

Addressing violence against women in connection with the right to land and territory

Coalition of Caribbean Women for Land and Territory
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The United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women-UN Women defines gender-based violence as:

“harmful acts directed at an individual or group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. The term is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials place women and girls at risk for multiple forms of violence. While women and girls suffer disproportionately from gender-based violence, men and boys can also be targeted. The term is also sometimes used to describe targeted violence against LGBTQI+ populations, when referencing violence related to norms of masculinity/femininity and/or gender norms.”¹

This violence is particularly and unequally applied to women and feminized bodies. Hence, the need to refer, politically, to violence against women, which according to the Convention of Belém do Pará²:

- 1- It constitutes a violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and impairs or nullifies the observance, enjoyment and exercise of such rights and freedoms.
- 2- It is an offense to human dignity and a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men.
- 3- It pervades every sector of society regardless of class, race or ethnic group, income, culture, level of education, age or religion and strikes at its very foundations.

Violence against rural women

In rural areas, these power differences have a differentiated impact on the life trajectory of rural women, because: they are conditioned by the fact that they are women; they live in the countryside; because of the processes of racialization and ethnicization; and, in the case of Colombia, because of the armed conflict.

Different data and figures³ show that rural women are in a situation of greater inequality than rural men, and urban women and men. They face systematic violence in relation to access to land and common goods; they cope with most of the unpaid workload due to gender stereotypes and social norms; they face inequality within the household and discrimination with respect to access to infrastructure, services and food production (CEDAW, 2016, p. 4).

¹See: <https://www.unwomen.org/es/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence>

² See: <https://www.oas.org/es/mesecvi/docs/Folleto-BelemdoPara-ES-WEB.pdf>

³See “La mujer en el mundo 2010: Tendencias y estadísticas” (United Nations publication, Sales No. S.10.XVII.11). Available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesK/SeriesK_19s.pdf

Violence against women in connection with the violation of the right to land and territory in Colombia

The varying types of violence that affect rural women's right to land and territory are linked to economic and patrimonial inequalities, as well as to discrimination resulting from double or even triple burden of unpaid work. This violence also has political implications such as the obstacles they face to exercise their right to free association and the threats to their lives that result from the exercise of territorial and environmental leadership.

Therefore, access to land requires the guarantee of the right to land and other associated rights in order to have a positive impact on the lives of rural women. In this sense, protection of land tenure, titling and property are central claims that must be satisfied, but they also must be accompanied by other policies in areas such as work, social security, food, education, housing and leisure, among others, that shape a favorable environment for the elimination of violence against women.

Statistics related to violence against rural women in Colombia

The official data for Colombia (National Administrative Department of Statistics - DANE) – despite the fact that research on the situation of rural women (peasant, indigenous, Afro-descendant) in our country should be strengthened - lay down that:

- Out of the 12.2 million people living in rural areas, 48.2% are women: 5.9 million. Of this total, 52.3% of rural women are under 30 years of age (DANE, 2022b).
- 76.6% of women who self-identify as indigenous (13.1% of the national total) and 33.1% of women who self-identify as black, mulatto, Afro-Colombian or Afro-descendant (11.8% of the national total) are located in the countryside. Meanwhile, 75.2 (around 3.2 million) of women over the age of 15 identify themselves as peasant women (DANE, 2022b).
- Rural women aged 5 years and older who can't read and write represent 11.2%, while in urban areas this same figure for women is 4.1%. This is an example of the gaps between urban and rural women ([DANE,2022b](#)).

Some differences between rural men and women:

- Female-headed households in rural areas have higher rates of multidimensional poverty (33.7%) and monetary poverty (48.6%) in comparison with male-headed households, where these rates are 29.9% and 43.1% respectively (DANE; 2022b).
- Among the multiple reasons given by rural people between 6 and 21 years of age for not studying, the obligation to take care of household chores was expressed by 11.2% of women. The percentage of men who gave this reason was 0.7% ([DANE,2022b](#)).
- In 2021, the employment rate for rural women was 30.6%, whereas, for rural men, it reached 74.7%. In the same year, the unemployment rate for rural women reached 15.0%, whereas, for

rural men, it was 6.0%. Regarding unpaid work in rural areas, from 2020 to 2021, 93.0% of women and 56.5% of men performed this type of activity (DANE, 2022b).

- Domestic violence is the most common form in which women face violence in Colombia. In around 74% of cases of violence reported in 2021, the aggressor was the woman's partner or ex-partner ([Corporación Sisma Mujer: 2021](#)). From 2020 to 2021, the registry of cases of intimate partner violence against women shows an increase of almost 12%. This situation worsened with the pandemic. The UN report on Violence Against Women during COVID-19 shows that in Colombia, 7 out of 10 women stated that verbal or physical abuse by their partners became more common during the pandemic.
- The report by Corporación Sisma Mujer (2021) states that during 2020 and 2021, there was an increase in the number of femicides, an extreme form of violence against women. The Criminal Investigation Directorate of the National Police reported 210 femicides during 2021. This means that, in Colombia, at least one woman was a victim of femicide every 41.7 hours.

Regarding access to land and support to productive activities:

- In 2019, out of the national total of properties in which only one person is reported as owner, 63.7% of the properties are owned by men and 36.3% are owned by women. Furthermore, throughout the country, the percentage of women landowners is higher than the percentage of women who make productive decisions: in other words, in addition to the gap in land ownership, there is a lack of control over the land. In general terms, rural women have smaller properties which, moreover, are used with a purpose other than productive activities (DANE, 2022a).
- From January 2018 to August 2022, rural women accounted for 36.2% of the applicants of credit for agricultural development. Regarding agricultural extension services, the percentage of rural women was 23.0% of the total (DANE; 2022b).

How does the Coalition of Caribbean Women contribute to the prevention and eradication of violence against rural women?

1. The Coalition comprises indigenous women, peasant women, Afro-peasant women, women who are victim of the armed conflict, Caribbean women, mothers, and fisherwomen who have lived in rural areas. This involves the need of designing strategies that reflect not only their life experience, but also the use of methodologies and languages responsive to the context.
2. The actions are carried out not only with the participation of women, but also with male colleagues who are part of the organizations or communities, with the purpose of strengthening the gender perspective and the capacities in the organizations, and avoiding reprisals against women linked to their participation in the campaign. This is always in agreement with the women involved in the process.
3. We acknowledge and make visible that land is a women's issue: while we have pointed out some structural causes that trigger violence against rural women, we understand that

social norms based on beliefs and expectations about how women and men should behave determine the guarantee of women's right to land and territory. For this reason, we have been identifying, together with the organizations, women leaders and women of the Caribbean, the discriminatory practices that infringe this right, legitimize and normalize violence and prevent these women from participating in different decision-making spaces.

4. The methodological and logistical design of the activities is carried out hand in hand with the social organizations, always taking into account the women's time availability, so that they do not have to choose between the activities of the campaign, their paid work and their caregiving tasks.
5. For the development of each of the activities, minimum conditions that allow active and fair participation are guaranteed, such as food, transport, security, spaces free of violence and discrimination, support, among others.
6. The actions carried out use psychosocial and intersectional approaches that promote women's autonomy.
7. In order to build up alliances, the Coalition has laid down several criteria to be met by the organizations. These criteria are linked to the gender perspective, zero tolerance for any type of violence and discrimination against women and the claim of their rights.
8. Gender as a political and relational category is not understood as synonymous with women and, therefore, the gender perspective will not involve developing measures that are unique and specific only to women. We constantly invite women and organizations to reflect on the questions: How to include men colleagues in our campaign activities? What are the challenges? What risks or difficulties exist or may arise?
9. The coalition has been working on ways to address conflicts within the organizations that use a gender and feminist approach.

Resources:

CBI Mujer Rural y Derecho a la Tierra América Latina. (n.d.). Economic and patrimonial violence against rural women. Available at: http://www.mujertierrayterritorio.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/VEyP-Mujeres-Rurales_completo_compressed.pdf

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women -CEDAW. (2016). General Recommendation No. 34 (2016) on rural women's rights. Available at: <https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2016/10709.pdf>

Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics -DANE. (2022a). Propiedad rural en Colombia. Un análisis con perspectiva de género e integración de fuentes de datos (*Rural landownership in Colombia. A gender-sensitive analysis and integration of data sources*).

Available at: https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/notas-estadisticas/jul_2022_nota_estadistica_propiedad_rural.pdf

Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics -DANE. (2022b). Situation of rural women in Colombia Statistical Note. Third edition. Available at: <https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/notas-estadisticas/oct-estadisticas-mujer-rural.pdf>

Organization of American States - OAS. (1994). Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, Convention of Belém do Pará.

United Nations - UN. (2010). La mujer en el mundo 2010: Tendencias y estadísticas. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/Seriesk/SeriesK_19s.pdf