

# GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION IN LAND TOOL DEVELOPMENT

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) aims to establish a continuum of land rights, rather than just focus on individual land titling; improve and develop pro poor land management, as well as land tenure tools; unblock existing initiatives; assist in strengthening existing land networks; improve global coordination on land; assist in the development of gendered tools which are affordable and useful to the grassroots; and improve the general dissemination of knowledge about how to implement security of tenure.



## Introduction and Brief Overview

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) partners would like to ensure genuine grassroots participation in its land tool development initiatives, to ensure that high quality, pro poor and useful tools will be designed and used in practice. GLTN will, by developing, and implementing a 'grassroots mechanism', engage the grassroots in participating in tool development. This will ensure a virtual feedback loop between research and action, to enhance accountability, to be pro-poor, to deliver affordable land tools, to support community involvement, and to maximize policy impact.

Grassroots participation can be defined as 'a planned process whereby local groups are clarifying and expressing their own needs and objectives and taking collective action to meet them.' This definition indicates that grassroots communities have a role beyond simply giving their views, though incorporating this

wider active definition in tool testing may be difficult.

The grassroots should ordinarily be those groups who are the intended beneficiaries of the relevant tools. In urban areas this would include residents of informal settlements, low-income tenants, low income owners in slum conditions, IDPs and marginalised groups affected by urbanisation such as indigenous peoples and small farmers. In rural areas, the categories would cover small farmers (tenants, freehold, informal), small and nomadic pastoralists, landless labourers, indigenous peoples, other informal settlements, refugees and IDPs.

## Operationalising Land Tool Development

Pro poor land policies have been, and are being, developed in many countries, but in general, there has been a lack of political clout to implement the land policies at scale and make their presence on the ground significant. To ensure pro poor implementation at scale, the involve-

ment of the grassroots is crucial at all stages of the work of GLTN. Grassroots involvement is particularly important with respect to the issue of corruption. Not only do local people understand the myriad of ways in which illegal and unfair practices take place in the transfer of land, but they can help to design land tools which curtail this omnipresent problem. A pro-poor focus necessitates a bottom-up, participatory approach.

Thus, tools developed by GLTN and its partners should be created and disseminated in a way that is readily accessible to these communities. It is important that grassroots groups are able to both communicate and fully participate in all aspects of the tool development process and not simply be passive recipients of solutions developed for them. Thus, throughout the GLTN tool development lifespan, grassroots should be consulted in a way that takes into account their preferences, such as their technical capacities, literacy levels, time and financial constraints.



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## Grassroots Participation

For GLTN to be efficient and make a difference in terms of its impact on existing land realities, it will involve both a dimension of conceptual discussion and a more practical dimension of action. It is not possible for all grassroots individuals to participate in tool development. Methodologies have to be developed to make grassroots involvement feasible. Possible mechanisms for grassroots participation in tool development could be an inquiry procedure through community-based open workshops. However, general mechanisms of grassroots participation could be the following; Workshops, Public meetings, Community outreach, Elected committees/representatives, Focus groups, Joint project teams, Surveys, Participatory planning, Open house/resource centres, Referendums and Cultural activities/training etc. To ensure grassroots engagement, capacity building will also be necessary.

GLTN wants to improve the dissemination of knowledge. However, in many places, particularly in Africa, people both at the grassroots and the general population at large, do not have easy access to the information technologies that this Network will primarily be using, not to mention basic access to electricity and telephones. As women are over-represented at the grassroots, the technological

exclusion of the latter translates into the exclusion of many women. Furthermore, print material by itself has not been found to be an effective way to communicate with the grassroots. Women in these groups often lack the requisite literacy skills. Even when they are literate, the demands on their time precludes them from taking full advantage of print materials and publications which themselves may not be in formats that are accessible to this group.

This presents a challenge to GLTN which will have to be worked out.

## Proposal for a Way Forward

This first initial draft grassroots mechanism proposes a multi-stage approach and methodologies for systematic tool building, from preparation and analysis to the piloting/evaluation of pro poor and affordable tools. Each stage requires inputs, guidelines, checklists and action plans from grassroots. The process will be realised through the GLTN by the following steps which should be piloted to ensure a robust methodology is developed:

1. Sharing Grassroots Participation Approaches
2. Participatory Grassroots Land Analysis
3. Creating a Framework for Engaging Grassroots in Scalable Tool Development

4. Reviewing the Tools Inventory to Assess Grassroots Engagement
5. Piloting and Upscaling Existing Tools
6. Participation in the Development of New Tools
7. Developing monitoring and evaluation tools for grassroots.

No single partner has the capacity to undertake this hard and difficult process. It requires a clear road map, collaboration and guidelines from partners and is a costly process. Ensuring grassroots participation in the tool building process requires not merely the passion and commitment but the sharing of capacity, expertise, and experience of various partners. GLTN can provide coordination and an enabling mechanism for partners to undertake, as per their comparative advantage, this challenging, but vital endeavour to enhance grassroots participation into pro poor land tool development processes. This initial stage of GLTN will include wide consultation with grassroots to identify what their main needs are.

Proper representation of the grassroots at the global and regional levels of GLTN, as well as on the monitoring activities, will be put in place to see whether the needs of the grassroots are being taken into account. The GLTN International Advisory Council will regularly assess the extent to which the GLTN commitments are being acted upon.

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