

Women & Land

Overview

When women own property and control assets, they are better positioned to improve the lives of their families and themselves. Unfortunately, women in many countries do not have secure property rights, a key tool to gaining economic security. Women's insecure property rights are important because they contribute to women's low social status and their vulnerability to poverty. It is also increasingly linked to problems including HIV/AIDS, hunger, urban migration and domestic violence.

Land rights confer direct economic benefits as a source of income, status, nutrition and collateral for credit. However, women may not fully participate in these benefits as members of a household if they do not share formal rights to land. Formal rights to land can have an impact on intra-household decision-making and women's overall role in the household economy. Land is a particularly critical resource for a woman when the household breaks down—for example, in the event of male migration, abandonment, divorce or death. In these cases, women without secure land rights may be forced to engage in risky behaviors to make money, further eroding their own health, families and communities.

Facts

- Women represent over 50 percent of the world's population and do 60-80 percent of the world's agricultural production, yet some research indicates they own less than 5 percent of the world's land.
- Income in the hands of women results in higher caloric intake and better nutrition for the household than when in the hands of men.
- Improving women's land rights makes a powerful contribution to food and nutrition security.
- Women's property rights increase women's status and bargaining power within the household and community.
- Secure land rights provide women with greater incentives to adopt sustainable farming practices and invest in their land.
- More than 80 percent of farmers in Africa are women, yet women in most African countries do not have secure rights to the land they farm.
- Providing women with secure rights to land that they can farm has the potential to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security and reduce high-risk behaviors.

Current Programs

RDI's Women and Land Program focuses on the specific interests and needs of rural women, developing tailored solutions that address those interests and needs through secure land rights.

Rwanda: Women comprise more than half of Rwanda's population. Over 30 percent of households are headed by women, one of the highest rates in the world. RDI is assisting the Rwandan government with implementation of its new land law, including consideration of gender issues and coordination of a Women's Law and Policy Task Force to provide continuing input on laws from a gender perspective.

Burundi: In this post-conflict environment, women's rights to land are even more precarious given the repatriation of refugees and internally

displaced persons placing multiple claims on the land from which they fled during the conflict. RDI is working with the government and local NGOs to promote women's land rights as the country deliberates on draft land and inheritance laws.

Angola: RDI is working to ensure that the formalization of land rights incorporates gender-sensitive procedures, that women participate in that process, and that their land rights are formally recognized.

China: In addition to strengthening women's land rights under China's new land law, RDI provides training for legal aid lawyers on the protection of rural women's land rights.

India: RDI is securing women's land rights through "micro-ownership" of land titled in women's names, and holds state level policy workshops on woman's land rights.

Indonesia: RDI is working with a local NGO to study women's roles in micro-plot production in Java.

continued on reverse . . .

WOMEN AND LAND

Seattle Office

1411 Fourth Avenue
Suite 910
Seattle, WA 98101
[T] 206-528-5880
[F] 206-528-5881

Contact

Gail Romero

Director of Development
and Communications

1411 Fourth Ave, Suite 910
Seattle, WA 98101 USA

[T] 206-528-5880 x120
E-mail: gailr@rdiland.org



Selected Accomplishments

► **Strengthening Women's Land Rights in India:** In India, RDI is collaborating with the states of Karnataka, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh to initiate new programs to provide micro-plots to roughly 11 million people, ensuring that women receive legal rights to the land.

► **Rwandan Women's Law and Policy Task Force:** This Task Force—a collective of indigenous grassroots women's organizations—grew out of an RDI-sponsored workshop. Their mission is to provide input and advocacy on Rwandan laws and policies with the goal of promoting women's rights.

► **Women's Rights to Market Gardens in Mali:** RDI attorney Leonard Rolfes, working part-time for the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), has played an instrumental role in designing a large irrigation project with a special allocation of land to women for market gardening—an important way for women to control land and gain nutritional benefits.

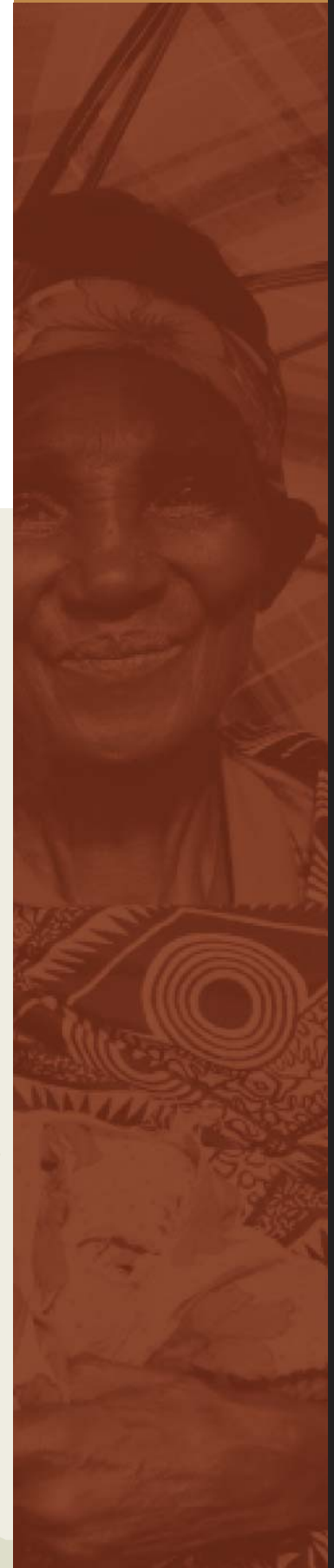
► **Ugandan Land Sector Analysis:** RDI led a team, composed primarily of Ugandan lawyers, in fieldwork, monitoring, and evaluation with two goals: (1) to determine how Ugandan land and agricultural reform has affected women's and orphan's rights and access to land and housing; and (2) to provide recommendations and interventions to strengthen those rights.

► **Ford Foundation Project to Strengthen Women's Rights in China:** In cooperation with the All China Women's Federation Rural Policy Research Center in Beijing, RDI conducted research and issued a report on legislative reforms to strengthen women's land rights.

► **Women's Customary Rights in Kyrgyzstan:** RDI led a team of legal and social sciences researchers in rural Kyrgyzstan to determine how local institutions enforce customary laws and if this practice precludes women from exercising their rights to land and other assets.



WOMEN AND LAND



RDI