

# Information poverty blocks women's access to land justice

imited access to information about land rights continues to prevent many women from claiming and protecting the land they depend on for their livelihoods.

According to the Uganda National Land Information System (June, 2023 data), women own only 26 percent of registered land. This gap is not just an issue of inequality, it is a serious development challenge. When women lack secure tenure, they cannot use land as collateral to access credit, they hesitate to invest in long term farming and they are often excluded from household decision making. The result is lower food productivity, weaker family stability and slower national economic growth.

Uganda has made significant strides in creating legal frameworks that protect women's rights to land and property. However, a law that is unknown is a law that cannot protect.

When women are unaware of the rights they possess or the procedures required to defend those rights, legal protections remain largely theoretical.

In practice, however, we witness widows frequently evicted from their homes after the death of their spouse and daughters excluded from inheritance. In most cases, the issue is not only the deeply entrenched social norms and discrimination but rather lack of clear information about the rights that women and girls can legitimately claim.

Through community legal literacy sessions, training grassroots women as peer educators, radio programs reaching rural communities and dialogues with local and cultural leaders, it is possible to help transform attitudes and practices around land.

Justice is not only about laws and institutions but rather it begins with information and knowledge. When women know their rights, they are empowered to negotiate within households and engage confidently with local leaders. Access to information not only strengthens their agency but also allows them to participate effectively in trade and markets by securing fair prices, reducing reliance on middlemen and increasing household income. Beyond economics, informed women contribute to harmony at home fostering stronger families, cohesive communities and ultimately a more peaceful and prosperous nation.

Beyond justice and human rights, women's secure access to land is critical for development. Research by the Food and Agriculture Organisation shows that if women had equal access to productive resources like land, farm yields could increase by 20 to 30 percent, potentially reducing hunger for up to 150 million people worldwide. In Uganda, investing in women's land rights is, therefore, not charity but a smart economic policy.

As Uganda celebrates milestones in women's empowerment, real progress requires sustained investment in legal empowerment and information systems that make rights understandable, usable and actionable. Justice is not realized when a case file is closed in a court, it is realized when a woman in a rural Uganda can grow food on land that she knows and understands is legally recognised, socially respected and permanently protected.

Bridging the information gap about women's rights is not just about fairness, it is about empowering women, strengthening families, communities and advancing national development.

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Land Rights

For example, despite legal protections regarding spousal consent before any transactions involving family land can take place, many women are unaware that such a protection exists.

As a result, family land is sometimes sold or mortgaged without their knowledge. Similarly, the law recognises Matrimonial Rights, including protection of the family home, as well as succession equality, which provides for fair distribution of property for both daughters and sons to their inheritance.

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