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### **Official Travel Report**

**Topic:** "Securing Women's Access to Land – Linking Research and Action": Inception workshop held by MISR and PLAAS for the small grants programme in Eastern and Southern Africa

**Date:** 19-23 May 2008, Nairobi (Kenya)

**From:** Sabine Pallas, Mike Taylor

**Circulation:** ILC members Africa: LandNet West Africa; ULA, ZERO Regional; AAP, AFRA, CEBEDES, CPM, KENFAP, KLA, LAMOSIA, LandNet Malawi, MACOFA, RECONCILE, SAFIRE, UEFA, ZLA, IUF, IFAD, FAO, GLTN; ILC partners Africa: Huairou Commission, GLTN Gendered land tools workshop participants, MISR, PLAAS, IDRC.

This note to file gives some information on the programme and participants of the meeting.

#### **1. Background**

ILC is undertaking a 30 month research project, with the overarching aim of learning from women and respond to their needs through applied research. Research carried out under this project will focus on a) legal frameworks/policy – implementation gaps; b) women's agency; c) linkages between land and other resources; d) gendered implications of social/economic changes (especially HIV/AIDS, conflict, migration). It will not only provide evidence but also a platform to promote and advocate for a transformative agenda that supports rural poor women to improve their access to and control over land and other natural (and productive) resources, and will be integrated with the wider advocacy relationships and programmes of ILC.

The overall result expected will be an enhanced understanding of complex power relations and how they continue to hinder women's access to land. By learning from women and using this knowledge in trying to influence the formulation and implementation of relevant policies, women's role as change agents is strengthened.

The project document<sup>1</sup> explains in detail how the various activities under the three objectives will be interlinked, with the key activity being a small grant programme for action-oriented research to be implemented by two partner institutions in Africa, namely, the Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR) of Makerere University in Uganda and the Programme of Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) of the University of the Western Cape in South Africa.

One of the key activities in the start-up phase of the small grants programme in the sub-regions is the inception workshop, a key moment in the development of proposals for action-oriented research. Originally, one workshop per sub-region was to be held, with organizations that had expressed interest invited to participate in capacity-building sessions, specifically designed to assist them in developing their proposals, including with feedback from their peers present at the workshop. The inception workshop was to be a

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<sup>1</sup> available at <http://www.landcoalition.org/program/programmes.html>

moment of capacity-strengthening for all participating organizations, even if their proposals were not chosen.

It was decided by MISR and PLAAS to pool their resources and organize just one inception workshop, so as to ensure a coherent approach and allow for a sharing of experience and knowledge across the two sub-regions.

The inception workshop's main goal was to build the capacity of organizations that submitted expression of interest to participate in the small grants programme. The capacity-building sessions were relevant to the project, but rather than focusing this capacity-building only on organizations participating in the project, however, the inception workshop was conceived to include all (or most) of the organizations interested in the project before selecting the participating organizations.

## **2. The inception workshop - programme and participants**

More than 40 participants have been invited, representing organizations from 8 countries (Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda for Eastern Africa; Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Madagascar and Zimbabwe, for Southern Africa). Organizations represented varied widely, from grassroots women's movements to academic institutions, as well as several NGOs engaged on women's issues, but from different starting points. Most organizations had submitted expressions of interest in partnership with others, so that different ways of working and skills were represented in each proposal. Were expressions of interest fit very evidently with others submitted from the same country, organizations were encouraged to consider working in partnership (prior to and during the workshop). A list of participants is attached.

### **Day 1: Introduction - Building a Community of Learning & Key Issues**

Connie Freeman, IDRC regional director, opened with remarks on IDRC's mandate and the history of the project on Gender and Tenure that produced scoping studies for nine sub-regions, including the two sub-regions covered in this project. ILC then gave a brief presentation on the nature and purpose of the coalition, the background to ILC's involvement with IDRC, the genesis of this project and ILC's role in it, as well as the way that the small grants programme and other activities in this project are interlinked.

To introduce the small grants programme, MISR and PLAAS provided a roadmap **of the project**, highlighting the conceptual framework and methodological approach for the project. Also covered were other resources, events, activities, synergies, deliverables, etc. offered by the project, the community of learning and practice, and any possible linkages to other projects.

These introductory presentations were followed by a number of exercises, including a participatory exercise on **building a community of practice** that helped find a common understanding of what such a community is, how it can be established and coordinated, what resources are needed, and what are some of the key elements for successful sharing. This was followed by another exercise to define the key issues on women's access to and control over land to be addressed by this project through collecting 'burning issues' from each organization's experience and grouping these into categories identified for further research in the work leading up to this project.

The ILC consultant then introduced the background paper written for this workshop to link the project into a **global context** and encouraged feedback. The presentation

focused on the current state of knowledge and debate on women's worldwide land tenure security and a discussion of rural women's agency for their empowerment.

### **Day 2: Concepts for Action Research in East & Southern Africa**

The second day focused on the proposals to be developed by the participating organizations. The first session introduced a concept map on which all concept notes presented were to be placed to visualize the spread across the sub-regions. Participants were then clustered according to the themes predominating in their concept notes.

Each organizations or group of organizations that had submitted an expression of interest was then asked to briefly present their concept in a poster session, highlighting the issues to be addressed, partners involved, and methodologies to be used. The aim of this session was to stimulate feedback from the group (peer review) on innovative/strong points of each concept note, as well as weaknesses/points that needed strengthening, thus engaging participants on the other concept notes submitted.

A total of 26 concept notes were presented. For Eastern Africa, the number was larger, as MISR is following the process originally agreed to select only after the workshop. For Southern Africa, there were fewer concept notes, as 4 of them had been pre-selected to develop full proposals (1 of which was encouraged to form a partnership with another organization in the same country), while 2 organizations representing joint expressions of interest had been informed that they were not selected. It remains to be clarified by PLAAS whether all of the organizations present will submit a proposal and how the selection process will be finalized.

### **Day 3: Bringing the Project to Life: Concepts, Action Research & Methodology**

The day began with an interactive session on **gender concepts**, with the aim of finding a common definition of 'gender' for the project, highlighting some of the key elements of a definition, such as power relations and changeability over time.

The next session was critical to the project since it introduced the concept of **action research**, about which the understanding among participants was uneven. Definitions, concepts, and main approaches of action research were given by MISR, stressing, amongst other things, the participatory nature of action research, for instance, encouraging ownership by the community and providing the opportunity for them to voice opinions, even if these are at odds with those of the researchers. This session provoked many questions, including on methods to be used and their shortcomings, as well as questions on how to make sure to be continuously reflective, and it was felt that there was still a level of discomfort with the concept of action research and two of the participating organizations with relevant experience (Nkuzi Development Association from South Africa and VEDCO from Uganda) were asked to briefly present practical examples from their work.

The afternoon session started with a **role play on gender and land** that brought out some of the key issues affecting women's access, including legal pluralism (multiple customary laws; customary laws and the legacy of colonialism; customs as 'used against' women's empowerment) and positionality (i.e. position within a community/society according to race, caste, etc. in addition to gender) and how this impacts on women's access to and control over land through participation (or lack of it) in decision-making. The role play showed that there are overlapping legal

domains rather than a gap between statutory and customary laws, and that there are many examples for women's access/control, good and bad, in both customary and statutory laws. It also clearly emerged that, to bring about change, we need to focus on advocacy, involving men at all levels, starting with community leaders. It was also stressed that children should be engaged because not only are (or will) they be affected, but because they will not perpetuate discrimination as adults if they are informed and aware.

The closing session took a closer look at **gender sensitive methodology for action research**, focusing on tools/methods that participants are planning to use and suggesting additional ones. Tools discussed included: key informant *interviews*/in-depth interviews; *focus groups discussions*, life history (anthropological method), literature review, questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative), *observation* (anthropological method), community meetings, validation workshop, *reflective methods*. Other methods presented in addition to the above included: daily activity calendars, transect walks (map out gender spaces); mapping and diagramming (can be creative with tools used); and visual methods (photography/video). Those in italics were then discussed in groups, with the help of the following questions:

- What are some gender challenges to using these tools? How these be addressed?
- Does the method contribute to answering your research question?
- How do you ensure that women's concerns/priorities are addressed?
- Does the method contribute to women's empowerment?
- At what level can this method be used?

The main challenges identified and suggestions to overcome them were, as follows:

**Interviews:** domination by a few people, especially if group interviews (men, those with status in community); women face constraints to talk in public or with outsiders; interviewers may be biased; earning trust and being accepted by interviewees takes time (depending on how you present yourself whether man or woman); how you pose questions can influence the answer.

*Overcome challenges:* ask questions that are sensitive to cultural context; leave behind stereotypes; ask specific questions that leave little room for interpretation; understand differences between women and men and the ways they express themselves (key informant interview, length, group interviews, how many times to speak to each person, how long in the village, how do you set them up).

**Focus group discussions:** fear to share, domination by men, age positionality, selection of venue and time that does not allow for participation of women.

*Overcome challenges:* chose location and time of day sensibly to include women, similar as for interviews, above.

**Observation:** difficult to capture feelings, underlying causes – gender issues are experience specific; observer can have their own interpretation, too much room for assumptions, men and women express themselves differently, people can change their behaviour if they know they are being observed.

*Overcome challenges:* make sure to understand the context, be discreet, don't assume. While it can be helpful to use observation to identify patterns of participation, it cannot be used in isolation, only together with other methods.

**Questionnaires:** are limited in scope; risk of 'leading questions' that evoke a certain type of answer; assume sincerity; leave room for interpretation.

*Overcome challenges:* select questions carefully (need to be specific and not leave so much room for interpretation), use different kinds of questionnaires and surveys – quantitative and qualitative; use open-ended questions; pre-test questionnaires; make them concise (long questionnaires risk getting incomplete answers).

There are some **common challenges** to all of the above; including the importance of timing, as depending on workload, people may not be available to speak at length. Since you are asking people to dedicate their time, this is as important as location/venue. Language is another challenge, as translation can alter outcomes significantly by interpreting what is being said (or written in case of questionnaires), but it is important also to be mindful of the register of language uses with different people, and, in some cases, of what conceptual language to use, e.g. with traditional leaders, instead of gender, it was suggested to speak of equal opportunities for women and men to avoid them backing off immediately. It was also noted that qualitative methods are often superior to explore gender issues, since these are conditioned by attitudes and opinions that are hard to capture with quantitative methods.

#### **Day 4:** A View from the Grassroots: Field Visit

Three field trips were organized on Day 4 to allow for an improved understanding of the Kenyan context and a sharing of the experience of groups working with GROOTS Kenya. Two field trips went to Samburu, outside of Nairobi, the third one to the Ministry of Lands and Mathare slum in Nairobi.

ILC staff went on the field trip to the Ministry of Lands – Commission on Land, an opportunity to find out about the progress on developing a new land policy, though the audience was fairly short and unfortunately due to a strategy development workshop at the Ministry, the officials present were informed only at the last minute and thus not prepared for many of the points raised.

Following the appointment at the Ministry, the group continued to Mathare, the second biggest slum in Kenya, to meet the women of the Mathare Mothers Development Association, a group of caregivers that have also established a crèche and a programme of vocational training for youth in the slum. In Mathare, the group also visited an IDP camp to which several hundred inhabitants of Mathare had moved after the election troubles in December. The conversations with some of the people in the camp as well as the coordinator from the Red Cross showed the complexity of any emergency situation, especially poignant in this case, where the IDP camp is only hundreds of meters away from the community in which those now displaced used to live. The Red Cross is providing psycho-social counseling and trying to bring the community together through socio-cultural initiatives, however, the difficulty of overcoming the distrust and anger created through the violence is evident. IN addition, this being a slum area, the camp is actually offering an improvement in food security for some of the people in it, so that the incentive to leave is small at best.

Information on the other field trips will be included in the forthcoming workshop report.

## **Day 5: Developing Proposals & Projects**

The last day of the workshop focused on the concept notes from which proposals are to be developed, starting with a session on proposal writing by the Director of MISR to assist participants in further developing their concept notes that had already been subject to a peer review on Day 2.

The **proposal writing** session highlighted that a proposal, first and foremost, needs to match the focus of the donor to be successful – and that careful preparation, including through researching the donor’s policies and programmes, providing a context through literature review and identifying gaps in existing research, leading to a problem statement that justifies the research to be undertaken and specific objectives to be achieved.

The section that draws most comments from reviewers is usually that on methodology. Strong methodologies explain the rationale behind choosing certain methods and how this responds to the research objectives. Describing methods in detail is a good idea, including quantification (how many people to interview, in what timeframe) and a plan for data collection, processing and analysis – while these are the elements that are subject to change, the methodology behind using certain methods should not change during the research.

Other important topics to be addressed in a research proposal are ethical guidelines (national or donor’s guidelines), results (including tangible outputs and expected, possibly more long-term, outcomes, if possible also development impacts) and dissemination, a plan for policy advocacy for projects such as this one, and, last but not least, information on the institution and team to be involved in the research (which expertise), as well as, if applicable, partnerships with other organizations.

Any proposal should include a timeline (detailed work plan) and budget for planned activities, as well as a section on monitoring and evaluation to explain how results will be measured (including through the use of indicators) and learnt from.

The session was complemented with an exercise, using a sample proposal to be improved based on the key elements presented. Based on the exercise, the key characteristics of a good proposal were summarized as follows: quality (strong argument, fair and balanced, written persuasively); excellent clear thinking and planning (logical flow throughout); and knowledge of guidelines is essential (objectives of the donor need to be addressed in proposal for it to convince!). Regarding the flexibility/adaptability key to action research, it was stressed that the proposal should be clear on methodology, so that any changes made due to circumstances could be explained later.

Participants then discussed **project management arrangements** per sub-region with MISR and PLAAS, followed by a session per concept note to refine research questions further and discuss partnering. (More information to be provided by RRIIs).

### **3. Other follow-up:**

1. Share papers and presentation, as well as workshop report with ILC membership as soon as it is made available
2. Gather workshop information and make it available through the ILC website
3. Encourage participants to provide feedback to and inputs for background document and annotated bibliography
4. Gather(from participants and elsewhere) and share tools through the ILC website (dedicated space for this project)
5. Find out about technical modalities of establishing and running a listserve for MISR

A detailed workshop report is forthcoming. For documentation related to the inception workshop, including papers and presentations, please go to:

<http://www.landcoalition.org/program/programmes.html>

### Annex 1: List of Participants

NO	NAME	COUNTRY	ORGANIZATION
1	Mary Njeri Gichiru	Kenya	ECWD
2	Flavia Trevisani	Rwanda	LWOB
3	Florence Munganyese	Rwanda	SHARING-RWANDA
4	Annette Mukiga	Rwanda	Rwanda Women Network
5	Carol Kayira	Malawi	Action Aid/Landnet Malawi
6	Immaculate Agedo	Uganda	NAWOU
7	Prisca Shabalala	South Africa	RWM
8	Sizani Ngumbane	South Africa	RWM
9	Mujuzi-Mujabi Sarah	Uganda	VEDCO
10	Graca Samo	Mozambique	FORUM MULHEN
11	Tulezi Clement	Kenya	Shelter Forum
12	Veronica Kamanga Nyiko	Malawi	Women Legal Resources Centre
13	Rosemary Mburu	Kenya	KANCO
14	Mugenyi Milly	Uganda	CEEWA-U
15	Marren Akatsa Bukachi	Uganda	EASSI
16	Sophie Dhatemwa	Uganda	FHRI
17	Judy Adoko	Uganda	LEMU
18	Mpalanyi Micheal	Uganda	ULA
19	Everlyne Nairesiae	Kenya	GROOTS Kenya
20	Phides Mashavidza	Zimbabwe	Women Farmers Association
21	Maggie Kathewera Banda	Malawi	Women Legal Resources Centre
22	Teresa Yates	South Africa	Nkuzi Development Association
23	Ximena Andreade	Mozambique	FORUM MULHEN
24	Kanaidza Abwao	Kenya	GUS Development Consultancy
25	Andre Cristiano Jose	Mozambique	Cruzeiro Do Sul
26	Jacqueline Akello	Uganda	URDT
27	Ramaroson Mino	Madagascar	SIF (HARDI)
28	Ramiaramanana Danielle	Madagascar	FOFIFA
29	Ravoniarison Lilia	Madagascar	SIF
30	Andriananonjy Fidy	Madagascar	SIF
31	Sabine Pallas	Italy	ILC
32	Michael Taylor	Italy	ILC
33	Abby Sebina Zziwa	Uganda	MISR
34	Ritu Verma	South Africa	PLAAS
35	George Bogere	Uganda	MISR
36	Saskia Ivens	Canada	ILC Consultant