

Land Post-2015

Rights to Land and Other Productive Resources for Women and Men in the Post-2015 Agenda

Secure rights to land and other productive resources provide a foundation on which to build an equitable, secure, and sustainable world. For a vast majority of people, particularly in developing countries, the ability to access, use, own, control, or otherwise make decisions about land and other resources largely determines their access to economic opportunity, standard of living, resilience to shocks, and food and nutrition security. It also shapes their social status, political power, and decision-making within their communities. For women in particular, secure rights to land and other resources enhance their rights to self-determination and support their well-being, as well as that of their families and communities. The cross-cutting nature of these rights represents a substantial opportunity: Efforts to strengthen and enforce them can help achieve multiple goals in a post-2015 development framework, including goals to eradicate poverty and to empower women.¹

The post-2015 agenda should include targets and related indicators on secure rights to land, natural resources, and other productive assets that explicitly include women's rights.

The targets should be:

- formulated to address *de jure* protection of rights to land and other productive resources, as well as *de facto* enjoyment of these rights to ensure equal realization of the rights by women and men;
- informed by, and aligned with, relevant international human rights standards and guidelines protecting land and property rights, particularly for women; and
- crafted with meaningful participation from civil society, including affected women and women's community groups and organizations.

Background

Secure rights to land and other productive resources are central to breaking the cycle of poverty: they provide opportunity and incentive for investments that enhance productivity and improve the quality of homes, and they provide a buffer against shocks. Rights are secure if they are clearly defined, long-term, enforceable, appropriately transferable, and legally and socially legitimate. The exercise of such rights by women should not require consultation or approval beyond that required of men. For women, the realization of such rights is a means of economic and social empowerment. Secure rights to land and other productive resources are also related to improvements in other areas such as education, nutrition and food security, peace and security, and environmental sustainability. Several international policy documents recognize the significance of addressing rights to land and other productive resources, and the importance of these rights in the global fights against development challenges such as HIV, hunger, and domestic violence. Notably, they recognize that women must enjoy those rights on an equal basis with men to realize their transformative effects.

Yet many of the world's poor lack such rights, and this is particularly so for women. Women face multiple barriers in accessing and benefitting from such rights. These barriers include inadequate legal standards and implementation of laws as well as discriminatory social norms, attitudes, customs, traditions, and programs. With respect to land, the result is that women are less likely than men to have secure land rights, and women tend to have rights to land smaller in size and of poorer quality than that of men. Because women tend to use their assets, including land, in ways that improve household and community well-being, failing to address land and property rights for women can undermine development efforts.

Because of their critical role in helping to reduce poverty, achieve gender equality, and ensure sustainable development, secure rights to land and other productive resources – particularly for women – must be central to the international development agenda and to the post-2015 development framework.

¹For additional information, see Gomez, M. and Tran, D.H. (2012), *Women's Land and Property Rights and the Post-2015 Agenda*, Official Background Paper – Global Thematic Consultation on Addressing Inequalities (and sources cited therein), available at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/283484>. See also UN-Habitat and GLTN (2008), *Secure Land Rights for All*.