



Realizing women's land rights in Africa and Beyond

A Webinar Report




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In October 2016, women farmers from 22 countries across Africa climbed the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro to claim women's rights for access to and control over land and natural resources. This event coincided with the launch of a campaign of the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC) to reach the target of having 30 percent of all registered land in the name of women by 2025 and to embed women's land rights into the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In line with these initiatives, there has been increased attention for women's land rights by grassroots movements, local governments, civil society organisations, academics, and international organisations. Nonetheless, despite progressive policies, legal frameworks, and strong civil society engagement in many countries, there is still a lot to be done to feel a real impact on the ground. This webinar featured experiences from several grassroots initiatives and highlighted how they fight for women's improved access to and control over land and other natural resources and to scale up women's land rights.

The webinar was co-hosted by Acção Académica Para O Desenvolvimento Das Comunidades Rurais (ADECRU) (Mozambique), Action Aid, Both ENDS, ENDA Pronat (Senegal), Fórum Mulher (Mozambique), GROOTS Kenya, LANDac, the Land Portal Foundation and OXFAM International.

Moderator: Griet Steel, Utrecht University and LANDac, the Netherlands

Panelists:

- Nzira Razão Deus, Fórum Mulher, Mozambique
- El Hadji Faye, Enda Pronat, Senegal
- Fridah Githuku, Groots Kenya
- Sreetama Gupta Bhaya, Oxfam, India

A complete recording of the webinar is available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/IgViimuNB-Q>



Key Takeaways

- Although legally women may have rights to land, patriarchal relations between men and women continue to dominate, resulting in the exclusion of women from decision-making, and women's land rights have not been prioritized in the public sector.
- Building a grassroots network of advocates and champions for women's land rights is crucial to success.
- While training for grassroots advocates is important in promoting good practices, ultimately the government is responsible for scaling up actions supporting women's land rights, and for this to happen, champions within the public sector are fundamental.
- Policy makers must lead transformation of land administration systems that support implementation of laws, including by hiring new staff, in particular women staff, who are supportive of women's land rights.
- For further reading see <https://www.landgovernance.org/womens-land-rights/>

Webinar Summary

1) WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO FOCUS SO MUCH ATTENTION ON WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS?

- Women in some countries, as in Senegal, continue to be perceived as immature beings who should be under the responsibility of a man and be dependent on a man for accessing resources.
- Asymmetric power relations between men and women, along with social dynamics characterized by patriarchal practices, as in Mozambique, remain a serious problem. Customary land governance systems often only allow women secondary rights and access to land through a male relative, very few women hold land titles in their own names and women are rarely allowed to take part in decision-making.
- In Kenya, within the land sector institutional framework, women's land rights have not been acknowledged as problem, hence it has no real champions inside the public service and gender-blind land reforms have taken precedence.
- Although almost 70% of the farmers in India are women, only 14% have rights to land. Despite this, women in India continue to face extreme disadvantages in terms of pay, land rights and their representation in agricultural decision-making.

2) WHAT ARE GOOD PRACTICES YOU HAVE SEEN IN ACHIEVING SUCCESS TOWARDS WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS AND WHAT MADE THESE INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES SUCCESSFUL?

- It is necessary to influence practices and perceptions of grassroots actors by involving those who hold power at the local level and to build collective actions and social movements in which women can understand the roots of the problem. This can involve organizing community workshops to generate data about the communities, making women's voices and stories more visible and lobbying for policy and legal amendments guaranteeing rights to land and property and protection against discriminatory cultural laws. These efforts should be supported by grassroots women's land rights champions.

3) WHAT IS NEEDED NEXT TO SCALE UP THESE APPROACHES AND TO MOVE THE WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS AGENDA FORWARD?

- There is a need to capitalize on good practices and approaches to projects, including those originating from both civil society and state programs. This is complimented by a need to train women to be politically engaged on legislation reform dialogue and to strengthen women's social movements for aggressive advocacy and to participate actively in local dialogue and also to design tools to monitor the allocation of the land to women. Champions within public service providers are need to carry forward the women's land rights agenda inside government. With all this in mind, however, ultimately the government is responsible for scaling up successful models through programs and budgetary allocations.

4) WHAT IS THE MESSAGE TO POLICY MAKERS TO SCALE UP THESE APPROACHES?

- Policy makers need to integrate the gender agenda in public policies and programs, including training curricula, especially for public officials intervening in rural areas. There is also a need to ensure transparency in land governance and administration; rural women must have a seat at the table and their contributions must be taken into consideration. Policy makers should bring women's land rights to the mainstream of land reforms and provide legal protection to small scale land holders. Policy makers must also reform the land institutions and hire new staff members who are not corrupt, and prioritize enhancing gender representation in the land institutions specifically. Land records should be digitized and updated with gender disaggregated data.
- These and a diverse range of country-specific actions by policy makers are necessary to alter the current situation with regard to women's land rights in Africa and beyond.

Notable Quotes from the Panelists



“IT IS STILL A CONTINUOUS FIGHT TO PUT LAND RIGHTS AT THE CENTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. THESE EXPERTS HAVE SET THE SCENE AND IDENTIFIED BOTTLENECKS, WHILE LOOKING FORWARD TO GOOD PRACTICES, SOLUTIONS AND CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS FOR SCALING UP.” - GRIET STEEL, UTRECHT UNIVERSITY AND LANDAC, THE NETHERLANDS



“IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE POLICY MAKERS THEMSELVES TO RAISE AWARENESS OF FINANCIAL PARTNERS (BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL) ON THE NECESSITY TO SCALE UP ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUCCESSFUL WOMEN’S LAND RIGHTS INITIATIVES.” - EL HADJI FAYE, ENDA PRONAT, SENEGAL



“WOMEN’S LAND RIGHTS IS A LEGAL PROBLEM AND A SOCIAL PROBLEM. IN KENYA WE PAUSED OUR REFORMS AT THE LEGAL LEVEL AND TURNED A BLIND EYE TO THE SOCIAL-CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION AIDED BY PATRIARCHY. WE REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THIS GAP AND ADDRESS IT AND THAT’S WHY THE POLICY-PRACTICE GAP IS SO HUGE.” - FRIDAH GITHUKU, GROOTS KENYA



“ACCESS TO INFORMATION, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND DATA FROM THE GRASSROOTS IS CRUCIAL TO UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES OF WOMEN’S LAND RIGHTS ON THE GROUND, TO DESIGNING TAILORED INTERVENTIONS AND TO ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN’S ACCESS TO LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES AT LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS. ” - NZIRA RAZÃO DEUS, FÓRUM MULHER, MOZAMBIQUE



“GENDERED RELATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN TERMS OF NATURAL RESOURCES ARE DYNAMIC AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE. SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ROLES AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND MEN IN MANY SOCIETIES LEADS TO INCREASED VULNERABILITY OF WOMEN WITH THE DETERIORATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES.” - SREETAMA GUPTA BHAYA, OXFAM, INDIA



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