

# **WORLD: Islamic inheritance laws and rural women, new issue of ILC Framing the Debate series is out**

International Land Coalition (06.09.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2c6r9vX> – «Land rights are particularly important for women's empowerment and gender equality (...) but they continue to be systematically denied their rights to inheritance, especially in rural areas». The newest issue of ILC's Framing the Debate series on Islamic inheritance laws and their impact on rural women in Muslim societies finds that there are an interconnected mix of legal, religious, educational, economic, social and political reasons for discriminatory inheritance practices.

The publication, authored by Frida Khan and launched online on September 6th will also be present at the upcoming 13th International Conference of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). From the 8th to the 11th of September, 2,000 participants from a wide range of movements and sectors will gather in Bahia, Brazil to collectively strategize for feminist futures, including a specific focus on women's rights and land governance. We are proud to announce that ILC members will be involved in various sessions. Landesa, a contributor to the publication, will organize a specific session on "Why land rights matter for women and how they can grow".

The publication is the result of a research project developed between 2013 and 2015 where the International Land Coalition

commissioned a series of studies on women's inheritance rights in Muslim societies. The aim was to improve understanding of the barriers that prevent women from achieving tenure security, with a particular focus on inheritance laws and the practices that influence women's land rights in Asia.

The studies analysed inheritance laws and their impact on rural women in selected countries in Asia and West Africa such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Senegal, Togo, and Mali. While these countries have different demographics, they host common issues regarding discriminatory inheritance practices and laws. The comparative study in West Africa, covering two Muslim-majority countries (Mali and Senegal) and one Christian-majority country (Togo), was added in later in the process, to allow for a broader view of Islam and its interpretations relative to women's inheritance rights.

In short, the studies demonstrate that, while studied countries do indeed have legal, religious, and institutional provisions that protect women's inheritance, their implementation in the patriarchal cultural context in which they exist is weak. Countries need to institute a mix of attitudinal and structural changes to create an environment and legal framework for gender equality in inheritance.

As noted in the publication, "it is a sad irony that a religion which in its time was revolutionary in promoting women's rights, including those concerning inheritance, has now come to be associated with the worst forms of discrimination against women". So more than religion, it is overarching patriarchal practices that seek to keep women subordinate to men, socially, legally, and above all economically, by restricting women's mobility, sexuality,

participation in remunerative work, decision-making, and ownership of assets, including those gained through inheritance.

Owning land is a source of power and security for both women and men, and studies show that women who own land are able to negotiate space for themselves in the household with more confidence and independence. Furthermore, studies have shown that affording women their land rights has multiple positive impacts, including reducing poverty, improving household food security, and providing access to employment and to capital, as well as having a positive effects on their own education and health and those of their children.

Download and read Framing the Debate: Islamic inheritance laws and their impact on rural women in Muslim societies [here](#).