

# Women's Land Rights Declaration: A Roadmap towards Equity and Sustainability

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## **I. Preamble**

1. We, the participants in the Women's Land Rights Expert Meeting<sup>1</sup>, specialists on land rights, women's land rights and women's rights, amongst us activists, scholars, policy makers, land professionals and practitioners;
2. Gathered in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands on 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016;
3. To: (a) identify the most promising experiences, ideas, and strategies to enhance and strengthen women's land rights, and; (b) develop road maps on what actions participants can take forward and suggest other actors to involve;
4. Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Conferences on Financing for Development; the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries, and Forests; the Paris Agreement; the Marrakesh Declaration and Decision on Gender and Climate Change; The Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa; the Guiding Principles on Large Scale Land Based Investments in Africa; ILO Convention 169, and; the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Agree on the following;

## **II. Vision**

A world in which land rights, land governance and land administration are gender equitable and forming the foundation for inclusive and sustainable development.

## **III. Goal**

Ensure that women and men have equal rights of access, control and ownership over land and natural resources: Therefore, we call for reforms that will increase the proportion of women with secure land rights.

## **IV. Best Practices**

Taking stock of our own experiences, available case studies and existing literature, we suggest the following best practices to guide work towards accomplishing the vision and will advocate for the integration of these practices in ongoing and future interventions on women's land rights and natural resource management:

1. There is no "one size fits all" solution for enhancing women's land rights. Any intervention has to be grounded in a local context and should involve grassroots organisations. It should take a holistic approach that acknowledges the complexity of women's land rights, including the acknowledgement of the diversity of existing land rights and the options these offer to women.
2. Local women, men, communities and indigenous people are the experts, leaders and decision-makers on land issues in their localities. Their agency and empowerment are intrinsic parts of any intervention to enhance their land rights;
3. Women's land rights are part of the global sustainable development agenda, as well as an integral part of women's right to economic livelihoods and to basic human rights;
4. Guaranteeing women's land rights requires multi-stakeholder coalitions and alliances, involving actors with complementary competences, such as researchers, land

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<sup>1</sup> This expert meeting was facilitated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Oxfam Novib, Kadaster International, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, LANDac and Gender Resource Facility.

administration professionals, policy makers, development practitioners, women's rights activists and grassroots movements. These coalitions and alliances need to operate at multiple levels from local to global, creating transformative linkages for systemic change;

5. Women's land rights interventions require long-term processes and commitments, requiring resources for the strengthening of local organisations and an alignment of interventions and resources at different levels from local to global.
6. Women's land rights interventions require learning oriented approaches that inform and adjust these interventions, based upon the creation of evidence from lived experiences of women;
7. Strong, fit-for-purpose systems for land administration are needed, as well as progressive laws that secure women's land rights, taking into account the diversity of rights in each particular context.

## **V. Strategies**

The following commonly identified strategies will contribute effectively to ensure women's land rights:

1. Supporting and enhancing grassroots movements and female leadership in civic and professional groups, ultimately resulting in self-sustaining alliances;
2. Strengthening the evidence base to formulate and communicate key messages to inform policymakers, grassroots movements, activists, practitioners, and professionals;
3. Strengthening and supporting appropriate land administration and governance considering access to justice, dispute resolution and sustainable livelihoods;
4. Influencing and making strategic use of (inter)national guidelines, standards, procedures, and practices applicable to a multiplicity of stakeholders including governments, financial institutions, investors, and private sector actors. This includes ensuring equitable access to grievance mechanisms;
5. Developing curricula that integrate social, cultural, technical and environmental dimensions and build capacity for a new generation of practitioners, professionals and researchers in land and natural resource governance and land administration.

## **VI. Inspiring Initiatives**

Informed by the best practices and the strategies, a number of inspiring initiatives were elaborated for further action:

- In Uttarpradesh and Uttarakhand in India, the objective is to redistribute land to Dalit and Tharu people including the registration of at least 30% of land to women. As a main strategy, a court case is currently being filed by grassroots organisations to enforce the implementation of the 1960s Land Ceiling law meant to ensure land access to landless people. Grassroots organisations that include Dalit and Tharu people, will collaborate with researchers to foster these rights. Once precedence under this law has been created, experiences will be shared with similar people in India and Nepal. Ensuring Dalit and Tharu women access to land is expected to increase their participation in decision making and access to production opportunities and decent jobs.
- In Peru and Brazil and in the wider Mercosur community multi-stakeholder networks and platforms, operating at different scales to address women's land rights. The annually held Family Farming Specialized Meetings held in the Mercosur region constitute one of the entry points for finding synergies and identifying mutual interests to foster women's land rights in land governance. Support to this can be provided in the form of peer-to-peer sharing and learning and provision of technical and financial support to the initiative.
- The Pan-African Land Policy Initiative can play an important role to close the land rights gaps for women, and specifically the achievement of the target that a minimum of 30% of registered land must go to women by 2025. For this to happen, networks, partners and champions, including communities, local governments need to be supported. Evidence provided by researchers and tools adapted for more gender sensitive procedures could support the institutionalisation of good practices at different scales in African countries.

- The establishment of an intensive global capacity development programme, rooted in practice in different contexts will strengthen the ability of activists, professionals, development practitioners and policy makers to advance women's land rights. This will draw on research and learning from experience to build knowledge, action and collaboration to ensure women gain access and control over more land and natural resources within effective gendered land governance and administration systems.

## **VII. The Way Forward**

We continue working together towards the achievement of the abovementioned goal, vision in line with the best practices, the strategies and the inspiring examples. We further call upon governments and other duty bearers to enhance women's land rights in line with this declaration.

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Organisations</b>
Araujo, Katia	Huairou Commission
Barber, Jack	LANDac
Codispoti, Barbara	Oxfam
Dankelman, Irene	Radboud University
Doss, Cheryl	Oxford University
Dumashie, Diane	International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)
Elwell, Natalie	World Resource Institute
Gatundu, Catherine	ActionAid International
Giovarelli, Renée	Resource Equity
Haren, Nathalie van	Both ENDS
Ivens, Saskia	Gender Resource Facility
Klaver, Dieuwke	Wageningen University and Research (WUR)
Koppen, Barbara van	International Water Management Institute (IWMI) Southern Africa
Kovacs, Pamela	International Development Law Organization (IDLO)
Liebrand, Janwillem	Wageningen University and Research (WUR)
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Mor, Tzili	Landesa
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Raawat, Vidya Bhushan Singh	Social Development Foundation India
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