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# Enhancing Women's Access to Land through Land Restoration Policies and Programs

Iyenemi Ibimina Kakulu (Nigeria)

Professor of Land Management and Valuation  
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Senior Expert on Land Restoration Education  
UNCCD G20 GLI



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## Background

- Historically, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (1946), in 1947, declared as one of its guiding principles, to raise the status of women, irrespective of nationality, race, language or religion, to equality with men in all fields of human enterprise, and to eliminate all discrimination against women in the provisions of statutory law, in legal maxims or rules, or in interpretation of customary law.
- The Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In Goal 5, Target 5A, the international community agreed to undertake reforms to give women *equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property*, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.



## Land Degradation and Restoration

### Land Degradation

- Land degradation is characterized by a general decline or loss of biodiversity and/or ecosystem functions.
- It includes the many processes that drive the decline or loss in biodiversity, ecosystem function or services.
- Healthy soils support vegetation growth that regulates local climate, enhances the ability of rainfall to recharge groundwater , etc.
- If terrestrial ecosystems continue to be degraded the quality of life in human settlements whether in urban or rural settings will be compromised.



## Land Degradation and Restoration

### Land Restoration

- At the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) (COP) in 2016, the parties agreed on short-term action plans in Ecosystem restoration.
- The key activities of the short-term action plan include the assessment of opportunities for restoration by determining the extents, type, degree and location of degraded lands.
- These are roles that can be filled by surveying and land management professionals, who should be interested.
- There are however challenges of inclusivity in land restoration emanating from women's limited access to land historically.



## Women's Access to Land for Economic Empowerment

- Historically, when compared with men, women have had limited access to land in various societies.
- In a land restoration context, the chance that women would be involved in decision-making for upcoming restoration projects, design or implementation is quite slim because due to prevailing stereotypes, they might not own land.
- Where historical land ownership of degraded lands was dominated by men, this might perpetuate women's exclusion from the economic empowerment opportunities that land restoration projects might have to offer.



## Involving Women as Stakeholders in Land Restoration

- A key component of land restoration is the engagement of stakeholders in decision-making about the project. Top on the list of critical stakeholders are the original land owners.
- Land tenure and land restoration are closely linked, with actions in one area often affecting the other. This interrelationship is known as the tenure-restoration nexus.
- Some of these programs and projects by design or during implementation may or may not be inclusive or offer equal opportunity and should be addressed.
- Decision-making for restoration shapes the process and the chances of inclusivity and equal opportunity may exclude those who do not have a seat in decision-making.

## Scenario-Setting for Land Redistribution

Land redistribution may be a condition for or outcome of land restoration. A number of scenarios are suggested.

- Scenario 1 - Establishing Land Redistribution Banks
- Scenario 2 - Policy Formulation for Gender Equality
- Scenario 3 - Capacity Development for Economic Empowerment
- Scenario 4 - Program Development to Halt Degradation

## Scenario-Setting for Land Redistribution – Land Redistribution Banks

- Identify degraded lands with potential for a more productive post-restoration use and the financial capabilities of original owners to fund the restoration.
- Identify funding sources and negotiate terms that a fraction of the land can be redeemed by funding agencies and domiciled in a land redistribution bank.
- Women can be granted access to purchase such lands.

## Scenario-Setting for Land Redistribution – Policy Formulation

- Gender-responsive policy and legal frameworks are essential to advancing women's rights to land. To achieve gender equality in land restoration, land use policies should explicitly satisfy the requirements that grant women comparable access to land irrespective of their marital status.
- Women and men should have equal access to land ownership and control. Land policies should therefore be Gender inclusive land use policies.
- These can address gender-based constraints that women or men face that are a result of their gender and ensure that restoration projects are inclusive.

## Scenario-Setting for Land Redistribution – Capacity Development

- Capacity development can prepare women to take on challenges in land restoration.
- UNCCD G20 Global Land Initiative is developing capacity, especially of women to recognize the danger of unchecked land degradation and equip them with some basic understanding of the urgency to act.
- Enhanced capacity when presented with an opportunity will lead to economic empowerment of women.

## Scenario-Setting for Land Redistribution – Program Development

- Gender integration is part of the global strategy of the United Nations for promoting gender equality.
- The process by which gender perspectives may be integrated into policies, programmes and projects begins with conducting a gender analysis and using the data and information generated by the analysis to initiate policy reforms.
- Programs designed to halt land degradation such as tree planting, agro-forestry and others can be initiated by governments.
- Women participation in these programs can provide economic empowerment.

# The most relevant SDGs related to the presentation and theme of this session

1st relevant SDG



2nd relevant SDG



3rd relevant SDG



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