

**KNOW-HOW**  
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Learning from Failure  
*IN DETAIL*

# Poor Participation of Women in Public Debates on Land Rights



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AUSTRIAN ORGANISATION  
FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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## List of Abbreviations

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LARRRI/HAKIARDHI	Land Rights Research and Resources Institute
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## 1. General Information

The organisation Land Rights Research and Resources Institute (LARRRI/HAKIARDHI) is located in Daressalaam, Tanzania. The Institute envisages a socially just and equitable land tenure system in which all groups in the society, and especially the rural based small producers, are guaranteed security of tenure, access to land, ownership and other interests in land (HAKIARDHI, n.d.).

The institute was founded in 1994 and registered as a non-governmental non-profit organisation. It was established out of the need to generate and sustain a public debate and participation, particularly in villages with issues of land tenure. Thus, HAKIARDHI's mission is to promote and ensure the rights to land of about eighty percent of the rural based communities who are mainly small land holders and producers (HAKIARDHI, n.d.).

This document presents the experience of the "poor participation of women in public debates on land rights". This experience took place during public debates on land rights, governance and natural resources conducted on September 2017. The experience was made in 30 villages selected for programme intervention in the region of Morogoro, Tanzania.



Figure 1 Location of the experience

This experience could be relevant for other organisations to realise the importance of gender issues and customs and traditions. These topics should be carefully addressed as sometimes may hinder the participation of women in a project. Moreover, there should be deliberate interventions to get women attend to and participate in public debates so that the entire community understands their demands and rights in access and ownership of resources like land.



## 2. Context of the Experience

Due to the land problems confronted by small-scale producers in Tanzania, HAKIARDHI started implementing the programme called "land rights, governance and natural resources management" in two Districts, namely Morogoro and Kilindi. One of its activities is raising awareness by training villagers on land laws and related natural resources laws through public debates.

As land problems affect every small-scale producer in the country regardless of gender, age and status, each of them should have an equal chance to participate in the training and awareness rising sessions on land laws. Such problems include land conflicts, allocation of chunks of land to investors without enough land for the villagers and violation of land rights among women and other marginalized groups.

Public debates bring together all men and women over 18 years old in the so called Village Assembly meeting. The idea is to bring all the villagers together and provide a forum for them to ask their questions and get clarification on land laws, particularly Village Land Act number 5 of 1999, Land Use Planning Act number 6 of 2007, Land Conflicts Resolution Act number 2 of 2002 and other relevant laws. However, in the course of the implementation, women were lagging behind and so their issues and expectations in the topic were not addressed.



## 3. Main Characteristics of the Experience

The poor participation of women in these public debates on land rights was first noted during the mobilization of villagers of Morogoro to attend the village assembly meeting. Here, it was perceived that women were not interested in attending those public debates. Some of the women started to raise their concerns about the fact that they do not attend the debates because men do not respect their views, but promised to participate in the upcoming one. However, on the day of the public debate, the few women who attended did not participate and left the men ask the questions.

It was very fortunate that in Bamba Village Jennifer Okusia (Senior Programme Officer in

East Africa) attended one of the debates during her field visit and observed how women were side lined without taking an active role in the discussion.

The reason for it seems to be the orientation of customs and traditions which limit women to speak in front of men.



#### 4. Stakeholders and Partners – Roles and Responsibilities

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The parties involved in this experience are the Institute and Village Leaders. The Institute was involved in the planning and facilitation of the public debates in the villages. On the other hand, Village Leaders were involved in the mobilization of the villagers to attend and participate in the public debates.



#### 5. Reason and Impact of the Negative Experience/Failure

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Some reasons for this failure were:

- During the planning issues of customs and traditions as blocking stones for women to attend the public debates were not deeply analysed.
- The fact that the demand for separate training sessions with women before bringing them in public debates was not identified prior to public debates.
- Public debates took place in the evening which was not favourable for women who had to return home early to start preparing dinner for their families.

As a consequence, women did not participate in public debates as expected. Besides, the message intended to be delivered to women in the realization of their rights to land was not well captured by many women. Thus, women are yet to stand for themselves in order to advocate their rights to land and property.



#### 7. Bibliography

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HAKIARDHI. (n.d.). Retrieved January 17, 2018, from <http://hakiardhi.org>

#### 6. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

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Key messages and lessons learned from the experience include the following:

- There should be an analysis of the relationship between customs and traditions and statutory provisions prior to the implementation of the programme, particularly in rural areas.
- The need to plan separate capacity building and awareness rising sessions for discriminate and marginalized groups such as women, disabled people etc.
- Study new methodology which will convince and bring together both men and women to discuss land rights issues, as most of land problems (such as land conflicts, land scarcity, food insecurity etc.) affect both of them.

Through this experience we have learned that women are the most affected group of land rights challenges. Particularly significant is the denial to women of access, ownership, inheritance and transfer of land. Thus, the failure to resolve women issues in land rights would mean actual failure of a substantial part of the intervention.

To address the challenge, mobilization strategies have to be improved to convince more women to attend public debates. For that purpose, one important factor is to start the debates at a convenient time which does not interfere with the domestic tasks of women. Another measure that has been taken is to start using Land Rights Monitors to raise awareness among women on their need to participate in every discussion on land and other natural resources, so that their issues are heard and considered in planning and budgeting of the government and other institutions. Besides, we started fundraising and planning separate sessions for women awareness rising before upcoming public debates.