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On 14th December 2018, LANDac and its partners organised a public event to highlight the importance of Equal Land Rights for Women at the Humanity House in the Hague. The dialogue presented stories, film and photography from successful grassroots movements in Africa and the Netherlands on women’s rights to land. Speakers from the Netherlands and Malawi shared with the audience their experiences and the lessons we can learn from the role of local champions and the importance of building movements and international solidarity. This report shares some of the main experiences, reflections and discussions from the dialogue.

In many countries women do not have the rights to own land, not being able to have their names in land titles and consequently not being recognised as farmers. Yet they do most of the manual work and are an important part of the labour input in farms. Gender equity can

be strengthened by securing land use, access and legal recognition of women’s land rights.

LANDac coordinator Marthe Derkzen kicked off the event by welcoming everyone on behalf of LANDac and the Humanity House. Willemien Koning, Dutch Representative for UN Women

2018 and Chair of the Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture 'Women and Business', was the first speaker. She discussed the importance of bridging women's land rights efforts in the Netherlands to other parts of the world, her experience as a farmer in the Netherlands and her participation at the United Nations General Assembly this year.

One of the key points of Willemien's speech at the UN was the need for designing, revising and implementing laws to ensure that rural women are accorded full and equal rights to own land and other property, and raise awareness on equality of ownership.

The second speaker was Ellen Matupi, (vice-) president of the Rural Women Assembly & National Smallholder Farmers Association in Malawi. Ellen was at the forefront of the successful Women2Kilimanjaro Initiative, a mobilization of rural women from across Africa to guarantee and strengthen their land rights.

"We are farmer, and this means land. For me if we do not have land, we will not be farmers. That is why land rights is vital for us women."
– Ellen Matupi

Ellen shared outcomes from the 'Women's Land Rights in Africa' LANDac programme. She shared her hopes about Malawi's new land law that enables women and men to have land registered in their individual name or as a family. As one of the first rural women in Malawi, Ellen owns land in her name. Being a farmer herself, she knows how important it is to secure access to land to sustain a livelihood – even more so when women become widowed or divorced and risk losing their land to their former husband's relatives. Her work involves training women in how to read, write and do mathematics in order to give them the necessary tools to manage their own farms.

Imke Greven, policy Advisor Land Rights and coordinator of the 'Land learning journey on women's land rights in Myanmar' at Oxfam Novib was the third speaker. Imke shared inspiring stories from 28 women around the world and showed the impact of strong solidarity across continents and the need for platforms for women to share their lived experiences.

"Land does not belong to us. We belong to the land." – Imke Greven

Imke argued that women's land rights are not just about the land, but also about the access and control over natural resources and the ability to work with and make decisions about land. Moreover, she reflected on some key points regarding women's land rights such as the injustices of the past that still live today and concluded that "the greatest asset we have, is our solidarity."

The last speaker Klarien Kligen from the Association *Toekomstboeren* and former community farmer at the *Groentehof* made a clear link between women's land rights in the Global South and the constraints she encounters as a woman farmer in the Netherlands. Klarien talked about the struggles new farmers face when it comes to access to land in the Netherlands and about the collective approach of farmers and citizens to turn this situation around.

Klarien shared personal stories about her own desire to be a farmer, her quest for land, and what it means to participate in the *Toekomstboeren* association. She talked about the shared learning that new farmers build through telling their own experiences in the association and the discussions regarding the need for a reform on existing processes and new forms of farming and access to land rights in the Netherlands.

Dialogue

After the four talks, Barbara Codispoti from Oxfam Novib opened the floor to the audience. The debate started with the role of women in nature conservation and farming technologies, further discussion on farmland acquisition in the Netherlands and its bottlenecks, and the role of men in the advancement of women's land rights worldwide. Ellen shared her insights on women's participation in decision making in Malawi and Barbara shared a story from her home country where women were at the forefront of the fight for agrarian reform in Calabria, Italy in the 1950s. This story illustrated the role of women in the frontline of

change through history, concluding this inspiring dialogue.

Closing

After two hours of lively discussions and inspiring stories, the dialogue highlighted the role of local champions like Ellen and Klarien and stressed the importance of building movements and international solidarity.

The dialogue concluded with a collection of shared ideas on the necessity of the advancement of equal land rights for women and the consequences regarding women's role in families and communities, ultimately transforming societies.



Thanks to all those participating in the Gender Justice: Equal Land Rights for Women Dialogue 2018: ActionAid Netherlands, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kadaster International, Both Ends, Oxfam Novib, Agriterra and Toekomstboeren.

This is a report by LANDac – the Netherlands Land Academy for equitable and sustainable development. For more information on the dialogue or our work, please contact LANDac's coordinator Marthe Derkzen: m.l.derkzen@uu.nl or visit our website: www.landgovernance.org
