

Summary of the Side-Event: “*The rights of women in rural areas and their access to justice*”, within the framework of the 54th General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), in Asunción, Paraguay

The Side-Event took place on June 26th, 2024, at the Salón Medallistas Olímpicos, Comité Olímpico Paraguayo, Asunción, Paraguay. The German Federal Foreign Office organized the event together with the Government of Paraguay, the Justice Studies Center of the Americas (JSCA) and the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM).

Approximately 150 representatives from governments, OAS delegations, civil society, international experts participated in person. Online additional participation of approximately 416 people via live streaming on JSCA's YouTube page took place. The videos of the event can still be accessed in the four languages (ES, EN, FR, PT) - see Annex.

- **Background and Objective**

As part of the "Inter-American Decade for the Rights of All Women, Adolescents, and Girls in Rural Areas of the Americas" (2024-2034) of the OAS, the Side-Event addressed the challenges and progress around women's rights in rural areas. A specific focus was laid on access to justice for women in rural areas in cases of gender-based violence.

- **Key Statements from the Speakers:**

- **Cynthia Figueredo** (Minister for Women's Affairs of Paraguay):

Highlighted the progress made in Paraguay with the *Plan Nacional de Igualdad*. Under this plan, discriminatory laws are being amended; *Casas de Justicia* (Justice Houses) improve access to rights for women in rural areas; a training programme for female leaders promotes women's political participation in decisions relevant to them.

- **Juana Herrera Araúz** (Minister for Women's Affairs of Panama and President of CIM)

Emphasized the commitment to creating dialogue spaces and exchanging best practices that benefit women in rural areas. She pointed out the importance of the annual CIM monitoring report on women's rights, where access to justice for women in rural areas will be a central issue.

- **Víctor Alfredo Verdún Bitar** (Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay):

Reported on progress in recognizing women's rights at the regional and global levels. He emphasized that there are still barriers in rural areas. In the "*Decenio Interamericano por los Derechos de Todas las Mujeres, Adolescentes y Niñas en los Ambientes Rurales*", progress must be made for women in education, land ownership, and economic autonomy.

- **Annette Walter** (Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the German Federal Foreign Office):

Emphasized the commitment of the German government and the EU to women's rights. Highlighted women in rural areas, who make up to nearly 40% of the working population in Latin America and the Caribbean. She underlined the importance of gender equality and the rule of law for a sustainable democracy. The contributions of Germany and its Feminist Foreign Policy as well as its Stabilisation and Development Policy in cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean was outlined, and Germany is engaged in projects on microcredits, education, and access to justice for women as well as the regional training programme for judicial officials on handling gender-based violence.

- **Keynote**

- **Alejandra Mora Mora** (Executive Secretary of CIM):

Highlighted in the keynote "*Decenio Interamericano por los Derechos de Todas las Mujeres, Adolescentes y Niñas en los Ambientes Rurales de las Américas (2024-2034)*" the contradictions that characterize rural areas: women produce 50% of the food but own no land; they live in areas of ecological wealth, yet 58% of rural women suffer from multidimensional poverty; they bear the brunt of care work but lack access to stable healthcare and suffer from various forms of violence: gender-based violence in the home, obstetric violence in the health system, and impunity in the justice system. The "Inter-American Decade" aims to make the situation of rural women visible with annual progress reports. Through collaboration within the inter-American and multilateral systems, their protection is strengthened, and their rights are promoted; by strengthening their capacities and leadership in the political/public sphere, rural women are empowered. This requires an inter-institutional approach and cooperation.

- **Panel Discussion** moderated by **Astrid Bosch (GIZ)** with participation of the panellists:

- **Luz Haro Guanga** (Executive Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Rural Women - REDLAC):

Reflected on the position of rural women in Latin America and the Caribbean, who "are the ones who give life to the land and make it fertile; they are the guardians of life, natural resources, culture, and tradition, that is, of the common good: from the air we breathe to the water we drink." Reliable data must be gathered about this group; the human capital of women must be respected and enhanced through investment in education and leadership. The "Decade" is an important tool for overcoming inequality.

- **Terry Ince** (Founder and Convener of the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago - CCoTT):

Highlighted the importance of rural women, especially in the Caribbean and indigenous women, for food production (also commercially), environmental protection, and in the field of care work for the family and social environment.

- **Nataly Ponce Chauca** (Executive Director, JSCA):

"Discussed the paradox that, despite being a region abundant in resources, there has historically been a lack of knowledge and sensitivity towards rural areas and their population, particularly women. This demographic has specific legal needs related to water rights, land ownership, food security, and environmental protection. These needs extend to the justice system, necessitating targeted training and awareness-raising initiatives.

- **Presentation of the joint Training Programme:**

"*Strengthening Criminal Prosecution of Gender-Based Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean*", a joint format by the German Federal Foreign Office and CEJA. The target audience of the training programme are members of judicial and criminal investigation institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the aim of improving criminal prosecution and supporting victims of gender-based violence. During the last three years, the training has been conducted online approximately nine times in 14 Latin American and Caribbean countries, with around 1000 participants. Currently, also a training programme with a national focus (so far, Mexico, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic), that combines online learning with face-to-face practical training, has been elaborated.

- **Conclusion**

The momentum of the 54th OAS General Assembly and the political framework of the "*Decenio Interamericano por los Derechos de Todas las Mujeres, Adolescentes y Niñas en los Ambientes Rurales de las Américas*" was used to address the precarious situation of women in rural areas and the opportunities to eliminate legal, social, and economic barriers for this vulnerable group. At the same time, the training programme on gender-based violence allowed Germany to present its commitment to cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean within the framework of its Feminist Foreign Policy.

Annex

- Video recording available on: [JSCA YouTube channel:](#)

[Spanish](#)

[French](#)

[Portuguese](#)

[English](#)

- Photographic Documentation (Selection)



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