

LANDESA

CENTER FOR WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS



Ensuring that women have secure rights to land is essential to addressing poverty, hunger and gender equality around the world.

WHY WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS?

More than 400 million women around the globe rely on land, but many have no rights to the land they tend and depend on for their livelihoods. Securing those rights is crucial if the world wants to reach its development goals.

Women play an indispensable role in the rural economy, yet in many of the poorest regions of the world they are denied equal rights to access, use, inherit, control, and own land. Women are the bulk of food producers and make up an estimated 43 percent of the agricultural labor force. Women continue to shoulder the bulk of care responsibilities, yet they face unequal rights to land in law and in practice.

The challenges are two-fold.

First, laws and policies often dilute or deny women's rights to land.

Second, even when laws enshrine such rights, legal loopholes, gaps in implementation, lax enforcement, sex-discriminatory practices, social norms, low legal literacy, and lack of accessible, impartial institutions undercut these formal guarantees.

As a result, often women's only claim to the land they rely on for food, income, shelter, and their identity, is through their relationship to a male relative – a husband, father, brother or son. They are susceptible to displacement and

exploitation because they lack recognized control over the land on which they depend. That hampers women's ability to lift themselves and their families out of extreme poverty and impacts the way they can access, use, and control the land in fundamental ways.

When women have secure rights to land, women's status improves and they are better able to empower themselves, their families, and their communities. Research demonstrates links between strengthening women's rights to land and productive assets and women's increased participation in household decision-making.

Secure land rights for women also trigger powerful ripple effects:

- Better nutrition and food security for families
- Improved family health
- Educational gains for children
- Greater access to micro-credit and formal loans
- Decreased vulnerability to contracting HIV/AIDS
- Potential reduction in domestic violence

Evidence from around the globe links secure land rights, especially for women, to decreased poverty, increased economic growth, food security, social stability and justice and legal

GOALS

Champion and advise on standards, policies and tactics for strengthening women's land rights.

Nurture a global network of professionals and organizations collaborating to strengthen women's rights to land.

Implement innovative solutions to improve women's land rights nationally, regionally and globally.

THE LAW OF THE LAND

Women face legal or social barriers to their land rights in more than half the world:

15 countries where women do not have equal ownership rights to property

35 countries where widows do not have equal inheritance rights

90 countries where social customs inhibit women's access to land

From Landesa's [Law of the Land Infographic \(2016\)](#)

empowerment. The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the cross-cutting potential of land rights in three of its 17 goals: ending poverty (Goal 1), mitigating hunger (Goal 2), and achieving gender equality (Goal 5).

Given the centrality of women's land rights to a host of development and human rights outcomes, the Landesa Center for Women's Land Rights works to prioritize and integrate them in all of Landesa's projects, initiatives, and advocacy. The Center also develops and supports innovative models to strengthen girls and women's rights to land.

OUR PROGRESS

Landesa has partnered with national, regional and global actors to reform laws and institutions to strengthen women's land rights.

Landesa developed myriad innovative programs to bridge the gap between law and practice to secure women's rights to land.

Landesa champions women's rights to land regionally and globally in numerous fora, including the United Nations, African Union, the Clinton Global Initiative, the G-8 and the Borlaug Dialogue.

Landesa engages in sharing comparative technical expertise, advocacy, coalition-and network-building across movements and within project geographies.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- **The Women's Land Rights Visiting Professionals Program** engages practitioners from geographies with critical land rights issues for rural women in Asia and Africa to deepen technical expertise and leverage their work on women's land

LANDESA'S HISTORY

Landesa partners with governments, international institutions, and local organizations to ensure that the world's poorest families have secure rights over the land they tend. Across five decades in more than 50 countries, Landesa has helped bring secure land rights to more than 115 million families through innovative programs and policy advocacy.

rights nationally, regionally and globally. Participants attend a six-week intensive workshop in Landesa's Seattle headquarters and remain connected to Landesa experts and linked to a growing global network of like-minded professionals dedicated to advancing women's land rights. The program has hosted women's land rights professionals from China, Ghana, Kenya, India, Liberia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

- **The Girls Project** in West Bengal, India, aims to position girls to exercise their land rights throughout their life cycle. By increasing girls', boys' and communities' understanding of girls' land-related rights, and training girls to use land to create their own assets, girls can reduce key short-term vulnerabilities and improve their long-term control over their status and future.
- We **enhance the global capacity to strengthen women's land rights** in all the areas where Landesa works, including China, India, Myanmar and select countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Through our **regional and global advocacy, we elevate women's land rights** as a critical cause and potential solution to key development and human rights challenges, including climate change, health, economic empowerment and gender-based-violence.
- **Our robust desk and field research** informs project development and policy reforms, and assesses project impacts on women's land rights.
- **Roles, processes and tools are developed for gender integration** across Landesa's projects and initiatives.

CENTER FOR WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS

The Landesa Center for Women's Land Rights was launched in 2009 to leverage the strategic power of land for women by addressing laws, policies, and norms that deprive women from equal access to and control over land and by enhancing capacity in the women's land rights sector.

"I draw strength from the land I own."

— Sushmita, a landowner in India

"It makes a difference, having a land title."

— Liberata, a farmer in Rwanda