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# SHARING BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR SUPPORTING WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS: **A DEBATE ON THE GENDER EVALUATION CRITERIA (GEC)**

## REPORT

From 25 January to 5 February 2016, the Land Portal hosted a discussion on the Gender Evaluation Criteria (GEC), a flexible framework comprised of 6 criteria and 22 evaluation questions with possible indicators that can be adapted to a wide range of different situations that were developed as a flagship tool of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and its partners, and have been piloted and disseminated among a wide range of stakeholders at global and country level since 2007. The discussion resulted in 68 comments from 23 contributors in 15 countries across the globe, representing civil society, research institutions, professional organizations and multilateral institutions. The discussion was facilitated by the International Land Coalition (ILC) and coordinated by the Land Portal.

### **ABOUT THE GENDER EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Since 2007, the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) partners have been working on the development, piloting, training of trainers and dissemination of the Gender Evaluation Criteria among a wide range of stakeholders at global and country level. The GLTN Secretariat worked in particular with the Huairou Commission (HC), the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), and the University of East London (UEL) to develop the GEC to check whether land tools are gender responsive, and to show how they can be adapted to integrate various dimensions of gender issues. They are a flexible framework comprised of 6 criteria and 22 evaluation questions with possible indicators that can be adapted to a wide range of different situations.

# BACKGROUND

Several grassroots women's organizations who are members of the Huairou Commission, a global membership and partnership coalition that empowers grassroots women's organizations to enhance their community development practice and to exercise collective political power at the global level, tested the GEC during its initial phase in Brazil, Ghana and Nepal. These tests focused on large-scale land tools, municipal master plans, land reform commissions and land administration systems.

In Brazil, the application of the tool ensured inclusivity in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs, while engaging numerous community leaders working on land and property rights. Researchers, land professionals and representatives of the government's land institutions were trained in designing and evaluating land tools from a gender in an effort to recognize inequity and inclusion issues in land policies and land regulations, as well as the development of mitigation and affirmative action approaches. In Uganda, the Uganda Land Alliance implemented the second phase of pilots aggregating the capacity development of 10 districts, rural and urban, across Uganda. The International Land Coalition (ILC) has facilitated capacity-strengthening on the use of the Gender Evaluation Criteria (GEC) since 2012 through a series of Training of Trainers, and has supported its members in Africa, Asia and Latin America to use the GEC tool for a variety of purposes, with members in Togo, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia carrying out GEC evaluations as part of their country-level work.

The usefulness of the GEC has been demonstrated as a method of data collection, managing knowledge, producing tangible and rigorous evaluations and engaging with multiple stakeholders to discuss and validate evidence-based information. The GEC has become a mature tool that has been embraced by grassroots groups to step up and progress in their decision making processes. While it is designed for use by many land stakeholders, there is still a need to engage better with more governments and professional groups to champion the use of the GEC in various contexts. In the range of country experiences, the GEC has shown breadth and versatility in both rural and urban sectors. However, the GEC needs improvement in terms of further simplifying the tool for wider adoption by grassroots organizations. The aim of this debate was to provide insight about the specific ways in which the GEC could be improved, while highlighting their strengths and successes.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE DISCUSSION

- **Gathering lessons** and best practices on the usage of the GEC.
- Identifying the **positive** and **negative aspects**, the **challenges faced** and **positive outcomes** of tools like GEC.
- **Identifying entry points** for the adaptation and revision of the tool for up-scaling
- **Comparing** this tool to **similar gender tools** used by other **communities**.
- **Addressing** the **main characteristics** of a tool aimed at **promoting women's land rights**.
- **Bringing together stakeholders** in the **land governance community** and creating possibilities for **synergy**.



“The GEC is a **practical instrument** to **objectively assess** whether land interventions known as land tools, such as land legislation, and the institutional and regulatory framework associated with national land laws, but also customary laws and practices, address gender concerns.”

- **Oumar Sylla**, GLTN Secretariat Head

“This **flagship tool** developed by key partners and the Secretariat of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), has been **widely used and adapted** by many grassroots organizations around the globe. To date, more than **40 countries** have been exposed to the GEC, with varying degrees of success in terms of impacting lives of men and women as they continue to secure their tenure rights.”

- **Lowie Rosales-Kawasaki**, Gender Focal Point for the GLTN



## DISCUSSION RESULTS

A dynamic discussion with inputs from a great diversity of perspectives demonstrated that practitioners and scholars have used the GEC as both a research and assessment tool for a variety of topics, ranging from urban land and land administration to natural resource management and family law.

Those who have used the GEC appreciate the flexibility of the framework in assessing land and other laws and policies. Discussants noted its usefulness not only in evaluating laws, but also the gender-responsiveness of organizations. Importantly, the process of gender analysis and the outcomes of the evaluation itself both emerged as crucial results of using the GEC. The GEC also proved to be a tool to facilitate collaboration between diverse actors as well as contribute to women’s empowerment. What emerged clearly is that the appropriate selection of criteria, taking into account country specificities, the characteristics of the tool assessed and the needs of actors involved is key to a successful use of the GEC. Although the versatility and adaptability of the tool were appreciated, some challenges, such as difficulties in accessing the tools, insufficient dissemination and a need to improve translations, were identified.

## PARTICIPANT CONTRIBUTIONS



**Patricia Chaves** from **Espaço Feminista** in Brazil reminded us of gender as the power relations between men and women, stressing that use of the evaluation matrix had positive benefits that went beyond the assessment of a law or policy, and ultimately helped in the process of building a collective and nuanced understanding about gender inequality and gender equality as a result of women’s empowerment. The process was collective and participatory, involving government agencies, lawyers, researchers and academics as well as grassroots women from informal settlements, who had the opportunity to be heard in each phase of the process and ultimately had their land ownership recognized.

Patricia noted some of the challenges in using the GEC, highlighting that both institutional bias and power relations in communities need to be addressed, including through capacity-building, in order to contribute to women’s empowerment – which ultimately benefits the whole community.



**Frédéric Djinadja** from **ADHD** in Togo, an organization that promotes sustainable rural development that used the GEC to assess the impact of statutory laws and customary rights on women's tenure security by analyzing the country's family code, stressed the importance of involving a range of different partners and engaging them in adapting the matrix to the country context and needs by jointly selecting criteria and planning the data collection. This means starting with capacity-building of all actors involved, the data gathered then becomes the basis for developing recommendations together. By engaging with diverse stakeholders, including from government, ADHD used the GEC as an advocacy tool, resulting in significant changes to the family code have since been made, such as allowing women to be considered the 'head of household'.

**Liza Groenendijk** from the **Faculty of Geo-information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) at the University of Twente**, recounted how the GEC were used as part of the curriculum for a refresher course on the modernization of land administration systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (MODALS) as part of an exercise in assessing how gender-responsive they are in their own work, helping to raise the self-awareness of both the professional being trained and the academics carrying out the training. This use of the GEC generated extensive discussion on the lack of women professionals in surveying and land administration, the hurdles women face in gaining access to the profession and what can be done to increase the number of female students in these areas.



**Diana Fletschner** from **Landesa** noted that they have included the GEC in the curriculum of the Women's Land Rights Visiting Professionals Program for the past four years, highlighting that their use signals dimensions that are critical for a successful gender integration and contribute to developing concrete steps in doing so. The possibility of using GEC during the initial stages, when tools or interventions are designed, as well as for taking into account the diversity of needs and opportunities among women, proved to be highly beneficial.

**Prof. Stein Holden** from the **Norwegian University of Life Sciences** discussed collaboration between GLTN and the Norwegian Center for Land Tenure Studies (CLTS) on youth and land in Ethiopia and land renting as a pro-poor land tool. Professor Holden Shared findings from a research project on the impacts of joint land certification in southern Ethiopia demonstrating that wives became more involved in crop choice decisions and land rental decisions within households. He also showed that the complementary income women get from their jointly provided land may take several years before resulting in returns.



**Leslie Downie**, a scholar finishing research on premarital and cohabitation agreements as a pro-poor land tool, shared details on her research on informal practices, succession rights included in premarital contracts and customary perspectives. She plans on using the GEC to pilot projects aimed at refining and testing contracts with a small group of people who own subsidized housing.



Other interesting projects where GEC have been incorporated as a tool of including gender evaluation and land rights analysis have been presented. The experience described by **Dr. Uchendu Chigbu** from the **Technical University of Munich** confirmed that the GEC can serve as specific method to gain real-life data on improving tenure for women and the disadvantaged stakeholders.



**Prof. John Kiema**, Executive Secretary of the **Eastern Africa Land Administration Network (EALAN)**, confirmed that GEC can serve as specific method to gain real-life data on improving tenure for women and the disadvantaged stakeholders, but emphasized that internalizing gender evaluation in their curricula, training and research remains one of the biggest challenges they face.



**Prof. Siraj Sait** from the **University of East London**, one of the GLTN partners involved in the development and roll out of the GEC, stressed the versatility and adaptability of the GEC. For them, the GEC has been a vital component their strategy to improve land, property and housing rights in the Muslim world, and have been deployed in dozens of training programs and meetings. Criteria 4 of the GEC relating to social and cultural considerations in regard to women and men's access to land has helped them to address obstacles and opportunities resulting from customary and religious dimensions in the region.

The experience of the **Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)**, shared by **Laura Cunial**, on the use of criteria and indicators similar to GEC on displaced women's housing land and property rights highlights that these tools serve to provide well-founded recommendations.

**Chikondi Chavbuta**, National Womens Land Rights Coordinator with **Actionaid Malawi**, noted that flexibility may have some side effects, with a large number of indicators, all usable (or removable), leading to a biased selection in highly patriarchal settings. Chikondi suggested establishing a set of fixed criteria as a basis, with some additional flexible ones to be used according to the context.



**Susan Spedding** from the **Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy (CASLE)** shared an experience of working on the promotion of gender equality in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The recent assessment of the lack of progress of Millennium Development Goal 3 provided an impetus to use specific tools to promote women's rights effectively. Susan stressed that there is a need for a combination of top down legislation and bottom up constructive pressures, and suggested improving the effectiveness of the GEC by adding criteria

that capture political understanding, women's empowerment, engagement between communities and local/national authorities, transparency, innovation models, improvement in education and substantial change in the situation of informal settlements.

The experience of the **Indonesian Institute for Forest and Environment (RMI)**, shared by **Nana Ratnasari**, focused on assessing two specific pieces of law and linking this to advocacy work at the national level. Beyond the actual assessment, GEC has been a means to enrich gender analysis within their own programs. One of the main characteristics of this case is the successful collaboration with other institutions such as government agencies and the Gender Studies department at the University of Indonesia.



As numerous posts in this discussion demonstrated, the GEC are a useful for university departments and researchers in general. Using GEC also serves to enhance collaboration among different types of organizations, both in terms of conducting the assessment and in providing trainings for CSOs and at community level. In Indonesia, as in Togo, the use of GEC was not only supported by ILC (both RMI and ADHD are ILC members), but it was part of a wider National Engagement Strategy process initiated by the ILC to promote dialogue with government on land policy.

Productive interaction with Ministries and other government actors is included as a recommendation by **Estella Toperesu** from the **Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE)** in Zimbabwe, in order to diminish the burden of carrying these exercises on NGOs and CSOs project level. SAFIRE used the GEC to assess natural resource management legislation. Estella mentions specific challenges in using the GEC, including preconceptions about the tool that influence willingness to share information, achieving critical mass and lack of resources for scaling up. She also suggests that it would be useful to consider the GEC exercise as a process that could take up to two years.



**Raymond Enoch** from **Nigeria** also highlighted the difficulties concerning data collection and the relevance of using the GEC tool for CSOs.



**Everlyne Nairesiae** from **Oxfam International** underscored the versatility of the tool, to assess gender responsiveness of program and initiatives. One of the relevant gaps she identified is that the GEC is of limited use to address issues related to private sector interventions. An interesting point raised by Everlyne concerns the use of GEC to assess the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure (VGGT) or the African Guiding Principles on Large-scale Land Investments.

Another benefit of GEC which is illustrated by the experience of **Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation** in Ghana, headed by **Fati Alhassan**, is to enable communities to map different stakeholders at community level. The relevance of social dynamics and power relationships between men and women already stressed by Patricia was also evident in Ghana in the collaboration between male chiefs, local administrators and women's organizations.

A second contribution by Frédéric from Togo described details of the process that led to the use of GEC and how this increased both interest for gender issues and gender sensitivity within ADHD as an organization. The use of the tool increased interest for gender issues among different actors, though Frédéric also pointed out that there is a risk of politicization of the tool. The suggestions from Togo echo other contributors, who also underlined the importance of sensitization, trainings, involving a variety of actors and simplifying documentation, as well as the challenge of facing down traditional leaders who are hostile to changes in customs.

As in Togo, where the GEC was used to contribute to the drafting of the Land Law, **Michel Omara** from the **Uganda Land Alliance (ULA)** described how the GEC was used to influence the national land policy. The most important aspects that emerged were that using the GEC contributed to a much better theoretical understanding of gender issues and to the practical establishment of collaboration between different stakeholders, leading to the creation of a movement of women advocates (and "male champions"). The GEC also influenced plans for future activities of the ULA. One of the challenges highlighted by Michael is the complexity of the tool at first sight.



Several contributors from Latin America confirmed that the GEC is an effective tool. **Daniela Savid** and her colleagues from **Fundación Plurales in Argentina** described how they assessed if a project is as gender sensitive as the organizers imagined it to be, showing that the GEC can be useful even for organizations that have a high level of gender-sensitivity. She also confirmed that knowledge exchange is fundamental to learn from others how to use the tool to the best of its potential.

**Javier Medina** from **Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/ Programa por la Paz (CINEP)** stressed how the GEC can be used in support of other projects related to rural women's rights. An interesting suggestion from Javier was to reinforce the link between the tool and rural women's experience and to support familiarization of government officers and policy makers with the GEC.



**Selmira Flores** from **NITLAPAN** in Nicaragua provided a detailed account of their experiences using the GEC to assess the APAGRO program, focusing specifically on socio-economic dimensions and the relationships between men and women, noting that programs on some occasions served as a mechanism for their husband to gain access to resources.

All contributors from Latin America and the Caribbean raised the issue of translation; not only is the Spanish translation of the GEC in need of an overhaul, but a good translation also implies an understanding of cultural differences so that the translated version becomes relevant.

With regard to other tools, possibly to be combined with GEC, some examples were given by Nana, Everlyne, Raymond and Daniela, including the Harvard framework, analysis tools developed by Mosser, Longwee or Nayla Kabeer, the Watch Dog Tool - with its specific application for the protection of the land rights of women and orphans, as well as approaches such as promoting paralegals and a strong women's network. Daniela also gives the example of observatories in Argentina and Bolivia that host information and monitor violations of existing legislation.

In the perspective of elaborating of new tools focusing on land-scale investment and based on the experience of using GEC, Everlyne suggested focusing on women and community participation in decision making to secure land and ensure benefits. In this regard, Oxfam International developed a manual on free, prior and informed consent.

## OUTCOMES

Summarizing all of these contributions, here are some positive elements and challenges of using the GEC, which in some cases are contradictory, as well as a possible way forward.

### POSITIVE ELEMENTS

- Flexibility (for use in different socio-cultural-legal contexts)
- Versatility (use for different tasks and in diverse projects)
- Contributes to women's empowerment
- Stimulates collaboration
- Increases interest in gender issues
- Emphasis on the equal importance of process and outcomes

### CHALLENGES

- Too much flexibility
- Insufficiency in addressing private sector issues
- Bias and preconception (on gender and on the tool itself) of traditional leaders and institutions
- Risk of politicization of the use of GEC
- Lack of time to implement and replicate it
- Complexity of the tool
- Difficulties in gathering data

# WAY FORWARD

Some of the suggested step forwards included: revision, clarification, increased access and dissemination and creation of an accessible system of records to further encourage and facilitate the use of the GEC.

1. **Make a distinction** between the introduction of **required** and flexible criteria within the tool
2. **Improve the Spanish translation** (The cultural adaptation to the Latin-American context)
3. **Increase adaptability** of the tool
4. **Reinforce** the link between the tool and **rural women's experience**
5. **Support familiarization** of government officers and policy makers with the GEC
6. **Broadly disseminate** the tool among CSOs, governments and private sector
7. **Reinforce trainings** and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange

**Read the full Debate on the Land Portal**

## DEBATE FACILITATORS

**This debate was facilitated by the International Land Coalition (ILC) gender team.**

**Sabine Pallas**, responsible for Gender Justice, Women's Land Rights and Resource Mobilisation at the **International Land Coalition (ILC)**



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## ABOUT THE GLOBAL LAND TOOL NETWORK (GLTN)

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) is an alliance of global regional and national partners contributing to poverty alleviation through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure particularly through the development and dissemination of pro-poor and gender-sensitive land tools.

[www.gltn.net](http://www.gltn.net)



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## ABOUT THE LAND PORTAL

### VISION

**Improving land governance** to benefit those with the most insecure land rights and the greatest vulnerability to landlessness **through information and knowledge sharing.**

### GOAL

**To become the leading online destination for information, resources, innovations and networking on land issues.** Supporting inclusive and informed debate and action on land governance will increase the adoption and the scaling up of best practices and emerging innovations on land tenure.