

Women and Vulnerable Groups' Access to Land and Participation in Land Administration Systems in Namibia

Melania Tegerereni Ipinge and Royal Menare Mabakeng (Namibia)

Key words: Access to land; Land management; Security of tenure; Women, Vulnerable groups and gender equality

SUMMARY

Title: Women and Vulnerable Groups' Access to Land and Participation in Land Administration Systems in Namibia

Abstract: Access to land is a cornerstone of socio-economic development, particularly for women and vulnerable groups in Namibia, where land represents not only an economic resource but also a source of security, identity, and empowerment. Despite legal provisions, these groups face persistent structural, legal, and socio-cultural barriers that limit their ability to secure land rights and participate meaningfully in land governance.

This paper investigates how women and marginalized populations access land and engage with land administration systems in Namibia. It examines the intersection of gender, land rights, and governance, framed within the context of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality and aligned with international land governance frameworks such as those proposed by the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG).

The study's primary objectives are fourfold:

1. To assess the barriers and enablers to land access for women and vulnerable groups.
2. To evaluate how Namibia's legal and institutional frameworks particularly the Communal Land Reform Act facilitate or hinder equitable land access and participation in governance.
3. To investigate the representation and involvement of women and marginalized groups in land administration bodies and decision-making

Women and Vulnerable Groups' Access to Land and Participation in Land Administration Systems in Namibia (13797)
Melania Tegerereni Ipinge and Royal Menare Mabakeng (Namibia)

FIG Congress 2026
The Future We Want - The SDGs and Beyond
Cape Town, South Africa, 24–29 May 2026

processes.

4. To explore Namibia's alignment with international guidelines aimed at improving land access for women.

A mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders (including women landowners, land administrators, policymakers, and community leaders) and quantitative data from surveys conducted among landholders in both rural and urban regions, notably Zambezi and Omaheke. Comparative regional analysis and thematic coding were used to identify key patterns and disparities.

Findings reveal significant inequalities in land access and governance participation between men and women, including vulnerable groups. Although legal frameworks like the Communal Land Reform Act provide a foundation for gender equity, customary practices such as inheritance laws and patriarchal tenure systems continue to undermine women's land security. Women are often dependent on male relatives for land access, leaving them vulnerable in cases of divorce, widowhood, or familial disputes. Furthermore, women remain underrepresented in land administration structures, particularly at communal and regional levels, limiting their influence in decision-making processes.

The study concludes that while Namibia's legal and policy frameworks hold promise for promoting gender equity in land governance, enforcement remains inconsistent, and cultural norms must be addressed to achieve substantive change. Increasing the representation of women and vulnerable groups in land administration bodies is essential for fostering inclusive governance.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on gender and land rights in Namibia, highlighting the gap between policy and practice. It underscores the urgent need for policy reform, stronger legal enforcement, and international support. Namibia's ongoing initiatives such as communal land reform, urban agriculture programs, and economic empowerment campaigns offer pathways to improve land access for women, but must be scaled and sustained to meet the goals of SDG 5.

Keywords: Women, vulnerable groups, land access, land administration, gender equality, Namibia, land governance.

Women and Vulnerable Groups' Access to Land and Participation in Land Administration Systems in Namibia (13797)
Melania Tegerereni Iipingene and Royal Menare Mabakeng (Namibia)

FIG Congress 2026
The Future We Want - The SDGs and Beyond
Cape Town, South Africa, 24–29 May 2026