



FACTS ABOUT WOMEN AND LAND

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Recently, I heard a story about a woman farmer and her right to land. The story goes that on the death of her husband, the widow inherited a mango tree. She was considered lucky in the sense that she was allowed to inherit anything, but it soon became clear that she was not allowed access and ownership to the land on which her tree grew. This, unfortunately, could be the story of any number of traditional women farmers in large parts of Namibia.

Namibians are preparing themselves for the second land conference to be held in October this year. As expected, this very important conference will focus on issues such as restitution and land reform, issues which many feel are long-overdue.

Land, for rural people, is perhaps the most important household asset to support production and provide for food, nutrition and income security. Women, especially are charged with the responsibility of household food security, yet women's issues are often neglected or even overlooked when land issues are on the table. Following are some facts that need serious consideration in regard women and land and relevant issues;

- Agricultural census data shows that due to a range of legal and cultural constraints in land inheritance, ownership and use, less than 20 percent of landholders are women. Women represent fewer than 5 percent of all agricultural land holders in North Africa and West Asia, while across Sub-Saharan Africa, women average 15 percent of agricultural land holders.
- Women's poor access to infrastructure in rural areas limits their opportunities to reduce poverty and hunger. Rural women spend more time than urban women and men in reproductive and household work, including time spent obtaining water and fuel, caring for children and the sick, and processing food.
- Collectively, women from Sub-Saharan Africa spend about 40 billion hours a year collecting water.
- The jobs of rural women who are employed tend to be shorter term, more precarious and less protected than those of rural men and urban people. The lack of flexible hours to accommodate family work combined with wage and job discrimination and limited representation of women in workers' organizations are partly responsible for this.
- There is evidence that shows that if rural women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent, raising total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent, in turn reducing the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent.
- Rural female-headed households also have more limited access than male-headed households to a whole range of critical productive assets and services required for rural livelihoods, including fertilizer, livestock, mechanical equipment, improved seed varieties, extension services and agricultural education. Rural women are less likely to work for wages than rural men
- Putting more income in the hands of women translates into improved child nutrition, health and education. ♀

Source UN Women Watch