



Ministry for Foreign
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Transformative approaches to achieve women's tenure security at scale: the relation between equal land rights and women's empowerment in rural Africa

Session Handout

Women in sub-Saharan Africa own and/or hold about 15 per cent of the land, though there are wide differences between countries. In addition to land ownership, men typically control larger land holdings than women. Gender gaps are seen not only in land ownership but also in rights to manage or control land and in land use rights. Land is the foundation for food security, economic growth and development. Closing the gender gap in all areas relating to land use can increase agricultural productivity, improve household welfare and increase women's economic empowerment.



Best practices at a glance: How to strengthen women's land rights?¹

- **Study a country's land rights and policies in theory and practice** when planning a project to strengthen women's land rights. Legal and policy changes are necessary first steps, but are not sufficient by themselves to secure women's property rights.
- **Ensure rural women know about their right to obtain a title to their property, how they can get the title, and the benefits of land titling for women and men.** Women need detailed information to be able to describe how they use a resource, to know how to enter into negotiations about compensation, and to know how to engage in management of land or resources.
- **Make it easy to access registry offices.** For example, offer extended services at least one night per week or make outreach offices available to women and men who cannot travel to a registry office. Establish information sessions for women as well as a hotline or advisory services at the adjudication office.
- **Make men aware of the benefits of joint ownership.** Household methodologies can be used to improve intra-household gender relations and empower men and women to realise their joint development potential.
- **Raise awareness at the grassroots level and work with customary and statutory authorities** in the community and at the level of local institutions in order to tackle discriminatory behaviour and perceptions about women's land rights.
- **Train key staff on gender.** Provide gender training for civil servants and technical and management staff who are engaged in implementing the land tenure policies at the local and national levels.
- **Strengthen women's land rights through a context-specific approach.** Customary norms and religion can be more important in determining women's rights than statutory laws in rural areas in developing countries. An individual property right to land might not always be the most inclusive, sustainable solution, at least not in the short term. Social, cultural and other barriers might act against the effective enjoyment by women of ownership rights. Other options to certify women's land rights could be supported, taking into account the recognition of diverse tenure forms that many reformed legal frameworks nowadays allow.
- **Promote women's participation in land surveys.** Women must be invited to participate in collecting and analysing data and information about their own experiences and needs. This provides them with a better basis for getting organised to act on new knowledge.
- **Form and support women's groups.** Women's groups and community organisations are a powerful way to help women gain knowledge, and increase their voice and agency in a community. Training and awareness-raising activities might not be enough to guarantee this participation. Women who have had training must become agents of change and be involved in the work to support the recognition of women's land rights, especially at the community level.
- **Strengthen the link between grassroots- and national-level activities.** The representation of women in national stakeholder platforms is fundamental but it is just the initial step. First of all, this participation must be reinforced. Moreover, their

engagement in national platforms should translate into opportunities for influencing changes at the grassroots level and vice-versa. Women's participation is about much more than occupying a seat in a decision-making structure (either under statutory or customary systems, or at the local or national level).

- **Complement land rights with support to activities to increase agricultural productivity.** Social norms dictate that female farmers are often constrained in their choice of crop, with men tending to use more productive land for the cultivation of higher-value cash crops. If women were given greater agricultural decision making and advice over what crops to grow or inputs to use, what to sell and how to spend or invest the revenue, they could contribute to improving households' agricultural productivity, nutritional status, and resilience to food security crises.
- **Collect sex-disaggregated data.** To improve land policies, strategies and programmes, disaggregated data and gender analysis are needed. Better knowledge of diverse land-rights regimes and their effects on women and men is essential for ensuring equal land rights.

¹ Sources include: Ruth Meinzen-Dick, <https://www.devex.com/news/beyond-advocacy-what-it-takes-to-strengthen-women-s-land-rights-87510>; Amanda Richardson, <https://landportal.info/blog-post/2016/02/how-can-we-make-gender-concerns-mainstream-aspect-community-land-projects>; Vanya Slavchevska, Ana Paula de la Ocampos & Chiara Brunelli, <http://pub-docs.worldbank.org/en/170131495654694482/A2-ABCA-Slavcheska-et-al-2016-Beyond-ownership-working-paper.pdf> <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/633621509948228866/How-to-identify-legal-barriers-to-women-s-participation-in-agriculture>. <http://www.idlo.int/publications/women-food-land-exploring-rule-law-linkages-0>

MORE GUIDANCE ON GENDER AND LAND ISSUES:

- FAO: [Gender and land rights database](#)
- FAO: [Governing land for women and men](#) – A technical guide to support the achievement of responsible gender-equitable governance of land tenure
- GLOBAL LAND TOOL NETWORK: [Gender evaluation criteria](#) and training packages

- IFPRI: [Ten Essential Reads on Gender and Land Tenure](#)
- INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION: [Women's Land Rights Toolkit & Gender Evaluation criteria](#)
- LANDESA: [Landesa Center for Women's Land Rights](#)
- LANDPORTAL: [Land and the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)

- WORLD BANK: [Toolkit for Integrating Gender-Related Issues in Land Policy and Administration Projects](#)
- WORLD BANK: [Land tenure and gender: Approaches and challenges for strengthening rural women's land rights.](#)