

132 Vernacularise women's land rights

The Solution: One concrete way to improve food security in the Global South is related to secure women's access, ownership, and control over land and natural resources, generally referred to as women's land rights. We propose to make **the vernacularisation of women's land rights** an explicit part of the global and national agenda to secure women's land rights. Local agents (such as NGOs, civil society organizations and grassroots movements) should be systematically supported in advancing the cause for women's land rights by making legal frameworks understandable, accessible, and applicable in the local contexts where they are (to be) implemented, and vice versa, by putting local realities onto national and international agendas.

Source(s) of the Solution: The concrete suggestions for this solution, build upon Women's Land Rights in Africa (WLRA; 2017-2018), an action research programme in which women, NGOs working at the grassroots level (including GROOTS Kenya, ActionAid Kenya, ADECRU, Forum Mulher, Oxfam in Malawi, and Enda Pronat in Senegal), and the Netherlands Land Academy (LANDac) co-produced knowledge (see the synthesis report of this programme: *Securing Women's Land Rights in Africa*). The concrete reflections on vernacularisation are worked out in a paper: *The Land is ours: grassroots organisations' strategies in securing women's access, control and rights to land in rural communities in Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal and Malawi*, submitted for a special issue on women's communal land rights in the open-access journal *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*.

Problem addressed within food systems: Secure and equal access, ownership, and control for women and men is key for food security in the Global South. Secure rights have a substantial impact on the ability and willingness of farmers to make investments and adopt productivity-enhancing inputs. Secure land rights also provide households with enhanced food security and the ability to produce for local, regional, and global markets. From this perspective, secure women's land rights have clear development benefits to women, their households, and their communities. Over the past decades, positive changes in international spheres and national constitutions and legislation have been made. However, progressive legal frameworks and international initiatives and programmes that aim to empower women in securing their land rights are often top-down and do not result in intended outcomes as long as they are not combined with translating, implementing, and monitoring processes on women's land rights at and from the grassroots.

How this solution will address that problem: Concrete vernacularisation activities that translate women's land rights into grassroots languages are an effective strategy to increase decision-making power for women when it comes to land and natural resources. It can strengthen knowledge, improve the realisation of women's land rights on the ground, and keep track of women's land rights. Local actors play a role in shaping, fine-tuning, and articulating national land laws according to their specific realities. Through the organisation of concrete activities (e.g., community workshops, radio broadcasts, national conferences, community-led mapping exercises, they provide a space for local stakeholders, including grassroots organisations, rural women and men, and (traditional) authorities to learn and interact on the subject of women's land rights. These spaces allow for the identification of challenges and misconceptions on women's land rights and land reforms, some of which may be solved, while others will be translated back into (national and international) policy spaces. This reverse process of translation could be further encouraged by further connecting women at local, regional national, and international levels. Regional and country exchanges between grassroots organisations and other type of community exchange visits are of major value. Further support for these concrete activities will further improve the vernacularisation process.

Solution's alignment to the 'game changing and systemic solution' criteria:

Impact potential at scale: Bridging the gap between macro-level (national) institutions and legislation and locally lived realities and practices can contribute to consistency and effectiveness of policy.

Actionability: Women's land rights are widely supported among authorities, civil society, and in communities. Interventions on the ground, however, tend to be limited to a project approach, which makes their promotion piecemeal. By bridging the gap between the overall (national) legislative framework and local practices, efforts can be scaled up considerably and gain more impact.

Sustainability: Secure land tenure enhances people's motivation to preserve the quality of the natural resource base. More equitable distribution of land rights promotes inclusiveness and social cohesion within the community.

Existing evidence: During the WLRA programme, the organisation of activities with and in local communities in Sub-Saharan Africa proved effective to realise the vernacularisation of women's land rights. This can be illustrated by a concrete case from Kenya. In a community workshop, a discussion between representatives from the national Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning and the Laikipia group ranch members made clear that land issues related to divorce and widowhood were not effectively addressed in the Community Land Act of 2016. Divorced women explained how they were removed from community land registers where they were married, while at the same time are not included in community land registers in the communities of their birth. Based on this discussion, the ministry representatives realised that the Community Land Act was underdeveloped and that further amendments were needed to protect women in these kinds of situations.

Current/likely political support: Secure women's land rights are high on the global agenda on sustainable development, and gender equality and local organisations are already supported in achieving these goals. This support is, however, very project-based and focused on short-term outcomes. This idea calls for a more coordinated effort to acknowledge local organisations' mediating role in the action arena of women's land rights. More structural and long-term support and evaluation of their work will further encourage the change that is already envisioned in the reviewed legal frameworks on land and other natural resources.

Contexts where this is well/not well suited: We suggest focusing on rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa. These solutions have been piloted in rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa and fit well that context, especially if the overall aim is to contribute to food security, and in these contexts the issue of implementation of progressive women's land laws is often at the fore.