

Women's Land and Property Rights and the Post-2015 Agenda

Secure land and property rights, particularly for women, provide a foundation on which to build an equitable, secure, and sustainable world. For a vast majority of people in developing countries, the nature of such rights largely defines their access to opportunity, income, housing, economic security, food and nutrition security, as well as social status and political power within their communities. For women, secure land and property rights can mean the difference between lifetime dependence on male family members and personal autonomy. These rights empower women to reach their potential as citizens and as economic actors, and to take control over their own lives. The cross-cutting nature of secure land and property rights represents a substantial opportunity: Efforts to strengthen and enforce such rights can help achieve multiple goals in a post-2015 development framework.¹

The post-2015 agenda should include targets and related indicators on land and property rights that explicitly include women's rights.

The targets should be:

- formulated to address *de jure* protection of land and property rights, as well as *de facto* enjoyment of these rights, in particular by women;
- informed by, and aligned with, relevant international human rights standards protecting land and property rights, particularly for women; and
- crafted with meaningful participation from civil society, including from women and women's organizations.

Background

Secure land and property rights are a key 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. For women, such rights represent not only a key asset, but also a means of economic and social empowerment. Indeed, several international policy documents recognize the significance of addressing land and property rights, and the importance of these rights in the global fights against HIV, hunger and domestic violence. Notably, they recognize that women must share in those rights on an equal basis with men to realize their transformative effects. Secure rights to land and property, particularly for women, are also related to improvements in other areas including education, nutrition and food security, peace and security, and environmental sustainability.

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

The post-2015 process represents a critical moment to ensure that land and property rights, particularly for women, receive the attention that they deserve on the international development agenda.

¹ For 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*.