




Five Years into the SDGs: Are we on track to deliver the land targets?

A Webinar Report





This virtual side event was proposed as part of the **2020 SDG High Level Political Forum** which was held from 7th to 16th July 2020. It was organised by the SDG Land Momentum Group, an informal group of civil society organizations and multilateral agencies which advocate the implementation of the land targets of the SDGs and support their monitoring.

Acknowledging the centrality of land issues to end hunger and achieve sustainable development, countries have agreed to meet ambitious land targets by 2030. Five years into the SDGs, persistent land insecurity, land evictions, threats to land rights defenders and other challenges show that the land promises are not being delivered.

These challenges are now compounded with Covid-19 where economic downturns and job losses or insecurity across the world are creating havoc even among those who used to count on reliable and sufficient income. A strong pattern of reversed migration takes place, while government resources are thinly stretched.

In this webinar we discussed with participants where we stand and considered joint strategies to meet the **land-related SDG targets**, namely: 1.4, 2.3, 5.a and 15.3. Panelists explored the threats to women and men's secure access to land amid the current COVID-19 world pandemic, as well as how the SDG commitments can help address these challenges and how to support Member States' delivery on their land commitments.

Moderator:

- Rukshana Nanayakkara, Global Policy and Advocacy Expert at the International Land Coalition (ILC)

Panelists:

- Patricia Chaves, Director of Espacio Feminista
- Diana Fletschner, Senior Director of Research, Evaluation and Learning at Landesa
- Liv Nielsen, Land and SDGs officer at the Latin American and the Caribbean Initiative of the International Land Coalition (ILC)

A complete recording of the webinar can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfpDawRRQMA>



Key Takeaways

- **Building partnerships and collecting and analysing data from the ground is key to drive change, to shift power particularly in the benefit of women. They have been particularly vulnerable amid the pandemic to lose access to their lands and to hunger.**
- **There are promising examples on land rights in the Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) which countries submitted recently to report on progress towards the SDGs. They include countries like Ecuador, Honduras, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Liberia. However, five years into the Agenda 2030, most of the VNRs make no mention of land rights and only a handful of countries have reported on the land rights indicators.**
- **Despite social distance and public offices closed during the pandemic, civil society organisations have managed to be creative during the pandemic and keep alive the efforts to promote land governance, gender equitable land tenure rights. But there is still a long way ahead. Most governments are not reporting on the land-related SDG targets and indicators. And when information exists, it is not accessible.**
- **All groups can support in the SDGs monitoring and reporting. The SDG Momentum Group is developing a simple template for governments and civil society to report against specific land commitments. There will soon be a campaign to spread this template and collect land-related information while we wait for the official data to become available, which normally takes longer.**

Webinar Summary

1) WHAT CHALLENGES HAS COVID 19 POSED FOR PEOPLE'S LAND RIGHTS?

- People's land rights situation in Brazil was already quite bad, particularly for women, because we are talking about a country where informality - of the economy, of land rights - is huge. 22% of the population live in slums and are invisible to the government and have little access to policies. COVID-19 has deepened the problems of informality
- The insecurity of land affects essentially women. We have seen widows of the COVID-19 who are threatened to have their lands taken away right at the funeral ceremony. The threats are not only coming from large companies, but from next door neighbors.

- The Espaço Feminista is supporting communities and particularly women on two different levels: first, addressing the concrete problems of hunger and lack of dignity which have worsened with the pandemic. We organized a campaign to collect food supplies and cleaning products to donate to the women, where we also had much support from the private sector. Secondly, we build a network of supporters, including lawyers and government officials, who are helping to ensure women's rights to land and other public policies.

2) HOW DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS ARE USING THE 2030 FRAMEWORK TO ACHIEVE LAND RIGHTS AND WHAT PROGRESS HAVE THEY MADE?

- 47 out of more than 200 countries have submitted the so-called Voluntary National Report at the HLPF report on their progress. These reports show some good examples with regard to land rights. We can celebrate, for instance, the government of Ecuador which reported ongoing efforts to formalize land rights of over 70.000 smallholders. The government of Bangladesh has been paying special attention to women's land rights by working on a project called "My House, My Farm" which will benefit 40.000 villages, including close to 700.000 women. There are good examples from the government of Tanzania, which is coordinating a multi-stakeholder platform to advance women's land rights, and the government of Liberia, which promised to improve land access to rural people through the Land Rights Act passed in 2018
- These are promising steps, but there is still considerable work ahead to meet the SDG commitments. Five years into the Agenda 2030, 1/3 of the way through, we find that the vast majority of the countries have not adjusted the land commitments to their realities, have not enacted the necessary legal reforms, and have not reported on their (lack of) progress on land rights. Most of the VNRs make no mention of land rights and only a handful of countries have reported on the land rights indicators.
- We can and must do better. COVID-19 has compounded the problems and challenges, but we have had 5 years to get on a promising path and we have not taken this opportunity.

3) HOW HAS CIVIL SOCIETY GRAPPLED WITH THESE CHALLENGES AND TRIED TO REPORT PROGRESS?

- Threats to land rights already existed. Covid made it worse. But despite the social distance, national, regional and personal challenges, civil society organizations managed to be creative and resourceful through the whole process. There has been teamwork and commitment from the organisations to promote land governance, gender equitable land tenure rights. There has also been support from ILC and Landesa with monitoring and training. Finally, financial support was crucial and allowed us to hire researchers and consultants to analyse information on land rights.

- Sometimes it is difficult to comprehend and analyse info related to land. Many countries decided not to include information related to land. Public offices were closed with the pandemic. All this made it even harder for us to obtain and to compare and contrast information. Very often, we see that governments do not report on land, there is no analysis relating to the SDG targets and indicators. And when information exists, it is not accessible.

4) CONSIDERING YOUR CURRENT ROLE, WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST FOR 2021 FOR COUNTRIES TO MEET THE LAND TARGETS BY 2030 OR FOR BETTER REPORTING OF LAND TARGETS?

- **Patricia:** We cannot only rely on countries to implement the Goals. Civil society also plays an important role in monitoring and can support governments to shift power. The collection of evidence is key. For example, in a Brazilian municipality called Bonito, Espaço Feminista collected evidence and discovered that 75% of people lived in insecure urban and rural settlements, in land which belonged to the municipality. We called the municipality and we are in the process of regulating access to this land, underscoring that it should be registered in the name of women. It is also important to understand the role of the private sector, highlight any negative effects of investments, but also the positive stories and mobilize their support. Therefore, to meet the land targets, we need to collect and analyse data - to empower communities and support the government - and build partnerships.
- **Diana:** You can support this process of monitoring regardless of where you sit. Non-state parties can support governments to advance actions towards land rights by leveraging the reporting. The SDGs are an extraordinary tool – an impressive amplifier of good work and an effective mechanism to hold governments accountable. But we have to convince stakeholders to report. Towards this goal, the SDG Land Momentum Group developed templates relatively simple, for governments and civil society, to report against specific commitments, namely: to ensure secure land rights for all, to ensure land access by small agricultural producers and to gender-equitable land rights. For each of these commitments, we are asking what the responsible authority is doing and what data is available. Official data from statistical offices is of course important, but this info will take time to be published. So in the meantime, we can help with gathering and showing some data, to move forward with these commitments.
- **Liv:** Land related data is not easy to come across with, therefore, it is necessary to strengthen dialogue between civil society and governments, to get direct access to information. But civil society also needs support to fulfil its role. The technical and financial support received in past years has been crucial and will continue to be in the future. It is also important to develop a common communications strategy to support organisations to better communicate their reports to society, to raise awareness of people who are not necessarily familiar with such global commitments.

Notable Quotes from the Panelists



“WE CANNOT ONLY RELY ON COUNTRIES TO IMPLEMENT THE GOALS. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REPORTING AND IMPLEMENTING. IF WE ARE TO MEET THE TARGETS AND GOALS, WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THE CHANGES THAT COME FROM GOOD POLICIES, GOOD GOVERNANCE. WE HAVE TO LOOK AS WELL TO CIVIL SOCIETY, PROMOTE A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH, WORKING WITH LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS.”

- PATRICIA CHAVES, DIRECTOR OF ESPACO FEMINISTA



“IT IS TOO EASY TO GET DISTRACTED BY COVID-19. LAND RIGHTS ISSUES CONTINUE TO BE THE FOUNDATION FOR THE POST-COVID WORLD WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE. LET’S WORK TOGETHER AND LEVERAGE THE ONCE-IN-A-GENERATION OPPORTUNITY AFFORDED BY THE SDGS.”

- DIANA FLETSCHER, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, EVALUATION AND LEARNING AT LANDESA



“THE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT AS WELL AS THE TRAINING ON MONITORING HAVE BEEN VITAL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE MONITORING AND REPORTING OF THE LAND-RELATED SDG TARGETS. THESE RESOURCES, AS WELL AS COORDINATION, FOR EXAMPLE THROUGH A COMMON COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY WILL CONTINUE TO BE CRUCIAL FOR NEXT YEAR.”

- LIV NIELSEN, LAND AND SDGS OFFICER AT THE LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN INITIATIVE OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION (ILC)



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