

TAPPING THE POTENTIAL: THE ROLE OF GRASSROOTS IN LAND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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IMPLEMENTING LAND POLICY: TAPPING THE ROLE OF GRASSROOTS

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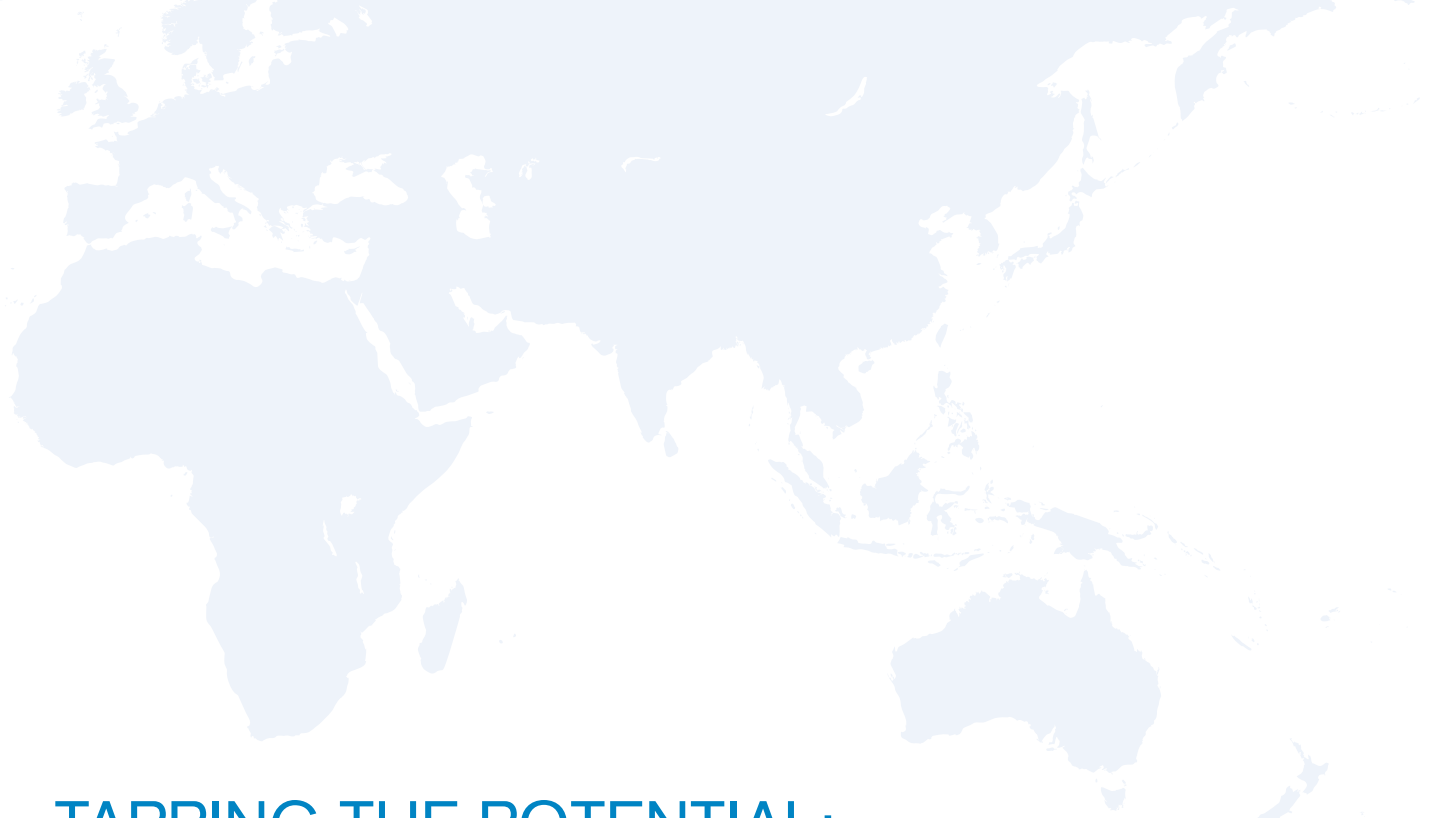
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How grassroots communities can engage with formal structures to help make pro-poor implementation a reality



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FOREWORD



The women living in Maasai communities of Longido, northern Tanzania, have attended training workshops and now know their land rights and what the Village Land Act means to them. In India, an alliance of slum and pavement dwellers has used

self-enumeration at citywide scale as a tool to actively engage with local governments in decision making. In the Philippines, Community-Based Forest Management agreements have been advocated by a local NGO as an additional way to secure indigenous land tenure rights in the face of increasing commercial pressure on customary territories. Women's groups are undertaking their own community assessments and initiating community-led planning in Lima, Peru.

Grassroots groups such as these across Africa, Asia and Latin America are ready to engage at a higher level in implementing pro-poor land policies.

Too often, land interventions are based on an exclusive, top-down approach that fails to involve the grassroots communities they are meant to serve. Implementation is also frequently top-down. Grassroots communities play a purely passive role: they are seen as objects of data gathering and, later, as beneficiaries. This is one of the major reasons that land policies remain so poorly implemented and why implementation tools are often ineffective.

This report sets out four examples where grassroots organizations' engagement with formal land policy implementation processes is strengthened. The premise is that land policy implementation and any

land interventions — whether in India, Tanzania, Peru, the Philippines or elsewhere — are far more effective in helping poor rural and urban communities when those communities are meaningfully involved.

This is one of the key principles for which the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) advocates. GLTN partners, with their Secretariat in UN-Habitat, recognise that grassroots engagement is a necessary element in any land tool design and implementation. Our special thanks go to those GLTN partners and their local affiliates who drive the initiatives described in the report: the Huairou Commission, the International Land Coalition, and Shack/Slum Dwellers International.

There is a great deal of untapped potential for constructive engagement between formal structures and grassroots communities. These could deliver land-related interventions that are both cost-effective and large scale, and reach all of those who need them. Through providing small grants, GLTN enables a process of learning and communication to take place that leads to grassroots solutions making the critical leap from a modest pilot phase to systemic change through large-scale interventions. The examples described in this report will build confidence among stakeholders from different sectors towards achieving this goal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Joan Clos'.

Dr Joan Clos
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

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INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) provided support to four pilot projects aimed at helping grassroots organizations to strengthen their engagement with formal land policy implementation processes. In India, a grassroots-based alliance promoted an alternative, more people-centred and effective methodology for a city-wide slum upgrading programme. In Tanzania, a local NGO and women's network explored how the Village Land Act can be better implemented to improve the tenure status of Maasai women. In Peru, a network of community organizations helped women's groups and whole communities to take a proactive role in natural disaster mitigation efforts. In the Philippines, a land-rights NGO, working with indigenous community organizations and government agencies, succeeded in unblocking the processes for securing land access and tenure over idle lands.

This booklet describes these innovative projects and identifies some of the key lessons that can be learned from them. The starting point is the belief that land policy implementation and any land interventions will be far more effective in helping poor rural and

urban communities when those communities are meaningfully involved. The questions it addresses are why should grassroots communities be actively engaged in this way? And how can they most effectively engage?

Five key messages are emphasized:

1. Effective policy implementation is demand-led.
2. Grassroots communities have vital information.
3. Grassroots communities have vital resources.
4. Effective engagement builds on effective organization.
5. Better policies come through learning by doing.

These projects were part of the Network's wider work on grassroots participation and the development of pro-poor, gender-responsive tools for land policy implementation. Together with the GLTN Secretariat and UN-Habitat a number of GLTN partners and their local affiliates collaborated to support the projects: these were the Huairou Commission, the International Land Coalition and Shack/Slum Dwellers International.



Maasai women learning about their land rights under the Village Land Act, Tanzania
Photo © UN-Habitat/Åsa Jonsson

TAPPING THE POTENTIAL: WHY GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE MORE INVOLVED IN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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