

Rural Isolation: local and global



Each year, Mothers' Union participates at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in New York. In 2018 the focus will be on issues relating specifically to women in rural areas throughout the world; in preparation for this Mothers' Union recently surveyed our membership to find out the views and experiences of those in rural contexts. Interestingly, members from a diverse range of countries, such as the UK, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania and South Africa, reported very similar experiences and concerns in addition to those unique to their own context.

Isolation is an experience common to women in rural communities around the world, many of whom face a lack of transport and access to essential services, including healthcare, education, and employment. Women are still disproportionately likely to undertake unpaid work and to care for children and older relatives; in rural settings full-time childcare can leave women particularly vulnerable to isolation while many feel an expectation on them to stay near their family home in order to look after ageing parents, limiting opportunities to seek employment or education further afield. For some, 'a village can become a prison' particularly for those without access to their own car. Isolation is also a concern for older women, especially for those with poor health or for widows living alone.

While violence against women and girls affects both rural and urban communities around the world, isolation and lack of access to specialist services and support can place women in rural areas at increased risk. In the UK, two women are killed every week by a partner or former partner, and one in three women will experience some form of gender-based violence in her lifetime.

Whilst the challenges facing women in rural settings can seem bleak, it is important to remember that there are many individuals and organisations around the world providing support and calling for change. Mothers' Union members offer a listening ear, provide practical support such as skills training, and campaigning for justice, calling on governments and decision-makers to address issues faced by women and girls around the world. Mothers' Union exists in grassroots communities and seeks to combat loneliness and isolation by providing friendship and fellowship, acknowledging that rural communities can also be some of the most tight-knit, empowering and supportive networks available to women.

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About Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union is a global Christian movement of over four million members in 83 countries. Our vision is of a world where God's love is shown through healthy and flourishing relationships, and by challenging injustice. Our members are particularly concerned with the experiences of women around the world, calling for gender equality, tackling gender-based violence, and promoting women's empowerment. Please see mothersunion.org for more information about our work.

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