

SHADOW REPORTING BY RURAL AND PEASANT WOMEN IN COLOMBIA

ILC'S DATABASE OF GOOD PRACTICES



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Country: **COLOMBIA** | Principal organisation: **CDS, Cinep**

ABSTRACT

In Colombia, *CINEP*, *CDS* and other partner organisations worked together to prepare a country-specific alternative report on the situation of rural and peasant women's rights, including land rights, as defined in the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. Four decades after Colombia signed the Convention, Colombian women still live under insecure land tenure systems. CINEP, CDS and their partners prepared an

alternative report, accounting on the implementation of the Convention in Colombia. While closely following the state's official report, the platform provided a community and research-based and practical assessment of the implementation of CEDAW at the community level, and the effectiveness of the government's policies and proposed concrete recommendations on how to improve the situation of rural and peasant women in Colombia.

ILC COMMITMENTS



EQUAL LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN



PROTECTED LAND RIGHTS DEFENDERS



INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

INTERNATIONAL
**LAND
COALITION**



**Corporación
Desarrollo
Solidario**

cinep

COMPETENCIES

AREAS	SKILLS
RURAL LAND GOVERNANCE	ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING
WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS AND GENDER JUSTICE	LAND MONITORING, INDICATORS AND ALTERNATIVE REPORTING
PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS	

BACKGROUND

Inequality in land ownership and an increase in latifundio (large-scale land ownership) characterised the agrarian structure in Colombia over the last two decades. On the other hand, small-scale farmers and peasants of Afro-Colombian and indigenous descent faced violent dispossession of their lands and communal territories by paramilitaries, at the service of land barons and businesspeople. Furthermore, the agricultural policies of the last two decades promoted intensive agriculture, resulting in land concentration.

Despite some specific regulations recognising rural women's land rights in Colombia, their socio-economic conditions continue to decline. Laws protecting rural women's rights include Act 731/2002 on rural women, Act 1257/2008 on the prevention of violence and discrimination against women, Act 1448 of 2011 on reparation to victims of the internal armed conflict, the 2016 peace agreement, together with other measures included in the 2014-2018 National Development Plan.

THE CHALLENGE

First, the government failed to implement laws protecting rural women's land rights due to a lack of adequate financial resources and institutional capacity in rural areas. Secondly, the state sought to promote an export-based economy by adopting regulations favouring agro-industries, and intensive and large-scale farming. Consequently, rural populations and peasants remained with insecure land rights, discouraging small-scale production and family farming. Furthermore, rural communities were displaced during the armed conflict of, resulting in the loss of livelihoods for peasant communities. In this context, women have faced additional gendered challenges such as chauvinism, crimes against women such as femicide, sexual violence, violence against women human rights defenders and a high level of impunity for the perpetrators. Indigenous women, Afro-Colombian women, rural women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women are disproportionately affected by tenure insecurity.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

In 2018, Colombian women's organisations, including ILC members CINEP and CDS, under the auspice of ILC's Commitment-Based Initiative (CBI) on women's land rights, used their platform of diverse members such as civil society organisations, farmers' organisations and rural and indigenous women's organisations, to generate an alternative report. The platform initiated an analysis and evaluation of the report that the Colombian state would submit to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and proposed to write an alternative report to counteract the government's official data. The report titled Primer Informe Sombra Especifico de Rurales y Campesinas in Colombia (the First Alternative Report on Rural and Peasant Women in Colombia), articulated the perspectives and experiences of Colombian rural women.

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) convened in February and March 2019 for its 72nd session to assess the status of the rights of women in Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Botswana, Colombia, Ethiopia, Serbia and the United Kingdom. The Colombian government presented a national report before the CEDAW Committee, in which the government stated that it had adopted different measures to protect the rights of women recognised in the CEDAW by including them in the National Development Plan of 2014-2018.

The government further stated that it had created a Directorate for Rural Women within the Ministry of Agriculture and that it had formulated a comprehensive public policy for rural women. However, continued socio-economic decline owing to the state's failure to implement laws protecting women's land rights still characterise the lived realities of rural and peasant women in Colombia.

As part of the alternative report writing process, the CBI platform convened two sub-regional workshops: the Colombian Caribbean workshop and the central-eastern region workshop, in which 100 women representing 70 organisations participated. The meetings sought to identify women's rights that were being violated and to create platforms for sharing knowledge on international mechanisms that guarantee women's rights, such as the Convention and its Recommendation 34.

Based on the workshops, the platform authored an alternative report for evaluating and monitoring the state's progress in protecting and guaranteeing women's rights, including their land and territorial rights, and freedom from violence. The platform used a simple, replicable and participatory methodology to gather information and write a shadow report on the status of rural and peasant women in Colombia.

MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

The CBI platform presented the first Alternative Report on Rural and Peasant Women in Colombia at the 72nd Session (2019) of CEDAW. The alternative report revealed the lived realities of Colombian women that were excluded from the state's reports to the CEDAW Committee. The alternative report was successful in bringing to the forefront, the experiences of rural and peasant women in Colombia. The report highlighted rural and peasant women's insecure land tenure, including their lack of access to land, basic water and sanitation, displacement, and vulnerability to violent crimes.

The alternative report also provided input to the general shadow report of Colombia, authored by the National Women's Network. Notably, other organisations and

networks submitted their own alternative reports to the CEDAW Committee for the evaluation of the Colombian government's performance under the Convention.

In March 2019, the CEDAW Committee made public comments about the Colombian state's violation of its international obligations. Specifically, the Committee highlighted the lack of rural and peasant women's representation and participation in negotiation bodies. The Committee recommended that rural and peasant women be involved in planning and decision-making relating to their access to land; and the implementation of the Peace Agreement of 2016, with a view of ensuring the rights of rural women and protecting women's land rights defenders.



THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

1

FORM A LOCAL PLATFORM AND IDENTIFY IMPORTANT THEMATIC AREAS

First, it is essential to liaise with other organisations to identify alternative reports or shadow reports already written by other national and international organisations working on women's land rights that have a strong territorial presence. Based on the information, it is essential to create a local committee to guide the platform. The committee identifies specific themes which guide the analysis of the experiences of participating organisations. The committee also develops and uses an analysis matrix to collate all the inputs that will later contribute to the alternative report.

2

INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Based on the identified thematic areas, the committee engages with all relevant stakeholders and community members, particularly rural and peasant women to collect information regarding their experiences. It is imperative to analyse information provided in the official report of the government against the shadow report to highlight contradictions and the realities under which the rural and peasant women live. Bearing in mind that alternative or shadow reporting is an organisational strengthening exercises, it is essential that the women participating in the workshops can communicate with ease. In Colombia, a WhatsApp group was created for easier communication. The group still exists and has since expanded.

3

DEFINE RESPONSIBILITIES AND AGREEMENTS FOR WRITING THE DOCUMENT

It is essential to assign tasks according to the competences of different organisations, and to specify the technical support required and type of information or content needed to write the report. Other important aspects to consider include editing and planning the launch of the report around international and national advocacy. Further, it is essential to schedule a second meeting to get feedback on the document from grassroots organisations.

4

STRATEGY FOR PRESENTING THE REPORT TO INTERNATIONAL BODIES

Alternative reports are more successful if they reach the intended authorities that can hold the government accountable for their obligations. In this light, it is essential to identify local, national and international organisations that have the ability to finance the production and distribution of a comprehensive alternative report and finance the participation of rural women to present their alternative report before international committees in Geneva, Switzerland or the United States of America.

5

ALLIANCES AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS.

Once the report is finalised, it is essential to plan how it will be presented to the relevant international body. The following are crucial steps to keep in mind:

- ▶ The presentation of the national government to the CEDAW Committee
- ▶ Presentation of the alternative report of civil society organisations
- ▶ Publication of the findings and recommendations of the CEDAW Committee, and
- ▶ Defining a strategy for disseminating the report to the rural and peasant women in the territories for local advocacy.



KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS AND REPLICABILITY

- ▶ Constant and transparent communication among all the members of the platform and recognition of the contributions of different organisations are essential for establishing trust between all the involved parties.
- ▶ Government reports usually focus on the creation of mechanisms, legislation and institutions. Shadow reports on the other hand successfully illustrate concrete cases of the realities of rural and peasant women and the violence that women's land and environmental defenders face.
- ▶ To empower rural and peasant women by ensuring their participation and representation, it is essential to give them an opportunity to present their experiences at international forums and before international treaty bodies such as CEDAW.

LESSONS LEARNED

Technical support is essential for the production of alternative reports, but it is more important that each of the voices representing the different experiences of rural and peasant women be taken into account.

The report should transcend a descriptive approach and analyse the experiences of rural and peasant women in the framework of CEDAW. The emphasis is on providing solutions from the grassroots. At the same time, the experience in shadow reporting should not be limited to the CEDAW timeline, instead, can be used as a tool for holding the government accountable for their obligations and monitoring the implementation of laws and policies relating to women.

FIND OUT MORE

Primer Informe Sombra Especifico de Rurales y Campesinas in Colombia (the First Alternative Report on Rural and Peasant Women in Colombia)

<https://www.semillas.org.co/apc-aa-files/5d99b14191c59782eab3da99d8f95126/2.4-informesombramujeresruralescolombia.pdf>

UNITED FOR LAND RIGHTS

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