

**Press Statement from the Zimbabwe Gender Commission on the International Day of Rural Women
Date: October 15, 2024**

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission joins the global community to commemorate the International Day of Rural Women, recognizing and celebrating the invaluable contributions of rural women and girls to our food systems. This year's theme, "Rural Women Cultivating Good Food for All," resonates deeply within Zimbabwe, where rural women are the backbone of our agriculture. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) approximately 80% of women in communal areas make up 61% of the farming community and contribute an impressive 70% of agricultural labour. Alarming, many are classified as unpaid family workers, dedicating 16 to 18 hours a day - 49% to agricultural activities and 25% to domestic responsibilities. Despite constitutional recognition of gender equality and non-discrimination in Section 56, women face systemic barriers limiting their voices, choices and control over their destiny. This manifests in unequal access to, control over and ownership of resources.

The ongoing El Niño-induced drought exacerbates the challenges faced by rural women, as they are disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters. This situation leads to increased vulnerability due to crop failures and livestock losses, causing severe food insecurity and malnutrition in their households.

Women, often responsible for fetching water and firewood, experience increased workloads and reduced opportunities for education and income generation. The economic stress induced by drought also heightens the risk of gender-based violence, further jeopardizing the wellbeing of women and their families.

Insecure land tenure remains a crucial issue, preventing many women living in rural areas from owning the land they farm, thus hindering their ability to invest in improvements and access credit. Limited access to agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, along with discrimination in agricultural extension services, further impedes their productivity and adaptability to climate change.

As we commemorate this day, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission calls upon the government and relevant stakeholders to take immediate action on the following:

- Implement gender-sensitive policies that promote women's rights to land and other resources.
- Ensure equitable access to agricultural inputs and training for women.
- Facilitate women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels.
- Address the impacts of climate change on livelihoods of women living in rural areas through targeted support and resources.
- Raise awareness about the link between economic stress and gender-based violence, providing support services for affected women.

Empowering rural women is essential for achieving our national goals of food security and gender equality. As we work toward Sustainable Development Goals 2 (Zero Hunger) and 5 (Gender Equality and Women Empowerment), let us recognize that women living in rural areas are key to rebuilding our food systems and fostering resilient communities.

The Commission reaffirms its commitment to advocating for the rights and empowerment of women in rural Zimbabwe. Together, we can cultivate a future where every woman has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the well-being of her community and country.

For Gender Equality

For media inquiries and further information, please contact For more information, contact ZGC Chairperson, Commissioner Margaret Mukahanana Sangarwe 0712214203/ 0772869214, or Chief Executive Officer Virginia Muwanigwa 0712899543/ 0772327955