



Arab Region Program on good land governance in support to inclusive development, peace and stability

AoC 3: Women, Land and Socio-Economic development

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## **Activity Report**

### **Expert Group Meeting**

**Evidence-based linkages between access to land  
and socio-economic development and empowerment, especially for women in  
the Arab region – (1-2 /2/2021)**

**By: Union of Agriculture Work Committees (UAWC)**

**25/02/2021**



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#### Background:

On the first and second of February, 2021, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) conducted the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) which is part of an Agreement of Cooperation (AOC3: Land, women empowerment and socio-economic development) signed between UN-Habitat/ Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), and the Palestinian based (UAWC) as part of a broader programme on land governance in the Arab region funded by the German BMZ.

Within this Cooperation UAWC focuses on women and land rights and delves into the identification of the impact of land tenure security on the socio-economic status of women in the Arab region. This through adopting three integrated activities, the second of which is conducting this regional EGM, to exchange and expand knowledge about women's land tenure security and women's rights to land and its impact on their socio-economic development.

#### Objectives of the Meeting

This EGM aimed to bring together experts with different professional backgrounds (academic, civil society, government, etc.) and women grassroots, in order to share knowledge and experience and to discuss and compare the state of women's access to and control over land in different countries of the Arab region. This is to identify challenges and to reflect on existing practices and approaches to enhance land tenure security for socio-economic development. It also sought to elaborate the extent to which land tenure security correlate with different aspects of socio-economic and political empowerment, especially of women, especially in conflict- and post-conflict situations. It also examined the priority action that should be undertaken by different land actors to improve women's situation with regards to housing, land and property rights.

The EGM gave the space to the participants to tackle issues including key land governance/ management and tenure security challenges, especially for women in the region/countries through the presentations that were shared over the six sessions of the two days meeting, and the following breakout groups that delved into the highlighted issues in more details. It also helped in identifying the most relevant approaches and tools for improving access to land, especially for women, in the Arab states; and was by far a learning opportunity from existing experiences that highlighted areas of convergence and possible collaboration among stakeholders; and concluded with consolidated priorities for the way forward.

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The results of this event will feed into a broader study conducted by UAWC as part of the partnership with UN-Habitat and GLTN on the evidence-based linkages between access to land and socio-economic development and empowerment, especially for women.

The identified challenges and obstacles that women in the Arab region face in this regard will conclude with a set of recommendations that point out the priorities for actions by the various land actors to enhance women's access to, control over and use of land and land rights in general.

#### Methodology

1. The EGM included panel discussions, during which key related topics were presented and discussed by selected panelists who carried on the discussion.
2. Different discussion groups were formed each day, through which the key topics were discussed more in detail.
3. Outcomes and recommendations of the discussion groups were shared at the end session on each day.
4. The overall facilitation was handled by UAWC staff, while other pre-assigned participant was asked to facilitate the discussions groups

#### Key topics

The EGM was composed of six interrelated and complementary panel discussions on actors and factors related to land tenure and women socio-economic empowerment in the Arab regions as follows:

1. Defining land tenure and women's socio-economic empowerment in the Arab region
2. Overview of women tenure rights in the Arab region: what do we know?
3. The nexus between socio-economic development and access to, control over and use of land for women.
4. Women land rights: sources and barriers.
5. Role of governments in enhancing women's land rights in the Arab region
6. Role of civil society organizations, academia, and individuals in enhancing women's land rights in the Arab region



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## Proceedings of the EGM:

### Day One:

The first day of the EGM started at 10:00 am by welcoming the participants to the event by Mr. Fuad Abu Saif, (UAWC Director) and Ms. Ombretta Tempra (Human Settlements Officer at the regional office of UN-Habitat/Cairo) who gave a quick overview of the EGM, its purposes and desired outputs. Then Ms. Hiba Al-Jibehi (past UAWC employee) gave an introduction of the event and the overall programme. A short film was then screened on “Women accessing land and its impact on their socio-economic development” as an introduction to the Palestinian grassroots women voice with regards to land tenure rights.

### The Introductory Sessions

The Introductory Sessions started as follows:

#### ***Topic 1: Defining land tenure and women’s socio-economic empowerment in the Arab region***

The first presentation focused on defining land tenure and women’s socio-economic empowerment in the Arab region and was presented by: Mr. Rafic Khouri (AUS) which covered women’s land rights in the Arab countries. It specifically covered the following issues: Women’s land rights in the SDGs, Gender Gap in MENA countries, Gender Development Index, Major employment sectors for MENA women: Services and agriculture, Data about women and land in MENA, Data about women and land, Data about urban areas, and Data about women HLP in Palestine and Jordan.

*The panel was followed by a discussion among the panelists regarding the content of the presentation and other relevant comments or contribution which mainly covered the following points:*

It is important to point out that the issue of the unpaid women work whether in the land or in their houses is never represented or covered. The figures Rafic gave were only for women participating in the official economic sector. This means that many women working in land and in their homes is not included in these figures. It will be important if some organization or expert could provide sufficient findings regarding women labor inside and outside the house in one country or more than one country in the Arab region or beyond.



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The other key issue related to the patterns of land ownership which differs from rural to urban areas, and although we do not have clear data about it, but one can assume that women access land ownership in rural areas more through inheritance, while purchase is the key medium for getting land for women in the urban areas. Access to credit is also another factor that plays an important role here, where men have more access to it than women, and those working in the formal sector, definitely have more access than those who do not.

The presentation shows that the setting across MENA makes it more challenging for people in general to access land, and it is more challenging for women specifically. For example, across MENA there are very low levels of registration of land with the highest gender gap, and lowest ranking in terms of equal property ownership and inheritance rights. This has continued for years with no significant growth or improvement in this regard. Hence a meeting like this could help identify reasons for this deterioration and ways to put an end to it.

One of the serious issues focused on is the inadequate up to date data and information in land rights related field which does not help take further informed decisions and actions too. The available data is either obsolete or very limited in terms of covered fields and aspects. You can hardly find quantified data that one can use in discussions and planning to make needed improvements.

Another issue is related to registration which is not also optimal in many if not all Arab counties and it is not disaggregated by gender, which could help significantly in future interventions and targets.

In terms of agriculture, across MENA, there is low tenure security, for many reasons; much of it is that the land in MENA is not subdivided or not registered which makes it more challenging for women to access land. Land registration and tenure security are in general very low across the MENA region, and it is perceived very complicated by the fact that there is very weak land administration there.

It is evident that societies with higher equality scores in terms of land administration tend to have less gender inequality. This is the reason we need to start working on reforming the entire system of land administration and registration and improve it and to study why it is more challenging for women.

It is important to remember that Palestine is a bit different with regards to land tenure due to the ongoing occupation, the existing policies and the capacity to draft proper policies due to the fact the Palestine is not yet a recognized state that can control its economy, policies and natural resources. Women in Palestine suffer more than other sectors from the occupation policies and control over natural resources



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on the one hand, and the social and economic barriers and the control over the market by large scale commerce.

Land represents the essence of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict and there are many challenges that prevent both men and women work in the production process or starting any potential project. However, there are valuable initiatives made by the Palestinian government to encourage and accelerate the process of land registration that supports the economy and enables the development of developmental projects.

Such process was taken seriously by the government as it made many legal and administrative amendments including the separation of the general directorate of land settlement and registry from the Land Authority. As a result of this decision an independent entity is established to accelerate the process of land settlement and registry which affected positively on increased statistics of women land ownership. Land settlement played a key role as well in ensuring women rights because it proves woman ownership to the land, which is the real evidence she needs to start any project she chooses.

It is worth mentioning that laws regarding land tenure are the same for men and women, and that law did not prevent women to own land, and this is the reason the government managed in Palestine through the settlement initiative to increase women ownership to land. Another relevant issue is that we have statistics that show that women ownership to apartments increased significantly because there are now more partnership or shared ownership in owning apartments.

Another initiative that is implemented by the Land Authority is land registry that ensures upgrading land registry systems and enhancing land tenure and ownership rights in general, and women rights particularly. It is true that we are facing difficulties in our initiatives and actions because of the inherited legal systems from many historical eras that caused contradictions and difficulties to enforce the law in many cases.

**Conclusions by the Speaker:**

Land registration and specifically in Palestine contributes to enforcement of the law which an extremely important issue. However, we all know that law is one factor in this equation while social and family pressure against women access to land tenure through inheritance is another serious, determinant and serious factor. This pressure usually ends up by forcing women to relinquish their rights to inheritance to their male relatives either legally or illegally.



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The impact of land registry and settlement with women rights is vital and could lead to clarifying and documenting rights for all, and for women specifically.

It is true that Palestine faces multiple issues and challenges, yet it has the advantage of a vibrant and active civil society that is one of its kind in the Arab World which contributes to engaging in dialogue and consultation about women rights and to act accordingly.

***Topic 2: Overview of women tenure rights in the Arab region: what do we know?***

The second presentation gave an Overview of women tenure rights in the Arab region: what do we know? and was presented by: Ms. Ombretta Tempra (UN-Habitat) and it raised more questions than answers regarding women tenure rights in the Arab region. The main issue that Ombretta focused on is that: do we know enough to act, and do we have enough evidence to empower our propositions and give evidence-based recommendations that can be considered and push policy makers, decision makers and administrators to start implementing what we have been advocating for so long. <sup>1</sup>

*The panel was followed by a discussion among the panelists regarding the content of the presentation and other relevant comments or contribution which mainly covered the following points:*

It is true that we still need data and information however we know enough to do a lot in terms of land ownership. We know what allows us to provide identified services within the framework of agriculture and legal legislations to support women access to land. Yet we need to update this data frequently so that we do not lose connection to the everchanging context and needs. The data related to land tenure is diverse and changing every day where we have new women groups getting out of the tenure security for many reasons including, displacement and confiscating lands within the expanding conflicts. Thus, we do know enough to intervene on the level of legislations, and community awareness on the importance of land tenure security for women.

Another point of view here is that it is true we know enough to tell decision makers and communities what is best to be done, however, we do not know enough to stop searching for answers or data because there is a huge gap out there. We still do not know also how decisions are made by women, and why they decide to do or not to do things at the society scale, we need this if we want to trigger a change of behavior in some of the aspects we are talking about. We also need to know numbers and statistics of women who

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e c <sup>1</sup> Reference is made to a publication to be published soon by UN Habitat; "Women and Land in the Muslim World. Pathways to increase access to land for the realization of development, peace and human rights, 2021



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are encouraged and claiming their land rights. Another point to consider, if cases of women claiming their rights increased, will the system be able to process and cope with them.

Information is also important with regards to dynamics and implementation tools that need to be introduced in case more women claim their rights which will cause land fragmentation, a challenge that is facing most countries in the Arab region. This does not mean we need to prevent women from claiming their rights out of fear of land fragmentation, but we really need better implementation tools to deal with land fragmentation so that people do not need to choose between claiming their right to land or having more productive agricultural land.

One of the main points to make here is that improving woman rights regarding her access to land contribute to improving human rights - for half of the society - which will contribute eventually to improving the human rights state for the society. Thus, defending women rights means defending the society at large to improve the conditions of citizens specially those does not enjoy the power.

In terms of what can be done, it is important to prioritize what we do and what the best approaches are in terms of short, medium, and long term. This in addition to taking into consideration social and cultural shifts and changes. This meeting can help us decide what can be done to improve our work, and what are the steps we can take to bring us closer to make the change we need to introduce. Sometimes, basic procedures may allow increased access to systems and processes for women.

The information that was shared earlier about Palestine initiatives in opening land registry and settlement office is inspiring in terms of that it makes it easier for women to access these services when provided at the local level and close to them. Thus, other countries in the region with similar context can replicate this practice to make it easier for women to access their land rights related services.

One enquiry was regarding: “the need also to know available information (if any) regarding the number of women claiming their inheritance rights, and countries in the MENA region that managed to make changes to improve the situation of women access to land tenure security. This is important because it will help us learn about different approaches and take ones that are practical and applicable to our context”.

The answer was that “it is true we have information about successful approaches and practices however we do not have data from all the region that show us the trend of women access to land depending on the introduction of measures because we did not have the corresponding baseline in the first place. We can also say that wherever there is an active and receptive civil society that is trained to deal with this



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issue, there will be more progress in the respective country. Palestine and Jordan are two positive cases compared to other countries where civil society is relatively weak and inactive. Tunisia introduced some positive legislation, but its impact is still not tested on the ground. It changed the inheritance share to allow equal shares for women and men by law. This however became a politicized issue and instead of becoming a process and opportunity to advance gender, it became a means of political confrontation between the progressive and conservatives of the parliament and the government and was not actually very productive.

One other point is that, sometimes it is good to work on making some practicalities in the short term to mobilize and make information available in simple terms, and simplified Arabic language for example or any other local language that women and men use. This way people feel it is made specifically for them, and this can contribute to basically improving processes and making it easier for all locals to access them.

An example is a hotline created for women to provide some land related services, after it was found that women find it difficult (even rich women) to access the real estate market because it is a male dominated field, and they do not feel comfortable doing it. Creating a hotline dedicated to women that provides information was really helping as women used it to inquire about information without feeling threatened or watched.

#### **Conclusions from Speaker:**

We need to know more about localized practical solutions at the grassroots level on the ground, like decentralized offices for example which have a lot to offer in terms of the change it can bring including creating a fertile ground to introduce broader changes in the long term.

#### ***Topic 3: The nexus between socio-economic development and access to, control over and use of land for women***

The third presentation focused on the nexus between socio-economic development and access to, control over and use of land for women, and was presented by: Ms. Samah Jaber (UAWC) specifically covered the following issues: Women are the most marginalized group in terms of land tenure, International agreements that protect women's right to own and access land, Enabling women to access land is a societal imperative, Women's access to land leads to economic and social empowerment, Contexts of abuse in the Arab region, Societal challenges: Confronting cultural norms that oppress women on the economical, developmental and human levels, Exclusion of women and rural residents from participation



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in planning processes, Empowering women in land tenure security at the legislation level, capacity building level, and in terms of agricultural interventions.

*This panel was followed by reading posts from the Q&A box and providing quick answers and clarifications by the panelists as follows:*

**Q: Has it been studied whether women land ownership may lead to her decreased well-being and security? I am a bit concerned about the conventional development indices versus a real quality of life for people.**

A: It is always difficult to discuss the indices that are computed by the United Nations as they are complex but thought of for a long time. It is a bit easy to criticize them from the outside, but I think we need to get deeper into our understanding of these indices before criticizing them. The other point is that if you feel you have a nice life that does not necessarily mean that all your rights are guaranteed as sometimes people are manipulated to believe so.

**Remark:** women ownership to land includes many issues in the Arab world and the Islamic countries. The patriarchal society also manipulates women rights, in Yemen for example there is a practice related to preventing women from getting her share from the inheritance by changing the land ownership into Waqf that is only inherited by men.

**Remark:** land rights are a complicated issue in our region, especially when we consider the different types of discrimination against women or other marginalized groups. This is even worse when it comes to the situation of indigenous people in different countries. The occupation in Palestine and the deteriorating situation in other countries require more efforts to get related data and enforcing inclusive rights -based approach to development.

**Panelists' response:**

Waqf land is a two sides weapon as if there is a generous man who wants to provide a private land as waqf for women from the family, then that is a good practice and application of waqf land. However, it was used before its suspension, against women, because when families use waqf land it is allowed for them not to abide by laws, specifically the inheritance law. This is reason there was a decision to settle all private waqf land, and only to keep charitable waqf under the supervision of the Ministry of Waqf. This is a very important issue that needs to be covered later in detail.

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## Discussion Groups:

### *1st Discussion Group: Defining Land Rights and Socio-Economic Development of Women in the Arab region*

This discussion tried to answer the following sub questions:

- After defining the terms, is access to land sufficient? What is the basic requirement that guarantees the right (access, control, or use of land)
- What is the theoretical and practical difference between access to, control over and use of land?
- Are these terms used differently among Arab countries? If yes, what are the differences particularly in countries under conflict?
- What is women's socio-economic empowerment? And why is it important for women in the Arab region?

## Remark:

Literature and discussion over the land tenure issue in the International and human rights law had a methodology and definitions to explain the normative content of the right. Thus, we need to have some parts of the combination of elements of the normative content including quality, cost affordability, physical attainment for people with disabilities, or those living across the wall which is considered a violation of the element, and land tenure security. All these elements are the combination of the right in all norms and references of human rights. However, we did not take the human rights position or approach, this is the reason there is confusion and misuse of terminology used because we did not take into consideration the right references. For example, if we tackled SDG 5, and its targets, then this is an illegal and temporary reference which represents a friendly promise because it does not include any commitment, whereas there are stronger references if introduced then the terminology used will completely change.

For example, item (34) of CEDAW committee is much stronger than SDGs, because it is an explanation of states commitments to abide by the international convention in more details. There are other criteria including performance criteria, reporting criteria by the state to the committee assigned to monitor and observe the states that acceded the convention. The formulation of criteria and indicators of SDG 4 for example did not take into consideration the existing rich assets of the system. If this culture was developed by referring to international law references as referred to earlier, then commitments of states will change



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and become stronger than promises of following international policies. 15 years later, these promises will come to an end, and new set of promises will be developed. However, there are consistent commitments that should not be forgotten. Right to land is a human right that should be fulfilled but till now it is not, thus it needs to be discussed further and based on stronger commitments and obligations. lexicon

This right is being drafted now by the cultural rights committee, and the general comment will surely include other important dimensions including tenure, control, affordability, physical attainments in terms of culture, combination in terms of norm and normative content of the right. There will be soon new reference that connects these components with the relation to land, and not to have one single description rather to take this combination as a definition of the right to land.

**Panelist Response:**

CEDAW is an international convention that obligates ratifying states to its articles. Almost all Arab countries report on its activities within women rights, and its accomplishments to the CEDAW committee. However, many Arab countries if not all ratified it with reservations, except Palestine as far as I know, yet there are internal disputes against the content of the convention that Palestine acceded to without reservations. CEDAW as is an important convention and essential to tackle women rights and that its principles should be published and disseminated. It is true that SDGs do not have strong legal force, but it guarantees that actors working with statistics all over the world would provide and improve SDGs related statistics. Thus, when SDGs related statistics are provided then those defending CEDAW or other international conventions there is data and statistics needed to support its activities.

**Remark:**

The differences between the definitions are vast and vary between theoretical definition and practical definition. For example, everyone will agree to the legal definitions for example of the right to access, control, and use land, however the practical application of these concepts does not exist. We have seen in the film that was screened that the woman has tenure over the land she was talking about, but the reality is she cannot control it or even use it. Legally women can own land, and they have the right to use it, but they cannot do so in reality because of social and cultural barriers including the society's customs and traditions. In Palestine, there are more complicated and combined challenges related to occupation and its practices and policies.

**Remark:** All laws in Palestine as mentioned earlier allow all citizens to own land including women, however there are other religious, social, traditions and customs related challenges. In some cases, men say we are not against women and tenure rights, but they allocated women land shares in Area C, which is behind the Annexation Wall, that is not accessible. In some cases, even when women own the land, however they do not have a say in decisions related to its use and control.

It is true that international conventions constitute a reference for different rights, but it cannot be consulted in all environments and contexts because we have wide range of circumstances and particularities in the Arab Region that makes this extremely difficult. For example, control is closely related to occupation which limits not only women but all farmers' access, use and control of land that is behind the Wall or confiscated land.

An important point to make is that if amendments are to be introduced to our existing laws in favor of women land tenure security, they should not include any inequalities for other sectors in society and should ensure justice and equality for all.

In some cases, incorporates have a negative impact on land tenure security which they try to control, buy or use agricultural lands and change them into housing projects, and can badly affect the agricultural development in Palestine.

Again, international conventions are essential in terms of universal principles and commitments but, local contexts should be taken into consideration or else there will be serious problems in their fulfillment. Counties and civil society organizations should be sensitive to the local cultural and social considerations and try not to impose alien cultures without paving the way for such changes.

We need also to remember that in the Arab region, rural areas are poorer than urban areas, and that women in the rural areas are also poorer than women in the urban areas. This is key when we want to plan our interventions and actions to know where to focus and on whom.

**Remark:**

The social aspect of women rights cannot be tackled without considering the political dimension which largely influences the social realities of women in Palestine or other Arab countries. Women rights conditions were much better in the past where political circumstances were more stable and empowering for women. Now societies became sources of intolerance because of ignorance and obscurantism as certain discriminatory attitudes towards women are associated with religious perceptions. This happens

in the existence of political regimes that are subordinates to other regional and external factors in most cases.

**Remark:**

There are key perquisites for making changes and developments to a society that should be available which include community convention of this change to achieve women access to, control and use of land. We do not aim at causing societal tension, or to start a conflict, and this is the reason we need to consider the land ownership issue, and women right to access and use land within a comprehensive societal context. It could be argued that land that is owned by women usually remains owned and used which is not the case with men owned land that could be sold easily because of men inherited desire to make commercial exchanges.

There is a need to understand how land is being perceived, is it considered as a human right to housing, or as a means of economic development. This is important to understand beforehand because it changes the rhetoric completely. If land is thought of as a political means of empowerment, then it is not an option all women will choose as some women may want to use land for housing purposes and not for agricultural related uses. This is also true about the type of land we are referring to as rural land is totally different from urban land and each has a different economic value.

It is also important to understand the context in different Arab countries in terms of land tenure security. For example, in Sudan, land ownership is usually collective where land is owned by the tribe and it is being used in a complementary process that include agriculture, harvesting, livestock breeding, then equal shares are divided to those working in the land. Thus, it is not wise to try and enforce socio-economic models that are strange to societies that already have different economic and social structure, and which is already working and accepted.

**Requirements for access, control, and use:**

*Access:*

Requirements for access include legal customary framework, Sharia law, or the state's law.

*Control:*



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Is protected by the law, but it is fulfilled through supportive awareness and education efforts to women on how they can maintain control over land so that they do not lose legally. This means that we need to intervene to help women control and keep land.

*Use:*

Requires legislative policies, and economic policies for financing proper use of land, this is because women are reluctant to issue checks for example for their land transactions out of her fear to go to jail if their agricultural season failed. This in turn means that use of land requires laws, cultural and education support and empowering policies in place

**Remark:**

If laws are drafted without respecting the cultural and inherited practices then they will fail, and people will find ways of circumvention and not to abide by the law. In other words, society role in control is major in terms of finding ways to deprive women form control by different means, however, the state has a very effective role in use of land because it needs other components including financial resources which the society is incapable to provide.

An important issue here is also related to the limited available lands for agricultural use in most Arab countries where around 90% of available lands are small lands in terms of their space. This means that in many cases not only women, but farmers have very limited opportunities for buying needed farming equipment which therefore limits the potential to develop agriculture properly.

We also do not have enough data on the negative role of incorporation of agricultural land ownership and use. We need more studies and research in this regard so that we can have a position about the roles, and if there is a need to develop informed policies or laws that can combat their practices.

There is a suggestion of providing two types of laws that people can recourse to, religious and civil laws. This could contribute to resorting litigates disputes on marriage, inheritance, and property ownership. There also could be some mitigating practices that empower women to use land, if the state for example dedicates some lands for women use for a period of ten years for example especially poor women, or in cases of women being the sole breadwinner of families with limited resources.

One problem in most Arab countries is the lack of a strategic vision for complementary interventions and actions of the government or for the civil society organizations which leads to loss of funds, distracted

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actions, and duplications. The fragmentation of funds for example given to the civil society organizations led to not being able to fulfill real changes and impact on the ground.

This chaos and fragmentation of utilizing available funds and resources can be organized if there is an entity that is responsible for documenting all interventions on the national level, publish all produced studies and making them available to help in development informed interventions to prevent the practices related to implementing projects or programs that sometimes are not even related to actual needs and priorities.

### *2nd Discussion Group: Overview of women tenure rights in the Arab region*

The discussion tried to answer the following questions:

- Why should women tenure rights be given more attention and care in the Arab region?
- How secure are women's land rights in the Arab region, compared to other regions of the world?
- Women's tenure rights in view of occupation and conflict.
- What are the factors that increase women's vulnerability regarding land rights violation and expropriation, especially in conflict-affected areas?

**Remark:**

In Yemen, women are facing a lot of issues regarding land tenure security, and there is no rule, regulation or even legitimacy to give women rights to own land tenure. I am not sure if it is only in Yemen, or if there are countries that developed rules under their constitution to give women their land tenure rights. This is the reason I think at least in Yemen, civil society, experts and individuals should call for giving women their rights to land tenure security. We need to exchange knowledge regarding countries that managed to incorporate women land tenure security in their constitutions so that we can duplicate and learn from.

**Remark:**

In Palestine, the constitution is not discriminatory in ownership and access to land, so both women and men are equal before the law in this regard and it also guarantees women rights to access and own their lands and properties. However, like it is the case in most countries with such laws, this is not practiced

fully on the ground, and the evidence is that only 3% of lands get ownership over land by inheritance. In most cases women are not given land they inherit, instead they are given amounts of money to relinquish the land (تخارج). This happens more often in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip.

**Remark:**

The 3% percentage of land owned by women reflect two issues, one is related to the action of giving up or relinquishing land for money by women to their male relatives (in cases of land inheritance), while only 1% of women have their full rights in land (from other means than inheritance).

Civil society organization engaged in different actions to prevent this practice (women relinquishing land) where they worked with the Sharia Court, and decision was taken that no relinquishing will be made unless four months passes after the death of the owner of land in question. Specifically, in May 2011, relinquishing of land by women stopped to happen immediately after the death, and fourth months should pass before any actions is taken regarding the inheritance division.

In some cases, women are not aware or are not taught about their right to their pre matrimonial rights, so that they can keep them or have them registered to their names. This led to their loss of property if they agreed to register them to the husband name for any reason. Women are not made aware of the shared ownership option for the properties they buy or contribute to buying while married, and thus they lose them if divorce happen because there are no official papers confirming this.

**Remark:**

In Jordan, there also several problems related to land tenure security, where only 7% of land is registered to women. It was also decided to enforce Sharia law on all even on Christians which some find a way out to give women their access or ownership to land. Women are better represented in other sector as 22% of shared in companies are owned by women, but land remains an inclusive man dominated sector. Another factor prevents women to have land tenure rights in terms of land registration and division. Women cannot inherit because land is not sub divided and remains for long times registered to the deceased grandfather, which is not only the case in Jordan but in other countries in the Arab Region.

Another point is that some land is being donated while the father is alive to sons or brothers which in discriminatory to women too. Relinquishing land is also practiced by enforcing social pressure against women to give up her shares of the land for an amount of money.

In some cases, land is also sold while the father is alive within the family which is facilitated by lower taxes paid compared to selling it out of the family members. Thus, the main solution will include solving the problem of land registration first. Another challenge is related to the type of land registration if it is miri or mulk (owned) land which has different ownership processes that are again discriminatory to women.

**Remark:**

In Palestine, it is true that there is a good legal framework for rights to land ownership, however the litigation process is long and tiresome. Sometimes it takes years which caused serious issues in the community fabric. There is also a need for consistent education and raising awareness efforts to educate women of their rights and enable them to demand without fear or shame. The inherited complicated legal system in Palestine contributed to having lands registered only to men, which requires intensive efforts to change this ownership, and include women in land ownership through inheritance and other means.

**Remark:**

Giving women their right to own land contributes to giving them their self-determination rights, which is stipulated in many international conventions including ICESCR, UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, and CEDAW to name a few. This is the reason it is imperative to raise awareness of society of the rights these international conventions and treaties include so that they became more understood and respected. There is also a need to integrate the principles of these international treaties into national legislations to change the culture and practices on the ground in terms of enabling women to own and use their land.

**Remark:**

It is important to make some collective action with regards to indigenous people rights in the region. All different kinds of rights conditions are worse when it comes to indigenous people and other marginalized groups not only women in the Arab Region because of the absence of the rule of the law and other factors mentioned earlier. There are serious concerns regarding indigenous people in Morocco, Sudan and other countries as well. Palestinians can also cooperate among other indigenous people around the world to support their rights to land and other rights. This sector needs to be presented to give them a voice to their demands and rights.

**Remark:**



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There is a problem regarding the very limited information and data on women land tenure rights as well as statistics about women accessibility to land, and how many women are given their rights to land compared to their brothers or husbands. In Prendix, there was a survey carried out where women reported insecurity in case of death of a family member. This means that it is not enough to have laws that ensure women rights to land, and that more studies should emphasize on what hinders enforcing these laws on the ground. We need to raise awareness of women and men in women rights to land tenure and how this can influence positively the socioeconomic development of the country, and the region as well.

There is a need to create more substantial data from countries in the Arab region so that we can improve women tenure security and work jointly to gather more statistics that can help develop informed interventions and actions.

**Remark:**

It is usually the responsibility of the government to provide such data and statistics through national bureau of statistics and the land registry authority who have accessibility to all kinds of information related to land tenure issues, and they can build up a reliable and accountable database. However, since we are witnessing scarce information in this regard in the Arab Region, we need to combine efforts to gather information from several sources and start compiling a database. For example, we have information from the civil society organizations gathered from the ground, that we can integrate into Prendix data to report on certain issues.

**Remark:**

There are also different capacity building initiatives to empower partners and colleagues on monitoring land governance and related gender aspects conducted within the Arab land initiative. Another round of training will be available from 8-11 March,2021 so all are invited to join it.

**Remark:**

When it comes to the role conflicts play in triggering more land tenure insecurity for women during and post conflict, there is unfortunately very limited data available from Syria for example in this regard. The problem is that during conflicts many women lost their documentation, their personal IDs, marriage certificate along land and property related documents. Thus, women could not prove later their relation

to land which positioned them into a vulnerable situation. This is one of the major points to consider when working in conflict scenarios and displacement, by providing personal documentation to help reduce such vulnerability during and post conflict times.

**Remark:**

In Palestine, in many cases women are given their inheritance in lands allocated in Area C or behind the Annexation Wall which is not accessible or usable. Lands in area A and B are usually given to males as inheritance, and usually women get their shares in either confiscated lands by Israelis or behind the wall which hinder women accessibility to use, sell, plant or use this land.

60% of the Palestinian land is classified as Area C and most if not all of it is agricultural land, which became unavailable for use in agriculture, for construction or other purposes. The Palestinian social structure also assumes that men are supposed to build houses in their lands for their families upon their marriage, and this led to more allocation and registration of usable lands in males' names, again giving another excuse to allocate land in Area C for women because of perceived roles for men in land usage. This is again not only a question of access to properties as such but more related to cultural, social interaction and norms and the social status of women in the respective societies.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

**Remark:**

With regards to recommendations and actions that can be taken to make things better, law reform is a priority, in particular inheritance law. In addition, there should be a department in the Ministry of Justice that deals directly with inheritance rights before it is being settled within the family which usually forces women to relinquish their land right. With regards to matrimonial rights, we are working to draft an agreement that is attached to the marriage contract which will stipulate clearly all matrimonial rights to help protecting women rights.

One of the ways to enforce change and reform with regards to women land tenure rights, there is a need to work and fix the top by reforming land related laws and regulations, and to help implementing them in the field to ensure access to women land rights.

It is never enough to work on awareness at the grassroots level, nor is it enough to target reform at the law and policy making level. We need to combine a two-way approach that targets all involved stakeholders and that is to work bottom-up and top- town.



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**Remark:**

In Jordan, women rights defenders worked to introduce three months waiting period during which it is not allowed to relinquish or sell the land to give women time to think about their decisions and their consequences.

**Remark:**

It is important to point out that the democratic space is shrinking in the Arab Region after the so-called Arab Spring, where many governments took drastic measures against civil society organizations. This in turn was reflected in further deterioration of civil society organizations in general and women organizations specifically, and their role in defending social, economic, and cultural rights a which re not addressed or protected the same way they used to be. It is important to work more on ensuring women participation and emancipation in different decisions and reforms.

The role of civil society is vital in this regard, but we need to identify what should be done to increase the role and engagement of civil society actors when it comes to raising awareness and mobilization of grassroots organizations and people on the ground.

More consultation and discussion groups should be organized to share knowledge and hands-on experiences from different countries in the Arab Region. On the other hand, more studies and statistics should be developed specially those elaborating the consequences of giving women their land tenure rights on families, communities, and women in terms of access to better education opportunities, better health care services, just and balanced power dynamics in the family, and less violence against women.

**Remark:**

There is some scattered information that addresses women land tenure security in the Arab region. For example, Prendix data are open to all to use. There are other indices like women, business and law index, and women. The peace and conflict index provide some substantial data that can be useful. What we need is to introduce a framework that can help us put all this data together to help us report on the commitment and achievements of SDGs in the region.

**Remark:**

With regards to raising awareness, art and artists can be included in different campaigns especially that we witnessed the power of art in changing mindsets of beneficiaries and also decision makers to change law maybe not immediately but in the long run.

***3rd Discussion Group: The nexus between socio-economic development and access to, control over and use of land for women***

The discussion attempted to answer the following questions:

- Does women's land tenure enable them economically? Is there a linkage between secure access to and control over land by women and their economic activities (local markets, and investments, etc.)
- How does access to knowledge and awareness about the economic assets and rights empower women?
- Through accessing land and natural resources and the acquired awareness, women could be encouraged to participate in local decision-making (in different areas). Has that been observed in the Arab region?
- How is food security and socio-economic empowerment of women correlate?

**Remark:**

Women are an influential player in the agricultural production, and they represent in their participation in the agricultural work whether in Egypt or other Arab countries more than 50% of the agricultural workforce, and sometimes more. Women cover all types of agricultural activities including planting, breeding livestock, home gardening and other. Despite that, women are not capable of having the income generated from performing all these tasks, because they do not have the official access to land and are supposed just to work while the income is received by the husband, his family or her family if not married. The key point here is that she is perceived as weak or incapable when it comes to receive income, while she is supposed to work as hard as she can in this system.

It is worth mentioning that when women get financial support or fulfill their financial potential, this reflects on their psychological state, help them in their family's living, and become a productive actor in the society.

There are different efforts that were invested in these regards through raising awareness, advocacy, and some financial aid programs and loans to enable agricultural production.

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Women do not only need financial, legal and technical support to take loans, they also need to know how to manage and use land through purchasing equipment and other needed tools for agricultural purposes, transferring products to the market and marketing of products.

What women need are comprehensive programs that are composed of many interrelated components: financial, legal, support from grassroots agricultural associations and cooperatives.

There should be a disaggregated database that could show the interventions targeting women and men and the impact of such programs and initiatives.

**Remark:**

There are different factors that hinder women access to land and their economic empowerment that exist nearly in all countries in the Arab region, which include:

- 1- Neoliberal policies that are followed by governments against rural and marginalized areas.
- 2- Current capital economic patterns that encourage privatization and deprive small producer from access to land.
- 3- The patriarchal system controls land in almost all Arab countries in the region.

Within such context, women contribution as key actors in agriculture amounts to 70% in different types of related tasks, however, they do not control financial revenues in return for their work in the land. We can easily say that rural women are essential for accomplishing the rural sustainable development, therefore their economic empowerment is key to achieve it.

Preventing women to access revenues of their work in the land is part of the violence practiced against women and needs to stop to empower them economically.

However, change is not achieved by one single action, and there is a need for a comprehensive approach that integrates working from the up-down where we should get rid of the remains of the patriarchal system, develop alternatives to neoliberal policies, and overcome capital economic systems that together control the land and deprive small producers and women to access and use land.

**Remark:**

We need to keep in mind that economic empowerment is not only achieved by land access and control, because focusing only on land tenure rights for women is somewhat inadequate and a short vision perspective.

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We also do not have enough data on how decisions are made by women when it comes to their land tenure, thus it is inaccurate to assume that they are always suppressed or forced to give up land to men. Sometimes of course it is the case, and they are forced to give up their inheritance, however we do not have data for all recorded cases, therefore we cannot draft policies that assume this without proper evidence. There are some women who believe that men are responsible for the wellbeing of the family and enjoy being dependent financially on men, and this is not necessarily a bad practice or belief.

This also means that we do not need to follow and adapt international norms and practices if we have agreed upon practices and traditions which guarantee some kind of economic empowerment for women through owning certain financial assets.

**Remark:**

It is true that land tenure security is not the only way to achieve economic empowerment, but it is one important factor as one main input to the production process. It is always important as mentioned many times earlier to have solid and reliable data on this issue and to share success stories and role models that can inspire other women.

**Remark:**

Raising awareness is crucial for a woman to enable her claim and demand her rights equipped with all needed information. We need to introduce this knowledge of rights in earlier stages in schools where traditions and customs can be challenged and changed. It is also important to point out that it takes a society to empower women, raising awareness is not enough if it is not backed by technical and legal support among other types of support. All should work together in a comprehensive complementary system to empower women.

**Remark:**

One can see from examples in the Arab region that knowledge of how to navigate the system is extremely helpful for women. This is especially important because land administration and registration is very challenging and complicated across the region. It is not an easy and smooth system as it is the case in Europe and other GCC countries. However, the mere knowledge of how to navigate the system, how to file your claims, and how to access the registration services is extremely important, and it has started in



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some countries already. This is not only important for women only, but all people need to be informed of the due procedures and processes.

Knowing the procedures, having nearby branches of land related departments, or having an open line to receive enquiries and questions will make it easier for women to access information they need regarding the available services. Knowledge of policies, legal frameworks, procedures to be followed will make women more confident in claiming their rights and follow procedures easily.

**Remark:**

Again, knowledge or awareness is not enough and may bring about some serious risks and challenges to women, if they are not supported by institutions or other protection networks. Sometimes when women start to claim their land rights they are exposed to domestic violence and in other cases they might be killed. Therefore, we need to equip women with knowledge that is coupled with legal protective framework through women and human rights institutions and networks in addition to legal consultation either in person or through women dedicated hotlines.

Thus knowledge, data, and awareness are important for both institutions and individuals as it improves institutions performance when it is based on solid data and field-based knowledge, and also helps women to be more confident to claim rights.

It is also important to have knowledge of success stories of women who succeeded in their land access and use, and successful women projects which will motivate and encourage other women to follow their lead.

**Remark:**

Incorporating laws, duties and rights into early stages education could educate people about their rights and duties and help them become active informed citizens at early ages.

Open access data was mentioned earlier and although it is a very important advantage to share and benefit from, yet there are precautions that should be considered as in people's privacy and remaining anonymous in terms of their personal records and data should be respected and controlled.

Having enough data regarding women land tenure security is important for us because it can give us more information on how many women registered their lands, why they did so, what are the factors that encouraged them to do so, was there legal support provided so they were encouraged, or other reasons.



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**Remark:**

It is often that access to resources of any kind, access to finance or access to land give women empowerment and support, which will encourage woman to participate in decision making. Women are usually concerned about their lack of security which makes them less empowered to have a say in decisions related to their wellbeing. Whereas, when women are empowered and have a say they will feel more encouraged to participate in the conversation. This may not necessarily be through being represented in municipal councils or other bodies of decision making, but they can still be heard in different ways, and their say can contribute to the conversation and influence the discussions and decisions too.

**Remark:**

Some of the practices that can be introduced by institutions in the civil society include allocating quotas for women to be part of all projects and interventions phases starting from planning and design and ending with monitoring and evaluation.

Some examples from institutions working agricultural and economic empowerment projects reported that projects led by women scored higher success rates than those led by men (93% compared to 80% respectively) which will encourage other women to join and give institutions more confidence that by targeting women more they can have their investment successful and powerful.

Some temporary measure like quotas can enable women to get needed skills and experience to work so that we there are more strategic policies they can participate effectively.

**Remark:**

Food security, economic and social empowerment of women is interrelated; however often women access to finance is limited which negatively affects their access to land and opportunities. Usually, women access to finance is limited because of their lack of basic resources and that can be improved by many ways including access to land. One of the main collaterals to loans is land, and in Palestine it amounts to 70% of collaterals to loans. These types of loans are small but can create business potentials for women that vary from agricultural development projects or related small businesses. Access to finance links very strongly to food security and can lead to social and economic empowerment

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

### Closing session

The day ended by representing the conclusions and recommendation of the three discussion groups as follows:

#### *1st Group Discussion Recommendations and conclusions:*

- References were made to international conventions that can be used to guarantee combating all types of discrimination against women that was ratified by most Arab countries. CEDAW should be the key reference from a legal point of view to hold countries accountable in respecting their commitments and responsibilities. SDGs are technical recommendations and do not hold countries accountable legally, however they are useful to develop mechanisms and data to be used by those working to fulfill rights included in CEDAW.
- Roles of different actors should be respected including the society, the state and the law.
- The legal official framework is extremely important because it ensures women rights at least from the theoretical point of view which has Sharia and Civil aspects.
- It is also important to support women full access to land not by only giving them only nominally ownership of land which does not empower them to fully use and access land. This is related to social and Sharia related issues that should be addressed to help women have better positions in the family and the ability to work and function in the economic sphere.
- Empowering women leads to more economic production of land, which is in the public benefit which in turn requires having enough agricultural production adequate for food security, this is the reason it is important that the government is actively involved in this direction.
- Consideration should be given to the existing different types of land ownership in Arab countries, where introducing private ownership of lands may contradict the norms and practices that are more empowering to all sectors of the community as is the case in Sudan.
- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas could also be introduced as a framework to be used in defending women land rights. It is compatible with agriculture realities in the Arab countries and can be used on the national level to lobby and advocate governments to adapt policies accordingly. It is also important because it acknowledges women's role and weight in rural areas, land tenure security in relation to food security, civil peace and nations' sovereignty of their resources.

#### *2nd Group Discussion Recommendations and conclusions:*

### Findings:

- One striking point is related not only to women land tenure security and properties issues but also to women participation in the political, social and economic life and more generally their emancipation. Thus, women need to be encouraged to join different life spheres, and more awareness should target not only women but also men who are part of the challenge faced.
- It is true that laws exist in many countries which do not prevent women from owning their land and properties, but these laws are generally not sensitive enough to challenges that women can face in the process of obtaining ownership of land and properties.
- Different types of women land tenure security remain low in the different countries and the challenge that different stakeholders face include the availability of land related data on women and land. Very limited information is available and access to the available information is difficult too.
- Women are particularly vulnerable when it comes to land tenure security in conflict affected areas. This challenge is mostly linked to the loss of different types of documentation including land related documents, which is the case in areas of conflict and displacement
- The importance of bringing together the top-bottom and bottom-up approaches to create linkages between stakeholders, law and policies makers, and grassroots.

### Recommendations:

- To focus on law reform specially inheritance law and to take into consideration the challenge that women face during the process of getting their inheritance which is the main way for women to access land in the Arab region.
- To consider the political context and the political regimes more broadly in terms of the impact of the Arab spring on political regimes practices, to create more democratic space and structure for participation in general by different stakeholders. It is important in this context to raise awareness of women while providing democratic spaces for participation.
- To strengthen the civil society, because of it's the importance of civil society stakeholder in different regards including land governance. Civil society can play a major role with regards to data scarcity that we tackled earlier, where they can provide data in multiple related sectors like education and health which are related to land ownership and emancipation broadly.
- To work on providing better monitoring and governance for land tenure security data to improve the availability of land related data and monitor the evolution of land tenure security. Then in the next steps to improve access to this data, and integrate gender perspectives into data collection and analysis tools.

### ***3rd Group Discussion Recommendations and conclusions:***

*With regards to women economic empowerment and land tenure security the following was highlighted:*

- There is a strong relation between economic empowerment and land tenure security, but it is important to take the more comprehensive approach to economic empowerment, as land tenure security is only one aspect in this regard. In many cases women have access to land but do not enjoy any economic empowerment which again enforces the importance of having more comprehensive approaches of economic empowerment which include women bringing income into the family, technical support provided to women after they have access to land, and importance to include associations and cooperatives that support women land tenure security that can provide women in this venture.
- We need to rethink neoliberal policies in the Arab region, which does not support small producers including women.
- We need also to have more data about women decision making with regards to land tenure.

*In terms of knowledge and awareness we covered the following:*

- Awareness is important on the individual and community levels; women should know how to navigate the system by allocating a hotline for providing legal advice for women with regards to land tenure rights.
- There should be protection networks to provide personal and community support to women because in many cases when women decide to claim their rights, they became vulnerable to domestic and community violence.
- It is important to incorporate different laws into the educational system from early ages to enforce societal change.
- In our efforts to gather data we need to remember to respect and protect users' privacy and confidentiality.

*In terms of encouraging women to access decision making these points were addressed:*

- Women should be encouraged to access decision making processes, and they should be supported by different means and where women are represented on different levels by allocating quotas for women.
- It was also highlighted that women are more capable of leading developmental projects with higher success rates that those of men.

*In food security, social and economic empowerment, the following was addressed:*

- In relation to food security, social and economic empowerment it was highlighted that these factors are interrelated where economic empowerment can lead to food security. Food production and security can also lead to social and economic empowerment for women where they can have a stronger position in their families.
- The last point relates to women access to finance for development projects, which is related to further economic empowerment.

#### Final remarks and takeaways

- It is clear many of the participants today have very good experience, and this is why we need to utilize these experiences to develop more comprehensive and complementary approaches and interventions.
- We need also to be aware in our interventions of the differences between rural and urban women, and ages to choose best approaches and practices for these different groups. We need to look at the different practices in different regions to see what works and try to duplicate it whenever appropriate while taking into consideration different areas, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- It is important to work more on awareness initiatives that help women on the ground to pursue their rights and utilize their abilities too. Encouraging women access to their land and following up on their land rights will trigger further effect and lead to access to finance and increased economic opportunities that will help women become more productive for their own sake and the society's as well.
- We expect to learn more tomorrow about practical ways and specific tools that can be implemented in Palestine and across MENA for improving women's access to land via shared lessons learnt regarding awareness, legal reform, administrative reform, and improving processes in place.
- The discussion was rich, and next sessions will elaborate more on the information, mandate and capacities owned by the different actors. This is also related to the role of governments, where funds are invested, and where emphasis will be put. The system at hand is quite complex and during the last years there has been more convergence and awareness on the issue of land tenure security, with more mastery of the topic within international and national organizations.
- It has been a long but useful day with many precious ideas and discussions that many action plans and policy papers can be derived from. This process needs more than two days, and other similar regional workshops should be organized to build on the results of this meeting.

## Day Two:

The second day of the EGM started at 10:00 am of Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>,2021 by recapping Day 1 sessions, recommendations and conclusions. Day 2 agenda was shared which focused on three major issues as follows:

4. Women land rights: sources and barriers.
5. Role of governments in enhancing women's land rights in the Arab region
6. Role of civil society organizations, academia, and individuals in enhancing women's land rights in the Arab region.

The same methodology during Day 1 was followed, where there were three introductory sessions, followed by three discussion groups to discuss panel sessions topics in more details. The following is a documentation of the proceedings of these sessions and the interaction that took place.

## The Introductory Sessions

The Introductory Sessions started as follows:

### **Topic 4: Women land rights: sources and barriers.**

In her presentation, Ms. Shahd Mustafa (GLA) focused on giving facts about Women and Land elaborating on: Why Women Accessibility to Land matters, Gap of Land Accessibility, Women Barriers to Access Land, Insecurity in Case of Spousal Death, Insecurity Gap in Case of Divorce, and concluded by presenting the next steps needed.

*The panel was followed by a discussion among the panelists regarding the content of the presentation and other relevant comments or contribution which mainly covered the following points:*

It is true that 70% of women in the Arab World are responsible for providing food for their families, but unfortunately this does not reflect that they have land tenure. This is the case because of many challenges including traditions and customs. The major challenge is related to the fact that although laws and legislations related to women land tenure rights exist, there is not enforcement and implementation mechanisms that empower women to access, own and register their lands in their names. This is the reason for the need for different advocacy and lobbying interventions towards enforcing and implementing the laws so that women can have land registered in their name to enable them to work on



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their land effectively. Inadequate awareness of women rights and justice is another key element that hinders women access and ownership of land, especially when men control the decision in the family and society, and in drafting laws and legislations in any given authority. Different activities of awareness can be implemented in cooperation with community institutions to improve women's situation.

Women need supportive institutions to empower them to claim their rights, and provide specific services including financial support to enable them to litigate before courts, pay for lawyer expenses, and cover the expensive land registration procedures. Institutions support is also needed in protecting women from violence they may encounter when they claim their rights.

The Arab region undergoes difficult times of wars, internal conflicts, and armed militias which negatively affect women land tenure security and causes loss of important documentation of ownership. In Palestine, the dilemma is bigger with the occupation practices on the ground which include land confiscation, restrictions on access to land which reflects also on more limitations to women access to land when male family members allocate women land shares of inheritance in "Area C", or land confiscated or controlled by settlers.

It is true that Jordan has enforced laws that protect women land tenure security, but women in Yemen feel more secure than those in Jordan related to this, because of the inefficiency of law implementation in Jordan. Customary law plays a vital role in securing access to some land rights of women and marginalized groups too. If we review the continuum of land rights and their approach to land tenure security, then customary laws are one of the main elements of this continuum, along with the statutory tenure system and the religious tenure system. This leads to a conclusion regarding consolidating the practices to serve legal platforms and put statutory tenure system in action by completing for example land titling/registration for women to ensure their rights to their economic revenue of these pieces of land. Also, to utilize religious tenure system to ensure it does not contradict with the main goal of women accessing their lands.

Morocco started implementing the land joint titling/registration, but it is still optional which means that husband and wife are not forced to do joint titling. If chosen to do so, there is a form they complete, and attach to their marriage certificate to ensure husband and wife rights in their shared properties.

Q1: Learning the importance and significance of evidence as one cannot have police or political dialogue without showing evidence. Prendix is a good step forward to have data, point out hotspots, and where progress is achieved. There is still a lot to be done, in terms of next steps after having the first overall round of data which is extremely important. There are still actions to be taken including discussions within countries and among other countries in the region. In addition to the need to have more data, analysis and research. The question is what are the next steps that Prendix plans to implement within the local and broader context in terms of discussions and interventions with other countries in the Arab region.



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A1: Prendix first steps were to exhibit data of the Arab region and opened calls for all civil society organizations in the Arab region to exchange more knowledge and seek cooperation to start some policy recommendations based on country context. The first cooperation in this regard was with Rasheed Transparency Program in Jordan. Now Prendix is working to develop projects with them regarding how Jordanians themselves, and women in particular can report their insecurities, and to build their capacities to enable them to report on SDGs as a step towards enabling women to access land or at least to report reasons for their lack of accessibility. The cooperation also aims at knowing what civil society needs and identifying areas of possible interventions in this regard.

Q2: In countries like Lebanon and Jordan, there are enormous numbers of refugee women; how will Prendix consider HLP rights for refugee women in neighboring countries like Jordan and Lebanon.

A2: Prendix attempted to make an in-depth analysis in Jordan in this regard and we have collected data where the refugees reported more insecurities than locals. This analysis remained within Prendix because there was not much interest in the Arab world or the region to develop more studies on this issue. This is one of the suggestions I included in my presentation and that is to have more thematic research in conflict countries as well as hosting countries. We have seen that in Jordan the government was trying to improve the situation of refugees by issuing IDs to help their access to issue marriage certificates within camps.

Similar actions were taken in Northern Iraq related to documentation, as refugees were given some documentation stamped by the Iraqi government until the Syrian refugees can go back to their country and have Syrian documentation again.

There are some actions, however they are not up to the level we expect especially regarding actions and efforts to enable displaced women and refugees, as in a collective research between these three countries that can be in the direction of identifying some ways to improve or at least enhance accessibility of these women.

***Topic 5: Role of governments in enhancing women's land rights in the Arab region***

The second topic on Day 2 was on the role of government in enhancing women's land rights in the Arab region where Ms. Dina Naguib covered the following points: Arguments about enabling access to land, Independence in cases of separation from family in the Arab world, Women's inheritance: The Absent Obligation (in Upper Egypt), Issues of empowering women to get their inheritance in Palestine, Tribalism in Saudi Arabia, The Egyptian government: The legal role (Arab Republic of Egypt), Financial support "agricultural lending" for women (Jordan); A proposal for the role of the government in confronting issues of empowering women; Facing the challenges women encounter, as well as the Importance of collecting and analyzing data.



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*The panel was followed by a discussion among the panelists regarding the content of the presentation and other relevant comments or contribution which mainly covered the following points:*

In the past there was a scarcity of evidence-based research related to inheritance and marriage issues which is extremely important. At present, one can see that most countries agreed to the voluntary guidelines of the SDGs, whereas some countries have modernized their laws to meet SDGs. However, the gap between laws on paper and social norms is incredibly huge, as illustrated in examples from upper Egypt.

The journey is very long and a tiresome journey towards social norms that are more just, fair, and linked to human rights. We all went through this long process where we worked with tribal leaders in some countries that was in many ways hopeless, while in others there was a lot of progress.

Q1: The question is what can we do more to link social norms with the normative base?

A1: I presented only some initiatives not all of course, but we have as a first step to map all initiatives that target, address, or integrate women rights on the ground at the local level to serve and support the main goal of ensuring accessibility of women to their rights to land, inheritance, marriage and other types of access.

What needs to be done is to develop a database of these initiatives, which are sometimes developed by the implementer under the supervision of the country's agenda towards women, while others are not aligned with the country's approaches to target women. Women on the ground are in most cases not aware of these initiatives, and how they can benefit from them. Therefore, the first entry point is to map these initiatives and classify them into those in alignment with existing laws, or those developed by community activities or NGOs. Then there should be advocacy on these initiatives with women because they already exist, but they do not have any information that they exist and can support them.

There is a need to raise awareness of women about the initiatives and laws as well, and to make sure that women get all support they need through the provision of legal support and economic empowerment for example. Women need support not only to access finance and loans, but also knowledge on how to manage, and use loans because they mostly do not have experience in financial management of loans. This is the reason they need support from other parties that can support them managing these loans to be productive, and to access the market after they work in the land and produce.

In Sudan, there is now cooperation with Prendix to provide basic needed information that will help in making the right intervention regarding women rights. The right-based approach to improve women's access and control over land should not exclude governments. The notion of performing all the work

through the civil society may not be the correct way to work in our societies and countries because of their political complications.

Governments and decision makers should be always kept involved to create alignments between civil society, research centers, UN agencies and governments until we reach a result. The mere fact that we are not able to achieve everything we are planning to do is not an excuse to stop working on it even with limited resources.

Most of the information about land in the Arab World is coming from civil society organizations, and they might not be true or correct. Some governments may be willing to engage in such efforts to change but they do not find support to change, or information is not available about what needs to be done.

Perhaps, there should be a session in the future for government representatives so that they understand what we do, and we hear what they need, enabling us to work together in improving women land tenure security.

It is important to build on the good practices that communities have in place, and not to introduce new practices quickly because they will be rejected.

With regards to raising awareness through religious figures, there are successful examples in Northern Iraq in one rural area where these religious figures conducted raising awareness by using religious texts about the importance of giving women their rights as in the case of inheritance and it worked very well, and some improvements were reported in this rural area.

All mentioned initiatives are great, but we still need to have a body that maps all these initiatives, and gather all scattered data coming from different sources. We can establish such a body that oversees such data and initiatives and ensures sharing of such knowledge between different civil society organizations and governments which would be a great step towards ensuring women land tenure security and accessibility to land.

### ***Topic 6: Role of civil society organizations, academia, and individuals in enhancing women's land rights in the Arab region***

The final session of Day 2 was conducted by Mr. Alaa Ala Mansour (IYCY) with a presentation on “the Role of civil society organizations, academia, and individuals in enhancing women's land rights in the Arab

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region” which included the following key points: Challenges for Women’s Access to Land in the Arab Region, International conventions related to gender and access to land, Role of Arab Civil Society Organizations, Entry points for CSOs for increasing women’s access to land, and the Role of Research and Educational Institutes in enhancing Women’s Land Rights.

*The panel was followed by a discussion among the panelists regarding the content of the presentation and other relevant comments or contribution which mainly covered the following points:*

The presentation contained a very long outline of an action program for civil society and academia to get involved in enhancing women’s land tenure in the Arab region, it is then suggested to create some sequence. The presentation included many challenging issues that need to be classified in sections for what can be done immediately, and what can be included in five-year programs.

*This panel was followed by reading posts from the Q&A box and providing quick answers and clarifications by the panelists as follows:*

**Remark:**

Civil society organizations have mobilized a lot of resources during the past two years however they cannot do everything at the same time. Priorities should be with sequence for timing which will be useful to translate these lengthy points into an operational and doable action plan which is based on a good starting point.

**Response:**

There is a plan to establish a CSOs network in the Arab region and through this network, we will have a five-year plan that will sequence all these issues mentioned in the presentation.

Q1: Religious figures involvement was brought up during the last sessions, the questions is how much can religious figures influence men, and what are the texts and words that can used in this regard?

The answer was provided earlier in the previous session.

**Remark:**

Can GLTN provide a platform to manage knowledge and gather data and material for interested persons?

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**Response:** Prendix has already data published on its website which is accessible to all. It also publishes raw data collected and is open to all to use. There could be another platform for initiatives, index data and other data like the World Bank data that could be posted and become accessible to everybody in the Arab region.

**Discussion Groups:**

***4th Discussion Group: Women Land rights: Sources and barriers***

The discussion attempted to answer the following questions:

- How do women access, control and use land? What are the social factors that enhance their access, control and use?
- Gender-based bias in land rights: Are the legal and administrative processes for women to access land different of those for men?
- What are the main obstacles to women's land tenure security? (with focus on the legal and administrative barriers, illiteracy and lack of knowledge, patriarchal and societal traditions and customary laws).
- How do Arab countries differ in terms of these obstacles?

**Remark:**

In Indonesia, female religious figures are assigned to lobbying against child marriage, which is very inspiring and powerful. This is one good illustration of initiatives that can be taken on the social and religious levels. Female religious figures could be more successful in mobilizing into social and economic change, because they are more acceptable and moderate than men in general.

**Remark:**

There is no doubt that assigning religious figures in order to enhance women accessibility to land is very vital in our region, because it has been documented and mentioned by different countries in the region among good practices. The issue remains in the scarcity of available information, so one would start by encouraging civil society organizations to document their initiatives, approaches, impact and changing realities.

Q1: It is important to note that we cannot change anyone unless he/she wanted to change. In many Arab and Islamic countries customary norms are more dominant than the rule of the law and conventional laws. There is also gender inequality between men and women, where people resort to their

interpretation of religion. The question is whether there any surveys to understand whether women themselves are willing to change and exit the victim position to take over their role to work in land and change their realities.

A1: There are some initiatives to empower women in such situations, where they want to change or break their victimization, and depend on themselves. There are so many approaches to support these women financially, or to empower them to go to courts and provide shelters for them if needed. There are also some initiatives by the government (Iraq, Jordan) where they provide some basic needs for women who are escaping from sexual abuse and violence because of their decision to access land among other assets. The answer is that there are some cases, but there is not a source where all cases are documented.

**Remark:**

In Palestine and Jordan, there are many women organizations, and some are represented in this meeting, and this is an indicator on how women can be, and how organized. This is a process that is not easy because when women start to claim their rights especially land, then they are going into conflict with the family and the society in some cases.

**Remark:**

The best approaches to be followed in women empowering initiatives depends on the context, and it is either bottom-up or top-bottom or a combination of both. The important thing is to choose an approach that the community approves and is tailored to the context. The approach chosen should avoid creating conflicts, and disputes which might hinder the process of enhancing women accessibility to land.

Q2: In Jordan, human rights defenders such as Mizan and other several NGOs worked with the Sharia court to introduce three months period after the death of the father during which no transactions could take place, and as such no relinquishing, no renouncing and no selling could occur. This gives women the possibility to think of what they would do and the consequences of their decisions. The question is about Palestine, is there some similar decision in Palestine, or is this irrelevant to its context?

A2: The same decision was made in Palestine with the Sharia court, but there is not enough data to check if it is well implemented on the ground.

Q3: One of the main issues hindering giving women access to their land is that there is no registration and subdivision of lands, where lands in many cases are still registered to the deceased grandfather and was not subdivided since his death. This leads to keeping lands by the elder brother or son. The question: is this the case in Palestine?

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A3: The issue of non-registration is almost the same in Palestine, however the Palestinian Authority is now involved in a project where it is trying to resolve all lands issues in villages. There is an important initiative that was taken by UNRWA in the Gaza Strip after the last war, where it was involved in reconstruction efforts. Within this initiative, UNRWA decided to issue co-sharing registration certificates for the reconstructed homes to the names of wives and husbands.

**Remark:**

It is interesting how countries are trying to copy good practices and approaches but unfortunately the implementation remains a question.

There are some biases regarding granting women their land rights in certain cases, such as when women are married to foreigners, or if a non-Muslim woman decided to marry a Muslim man then she has no rights to land.

**Remark:**

The administrative process to land registration is known to be lengthy, expensive, and tiresome especially for rural women. Therefore, many decide to give up their land rights, so they do not go through such a complicated process.

**Remark:**

Another point is that if women want to contest any decision at court then they need to be two women to be accredited as witnesses, and although this is known but it is important to view this from the international or UN practices and laws. There was a very important reference book produced in Jordan by the World Bank in 2013 (Gender and Justice) where a team of researchers studied cases of women going to court to contest a decision of wrong or unfair distribution of inheritance in terms of land or apartments. The study showed how dangerous it was for these women to go to courts and claim their rights, which in many cases becomes the moment of violence. The famous honor crimes in Jordan are not all linked to sexual misbehavior as reported most of the time. If you study the cases, you will find that most of them, and here quotation is made by "Hiba Abu Halaweh, 2014 ", who stated that most of the cases of honor killing are due to women contesting to unjust inheritance distribution.

**Remark:**

This is also the case in other Arab countries not only Jordan, because when women start to contest inheritance distribution, families believe that they are being challenged and that their reputation is defamed and tarnished.

**Remark:**

Another point to highlight is the mediation process which can be used for conflict resolution including land conflicts. The moderator's job in Palestine is to try and set up a consensus in order to solve conflicts before going to courts. This process seems interesting in principle but needs to be assessed to see if it can be applied in women land tenure cases of conflict.

There are some mediation efforts that are taking place regarding customary tenure issues and it is usually between tribes. However, there are no instances that show incentives to follow it for women accessibility to land conflict. Although mediation is important and effective, men have always better access to it because they can easily have social gatherings to discuss issues, which is more difficult for women.

**Remark:**

In Arab societies, not only women but young people are not allowed to have a say in decisions made regarding land issues, although the percentage of young people in these societies is the second highest percentage in the world. The problem is that land issues get usually solved and settled in the family by the most powerful member of the family who controls the decision. This is the reason why there should be an intervention of public authorities as was the case in Jordan and Palestine with regards to prolonging the time for women before relinquishing their inheritance. Sharia Court would intervene in the inheritance process because it will break the monopoly of the most powerful people in the family making decisions related to inheritance. Young people may be interested in such changes and having the court dealing with the issue of inheritance.

Women and youth awareness should be raised about their rights by the means of technology and media to reach out larger groups of beneficiaries.

There are however some precautions in this regard which are related to the fear of breaking the family ties and connections. This can be one of the means for blackmailing or influencing women to abandon their right to inheritance. Other reasons for women giving up their land include not being forced to marry men they do not love or being prohibited from pursuing their education.

**Remark:**

With regards to obstacles women face to access land, there are not many differences in Arab countries, apart from Tunisia and Morocco where there are more land rights in favor of women. However, there is a need to an observatory that can monitor data from the Arab World in terms of existing contexts,

practices and success stories. In some countries divorced women do not get married out of their fear to lose their apartments.

**Remark:**

Land administration is an important issue that needs to be tackled in a combined way with top-down and bottom-up approaches to include all involved key actors for better results and discussions.

**5<sup>th</sup> Discussion Group: Role of Governments in enhancing women land rights in the Arab region**

The discussion attempted to answer the following questions:

- What are the main actions taken by the different governments in the Arab region to enhance women's land rights, and their socio-economic empowerment (land reform and legislation, fostering civil society engagement in women empowerment, etc.)?
- Examples of government reforms in terms of women land rights from the Arab region

**Remarks on previous sessions:**

Some relevant ideas are made regarding the role of media in raising women awareness and formulating concepts and decision making. It contributes to building the ideology of the society, and if there were specific programs that target women awareness about their rights that could make a dramatic change in enabling women to access their rights. Knowledge was usually driven from individuals and not solid references. Due to that and in many cases, the information was incomplete, blurry or distorted, thus lots of investment should be put in changing such knowledge.

It is a brilliant idea to assign religious figures to participate in raising awareness, because in most cases all religions from heaven agreed in principle, and thus religious figures could build on this while educating women of their rights. However, it is important to unify ways and mechanisms of elaborating and tackling rights so that it creates the expected impact.

**Remark:**

Regarding the topic of this session, the role of governments is to provide awareness of rights and duties, and that such awareness should be integrated into the educational curriculum to target both men and women.

Governments should also give more space for civil society organizations to function and become supportive to the government policies development and decision making to create a connection between



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civil society organizations outputs in terms of studies and research and the government decisions in terms of legislations and policies.

**Remark:**

On the other hand, we sometimes feel that the role of governments is vague because of the circumstances that the region goes through, the difficult economic situation that is not easy to manage, the limited production, the poor economy and the population explosion. This all drags governments into taking loans from international organizations and implementing certain programs that might not be beneficial to all. Women in such context are not in a better off situation, especially after the revolution that took place in the Arab region and the pressures governments impose on civil society organizations that impacted its actions including that with women in different fields.

**Remark:**

With regards to assigning religious men in the dialogue and their role in supporting development and women rights specifically, they do play a role, but we need to be aware of some religious radical figures that influence the public opinion and bring about negative impact related to their desire to limit women roles. In Tunisia, there was a violent reaction against enacting a law that supports women rights, which reached the point of calling to kick Tunisia from different frameworks including the Arab League.

**Remark:**

If the government is convinced in empowering women, then land registration is the first step to do so. If it is not an easy action to take, then there could be other actions that include enabling women to access government land to use them. This way the government contributes to change the social norms and the society's convention by elaborating that women can work in land if supported.

**Remark:**

Women should be brought into the dialogue so that they can share their opinions regarding their priorities and the type of support they need. To do so, women should have the skills, the will, and to be integrated in the different interventions that are sustainable to inspire other women who are not equipped to go through the same process.

***6<sup>th</sup> Discussion Group: Role of civil society organizations, academia, and individuals in enhancing women land rights in the Arab region***

The discussion attempted to answer the following questions:

- What are the activities undertaken by civil society organizations, including NGOs, associations, grassroots movements, also media and academia in promoting secure access to and control over land by women (through awareness raising, research, campaigning and lobbying, etc.)?
- What is the role of women themselves in obtaining their tenure rights?
- What are the work priorities to enhance women land rights for each of these actors?

**Remark:**

NGOs should work on empowering women access to land through using the international agreements as references and raising women awareness of how they should be used to fulfill their rights. Some of the activities that NGOs can work on to empower women access to land include economic empowerment activities, developing natural resources, building roads, distributing seedlings, and planting empty land, etc.

**Remark:**

Civil society organizations should develop and apply human rights-based approach to the land tenure security. Unfortunately, governments do not have the capacities, training or culture to implement this approach, so it becomes the sole responsibility of civil society organizations in implementing the approach provided it is evidence based.

**Remark:**

Related to access to land, one important challenge is how this issue is approached. In the covenants on human rights, the reference to land is as a property not as a right. If we addressed people's need to land as a right thus giving it the universality of other human rights. If this is achieved, then the right to access land becomes a right for men and women equally.

**Remark:**

In terms of the role of NGOs different initiatives, it is important to map these initiatives to assess their impact on the ground, their relevance to the different contexts in cases of rural and urban areas and to the targeted groups. It is important to assess all mechanisms and approaches used to determine what are the success stories and build on them, and to isolate failures and avoid them. This will help in developing different initiatives that build on previous work and succeed in achieving set goals.

**Remark:**

Data is always important in this regard to be able to plan initiatives wisely and make use of all available resources. This data would include the number of women who do not have access to ownership, women needs and perception of land tenure security, role of land tenure in economic empowerment, to name a few. Civil society organizations should be involved in efforts to provide all needed information to develop informed initiatives not on perceptions or expectations. In some countries, Sudan for example joint ownership responds more to the welfare of the society including women, thus other means of empowerment for women should be taken. Women should not be pushed to pursue economic empowerment through means that do not respond to her needs or priorities just because they conform to international agendas.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

- Civil society organizations should conduct field research and provide information and data on women tenure security taking into consideration the different contexts of the Arab countries involved.
- The role of civil society organizations in holding governments accountable for their commitments to international and human principles of the international treaties they acceded to.
- Building the capacity of civil society organizations in understanding land governance and mastering research skills to gather and analyze needed relevant data.
- Building media institutions capacity in land tenure issues by sharing data produced by civil society organizations, providing the appropriate and accurate inputs to act and help them in understanding the magnitude of the problem.
- Introducing basic rights, as well as rights to land into the curricula of different relevant sectors as in agriculture, economy, finance, and engineering.

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- The need to develop strategies related to enforcing human rights in the Arab countries to improve potentials to adhere and fulfill their commitments.
- Introducing a rights-based approach that deals with land as one of the universal human rights, and one of the human needs to live with dignity.

### Closing session

After the three groups discussions, the closing session started by sharing the conclusions and recommendation of the discussion groups:

The 4th discussion group's recommendations were:

- Some good practices were shared to follow, like assigning female religious figures in Indonesia and not only to think of male figures. The former could give more chances to reflect women needs and challenges.
- To combine joint approaches from bottom-up and top-down to ensure greater impact and outreach, and to refer to previous studies on best practices in terms of approaches and identified problems and challenges.
- The local context of the different countries should be studied and understood to develop interventions and initiatives that respond to these contexts.
- To work on ensuring having supportive entities to help women access to her properties and courts which include legal and administrative support to all needed services.

The 5<sup>th</sup> discussion group's recommendations focused on:

- Ensuring women access to their due wages for working in the agricultural sector which will empower them in supporting their families or enable them to start their own lives independently
- There is a need to create complementary actions and interventions with religious and influential figures to ensure better outreach and avoid any societal rejection.
- Recommendations that were reached in this meeting and other societal discussions should be presented to decision, policy and legislation makers, and have them be involved in developing supportive programs for women based on these discussions and the identified needs and priorities.
- Highlighting the role of media in building societal awareness regarding knowing women rights, how to access these rights and entities that can support them fulfilling these rights
- Exhibiting models of successful women who were empowered economically to influence other women and inspire them to follow their lead.

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- Governments are at times reluctant to make needed changes because of the pressure they go through including population explosion, economic crises, and conflicts. Thus, they need support to implement better strategies and plans.
- Providing database and mapping for existing government initiatives or in cooperation with civil society, and to study their effectiveness and impact. Then to develop a proposition with best practices and approaches that should be later tailored to suit the contexts of implementing countries.
- Working on raising awareness and education of rights by integrating knowledge of rights into school curricula at an early stage.
- Introducing research and study results into governments' decision-making processes to develop more responsive policies and plans. Representatives of these research centers can be present at meetings of the government where decisions are made regarding women's different programs and interventions

The 6<sup>th</sup> discussion group's recommendations included the following:

- Civil society organizations should focus on treaties and conventions that help recognizing land tenure as a right and not only means of property.
- It is important to assess different NGOs initiatives to know their impact on target groups, and to ensure they respond to people's needs and priorities.
- There should be more statistics and data on women land tenure rights to have an insight of their needs and act accordingly.
- Building the capacities of civil society organizations in understanding land governance and mastering research skills to gather and analyze needed relevant data.
- Building the capacity of media-institutions in land tenure issues by sharing data produced by civil society organizations so that they have the right inputs to act and help in understanding the magnitude of the problem.
- Introducing the rights-based approach that deals with land as one of the universal human rights and one of the human needs to live with dignity.
- The need to develop strategies related to enforcing human rights in the Arab countries to improve potentials to adhere and fulfill their commitments.

### Final Remarks

- Politician and decision makers should be brought into the conversation to make sure that recommendations and conclusions are received and taken into account which might introduce a change in the near future.

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- It is true that the road is long, and tiresome but there are substantial achievements that should be celebrated where women are better represented in such meetings, in pursuing their higher studies in land tenure security, and in NGOs as lead researchers and experts. It is true that challenges are huge, but we started by working on providing more data, structures and networks.
- This meeting was a rich opportunity to get to know expertise, experiences, successful initiatives and approaches that could be inspiring to other countries with similar contexts. The resulting recommendations and proposed actions constitute a very promising action plan if implemented by the different countries with the existence of a supportive developmental framework to implement it and a persistent support for women rights from all involved stakeholders.
- The meeting was a starting point for a long journey that should continue through networking and exchanging experiences and knowledge, and to try and implement some of the ideas within the different country contexts.

### Relevance to the “Land, Women and socio-economic development” study

The presentations, discussions, remarks, conclusions and recommendations during the EGM, are relevant in many ways to the “Land, Women and Socio-Economic Development” study.

In terms of the overlooked impact, the EGM affirmed with the study this that more data, information and essential details regarding the number of effected persons, households, value of homes, lands, incomes in cases of mass violations and deprivation in rural and urban areas as well as violent displacements and dispassion in conflict and war areas is needed. Even when some monitoring and reporting practices are performed, the long-term consequences are still missing which weakens planning and designing relevant and responsive interventions.

As highlighted in the study, the EGM also agreed that compiling such needed data and statistics would not be possible by one institution alone, and this is the reason it is needed to work together under existing networks like Prendix to accumulate the institutions’ efforts and resources into a rich database which would help provide all needed information and data for action.

With relation to discrimination in process, the EGM also confirmed what the study came up with regards with the role traditions and norms play in depriving women from the access, use and control of land with limited access to credit and finances needed to realize the land’s full economic potential which usually requires male or other collateral. The EGM also pointed out the need for further research to understand the factors for this under representation of women in land tenure.

Another point that the EGM agreed with in the study is related to how land tenure is addressed by different actors and studies as being right to own and control property or a universal human right that preserves women dignity and respond to their needs. The study puts it clearly perfect when it states “**human-rights**” that is to say “**human right to land**”—interpretation of the subject of women, women’s empowerment and sustainable development differs from the commonly assumed understanding of land as “property”.

The EGM also focused intensively as the study did on different factors that constrain women from claiming their inheritance rights. These factors as the EGM confirmed vary from fear from “family boycott,” lack of awareness about their rights, ignorance of the laws and procedures related to partition of inheritance, lack of resources to pay court costs, and fear of facing social criticism as a woman who would “embarrass her husband or family.

The issue of access to land was raised by the EGM also as not being the only desired form of women relationship to land in conformation with the study's conclusions. It highlighted the need to consider other important entitlements that need to be complemented just as the study pointed out by availability, quality, acceptability, effective use, cultural appropriateness, affordability, location, control and secure tenure over the land in question.

The EGM tackled the issue of designing initiatives and interventions that should be based on national studies and mapping and not on external international frameworks of actions that does not take respective countries contexts. The study captured the same idea as a challenge facing women land tenure security where the critical analysis and theoretical literature on women's equality of rights, emancipation and economic liberation in the Arab region is predominantly hosted and/or resourced from international institutions. This is why the EGM suggests producing studies and research by civil society organizations and other involved governmental entities which respond to the reality on ground and help give thorough understanding of the context.

The definition of tenure, the "continuum of land rights" was covered by the EGM in details that is, as the study proposes the recognition of a plurality of a person's legitimate relationships with land that allows for a diversity of tenure situations, ranging from the most informal types of possession and use to full ownership.

Over its different sessions, the EGM covered the factors that contribute to women's access to use tenure and control of land. It agreed with what the study highlighted with regards to the state responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including to ensure that the human right of women and girls to fulfil their human right to land on equal terms with men and boys. The EGM mentioned other factors hindering access to land for women again as the study suggested which include patriarchy and decisions and behavior materially favoring males, Patriarchy and Violence, Subsistence and Dependence, Awareness of Rights, and Political Will and Policy

The overall recommendations and conclusions of the two days EGM suits perfectly on the reasons set by the study "as formulated by the First Arab Land Conference":

- Women's secure tenure relationship to land is key for realizing women's rights, promoting development, and creating just and peaceful societies.
- Women are often disproportionately affected by housing, land and property (HLP) violations that are assuming monumental scale in the context of displacement in the Arab region.

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- Women are rarely parties to lease agreements or other HLP documentation in some Arab countries, which leaves them particularly vulnerable to evictions.
- Economic empowerment and land ownership are interlinked. Boosting economic empowerment for women is important to secure ownership of land and property and vice versa.
- Top-down policies and approaches targeting the improvement of women's conditions can achieve a lot if there is enough political commitment and resources for implementation.
- Land-related national laws, customs and practices coexist in Arab states; there is the need to look into these different dimensions to increase women's secure tenure relationship to land and tenure security effectively.
- Women's secure tenure relationship to land and housing goes beyond individual ownership: it includes joint ownership, use rights, etc. (the continuum of land rights).
- Community-based land rights are important to protect women's access, use and control over land to expand the concept beyond only access, replacing "access" with "secure tenure relationship".

Again, the EGM referred to an important point regarding matrimonial property, where prescribed gender roles; socially constructed professional opportunities and economic activities; power dynamics; discrimination within family practices; unequal access to opportunities, institutions and land administration processes; traditional norms; and local tenure relationships typically deny women the chance to achieve equal tenure relations with land as men.

Finally, the EGM managed through its recommendations to tackle division and complementarity of roles that was also highlighted in the study where, a division of labour is foreseen to advance women's access to, productive use of and control over land in the region.

- Theoretical academics and writers could develop and publish more on the understanding the universal and cross-gender "human right to land."

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- Trainers and others convening Muslim adherents and secular practitioners could emphasise and develop approaches/curricula with a vision to develop into a *manar* (Arabic word for beacon) of just practice across the region.
- All those engaged in the inquiry related to the region's apparent discrimination against women's access to, productive use of and control over land could emphasise more what is beyond and behind inheritance as a device or symptom of cultural discrimination not necessarily supported by scripture.
- Those working on land tools, especially for monitoring and evaluation, should adopt and further define the theoretical framework and survey instruments to be used in defining the measurement processes and instruments, especially quantifying women's potential and actual losses, costs, damages and any other values at stake for women denied their equitable share of access to, productive use of and control over land.
- Civil society also could play the catalytic role in developing and promoting a set of Responsible Agricultural Investment (RAI) Principles for the Arab region, taking into consideration the need to uphold people's sovereignty over land and natural resources, also adapting and building upon the established principles of food sovereignty.

### Planned versus Achieved Outputs:

The EGM was initially planned to fulfill the following overall outcomes:

- Improved awareness of the activities being done by different stakeholders in the Arab region on land tenure security and its linkages with socio-economic development, especially of the most vulnerable and women.
- Practices and approaches to improve the nexus between land tenure security and the different aspects of socio-economic development (education, political participation, food security, social status, gender equality, etc.) are shared.
- Improved network between the experts and participants dealing with the topic.
- A database containing the presentations and the report of the outcomes of the discussions are shared (through a Google Drive file).

The proceedings of the two days, recommendations and conclusions detailed above showed that the EGM succeeded to fulfill all planned outputs.

During the different six topics covered in the EGM, and the following discussion groups experts and participants shared their activities in their respective countries with regards to women land tenure securities, and how they were developed to respond to the different country contexts.

Experts and NGOs representatives elaborated on the practices and approaches they follow to improve the nexus and relevance of land tenure security and socioeconomic empowerment. These initiatives included conducting research on women status and land tenure security, provision of legal and economic empowerment support, involving influential figures in awareness campaigns, working with Sharia court, land authority among others, integrating women in all levels of program implementation, and developing open-source databases.

All participants contact information was shared, so that future meetings and actions can be planned to build on the EGM's findings and recommendations.

In addition, a Goggle Drive file was developed which included all presentations and documents shared during the EGM, and this narrative report aims to capture the outcomes of the discussions and possible future actions and strategies.

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### Annex 1: EGM Agenda

Expert Group Meeting on evidence-based linkages between access to land and socio-economic development and empowerment, especially for women		
Day 1 Monday Feb 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2021 10:00 AM –3:00 PM Jerusalem Time Zoom online meeting		
Opening session		
Time	Activity/Description	Facilitator/speakers
10:00 am – 10:25 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming of participants</li> <li>• Opening remarks</li> <li>• UN-Habitat/GLTN opening remarks</li> <li>• Introduction into the event and the overall Programme</li> </ul>	Do'a Zayed (UAWC) Fuad Abu Seif (UAWC) Ombretta Tempra (UN-Habitat/GLTN) Hiba Al-Jibeihi (Past UAWC employee)
10:25 am – 10:35 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roundtable and short presentation of each presenter/presenting institution</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Sawsan Sarsour
Grassroots Women Voice		
10:35 am – 10:40 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women accessing land and its impact on their socio-economic development</li> </ul>	Short video
Session 1: Introductory session		
Time	Topic	Presenters

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<p>10:40 am – 11:00 am</p>	<p><b>Topic 1:</b> <b>Definitions of land tenure security and women’s socio-economic aspects in the Arab region</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation (10 min)</li> <li>- Discussion (20 min)</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitator: Sawsan Sarsour (UAWC)</p> <p>Speaker: Rafic Khouri (AUS)</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sina Schlimmer (UN-Habitat/GLTN)</li> <li>- Samah Jaber (UAWC)</li> <li>- Rafeef Abdel Razek (WB)</li> <li>- Hadeel Al Barghouthi (PLA)</li> </ul>
<p>11:10 am– 11:40am</p>	<p><b>Topic 2:</b> <b>Overview of women tenure rights in the Arab region: what do we know?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation (10 min)</li> <li>- Discussion (20 min)</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitator: Sawsan Sarsour (UAWC)</p> <p>Presenter: Sina Schlimmer (UN-Habitat/GLTN)</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rafic Khouri (AUS)</li> <li>- Samah Jaber (UAWC)</li> <li>- Rafeef Abdel Razek (WB)</li> <li>- Hadeel Al Barghouthi (PLA)</li> </ul>
<p>11: 40 am – 12:10 am</p>	<p><b>Topic 3:</b> <b>The nexus between socio-economic development and land rights for women in the Arab region</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation (10 min)</li> <li>- Discussion (20 min)</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitator: Sawsan Sarsour (UAWC)</p> <p>Presenter: Samah Jaber (UAWC)</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rafic Khouri (AUS)</li> <li>- Sina Schlimmer (UN-Habitat/GLTN)</li> <li>- Rafeef Abdel Razek (WB)</li> <li>- Hadeel Al Barghouthi (PLA)</li> </ul>
<p>12:10 pm – 12:30 pm</p>	<p><b>- Questions and remarks on the presentations</b></p>	<p>Facilitator: Sawsan Sarsour (UAWC)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Organizing the discussion groups (10 min)</b></p>		

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<b>1<sup>st</sup> Discussion Group</b>		
<b>Defining Land Rights and Socio-Economic Development of Women in the Arab region</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Guiding questions</b>	
12:40 pm – 1:25 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After defining the terms, is access to land sufficient? What is the basic requirement that guarantees the right (access, control, or use)?</li> <li>• What is the theoretical and practical difference between access to, control over and use of land?</li> <li>• Are these terms used differently between Arab countries? If yes, what are the differences particularly in countries under conflict?</li> <li>• What is women’s socio-economic empowerment? And why is it important for women in the Arab region?</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Rafic Khouri (AUS)
1:25 pm – 1:40 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions and recommendations</li> </ul>	All participants
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Discussion Group</b>		
<b>Overview of women tenure rights in the Arab region</b>		
12:40 pm – 1:25 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why should women tenure rights be given more attention and care in the Arab region?</li> <li>• How secure are women’s land rights in the Arab region, compared to other regions of the world?</li> <li>• Women's tenure rights in light of occupation and conflict.</li> <li>• What are the factors that increase women’s vulnerability regarding land rights violation and expropriation, especially in conflict-affected areas?</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Sina Sclimmer (UN-Habitat/GLTN)
1:25 pm – 1:40 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions and recommendations</li> </ul>	All participants

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<b>3rd discussion Group</b> <i>The nexus between socio-economic development and access to, control over and use of land for women</i>		
12:40 pm – 1:25 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does women's land tenure enable them economically? Is there a linkage between secure access to and control over land by women and their economic activities (local markets, investment, etc.)</li> <li>How does access to knowledge and awareness about the economic assets and rights empower women?</li> <li>Through accessing land and natural resources and the acquired awareness, women could be encouraged to participate in local decision-making (in different areas). Has that been observed in the Arab region?</li> <li>How is food security and socio-economic empowerment of women correlates?</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Samah Jaber (UAWC)
1:25 pm – 1:40 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conclusions and recommendations</li> </ul>	All participants
<b>Closing session</b>		
1:40 pm – 2:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing of the conclusions and recommendation of the discussion groups</li> <li>Final remarks and takeaways</li> <li>Preview of Day 2</li> </ul>	Group facilitators (Rafic Khouri, Sina Schlimmer, Samah Jaber)  Sina Schlimmer (GLTN)  Sawsan Sarsour (UAWC)
<b>End of Day 1</b>		

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<b>Day 2</b> <b>Tuesday Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021</b> <b>10:00 AM –3:10 PM - Jerusalem Time</b> <b>Zoom online meetings</b>		
<b>Opening</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity/Description</b>	<b>Facilitator/speakers</b>
10:00 am – 10:20 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcoming of participants</li> <li>• Recap of Day 1</li> <li>• Day 2 Agenda</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Do'a Zayed (UAWC)
<b>Session 1: Introductory session</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Presenters</b>
10:20 am – 10:50 am	<b>Topic 4:</b> <b>Women Land rights: Sources and barriers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation (10 min)</li> <li>- Discussion (20 min)</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Do'a Zayed (UAWC)  Speaker: Shahd Mustafa (GLA)  Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dina Naguib (HBRC)</li> <li>- Ala Manour (IYCY)</li> <li>- Salah Abu Kashawa (ISTIDAMA)</li> <li>- Mariam Ismael (WATC)</li> </ul>
10:50 am – 1:20 am	<b>Topic 5:</b> <b>Role of Governments in enhancing women land rights in the Arab region</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation (10 min)</li> <li>- Discussion (20 min)</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Do'a Zayed (UAWC)  Speaker: Dina Naguib (HBRC)  Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shahd Mustafa (GLA)</li> <li>- Ala Mansour (IYCY)</li> <li>- Salah Abu Kashawa (ISTIDAMA)</li> <li>- Mariam Ismael (WATC)</li> </ul>

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11:20 am – 11:50 am	<p><b>Topic 6:</b> <b>Role of civil society organizations, academia, and individuals in enhancing women land rights in the Arab region</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation (10 min)</li> <li>- Discussion (20 min)</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitator: Do'a Zayed (UAWC)</p> <p>Speaker: Ala Mansour (IYCY)</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dina Naguib (HBRC)</li> <li>- Shahd Mustafa (GLA)</li> <li>- Salah Abu Kashawa (ISTIDAMA)</li> <li>- Mariam Ismael (WATC)</li> </ul>
11:50 pm – 12:20 pm	- Questions and remarks on the presentations	Facilitator: Do'a Zayed (UAWC)
<b>Organizing the Discussion Groups (10 min)</b>		
<b>4th Discussion Group</b> <b>Women Land rights: Sources and barriers</b>		
12:30 pm – 1:15 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do women access, control and use lands? What are the social factors that enhance their access, control and use?</li> <li>• Gender-based bias in land rights: Are the legal and administrative processes for women to access land different of those for men?</li> <li>• What are the main obstacles to women's land tenure security? (with focus on the legal and administrative barriers, illiteracy and lack of knowledge, patriarchal and societal traditions and customary laws).</li> <li>• How do Arab countries differ in terms of these obstacles?</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Shahd Mustafa (GLA)
1:15 pm – 1:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions and recommendations</li> </ul>	All participants

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<b>5th Discussion Group</b> <b>Role of Governments in enhancing women land rights in the Arab region</b>		
12:30 pm – 1:15 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main actions taken by the different governments in the region to enhance women’s land rights and their socio-economic empowerment (land reform and legislation, fostering civil society engagement in women empowerment, etc.)?</li> <li>• Examples of governments reforms in terms of women land rights from the Arab region</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Dina Naguib (HBRC)
1:15 pm – 1:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions and recommendations</li> </ul>	All participants
<b>6th Discussion Group</b> <b>Role of civil society organizations, academia, and individuals in enhancing women land rights in the Arab region</b>		
12:30 pm – 1:15 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the activities undertaken by civil society organizations, including NGOs, associations, grassroots movements, also media and academia in promoting secure access to and control over land by women (through awareness raising, research, campaigning and lobbying, etc.)?</li> <li>• What is the role of women themselves in obtaining their tenure rights?</li> <li>• What are the work priorities to enhance women land rights for each of these actors?</li> </ul>	Facilitator: Ala Mansour (IYCY)
1:15 pm – 1:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions and recommendations</li> </ul>	All participants
<b>Closing session</b>		

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1:30 pm – 2:45 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of the conclusions and recommendation of the discussion groups</li> <li>• Follow-up strategies and the way forward</li> <li>• Final remarks and takeaways</li> </ul>	UAWC + Group facilitators
2:45 pm – 3: 00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing remarks</li> <li>• Closing remarks</li> </ul>	Moayyad Bsharat (UAWC) Sina Schlimmer (UN-Habitat/GLTN)
<b>End of Day 2</b>		