

Varsha – Parivartan Kendra (Centre for Change)

Thank you for giving me opportunity to speak!

I am Varsha from India representing Parivartan Kendra(Centre for Change).

I wish to draw your attention to the recommendation 77 when I focus my recommendations on minorities' women's land rights.

For sustainable and dignified livelihoods and development, social status, economic independence and political influence land is crucial. A survey conducted in Bihar a northern state of India found that only 1.85% of all landowners in the locations of study were women. When you talk about minorities women, they are not found in any government or nongovernment data with regards to land rights. It is very shocking, pathetic and shameful situation. Women are not even recognized as farmers by society and also by government. In India land ownership is equated with power. My question is, don't we want to empower minorities' women? If you try to find laws and policies which clearly speak land rights to minority women, you can hardly find one.

Why is it important that minorities women own the land?

- To remove the gender inequalities favoring men in the distribution of resources.
- To give women more bargaining power leading to gender equal allocations of 1. Direct benefits and 2. Indirect benefits like crops, access to Credit, etc.
- Equality in land rights is critical element in women's economic empowerment and it will enhance productive efficiency of women and in turn of the society
- To empower women to assert themselves better within the home, in community and with the state agencies that provide inputs and extension services and also against violence against women.
- To enhance women's ability to challenge and change existing unequal power relations that place them in subordinate social, economic and political positions.

Recommendation to Govt. of India -

- Issue Joint titles in the name of Husband and wife.
- Give Priority to the single women in distribution of land
- Recognize minority women as farmers.
- Issue Title of residential land in the name of minorities' women
- Ensuring rights to house sites as a legal guarantee to all minorities' women in rural and urban households.
- Distribute of waste land community land in the name of minorities' women
- Ensure opportunities and rights of community farming for minorities' women
- Ensuring minorities' women's right to inherit to all agricultural and homestead lands and title to all allotments of ceiling surplus and government lands.

To conclude, I would like to say that we run the homes and we do not own them. We are the major force in agriculture and we do not own it. We minorities' women have to understand that we have so much potential but at the same time our families, society and governments also recognise this. Thank you very much!