

The Rights of All Women, Adolescents and Girls in Rural Areas of the Americas: The path to the Inter-American Decade

1. Introduction

Women's human rights and gender equality are supported by a broad series of international and regional commitments, including the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW, 1979), the [Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women](#) (Belem Do Para Convention, 1994), the [Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference of Women](#) (Beijing, 1995) and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda (2015), in particular SDG 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

In recent years, a greater number of political agreements and standards issued by different multilateral organizations and human rights mechanisms at the regional and international level have given specificity and depth to this legal and political framework, especially from an intersectional approach. In this sense, for example, the OAS has adopted instruments such as the [Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities](#) (1999), the [Inter-American Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance](#) (2013), the [Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance](#) (2013) or the [Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons](#) (2015).

2. The rights of women and girls in rural environments: Towards a workable agenda

Given the mobilization of a broad network of organizations and women leaders to make visible, promote and deepen the rights of women and girls in rural environments, and under the Presidency of Panama of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) of the OAS, in June 2023, the 53rd regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted the Declaration for the Rights of All Women, Adolescents and Girls in Rural Areas of the Americas ([AG/DEC. 113 \(LIII-O/23\)](#)) (see Figure 1, below).

Following up on a number of existing agreements and declarations, including the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas](#) (2018) and [General Recommendation No.34 of the CEDAW Committee on Human Rights of Rural Women](#) (2016), the OAS Declaration recognizes that *...women, adolescents and girls, particularly those in rural areas, have experienced barriers to the exercise of their rights related to accessing, possessing and inheriting land for reasons that maintain subordination and structural invisibility, for which it is essential for States to promote policies aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, especially in relation to land.*

Figure 1: Timeline

2022	The process begins
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The CIM Delegates, gathered at the 39th Assembly of Delegates, adopt the Declaration of Panama and the Strategic Plan 2022-2026 of the CIM, both with a mandate to deepen the work of the CIM from an intersectional perspective.• The Executive Committee of the CIM 2022-2025 specifies the mandate to work with rural women.
February 2023	Initial consultations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The President of the CIM (Panama) meets with representatives of the Permanent Missions to present a first draft of the Declaration.• The CIM Secretariat organizes the inaugural meeting of the Inter-American Roundtable of Rural Women.• Panama leads a series of consultations on the text of the Declaration.
June 2023	OAS Declaration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 53rd General Assembly of the OAS adopts the Declaration for the Rights of All Women, Adolescents and Girls in Rural Areas of the Americas, thus declaring the Inter-American Decade (2024-2034).• The Declaration contains a specific mandate for the CIM to work with other areas of the OAS and the inter-American system in the implementation of the Decade.
August 2023	Consultations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Between August 2023 and February 2024, the CIM Secretariat carried out a series of consultations with States, other entities within the OAS (SEDI, SARE, IACHR), and other bodies of the inter-American system (IICA), other organizations of the international system (FAO, IFAD, WFP, UN Women) and with social organizations, through the Inter-American Roundtable of Rural Women.• The IV Forum of Women Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Authorities of Agriculture of the Americas of IICA is held, on this occasion with the participation of some Ministers of Women to be able to address the issue of rural women from an intersectoral perspective.
October 2023	International Day of Rural Women
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In commemoration of the International Day of Rural Women (October 15), the OAS Permanent Council includes the topic on its agenda, and the CIM presents an overview of the work carried out towards the implementation of the Inter-American Decade for the Rights of All Women, Adolescents and Girls in Rural Areas of the Americas, including the three strategic lines of work.
January 2024	Systematization of promising practices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The CIM Secretariat begins a process of systematizing good national and institutional practices, following the guidelines of the three strategic lines of work - Dialogue, Promotion of Rights, and Empowerment and Leadership.
March 2024	CSW'68
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the 68th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Panama leads a Ministerial Dialogue on the implementation of the Inter-American Decade and its universalization.

The OAS Declaration and the establishment of the Decade are the result of a series of collaborative efforts that began with the establishment of an alliance between the CIM and the Network of Rural Women of Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) in September 2021. Based on this alliance and initial coordination efforts, the Principal Delegates to the CIM participating in the 39th Assembly of Delegates (Panama, May 2022) included a specific focus on rural women in the [Panama Declaration "Building bridges for a new social and economic pact led by women"](#), and in the [Strategic Plan 2022-2026 of the CIM](#).

The most important milestone of the Declaration was the proclamation of the Inter-American Decade for the Rights of All Women, Adolescents and Girls in Rural Areas of the Americas, which will be observed between 2024 and 2034, with *...the objective of promoting progressive measures for the advancement of all their rights and the eradication of all forms of discrimination that they face... under an intersectional approach, understood as the interconnection of multiple forms of discrimination, exclusion, and inequality.*

3. The path to the implementation of the Inter-American Decade

Since the adoption of the Declaration, the Member States of the OAS, both through the Permanent Missions and the Delegates to the CIM, and the CIM Secretariat have worked hand in hand to provide structure and substantive content to the implementation of the Inter-American Decade. In this process, different spaces for dialogue have been established with:

- i) **Member States:** in particular the regular sessions of the OAS Permanent Council (October 2023), where the States provided information on their efforts and results at the national level in terms of recognizing and addressing the specificity of the rights, needs and priorities of rural women, and the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), where the Ministers of Women of Panama, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Chile and Guatemala, along with rural women's organizations and UN Women, exchanged views on the implementation of the Inter-American Decade and possibilities of its expansion to the universal system.
- ii) **Rural women's organizations:** especially through the Inter-American Roundtable of Rural Women, established by the CIM in February 2023 as a space to elevate the voices of rural women. The Roundtable held meetings throughout 2023 and this report includes a systematization of its priorities for the Decade at political spaces at both the national and regional level.
- iii) **Other entities of the OAS and the inter-American system:** pursuant to the provisions of the Declaration, the CIM Secretariat has held multiple meetings with the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI), the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (SARE) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), as well as with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). In these meetings, specific possibilities for coordinated work have been identified to make visible and promote the rights of rural women.
- iv) **Other international organizations:** including UN Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Program (WFP), with a view to coordinating efforts and identifying opportunities and concrete measures for mobilizing resources for the implementation of activities during the course of the Inter-American Decade.

As a result of these dialogue spaces, strategic lines, concrete activities, and promising practices were identified:

A. Strategic lines for the implementation of the Inter-American Decade:

- i) Generate spaces to make visible and dialogue about the situation of all women, adolescents and girls in rural areas from an intersectional and an ethno-cultural approach,
- ii) Promote the protection and defense of the rights of all women, adolescents and girls in rural areas, and
- iii) Promote the empowerment and strengthening of the political leadership and public management capacities of rural women through inter-institutional articulation and collaboration.

B. Concrete activities

From the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI):

- Offer opportunities to women in rural areas to gain more visibility and strengthen their businesses within the framework of the “Economically Empowered Women for Equitable and Resilient Societies” project, with the aim of empowering women to actively participate and benefit from the digital economy in the following countries: El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines,
- Make visible the SBDC Cooperatives Program in Uruguay, in order to strengthen the participation of women and young people in cooperatives, thus supporting their access to financing, their education and training, their connection with value chains and the measurement of their social value and economic,
- Enhance the Indigenous Tourism Collaborative of the Americas, which through capacity development and other information exchange mechanisms, supports indigenous communities to take advantage of opportunities in the tourism sector and promotes economic empowerment, including among women in rural areas, and
- Make visible the situation of women within the OAS “Youth Academy,” an online platform that offers free courses in English and Spanish on advanced and transformative technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, Blockchain, etc. and that collaborates with local governments, including in rural areas.

From the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (SARE):

- Make rural women visible in the work of SARE to address groups in situations of vulnerability, recognizing that rural women are not a homogeneous group and an intersectional approach is also required to recognize the multiple and interconnected forms of discrimination they face. In this case, put particular emphasis on rural women in situations of human mobility,
- Strengthen the participation of rural women's organizations in the OAS,
- Address the situation of rural women, from an intersectional and social inclusion approach, in the Ministerial Meeting on Social Development (REMDES), including specific actions to measure and address multidimensional poverty in rural areas, strengthen social protection systems and access for rural women and strengthen regional cooperation to promote social development,
- Include a specific focus on comprehensive care systems in the Work Plan of the Inter-American Commission for Social Development (CIDES) for the 2023-2025 period, and
- Highlight the gender focus of the hemispheric report “Confronting food insecurity in the Americas: Good practices and lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

From the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR):

- Organize an IACHR hearing on the rights of rural women, emphasizing particular topics such as the right to land and property and the right to water, as well as the role of rural women as defenders of human rights, the environment, and lands.
- Begin the analytical and research process for a thematic report on the rights of rural women, to make the legal framework visible and document in a more systematic way the obligations of States regarding this set of rights.

From the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA):

- Continue the Permanent Forum of Women Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials of Agriculture of the Americas, including when possible Ministers of Women, Social Development and other relevant topics to continue addressing the issue of rural women from an intersectoral perspective,
- Strengthen the Training Program for Rural Women of the Americas, with new courses in response to the interests that the women participating in the first courses expressed and in alliance with other entities committed to the rights of rural women and the need to demasculinize agriculture and rural institutions

Training Program for Rural Women of the Americas

IICA: Strengthen the capacities of rural women through educational tools and information, to enhance their ventures and entrepreneurial leadership skills.

C. Promising practices

In addition to the practices identified in consultation with OAS entities, described above, consultations with States and a series of consultations with other organizations of the international system have contributed to a process of identification, systematization and dissemination of “promising practices” around the rights of rural women. This exercise, which will be published as a “Compendium” in the course of 2024, will serve to provide States, in addition to the existing regulations and recommendations, with a series of concrete examples for the implementation of these regulations and recommendations, with a view to reducing the implementation gap.

Some examples of the promising practices identified:

Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture (REAF)

• **Sub-regional:** Meeting space between civil society organizations linked to family production, and governments representatives of MERCOSUR

National Gender Plan for Agriculture and Fisheries Policies

• **Uruguay:** planning that includes all institutions in the agricultural and fisheries sector and is built in a participatory manner

National Documentation Program for Rural Workers

• **Brasil:** women's access to civil identity documentation and cadastres related to family farming that give access to sustainable agrarian development policies

4. Priorities of the Decade: Visibility, dialogue, rights and leadership

Pursuant to the work advanced to date and with a view to concretizing the implementation of the Inter-American Decade, the CIM will continue working closely with the allies and the issues previously identified along the three strategic lines.

- i) *Generate spaces to make visible and dialogue about the situation of all women, adolescents and girls in rural areas from an intersectional and an ethno-cultural approach*

Along these lines, the CIM will seek to strengthen the spaces for dialogue between the Inter-American Roundtable of Rural Women, REDLAC, the pertinent authorities of the State (agrarian

and rural sector, National Women's Machineries) and the agencies and bodies of the inter-American and the universal systems.

Likewise, it will establish spaces for dialogue between leaders and representatives of rural women's organizations with the authorities of the security and justice sectors, both national and traditional, in order to debate the situations of discrimination and violence suffered by rural women, adolescents and girls and the obstacles they face in accessing their individual and collective rights, as well as justice and reparation systems. Likewise, in this dialogue, it will contribute the experience and information of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), while seeking to deepen the understanding and attention to violence against women, adolescents, and girls in rural environments.

With a view to expanding knowledge and involvement in the Inter-American Decade, the CIM will promote dissemination and awareness campaigns on the history, knowledge and ancestral wisdom of rural women, as well as their contributions to food security and environmental sustainability, to the economy and social and economic development

ii) Promote the protection and defense of the rights of all women, adolescents and girls in rural areas

Along these lines, the CIM will prioritize, based on existing regulations and recommendations, as well as identified promising practices, promoting effective public policies to eradicate poverty and food insecurity for women, adolescents and girls in rural environments, which incorporate the budgetary and administrative measures necessary to guarantee their effectiveness.

In this context, it will seek to generate spaces for cooperation to strengthen the capacity of States in the provision of essential public services to rural women. In this sense, the identification and dissemination of the promising practices indicated above will be essential to ensure that training efforts for States are based on knowledge, evidence and proven experience.

Pursuant to the work of the CIM on the issue of care and with a view to deepening the implementation of the Inter-American Model Law on Care, the CIM will support the design of methodologies and State mechanisms for the recognition of unpaid work carried out by rural women, in care, family farming, and community leadership, to confront climate crises or resolve conflicts.

At the same time, in the context of the Follow-up Mechanism of the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) and in its capacity as its Technical Secretariat, the CIM will seek to make violence against rural women and their access to justice more visible.

iii) Promote the empowerment and strengthening of the political leadership and public management capacities of rural women through inter-institutional articulation and collaboration

Pursuant to its work on the issue, the CIM will promote political parity for rural women in electoral processes, in community management spaces and in national decision-making processes, to ensure effective access for rural women to their political-electoral rights.

In support of these efforts, the CIM will seek to identify and systematize the experiences of rural women in public decision-making spaces, both at the national level and in local governments and

development councils, in order to guide a concrete offer of leadership training for rural women, including through the REDLAC Rural Women Training Schools and the courses offered by IICA.

In this sense, the CIM will also seek to offer a specific edition of its Course for Electoral Candidates to rural women, with a view to promoting and supporting greater participation of rural women in electoral politics.