

Women and Community Land Rights: Investing in Local Champions

A Webinar Report



For more than five years, the Women's Land Tenure Security (WOLTS) Project has been investigating the intersection of gender and land relations in mining-affected pastoralist communities in Mongolia and Tanzania. The aim has been to develop a methodology for long-term community engagement and capacity building to protect and support the land rights of all vulnerable people – thus to fully mainstream attention to gender equity in land tenure governance within a framework that would facilitate improvements in community land rights across the board.

The project has demonstrated that investing in a diverse group of gender and land champions, women and men, can be a game changer both for women and for the wider community. The local champions nurtured through the WOLTS training programme are reinvigorating local power structures to strengthen and protect the rights of women and other vulnerable groups and delivering real improvements for women's land rights and community land rights alike. The evidence to date demonstrates that the WOLTS methodology can help to empower communities to combat entrenched patriarchal norms and challenge land grabbing more broadly across the Global South. In the pilot communities, the WOLTS approach created new leadership spaces for women, changes to social norms within households, and raised awareness of gender-based violence.

In the webinar, WOLTS team leader, Elizabeth Daley, provided an overview of the project and its results as well as its potential to be applied in other settings. Michael Taylor, Director of the International Land Coalition, spoke from a global perspective on the potential for the project to contribute to more equitable land governance for billions of people reliant on community land rights. WOLTS senior team members, Joyce Ndakaru (HakiMadini, Tanzania) and Narangerel Yansanjav (People Centered Conservation, Mongolia) provided examples from their respective countries on the impacts of training gender and land champions and wider applications of the project to date.

Chair:

- **Christopher Tanner, Mokoro**

Panellists:

- **Elizabeth Daley, Mokoro**
- **Michael Taylor, International Land Coalition**
- **Joyce Ndakaru, HakiMadini**
- **Narangerel Yansanjav, People Centered Conservation**

The recording of the webinar is available here: <https://youtu.be/Grn83dokfH0>

Key Takeaways

- Women's participation in land governance has increased
- Investing in women's land rights protects community land rights
- Knowledge of land- and gender-related laws rose by almost 50%
- Ripple effect on gender-based violence and broader gender norms
- Women's economic empowerment – an indirect impact
- A proven methodology – ready to scale up

The WOLTS Project has committed to long-term involvement at the community level to ensure solid buy-in from the communities and local leadership. The WOLTS champions training programme was preceded by two years of in-depth participatory baseline research in each community to produce a rigorous evidence base. The programme was developed with a replicable format that included tailored content to meet local needs.

From the outset of the WOLTS Project, men and women have taken part jointly and equally. The WOLTS team created safe and mutually supportive spaces for champions to grow in confidence, both individually and as a group, using a range of participatory techniques in both mixed and gender-segregated sessions.

Investing in women's land rights protects community land rights. Trained champions now offer support to their local governments to protect natural resources in a gender-equitable way.

WOMEN AND COMMUNITY LAND RIGHTS

INVESTING IN LOCAL CHAMPIONS

*Findings from first five
years of the Mokoro
Women's Land Tenure
Security Project
(WOLTS)*

Key Finding:

*Training gender and land
champions has a ripple
effect on other gender
norms, including on
gender-based violence*

Webinar Summary

1) WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAIN IMPACTS OF THE WOLTS PROJECT GENDER AND LAND CHAMPIONS TRAINING PROGRAMME?

- Women champions have become increasingly confident in speaking up in meetings and have the support of male traditional leaders in doing this.
- They've also become more willing to contest elections and take up local leadership positions, with men champions strongly supporting their fellow women champions in these roles, particularly in Tanzania.
- Investing in women's land rights also protects community land rights so it is a "win-win" and not an "either/or". The champions in Mongolia are leading a community effort to hold mining companies to account, to protect land from investors and support local government in the development of new regulations and planning in a gender-sensitive way.

2) HOW DOES THE WOLTS APPROACH FIT WITHIN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT AROUND EMPOWERING MEN AND WOMEN TO PROTECT THEIR LAND RIGHTS?

- Globally, there is currently an urgent need to upscale the recognition of land rights, however, we have very little evidence that we are moving towards targets such as the SDGs.
- How do we scale up in a way which overcomes the risks in securing community land rights? The WOLTS Project shows that we can think about scaling up from the bottom where the rights of the most vulnerable can be secured as part of a community's efforts.
- WOLTS is an example of building democracy from the local level where women and men and young people can decide their own futures, starting with land rights which are fundamental to creating new opportunities.
- Securing women's land rights is one step in overcoming wider discrimination against women. By nurturing the emergence of strong women leadership there are long term impacts on many aspects of gender equality at the local level.

3) HOW HAS THE WOLTS TEAM MANAGED TO MEASURE THE INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF KEY LAND- AND GENDER-RELATED LAWS AMONG CHAMPIONS?

- Using a series of perceptions surveys, the WOLTS team found an almost 50% increase in levels of legal awareness after the training. The overall increase in legal awareness among women champions was 62%, and among men it was 37%.
- Training men and women champions in land and gender has had a ripple effect on broader social and norm change, this includes changes in attitudes and behaviour around gender-based violence as well as economic empowerment.

4) WHAT IMPACT HAS THE WOLTS PROJECT HAD ON GENDER NORMS IN MONGOLIA AND TANZANIA?

- Through participatory exercises such as role-plays, the issues around gender-based violence began to be raised more openly by the champions in the training sessions.
- In both Mongolia and Tanzania, men are increasingly taking up more domestic duties that have traditionally been seen as women's responsibility, especially younger men. A case study from Tanzania showed that women would often have to give up their seat at a meeting to a man, however women and men champions are encouraging an end to this practice, arguing that it is discriminatory.
- In Mongolia, champions are trying to offer greater support to victims of gender-based violence. Posters listing the contact details of agencies and organisations that offer support to GBV victims have been pinned up around the communities. Furthermore, champions have tried to give greater attention to the different forms of violence in the community and raise awareness, including emotional and financial violence, and issues for vulnerable men.

5) HOW HAS THE WOLTS PROJECT CONTRIBUTED TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT?

- The WOLTS gender and land champions training programme has built confidence among women to demand equal rights and treatment. An example of this in Tanzania is the price women receive for selling minerals which traditionally has been much lower than the price men receive. By engaging the husbands of female rubble collectors to take a more patient approach to cash income generation, women can choose not to sell their minerals when the price is low and wait to receive a fairer price.
- In Mongolia, land conflicts affect the lives of pastoralists who depend on the land for their livelihoods. Trained champions now have the tools to hold mining companies to account and prevent them from operating if they do not have the correct licenses or permissions. Greater security over the land has helped pastoralists to operate more confidently and pursue cash income generating activities.

6) WHAT POTENTIAL DOES THE WOLTS PROJECT HAVE AS AN APPROACH THAT CAN BE SCALED UP?

- In Tanzania, the WOLTS team have seen a demand from neighbouring villages to replicate the training programme in their communities.
- The WOLTS Project has already gone beyond the community level in Mongolia by collaborating with the Government's National Land Agency (ALAMGAC) to develop new guidelines for including participatory and gender-equality principles within national technical guidelines on landscape planning for local governments. This demonstrates that the WOLTS approach has potential to produce much wider impacts on women's land rights, beyond the project's pilot communities.

Notable Quotes from the Panelists



“OUR TEAM WORKED REALLY HARD TO CREATE SAFE AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE SPACES FOR OUR LOCAL CHAMPIONS TO GROW IN CONFIDENCE, BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A GROUP, AND THIS CONFIDENCE-BUILDING ELEMENT WAS A REALLY KEY ELEMENT OF THE WOLTS PROCESS.”

- ELIZABETH DALEY, MOKORO



“[THE WOLTS TEAM] ISN'T IGNORING TENSIONS THAT EXIST AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL. YOU'RE FACING THOSE HEAD ON AND YOU'VE MANAGED TO FACILITATE PROCESSES, WHEREBY OPPOSING PERSPECTIVES AND TENSIONS ON WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, CAN ACTUALLY BE DEALT WITH”.

- MICHAEL TAYLOR, INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION



“WHEN WE STARTED, WOMEN WOULDN'T TALK WHEN THEY CAME TO THE CLASS, THEY WOULDN'T CONTRIBUTE, THEY WOULDN'T RAISE THEIR HANDS WHEN THEY HAD CONCERNS. IT IS PART OF THE CULTURE AND TRADITIONS – BECAUSE THE COMMUNITIES HAVE NOT ALWAYS SERVED WOMEN – NOT TO ARGUE OR TO SPEAK IN FRONT OF MEN. SO, WHEN WE CONTINUED BUILDING THE CAPACITY, THE AWARENESS, AND CONFIDENCE-BUILDING, THESE WOMEN STARTED TO CONTRIBUTE A LOT IN THE MEETINGS.”

- JOYCE NDAKARU, HAKIMADINI, TANZANIA



“PARTICIPANTS OF THE TRAINING ARE NOW ACTIVELY PROMOTING SERVICES FOR WOMEN AFFECTED BY GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE MALE CHAMPION MADE A BIG POSTER WITH CONTACT DETAILS FOR VICTIMS OF GBV TO CALL FOR SUPPORT. HE NOTICED THAT WOMEN ARE OFTEN HESITANT TO APPROACH WHAT WAS ONCE A MUCH SMALLER POSTER BECAUSE THEY ALWAYS THINK THAT THEY CAN BE NOTICED OR SEEN BY OTHERS, BECAUSE IT'S SUCH A SENSITIVE ISSUE. SO, THE LARGER POSTER HANGING ON THE WALLS NOW CAN BE SEEN BY EVERYONE.”

- NARANGEREL YANSANJAV, PEOPLE CENTERED CONSERVATION, MONGOLIA

