

UN NEWS Announcement

For immediate release

UNOPS and UN Women campaign calls to empower rural women.

To mark International Rural Women’s Day, UNOPS and UN Women launched a social media campaign and events to call for action to empower women in rural areas so they be better equipped to contribute to food security and climate change adaptation in their communities.

- From 9 October to 15 October (International Rural Women’s Day), UNOPS and UN Women across Africa will be sharing messages on social media and hosting events in different African cities such as Harare (Zimbabwe), Freetown (Sierra Leone), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Kinshasa (DRC) and Juba (South Sudan), among others.
- The joint campaign aims to promote the role rural women play in supporting their households in achieving food security, generating income, improving rural livelihoods, and building climate change resilience.
- In Freetown, Sierra Leone, UNOPS and UN Women will be having a panel discussion and exclusive interview on radio and TV on the empowerment of rural women and their role in climate change and food security, infrastructure development and challenges.

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 08 October 2023 — UNOPS and UN Women are marking International Rural Women’s Day by launching a joint campaign to underline the contribution of rural women to development in Africa and highlight the importance of investing in gender-sensitive infrastructure that will allow them to better contribute to food security and climate adaptation.

The objective of the campaign is to call policy and decision-makers, societies, and international partners to action in supporting gender-responsive infrastructure in Africa that can empower rural women to access productive resources and opportunities, accelerate their socio-economic mobility, and boost gender contribution to climate adaptation and food security.

The campaign will include joint activities in several African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Zimbabwe, among others. These events will be supported by a social media campaign in UNOPS and UN Women regional and national channels in Africa.

On 13th October, UN Women Africa and UNOPS Africa will be hosting a live conversation, where stakeholders—including a woman from an African rural area and a specialized journalist— will highlight the importance of addressing persistent gender gaps in the response to climate change and food insecurity.

In Freetown, Sierra Leone, UNOPS and UN Women will be having a panel discussion and exclusive interview on radio and TV on the empowerment of rural women and their role in climate change and food security, infrastructure development and current challenges.

UNOPS Director a.i. for Africa Region, Dalila Gonçalves, said: *"Gender-blind infrastructure limits women's access to financial resources, land, education, health, and other rights and opportunities. Also, it limits their capacity for coping with and adapting to climate change impacts. Women can play an active role as change-makers and educators in embedding sustainability within different infrastructure sectors. Supporting the empowerment of rural women through gender-responsive infrastructure, UNOPS helps low and middle-income countries across Africa in their journey toward the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals."*

UN Women Regional Director for East and Southern Africa and Regional Director a.i for West and Central Africa, Dr. Maxime Houinato, said: "Rural African women's pivotal role in bolstering regional economies and combating poverty is irrefutable. Yet, they grapple with pronounced challenges in securing vital agricultural resources, restricting their agricultural productivity and impacting their adaptability to climate change. UN Women studies reveal that gender disparities in agriculture have a direct impact on the economic growth of countries ranging from 13 to 28 per cent of GDP, equivalent to annually elevating 80,000 to 238,000 individuals above the poverty line per country. It's imperative that we advance programmes and policies that increase financing for rural women's access to labour and time-saving equipment and services, fostering gender equality and improving rural women's economic security."

According to [UN Women](#), women make up more than 50 percent of Africa's population and 80 percent of them reside in rural areas. The [International Labour Organization](#) states that giving women the same opportunities as men could raise agricultural production by 2.5 to 4 percent in the poorest regions and reduce the number of malnourished people by 12 to 17 percent.

The UNOPS Report, '[Infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women](#)', stated that in rural areas inadequate infrastructure services disproportionately affect

women's time use because they bear the burden of household tasks, like collecting water and firewood, cooking, cleaning, and providing childcare. This limits the time available for pursuing educational, economic, or social activities.

Women also face disadvantages when it comes to land and livestock ownership or equal pay which hamper their productivity and growth, resulting in weak rural economies, and impacting the local and global food systems and climate adaptation capacity.

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About UNOPS

UNOPS mission is to help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development. We help the United Nations, governments and other partners to manage projects, and deliver sustainable infrastructure and procurement in an efficient way. Read more: www.unops.org

About UN Women

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. www.unwomen.org