

Driving forward women's land rights in Africa: What happens next?

Policy pointers

- **Start at the grassroots:** Grassroots women, their organisations and their lived experiences must be at the heart of any discussion on women's land rights.
- **Fund grassroots women to collect and analyse their own data and knowledge:** This is vital for raising awareness, negotiating better rights and for monitoring impacts. Integrate local data and knowledge into national plans and e-learning courses for local leaders.
- **Strengthen grassroots movements:** Build on ongoing initiatives and movements, work with local champions, facilitate learning exchanges and create platforms to discuss women's land rights.
- **Integrate women's needs into international, national and local politics:** Create coalitions by linking grassroots organisations with local and national authorities and traditional leaders, and support an ongoing dialogue involving grassroots women, government agencies, development practitioners and knowledge institutions.



['A paradigm shift needs to occur – development policies should view grassroots groups not as projects but as agents of change and partners in development.']

Minou Ramaroson of the Huairou Commission for Women, Homes and Community at the Agents of Grassroots Transformation learning event in Nairobi, 23 April 2018

Summary

Women's land rights are gaining momentum. There is growing recognition internationally that they are key to sustainable development. But women's voices must be central to any plans to secure those rights. Grassroots initiatives are crucial to raising awareness and making women's land rights visible, for negotiating better rights and for monitoring the reality on the ground. It is vital to bring together women's land rights experts to exchange experiences at local, national and international levels, from women's grassroots organisations and local champions to local leaders, academic researchers, development practitioners, policymakers and donors. Further funding is essential to scale up the impact of successful women's grassroots movements and initiatives at all levels.



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Box 1. The WLRA consortium of partners

The consortium worked with Enda Pronat in Senegal, GROOTS Kenya and ActionAid Kenya, ADECRU and Fórum Mulher in Mozambique, and Oxfam in Malawi. Each of this WLRA partner was chosen for its successful cooperation with women's grassroots initiatives, its different orientation and its different opportunities for scaling up the women's land rights agenda in Africa. The partners have contributed to action research and a series of international activities coordinated by the Netherlands Land Academy (LANDac). This combination of research and practice has further strengthened the consortium and brought international attention to the women's land rights agenda.

Background

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is supporting grassroots women's movements and organisations in their goal to secure women's land rights in Africa through the Women's Land Rights in Africa (WLRA) programme. WLRA works with a consortium of partners in Senegal, Kenya, Mozambique and Malawi. It aims to move the women's land rights agenda forward and to scale up successful grassroots initiatives in claiming access to and control over land and other natural resources (Box 1).

Securing women's land rights – what works in practice? Based on the programme outcomes, the WLRA partners identified three closely related policy recommendations to scale up women's land rights from the grassroots.

Generate knowledge and collect evidence locally

Access to and control over gender-sensitive data is key to securing women's land rights in Africa. Collecting data for and by grassroots women is essential. To scale up impact, donors and policymakers should support activities that:

- Support women's groups to collect evidence of women's daily experiences in accessing and claiming rights to land.
- Train grassroots women to become para-surveyors.
- Raise awareness in local communities about women's and men's equal rights to land and other natural resources.
- Support grassroots movements to partner with local and wider mainstream media to raise awareness about women and land.
- Support grassroots movements to lobby and partner with statistical agencies and land ministries to generate gender-disaggregated data.

Strengthen local champions and grassroots movements

Local champions play a crucial role in driving collective action, strengthening grassroots movements and forging links between grassroots organisations and local authorities. Local champions are usually women role models who have secured



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their rights and advocate for the rights of others. This helps to secure women's land rights at the local level. To support this process, donors and policymakers should:

- Link together grassroots initiatives, organisations and movements. Key activities include exchange visits and learning events between grassroots movements within and between countries.
- Create and support local, regional and international platforms where women's land rights can be discussed from a grassroots perspective.

- Promote e-learning to train local champions, local authorities and traditional leaders such as chiefs, religious leaders and mayors in women's rights. Work with them to strengthen links between grassroots organisations and others.

Build coalitions with multiple people

It is vital to involve women's grassroots movements in policy debates and dialogues with other stakeholders. This builds coalitions and creates opportunities for others to learn from women's experiences. It scales up successful initiatives, practices and policies and integrates women's needs into



Photo © Clemente Ntauazi



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international, national and local politics. To support this, policymakers should:

- Establish a parliament of local authorities to support women's land rights.
- Forge links between grassroots organisations, development practitioners, government agencies and knowledge institutions.
- Organise and support an ongoing multistakeholder dialogue which puts women's voices at the heart of the debate.
- Plan, support and fund initiatives which link activities to coincide at global, national and local levels. This will have a wider outreach and therefore a greater impact.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) must take a more coherent and coordinated approach to advocating for women's land rights nationally. Encourage them to embed these issues into their programmes.



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