

R149 Rural Workers' Organisations Recommendation, 1975

Recommendation concerning Organisations of Rural Workers and Their Role in Economic and Social Development

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The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation,

Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and having met in its Sixtieth Session on 4 June 1975, and

Recognising that the importance of rural workers in the world makes it urgent to associate them with economic and social development action if their conditions of work and life are to be permanently and effectively improved, and

Noting that in many countries of the world and particularly in developing countries there is massive under-utilisation of land and labour and that this makes it imperative for rural workers to be given every encouragement to develop free and viable organisations capable of protecting and furthering the interests of their members and ensuring their effective contribution to economic and social development, and

Considering that such organisations can and should contribute to the alleviation of the persistent scarcity of food products in various regions of the world, and

Recognising that land reform is in many developing countries an essential factor in the improvement of the conditions of work and life of rural workers and that organisations of such workers should accordingly co-operate and participate actively in the implementation of such reform, and

Recalling the terms of existing international labour Conventions and Recommendations--in particular the Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921, the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948, and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949--which affirm the right of all workers, including rural workers, to establish free and independent organisations, and the provisions of numerous international labour Conventions and Recommendations applicable to rural workers which call for the participation, inter alia, of workers' organisations in their implementation, and

Noting the joint concern of the United Nations and the specialised agencies, in particular the International Labour Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, with land reform and rural development, and

Noting that the following standards have been framed in co-operation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and that, with a view to avoiding duplication, there will be continuing co-operation with that Organisation and with the United Nations in promoting and securing the application of these standards, and

Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to organisations of rural workers and their role in economic and social development, which is the fourth item on the agenda of the session, and

Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of a Recommendation,

adopts this twenty-third day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and seventy-five, the following Recommendation, which may be cited as the Rural Workers' Organisations Recommendation, 1975:

I. General Provisions

1.

(1) This Recommendation applies to all types of organisations of rural workers, including organisations not restricted to but representative of rural workers.

(2) The Co-operatives (Developing Countries) Recommendation, 1966, further remains applicable to the organisations of rural workers falling within its scope.

2.

(1) For the purposes of this Recommendation, the term **rural workers** means any person engaged in agriculture, handicrafts or a related occupation in a rural area, whether as a wage earner or, subject to the provisions of subparagraph (2) of this Paragraph, as a self-employed person such as a tenant, sharecropper or small owner-occupier.

(2) This Recommendation applies only to those tenants, sharecroppers or small owner-occupiers who derive their main income from agriculture, who work the land themselves, with the help only of their family or with the help of occasional outside labour and who do not--

(a) permanently employ workers; or

(b) employ a substantial number of seasonal workers; or

(c) have any land cultivated by sharecroppers or tenants.

3. All categories of rural workers, whether they are wage earners or self-employed, should have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organisation concerned, to join organisations of their own choosing without previous authorisation.

II. Role of Organisations of Rural Workers

4. It should be an objective of national policy concerning rural development to facilitate the establishment and growth, on a voluntary basis, of strong and independent organisations of rural workers as an effective means of ensuring the participation of rural workers, without discrimination as defined in the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958, in economic and social development and in the benefits resulting therefrom.

5. Such organisations should, as appropriate, be able to--

(a) represent, further and defend the interests of rural workers, for instance by undertaking negotiations and consultations at all levels on behalf of such workers collectively;

(b) represent rural workers in connection with the formulation, implementation and evaluation of programmes of rural development and at all stages and levels of national planning;

(c) involve the various categories of rural workers, according to the interests of each, actively and from the outset in the implementation of--

(i) programmes of agricultural development, including the improvement of techniques of production, storing, processing, transport and marketing;

(ii) programmes of agrarian reform, land settlement and land development;

(iii) programmes concerning public works, rural industries and rural crafts; (iv) rural development programmes, including those implemented with the collaboration of the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation and other specialised agencies;

(v) the information and education programmes and other activities referred to in Paragraph 15 of this Recommendation;

(d) promote and obtain access of rural workers to services such as credit, supply, marketing and transport as well as to technological services;

(e) play an active part in the improvement of general and vocational education and training in rural areas as well as in training for community development, training for co-operative and other activities of rural workers' organisations and training for the management thereof;

(f) contribute to the improvement of the conditions of work and life of rural workers, including occupational safety and health;

(g) promote the extension of social security and basic social services in such fields as housing, health and recreation.

III. Means of Encouraging the Growth of Organisations of Rural Workers

6. In order to enable organisations of rural workers to play their role in economic and social development, member States should adopt and carry out a policy of active encouragement to these organisations, particularly with a view to--

(a) eliminating obstacles to their establishment, their growth and the pursuit of their lawful activities, as well as such legislative and administrative discrimination against rural workers' organisations and their members as may exist;

(b) extending to rural workers' organisations and their members such facilities for vocational education and training as are available to other workers' organisations and their members; and

(c) enabling rural workers' organisations to pursue a policy to ensure that social and economic protection and benefits corresponding to those made available to industrial workers or, as appropriate, workers engaged in other non-industrial occupations are also extended to their members.

7.

(1) The principles of freedom of association should be fully respected; rural workers' organisations should be independent and voluntary in character and should remain free from all interference, coercion or repression.

(2) The acquisition of legal personality by organisations of rural workers should not be made subject to conditions of such a character as to restrict the application of the provisions of Paragraph 3 and subparagraph (1) of this Paragraph.

(3) In exercising the rights which they enjoy in pursuance of Paragraph 3 and of this Paragraph rural workers and their respective organisations, like other persons or organised collectivities, should respect the law of the land.

(4) The law of the land should not be such as to impair, nor should it be so applied as to impair, the guarantees provided for in Paragraph 3 and in this Paragraph.

A. Legislative and Administrative Measures

8.

(1) Member States should ensure that national laws or regulations do not, given the special circumstances of the rural sector, inhibit the establishment and growth of rural workers' organisations.

(2) In particular--

(a) the principles of right of association and of collective bargaining, in conformity especially with the Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention,

1921, the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948, and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949, should be made fully effective by the application to the rural sector of general laws or regulations on the subject, or by the adoption of special laws or regulations, full account being taken of the needs of all categories of rural workers;

(b) relevant laws and regulations should be fully adapted to the special needs of rural areas; for instance--

(i) requirements regarding minimum membership, minimum levels of education and minimum funds should not be permitted to impede the development of organisations in rural areas where the population is scattered, ill educated and poor;

(ii) problems which may arise concerning the access of organisations of rural workers to their members should be dealt with in a manner respecting the rights of all concerned and in accordance with the terms of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948, and the Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971;

(iii) there should be effective protection of the rural workers concerned against dismissal and against eviction which are based on their status or activities as leaders or members of rural workers' organisations.

9. There should be adequate machinery, whether in the form of labour inspection or of special services, or in some other form, to ensure the effective implementation of laws and regulations concerning rural workers' organisations and their membership.

10.

(1) Where rural workers find it difficult, under existing conditions, to take the initiative in establishing and operating their own organisations, existing organisations should be encouraged to give them, at their request, appropriate guidance and assistance corresponding to their interests.

(2) Where necessary, such assistance could on request be supplemented by advisory services staffed by persons qualified to give legal and technical advice and to run educational courses.

11. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that there is effective consultation and dialogue with rural workers' organisations on all matters relating to conditions of work and life in rural areas.

12.

(1) In connection with the formulation and, as appropriate, the application of economic and social plans and programmes and any other general measures concerning the economic, social or cultural development of rural areas, rural

workers' organisations should be associated with planning procedures and institutions, such as statutory boards and committees, development agencies and economic and social councils.

(2) In particular, appropriate measures should be taken to make possible the effective participation of such organisations in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of agrarian reform programmes.

13. Member States should encourage the establishment of procedures and institutions which foster contacts between rural workers' organisations, employers and their organisations and the competent authorities.

B. Public Information

14. Steps should be taken, particularly by the competent authority, to promote--

(a) the understanding of those directly concerned, such as central, local and other authorities, rural employers and landlords, of the contribution which can be made by rural workers' organisations to the increase and better distribution of national income, to the increase of productive and remunerative employment opportunities in the rural sector, to the raising of the general level of education and training of the various categories of rural workers and to the improvement of the general conditions of work and life in rural areas;

(b) the understanding of the general public, including, in particular, that in the non-rural sectors of the economy, of the importance of maintaining a proper balance between the development of rural and urban areas, and of the desirability, as a contribution towards ensuring that balance, of furthering the development of rural workers' organisations.

15. These steps might include--

(a) mass information and education campaigns, especially with a view to giving rural workers full and practical information on their rights, so that they may exercise them as necessary;

(b) radio, television and cinema programmes, and periodic articles in the local and national press, describing the conditions of life and work in rural areas and explaining the aims of rural workers' organisations and the results obtained by their activities;

(c) the organisation, locally, of seminars and meetings with the participation of representatives of the various categories of rural workers, of employers and landlords, of other sectors of the population and of local authorities;

(d) the organisation of visits to rural areas of journalists, representatives of employers and workers in industry or commerce, students of universities and schools accompanied by their teachers, and other representatives of the various sectors of the population;

(e) the preparation of suitable curricula for the various types and levels of schools appropriately reflecting the problems of agricultural production and the life of rural workers.

C. Education and Training

16. In order to ensure a sound growth of rural workers' organisations and the rapid assumption of their full role in economic and social development, steps should be taken, by the competent authority among others, to--

(a) impart to the leaders and members of rural workers' organisations knowledge of--

(i) national laws and regulations and international standards on questions of direct concern to the activity of the organisations, in particular the right of association;

(ii) the basic principles of the establishment and operation of organisations of rural workers;

(iii) questions regarding rural development as part of the economic and social development of the country, including agricultural and handicraft production, storing, processing, transport, marketing and trade;

(iv) principles and techniques of national planning at different levels;

(v) training manuals and programmes which are published or established by the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation or other specialised agencies and which are designed for the education and training of rural workers;

(b) improve and foster the education of rural workers in general, technical, economic and social fields, so as to make them better able both to develop their organisations and understand their rights and to participate actively in rural development; particular attention should be paid to the training of wholly or partly illiterate workers through literacy programmes linked with the practical expansion of their activities;

(c) promote programmes directed to the role which women can and should play in the rural community, integrated in general programmes of education and training to which women and men should have equal opportunities of access;

(d) provide training designed particularly for educators of rural workers, to enable them, for example, to help in the development of co-operative and other appropriate forms of servicing activities which would enable organisations to respond directly to membership needs while fostering their interdependence through economic self-reliance;

(e) give support to programmes for the promotion of rural youth in general.

17.

(1) As an effective means of providing the training and education referred to in Paragraph 16, programmes of workers' education or adult education, specially adapted to national and local conditions and to the social, economic and cultural needs of the various categories of rural workers, including the special needs of women and young persons, should be formulated and applied.

(2) In view of their special knowledge and experience in these fields, trade union movements and existing organisations which represent rural workers might be closely associated with the formulation and carrying out of such programmes.

D. Financial and Material Assistance

18.

(1) Where, particularly in the initial stages of development, rural workers' organisations consider that they need financial or material assistance, for instance to help them in carrying out programmes of education and training, and where they seek and obtain such assistance, they should receive it in a manner which fully respects their independence and interests and those of their members. Such assistance should be supplementary to the initiative and efforts of rural workers in financing their own organisations.

(2) The foregoing principles apply in all cases of financial and material assistance, including those in which it is the policy of a member State to render such assistance itself.

Cross references

[Recommendations:R127 Co-operatives \(Developing Countries\) Recommendation, 1966](#)

[Conventions: C111 Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958](#)

[Conventions: C011 Right of Association \(Agriculture\) Convention, 1921](#)

[Conventions: C098 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949](#)

[Conventions: C087 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948](#)

[Conventions: C135 Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971](#)