Editorial: Why should we be bothered by inclusion of the vulnerable?

Amongst themselves, the world’s geologists have agreed that the world has entered the Anthropocene, the geological epoch that reflects significant human impact on Earth’s geology and ecosystems. And around the world, wildfires, floods, heatwaves and droughts are becoming more extreme and dangerous. Stresses and damage to people and ecosystems are increasing.

This is just the beginning. Over the coming years we can expect an exponential increase in these impacts. The global warming that is driving much of the climatic change will continue even if we immediately stop emitting greenhouse gases. This creates a situation in which humanity faces cascading and compound risks to the environment and communities, especially the most vulnerable.

As we enter these more challenging times, we must reflect on how we want to live together on the planet, and in our communities. And coupled to this question is that of how we want to make the critical decisions that impact on the environment.

Exclusion of the knowledge and insights of vulnerable people from decision making processes deepens the instability of society and increases the pace of the destruction of our environment. And in turn, the vulnerable suffer most from the unsustainable exploitation of people and of natural resources.

Are these questions of human rights or of sound governance? Where we place our priority will depend on our values and world view. But is clear that both are of great importance for the well-being of all.

A highly significant recent policy shift by the GEF places more emphasis on the contribution of civil society to the decision-making processes of the Parties to the Rio Conventions. The CSO LDN project that Drynet has successfully lobbied for is the first of a new generation of funding initiatives to enhance the capacity and agency of civil society to influence decision making at this global level. It is a golden opportunity, and with it comes a huge responsibility to ensure that it results in wiser, better-informed decision making within the context of the Rio Conventions.

Drynet has a track record of promoting the inclusion of the voices and interests of the most vulnerable in the decision-making processes of the UNCCD. The GEF project will create opportunities to amplify these voices within the UNCCD so that appropriate solutions can be designed and rolled out at scale. In this context we will need to deepen our understanding of how interventions impact and change local circumstances. A systems perspective can provide the necessary insights in a dynamic way and help to avoid simplistic “one size fits all” approaches that are unlikely to lead to sustained improvements.

As a network we have the opportunity and the responsibility to deepen our collective understanding and ensure that we are promoting coherent, effective and inclusive pathways to Land Degradation Neutrality. Let us make a difference, together!
Why It Matters to Extend the Land Rights of Women

By Noel Oettlé, Drynet Coordinator

Ana Di Pangracio, UNCCD CSO Panel representative for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), recently published a blog on the IUCN site reflecting on the urgent question of extending land rights to women.

Ana reflects that amidst the severe global crises of biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation and desertification, pollution, and inequality, those most affected are the most vulnerable, especially women and girls. The rampant destruction of nature endangers human well-being and the realisation of fundamental rights, ultimately, risking our chance to achieve a just and sustainable world.

Most rural women do not own land but play a key role in climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, sustainable land management, preserving seeds, and promoting agroecology. Nevertheless, their activities are undervalued, and their status exposes them to poverty, hunger, gender-based violence, and displacement.
In LAC countries, women account for over 30% of agricultural landholders in just a handful of countries, and well below 15% in most of them. Women own less land, and they also receive less financial support and technical assistance. Furthermore, rural women in LAC countries receive only approximately 10% of the credit and 5% of the technical assistance.

Despite the reform of legislation on land, civil and family codes in some LAC countries to recognise legal equality including for property rights, important gaps in land tenure persist. Culturally, men still control family property and speak for women. Gender inequity is exacerbated by social inequity, reflected in the high concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few. Industrial agriculture displaces smaller, family farms, takes over forests, wetlands, and grasslands, and pollutes the environment by using transgenics and agrochemicals. As extractivism advances, land conflicts increase, and more people are evicted.

The law can play a key role in advancing gender equality, providing tools and a framework for the realisation of gender-equitable land tenure. If women are aware of their land rights they can change values, attitudes, and cultural norms. Alliances of organisations and movements promote joint and strategic work to secure women's land rights.

Women protect, restore and care for the land. Realising women’s land rights supports the independence and autonomy of women, enabling them to provide for the needs of their families and communities. It is an integral part of the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the three Rio Conventions, each of which has a Gender Plan of Action.

The theme of the 2023 Desertification and Drought Day was “Her Land: Her Rights”. The UNCCD’s campaign provides a global platform to help advance the full integration of half the world’s population in land management decisions and builds on the landmark COP decision on land rights.

The full blog can be read here.
Harnessing Synergies Between the Rio Conventions on Women's Land Rights: The Berlin Workshop of Women’s Land Rights

By Noel Oettlé, Drynet Coordinator, with acknowledgement for the reporting of Emily Robertson, Moritz Hauer and Frederike Klümper of TMG.

Around 60 stakeholders from more than 30 countries gathered in Berlin between the 3rd and 5th of July 2023 for the first-ever workshop on women's land rights with the support and participation of all three Rio Conventions. Co-hosted by TMG Research, the UNCCD and the Robert Bosch Stiftung, this workshop was to explore the issues of women’s land rights in the context of the three Rio Conventions. Drynet’s Ana Di Pangracio (FARN), Yolanda Ramírez Villacorta (AIDER) and Nathalie van Haren (Both ENDS) contributed to this ground-breaking event.

Throughout the 3 days, participants collaborated to address the question: How can we leverage synergies and develop concrete actions to advance women’s land rights across the
UN's Rio Conventions? The diverse group included representatives of civil society, the Rio Convention secretariats, other UN bodies, and national focal points.

Coordinating and aligning advocacy on women's land rights by developing a cohesive narrative can effectively raise awareness, build political will, and empower women to exercise their land rights. The event created a community of practice that participants were keen to open to all. It has the potential to collect and distribute key messages, amplify women's voices, and share successful examples. The participants were aware, however, that any advocacy efforts must consider the realities of land ownership, along with carefully considering global and local historical, political, social, and economic power imbalances.

One of the key questions addressed was how funding can transform the circumstances of recipients. Funding commitments to promote women's tenure rights are inadequate and are at times misaligned with fundamental gender and land tenure principles. For funding approaches to become more inclusive and transformative they must shift from efficiency-driven approaches to empowerment models, develop joint process ownership, and respond to funding needs at the grassroots level.

The participants highlighted the need for mapping funding flows, analysing funding gaps, researching the actor landscape, and identifying indicators to guide the distribution of funds. Rigorous monitoring of commitments and impacts can provide insights that, in turn, can lead to improvements in how funding is directed and distributed. Institutional capacity building,
organizational development, and building long-term partnerships were recognised as being critical to transforming the impacts of funding.

By creating synergies between the Rio Conventions around the common cause of promoting women's land rights as a path towards greater equity and sustainability, it is possible to reduce systemic inequality, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and conserve biodiversity.

After the workshop, the participants shared specific offers of close collaboration, including commitments to coordinate monitoring and reporting efforts, co-create a storytelling platform to ensure a cohesive narrative on the just land transition and enhance the capacities of civil society organizations to achieve land degradation neutrality. There was enthusiasm for webinars and inter-country events and for facilitating collaboration between the caucuses and other Rights Holder Constituencies within the Rio Conventions. At the core of all future action, participants emphasized the importance of the engagement of grassroots women.

The workshop marked an important moment in advancing these crucial issues at a time of unprecedented climate crisis and biodiversity loss.
Updates

2023 UNCCD Desertification and Drought Day Celebrations

In honour of the UNCCD World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (WDCD) on June 17, Drynet members shared reflections on their work and engagement with dryland communities to conserve global drylands and their people. Excerpts from these reflections can be seen on the Drynet website.

CRIC21

The UNCCD CRIC21 will be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan from 13 to 17 November 2023. The Drynet Coordination has gathered members’ plans and ambitions related to the CRIC. Drynet is planning to fund some of its members to attend the CRIC, and the Drynet Coordination will inform members in good time about the process to apply for this support.

Drynet Annual Assembly 2023

The Drynet Annual Assembly will be held as a “hybrid” event in Samarkand, with members able to attend in person or virtually. The Drynet Annual Assembly is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, 18 November 2023.

The GEF Project

The three-year Drynet/IUCN project entitled “Strengthening Civil Society Role in Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality” was officially approved by the GEF in June and is set to start in January 2024.

Plans are being made to hold a first meeting of the project Steering Committee in Samarkand immediately after the CRIC to ensure that plans are in place for a smooth project launch at the start of 2024.

Changes to the Drynet Board

At the start of this year the Drynet Board bid farewell to one of its members when Burcu Genç (TEMA) resigned to take on new challenges.

Thank you Burcu for your contributions to the network!