



Commission for Gender Equality

Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) – Side Event Concept Note

70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)

Theme: “Tackling global patriarchal systems to include women in communal land allocation and decision-making.”

Linked to the CSW70 Priority theme, “Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers”.

Proposed Date: 12/13 March 2025

Proposed Venue: UN Headquarters, New York **Co-hosts:** Zimbabwe Commission for Gender Equality

1. Introduction and Context

Access to communal land is inseparable from women's access to justice, dignity, and socio-economic empowerment. Across regions, communal land systems remain central to rural livelihoods, cultural identity, and social cohesion, yet they are frequently governed by fragmented legal and policy frameworks that perpetuate exclusion. In South Africa, communal land governance under customary systems remains a critical site of inequality for rural women, despite constitutional guarantees of equality and land reform commitments. Similar patterns are evident globally, particularly in parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where women's roles in agriculture and food systems are not matched by secure land rights. Against this backdrop, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) seeks to utilise CSW70 as a strategic global platform to advance policy

dialogue and advocacy on women's access to communal land, linking global justice imperatives with lived realities in rural and communal contexts.

5. Problem Statement

Despite progressive legal frameworks, women's access to communal land remains severely constrained by entrenched patriarchal norms, fragmented governance systems, and inconsistent application of laws. CGE research across several South African provinces reveals that traditional authorities often exercise disproportionate control over land allocation in the absence of clear national regulations, resulting in gender discrimination, procedural inconsistencies, and corruption.

These dynamics disproportionately disadvantage unmarried, divorced, widowed, and gender-diverse individuals, reinforcing poverty, economic dependency, and vulnerability to exploitation. The persistence of these barriers undermines constitutional commitments, weakens women's resilience to climate and economic shocks, and perpetuates intergenerational inequality.

6. Objectives of the Side Event

Main

Objective

To advance global policy dialogue and awareness on the structural and socio-economic barriers that impede women's access to communal land, and to promote rights-based, gender-responsive approaches to land governance. To elevate policy-level discourse beyond isolated case experiences, with a focus on systemic reform. Facilitate cross-country learning on gender-responsive responses to climate change and land tenure insecurity in communal settings. Strengthen collaboration and develop policy-oriented recommendations to address gaps between state and non-state actors.

7. Format of the Side Event

The side event will take the form of a moderated high-level dialogue comprising:

- **Policy Analysis:** Comparative discussion on shared structural drivers of exclusion in communal land systems.

- **Learning and Exchange:** Cross-regional reflections on effective legal, institutional, and advocacy interventions.
- **Collaborative Engagement:** Identification of pathways for policy coherence, accountability, and multi-stakeholder cooperation among governments, national human rights institutions, traditional authorities, civil society, and community representatives.

8. Outcomes of the Side Event

- The side event will position women's access to communal land as a global justice issue, highlighting its intersections with poverty, food insecurity, gender-based violence, climate vulnerability, and exclusion from decision-making.
- The engagement will amplify evidence from CGE research demonstrating how rural women, despite their central role in agricultural production and household sustenance, remain marginalised by customary and administrative practices that reinforce inequality.
- The event will promote cross-country learning, policy coherence, and dialogue on integrating statutory, customary, and environmental governance frameworks in ways that advance women's rights.

9. Format and Participants

Moderated panel by Dr Dennis Matotoka (Chief Executive Officer, Commission for Gender Equality). **Featuring;**

- Regional Gender Commission Chairpersons (South Africa and Zimbabwe).
- Ministerial Representative (Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities-South Africa).
- UN Working Group Experts on Discrimination against Women and Girls.
- Regional Civil Society Experts advocating communal/rural land access, equitable development, and collective development.
- Academic experts to ground the discussion in evidence, comparative analysis, and theory-informed policy insight.