



## **HUIROU COMMISSION STATEMENT FOR CSW 52**

The Huirou Commission was founded at the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, in order to bring grassroots women's voices into the development agenda. It is a global coalition of networks, institutions and individual professionals working for the advancement of grassroots women-led development work.

Grassroots women are economically marginalized and working on issues directly affecting their own community. The Huirou Commission knows that the traditional paradigm of viewing grassroots women as 'beneficiaries' of development work must be eliminated. For sustainable advancements in gender equity and development generally, grassroots women must be recognized as agents of change.

In spite of the lack of institutional resources and policy support, grassroots women's organizations have been steadily advancing and scaling up creative solutions to problems faced by their communities. In addressing livelihoods, increasing community access to basic services, securing housing and land and by demanding institutional accountability, grassroots women have made sizeable contributions to poverty reduction and community development while repositioning themselves in the eyes of their families and communities.

In developing and scaling up these solutions grassroots women have emerged as leaders and innovators whose participation is vital to setting the policy and program agendas for advancing effective gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Members of the Huirou Commission and GROOTS International at CSW 52 are therefore calling for:**

**A. Reframing the equality and empowerment agenda to include grassroots women's priorities**

Survival needs of communities living in poverty, as articulated by grassroots women - such as shelter, basic services, livelihoods - must be at the center of gender equality and women's empowerment. Economic empowerment, adequate housing, basic services, community caring in the context of childcare, HIV/AIDS pandemic are all issues that grassroots women prioritize. Yet these issues are frequently excluded from women's empowerment programs and their connection to women's rights questioned.

**B. Channeling funds directly to grassroots women's organizations and networks in response to their priorities.**

Grassroots women's groups have been trying to fill the priority gaps in innovative ways and by working with local and national governments to access and redirect resources for effective local problem solving because in general national funds and programs do not allow grassroots women to set agendas and access resources

Donors and Governments need to redesign the aid streams and develop mechanisms for grassroots women to access funds for their priorities.

In addition there is a need to establish new funds for strengthening grassroots women's organizing and leadership, to access public spaces and to undertake peer learning exchanges.

Organizing is essential for building women's organizations and networks who will sustain community efforts over a period of time. Grassroots women's access to public spaces has emerged as an effective strategy for nurturing women's organizing and participation in public affairs for planning and governance; and peer exchanges enable women to refine and transfer their knowledge to scale up effective development practices.

### **C. Involvement of grassroots women's organizations and networks in designing of policies, programs and aid modalities**

Community focused indigenous women, women-led slum dwelling groups, federations of rural self-help groups, landless women are among the most innovative development actors. Yet they are rarely involved in decision-making. Given their longstanding contribution and demonstrated knowledge and skills in improving the quality of life and building democracy, grassroots women's organizations must be engaged in dialogues from local to global levels to shape development policies and programs.

It is also critical that grassroots women have a voice in the development of the new gender entity at the UN to ensure that their normative and operational frameworks are responsive to grassroots women's priorities.