

Innovative Grassroots Women Led Tools and Approaches in Promoting Gender Responsive Land Governance: Processes for Strengthened Equitable Land Rights for Women

Equal land rights for men and women are fundamental for realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is also mentioned by other key global development frameworks including the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGTs) and the New Urban Agenda. These frameworks further emphasise the role equitable land rights and women's security of tenure play in facilitating the sustainability agenda. For example; SDG 5 speaks to gender equality with a focus on access to and control over resources and indicator 5.a.1 requires reporting on women's ownership or secure rights to agricultural land. Likewise, the VGGT's emphasize promotion of women's effective participation and empowerment in responsive tenure governance through gender sensitive policy/law making, building gender equitable land institutions, gender sensitive land administration and management processes and procedures, gender sensitive communication and awareness raising strategies and methods, gender-based land investments, gender sensitive monitoring, and gender equitable dispute resolution. The New Urban Agenda focuses on Land and Housing as one of the key drivers of change towards realizing "The City We Need". It envisages cities and human settlements that fulfill their social function, including the social and ecological function of land. It further affirms a vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use, and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of the present and future generations are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, as well as fundamental freedom. Further still, the Africa Union declaration (Agenda 2063) on land issues and challenges puts emphasis on promoting equitable land rights and targets attainment of 30% documented land rights for women by 2025.

Strengthening women's land rights is critical because women are the primary users of land. Women's labour is a critical element in food production. In developing countries, it is estimated that 50% to 80% of food is produced by women's labour. Secure land rights for female farmers and business women can improve investments, access to credit and better land use and productivity. Further still, there is a strong correlation between improving women's land rights and realisation of other SDGs especially SDG1 on reducing poverty. It has been shown that women tend to reinvest more resources into the household unit for food and nutrition, (SDG 2) health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), housing and sustainable cities (Goal 11)

Many women are however unable to fully exercise their land and property rights including the right to effectively participate in land governance processes. Women especially those under customary land tenure, face barriers to obtain land. They are unable to own or inherit land due to restrictive practices under the customary land tenure that many times override statutory law in recognition and enforcement of women's land rights. Further still, the top-down land governance policies and programs usually identify grassroots women as a "vulnerable group" thereby focusing on them primarily as victims and beneficiaries rather than as active agents of change in transforming their communities. Equitable access, ownership and control of land and tenure security for all cannot occur without a transformation of land governance processes from the conventional top-down processes to a more bottom-up, inclusive, participatory and gender responsive processes.

For many years, Huairou Commission have laid the ground work for empowering grassroots

women's groups to take the lead in organizing their communities and influence public policies to ensure access to and control over land, housing and other key productive resources. This has included linking local initiatives to work on influencing and using international frameworks - such as the SDGs, F&G, and the Voluntary Guidelines – to bring change in women's lives. The master class will therefore showcase the innovative grassroots led practices and tools that grassroots women organizations are developing and applying in their communities in order to transform land governance processes at local and national levels in ways that empower women as active agents of change and also deliver tenure security at scale ensuring that gender inequality is diminished rather than concretized.

The tools, that will be shared during the masterclass, include the following:

1. Local to Local dialogues: an organizing and partnership building tool. Dialogues help grassroots women organize around their own priorities and negotiate with local authorities to improve access and control over resources and services.
2. Peer Learning exchanges: a learning tool in which grassroots women teach and learn one another's successful practices. Exchanges amplify the impact of practical local knowledge and can focus on any topic of common interest.
3. Community mapping and data collection: Community mapping is a versatile participatory research tool. It raises awareness and informs decision making and engages community members in a structured learning, documenting, and analysis process.
4. Monitoring groups: Monitoring Groups, sometimes known as WatchDog Groups or Vigilance Committees, is an empowered collective approach to community justice.
5. Gender Evaluation criteria: a tool to evaluate the gender responsiveness of land tools and how they can be adapted to integrate various dimensions of the gender lenses
6. Grassroots women assemblies: Grassroots Academies are events where many grassroots organizations meet to exchange successful strategies, discuss barriers, and make policy recommendations with the support of partners. Grassroots women are both learners and teachers as they share their expertise in a classroom-like setting.
7. Urban thinkers' campus model is an initiative conceived by UN-Habitat and adopted by the grassroots women groups because it creates a platform to build consensus between partners engaged in addressing urbanization challenges and proposing solutions to urban futures.
8. Community resilience funds: CRF is a mechanism through which grassroots women invest in collective actions to reduce disaster and climate related risks and vulnerabilities

The objectives of the master class will include:

1. To share the different tools and practices and also learn from other perspectives
2. To get feedback from the participants on how to improve the tools and make them relevant for scale up exercises



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3. To build relevant partnership which will help in advancing grassroots women's agenda and securing bottom up approaches in the implementation of domestic policy on land.
4. To position these grassroots piloted tools to be considered as relevant tools to be adapted and used by other stakeholders at different level for grassroots engagement and participation in decision-making processes.

The target group for the master class will include Government representatives, Civil society, private sector, INGOs and IGOs.