

Opportunities for Female Land Surveyors in Emerging Economies

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SUMMARY

Land administration is generally the responsibility of governments. But in emerging economies, the lack of financial and human resources prevent many governments from building and maintaining comprehensive land registries and cadastral systems. Typically, only the wealthiest people have the means to navigate a cumbersome and expensive government bureaucracy in order to acquire legal titles and secure their land tenure. The most vulnerable people often rely on commonly unrecorded informal and/or customary practices and these land management practices most acutely affect women. In many societies, even if women inherit land from their fathers, and even if they have the financial capacity to register their land, women are not recognized by men as landowners. Furthermore, women often lack knowledge about their rights, face male-dominated land agencies, and even in instances where women can register their property in their name, the process is often hijacked by male relatives. However, research has established that secure land rights increase productivity by as much as 50 percent, doubles the rate of high-school graduation, and increases environmental conservation. This impact is even more pronounced when women gain secure rights to land.

The lack of female intermediaries to facilitate the formalization of tenure for female landowners actually creates an opportunity for women land professionals in emerging economies that might be more trusted by female headed households than their male counterparts. At the moment, there are no clear global figures regarding the number of female surveyors or cartographers and their proportion in regards to men, but it is certainly still a profession that is highly dominated by men. In certain areas of the world, it is a necessity to involve women in the land documentation process to enter homes, if accurate and unbiased data is to be collected. Women are also essential in certain conflict resolution projects related to women and inheritance, so why not involve them in the entire registration process? Women can talk to other women more easily and are often seen as having

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more empathy. And when it comes to using the tools and applying a process, women are also more detail oriented and thus accurate than men.

Women surveying and mapping professionals will facilitate the empowerment of women in the global economy. By starting with a pragmatic approach in training them to the use of the newest mobile technologies that allow them to collect land information and build local cadastral systems faster and at a fraction of a cost compared to traditional survey methods, it will help bridge the gap between women landowners deprived from land rights recognition and women full actors of economic development by having access to secured tenure. And by having these newly qualified women surveyors join land professional organizations, they will have access to higher competences and eventually get job opportunities in the construction industry, urban and rural planning, or even conservation. Involving women in the land and surveying profession is essential, especially if we want to have women participate as full actors in the process of economic development.

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