



## Rural Women and Girls

Rural women are resourceful economic agents who contribute to the income of families and communities. They work as entrepreneurs, as farm and non-farm labourers while some are self-employed. The bulk of unpaid care and domestic work within families and households is done by rural women. Rural women also play a vital role in ensuring food and nutrition security. Globally, 50 percent of food is produced by rural women and girls. They also account for a substantial proportion of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. Nearly 43 percent of the 1.7 billion women and girls living in rural areas account for the agricultural labour force in developing countries. In most rural households that do not have access to drinking water or electricity, rural women and girls are largely responsible for water and fuel collection. According to the United Nations, 80 percent of households without piped water rely on women and girls. In spite of the crucial roles that they play in improving the well being of their families and communities, rural women continue to face serious challenges as a result of gender-based norms and persistent discrimination that deny them equal access to opportunities, resources, and services. On almost every indicator of development, rural women fare worse than rural men and this is basically because of gender inequalities and discrimination. This is a major impediment to the realisation of their full potential which is at variance with sustainable development.

### Rural women and girls sidelined:

- The United Nations records that women farmers may be as productive and enterprising as their male counterparts, but are less able to access land, credit, agricultural inputs and markets. In Tanzania, women earned nearly four times more in areas where they have control over land yet only 13 percent of landowners are women.
- In low income countries, rural women are 38 percent less likely to give birth with a healthcare worker than an urban woman due to lack of access to health services and infrastructures: this puts them at risk of life-threatening complications.
- Recent estimates show that 39% of rural girls are known to attend school compared to 45% of rural boys and the rural girls are twice as likely to be out of school when compared to their counterparts in the urban areas.
- Social norms make rural women and girls vulnerable to harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage.
- Although education is a human right, in the rural communities, more than half of the poor rural women lack literacy skills.
- 1 in 3 employed women works in the agriculture sector but most of them are in the informal sector, with low or no pay and this exposes them to abuse and exploitation.
- Rural women often depend on forests for fuel and food. They also have extensive knowledge of traditional medicines, biodiversity, and indigenous technologies but their limited ownership of land reduces their ability to make decisions about how land is being used and they are mostly excluded from decisions about sustainable ecosystems.

### Empowering rural women:

- Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women: [Learn more](#)
- How an NGO is fostering women's financial inclusion and entrepreneurship in rural India using digital solutions: [Learn more](#)
- The efforts of Rainforest Alliance in empowering women in farming: [Watch now](#)
- How sustainable foraging is empowering rural women: [Watch now](#)