

Key facts and figures on women's land rights

The disproportionate impact of desertification, land degradation and drought on women

- Women make up almost half of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, but their production is limited by barriers to finance and land rights.¹
- Women produce 60 to 80 per cent of the food grown in developing regions affected by desertification, land degradation and drought.²
- Women own less than 15 per cent of the world's agricultural land, account for 21% of all house owners and hold 24 per cent of all management positions.³
- Droughts increase the time necessary to collect water, increasing the burden of labour by extension. Globally women spend a collective 200 million hours every day collecting water.⁴
- In 102 countries, women are denied land rights under customary, religious, or traditional laws and practices.⁵ In 34 countries, daughters do not have equal inheritance rights.⁶ The same is true of widows in 35 countries.⁷
- By 2015, only 12 per cent of 881 national environmental ministries across 193 countries were led by women.⁸
- 90 per cent of the rural land in Sub-Saharan Africa is undocumented. And women's land and property rights are least likely to be documented.⁹

The benefits of increasing women's land rights

- If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30 per cent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5–4 per cent, which in turn could reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 per cent.¹⁰
- Children whose mothers own land are up to 33 per cent less likely to be severely underweight,¹¹ and children in households where women own land are up to 10 per cent less likely to be sick.
- Families where women own more land devote more of their budget to education.¹²
- Women who own land are up to 8 times less likely to experience domestic violence.¹³



The benefits of increasing women's land rights

- Women in Sierra Leone can finally own land under the Customary Land Rights Act since January 2023. The new law puts an end to six decades of customary laws that prevented women from owning land.¹⁴
- In Ethiopia, a household land certification program led to a 44 per cent increase in the likelihood of a woman making the decision which crops to grow on lands under her control.¹⁵
- In India, women farmers have developed a 100 per cent women-driven irrigation system, Bhungroo, that relies on rainwater harvesting. The system serves more than 18,000 impoverished farmers with over 96,000 dependent family members.¹⁶
- In Jordan, rangeland management is an effective means to restore severely degraded land by keeping areas undisturbed over a period of time. This has customarily excluded women from rangeland management, but due to project requirements, women received rights to rangeland and 40 per cent of the administrative seats within the land management committee.¹⁷



The benefits of increasing women's land rights

- In **Burundi**, a \$30 million Burundi Landscape Restoration and Resilience Project helped narrow the gender gap in women's land ownership. Its land certification process allowed families to register land under the name of both spouses. To date, over **93,000 certificates have been issued**, signifying a huge leap forward in women's right to manage land.¹⁸
- In **Rwanda**, joint-titles for married couples were introduced in 2006. Requiring women to make up at least 30 per cent of all land committees, in-person attendance for joint-land registration, and written consent from both spouses for land transactions. Registered owners were over two times more likely to invest in soil conservation than unregistered owners, with women-headed households 19 per cent more likely when compared to 10 percent of men.¹⁹
- In **Lao PDR**, women-led rice straw composting helped revive degraded land to maximise agricultural outputs. Currently, villages are able to cultivate three crops per year on newly fertile land, which generates additional income for each household.²⁰
- With stronger land rights, women's participation in household decisions increases. In **Nepal**, **37 per cent of women who own land also made important household decisions**, compared to 20 per cent of women who did not own land.^{21,22}

Sources:

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- ³ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/6498ea10-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/6498ea10-en>
- ⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-collecting-water-often-colossal-waste-time-women-and-girls>
- ⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/brief/study-differentiated-impacts-desertification-land-degradation-and-drought-women-and>
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- ¹² <https://www.land-links.org/issue-brief/fact-sheet-land-tenure-womens-empowerment/>
- ¹³ <https://www.habitat.org/multimedia/shelter-report-2016/>
- ¹⁴ <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/sie212374.pdf>
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- ¹⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/11/28/burundi-certifying-land-ownership-protects-the-landscape-and-women-as-well>
- ¹⁹ http://catalogue.unccd.int/1222_UNCCD_gender_briefing_note.pdf
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- ²¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3657746/>
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