Rural women play a major role in achieving food security and a vibrant rural economy. According to UN-FAO, women are the backbone of rural development. They comprise 43% of the world’s agricultural labor force.

Despite the crucial role of women in ensuring food security and rural development, their work and contribution are often unrecognized and they continue to face numerous challenges, such as limited access and control over land and other productive resources, including extension services, capital, technology and market. In addition, unpaid care work (i.e., cooking, cleaning, caring for children), which is usually done by women and girls, limits their opportunities and hinders them from seeking employment and income.

In response to these needs, government and non-government organizations are providing opportunities for rural women to access these productive resources and building their capacities through enabling mechanisms, which include policies, program and projects. Despite these efforts, rural women continue to face barriers towards their empowerment.

This side event will highlight the real situation of rural women in developing countries, specifically the Philippines and Zimbabwe. It shall present both government and non-government efforts and interventions in promoting rural women empowerment at the grassroots level. The event will also feature the good practices and experiences of rural women in their journey towards empowerment and in their efforts in ensuring food security, including recognition of rural women’s unpaid care work and transformation of gender roles and relations. It shall likewise tackle the gaps, challenges and recommendations on rural women’s equitable access to land and other productive resources. Further, this side event will also showcase the national digital inclusion initiative providing ICT-enabled services and content for the empowerment and participation of the unserved and underserved people in rural areas.

OBJECTIVE/S:

This side event aims to: 1) highlight the situation of rural women in the Philippines and Zimbabwe; 2) share their gains, challenges and opportunities to rural development; and 3) describe the enabling mechanisms to women empowerment and to rural women’s access to productive resources.
# PANEL of SPEAKERS

Moderated by:  
**Ms. Emmeline L. Verzosa**  
Executive Director, Philippine Commission on Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What now? The Status of Rural Women in the Philippines</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture/ Department of Agrarian Reform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Rural Women’s Access and Control over Land and productive resources | **Ms. Rosalina Bistoyong**  
Undersecretary, Department of Agrarian Reform                         |
| 2. Enable-Empower-Transform: How rural women access ICT-enabled services | **Ms. Maria Teresa M. Camba**  
Director, Department of Information and Communications Technology       |
| 3. Success Stories of Rural Women’s Organizations in the Philippines: |                                                                      |
| a. Preserving cultural heritage and empowering indigenous women: the experience of Subanen women from Josefina, Zamboanga del Sur | **Ms. Nida Sangca-on**  
President, Pekpungunan Lebun Subanen Women’s Organization           |
| b. Supporting rural women empowerment through agri-enterprise development and legal aid services | **Ms. Junafior “Sweet” Cerilles**  
Federated President, Women Empowerment Movement – Rural Improvement Club (WEM-RIC) and Municipal Mayor, Municipality of Dumalinao, Zamboanga del Sur |
| c. Effective rural organizations and partnerships in empowering rural women and girls | **Ms. Sef Alba Carandang**  
Adviser, Women Empowerment Movement – Rural Improvement Club (WEM-RIC) |
| 4. Zimbabwe: Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment                      | Resource person from Oxfam Zimbabwe                                     |
| 5. Gaps, Challenges and Way Forward for Rural Women                  | **Ms. Amparo Miciano**  
Secretary General, Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Pilipinas or National Rural Women Coalition (PKKK) |