

Securing women's right to communal land through dialogue and advocacy: experiences from East and West Africa

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19. Entwicklungspolitische Hochschulwochen, Salzburg, 20th November 2023

Hosted by FB Politikwissenschaft und Soziologie, Arts and Performances, Gender, Univ.-Prof.in Zoe Lefkofridi & Südwind Salzburg, Anita Rötzer



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Tanzania © Lemke



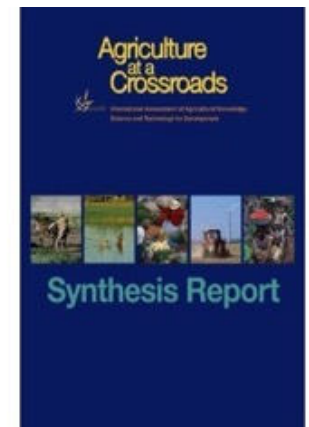
Tanzania © Pastoral Women Council

Key challenges

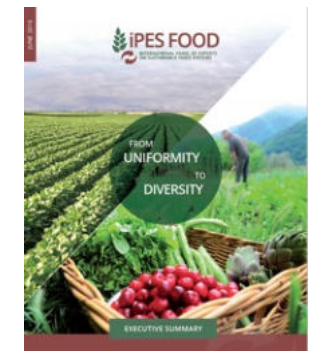
- Climate crisis, increasing competition about natural resources, land grabbing
- Violent conflicts, migration, displacement/evictions
- Current food systems fail to address hunger and encourage diets that lead to overweight/obesity
- Power of transnational corporations (food systems)
- Root causes of hunger: structural inequality, lack of access to resources
- Smallholder farmers, fisher folk, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth

We need

- radical transformation of our food systems
- global solidarity



IAASTD 2009



IPES-Food 2016

See also Whitmee *et al.* 2015; HLPE 2016 & 2017; GloPan 2016a; Haddad *et al.* 2016; FAO 2017 *The future of food and agriculture*; *EAT Lancet Commission Report 2019*; PIK 2022

Agenda 2030 - Sustainable Development Goals



<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

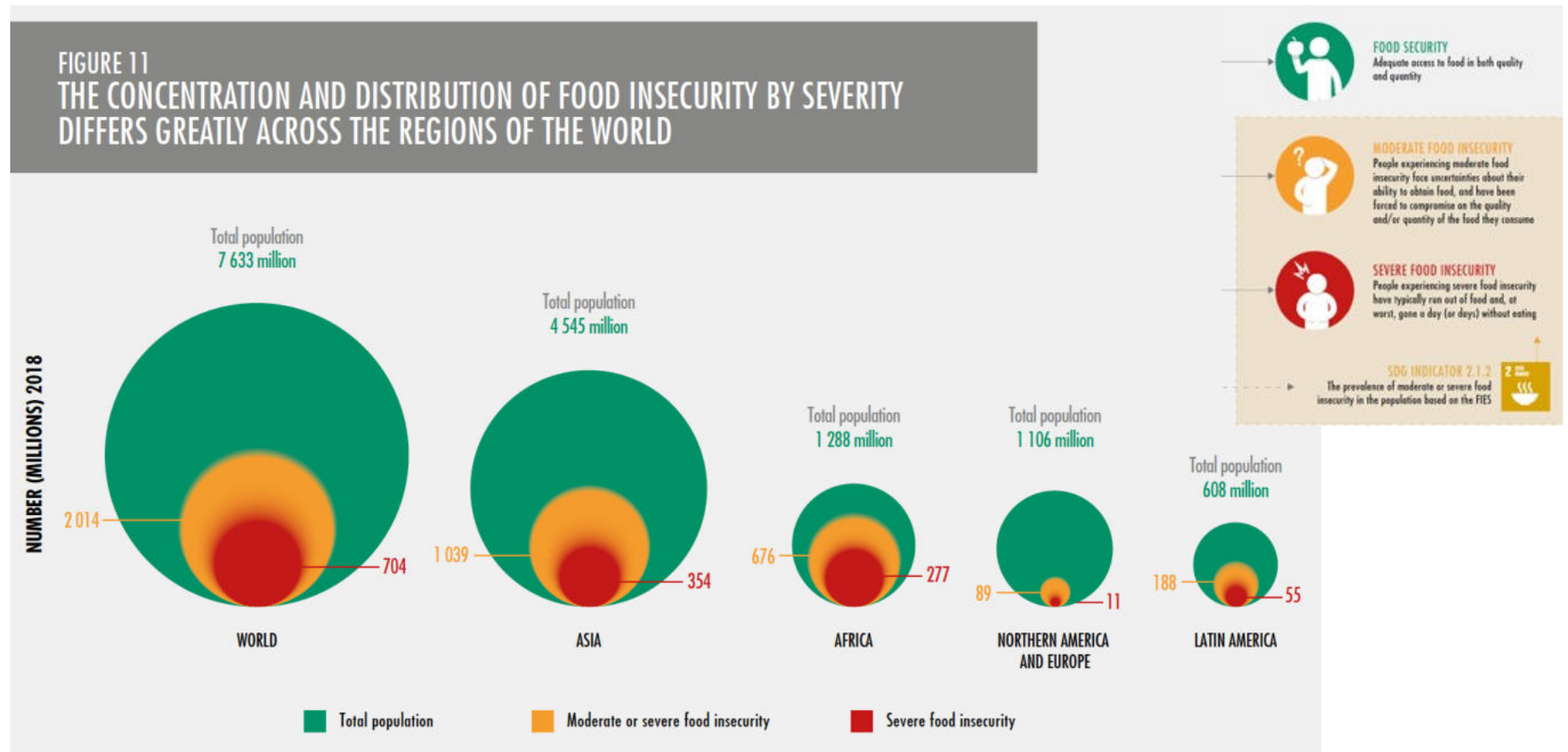
SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture (8 targets)

2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure **access** by all people ... to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

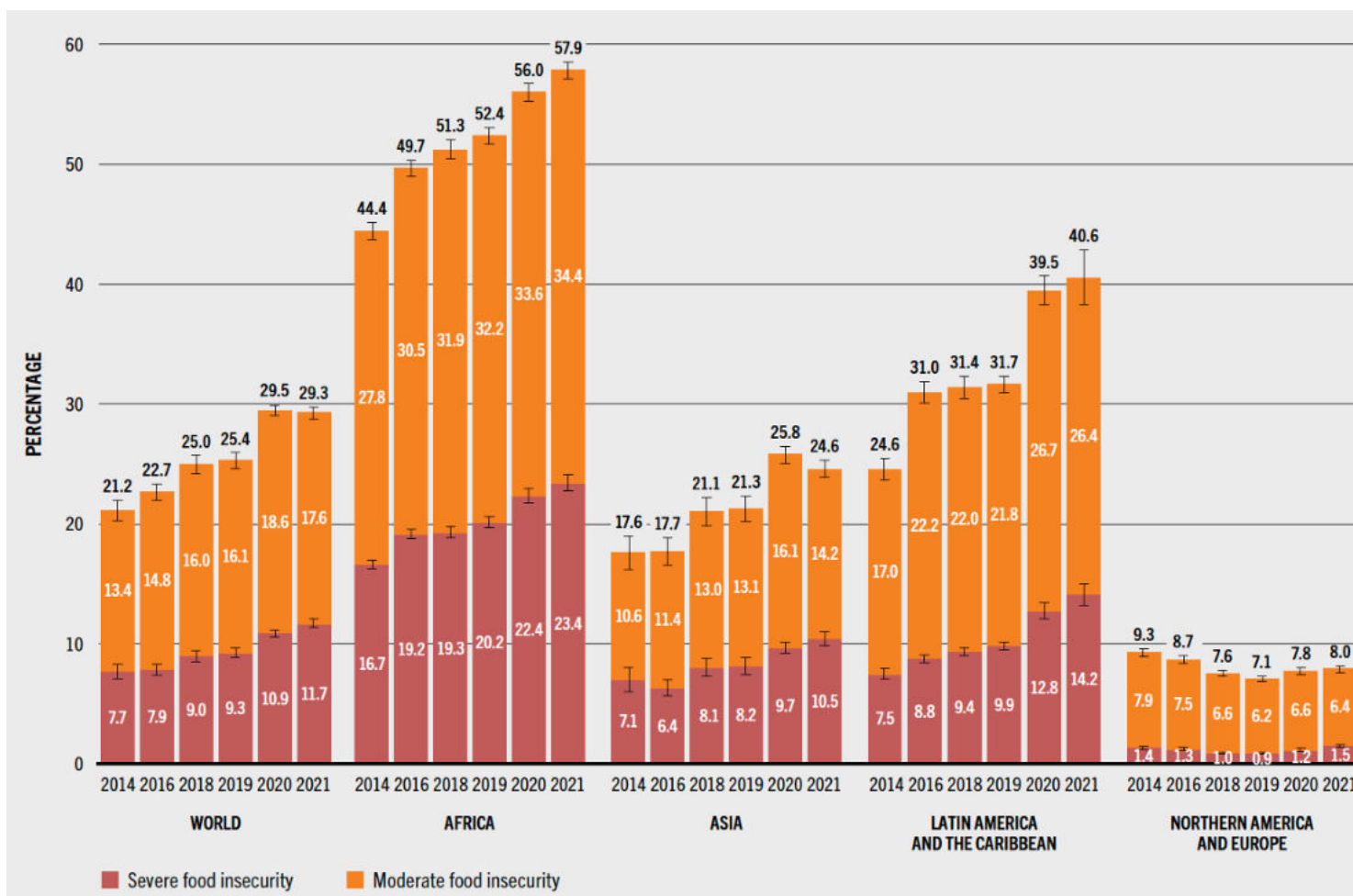
2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of **small-scale food producers**, in particular **women**, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through **secure and equal access to land**.

Right to Food and Food Sovereignty not mentioned

The global situation: Number of hungry on the rise since 2015: > 800 million - projected in 2030: > 670 million



FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2019. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019*, p. 5



FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2022. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*

Food Sovereignty

“[...] the **right** of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through **ecologically sound and sustainable** methods, and their **right to define their own food and agriculture systems** [...] prioritises **local and national** economies and markets [...] and] implies **new social relations** free of oppression and inequality **between men and women**, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations”

<http://www.foodsovereignty.org/FOOTER/Highlights.aspx>.



Women for food sovereignty



- Peasant women key in the struggle to defend peasant land and territory
- Women often on front lines in cases of land grabbing/evictions
- Women central to La Via Campesina's definition of food sovereignty, grounding it in production of healthy food for a peasant family's own consumption
- Women advocate to stop use of dangerous pesticides and lead agroecological transformation of peasant family farming.

<https://viacampesina.org/en/keeping-the-struggles-of-peasant-women-alive/>

*“First we need to secure communal land,
then we will deal with women”*

Female land activist, Bamako, Mali, June 2018

Structural discrimination of women

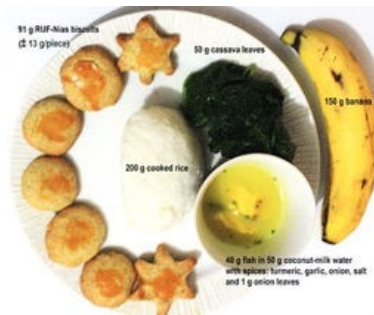
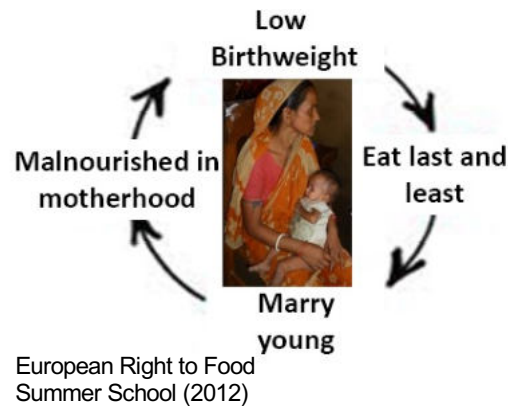
Direct/structural violence against women/girls: often hidden, barrier to women's right to adequate food > reproductive rights, self-determination, access to productive resources,...

Narrow focus on women as mothers; „medicalization“ of food instead of supporting food-based systems and local, sustainable strategies

Women portrayed as victims, “vulnerable” – disregarding their strength; not integrating men/boys

‘Empowerment’ not at the cost of women; unpaid care work

Bellows, Valente, Lemke, Nunez BdL (Eds) 2016



Purwestri et al. 2012



BfL/Agroscope, Switzerland



Ivory Coast © Kiefer

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Living in Rural Areas (UNDROP)

New human rights, advanced by peasant organizations, adopted **Dec 2018**

- Less individualistic, less statist, less anthropocentric, less western;
- Emphasizes the collective, rebalances rights of humans and nature;
- Pushes for people-centered, bottom-up, anticapitalistic, multicultural understanding of rights.

https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/73/L.30&Lang=E

See Claeys, P.: “The creation of New Human Rights by Transnational Peasant Movements”, Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University, 21st June 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfgwWXPal1g>

Video: Towards a Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-d4zHxVREUQ>



https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/73/L.30&Lang=E

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Living in Rural Areas (UNDROP)

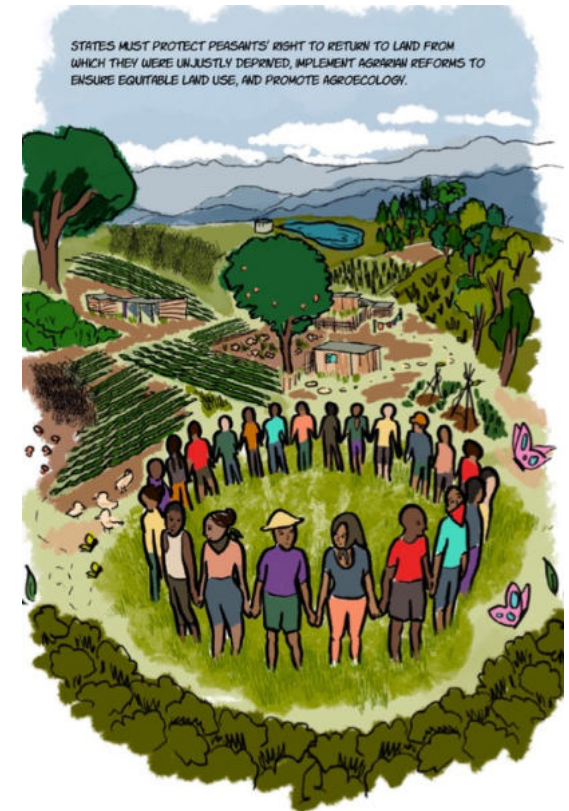
- Right to Land
- Right to Seeds
- Right to Food Sovereignty

AS COLLECTIVE RIGHTS

- Strengthening communities against land grabbing and privatization, establishing and protecting resilient food systems
- Individual land titles not the (only) solution

(Claeys, 2017; Claeys & Edelman 2019)

- **Support UNDROP; link to existing networks/initiatives**



https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/73/L.30&Lang=E

Governing natural resources for food sovereignty



11th Hour Project

The Schmidt Family Foundation

Exploratory research: initial visits, co-developing ideas; followed by participatory workshop

West Africa: Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, Benin; co-organized with *Institut de recherche et promotion des alternatives en développement (IRPAD)*, Mamadou Goïta, 2018

East Africa: Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya; co-organized with *Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)*, 2019



© Lemke, Uganda



Research Centre
Agroecology, Water
and Resilience

Coventry
University



AFSA

ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

Key findings

Achievements regarding Communal Land Rights

- Growing recognition of CLR in the law; multi-actor platforms for dialogue with governments
- Social movement mobilizations (West Africa), progressive human rights lawyers (East Africa)

Challenges regarding Communal Land Rights

- Commercialization (large-scale land deals), privatization of land, elite capture
- Individual titling to protect tenure security – women may lose land
- Power dynamics and marginalization - women and youth largely excluded from communal land governance - women gain access to land through men - “family land grabbing” (IIED 2006; Krantz 2015; Scalise 2012)
- **Gender equality** not implemented in practice - national vs. customary law (Doss and Meinzen-Dick 2018)

Key findings

- UNDROP reaffirms:
 - Women's equality, but fails to recognize women's equal rights to inherit land;
 - Non-discrimination, but does not grant women equal tenure rights in agrarian reform or in the allocation of communal land (Claeys and Martignoni, 2021)
- Food Sovereignty actors advocate for legal recognition of communal land rights, but fail to prioritize women's rights within communal land systems
 - **Research gap in relation to women and communal land**

Women's Right to Communal Land

Collaborative Action Research

Phase I, 2020-2022

Priscilla Claeys, Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University

Stefanie Lemke, IDR, BOKU

Research Centre
Agroecology, Water
and Resilience



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IDR
Institute of
Development
Research



Mali

Guinea



Kenya

Tanzania



Women's Right to Communal Land - Aims

- Collectively map & document achievements, challenges and opportunities regarding WCLR (ownership & inheritance rights, education & training, governance)
- Draw lessons & scale up efforts to advance women's participation in CLR governance
- Inclusive of diverse groups of women, men, youth – intersectional approach (*older/younger women/men; widows; single/divorced women;...*), intergenerational dialogues, community cohesion



Tanzania © Pastoral Women Council



Kenya © Kenyan Peasants League



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Areas of work and research activities



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SUPPORT

partner organisations:

- Gender-transformative
- Research capacity (PAR)
- Peer-to-peer learning (4 org.)
- Co-design the process
- Organisational development



Tanzania © Pastoral Women Council

RESEARCH :

- Challenges with WCLR
- Success stories, role models
- Changes in WCLR
- Legal mobilisations
- Participatory methodologies
- Co-analyse data

ACTION:

- information, training materials
- Support women and youth
- Legal and policy advocacy
- Public interest litigation, legal redress
- Develop networks
- Communicate (video, audio, briefs)
- AFSA women voice, LVC, IPC



Kenya © Kenyan Peasants League

DIALOGUES:

- At HH level
- Between men and women
- Between generations
- Among men
- Among women
- Between village and local government
- Within partner organisations



Kenya © Kenyan Peasants League

Selected findings, Phase I

Gender-based discrimination and violence in all 4 partner countries

- Women urgently need support with child care/household chores
- Men have to come forward in support of women's rights to land and other resources
- Role of mother-in-law and other powerful household members: intersectional lens
- Inheritance – still taboo - insecure access to land; girls cannot inherit land (customary law)
- Need for evidence-based and gender-disaggregated data
- Rights have to be implemented to be meaningful - customary vs. statutory law

Aims Phase II:

- Women's participation in communal land management structures (Kenya and Tanzania)
- Securing access to land for women and role of women collectives (Guinea and Mali)

Women's Right to Communal Land

International Learning Exchange, Kenya, 4.-16.10.2022
(Research phase II, 03/2022-09/2023)



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Women's Right to Communal Land

Community dialogues, Kenya



© Lemke, Kenya



Key findings, Phase II

- Importance of protecting and recognizing communal ownership – while development actors promote land markets, land titling and individual land ownership to ensure gender equality;
- Boosting participation of women and youth in communal land governance is key to promoting women's right to land in the long term;
- Ensuring that women fully participate, putting an end to gender-based violence (GBV) - violence generates fear, trauma and inhibits participation;
- Women's right to own and inherit land continues to be violated, gender-based discrimination very high when it comes to land succession;
- Women's access to land in communal land systems has to be secured – individual ownership is not necessarily best option.
- Women are not isolated from but are pillars of their communities - efforts to secure women's access to land more successful if they support **community cohesion**.

Women's Right to Communal Land

International Learning Exchange, Tanzania, 23.10.-05.11.2023
(Research phase III, 10/2023-03/2025)



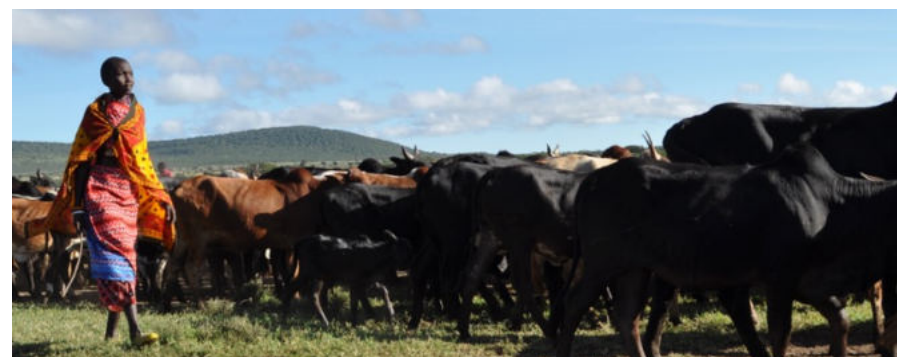
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Pastoral Women's Council, Tanzania



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- Founded **1997** by 9 Maasai women
- 90 villages, 3 districts: training, support, advocacy – “*women are often leading the struggle for land rights*”
- More women speak in public; more seats in village government councils; cooperation with male customary leadership institutions; women-led customary leadership institutions *Sorensen 2013; interview Ruth Kihui, PWC, 13 Nov 2019*



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LIVESTOCK AND PEOPLE

The cow represents the pastoral lifestyle of the Maasai inhabitants. The NCA is a conservation area, not a national park. People can live here if their way of life does not damage other natural resources of the area. We are responsible for protecting the interests of the local people and for helping their communities to develop.

© Lemke

Frankfurter Rundschau, 27.05.2023, <https://www.fr.de/wirtschaft/wie-tiere-vertrieben-masai-menschenrechte-92305333.html>

Spiegel, 24.05.2023, <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/wie-masai-in-tansania-fuer-arabische-grosswildjaeger-weichen-muessen-a-d3e5f264-f318-4607-8434-79ffade8f4f1>

Conclusion

- Participation of women in governance of land key for sustainable development
- Requires broad transformation of societal structures
- Need for evidence-based and gender-disaggregated data
- Co-conceptualise research with locally-based academic and non-academic partners
- Gain insights into underlying (often hidden) social dynamics and power relations
- Requires **time, trust, empathy, skills**
- Support local organisations' work on gender mainstreaming and securing women's land rights (<https://landportal.org/debates/2020/land-rights-implications-covid-19>)

*“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin?
In small places, close to home – so close and so
small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the
world. Yet they are the world of the individual
person. Unless these rights have meaning there,
they have little meaning anywhere.”*

*Eleanor Roosevelt at presentation of “IN YOUR HANDS: A Guide for
Community Action for the Tenth Anniversary of the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights.” 1958*

Selected Outputs



Absent Voices: Women and Youth in Communal Land Governance. Reflections on Methods and Process from Exploratory Research in West and East Africa

by Stefanie Lemke and Priscilla Claeys

2020, *Land*, 9(8)

<https://www.mdpi.com/2073-445X/9/8/266/html>

Research Topic
Women's Communal Land Rights

Editorial: Women's Right to Communal Land
Priscilla Claeys, Stefanie Lemke and Juana Camacho

Editorial
Accepted on 07 March 2022
Front. Sustain. Food Syst. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2022.877545

<https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/15848/womens-communal-land-rights#overview>



Video: English & French
<https://tinyurl.com/y46p7xsv>



Partizipative Aktionsforschung: Women's Communal Land Rights

