Country: Uganda
Principal Organisation: UCOBAC

ABSTRACT

Women and girls struggle to own or inherit land in Uganda because restrictive customary practices continue to override statutory law in land rights matters. Inconsistencies in some existing laws further compound the implementation gap, retarding gender-responsive land rights programming. The Uganda Community Based Association for Women & Children Welfare's (UCOBAC) initiative aims to promote advocacy by grassroots and women. UCOBAC empowers women in advocacy to influence policy review, formulation, and implementation to promote women's land rights and accelerate progress towards advancing economic rights and justice.

ILC COMMITMENTS

- Secure Tenure Rights
- Equal Land Rights for Women
COMPETENCIES

AREAS
RURAL LAND GOVERNANCE
WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS AND GENDER JUSTICE

SKILLS
ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING
LAND POLICY AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

BACKGROUND

Despite the importance of land as an asset for sustaining livelihoods and meeting global, regional and national commitments for protecting equal land rights, women often have weaker land rights than men. The power imbalance between men and women in patriarchal societies in Uganda causes discrimination against women and restricts women's rights to access, use, inherit, control and own land.

THE CHALLENGE

Although the Ugandan Constitution and the Land Act of 1998 guarantee gender equality in land rights, other laws affecting property ownership such as family, marriage and succession laws contradict the constitutional equality clause. By denying women equal rights to marital property or equal inheritance rights, the property regime undermines women's rights to equality.

OVERCOMING THE Challenge

UCOBAC's grassroots and women-led advocacy project on women's land rights aims to close the implementation gap between laws and practice. Through this process, grassroots women have organised advocacy for policy review, formulation and implementation. They have undergone training on existing national, regional and international instruments such as the African Union Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges, the Kilimanjaro Charter of Demands, SDG land-related targets and indicators. They also received training on land data collection, evidence gathering, land monitoring, policy analysis, lobbying and advocacy.

Grassroots women have collected land data on the status of women's land rights, undertaken land monitoring on land-related SDG targets and indicators and used evidence-based advocacy and multi-stakeholder approaches to influence policy review of the succession and marriage laws and implement the Land Law and constitutional clauses on equality at the national and local levels.

MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

Grassroots women have undertaken capacity building exercises which gave them knowledge on existing land-related legislation and frameworks at national, regional and international levels. As a result, they strengthened their capacities to monitor land-related legal frameworks’ implementation progress at the local level. Through the grassroots women-led land data mapping and monitoring processes, grassroots women have been able to generate information critical for meaningful engagement and hold policymakers and land actors accountable for the glaring implementation gaps in women's land rights. Grassroots women leaders have done critical policy review and given implementation recommendations concerning women’s land rights in the Succession Act. They seek the rectification of any inconsistencies, and the enactment of other laws to advance women's land rights as a pathway to women's economic rights and justice.
MOBILISING RURAL WOMEN FOR ADVOCACY

Rural women tend to be the most vulnerable to violations of their land rights; thus, it is crucial to mobilise grassroots rural women and educate them about their rights to equality under the Constitution and the Land Act. Community land forums provide a platform for engaging with women at the grassroots level.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR RURAL WOMEN TO SAFEGUARD THEIR ACCESS AND CONTROL OVER RESOURCES

Grassroots women participate in training workshops on land rights protected by national statutes and policies, regional and international land-related frameworks, including the Kilimanjaro Charter of Demands and land-related SDG targets and indicators. The women received training in policy analysis, lobbying, advocacy, evidence gathering, community mapping and land monitoring. The women were also assisted in producing and disseminating easy-to-understand materials with key messages on land-related laws, frameworks, and guidelines at the global, regional, and local levels, including the SDG land indicators and targets, the AU guidelines on women and land, the Kilimanjaro Charter of Demands and the Succession Act. Traditional and local government leaders also received reference booklets, banners, posters and policy briefs on gender justice and women’s land rights.

UNDERTAKING EVIDENCE-BASED AND WOMEN-LED MAPPING OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN’S ACCESS, OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OVER LAND

For advocacy purposes, women identify gaps between laws, policies and practices concerning their land rights. They also use tools such as the Gender Evaluation Criteria (GEC) developed by GLTN to monitor and evaluate implementation and compliance to national, regional and international guidelines for the advancement of women’s land rights.

DEVELOPING AN ADVOCACY STRATEGY

A concise advocacy strategy enables grassroots women’s groups to lobby and advocate for policy review, formulation, and implementation of laws to promote women’s land rights and accelerate economic rights and justice. Building an effective advocacy strategy requires the inclusion of grassroots and women-led stakeholders.

TARGETED ADVOCACY WORK TO INFLUENCE POLICY PROCESSES ON WOMEN’S LAND RIGHTS

Women’s land rights are essential in accelerating economic rights and justice for women. Grassroots engagements through local dialogue platforms and community land policy forums at the community level, and the national land policy forum at the national level build strategic partnerships for collective advocacy action. Advocacy efforts are directed towards policy review and recommendations, policy formulation and implementation, the development of policy position papers, and policy statements.
Advocacy for policy change is challenging because non-governmental organisations do not control the pace at which changes in policies and laws happen. As such, advocacy for policy change requires consistency, persistence, patience, and determination. Additionally, deeply embedded patriarchal views held by most power bearers, in both the formal and informal arena, discriminate against women in land ownership.

Policymakers and land actors need support to transform their biases against women’s land ownership to enact policy changes required to transform communities. Finally, although there are gender-sensitive laws in place, the implementation gap affects communities negatively. Consequently, land actors, local governance and community leaders need financial allocations, training, materials and equipment to implement the legal provisions on the ground. Significant financial resources are required to ensure that non-governmental organisations and grassroots organisations can monitor the implementation of laws at the community level.

1. Mobilising rural women towards a common goal and building their capacities to take action is an effective strategy for grassroots-led advocacy.
2. Rural women-led platforms and processes empower them to bring their plights to light.
3. Collaboration is critical to the success of policy advocacy efforts. Collaborative efforts include partnerships with key stakeholders such as grassroots organisations, women leaders, and formal and informal power-bearers.

FIND OUT MORE

The Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare (UCOBAC)
http://ucobac.org/ucobac/default.aspx
UNITED FOR LAND RIGHTS