



RURAL DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP NETWORK

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United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

General Discussion

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“Access and Participation of Women and Girls in Education, Training, Science and Technology, including for the Promotion of Women’s Equal Access to Full Employment and Decent Work”

Oral Statement by

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Rural Development Leadership Network

For the

Rural Caucus

Good Morning Mr. Chairman, distinguished members, and NGO representatives. I am Starry Krueger, president of the Rural Development Leadership Network in the United States, representing the CSW Rural Caucus. As you know, one quarter of the world’s population is composed of rural women, and in many countries they produce most of the food. They are most often the backbone of their families and communities. Yet they are at the bottom of the economic and social strata of their countries. At CSW events since 1994, rural women from many countries have told us that there are not enough rural women at these meetings. They say that there need to be more grassroots rural women here. The issue is representation, even more than specific issues.

Rural women from all continents say that their voices are not heard in national and international arenas. From the U.S., we have heard from Latinas who are farmworkers, African-Americans who are former sharecroppers and small farmers, women living on Indian reservations, in Appalachian, immigrant, and refugee communities and in other historically oppressed areas. I quote them:

Poor rural women face different challenges and opportunities than other women. We live away from the urban centers of power, many times in isolated and remote areas. We lack access to land, transportation, suitable housing, healthcare, and protection from exploitation and violence.

To overcome these barriers, we must sit at the table of power where decisions are made about us. At the local, state, national and international levels our voices must be heard. We can achieve our own

empowerment with intentional support of infrastructure and overall development of our communities under our leadership.

National and international policy must be changed to promote the availability of land, transportation, markets, credit, healthcare, education, suitable housing, appropriate technology, green energy, cultural expression and other elements that advance the wellbeing and social equity of poor rural women and their families.

Computers technology can help level the playing field for women and girls. It can mean self-sufficiency and empowerment for millions of women around the world. Yet rural communities are underserved in these areas.

We ask that, starting now, CSW officials seek meaningful engagement by poor rural women in planning for next year's session. The theme is "The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges." Grassroots rural women need to be prominent and visible in these proceedings.

We thank you very much for this opportunity to speak on behalf of poor rural women and girls.

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