



Submission: Draft CEDAW Committee General Recommendation No. 41 Dismantling Gender Stereotypes and the Unequal Power Relations that Sustain them

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To: CEDAW Committee

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INITIAL COMMENTS

1. About 46% of the women and girls in the world are in remote, rural, maritime and other non-urban areas ('RRM+ areas'),¹ so are the majority women and girls in the world who are multidimensionally poor² and most Indigenous women and girls.³ The Committee noted in [General recommendation 34 \(2016\) - rights of rural women](#):

“5. Globally, and with few exceptions, on every gender and development indicator for which data are available, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men, and rural women disproportionately experience poverty and exclusion. They face systemic discrimination in access to land and natural resources. They carry most of the unpaid work burden owing to stereotyped gender roles, inequality within the household and the lack of infrastructure and services, including with respect to food production and care work. Even when formally employed, they are more often engaged in work that is insecure, hazardous, poorly paid and not covered by social protection. They are less likely to be educated and are at higher risk of being trafficked and forced into labour, as well as into child and/or forced marriage and other harmful practices (see CEDAW/C/GC/31- CRC/C/GC/18). They are more likely to become ill, suffer from malnutrition or die from preventable causes, and are particularly disadvantaged with respect to health care”

2. The draft General Recommendation ('GR') applies a universalist approach, treating all women and girls as included while making no reference to women and girls in RRM+ areas. Although this does not exclude women and girls in RRM+ areas it does not make these women and girls visible or reflect:
 - a) How gender stereotypes apply in RRM+ areas.
 - b) How intersectionality relates factually and conceptually to RRM+ areas.
 - c) How CEDAW Art 14(1) (that States parties' 'take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women and girls in rural areas') relates.
 - d) How [GR34 \(2016\) rights of rural women](#), ('GR34') [General Statement of the CEDAW Committee on Rural Women](#) (2011) and other CEDAW Committee GRs - which also include rural women and stereotyping - relate.

¹ UNDESA, [World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision](#) (2019)

² World Bank, '[Pathways out of the Polycrisis: Poverty, Prosperity and Planet Report 2024](#)' (2024) 75

³ ILO, '[Implementing the ILO Indigenous & Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future](#)' (2019) 58

3. The drafting approach should engage with (a) to (d) for effective rights description, treatment and inclusion of women and girls in RRM+ areas to ensure that action on requirements *'to dismantle gender stereotypes and the unequal power relations which sustain them'* benefit all women and girls wherever located including in urban and non-urban areas. This recommended drafting approach reflects that the lives and contexts of women and girls in RRM+ areas are often impacted by multi-dimensional peripheralizations, inequalities and subordinations. This includes experiencing duty-bearer failures which directly or indirectly evoke their RRM+ location against them. Geofencing the human rights of women and girls is impermissible and adverse discrimination based on RRM+ location must be fully addressed. Universalist drafting approaches, which do not engage as outlined, risk perpetuating norms operating against women and girls in RRM+ locations including:⁴
 - Urban normativity: urban as power and knowledge centre applying centre / periphery geographic and political dynamic.
 - Structural urbanism: urban structured into many forms of power and power relations.
 - Social Darwinism: especially geographic determinism, which claims geography is destiny and that geographic location not duty-bearer shortfalls account for profiles of poverty related human rights shortfalls in RRM+ locations.

Examples for inclusion of RRM+ areas in RG 41

4. The following (input paras 6-30 below) outlines ways to visibly, conceptually and intersectionally include women and girls in RRM+ areas in GR41. Paras 31-33 contain two further recommendations.
5. The recommended language for inclusion is 'remote, rural, maritime and other non-urban areas'. This is like language in para 8 of the [CSW70 agreed conclusions](#) which refers to 'women and girls in rural, remote and maritime areas'. The proposed wording helps communicate that 'rural' in CEDAW includes all non-urban contexts whether functionally 'rural' or not ([GR34](#)).

I. Introduction

6. Para 1 – refers to obligations of States' parties to address gender stereotypes – the GR should reflect CEDAW Art14(1) – rural women - throughout, including as outlined below.
7. Para 4 –does not, but should, reflect intersectional discrimination and gender stereotypes based on 'rural' location.
 - Adjust 2nd sentence to include suffering intersectional discrimination and gender stereotypes based on their 'location in remote, rural, maritime or other non-urban areas',
 - Adjust footnote 2 to include reference to [GR40 \(2024\) equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems](#) para 17 regarding rural women and intersectional discrimination
 - Adjust footnote 3 to include reference to [GR30 rights of Indigenous women and girls](#) which refers to Indigenous women and girls in rural, remote and urban areas and similar (paras 1,

⁴ Li, Tania Murray, 'After Development: Surplus Population and the Politics of Entitlement' (2017) 48(6) *Development and Change* 1247–1261, Hayes, Karen et al, 'Rural and remote health care: the case for spatial justice' (2025) 25(1) *Rural and Remote Health* 1; Probst, Janice et al, 'Structural Urbanism Contributes to Poorer Health Outcomes for Rural America' (2019) 38(12) *Health Affairs* 1976

para 22 which refers to ‘discriminatory gender stereotypes and practices, in particular in rural areas; ‘ paras 23 (a) & (e), and para 28).

8. Para 5 – contains the only reference to climate or climate change in the draft. Adjust to include how gender stereotypes impact women in relation to climate change and natural disasters; include women and girls in non-urban areas. This could draw on [GR37 \(2018\) gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change](#) including paras 7, 55, 57(f), 71 & 76 which discuss stereotypes.
9. Para 6 – refers to GR being informed by a range of listed mechanisms including with the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls. The Working Group made recommendations about rural women, which are not – but should be - reflected in the draft GR. For example footnote 10 refers to para 56 of the [Working Group report](#) but the GR does not reflect the contents:

‘56. Rural women are particularly affected by patriarchal gender stereotypes and roles and are extremely vulnerable to harmful practices such as early or forced marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as to violence and poverty. These practices have a negative impact on their right to health. Rural women are usually particularly disadvantaged in accessing health-care services, including reproductive and sexual health services ‘

10. Para 7 footnote 13 - Check the reference in the footnote; should it be to the [African Commission on Human Rights, General Comment No 6 on the protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples Right on the Rights of Women in Africa \(Maputo Protocol\): The Right to Property During Separation, Divorce or Annulment of Marriage](#) para 31 & 50 regarding stereotypes.

II. Scope

11. Para 8 – after stating ‘The Committee has addressed gender stereotypes as a form, underlying condition, structural cause, and contributor to discrimination against women and girls’ references are given in footnote 18 but should be rechecked:
 - [GR40 \(2024\)](#) paras 30-31 should read 30-35.
 - Add the following GRs, and check all other GRs for inclusion:
 - [GR38 \(2020\) trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration](#) paras 26, 30, 66, 97
 - [GR37 \(2018\) the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change](#) paras 7, 55, 57, 70, 76
 - [GR36 \(2017\) the right of girls and women to education](#), paras 16, section VI, para 37, 46, 62-63, 74, 80-81
 - [GR34 \(2016\) the rights of rural women](#) paras 5, 8, 22-23, 43, 53, 57, 75
 - [GR23 \(1997\) political and public life](#): paras 12, 20, 43
12. All footnote references should be sufficiently inclusive of RRM+ women and girls and should be checked considering footnote 18 and other comments in this input.
13. Para 13 – last sentence reads: ‘Gender inequality and related stereotypes impact the distribution of power and resources in most societies’- it is submitted that the issue of ‘related stereotypes’ should be developed and include racial stereotypes and stereotypes relating to age, disability, and all others including location in RRM+ areas.

14. Para 17 refers to ‘discrimination against girls, based on the intersection of their sex, gender and age’ however this should reflect other dimensions including intersections of racial discrimination, disability and RRM+ location. Para 17 refers to gender stereotypes which limit girls’ participation in education opportunities, this should reflect [Joint GR31 CEDAW Committee /General comment 18 CROC Committee \(2019\) on harmful practices](#) about education of girls including in rural and remote areas, especially paras 62 and 69 and [GR34 \(2016\) rights of rural women](#) para 43 about personnel training.
15. Para 17 should also reflect barriers per CEDAW Art 14, para 2 (b), for States parties to ensure access for rural women to adequate health-care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning.
16. Para 18 first sentence refers to multidimensional discrimination against older women and outlines ‘sex, gender, ethnic origin, disability poverty; and other factors.’ [GR27 \(2010\) older women and protection of their human rights](#) includes para 24 (below), this and other references to older women in rural areas should be reflected:

“24. In many countries, the majority of older women live in rural areas where access to services is even more difficult due to their age and poverty levels. Many older women receive irregular, insufficient or no remittances from their migrant-worker children. Denial of their right to water, food and housing is part of the everyday life of many poor, rural older women. Older women may not be able to afford proper food due to a combination of factors such as the high price of food and the inadequacy of their income—due to discrimination with regard to employment—, social security and access to resources. Lack of access to transportation can prevent older women from accessing social services or participating in community and cultural activities. Such lack of access may be due to the fact that older women have low incomes and the inadequacy of public policy in providing affordable and accessible public transport to meet the needs of older women.”

17. Para 19 relates to intersectional discrimination against women and girls with disability but does not reflect:
 - the location of women and girls with disabilities in urban and rural areas (i.e. RRM+ areas)
 - how intersectional discrimination and gender stereotypes experienced by women and girls with disability may include dimensions in, or be exacerbated by responses to, their RRM+ location.

Submissions to the CEDAW Committee [2013 Day of General Discussion on Rural Women](#) should be reflected including the submission by the International Disability Alliance (**IDA**) highlighting that the majority of women and girls with disability in the world are in rural areas. Also see the submission to the CEDAW Committee *Day of General Discussion on the Rights of Indigenous Women and Girls* in June 2021 by [IDA and Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network](#).

18. Para 19 should also be enlarged to refer to [GR39 \(2022\) rights of Indigenous women and girls](#) for example para 22 (below) outlines stereotypes, particularly in rural areas, and intersecting barriers and forms of discrimination Indigenous women with disability often face (bold added):

“22. The Committee, in its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, underscored the importance of the rights of Indigenous women to land and collective ownership, natural resources, water, seeds, forests and fisheries under article 14 of the Convention. These rights are also guaranteed to Indigenous women as members of their peoples

and communities by the Declaration and related international legal norms. The key barriers to these rights are the incompatibility of national laws with international law; the ineffective implementation of laws at the national and local levels; **discriminatory gender stereotypes and practices, in particular in rural areas**; lack of political will; and the commercialization, commodification and financialization of land and natural resources. **Indigenous customary laws, misogyny and existing institutions may also be barriers. Indigenous women with disabilities often face intersecting forms of discrimination** on the basis of their sex; gender; disability; ...

19. Para 20 relates to gender stereotypes against women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and that rights and needs are often ignored. RRM+ location should be, but is not, included.
20. Para 21 relates to discrimination against Indigenous women which is often based on gender stereotypes and other discrimination, however RRM+ location is not, but should be, included – see [GR39 \(2022\) rights of Indigenous women and girls](#) para 22 (copy above) highlighting discriminatory gender stereotypes and practices which are barriers for Indigenous women ‘particularly in rural areas’.
21. Para 22 refers to stereotypes based on gender and race including that this ‘has promoted enduring inequalities for Afro-descendent women’, paras 14 & 15 of [GR34 \(2016\) rights of rural women](#) relate to Indigenous and Afro-descent women who live in rural settings - and should be incorporated.
22. Para 23 relates to women facing gender stereotypes in the context of ‘migration, asylum-seeking, refugee status, nationality, and statelessness.’ The drafting should engage with [GR34 \(2016\) rights of rural women](#) para 90 and other aspects, including outward relocation from RRM+ areas and inward relocation to RRM+ areas.
23. Patterns and issues in, and relating to, RRM+ areas should be reflected in paras about gender stereotypes and:
 - Para 24 - perceptions of biological differences
 - Para 25 - maternity, motherhood and related
 - Para 26 - women’s care and support work
 - Para 27 - the family
24. Para 28 – gender stereotypes in education – Patterns and issues in, and relating to, RRM+ areas should be reflected (refer to [GR34 \(2016\) rights of rural women](#) above and UN GA resolution, [Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas](#) Dec 2007 para 2 (r):

‘Supporting a gender-sensitive education system that considers the specific needs of rural women in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and discriminatory tendencies affecting them;’
25. Patterns and issues in, and relating to, RRM+ areas should be reflected in gender stereotype content relating to:
 - Para 29 - employment practices
 - Para 30 - health sector
 - Para 31 - public office
 - Para 32 - digital technology
 - Para 33 - cultural frameworks
 - Para 34 - cultural beliefs and ideologies

- Para 35 - religious practices.

III. Obligations of States Parties

26. Patterns and issues in and relating to RRM+ areas should be reflected in Part III Obligations of States Parties (paras 36-48).
27. Para 41 which relates to States obligations 'to ensure that all components of the justice system... offer an adequate and effective remedy for women who suffer the far-reaching consequences of gender stereotypes' goes on to outline what this involves. However, this does not adequately capture the dimensions elaborated in [GR33 \(2015\) Women's access to justice](#) or the [Agreed Outcomes of CSW70](#) on access to justice for women and girls. The diversity and contexts of women and girls, including women and girls in RRM+ areas, should be reflected.

IV. Recommendations

28. Patterns and issues in and relating to RRM+ areas should be reflected in Recommendations (paras 49-51 and General Recommendations (para 52).
29. The General Recommendation in para 52 (d) about integrating 'an intersectional perspective – which recognizes the complex interweave of contributing factors to discrimination', would be more effective placed early in the document so the meaning is clear for reference throughout. Further, the meaning should reflect how adverse discrimination can and does play on geographic location, including and especially RRM+ location, to adversely discriminate. Current practices regarding treatment of RRM+ areas vary from, on the one hand, being descriptive of where women and girls are located, to analysing and conceptualising power relations on the other. Conceptualising includes how power operates spatially, often controlling and withholding resources and requirements for human rights inclusion by certain groups, or all groups, in these areas.
 - a. The diagram in the [Wiyi Yani U Thangani \(Women's Voices\): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future Final Report](#) (2020, p. 72) notes that 'geographic based discrimination (urban v remote') is *a type of discrimination*.
 - b. However 'rural' is mainly presented as an '*identity*' in many other treatments (e.g. UN Women and UN Partnership on the Rights of People with Disability, '[Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit: An Intersectional Approach to Leave No One Behind](#)', 2021 diagram p.8) or not included e.g. Lim, K. et al (2023). [Intersectionality in Action: Elevate Your Workplace and Achieve Lasting Impact](#), Equality Institute, diagram p.13.
 - c. For more background regarding 'intersectionality' and 'rurality' (RRM+ locations) see:
 - Redshaw, Sarah et al, 'Rurality and intersectionality: a literature review' (2025) 44(9) *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* 208
 - Biana, Hazel, 'The Place of 'Place' in Intersectionality: Developing a Critical Place Theory' in William Arrocha and Elena Xenii (eds), *Migrations and Diasporas: Struggling Between Inclusion and Exclusion* (2023) 123–136
 - Lyons, Amanda, 'Rurality as an Intersecting Axis of Inequality in the Work of the U.N. Treaty Bodies' (2022) 79 *Washington and Lee Law Review* 1125
 - Shannon, Geordan et al, 'Intersectional insights into racism and health: not just a question of identity' (2022) 400(10368) *The Lancet (British edition)* 2125

- Mollett, Sharlene and Caroline Faria, 'The spatialities of intersectional thinking: fashioning feminist geographic futures' (2018) 25(4) *Gender, place and culture: a journal of feminist geography* 565
- Campbell, Meghan, 'CEDAW and Women's Intersecting Identities: A Pioneering New Approach to Intersectional Discrimination' (2015) 11(2) *Revista Direito GV* 479

30. Regarding Recommendations by area (paras 53 - 61) each of these should include RRM+ areas in the treatments in each para in sub-section in B, namely:

- Para 53 - Education, Employment and Economic Activities
- Para 54 - Family Sphere
- Para 55 - Care and Support
- Para 56 - Health
- Para 57 - Justice
- Para 58 - Participation in Political and Public Life – and add reference to [GR23 \(1997\) Political and public life](#): stereotyping is referred to in para 12, 20, 43
- Para 59 - Media and Social Media
- Para 60 - Digitalization, Artificial intelligence, and Cybersecurity
- Para 61 - Culture, Religion and Harmful Practices

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING ABSENCE OF RRM+ AREAS

31. Although the [Concept Note towards draft GR41](#) noted why rural women must be included, this is not reflected in the current draft. That the [Zero draft of CSW70 agreed outcomes](#) and [most of written the CSO inputs in the lead up to CSW70](#) contained no reference to women and girls in RRM+ areas warrants broad consideration. Regarding draft GR41, questions include: why RRM+ areas were (i) not described, (ii) not considered in any of the treatments of intersectionality, and (iii) not considered conceptually in terms of power relations?

32. Leadership is needed to improve human rights, wellbeing and inclusion. This includes modeling procedural, conceptual and textual inclusion to stand in full solidarity with women and girls in RRM+ areas against multiple structures, narratives and norms of human rights withholding. Leadership can encourage all stakeholders to fully partner, collaborate and meet solidarity expectations.

33. Consequently, it is recommended that the CEDAW Committee develop:

- A high-level directive to inform its work and UN Women operations to guard against non-inclusion, nominal or superficial inclusion of gender issues and issues for women and girls in RRM+ areas.
- A Guidance and resources for actors and functions across the UN system, for States parties and duty bearers to promote good practice for:
 - full, effective, intersectional inclusion of women and girls in RRM+ areas, and
 - non-discrimination against women and girls based on their RRM+ location.