

Power and Potential

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO COMMUNITY FORESTS

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Indigenous and rural women comprise more than half of the up to 2.5 billion people who rely on the world's community lands. They manage these lands to support their communities and families, yet **remain disproportionately constrained by unjust laws and regulations.**

Women comprise more than 1/2 of the



up to 2.5 billion people who rely on community lands

The study analyzed 80 legal frameworks comprised of national laws regulating community forest tenure in **30 low- and middle-income countries covering 78% of the developing world's forests.**



None of the 30 countries assessed are adequately respecting indigenous and rural women's tenure rights. Though all have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), not one meets the minimum standards established in the convention.

Secure community rights contribute to global goals on:



CLIMATE



INEQUALITY REDUCTION



PEACE



SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

But the benefits of community forest ownership can only be realized if women's rights within communities are recognized. Strong tenure rights for indigenous and rural women are essential to both women's and their communities':



HEALTH



FOOD SECURITY



EDUCATION

Most of the laws that specifically regulate community-level tenure rights fail to adequately protect women's rights within communities. Of the 80 legal frameworks analyzed, the proportion that have adequate protections for women's rights are only:

3% for voting rights

5% for leadership

10% for inheritance

18% for dispute resolution

29% for membership

The legal advancement of women and their communities go hand in hand.



Legal frameworks that provide avenues for communities to own forests, and those that are created with the express purpose of acknowledging community-based rights, provide the greatest protections for women's rights.



Conservation-oriented frameworks that regulate community forests offer the fewest and weakest protections for women's tenure rights, as compared to community- and natural resource exploitation-oriented frameworks.



There is a particularly pressing need for legal reforms regarding women's governance (voting and leadership) and inheritance rights.

Of the 80 legal frameworks analyzed:

GOVERNANCE (VOTING & LEADERSHIP)



Only **3%** adequately protect women's community-level voting rights



Only **5%** adequately protect women's community-level leadership rights

Women's rights to participate in community-level governance through voting and leadership are arguably the legal entitlements most necessary for asserting their voices in the decision-making processes that affect them.

INHERITANCE



73% fail to address community-level inheritance in any respect

Women's inheritance rights are essential to their economic security, and survival, particularly when a spouse, partner, or parent dies.