

Enhancing Women’s Access to Land in South Sudan: Rollout of national surveys

Introduction

UN-Habitat and FAO, with support from the United Nation’s Secretary General’s Peace-building Fund (UN PBF), are jointly implementing a project on ‘Enhancing Women’s Access to Land to Consolidate Peace in South Sudan’. This will be achieved through capacity building of traditional authorities to feel more confident and committed to gender responsive land dispute resolution; improving land management and administration systems at State, County and Payam levels to enhance access and secure land tenure rights for most vulnerable women mainly IDPs and Returnees and enhancing the capacity of policy makers at national level to enable them to be more committed to implementing gender responsive land polices. This is a timely initiative as the peace agreement signed in September 2018 is currently under implementation. Upholding and securing women’s land right during the implementation of the peace agreement is crucial in facilitating resettlement, reducing recurrence of conflict and contributing to sustainable peace and stability.

Implementation of surveys

Implementation of the project entails establishing the status of women’s access to land through a baseline study, enhancing skills and understanding on gender responsive land dispute resolution, land management and land administration and reviewing land management and administration systems to ensure they are gender responsive. From the 9th to 24th of September 2019, surveys have been ongoing on a baseline study, capacity needs assessments and mapping of systems in Juba and Wau and currently in other areas beyond Wau for a comprehensive analysis. The methodology used included literature review, focused group discussions and interviewing key informants. A team of land experts from UN Habitat, NRC and staff from the Ministry of Land, Housing and urban development conducted the assessments.



Deputy Governor of Wau State, Hon. Zackaria Joseph Garang (in Suit) with staff from UN-Habitat, NRC and representatives of Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development after an interview

Stakeholders interviewed were drawn from nation organizations including the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development, the Parliamentary Land Committee and South Sudan Land Commission. At the Wau State

level, interviews were carried out with the Deputy Governor of Wau, State Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Urban Development officers, Wau Municipality, Land commission and Women's Association in Wau. Others included the State Ministry of Gender, Child and Social welfare, leaders of Protection of Civilian (POC) center, State Ministry of Justice, County commissioners, and members of Abunybuny IDP and host community.

Baseline study

The baseline study was designed to establish the level at which women enjoy secure tenure rights, the link between land and conflict and existing levels and platforms for conflict resolution; participation in key decision making levels on land governance and dispute resolution, knowledge of policy and customary issues affecting their tenure rights, numbers of women returnees/IDPs, perception of land administration and other institutional responsiveness to women's land rights, public recognition/understanding of women's land rights issues among others.



A woman being interviewed in Wau State

Land Management and administration capacity needs assessment and mapping of systems

The survey reviewed and assessed capacity-building needs on gender sensitive land administration and management and dispute resolution among State, County and Payam officials dealing with land administration and management. It also reviewed existing land administration and management systems at the Payam, County and State levels including community land management procedures and the formal and informal documentations issued for secure rights to land with the aim of identifying areas to enhance the land management system including the community system.



The Deputy Director of Land at the State Ministry of Infrastructure and Urban Planning Mr. Charles Nichola during the interview on land management

Land dispute resolution for enhanced understanding on gender responsiveness

The assessment was designed to help identify gaps in structures for resolving land conflicts and how they respond to both women and men. This information was critical in designing, and planning interventions on the Peace Building Fund's 'Enhancing women's Access to Land' project. Institutional capacity of land authorities was also assessed, as well as participants/respondents' experiences and level of satisfaction with services provided by the various land authorities and structures for land conflict resolution. The three major areas of focus during the assessment included equity, rule of law and non-discrimination of women and men, transparency and accountability and accessibility and affordability



Focused group discussions with members of the Abunybuny IDP and host community

Preliminary findings and recommendations

The findings point towards general conclusions and recommendations. Under capacity assessment, office equipment was found to be inadequate and there is need for capacity building and training on various land management processes. Mapping of land management systems revealed overlapping of responsibilities.

Practical and immediate opportunities to support the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Urban Planning were identified and included support to government to have one national lease form, support to document gender disaggregated data and campaigns on women land rights, land registration procedures, and dispute resolution practice designed for everyone involved in land administration and management.

The importance of integrating land interventions with other livelihood support measures was reiterated. The surveys revealed that internally displaced persons will not leave the protection of civilian sites due to lack security of tenure as well as other challenges like destroyed houses and insecurity. In this case it was suggested that giving land to women households should be done hand in hand with elements of house construction/renovation and livelihood support.

The issue of inheritance needs further consideration as women generally have access to land but inheritance of land still favours men. On policy it was suggested that the draft land policy should incorporate monitoring mechanism of the Sustainable Development Goals and especially as it relates to women's rights.

An in-depth analysis of findings and recommendations will be shared in the validation workshop to be held with the relevant stakeholders in Wau, South Sudan towards the end of October 2019



Survey team engaging with the Sheikh and community of Hai Dinka local administration block 17, Wau



Filing system at the Department of Survey



Drawing equipment and filing system in the draftsman's office, Ministry of Physical infrastructure and urban planning, Wau



Survey team with staff of the Wau State Ministry of Physical infrastructure