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# Package 78, Script 3

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## Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

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**Notes to Broadcaster**

Gender inequality continues to cause serious problems in Africa and elsewhere. When women lack control over resources such as land, they are unable to make decisions which improve family income. Without control over family income, for example by growing cash crops, women contribute their time and labour only to maintain subsistence levels, and are more severely affected by poverty than men. And cultural traditions, which bar women from activities such as tree planting, limit their ability to conserve and promote environmental sustainability.

Land and property rights, in particular, are slowly taking centre stage in almost every public forum convened by government officials or civil society, and women are taking a leading role in the fight against discrimination. Gender equality is a human right and at the heart of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is a must before overcoming hunger, poverty and disease. Gender equality means equality at all levels of education and in all areas of work, equal control over resources and equal representation in public and political life. This script looks at eliminating gender disparity in all sectors of life because we cannot enjoy development without security, we cannot enjoy security without development and we cannot enjoy either without respect for human rights. One way to adapt this script for your local audience is to interview someone in your community or region that is an activist for gender equality.

***Fade up signature tune 10 seconds then under host.***

**Host:** Welcome dear listener to today’s programme on women and property rights. This is not only a national but also a global concern. On the air is your host Rachael Adipo, reaching you from Ugunja FM. With me in the studio is today’s guest, Miss Jessica Odima, a women’s rights activist in Kenya. Stay tuned.

# *Fade up signature tune 2 seconds then out.*

**Host:** Welcome again. Today we will focus on women and property rights as a way to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women, especially in Siaya District. Welcome Miss Jessica. Would you shed some light on some of the rights that women are entitled to?

**Jessica Odima:** Thank you. To start with, women are entitled to land access, security of tenure and the right to own property. Both women and men have recognized these issues as the main points of debate. Although Kenyan national laws do not discriminate against women’s right to inherit property, the customs and traditions of individual communities continue to prevent their access to that property.

Host: How are you and your fellow activists in the Siaya region trying to help women change discriminatory laws and customary practices regarding inheritance, women’s direct ownership and control of land, and women’s co-ownership of family land?

Jessica Odima: As Siaya District activists, we have helped women to become aware of their rights through popular education, legal aid clinics, media campaigns on women’s access to land and property, and celebration of “International Women’s Day” every year on the eighth day of March.

**Host:** I have heard that, in Siaya District, a community meeting is incomplete without a women’s rights advocate or even the chief stressing the need to involve women and even children in property matters.

Jessica Odima: Yes, and all this has raised women’s spirit to fight for their rights and deal with greedy relatives who make women suffer by kicking them out of their matrimonial home and taking all their property.

# *Fade up signature tune 2 seconds then under and out.*

Host: Now, Miss Jessica, could you tell our listeners some of the women’s stories that you have heard in the community?

Jessica Odima: Yes, of course. Let’s listen to the story of Agnes Apiyo from Siaya District.

**Narrator:** Immediately after successfully going through the Luo cultural rite passage, which required the removal of six lower teeth, I was approached by one of our neighbours who was looking for a suitable wife for his nephew. Soon, I was to meet the young, handsome man who was to be my husband and the father of my five children, three boys and two girls.

I lived happily with my husband for close to eighteen years when tragedy struck. My husband Daniel Omollo died of malaria. Suddenly, the whole world crumbled, includingmy joy at having been the darling of my in-laws. Everybody turned hostile. From my husband’s brothers to his parents, everybody demanded a share of the property.

**Jessica Odima:** Agnes is not alone. During awareness meetings conducted by a local non-governmental organization called Ugunja Community Resource Centre in collaboration with a national body called Kenya Land Alliance, disturbing stories were told of how widows had been forced from their homes following the deaths of their husbands.

**Host:** So these awareness meetings have really opened people’s eyes?

**Jessica Odima:** Yes. Now women want to be the masters of their own destiny. Now they want to say: “These are our activities and the development plans we have for our future,” *not*, “These are our activities and the development plans that have been prepared for our future.”

**Host:** Thank you Miss Jessica. Now we see that diversity among women is a source of richness, strength, knowledge and energy.

(*Pause*) We learned many things today: the kinds of women rights, how discriminatory practices can be actively eliminated, and how activists in Siaya District are creating awareness. We heard that even those who have been discriminated against can regain hope. (*Pause*) Listener, this brings us to the end of today’s programme. Today we focused on women and property rights as a way to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women. We do hope that you learned something. Till we meet again. Bye.

# *Signature tune for 10 seconds then fade out.*

**Acknowledgements**

Contributed by: Rachael Adipo, Ugunja Community Resource Centre, Kenya.

Reviewed by: Carole Houlihan, International Development Consultant, Canada.

Notes:

There is no single formula for recommendations on tenure types for women’s access to land and property. Registered titles may be appropriate in some situations and customary titles for others. Provision of legal security and equal access to land and property for women requires action not only by governments, but by all sectors of society, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations, communities and local authorities, as well as by partner organizations and entities of the international community.

Women need an equal voice in decisions that affect their lives - from within the family to the highest level of government. This is a key element in women’s empowerment.

For a long time men have dominated decision-making at the highest levels. Preventive and corrective measures for the expected undermining of women’s land and property rights due to current trends of economic policies must be prepared.

# Information sources

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