

CSD-16 Women's Major Group statement  
Land session May 7, 2008

We would like to make a statement about women's rights to land and buildings. Although women are heavily involved in agricultural production, they do not have legal control over the land they use. Globally women own less than 5% of the land. However, we know that providing women with independent land rights and control enhances food security and economic opportunities.

Although on paper, governments give legal rights to women, in practice women do not have their names on the land documents. Increased migration by men results in more households headed by the women. However, these women can not access credit and other government schemes, and are often not identified as farmers.

Civil and customary laws sometimes conflict with each other. Customary law can be seen as flexible and open to different interpretations. These interpretations tend to favour men because most public spaces are controlled by men. The women do not own and manage spaces as part of urban and rural development plans. When women migrate they need safe spaces, such as migration centres, market places and hostels. Research by the UN HABITATS Global Land Tool Network shows that a range of flexible tenure options for women are more useful in urban areas than individual titling alone. This will enhance women's security of tenure. A range of gender-sensitive land tools are needed to implement land policies.

We would like to ask governments how they are going to allocate more resources to educate women to better understand their legal rights, resulting in greater land ownership by women.

Secondly, how you are going to ensure the allocation of spaces for women in your development plans, both in urban and rural areas? And finally, how are you going to sensitize policy makers about the effect of insufficient land rights to women and act on it?

Meena Bilgi – CWLR (Consult for Women and Land Rights)  
WOCAN (Women organising for change in Agriculture and Natural resources  
Management)  
Ineke Gijsbers – Bahá'í International Community  
Sabina Mensah – GRATIS Foundation