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Marcela Villarreal is Director of the Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). She has a PhD in Rural Sociology from Cornell University and a BA/MA in Systems and Computing Engineering from the University of Los Andes in Bogotá. She leads the implementation of FAO's innovative partnerships with civil society, academia, research institutions and UN entities, as well as FAO's role in the UN Reform. She coordinates the initiative on the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems, FAO's policy on Indigenous Peoples, the Parliamentarian Fronts against Hunger initiative and the Decade of Family Farming, among others.

Since she joined FAO in 1996, her previous roles include Director of the Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development Division; Director of the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division; Chief of the Population and Development Service; and Senior Officer Socio-Cultural Research. Before joining FAO, she worked for UNFPA, ILO and for the Colombian Government. Throughout her 32-year career at the UN, she has worked and published extensively in the areas of poverty reduction, gender issues, rural development, employment, social inequality, land tenure, HIV/AIDS and food security. She has lead and/or participated in UN missions to some 40 countries.