



# Statement of rural women within CNCR and ROPPA

Thiès, Senegal, October, 15th 2020



We, rural women within CNCR and ROPPA, met during a workshop held in Thiès on October, 15th 2020 to celebrate the international rural women's day, commit to getting mobilized to make the ongoing systemic crisis, a factor for accelerating the recognition and empowerment of women within family farms, FOs and rural communities

Let's strengthen our commitment and mobilization to make the ongoing systemic crisis, a factor for accelerating the recognition and empowerment of women within family farms, FOs and rural communities

Everyone knows today the marginal place granted to women and their activities in social and economic hierarchies ... and yet everyone knows the importance of their roles in the balance of our families, farms and our local communities, but also the importance of their contribution to the economy of our country ... rural women are doubly victimized by the world order and affairs. Everything must be done, in West Africa as elsewhere, so that this changes and that rural and farmer women find a fair recognition for themselves, for their roles and activities.

Policy-makers, farmer organizations and civil society are all responsible for changing this situation and transcending the fundamental factors of the vulnerability of rural women and the inequalities that impede their triple recognition and empowerment. According to a capitalization carried out by a consortium of FOs and CSO networks in West Africa under the leadership of Oxfam, because of the recurring factors of their vulnerability and the inequalities observed, the COVID19 pandemic has an impact that is even higher among rural women.

In this context, we are fully convinced that it is first and foremost up to ourselves to conquer and impose the desired triple reco-

gnition and, to do this, we must be able to organize ourselves as a « collective actor » thanks to the strengthening of our local, national and regional organizations. Beyond our own activities, our organizations must allow us to participate in life of the great West African farmer movement and defend our positions, proposals and specific requests. Under the Network of Farmer Organizations and Agricultural Producers in West Africa (ROPPA) and national platforms of member FOs, we have taken this turn since the Kanilai's meeting. (Gambia) in 2003, which resulted in the creation of the Regional Women's College in 2005, built from the national colleges, in order to « contribute to strengthening the representation of rural women in decision-making and governing bodies at all levels of the network and their socio-economic and politico-legal empowerment within the family, community and the local authority ». Through this space of the women's college, we commit with national platforms to achieving the purpose of ROPPA, build balances within our families and allow our family farms to fully perform these main functions (i) adequately feed the populations ; (ii) ensure the reproduction of farms ; (iii) ensure a sustainable management of natural resources ; (iv) create wealth. To support women's colleges dynamics, the 7 th Convention ROPPA decided, besides the involvement of women's colleges in the overall governance of the 2019-2023 five-year plan of the network, their full accountability in the implementation of two programs of this five-year plan concerning (i) the promotion of the economic activities carried out by women within, downstream or near family farms - and (ii) local and national consumption of products from West African family farms.

Indeed, we rural and farmer women are on the solutions side. Our role is considerable in agri-forestry-pastoral and fisheries productions. In production basins, we are the main source of labor for the various weakly or not mechanized works. Most of

the women who, through happy or unfortunate circumstances, have reached the status of farm manager have shown a capacity for creativity and innovation which have helped maintain and increase productivity and production. The Malian heroine « Nyéléni » recognized in the history of this country, marked her community in her time with her great production performance as a woman farm manager. Rural women are strongly involved in specific activities and by-products such as market gardening, the production of local leafy vegetables, small-scale livestock, milk. They contribute to the diversification of production systems, preservation and promotion of agro-biodiversity, management of farmer seeds, resilience of family farms and to the improvement of nutrition in families, within rural communities and urban populations. From time immemorial, rural women have shown a detailed knowledge of agri-systems and the positive interaction between the various cultures, necessary for the sustainable management of natural resources. The role of women is even more essential in the small-scale processing of agri-forestry-pastoral and fisheries products, in their marketing and, of course, in local consumption of these products and in collective catering, outside home. In Burkina Faso, in some rice cooperatives, women ensure the parboiling, processing and marketing on domestic and cross-border markets of around 60% of paddy rice production.

We note and welcome the efforts from the international community, bilateral and multilateral cooperations through the adoption of numerous instruments (commitments, protocols, conventions, etc) within the UN's institutions (FAO, IFAD, CSA, etc.) to take into account rural women concerns and support their empowerment. The UNDRR, Voluntary Guidelines on Land Management and guidelines for the access of small-scale farmers to the market... offer real opportunities for the empowerment of rural women in family farms, rural communities and local authorities. We also endorse and support the new dynamics of African and West African institutions for the compliance and application of rural women rights. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to the rights of women in Africa is an instrument and one of the major instruments of the continent. In West Africa, sectoral policies and programs are adopted by regional institutions (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS, CORAF) and some States, taking into account the improvement of activities and living conditions of rural women. However, several proven weaknesses impede the effective implementation or effectiveness of these initiatives at the international, continental, regional and national levels.

We rural women, grouped together within CNCR and ROPPA, wish to take advantage of the 2020 International Day of Rural

Women to take a further step in the triple recognition of rural women, their roles and activities in the service of our societies and our national and regional economies. We want to encourage ourselves to mobilize more for the decisive role we play for sovereignty and food and nutritive security in the region, but also to invite the regional institutions (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS, CORAF), States and the international community to invest more and better, support a real transformation of the social and economic status of rural women.

In this perspective, we propose to the public and private partners, regional institutions (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS, CORAF), bilateral and multilateral cooperation and Governments of ECOWAS member countries to :

- a) Really ensure the full participation of rural women's organizations in the assessment of the impact of COVID19, formulation and implementation of response and recovery plans ;
- b) Massively support (i) investments in small-scale processing equipment ; (ii) taking local and national products into account in institutional purchases for collective catering and food aid ; (iii) support for the organization of regional, national promotional and trade events allowing the development of regional trade of the agri-forestry-pastoral and fisheries products ;
- c) Strengthen regional sectoral gender policies by making them more readable and effective with appropriate implementation instruments and measures ;
- d) Support the capacity-building of rural women's organizations to ensure their more effective participation in the governance of development policies and programs ;
- e) Support the implementation of the UNDRR (United Nations Decade for Family Farming) with a significant participation of rural women, guidelines on farmers' rights and all the guidelines adopted under CSA fostering the strengthening of the resilience of rural women and their empowerment.

In Thiès, October 15th, 2020

President of CNCR's  
Women College



President of ROPPA's  
Women College

