

Singular Vision and Collective Action Are Required to Promote Women's Access to Land and Land Tenure Security

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SUMMARY

Land is a crucial resource to promote prosperous, stable, and peaceful societies, a means of production and livelihood for the household, and an essential aspect of our identity. Land is also a way to achieve political control and have decision-making power. In Sub-Saharan Africa, however, although most women in rural areas depend on land to survive, many do not have secure land tenure, and their rights are often limited to the use of land but not to control or own land or to alienate and transfer it. African women are more likely than men to be landless and to have fewer rights than men.

The most substantial barriers to women's land-ownership rights are related to legal, institutional, socio-cultural, economic, and educational constraints. Several countries have established legal frameworks stipulating that everyone can have access to land on equal terms by law. However, there are still gaps in the legislation, and many regulations are not fully implemented. Additionally, the coexistence of different legal systems in a country brings complexity, overlaps, and sometimes contradictions, as traditions and power relations prevent women from effectively enjoying their rights, as opposed to the statutory law. This situation aggravates women's economic well-being, social status, empowerment, and resilience. It puts women in a fragile position in the agricultural value chain, increases inefficiencies in the economy, and prevents the eradication of hunger and poverty. Gender inequalities in access to land and security of land tenure represent severe barriers to sustainable development and are a violation of human rights.

Women's land rights are foundational for achieving the 2030 Agenda through gender equality, economic justice, adequate housing, climate action, land degradation neutrality, peace, and stability. Guaranteeing the right to land can help lift women, their families, and their communities out of poverty. Therefore, multi-faceted and interconnected international, regional, and national efforts are

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required, including several stakeholders such as policymakers, legal and land institutions, CSOs, IGOs and NGOs, academia and research institutions, donor organizations, the private sector, and technology players. Local communities, traditional leaders, grassroots organizations, women leaders, and governmental officials at the local level are also essential stakeholders to be involved.

A collective action based on a singular vision of women's empowerment through access to land generates synergies that help create and uphold laws protecting women's land rights and create opportunities for women to engage in productive activities, leading to improved livelihoods and women's economic independence. Additionally, women with access to land, information, and technology are more likely to engage in sustainable farming practices, improving food security for their families and communities. A coordinated collective creates a more inclusive and equitable environment for women to access and secure land rights, resulting in greater social cohesion and stability. This collective action helps to fulfill existing international agreements, frameworks and conventions such as 2030 Agenda, New Urban Agenda, Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure, Rio Conventions, UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, African Union Agenda 2063, Kilimanjaro Rural Women Charter of Demands, and others.

This article intends to discuss the existing efforts to promote women's land rights, and how to leverage synergies and develop concrete actions to advance women's land rights across the continent.

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