



**PAMBANSANG KOALISYON NG KABABAIHAN SA KANAYUNAN**  
[National Rural Women Congress]

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**PROPOSALS TO THE GENERAL RECOMMENDATION ON RURAL WOMEN AND THE  
PROTECTION OF THEIR RIGHTS**

**Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan(PKKK)<sup>1</sup>  
Philippines**

**Introduction**

The PKKK humbly submits this presentation of our proposed content for the General Recommendations on Article 14 to the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). We have read and studied the Concept Note for the General Recommendation on Article 14 of CEDAW and fully appreciate the concern and effort of the committee to achieve the objective of Article 14.

However, we wish to present additional points from the perspective of rural women in the Philippines regarding our own reflection of our situation as rural women and which has not been sufficiently reflected, appreciated and elaborated in the concept note.

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<sup>1</sup>This Submission was a result of a workshop attended by members of PKKK/NRWC coming from different provinces such as South Cotabato, Bukidnon, Leyte, Negros Oriental, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan and National Capital Region. PKK/NRWC is composed of 426 organizations in 42 provinces.

PKKK is a national coalition of 426 organizations in 42 provinces in the Philippines, composed of organizations of women small farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, formal and informal workers in the rural areas.

First convened in 2003, during the first National Rural Women Congress, PKKK is united on a Rural Women Agenda, namely:

1. Fulfillment of Rural Women Property Rights in Agrarian Reform
2. Fulfillment of Rural Women Property Rights in Ancestral Domains
3. Fulfillment of Rural Women's Property Rights in Coastal Resources
4. Access to basic Services and Social Protection, Safe and Adequate Food and Potable Water and Right to Fair Wages and Just Working Conditions
5. Access to Sustainable and Women-Friendly Agriculture and Fishery Support Services
6. Representation and Participation in the Implementation of Gender and Development Programs and Local Sectoral Representation
7. Fulfillment of Reproductive Rights and Protection from all Forms of violence and other oppressive relations
8. Fulfillment of Peace Agenda, especially in Mindanao
9. Right to Safe Environment and Protection from the Impacts of Climate Change

The PKKK is credited with the strong advocacy at the legislature which eventually resulted in the passage of the Magna Carta for Women, originally Magna Carta for Rural Women, and the extension of the agrarian reform program, the CARPER.(PKKK External Evaluation). To this day, PKKK continues to work on capacity building for rural women leaders and its lobby, advocacy and campaigns for the emancipation of rural women.

## Background and Situation

For the past decades, the rural women number less than 1/2 of those who exercise control over land and water resources, less than 1/3 of beneficiaries of agri-fishery support services, and less than 1/4 of those who decide on rural development programs.<sup>2</sup> This situation is further exacerbated by market-oriented policies that contribute to decreasing control over productive resources (land and water resources, seeds, capital, and market) and displacement from employment and income opportunities.

Moreover, rural women are also gravely affected by market-oriented programs and import-oriented food security policies that pose repercussions instead of benefits to rural women, i.e. continued decrease in women's participation in agriculture, displacement of women's access to coastal resources, entry of corporations in many ancestral lands, thereby condoning mining and logging activities that pose direct threat to indigenous women's culture and livelihoods. Many rural women live in far-flung villages. This adds to the layer of discrimination when governments fail to consider their situation and adopt "equal" treatment to both urban and rural contexts instead of devising models of service delivery that adapt to particular conditions and needs of rural women.

The entry of foreign investors on mining, logging, genetically modified organisms, commercial plantations, among others, have posed direct threats to the lives of those in the affected areas, particularly the indigenous communities. The negative trade balances (imports exceed exports) in agriculture and fisheries sectors have meant more than just loss of income for farming and fishing households. For women, these entailed increased burden, labor shifts, and migration from the rural areas to overseas. Working overseas, meanwhile, increased the women's vulnerability to violence and trafficking.

### **Who are the rural women?** Expanding the definition of Rural Women in CEDAW

*Rural women vary from one another according to what they do to live, where they are, what relationships they are in, what opportunities they have access to and what decisions they are able to make. For this reason a woman fisher copes differently from a woman farmer; a woman upland farmer copes differently from a woman farmer in the lowland; and indigenous women vary in beliefs and actions as defined by their community's cultural, economic and political systems. On the other hand, rural women share common experiences such as dependence on natural resources, seasonality of work, food provisioning roles in the family, and sadly, extreme marginalization and invisibility in rural development policies<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Concept paper for the 2003 1<sup>st</sup> Rural Women Congress, based on consultations of the Philippine Peasant Institute.

<sup>3</sup> "Strengthening Policy Framework for the Rural Women Magna Carta", Leyesa, M.D., Farm News and Views, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, Philippine Peasant Institute 2002.

### **Women Farmers**

The Centro Saka Inc. (CSI) research on rural women showed that women in agriculture spend as much as eight to eleven hours a day in productive and reproductive work—i.e. acquiring capital for farming (usually through credit), carrying out planting activities, marketing the primary crop and backyard produce, and providing for their household's daily survival needs. In domestic work alone, they spend from one to six hours daily, which includes activities like preparing farm tools and food for farm laborers; fetching water; gardening; foraging; wood gathering; raising poultry and livestock. *During the off-season, the women in agriculture spend more time in domestic chores, as well as augmenting cash income and ensuring food for their households.*

The findings further indicate that 60% of 1,194 respondents exercise sole decision-making in their family households over what food to prepare for the family, but they *make these decisions under conditions of marginal access to resources and services*. In spite of their primary role in the food security of the family, only one-third of the respondents has access to production services; less than one-fourth has access to seeds, calamity assistance, training and extension services; and less than a tenth has access to production capital. Among the top personal aspirations of the respondents was to provide at least three meals a day for their families.

### **Women Fishers**

A study by the Center for Empowerment and Resource Development estimates that in multiple hook and line fishing, women contribute about 45 - 60% of the work done in the different fishing stages. In addition to *unremunerated work* in fishing, women fishers devote 85 - 90% of the household work. *While fetching water is presumed a shared responsibility between men and women in the household, the burden of poor access to clean water is borne by women, according to the focus group discussion.* Many women in coastal areas are directly engaged in capture activities, assisting their husbands in fishing, or gleaning fishery resources near shore for household food consumption or for selling to the market.

Despite their direct contribution to fishing economy, rural women fisher do not participate in the annual fisherfolk registration process<sup>4</sup>. The view that women's work in fishing is part of their reproductive role predominates, while government authorities tasked with the responsibility for the registration process manifest a bias for market-oriented fisheries activities and perceive fishing solely as a male occupation. Yet, the impact of government intervention in fishing economy that disregards women's role is highlighted by the study of Kilusang Mangingisda (Fisherfolk Movement) where the proliferation of private hatcheries for bangus fry or seedlings (chanoschanos) has displaced many women and children from their source of income which is gleaning bangus fry in the wild for selling to aquaculture farms.

### **Women workers in the Informal Sector<sup>5</sup>**

According to PATAMABA, a national coalition of informal workers, there are 26 million informal workers in the Philippines, equivalent to 75% of the employed population. They comprise the following: home-based workers or own-account workers, household helpers,

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<sup>4</sup> Fisherfolk registration process refers to the official survey or listing of fishers in the communities, which forms as basis for the government's targeting of support services and programs related to fisheries industry development plans.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/fao\\_ilo/pdf/FAQs/Definitions\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/FAQs/Definitions_2_.pdf)

vendors, small farmers and fisherfolk, non-corporate construction workers, small transport operators ('owners'), barangay health workers (BHW), waste pickers, and service workers. Majority of these income-insecure jobs are held by women. *The issues of informal women can be summarized into non-recognition and representation, lack of access to productive resources, and poor access to social protection (social security, justice system, gender-based violence).*

Statistical and situational analyses of informal workers' situation are incomplete. Although they can be considered gainfully employed (though insecure), scaling up their individual enterprises remains difficult because of legal and technical barriers to access to loans and other support and preventive registration processes. Moreover, like agriculture-based workers and fishers, they are directly impacted by economic and financial crises that have been cycling the country in the past decades, and their number is bound to increase as trade-related shifts and global economic meltdown exacerbate a soaked up unemployment situation in the country.

### ***Indigenous Women***

Women in indigenous communities are the most marginalized because of their ethnicity, geographic location, low access to education and health services. Food production in tribal communities remain at subsistence level, with increasing periods of food scarcity brought about by extractive industries such as mining and logging. The Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA) provides for the policy framework on how government relates with and responds to the situation of indigenous communities, most especially in helping tribes to re-claim their ancestral lands. IPRA also recognizes women's equality with men, but there are interpretive issues with some provisions such as right to self-determination that conflict with women's rights. The right to self-determination covers the preservation of and respect for customary laws and traditions, which in present context have put many indigenous women in dire circumstances. *There are practices however that impede women's full participation in the community's development of ancestral domains, such as early marriage and "commercialized" dowry system.* Some communities permit the marriage of children under the legal age of 18 years, some are even as young as 9 years old.

### **Key Issues of Rural Women**

#### **Right to Food Security, Land and other assets**

Rural women secure our food – in the family, they do subsistence gardening and livestock raising to provide food on the table; at the national level, they engage in primary crops production such as rice, corn, coconut, sugar, and vegetables. Studies show that in food production, women work 25 hours longer than men do in a week<sup>6</sup>, which is estimated to account for 45 to 60 percent of food production in Asia.

Indeed, there is no other way of securing our food than empowering the women in terms of having access to and control over the land. But despite being the prime movers of food security,

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<http://www.unfpa.org/intercenter/food/womenas.html>. Women as Food Producers, Interactive Population Center, UNFPA, Accessed in 2002.<sup>7</sup>  
The women's access to justice (ATJ) study was borne out of the Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau's 2010 research on Mapping of Domestic Legal Remedies on Violence against Women.

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women bear the brunt of hunger the most. They suffer from income disparities and economic displacement and get a pittance from productive resources of the country. In the twenty-year old Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program/ CARP or Republic Act 6657 (1988 to 2008), peasant women comprised less than a third of those who have been listed as beneficiaries. Touted to promote social justice and uplift the status of the rural poor through the "land to the tiller" program, CARP seemed to have held back its promise from the peasant women. It was not until 2009, with the enactment of CARP Extension with Reforms or the Republic Act 9700, also known as CARPER, that several rural women's groups and advocates, such as PKKK, took advantage of the legislation so as to assert their rights and interests. However, the glimpse of hope that rural women had are slowly vanishing because of the very slow and dismal implementation of the law. Women agrarian reform beneficiaries continue to suffer from non recognition as rightful owners of the land.

### **Right to Basic Social Services**

In the rural communities, basic services such as food, water and sanitation, education and health are dismal. Most rural women are engaged in food production but their access to food is limited. Many households still do not have adequate potable drinking water and sanitary facilities. There is high illiteracy rate especially among indigenous peoples such as the Teduray, Lambangian. It was cited in TLWOW's 2010 research that these women continue to air their concern on the: lack of electricity in Upi and South Upi; limited health services, including reproductive health services; high illiteracy in Barangay Rifao and Itao; unsafe drinking water due to mine tailings; displacement due to political armed conflicts and continued practice of early arranged marriages.

### **Participation in Governance**

*Rural women's representation and participation in different decision-making fora such as local development councils and special bodies has been dismal.* PKKK cites several factors contributing to gender inequality in governance and participation: (1) the traditional notion that women's role is limited to the reproductive sphere, still proliferates in rural communities; (2) women commonly exhibit low confidence and self-esteem because the society considered them inferior in terms of decision-making, or they are discouraged and prevented by their husbands or fathers from joining organizations or any political undertaking; (3) lack of information on CEDAW, laws on gender equality, programs, resources and services not only among rural women but also among local government officials; (4) men still dominate the political sphere; (5) women's participation in local elections are often hindered by traditional politics and non-accreditation due to inconsistent processes/guidelines and rigid requirements.

### **Right to Reproductive Health and Nutrition**

The Philippines ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in 14 countries that contribute to 80 percent of world's stunted children. This means around 3,602,000 children below 5 years old in the country are suffering from moderate to severe malnutrition. This is expectedly more evident in the countryside since global data on incidence of stunting is higher in the rural areas (above 30%) compared to the urban areas (around 25%). (UNICEF 2013)

One effective way to address stunting is through maternal nutrition and relating this concern with women's reproductive rights. It has been observed that the window of opportunity in preventing the child's under-nutrition is by targeting the first 1,000 days covering pregnancy and the child's first two years. This brings attention to the impoverished mothers who, on top of having limited access to sufficient and good food, also have little access to reproductive health services.

Last December 2012, the Reproductive Health Law was passed however, its implementation has been suspended indefinitely by the Supreme Court pending the issue regarding its constitutionality raised by the Catholic Church in spite of the full deliberation of this legislation in the Philippine Congress. The suspension means a halt in the delivery of reproductive health services, which is badly needed especially by poor and marginalized rural women.

### **Right to Sustainable Livelihoods and Social Protection**

The access of rural women and indigenous women to sustainable livelihood and social protection is limited. This is due to several factors such as lack of access to productive resources including access to land, technology, capital, education and training; lack of access to income; and vulnerability to effects of climate change. Access to income is necessary for rural women and indigenous women to pay for social insurance and other basic health services.

**Right to Environment** The Philippines is considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Around 20 typhoons pass by the Philippines every year, which add burden on rural women, particularly hunger and loss of livelihoods for many rural households that are dependent on rice, corn, vegetables, fisheries and livestock. *The inadequacy of policies to reduce impacts of disasters has compounded the situation under a liberalized economic policy where support services are already lacking.* In a broader context, issues concerning Climate Change weigh heavily on the already vulnerable situation of the rural women. *Gender-blind policies on adaptation, mitigation and capacity building tied with rehabilitation and reconstruction programs, result in lesser social protection and furthers the cycle of poverty and marginalization for rural women.*

### **Access to Justice and Protection from Gender based violence**

Gender-based violence remains to be the immediate barrier to women's full enjoyment of their rights. Data show that at least one woman is battered every two hours. This condition is likely to prevail in areas where there is less access to information and services. In the 2008 PKKK's study, violence against rural women prevails in various forms, i.e. rape, incest, domestic abuse such as physical and emotional battering. Very few of these women victims pursue legal actions since most of them are still economically dependent on their husbands who are often the perpetrator of the abuse. Moreover, "engaging in litigation entails expense. Though these are public crimes, prosecuted in the name of the People of the Philippines under the direct control and supervision of the public prosecutor, economic consideration still figures in the picture"<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> The women's access to justice (ATJ) study was borne out of the Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau's 2010 research on Mapping of Domestic Legal Remedies on Violence against Women.

A nationwide research conducted by Rainbow Rights Project<sup>8</sup> revealed the nature, extent and impact of violence committed against LBT women. Young indigenous women from Jolo, Sulu vented their serious discomfort in enforced university/college uniforms that do not match their gender identity and expression. Young Bajau LBT women choose to drop out of school to avoid parents being summoned frequently. Without legislation, LBT women will remain invisible and voiceless and discriminated. There is also a need to consider the different facets of a woman, her being LBT, indigenous, young, out of school and disempowered.

### **Government Response to Rural Women**

In August 2009, the Republic of the Philippines affirmed the state's duty to promote and protect women's human rights as stated in CEDAW through the enactment of the Magna Carta of Women. The law defines the rights of the marginalized women- including women farmers, fishers, rural workers, and indigenous peoples – as the right to: food security and productive resources; housing; decent work; livelihood, credit, capital and technology; education and training; representation and participation; social protection; information; recognition and preservation of cultural identity and integrity; peace and development, among other human rights.

However, much work remains to be done by Philippine and other governments to implement women's human rights. In particular, PKKK, in consultation with rural women, make the following recommendations to further the realization of the State Parties' obligation to respect, protect and fulfill women's human rights:

### **Recommendations**

1. State parties must consistently recognise and acknowledge the valuable contribution of rural women to the economy through both productive and reproductive work. Measures should be taken that rural women should have full access and control over land and other capital resources, including issuance of legal titles and registration of rural women as farmers and fishers, ensuring their formal inclusion in traditionally male-dominated occupations.
2. The State Parties' obligation to eliminate all forms of discrimination against rural women, demands that government agencies at all levels collect sex disaggregated data that will help governments to develop more appropriate programs and services for rural women based on their specific contexts and needs.
3. State parties must address the negative and differential impacts of gender blind neoliberal-economic policies on the lives of the different sectors of rural women that has resulted in reduced government spending on agricultural infrastructure and increased fees for public services, which has further marginalized rural and poor women. Government must draw up affirmative programs for rural women at national and community levels with full participation of rural women, from conceptualization, planning and implementation.

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<sup>8</sup> A non-government organization that empowers and educates the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community on human rights

4. State parties must ensure the sustainable use of land, water and other resources through policies and programs that promote protection of the environment and prevent the use of technologies that tend to displace rural women labor, destroy rural communities and resources, and threaten the health conditions of rural women and their communities. State parties must respect rural women initiatives to set up women-managed resources, and protect the land and water resources that they manage from these destructive development incursions.
5. State parties must ensure that rural women have access to basic social services like health, education, social security and protection. This can be done through gender-responsive governance where the highest standards of basic social services are delivered to rural women in accordance to their different contexts and needs.
6. State parties must ensure the protection and security of rural women in times of disasters and other crisis situations in all phases of relief, recovery, rehabilitation and re-construction efforts. Differential impacts of disasters on the different sectors of rural women must be considered in the planning and implementation of climate adaptation measures and disaster management.
7. State parties must ensure the full and meaningful participation of rural women in programs related to food security, land use planning, land/water use conversions, and agricultural/fisheries investments. Programs that ensure women's equal treatment to property rights, especially in agrarian reform and rural development, ancestral domains, and municipal waters must be also implemented.
8. State parties must ensure that rural women have access to information so they can substantively participate in all decision-making processes relating to access to and control over resources. Government must also develop programs that will enhance the capacity or rural women's leadership and full participation in decision-making at all levels.

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