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Women's Access, Control and Tenure of Land, Property and Settlement - some Obstacles and practical Advice

by Ewa Qvist, National Land Survey of Sweden

The obstacles behind the fact that women have less access, control and tenure of land, property and settlement than men, are different in different cultures. The approaches to achieve equality between women and men will therefore vary from country to country.

Many governments at all levels have failed to **adopt appropriate rural and urban land policies**, which is a primary cause of inequity. Governments including local authorities are responsible for protecting the interests of women and ensuring that women are granted equal access to land and property as men are. Rights of women and men related to land and property should be protected under the law.

The existence of **two sets of laws** relating to land and property leads to frequent ownership and inheritance disputes where women are usually the losers. Land and property ownership for women is an area where many countries have either no laws or no clear guidelines for dealing with traditional discrimination against women. Policy research is needed on the many contradictions between customary and modern laws. Traditional barriers to women's access to shelter need to be removed.

Women's and men's **unequal conditions in society**, in working life and in the family must be made visible before they can be taken into account in policy making. There is little data dealing specifically with women. Research could help identify the obstacles.

Even though women represent more than half the humanity and are active human settlements managers, they have been largely excluded from **participating in decisions** concerning the development of human settlements. Greater involvement of women in policy-making at local, national and international levels is essential, especially in the implementation of land reform. Men and women need to participate equally in human settlements planning and management.

Land reform cannot be ignored in the process of women's rights to equal treatment. Decentralisation of land management is essential for improving people's access to land. Local government is the most appropriate level of government to handle land management in favour of local populations.

Poor women have practically no access to **shelter credit**. Financial institutions prefer to give big loans, which the poor cannot afford because their monthly incomes are too small for the

Financial institutions must be encouraged to improve women's access to credit and develop strategies for subsidies, incentives and co-operative financing.

The **land-delivery systems** are in many countries centralised, inefficient and expensive. They cause problems to any citizen trying to acquire land. But the poor, especially the women, are the ones that suffer most from it. A review of land-delivery systems is required to make them more efficient. Women have to get better access to information about land transactions including stages of land purchase and transfer, the required documentation and charges.

Land information systems in every country should be examined from a gender point of view. It must be possible to register more than one owner in the system. Co-ownership registration must be introduced and promoted, reflecting both names in case of a couple, all names in a family, community or co-operative. The information system must also facilitate registration of different kinds of ownership and tenure.

What is generally missing among women is **awareness of their legal rights** and of the opportunities that are available to them. In order to create awareness of women's rights vis-a-vis tradition non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and women's groups should be important actors at community level. They should provide education, legal support, advice and information on women's rural and urban land rights.

Networking among women's groups is another essential step to support and promote equal gender rights to land and property. Groups of women can meet and exchange information and skills, and formulate joint action programmes. When women are more organised and well informed, they have more power and courage to demand their rights. A dialogue should be created between professional women and grassroots women.

Women are often excluded from **education**, which put them in a disadvantaged position in the world of work and in political life. Even those who can read have problems understanding the technical language used in documents on shelter development. There is an urgent need to increase women's educational opportunities, from literacy campaigns to scholarship.

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Personalities



Alison Cochlovius Gouws is the Director of Geomatics at the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. It is the largest and most diversified survey department in South Africa with sections that specialise in Photogrammetry, GIS Data Management, Precise Engineering Surveys, Hydrographic Surveys, GPS & Topographic Surveys, Cadastral Surveys, Training and Cartography. The division is also responsible for running a Land Information System and a Corporate GIS Database. The directorate currently has seven regional offices to complement the head office functions. After completing her BSc.Eng (Land Survey) at WITS

University in 1986, she worked back a bursary at ESKOM and registered as a Professional Land Surveyor (cadastral). Alison lectured at WITS for several years, during which time she completed a Diploma in Property Management and Development, an MSc.Eng in Global Positioning Systems, and an MBA from WITS Business school. She has authored several papers, mostly on GPS. In 1996 Alison joined the Department of Water Affairs as the Director of Survey Services, and has restructured and changed the directorate to fulfil the functions of a Geomatics directorate. Alison is married with twin girls aged three.

FIABCI Young Members Group

By Alexander Benedetti, Italy

During his year of office (1997/98), World President, Komm. Rat Alfons Metzger, created a New Group within FIABCI (International Real Estate Federation), the Young Members Group for real estate professionals under the age of 35 years.

act as a door opener in many matters, which are important for striving representatives of the real estate business.

Particularly in Europe, due to the European Process of Integration, it will be of the utmost importance for young real estate professionals to enrich their national professional knowledge with international know how.

The currency union and specially the combined common interest policy will change the behaviour of many economic operators of the real estate business in many European countries and increase the demand for new techniques in order to apply to the changing investor- and consumer market's requirements.

Especially for young representatives of the real estate business it is as important as never before being prepared already early in their careers to take advantage of the new political, social and economical European and global situation we are living in.

FIABCI offers with the Young Members Group the possibility for young real estate professionals to become part of an international community and to identify opportunities by conducting international business through successful networking.

The Young Members Group can transform the prospects for many young representatives of the real estate business in different parts of the world. Opportunities can be given to young real estate operators to improve their academic knowledge, practical training and business networking.

During the last year FIABCI's Young Members Group has organised two special international meetings in Vienna (Austria) and in Punta del Este (Uruguay) and several national conferences. Real Estate Professionals from over 14 countries (Netherlands, Germany, Japan, Taiwan, Belgium, Colombia, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Russia, USA, Austria, and France) joined the three-day conference in Vienna. The programme consisted of project visits of interesting real estate objects, lectures about property law and real estate economy in Austria as well as information about international training and exchange programmes.

At the 8th Cono Sur Meeting held in Punta del Este (Uruguay) from September 17th to 19th it was possible to organise an interesting professional programme and a very special social programme for the young members.

The meeting was crowned by the participation of young members from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Italy and the U.S.A.

The additional professional programme presented by the Young Members Group at the Cono Sur meeting included a forum with the academic members with information about careers and courses, the visit of several projects in Punta del Este and the region of Maldonado, a meeting with IBM, a lecture by Luis Fernandez Correa about the globalisation of the real estate market and the new challenges for young real estate professionals in the future, with inputs of all the representatives of the several nations. Everybody had the great opportunity to get in contact and to forge friendships with young and future operators of the real estate market.

At FIABCI's 50th World Congress, taking place from May 23rd to 29th in Seville (Spain), the Young Members have the opportunity to register to the whole convention at a reduced congress fee. The Young Members Group has organised combined professional and social events of special interest for Young Real Estate Professionals. During the World Congress of particular interest will certainly be the International Forum where international aspects of real estate economy will be considered.

Santiago Gutierrez Anaya, President of the Congress Committee Seville 1999: *"The engagement, the enthusiasm and professionalism of this young group and its dynamic and multi-cultural approach to reflect international aspects of real estate business impresses me deeply. Seville is a melting pot of cultures where extraordinary works of art have been left behind as a testament to its rich history. The numerous Roman remains, the fortifications and towers from the almohades, the renaissance and neo-classical palaces and the baroque churches are living evidence of Seville's multi-cultural past. It will be my privilege and my pleasure to welcome FIABCI's future, the Young Members Group, to Seville"*.

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Encouraging Girls and Young Women to Choose a Technical Career...

- is a project, founded by the equal opportunity officers of four universities of applied sciences (FH) in the Northwest of Lower Saxony, Germany, in 1993: **FH Oldenburg, FH Osnabrück, FH Ostfriesland and FH Wilhelmshaven**
- is funded by the ministry of science and culture in Lower Saxony. Additional funding for activities put up together with **Carl von Ossietzky University** was given for 1 ½ years.



- was prolonged after three years until August 1999
- organises one week **Summer Schools** for girls ages 16 and up to encounter natural sciences and engineering. In Oldenburg both universities participate in the program. The concept is to offer hands on experiences as well as lectures, guided tours and panel discussions with positive role models: female students and practitioners. In some Summer Schools Job Shadowing or Worksite Tours are also made possible for the “practise students”.
- In addition special 2-3 day **courses on selected subjects** are organised during spring and fall vacations, e.g. geoinformatics, physics, mathematics and environmental engineering (especially active in developing this module: FH Oldenburg and C.v.O. University)
- offers **Open Houses** at the university of applied sciences especially for young women (especially active in developing this module: FH Wilhelmshaven)
- offers **career guidance classes** for groups of schoolgirls, that are being held at the schools(11th trough 13th grade), providing insights into professional life in science and engineering (especially active in developing this module: FH Osnabrück)
- founded **women’s networks** of professionals in multiple fields of engineering and business (especially active in developing this module: FH Oldenburg)
- offers **further education** for female engineers, who readmit the workplace after a family break (especially active in developing this module: FH Ostfriesland)
- started a **collection in the field of literature regarding women and technology**. In cooperation with the library of university of applied science in Oldenburg “Women – university – technologies” was founded. In addition to providing books, every semester two lectures are being held dealing with women studies in engineering (e.g. a study on the development of the typewriter from a users point of view), or on the status of women in science and technology (e.g. questioning the unwritten rule, that part-time work in the field of engineering is impossible to organise)

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If you are interested to report about activities concerning under-represented groups in surveying, please contact the editor.

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1/99, month of issue: March

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