



WHAT LAND MEANS TO YOUTH

SECURING LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR ALL

WHAT LAND MEANS TO YOUTH

Today, there are more than 1.2 billion youth in the world, the largest number of youth ever to have existed. These youth live, by and large, in cities and towns; the cities of the developing world account for over 90 per cent of the world's urban growth and youth account for a large percentage of those inhabitants. It is estimated that as many as 60 per cent of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030. This urban demographic "youth bulge" represents both a challenge as well as an untapped potential in moving the land rights and tenure security agenda forward. Youth are increasingly mobile, social and creative in a rapidly transforming world. This means that the needs and attitudes toward land are changing too. High rates of youth unemployment linked to high levels of landlessness suggest a close correlation with youth poverty and access to land¹. Understanding the needs, experiences and perspectives of youth in relation to land is a precondition to strengthening youth and land interventions. Understanding as well the research and policy which exists, or doesn't, in regards to youth and land is as well critical.

This document describes some of the land issues that have emerged as important issues for youth, through a series of consultations and research done by UN-Habitat Youth Unit and the Global Land Tool Network in 2012. Some of the case studies are gathered from Urban Youth Fund recipients' projects to illustrate how land rights and tenure security issues are being addressed through youth-led processes.

LAND IS NOT AN "ADULT-ONLY" ISSUE

Youth is a transitional phase and youth's relationship to land needs to be addressed in this light. Land is



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Youth Assembly World Urban Forum

a limited and valued commodity which youth are often expected to access through adults, or wait for until they themselves are adults. It is a resource base for basic human rights such as food, shelter and prosperity. Youth area also one of the preeminent users of public space; space which they often have little say over in regards to its development or usage. Because of the value attached to land in societies, it has often been guarded as an area where only adults can participate and influence.

Land has more than a material or utilitarian aspect for youth. For many, their relationship with land is intertwined with their pursuit of identity, community and cultural expression. Socio-cultural meaning of land varies across the diverse categories of youth. It has a different meaning depending if you are a young man or woman; if it is customary or indigenous land it is imbued with sacred or cultural dimensions and land means fundamentally different things to the young farmer, pastoralist or urban dweller. Youth are one of the largest demographics within numerous if not all vulnerable groups such as refugees, widows, street youth, HIV positive and orphans.

1. Bennell, Paul (2007) Promoting livelihood opportunities for rural youth. Knowledge and Skills for Development Paper IFAD

GOOD LAND GOVERNANCE MEANS PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

Improved land governance is critical to the achievement of a wide range of development outcomes. A major reason of marginalization of some groups in the land sector is the top-down policy processes which in some instances represents vested interests, with limited participation opportunities for grassroots participation.

It is important to include young people in promoting good governance i) to capitalize on youth energies and capabilities, ii) to make sure that youth needs and expectation are well represented and to iii) build youth leadership capacities to prepare them for both their current and future responsibilities.

Young people can play a key role in promoting transparency and accountability in the land sector. In other development sectors youth are engaged in demanding accountability and promoting good governance. Young land professionals also have the potential to become change agents if good land governance is emphasized in curriculum and continuing education.

The rights of non-discrimination and participation in urban and land governance imply that youth are an important stakeholder group. Given the divergence between adult and youth conceptualisations of land rights or public space, the voices of youth need to be heard. Through youth empowerment, development of skills training and leadership, young champions will participate more effectively and influence land and urban governance.



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“ We might not be land owners, we might not be voters, but we still want a say in what happens to our land

Participant, World Urban Youth Assembly 2012

YOUTH RESPONSIVE LAND POLICIES

Land is central to security of tenure, shelter needs, food security, livelihoods, economic opportunities and quality of life of young men and women. By determining the priorities and needs on behalf of youth rather than building on inputs from the youth themselves, land policies are likely to miss the target.

To ensure youth responsiveness of land policies and appropriate responses to the needs of youth with regards to land participation and consultations are pre-requisites. Through a literature review and consultations undertaken by GLTN/Youth Unit the thematic areas below represent some of the concerns that have been highlighted. It should be noted that further documentation is needed in order to surface the complexity and the interlinkages of the issues.

“ Young people’s priorities shouldn’t be assumed to be identical with adults and they shouldn’t be ignored.

Participant World Urban Forum Youth Assembly 2012

TENURE SECURITY AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Lack of security of tenure is one of the most contentious issues facing youth. Lack of tenure security and appropriate land reforms bypassing youth can trigger conflicts with youth in the forefront as rebels and victims. Landlessness and lack of economic opportunities among rural youth is a primary cause for migration to urban areas which in turn links to pressures for housing, tenure insecurity, and increase in informal settlements.

In practice, youth are invariably ignored on land use and urban consultations. In informal settlements, urban planning and management system often

turn to force and intimidation against young urban poor or slum dwellers². Where avenues exist to incorporate youth concerns, the land governance processes are often legalistic, opaque and dominated by economic interests that tend to alienate youth and their needs.

Tenure security for the youth is about ensuring that there are appropriate and affordable tenure options available. No single tenure option has been able to respond to the needs of all groups in society, which is why the recognizing a continuum of land rights is of critical importance to advancing tenure security for all.

Young Voices Network addressing tenure insecurity and homelessness

In Harare's Hatcliff Extension the population has faced evictions on three separate occasions. Young people, through the Young Voices Networks programme called Voices from Below, have been able to raise awareness around the right to security of tenure both for the local authorities and the affected population. Through organizing Conversation Cafes and workshop on security of tenure they have facilitated dialogues around local solution that are relevant for the community and the youth. Through their active engagement the youth have attained the power to recognize their voices, articulate solutions and identifying roles that the youth can play. The youth in the YVN have played an active role in developing a seven-point manifesto to end homelessness besides engaging parliamentarians and the Ministry of Housing on this issue.

YVN is a UN-Habitat Urban Youth Fund Recipient 2010

RENTAL HOUSING AND TENURE SECURITY

Deciding on the tenure option; whether to own, rent, to stay on a family land may rather be an individual decision, but often made in consultation with the family, or in some cases community. While traditionally young couples in Western societies form a new household, in low-income communities new unions are often incorporated into existing households. These preferences, of course, change over time depending on employment, marriage or cohabitation and children³.



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Housing is about access to land as housing stock is produced using land, labour, and building materials – though there are other processes involved. Homelessness among youth is high, and shelters to home them are generally scarce. While rental deposits being often higher for youth than adults, the availability of housing is not solely based on earning capacity. Location is often limited by considerations of class, race, gender and other status. Research indicates that many refuse to rent to youth simply because of their age which they associate with disorder and unreliability⁴. In response, at least for the unemployed or those at lower end of the rental markets, ethnic networks and informal housing communities emerge, sometimes ending up as segregated ghettos or slums. In particular, young females suffer disproportionately in insecure and hostile dwellings.

2. Kamete, Amin Y (2008) Planning versus youth: Stamping out spatial unruliness in Harare. 39.5 vGeoforum 1721-1733
3. Lauster, Nathanael T. (2008) Better homes and families: Housing markets and young couple stability in Sweden. 70.4 Journal of Marriage and Family 891-903
4. O'Regan, Katherine M., and John M. Quigley (1998) Where youth live: economic effects of urban space on employment prospects. 35.7 Urban Studies 1187-1205

Tenure insecurity for young people in the rental market

For many young people house or land ownership is not an option while the private rental market is also not an affordable option. The next option that is looked at is often rentals. In Australia a report conducted in 2011 by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM), determined that one in four Australians aged between 24 and 35 now live with their parents. The report found that in comparison to the general Australian population, young people aged between 15 – 25 have twice the risk of a housing crisis and that one in five people aged between 15 and 25 are paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent (which is defined as being in housing stress). Of these, 80 per cent were renters.

Magnus Hammar the Secretary-General of the International Union of Tenants is calling for governments and municipalities to take action in relation to the lack of affordable secure housing for youth. For initiatives to be successful, young people must be consulted on where and what affordable housing should look like, innovative housing models and they should also be specifically targeted in tenancy legislation reviews. In order to have meaningful consultation, opportunities for engagement need to be flexible and take on board young people's life styles. Opportunities could include public community sessions run by young people outside of the regular working week hours and web based strategies accessible via smart phones.

Statement from IUT by JemmaDonaghey – at WUF 2012 Youth Assembly

INHERITANCE

In many societies, one of the main means youth to access land is through inheritance. Inherited land is intrinsically important to young men and women and provides other benefits than productive purposes and tenure security.

With urbanisation and shifts from the extended to nuclear family, it is unclear how inheritance and customary land tenure practices are evolving. Increasing impoverishment of rural families has led to selling of family land that would have otherwise been inherited by the next generation. A recurring question is how youth are impacted by the alienation of family land, especially in light of other research which has noted that youth seem to be more interested in investing in education and other non-land wage employment as they are focused on opportunities in the cities.

What we find, however, is that there is significant discrimination against women's equal inheritance rights both in customary and statutory systems. According to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), land inheritance increases a woman's income and assets, access to bank loans, mortgages and other financial and credit facilities which require collateral, and leads to her empowerment and independence⁵.

Youth and Land Research, Southern Ethiopia

With rapidly increasing population in rural Ethiopia, the main challenge for tenure security appears to be shortage of agricultural land. Parents of the young people in our sample currently cultivate on average 0.7 hectares of land, with little potential for expansion. On the other hand, their own parents cultivated on average two hectares of land and had a possibility for expansion. This is a clear example of decline in land holding in one generation.

5. Ezer, Tamar (2006) Inheritance Law in Tanzania: The Impoverishment of Widows and Daughters.» Geo. J. Gender & L. 7 599

In fact, some of our sample households now live on a land which is less than half the size of a foot-ball field. These households often have six or more children to feed. With regard to young female access to land, it appears to have improved over time. The law clearly allows equal right for men and women. The recently implemented land certification also requires that both male and female children names be registered in the land certificate. But the law doesn't say much on the transfer of the land. And the parents, who decide who inherit the land, do not seem to have changed their mind much. Our interview shows that 74 per cent of household heads intend to bequeath their land only to their son(s).

UMB and GLTN Research 2013

PUBLIC SPACES

Shrinking public space revolves around the control of land. Where land is highly in demand, public spaces are usually under intense pressure from commercial land developers⁶. The increasing privatisation of public space – shopping malls, theme parks, sports grounds and gated neighbourhoods – restrict youth access to these lands⁷. Further, modern commercial developments in city centres which are predicated on employees and consumers living in the suburbs or other residential enclaves, abandon the mixed-land



use and integrated communities and leave derelict landscapes which aids the social fracture

Young people around the world are demanding more and better creative, recreational and public spaces which help meet their social, intellectual and cultural needs. Neighbourhood parks, gardens, playing spaces, sporting facilities and recreation centres are mediated through land planning, allocation and management processes. Land is often granted by municipalities to youth centres (sometimes in conjunction with community centres) which provide meeting spaces and opportunities for networking, skill development and rights awareness for youth. UN-Habitat in partnership with local government supports the 'One Stop Youth Information and Resource Centres' in several countries. These Centres provide a safe and generative space for youth and youth-led organizations, while as well delivering key training, health and recreation services⁸. Yet in all these cases, underlying land tenure ambiguities, often lead to misuse by other interests or land disputes.

Youth often encounter numerous challenges in accessing public spaces for their social, cultural and material development. Concerns over security and criminal gangs translate into the exclusion of urban youth, especially those from low-income and minority groups. A range of policing activities, such as surveillance, curfews, move-on and anti-congregation laws, are being deployed in urban areas across the world which alienate youth through a 'zero-tolerance' policy.

Brazil: The Oasis game that transforms

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