

PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITABLE GENDER INCLUSION IN LAND ADMINISTRATION: FIG GUIDELINES ON WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND

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ABSTRACT

Managing land tenure arrangements is central question in development projects and programmes aimed at improving the livelihood of rural and urban populations in developing nations. Land tenure affect agricultural production, long term food security, economic livelihoods, and other basic needs. It is an essential element in achieving truly sustainable development. Access to land is a means by which resources and benefits of those resources are distributed within society, whether they be adequate shelter, municipal services, or decision-making powers.

The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness among surveyors of some of the critical issues that threaten women's access to and benefits from land. The paper emphasizes the significant role of the surveying community in the field of land administration and therefore their obligations in protecting and enhancing the rights of all stakeholders, including women. The paper also introduces draft guidelines to assist project managers, surveyors, and others in ensuring that development projects are gender-inclusive and that their real objectives are truly met.

We begin with a working definition of what access to land and security of title mean to women and men in rural and urban settings. Recent changes that have been affecting the relationship between women and land are examined together with what are (and can be) the outcomes with and without appropriate actions. A summary of key indicators that can be used by surveyors, project managers, and others to evaluate and monitor women's access to land are also presented.

We then outline recommended guidelines for land administration projects highlighting the importance of (i) land administration procedures that equally serve all segments of the population; (ii) promoting opportunities that would ease women's access to information relevant to their property rights; (iii) developing a better understanding of the obstacles preventing women's active participation and employing the tools necessary to overcome these obstacles; and (iv) working with local communities.

We conclude that, by providing secure and effective access to land for women, land administration can benefit families, communities, and nations through, for example: increased economic opportunities; increased investment in land and food production; increased access to housing and services, improved family security during economic and social transitions; and better land stewardship.

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