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3. Many commitments have been made for rural women's economic empowerment and the global policy framework provides a strong basis for action. Article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women outlines specific obligations for States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas. Despite these commitments, Governments and many other stakeholders have been slow in responding effectively to the needs and priorities of rural women. An enabling policy environment for rural women's economic empowerment needs to be created as a matter of urgency, by placing their concerns in the mainstream economic agenda, in particular in the areas of agriculture, finance and national planning. Addressing the needs and concerns of rural women in all policies at all levels requires a dual-track strategy which includes a stronger focus on gender mainstreaming across the board, and targeted measures that respond to the diversity of rural women, in all parts of the world. It also requires a holistic approach that addresses all dimensions of empowerment, including economic, political and social empowerment.

4. In the last decade, rural areas have been transformed as a result of migration to urban centres. Financial and economic crises, volatile food prices, climate change,



12. Rural women's access to decent work and employment remains limited. Some initiatives, such as gender-sensitive rural employment guarantee schemes, successfully provided off-farm employment opportunities for rural women. There is a need to recognize and value the unpaid work of rural women, and to pay increased attention to alleviating the burden of unpaid work of rural women so that they can engage in remunerated work. The provision of services and investment in infrastructure has been instrumental in reducing this burden of unpaid work. The availability and quality of infrastructure and services can help rural women to reconcile work and family responsibilities, and increase their access to paid employment, markets to sell their products, information, agricultural inputs and supplies. More efforts are needed to provide rural women with access to basic services such as running water, sanitation, and electricity for their households and businesses, as well as with transportation, especially in remote areas. Access to sexual and reproductive health services in rural areas is fundamental for rural women's survival as well as their ability to control their fertility and take advantage of economic opportunities.

13. The need to improve the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and rural/urban areas as well as gender-sensitive indicators was emphasized. Collection of data, however, is not sufficient. Analysis and use of data to better understand the root causes of discrimination and inequality is critical for gender-responsive policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in rural areas. The use of information and communications technologies can facilitate countries' efforts to collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data and create records. A set of standard indicators is urgently needed on issues such as asset ownership, land and housing in order to monitor and evaluate programmes and initiatives in rural areas. To this end, there is a need to increase the capacity of countries to collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age and rural/urban location.

14. The economic empowerment of rural women should be pursued in partnerships with stakeholders, including men and boys, women's organizations, grass-roots organizations, cooperatives and the private sector. Rural men and boys need to be sensitized for the elimination of discrimination against women and the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, in their families as well as in their communities. Above all, stakeholders need to engage in ongoing and systematic dialogue with rural women to better understand their needs and concerns.

15. An enabling environment needs to be created for rural women to organize themselves. In particular, women's participation and leadership in farmers'