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Advancement of women: advancement of women

Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/148](#), the present report provides reviews of the activities undertaken by Member States and United Nations entities to enable women and girls, especially the poorest and most marginalized, in rural areas to improve their livelihoods, well-being and resilience in a changing climate. Gains in that regard are essential for progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to ensure that no women or girls in rural areas are left behind in its implementation, monitoring and results. Recommendations are provided for consideration by the Assembly.

* [A/74/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [72/148](#) on improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report provides an assessment of the situation of women and girls in rural areas since the seventy-second session, with an emphasis on the significant impacts of climate change on their lives and communities that are exacerbated by prevailing gender inequalities. Highlighted herein are the efforts of Member States, the United Nations system and other actors to tackle challenges facing women and girls, especially the poorest and most marginalized, in rural areas and to enable them to improve their livelihoods, well-being and resilience in a changing climate.

2. The report offers an assessment of national efforts in the following areas: (a) integrating gender equality considerations into sustainable development and climate change frameworks; (b) adopting gender-responsive agricultural and rural development policies and programmes; (c) supporting the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls; (d) providing sustainable infrastructure and technology and improving access for rural women and girls; (e) ensuring the full participation of women in decision-making at all levels on climate and environmental issues; and (f) strengthening the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on the links between rural women and girls and climate change resilience. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.¹

3. Since their adoption, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have addressed environmental challenges and climate change as central to one of the critical areas of concern outlined in the Platform for Action and as issues cutting across all 12 areas. The priority theme of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in 2018, brought renewed attention to the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls (see [E/CN.6/2018/3](#)). In its agreed conclusions ([E/2018/27](#)), the need was underscored for gender-responsive strategies on climate change mitigation and adaptation to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of rural women and girls to respond to the adverse impacts of climate change. At its fifty-fifth session, the Commission had already called upon Governments to integrate a gender perspective into their climate change policies and to strengthen mechanisms and provide adequate resources to ensure the full and equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels on environmental issues, in particular on strategies related to the impact of climate change on the lives of women and girls ([E/2011/27-E/CN.6/2011/12](#)).

4. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women contains calls for States parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against rural women, specifically in article 14. In its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women ([CEDAW/C/GC/34](#)), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recognizes that rural women in both developing and developed countries are deeply affected by poverty, economic and political exclusion, climate change and natural disasters, and lack of access to infrastructure, services and social protection, which aggravates their

¹ Submissions were received from 26 Member States (Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Georgia, Honduras, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Mongolia, Peru, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan, Turkey and Zimbabwe) and from five United Nations agencies (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and World Food Programme (WFP)).

disproportionate responsibilities for unpaid care and domestic work. In the general recommendation, the obligations of States to uphold rural women's rights to land and natural resources, health, education, employment, housing, water, sanitation, energy and participation are underscored. It is noted that rural development policies continue to overlook the priorities and rights of women, including those of women farmers and migrant women workers employed in agriculture.

5. In the Committee's general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change ([CEDAW/C/GC/37](#)), it is noted that rural and indigenous women are directly affected by climate change and disasters, as food producers and as agricultural workers. Their climate resilience is compromised by insecure land tenure, poor-quality plots and the outmigration of men, which leaves them to shoulder farming responsibilities on their own. Climate-related resource scarcity also increases their exposure to the risk of violence.

6. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a comprehensive and transformative framework that covers rural development and the empowerment of rural women and girls. It contains calls for Member States to devote resources to developing rural areas and sustainable agriculture and fisheries and to supporting women farmers, herders and fishers in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries. Of particular relevance, among other Sustainable Development Goals, are Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls and Goal 13 on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, including by raising the capacity of women for effective climate change planning and management.

7. In his report on climate change and poverty ([A/HRC/41/39](#)), the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights stated that climate change would have devastating consequences for people in poverty and, if unchecked, would push vast numbers into poverty. Even if concerted and decisive action were taken by Governments and all stakeholders globally, hundreds of millions would face food insecurity, forced migration, disease and death. Climate change threatened the future of human rights, in particular women's rights, and the global progress in development, health and poverty reduction over the past 50 years.

8. Rural areas worldwide experience the severe impacts of climate change, including in relation to water availability and supply, food security, infrastructure viability, shifts in the areas in which food and non-food crops are produced and loss of rural livelihoods and income security. Climate change exacerbates existing inequalities rooted in poverty, remote location and neglect by policymakers, with rural populations the poorest and, because of their dependence on agriculture and natural resources, among the most vulnerable to climate change.² Nearly two thirds of all undernourished people live in countries with high exposure to climate extremes.³ Agriculture in developing countries experienced a quarter of the total damage and loss from climate-related disasters from 2006 to 2016.⁴ Globally, more than 3 billion people and 80 per cent of the extreme poor live in rural areas, with around 2.5 billion dependent on agricultural livelihoods.⁵ Almost one third of employed women work in agriculture worldwide, including in forestry and fishing,

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report* (2015).

³ FAO and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018: Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition* (Rome, 2018).

⁴ FAO, *FAO's Work on Climate Change: United Nations Climate Change Conference 2018* (Rome, 2018).

⁵ International Food Policy Research Institute, *Global Food Policy Report* (Washington, D.C., 2019).

concentrated in time- and labour-intensive, informal and poorly paid activities with little social protection or income security.⁶

9. The impacts of climate change amplify existing gender inequalities, which is evident in rural areas. Climate change affects the livelihoods and well-being of women and men differently, in terms of agricultural production, food security, health, water and energy resources, climate-induced migration and conflict, and climate-related natural disasters. In many contexts, the dependence of women on land, water and other natural resources and productive assets and their unequal access to them mean that they are disproportionately affected by climate change. Their capacities to withstand and recover from disasters are also strongly affected by gender inequalities. In most disasters, mortality among women is significantly higher than among men, and poverty among women increases in disaster-prone areas. The impacts of climate change on women are compounded by their limited mobility and decision-making power in households and communities.⁷

10. Structural barriers and discriminatory social norms continue to constrain the decision-making power of women in rural households and their political participation in rural communities and more broadly. Women and girls in rural areas lack equal access to land and productive resources, to public services, such as education and health care, and to infrastructure, including energy, water and sanitation, all of which compromise their capacity to withstand extreme weather events and the effects of ongoing climate change. Much of their labour remains invisible and unpaid even when their workloads become increasingly heavy owing to the outmigration of men or when they and their families are obliged to seek alternative livelihoods or migrate as a consequence of the devastating impacts of climate change on agricultural production and income security.⁸ Nearly every global gender and development indicator for which data are available continues to show that rural women lag behind rural men and urban women and that they disproportionately experience poverty, exclusion and the effects of climate change.⁹

11. Not only do women account for a substantial proportion of the agricultural labour force, making significant contributions to agricultural production, food security and nutrition and land and natural resource management, but they also perform most of the unpaid care and domestic work within families and households in rural areas. Unpaid care and domestic work only increases in a changing climate. In many contexts, women and girls often have primary responsibility for collecting water and fuel for household and productive use. Although sex-disaggregated data are scarce, evidence indicates that women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80 per cent of households without access to piped water. Where access to clean and affordable energy is lacking, women and girls may spend large portions of their day performing laborious and physically draining tasks, such as collecting biomass fuels, manually processing foodstuffs and pumping water. In areas of fuel scarcity, fuel collection can take up as much as five or six hours per day, time that could otherwise be used for paid work, education, rest or leisure. Climate-induced drought and scarcity demonstrably affect the time and level of effort required to collect, secure,

⁶ International Labour Organization, *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2017* (Geneva, 2017).

⁷ UN-Women, *Leveraging Co-Benefits between Gender Equality and Climate Action for Sustainable Development* (New York, 2016).

⁸ Sierra Club and UN-Women, "Women on the move in a changing climate: a discussion paper on gender, climate and mobility" (Oakland and Washington, D.C., 2018); International Food Policy Research Institute, *Global Food Policy Report*; UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World* (New York, 2019).

⁹ FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security* (Rome, 2016); International Food Policy Research Institute, *Global Food Policy Report*.

distribute and store water, fuel and other resources and potentially compromise the safety of women and girls while they perform these tasks.¹⁰

12. Systematically addressing gender gaps in responding to climate change is one of the most effective mechanisms to build the climate resilience of households, communities and nations. The growing evidence base regarding the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and girls has been matched in recent years by recognition of the potential of gender equality and the empowerment of women to produce social, economic and climate resilience benefits. For example, empowered women have played important roles in adopting low-carbon forms of technology, spreading knowledge about climate change and urging Governments and businesses to take action. That is reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the gender action plan under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

13. Nevertheless, rural women and girls face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of age, income, location, marital and head of household status, race or ethnicity, culture, indigenous status, sexual orientation and gender identity, and as women affected by HIV/AIDS, women with disabilities and women migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, and may be at particular risk of violence, exclusion and the adverse impacts of climate change because of such characteristics. That complexity constrains their access to land and productive resources, infrastructure and services and influences their decision-making power and the exercise of their voice and agency in the face of climate change. The diversity of rural women and girls and their particular needs and priorities mean that tailored policy and institutional responses are required to enhance their resilience.¹¹

14. The crucial role that women and girls can play in ensuring the sustainability of rural households, livelihoods and well-being in a changing climate is now better understood and is discussed below.

II. Enhancing the resilience of women and girls in rural areas

A. Integrating gender equality considerations into sustainable development and climate change frameworks

15. Member States have taken steps to integrate gender equality considerations that promote the empowerment of rural women and girls into national laws, policies and programmes on sustainable development and climate change and into their national reports and activities under international conventions and frameworks, including new developments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

16. Creating conditions for equality between women and men in all spheres of public, economic and political life and in all regions of the country, both urban and rural, and ensuring non-discrimination and the empowerment of women are among the aims of the governance programme of Bulgaria for the period 2017–2021. In Andorra, Act No. 13/2019 of 15 February 2019 on equality and non-discrimination contains calls for the principle of equal treatment and opportunities between women and men to be integrated into all public actions, programmes, policies or regulatory provisions.

17. Peru became one of the first countries in Latin America to encourage the development and implementation of public policies that consider the differentiated

¹⁰ Ibid.; UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (New York, 2018).

¹¹ UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015).

impacts of climate change on men and women. Its national strategy for climate change contains calls for consideration of a gender and intercultural approach in relation to rural development. Its plan of action on gender and climate change seeks to guide the actions of government entities to reduce gender inequalities in terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

18. In line with international agreements and mandates on the environment, climate change and disaster risk management, national policies of Costa Rica have integrated a gender perspective as a cross-cutting theme, including into the national biodiversity policy for 2015–2030, the national biodiversity strategy for 2016–2025, the national risk management policy for 2016–2030, the national policy on adaptation to climate change, the national decarbonization plan for 2018–2050 and the gender plan under the strategy for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

19. The national protected area strategic management plan of Cambodia for 2017–2031 has mainstreamed gender equality into every aspect of its implementation to guarantee that gender concerns receive broad-based attention and support at the local, regional and national levels. It is intended to ensure that women are empowered to participate in planning, management and decision-making processes related to protected areas and share equitably in benefits from the provision of livelihood opportunities. That includes the share of the revenues from ecosystem services that is earmarked for promoting gender equality in designated communities, an example of which is carbon fixing, which involves protecting forests to reduce deforestation and resultant greenhouse gas emissions.

20. The Sudan has emphasized national environment and climate policies and plans that take into account gender considerations, in affirmation of the role of women in protecting and sustaining the environment. The country is working to apply gender equality commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at all levels.

21. In Spain, the draft law on climate change and energy transition, which was presented in February 2019, includes equality between men and women as one of its guiding principles and is aimed at ensuring that the principle is taken into account in public policies to combat climate change. The country's strategy on a just transition, also presented in February 2019, contains strategic objectives on equal opportunities in the green economy and gender equality measures that reduce labour inequalities among women in the ecological transition.

22. In the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, each party is required to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve. Those contributions encompass efforts by countries to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. An analysis of the nationally determined contributions of 190 countries shows that 64 include a reference to women or gender, 15 refer to women as important decision makers or stakeholders in climate change policymaking and 6 refer to women as agents of change.¹²

23. Colombia has been integrating a gender perspective into climate change management actions as part of its low-carbon development strategy, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme nationally determined contributions support programme. By the end of 2019, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development will create a corresponding training programme with the collaboration of the Ministry of Mining and Energy, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of

¹² Gender Climate Tracker, "Gender and nationally determined contributions", available at <https://genderclimatetracker.org/gender-ndc/introduction> (accessed 21 June 2019).

Housing and Urban and Rural Planning, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

24. Most countries have worked to integrate gender considerations into their national adaptation plans under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, focusing on the agriculture, water and energy sectors.¹³ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supports countries in addressing gender issues in their plans, including in budgets and policies for agriculture at various levels, working with parliamentarians, central and district planners and non-government actors.¹⁴

25. Some 20 countries have developed and are implementing climate change gender action plans, including Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, Haiti, Jordan, Liberia, Mozambique, Nepal, Panama, Peru and the United Republic of Tanzania, with Zambia in 2017 and the Dominican Republic and Mexico in 2018 among the most recent. At the regional level, the League of Arab States and the Central America Integration System have incorporated a gender approach into their climate change planning for the first time.¹⁵

26. In terms of international development cooperation, Portugal seeks to increase the resilience of rural communities with regard to combating climate change and drought and to foster gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in partner countries as a fundamental factor in pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals and making global development more equitable, fair and sustainable. In Spain, the master plan for cooperation for 2018–2021 includes gender in development, environment sustainability, human rights and respect for diversity as a cross-cutting priority.

B. Adopting gender-responsive agricultural and rural development policies and programmes

27. Member States have prioritized adopting gender-responsive agricultural and rural development policies and programmes for the economic empowerment of rural women, many of which have a clear link to tackling climate change. Such policies and programmes support the livelihoods and well-being of rural women through capacity development, entrepreneurship, investments in productive assets and increased participation in the agricultural labour market. Some countries have targeted special groups of rural women, including indigenous women.

28. Azerbaijan is working closely with FAO to support capacity development for rural women to meet employment and sustainable development targets. FAO is supporting extension services to meet the needs of rural women farmers and producers by undertaking gender-sensitive needs assessments and designing and providing training that considers the crops cultivated by women and their needs and challenges to increase their roles in agricultural decision-making and farm management, improve their productivity, ensure food security and enhance their livelihoods.

¹³ Angie Dazé and Julie Dekens, *Towards Gender-Responsive National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Processes: Progress and Recommendations for the Way Forward* (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2018).

¹⁴ FAO, “Tackling climate change through rural women’s empowerment”, 2018.

¹⁵ The International Union of the Conservation of Nature Global Gender Office has facilitated the plans in partnership with Governments and with the support of the Government of Finland and the United States Agency for International Development.

29. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Iraq is implementing a project to train rural women and empower them economically and socially, prioritizing livelihood opportunities for widows and displaced women.

30. In Algeria, a national committee for the promotion of rural women, composed of ministerial and other relevant bodies, coordinates the work of local provincial committees and civil society. In 2018, a national award for the promotion of women entrepreneurs, which was launched during the celebration of the International Day of Rural Women, was devoted to the best agricultural projects and initiatives for sustainable development to encourage the contributions of rural women and support social mobility in the rural world. In 2019, the award will highlight the best projects undertaken by women in the field of creativity and innovation.

31. The single registry for social programmes of Brazil helps to coordinate a wide range of public policies, and it is recommended that the person indicated as responsible for the family unit be a woman. That has meant that 85 per cent of those who hold the card that provides access to key social programmes are women. Rural development programmes, such as a national programme to support rainwater harvesting and other forms of social technology and a programme for the promotion of rural productive activities that support women farmers, are also following that trend. Between 2012 and 2018, about 148,000 rural women received resources to invest in productive projects, representing some 60 per cent of the total beneficiaries.

32. In order to achieve food security and promote agriculture that is resilient to climate change, the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Development of Burkina Faso is promoting innovative and resilient agricultural technology, seeds and equipment and making them available to producers. At least 50 per cent of beneficiaries in 2019 are women.

33. The “Sowing Life” programme, in Mexico, promotes the effective participation of women and men, in particular older persons living below the poverty line, in integrated rural development and supports them in establishing agroforestry production systems that, by combining traditional crops with fruit and timber trees, including mahogany, cedar, cocoa, coffee, rubber, cinnamon and other products, will help to achieve food self-sufficiency, improve incomes and restore forest cover of 1 million hectares, thereby reducing emissions. The programme is operational across eight states in 361 municipalities, of which 113 are indigenous, and is aimed at reaching 230,000 producers in 2019.

34. In Uganda, through an initiative on women’s empowerment for resilience and adaptation to climate change, more than 1,600 women’s associations have pooled \$2.8 million, from which women borrow and invest funds in innovative, scalable and replicable activities that address climate change. The initiative has empowered more than 250,000 women, who are becoming economically independent, with increased access to productive resources and greater voice and agency. About 182,000 women now have control over the land that they use, and almost 250,000 own property and generate an income of at least \$300 per month. The initiative also supports women in undertaking land use planning, agroforestry and soil conservation practices, and the adoption of clean energy technology has reduced carbon emissions from burning bush and charcoal and cutting trees.¹⁶

35. In 2018, the Government of Portugal approved a statute on small-scale family agriculture, which is intended to redress the severe disadvantage at which women in

¹⁶ See <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/women-for-results/womens-empowerment-for-resilience-and-adaptation-against-climate-change> (accessed 7 July 2019).

that area find themselves and to promote the empowerment and participation of rural women, in particular in the agricultural labour market.

36. In the strategy paper and action plan on the empowerment of women of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services of Turkey for 2018–2023, the empowerment of rural women is prioritized, in particular for women’s enterprises and cooperatives and for women agricultural workers, by ensuring access to technology, training and social security.

C. Supporting the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls

37. Member States are supporting the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls to respond to the adverse effects of climate change, including in the application of gender-responsive mitigation and adaptation strategies. However, a recent study found that Governments and donors were not providing women farmers with sufficient resources to adapt to climate change.¹⁷ Moreover, climate finance can exacerbate gender inequality if Governments and funders do not adequately take into account the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change and the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that rural women and girls face. Gender-responsive climate finance, in contrast, has the potential both to enhance climate resilience and advance the enjoyment of human rights and gender equality by rural women and girls.¹⁸

38. Rural producers worldwide, including women farmers and cooperatives, are increasingly adopting sustainable ancestral, indigenous and modern technological practices to respond to climate variability and frequent climate shocks. Such practices include the use of drought-tolerant and fast-maturing crop varieties that conserve agricultural biodiversity, soil and water conservation techniques that restore degraded lands and store water in the soil, as well as agroforestry approaches that diversify production, restore soil fertility and control soil erosion, desertification and deforestation. In addition, greater access to land and other productive resources, extension services, early warning systems, climate information, credit, savings, insurance and alternative livelihood options are essential for building resilience.¹⁹

39. With funding from the Green Climate Fund, Georgia is implementing a project on scaling up a multi-hazard early warning system and the use of climate information with the objective of reducing the exposure of communities, livelihoods and infrastructure to climate-induced natural hazards through a well-functioning nationwide multi-hazard early warning system and risk-informed local action. The project is designed to yield strong gender benefits, and gender mainstreaming and the involvement of women in decision-making at all levels are key elements of its implementation. Gender-differentiated indicators will be used to monitor project performance. In 2017, the Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) jointly prepared a guidance manual, *Mainstreaming Gender in Green Climate Fund Projects*, to support the integration of gender equality considerations into climate change interventions and climate finance.

40. In Honduras, a project on women’s empowerment for climate action in the forest sector is being implemented by FAO with the support of Canada, with the objective

¹⁷ Oxfam, *Financing Women Farmers: The Need to Increase and Redirect Agriculture and Climate Adaptation Resources* (Oxford, 2017).

¹⁸ Tessa Khan, “Promoting rights-based climate finance for people and planet”, Working Group on the Right to Development, nineteenth session, Geneva, 23–27 April 2018.

¹⁹ FAO and others, *The State of Food Security*.

of reducing rural poverty and greenhouse gas emissions derived from deforestation and forest degradation, by promoting and strengthening the technical, productive and commercial capacities of rural and indigenous women and young people in 12 municipalities in the Departments of Santa Bárbara and Lempira.

41. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), under its Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme, is funding pilots of an enhanced gender action learning system in Madagascar and Rwanda to engage women and men in identifying the specific climate challenges that they face and to discover possible solutions. With the help of the household methodology, women become powerful agents of change in their households and communities as they learn how to collect and analyse the information necessary for tackling climate change.

42. The World Food Programme (WFP), FAO and UN-Women are implementing a joint project in Nigeria to restore and promote sustainable agricultural livelihoods for food security, employment and nutritional improvement, focusing on women- and youth-headed households identified as vulnerable in 13 local government areas in Borno State, with a key objective of enhancing social protection through the promotion of environmental and climate-friendly livelihood opportunities.

43. The R4 Rural Resilience Initiative of WFP is contributing to improving the situation of women and girls in rural areas by enabling them to improve their families' income and food security through access to an integrated climate risk management approach that combines index insurance, social protection, disaster risk reduction and financial services. The initiative is aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women by ensuring their participation in all phases and including gender considerations in the needs assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme. In 2018, over 50,000 women, or 55 per cent of the total number of insured farmers, received an insurance policy in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe. After the 2017/18 season, around \$1.5 million was distributed in insurance pay-outs to more than 31,000 farmers, 52 per cent of whom were women, in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal and Zambia to compensate for weather-related crop losses. The initiative is having a positive impact on decision-making by women, who play a major role in determining how to allocate the pay-outs received. The initiative is also supporting women in saving and building risk reserves.

44. A programme implemented by FAO, IFAD, UN-Women and WFP, on accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women, has advanced the climate resilience of rural women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, the Niger and Rwanda. With a focus on agriculture, food security and nutrition, the programme has worked with some 50,000 rural women to enhance their productivity under the threat of environmental degradation and climate change and the constraint of unequal access to, and use and control of, land and productive resources. The programme has facilitated access to assets for rural women farmer cooperatives and self-help groups and the adoption of climate adaptive infrastructure and technology that has boosted harvests in countries facing extreme cold, such as Kyrgyzstan, and heat, including Nepal, the Niger and Rwanda, but has also safeguarded women farmers from post-harvest losses, such as in Liberia, to ensure the efficient use of resources. Such approaches have strengthened the participation of rural women in higher value chains and markets, helped to diversify food production, improved nutrition outcomes for their families and communities and increased incomes and savings by, for example, raising revenues by 77 per cent, with benefits for in excess of 315,000 people across participating countries.

45. The UN-Women gender-responsive climate-resilient agriculture portfolio has expanded to countries across sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire,

Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania) and other regions, including China, supported by a training programme, entitled “Gender and climate-smart agriculture: making climate-smart agriculture work for women” (2018), and a policy guidance tool, entitled “Women’s land rights and tenure security in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals” (2019), among other materials.

46. UN-Women and the United Nations Environment Programme are jointly implementing a project on empowering women to secure climate-resilient societies for 2018–2022 in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam and regionally in Asia and the Pacific. The project involves Governments, regional forums, academic institutions, women’s groups and civil society organizations engaged in climate action and disaster risk reduction to promote the climate resilience of women and marginalized groups. It does so by supporting the participation of women in climate-related decision-making, the generation, analysis and use data disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics to inform policy and the transformation of climate and disaster risk reduction policies and financing to be more gender-responsive, and by enabling women to have access to and use renewable energy as a basis for more resilient livelihoods.

D. Access to sustainable infrastructure and technology

47. Member States are making progress in supplying rural communities with the infrastructure and technology necessary to alleviate the burden of unpaid care and domestic work performed by women and girls in a changing climate. Improving the access of rural women and girls to a safe and reliable water supply and sustainable energy through the provision of sustainable infrastructure and technology, including information and communications technology (ICT), is key to building their climate resilience. ICT can help to fill critical gaps in their access to education, training, climate and market information, finance and insurance to help them to confront climate challenges and manage risk (see [E/CN.6/2018/3](#)).

48. Decentralized sustainable energy and water solutions can play a very significant role in supporting the livelihoods, well-being and climate resilience of rural women and girls. Rural women’s enterprises and cooperatives are installing and managing decentralized mini-grids, powered by solar or other forms of renewable energy, that supply electricity for both household and productive uses in rural areas that are not served by national electricity grids. Solar-powered pumps provide water for irrigation and have the potential to ensure crop yields and food security for women farmers in different geographical settings and climatic conditions. Solar dryers, microhydro grain mills, solar grinders and solar refrigeration systems are important forms of technology for agrifood processing, storage and adding value to products. They help to decrease food waste and improve food security, while reducing the labour and time spent by women and girls in, for example, manual processing and collecting water.²⁰

49. Argentina is tackling access to water in a changing climate through a project on enhancing the adaptive capacity and increasing the resilience of small-scale agriculture producers in the north-east of the country, supported by a grant from the Adaptation Fund. Water supply infrastructure has been developed in the Provinces of Chaco, Santiago del Estero, Corrientes and Santa Fe, not only increasing the resilience of farmers and their families, but also greatly reducing the unpaid care and domestic work of women and children, who can now devote the four or five hours per

²⁰ ENERGIA, World Bank Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme and UN-Women, “Accelerating SDG 7 achievement: global progress of SDG 7 – energy and gender”, Policy Brief No. 12 (2018).

day that they had previously spent on water collection to other productive, educational and recreational activities.

50. A cisterns programme under the national programme to support rainwater harvesting and other forms of social technology in Brazil has addressed severe water scarcity in the drought-stricken semi-arid region in the north-east of the country, while also helping to eradicate poverty, ensure food security, diversify incomes and increase climate resilience. The programme has greatly reduced the time that women and children spend on finding and fetching water. The original goal of installing 1 million rainwater collection cisterns to provide water for domestic use was achieved in 2014 and has since been surpassed, with 250,000 productive water cisterns and thousands of cisterns built for schools. The policy was recognized with the silver Future Policy Award in 2017, presented by the World Future Council in partnership with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, as a model of large-scale rainwater harvesting that has facilitated the lives of millions of people, in particular women.

51. Georgia has developed one of the first gender-sensitive nationally appropriate mitigation action proposals under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is focused on access to affordable solar water heating solutions, energy-efficient wood stoves and thermal insulation.

52. A bank in Mongolia is implementing a private sector initiative, a business loan programme for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, supported by the Green Climate Fund, in which over half of the loans provided are for women-led enterprises to adopt sustainable low-carbon business models and to launch renewable energy and energy efficiency businesses.

53. Zimbabwe is undertaking targeted interventions to build the resilience of women through the adoption of climate-smart agriculture, water-harvesting technology, energy-saving technology and clean energy alternatives, such as solar and biogas, and afforestation, especially by planting fruit trees, which have both nutritional and economic benefits.

54. Azerbaijan has established women resource centres in eight regions, which offer rural women and girls free access to library resources, computers and the Internet and have helped to create a network of more than 3,000 rural women. Such networks are important for disseminating the information that rural women and girls and women farmers, in particular, need to confront climate challenges.

55. In Bulgaria, in the national action plan for promoting equality between women and men for 2019–2020, the building of modern broadband infrastructure is contemplated in rural areas to ensure the high-speed Internet connectivity that the country deems a prerequisite for the implementation of new forms of technology and for changing gender stereotypes.

56. The “African Girls Can Code” initiative is jointly implemented by the International Telecommunication Union and UN-Women to motivate girls in both urban and rural areas to take up studies and careers in ICT and equip them with digital, coding, entrepreneurship and personal development skills through coding camps. Some 34 African countries were represented at the first camp, held in Ethiopia in August 2018. The initiative also supports African countries in mainstreaming gender-sensitive ICT and coding curricula at all levels of formal education.

E. Ensuring the full participation of women in decision-making

57. Ensuring the full participation of women in decision-making at all levels on climate and environmental issues is an essential aspect of enabling the livelihoods, well-being and resilience of rural women and girls and their communities, and of giving them the voice and agency to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

58. Australia funds six national women's alliances to bring together women's organizations and individuals from across the country to share information, identify issues and solutions and engage actively on policy issues to create a more informed and representative dialogue between women and the Government. In that context, the National Rural Women's Coalition provides a collaborative national voice for women living in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia. The Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) consultations, led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, have explored the challenges faced by indigenous women and girls in regional and remote areas and given them an opportunity to voice their aspirations, priorities and needs. The final report to the Government, containing recommendations and actions that elevate women's voices and give traction to approaches to better support indigenous women and girls in regional and remote areas, will be issued in the second half of 2019.

59. The Cambodian Development Resource Institute, with a grant from the United Nations Democracy Fund, has been supporting women and their organizations to promote and advocate climate change adaptation initiatives. The project began in 2017 with the objective of training local women to form climate change groups to analyse climate change risks in communities and propose ways to enhance resilience and mitigate natural disasters, such as landslides, floods and droughts.

60. In Cuba, the participation of women in leadership roles in the conservation and preservation of the environment has increased, as it has in risk management for the reduction of vulnerabilities and the prevention of disasters through early warning and climate preparedness systems. Women often serve as heads of risk reduction management centres and as the responsible focal points for early warning systems in their territories or communities, working to avoid the loss of human lives and priority economic assets owing to climate change and extreme weather events.

61. The national strategy for women and girls of Ireland for 2017–2020 is based on consultations on priorities involving rural women's organizations. Rural women are represented in the membership of the strategy committee appointed to advise on the preparation of the strategy and monitor its implementation. They include representatives of the Irish Farmers' Association and the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks. Among the strategy's objectives are actions to recognize the contribution of women to agriculture and promote their leadership opportunities in the sector. The strategy is also aimed at supporting and resourcing community development for women as a means of providing services and support for socially excluded women.

62. The framework law on climate change of Peru of 2018 articulates the right and duty of all to participate responsibly in decision-making on the management of climate change at each level of government and makes the State responsible for ensuring the effective participation of indigenous men and women through intercultural and gender approaches.

63. The Government of Slovenia established a council for rural women on 7 March 2019 as a consultative body of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, responsible for monitoring the status of rural women and formulating proposals to

improve it. It will also have a consultative role in decision-making and the adoption of national rural development strategies, as well as contribute to raising awareness and strengthening the intergenerational cooperation of rural women.

F. Strengthening sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics

64. While most countries are not yet specifically collecting data and developing gender statistics on rural women and climate change, strengthening the collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on the links between rural women and girls and climate change is critical if gender- and climate-responsive agricultural and rural development policies and programmes are to be developed and implemented for the benefit of rural women and girls and their communities. Significant gaps exist in the data and statistics available on rural women and girls across the climate-related themes covered in the present report, including time use, unpaid care and domestic work and access to land, energy and water, as well as agricultural and environmental issues and practices. Member States are taking steps to identify and address such gaps across sectors.

65. A number of countries are continuing to collect data on time use that will help to assess the disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work performed by rural women and girls, among other issues, especially in relation to the provision of infrastructure and technology and addressing climate impacts.

66. In Mongolia, according to the time-use survey conducted by the National Statistical Office every four years since 2007, over the past eight years the time spent by Mongolian women and men on paid work has increased while the time spent on unpaid work has decreased. In that eight-year period, the time spent on unpaid care and domestic work has decreased by 0.3 hours for urban women and men, by 0.5 hours for rural men and by 1 hour for rural women. The trend warrants further research since it may indicate both the positive effects of the wider use of electrical appliances on the distribution of unpaid care and domestic work in the family and the consequences of the dwindling practice of processing livestock raw materials in rural areas in favour of alternative livelihoods.

67. The National Statistics Institute of Spain conducts time-use surveys to ascertain the magnitude of unpaid care and domestic work performed in households, the distribution of household family responsibilities, the participation of the population in cultural and leisure activities and the use of time by specific social groups. The next survey is expected to be carried out in 2021–2022.

68. Italy tracks the proportion of time spent on unpaid care and domestic work through data disaggregated by sex, age and location. Overall, the percentage of time spent on unpaid and domestic care work has remained almost the same since 2002. The time spent by men on unpaid care and domestic work has increased by 1 per cent, while for women it has decreased by about 1.5 per cent, but a large gender gap remains. Data from Italy on greenhouse emissions between 1990 and 2016 show an overall increase between 1990 and 2005 followed by an overall decline from 2005 to 2016. Data on deaths, missing persons or those directly affected by disasters per 100,000 people show an increase between 1990 and 2003, but a decrease thereafter until 2016, although the data were not disaggregated by sex.

69. The climate change strategic plan of Cambodia contains gender-sensitive targets and indicators, including the target that, by 2020, 10 per cent of the country's protected areas, conservation areas, agroecosystems and forest ecosystems, including mangroves, that have been under pressure in recent years will be in an advanced state of restoration, providing enhanced services, in particular for women, older persons and children in local communities and indigenous minority groups.

70. At the global level, FAO is providing guidelines and standards for the collection of comparable sex-disaggregated data in the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture in 2020, which is the main source of statistical information on the agriculture sector. It has also developed guidelines for collecting data for sex-disaggregated and gender-specific indicators in national agricultural surveys, providing a set of indicators for monitoring gender inequality in agriculture and proposing feasible approaches to collect the required data through agricultural surveys or agricultural modules in national household surveys.

71. The UN-Women “Making Every Woman and Girl Count” programme is aimed at creating an enabling environment to address institutional and financial constraints and strengthen policies and practices governing the production and use of gender statistics, increase the regular production of gender statistics, build the technical and financial capacity to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals and other national and international commitments and strengthen the capacity of all relevant actors to use gender statistics in policy, programmes and advocacy. For example, in Kenya, UN-Women will provide technical assistance to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and support several surveys, including on time use. In collaboration with FAO, it will support the Agriculture Finance Corporation in carrying out a baseline survey on the current status of agribusiness financing for women. Other priorities include supporting the production of gender-related Goal indicators and the improvement of routine data collection tools in the agricultural sector.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

72. Member States have designed and implemented plans, policies and programmes to improve the situation of women and girls in rural areas in a changing climate. The prevailing gender inequalities and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence that rural women and girls face have been amplified by the pace and complexity of climate change, which in turn has jeopardized rural and agricultural livelihoods, incomes and well-being and deepened poverty, food insecurity and instability. The magnitude of the climate crisis coupled with entrenched gender inequalities means that Member States need to take comprehensive whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches.

73. Some countries have effectively integrated gender considerations into sustainable development and climate change frameworks, including gender-responsive agricultural and rural development policies and programmes. Others are supporting the resilience and adaptive capacities of rural women and girls through climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods, access to sustainable energy, water infrastructure and ICT, and effective participation in decision-making. Many of the approaches are cross-sectoral and multilevel, but significant gaps remain, especially in the availability of gender-responsive climate finance and of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics that demonstrate the links between rural women and girls and climate resilience and support policymaking and action.

74. Member States are encouraged to implement the following recommendations to improve the situation of women and girls in rural areas:

(a) Take action to implement existing commitments to sustainable rural development, gender equality and the realization of rural women’s and girls’ human rights, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking note of general recommendations No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women and No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related

dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda as an integrated and universal framework that leaves no rural women or girls behind;

(b) Take action to implement commitments to gender equality under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change gender action plan and integrate gender equality considerations with reference to rural women and girls into nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans and all periodic reporting under the Convention;

(c) Design, develop and implement gender-responsive sustainable development and climate change frameworks and agricultural and rural development policies and programmes that respond to the needs and priorities of rural women and girls;

(d) Take measures to eliminate the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence that rural women and girls face;

(e) Promote gender-responsive climate finance and call upon climate finance institutions, including the Green Climate Fund, to support initiatives that respond to the rights, needs and priorities of rural women and girls and benefit them;

(f) Enact policies to eradicate poverty and support educational opportunities, sustainable livelihoods, decent work and income security in rural areas to support the climate resilience of rural women and girls;

(g) Develop and adopt climate- and gender-responsive strategies to support the capacities of rural women and girls to respond to the adverse impacts of climate change through, inter alia, climate-resilient agricultural production, food security and nutrition and sustainable natural resource management;

(h) Ensure the full and equal rights of rural women and their access to land and productive resources and land tenure security by designing, reforming and enforcing relevant laws and policies;

(i) Strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of all rural women and girls to respond to and recover from economic, social and environmental shocks and the adverse impacts of climate change, natural disasters and extreme weather events by providing essential infrastructure, services, technology, early warning systems, financing, insurance, social protection and decent work for women;

(j) Build the resilience of rural women and girls, in particular women smallholder farmers, to climate change and environmental degradation (deforestation, desertification and loss of agricultural biodiversity) by promoting ancestral, indigenous and modern technological practices and knowledge and strengthening access to extension services, information and training;

(k) Support rural women and girls by investing in time- and labour-saving climate-resilient infrastructure and technology, including sustainable energy, clean water and safe sanitation and ICT to access education, training, finance, insurance and climate and market information;

(l) Promote the full and equal participation of rural women and girls, including women farmers, fishers and agricultural workers, in sustainable agricultural and rural development;

(m) Ensure the full participation of, and decision-making by, rural women at all levels in environmental and natural resource governance and climate change strategies, policies and programmes;

(n) Support social, economic, political and scientific institutions in taking into account the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on rural women and girls and in developing gender-sensitive and robust evidence and studies, tools, databases, methodologies and policy analyses to respond to and mitigate such impacts;

(o) Increase the capacity of national statistical offices and other relevant institutions to collect, analyse and disseminate data disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics and produce gender statistics, including through agricultural censuses, to support policies and action to improve the situation of rural women and girls in a changing climate and monitor and track the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

75. The United Nations system and other international organizations, while supporting the empowerment of rural women and girls in their programmes and strategies, are encouraged to support Member States in implementing, measuring and monitoring the above recommendations at all levels.
