

CSW62 Advocacy Report

Importance of Data Segregation for the Empowerment of Rural Women Expert Group Panel Discussion

*By Geeta Desai,
Graduate Women International President*

On its priority theme “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls,” the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 62) held an interactive expert panel on “The role of rural women’s land rights and land tenure security in reaching the SDGs.”

Background:

Rural women’s land rights encompass ownership, control, access, or use of land and its resources in diverse land tenure systems, including community, customary, collective, joint or individual. The extent to which rural women have secure access, use and decision-making control over land and natural resources is a significant determinant of the level to which they can enjoy their human rights. Control over land can reduce the discrimination and of violence against women. Land tenure rights increase women’s social and political status and offer an avenue to economic justice.

However, not only do women have fewer land rights than men, but they are often restricted to so-called secondary land rights, meaning that they hold rights through male family members and risk losing them in the case of divorce, widowhood, or the migration of the male relative. The land rights of many women are curtailed by customary law even when recognized by statutory law or legal reform. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places women's land rights at the core of global development priorities, recognizing the foundational link to eradicating poverty (Goal 1), ensuring food and nutrition security (Goal 2), achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls (Goal 5), fostering sustainable cities (Goal 11) and protecting life on land (Goal 15). Secure land rights also contribute to achieving other SDGs, including the reduction in the effects of climate change and in the formation of peaceful and inclusive societies.

GWI Note:

While this was an engrossing session that reminded us of important concerns and initiatives that we need to be continually discussing like reinforcing connections between CEDAW and women’s land rights, awareness of laws already on the books and implementation of these laws, the special case for indigenous women’s rights to land, GWI wanted you to be aware of an aspect of legislation, policy development and resource distribution that we don’t talk about a lot as an organization – Data Support.

Data segregation will play an important role in the accomplishment of the SDGs and GWI encourages its members to become involved in helping UN agencies with data collection and segregation. GWI feels that members of our NFAs in 57 countries can provide a perspective on the culture, values, attitudes and beliefs of their respective countries that will be invaluable in data collection, in its segregation and in the development of recommendations to governments, businesses, foundation, donors and resource managers, that are relevant to each country. Data gaps undermine our ability to target resources, develop policies and track accountability.

To this end, here are highlights of the presentation by Robert Ndugwa, Everlyne Nairesiae and Oumar Sylla of UN-Habitat, on the role and importance of segregated data in the advancement of women's land rights.

- Data segregation moves us beyond simple gender binaries (male-female) and reveals intra-household gender relations. We need to improve our understanding of the scope of women's roles in natural resource management including land governance, conservation, environmental resilience, so that their contributions are strengthened through land rights and resource allocations.
- Beyond a male-female dichotomy, research is also needed on the ways in which gender interacts with other forms of difference and inequality (wealth, ethnicity, geography) in relation to tenure rights issues to understand precisely who is vulnerable and why.
- Although there appears to be causal relationships between gender and the land, available evidence and data are insufficient to demonstrate the detailed long-term and lasting impacts of gender inequality in land rights. The FAO's Gender and Land Rights Database (GLRD), for example, was launched in 2010 to highlight the major political, legal and cultural factors that influence the realization of women's land rights throughout the world.
- Rural women have been the least favored sector of the population by public policies on land redistribution, despite playing an important role in agriculture and food security in their households and communities. As long as data on the direct impacts of the many unfavorable policies on rural women and girls is scanty, redress of social and economic injustices remain difficult
- Further evidence (data) is required on women's land rights improving women's access to credit although anecdotally, we know that they do. Additional information would lead to rural women's universal access to farm credit and to well- functioning credit markets, with banking systems that accept land as collateral.
- We need to move towards building the capacity to perform the precise level of data collection and analysis of tenure rights assessments of rural women alongside precision interventions and accountability.
- Not very much information exists on how the combination of determinants is playing out in achievement of tenure rights for women and girls in rural areas. We will need more disaggregated data on the coverage of various types of programs, interventions, and services - what has worked, what has not., This would help sharpen both the targeting of actions and the monitoring of changes in coverage and outcomes.
- The UN Statistics Division in collaboration with UN Women and FAO has a project that is reviewing how best to collect data and report on women's land rights issues. GWI members are encouraged to explore this project.
- Data segregation is important because most national surveys interview head of households, skewing the responses and quality of the data produced in favor of men.

- The dearth of data makes it difficult to set policies and gauge progress, preventing governments and organizations from taking measurable steps to empower rural women and girls. Despite these challenges, more countries are now conducting household surveys, in addition to regular population censuses, producing important data on agriculture, social and economic status, presenting opportunities to glean sex disaggregated data on rural women and girls and land rights.

Please stay tuned to this space for a summary of the final Agreed Conclusions document to which GWI has substantively contributed. In a couple of weeks, please also visit the GWI website for delegates' reports once they have been posted.

Sincerely,

Geeta