Road – Namirembe  
P.O Box 5796 Kampala Uganda  
Phone: +256 788 104782  
Email: [fra@frauganda.org](mailto:fra@frauganda.org)