



## Rural women's access to land: An appraisal of land rights campaigns in Missenyi district Tanzania

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### Abstract

This paper aimed at appraising the land rights campaigns towards women's land access in Missenyi District in Tanzania. The study was guided by Liberal Feminism Theory. The qualitative approach was used to help the participants explore their attitudes, behaviours, and understanding of the women's land rights campaigns. This approach enables a comprehensive assessment of the campaigns' effectiveness, their response within rural communities, and the factors influencing their implementation. The data for this study were gathered through semi-structured interview schedules, focus group discussions and observation schedules. The researcher analysed data through the thematic analysis procedure. The study involved fifty-three participants. These included; rural men, rural women, and religious and local government leaders. The findings indicate that campaigns have raised awareness of women's land rights. This is due to seminars, workshops, village and ward meetings, social cognition, and the enforcement of laws. Ultimately, the findings aim to inform more effective strategies for promoting rural women's land rights campaign and achieving gender equitable access to land resources in Missenyi District, Tanzania and similar contexts. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of sustained efforts in capacity-building, legal reform, and community engagement to ensure lasting improvements in rural women's access to land. The study recommends that more efforts through various campaigns are needed to raise awareness about land rights. Also, community members, especially women, still need more education and training to reduce their ignorance of women's land rights and dispel misconceptions about women's land access.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Campaigns, Gender equality, Land access, Land rights, Ownership and women.

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### Contribution of this paper to the literature

For purposes of addressing your question with regard the nature of the contribution of this study, I hereby request the reader to go through the literature review documented in this study. It is my sincere belief that the reader will be able to identify the lacunae or the gaps in knowledge which has been expressed in the said literature review.

## 1. Introduction

Gender inequality in land ownership has been a serious problem in Tanzania, as it is in most African countries as well, as [Jacobs \(2002\)](#) and [Moyo \(2017\)](#) discovered in their studies. Women have been facing land ownership discrimination, whereby traditional laws are seen as the main source of women's oppression. This situation led to unsuitable conditions for rural women when accessing land. Women in Tanzania have less access to land ownership as compared to their male counterparts, as revealed by [Osorio, Percic, and Di Battista \(2014\)](#). This is due to some customary laws and cultural norms in Africa that do not recognise ownership of land by women. Instead, customary practices favour men over women in land matters. This has resulted to most women in Tanzania remain landless. However, nationally, different institutions and women's advocates groups realised the problem and put more effort into revamping the situation. Currently, the government, together with various organisations or women's advocates, is launching campaigns to inspire women to be aware of their rights. This includes the right to own land, which gives women the chance to access land for their livelihoods.

Therefore, the study aimed at appraising women's land rights campaigns towards women's land access. It also, examines the awareness of women towards land rights, assesses the presence of women's land campaigns, and realises the contribution or efforts of women's land rights campaigns to inspire rural women in Kilimilile Ward, Missenyi District.

## 2. Background and Literature Review

Tanzania as one of the most African countries, farming is a core economic activity. This concur with [Jacobs \(2002\)](#) and [Moyo \(2017\)](#) who commented that, access to land is essential to guaranteeing family livelihoods. Similarly, [Economic Commission for Africa \(ECA\) \(2003\)](#) and [Mutangura \(2005\)](#) reported that three-quarters of households in rural areas in Tanzania are cultivators and depend entirely on the land for their livelihoods. Women are observed as the main land users as [Moyo \(2017\)](#) reported that: "Women play a great role in farming activities in Tanzania". Also, [Moyo \(2017\)](#) claims that: nowadays the rural productive working force has relocated to metropolitan areas in search of formal occupations, mining, and/or business-related activities.

Women's access to land, as experienced from society to society at the regional level in Tanzania in particular, is pathetic. Scholars ([Moyo, 2017](#); [Tsikata, 2003](#)) have commended that: women in Tanzania, both in patrilineal and matrilineal societies, have indirect access to land through husbands, fathers, sons, or administrators. Furthermore, [Moyo \(2017\)](#); [Mutangura \(2005\)](#) and [Tsikata \(2003\)](#) contributed that: women receive secondary rights as land title normally follows the male line.

Due to indirect access to land, land title and other conditions, women have limited chances to control, use and possess the land. The rights to land, which are under customary law, seem to hinder women from making good decisions to control the land and its productions. The government of Tanzania, non-governmental organisations, and international agencies have made efforts to emancipate women from destructive traditional practices and abuses of landlessness ([Duncan, 2014](#); [United Republic of Tanzania, 2016](#)). There are many institutions involved in the women's rights campaign so that women can get their basic rights, including land tenure. According to [Kempster \(2011\)](#), such efforts are evidenced in organisations and institutions where women's advocates are raising and regulating women's rights issues.

In this regard, the government of Tanzania has taken a very strong position on the general principles of equality as human rights. The constitution of the united republic of Tanzania of 1977 provides for equality in land ownership and other properties, among many other rights to be given to each citizen legitimately. Also, Land Act No. 4 and No. 5 of 1999 suggest equal rights for land ownership and its usage that both men and women have. The Village Land Act No. 5 declares and limits the use of customary laws if they are likely to reject women's legal rights to own land. Furthermore, 'Vision 2025' recognises and addresses the significance of gender equality and women's empowerment.

As well, Tanzania formulated the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction 1 and 2 (NSPR), commonly known as 'MKUKUTA' which aims to show the place of interest in gender issues and particular strategies related to gender-based violence (GBV) ([United Republic of Tanzania, 2016](#)). (MKUKUTA is the abbreviation of Swahili words that stands for "Mpango wa Kupambana na kupunguza Umaskini Tanzania" which means the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction). Tanzania signed international rights conventions for more implementations to meet the requirement of gender balance ([Duncan, 2014](#)). To promote gender equality concerning property rights, the government of Tanzania ratified and signed treaties with various conventions and institutions nationally and internationally, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which inspires and emphasises the implementation of women's rights in the national constitutions and in all signed conventions locally and internationally; the Protocol on Gender and Development; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These protect key rights, enabling people to enjoy a wide range of human rights. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) promotes and protects women's rights and basic freedom in Africa. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, where Article 13 (b) of this convention asked state parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women to ensure equal rights in many fields, including land rights ([Meena, 1996](#); [Tanzania Mainland - Legal and Human Rights Centre \(LHRC\) & Zanzibar Legal Services Centre \(ZLSC\), 2019](#); [United Republic of Tanzania, 2016](#)). Fundamentally, these ratified documents have been adopted to support the application of human rights and, in this regard, property rights for women; above all, they defend and protect equal rights between men and women.

Also, in Tanzania, there are some local groups, women's advocates groups and professional women's groups that form associations and join together to empower other women. Empowerment include women who have little knowledge concerning legal matters and other social issues that could need assistance. For instance, the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA), Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA), and Women's Legal Aid Centre (WLAC) have played a big role in liberating their fellow women legally, socially, politically, ideologically, and culturally (Legal Services Facility (LSF), 2019). Women's advocates have been creating awareness of women's rights all over the country, and they insist on gender balance.

### *2.1. The Problem*

Through the background of this study, it is observed that most women all over the world face the problem of land access. As far as Tanzania is concerned, women have difficulties accessing land. As it has been observed, the issue is largely due to the existing traditions and customs in the country, which restrict women's rights to own land. This condition has led to the formation of women's rights campaigns at different levels, from local women's groups to national and international levels.

Efforts made by women's advocates in Tanzania to implement gender equality by recognising women's rights have been made in various regions. For example, organisations like TAMWA, TAWLA, LSF, and others have put their efforts into doing various campaigns in the country to liberate women's minds and teach them more about their basic rights (Legal Services Facility (LSF), 2019).

Despite the efforts of various women's rights campaigns in Tanzania, gender inequality, especially in land access, still exists in many parts of the country (Moyo, 2017). Considering all these issues, therefore, the problem is to evaluate how women's land rights campaigns have promoted the understanding of women's land rights, how women's access to land has been successful, and the researcher wanted to identify women's campaigns related to their contribution to the mobilisation of women's land rights in the Missenyi District.

This study therefore, aims to answer the following research questions: What are the strategies used by women's rights campaigns to promote women's awareness of women's land rights? How have women's rights campaigns contributed to promoting land access and ownership for women? Which kind of organisation for women's rights campaigns is available in Missenyi district?

### *2.2. Theoretical Framework*

The study employed Liberal Feminism Theory. Liberal feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses on achieving gender equality through legal and political reform, as well as the promotion of individual freedom and autonomy for women. Liberal feminists believe that women's rights are essential and should be protected under the law, and they advocate for policies that aim to eliminate gender-based discrimination and inequality. Nienaber and Moraka (2016) comments that, liberal feminism's perspective is based on women's rights and gender equality. Thus, Liberal feminists support women's rights by emphasizing on the rights to life, freedom, and property ownership and hold leadership positions. They also believe that women should have the freedom to make their own choices about their lives, including their careers, relationships, and family planning. Overall, liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of individual rights and freedoms in achieving gender equality, and it seeks to promote a society where women have the same opportunities and rights as men.

From liberal feminism theory, the conclusion can be drawn on gender equality which can be traced through social recognition, political and legal reform. Women's rights are likely to be attained if national laws and women's recognition in societies are clearly understood and practised. Thus, this theory is employed in this study because the problem of inequality in access to land denies women rights of land possession built on perceptions of male domination.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### *3.1. Research Approach and Research Design*

The study employed a qualitative approach. The researcher selected qualitative research because it enabled the participants to explore their attitudes, behaviour and understanding of women rights campaigns which intended to be gained in the study. This is in correlation with Mohajan (2018) who explains that the qualitative approach enables the researcher to capture people's views, opinion, motives and beliefs related to the study. It is from the participants' understandings; the researcher was able to collect primary data needed to answer the research objectives. A case study research design was involved to allow the extensive collection of data to be adopted and gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under the study.

### *3.2. Study Area*

The study was conducted in Kilimilile ward, Missenyi district in Kagera region, Tanzania. The researcher selected the Kilimilile ward because it is one of the rural areas which preserve customary laws that hinder women's basic rights, especially in land access. In Kilimilile ward, customary land rights are widely accepted as a practical option in rural life. In addition, men in this area like in other rural areas tend to own land and position to their eldest sons. Then, the researcher selected this area to appraise the women's land rights campaigns which deny man's autonomy in land access support women's land access. Therefore, the researcher selected this area to evaluate women's land rights campaigns where; the freedom of a man to use land in the African environment suppresses a woman's autonomy in using the land.

### *3.3. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size*

The study used non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique that seeks to identify rich information cases which can then be studied in depth (Gray, 2014). The researcher used a purposive sampling technique in selecting the sample size. The technique was used to help the researcher to select the sample size under the knowledge and experience of the participants since all live with women in society. Although the purposive sampling technique was used, the sample size still appears to be large. This is because the researcher

chose to conduct research in a ward with three villages. Therefore, each village required two group discussions, one for men and one for women. The reason behind this was to avoid mixing women and men in the same group. The researcher thought it could be an obstacle to getting real data from women in the same group as men.

The study involved a sample size of fifty-three participants. The sample size was obtained after the researcher collected the data until the point of research saturation through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observation. The sample size involved rural women cultivators because were the ones who could provide their views, experiences and perceptions on women land rights. Other participants were men, advocates of women, religious leaders and government leaders. In terms of the nature of study, women were mainly included in order to present their understandings on the matter

### *3.4. Data Collection Methods and Presentation*

The study employed semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and field observation methods. According to Yin (2014), the interview was used in order to supplement the extent of knowledge about individuals' thoughts, feelings, meanings and interpretations. This instrument collected qualitative data required in addressing the study need. The technique was used to probe the key informants like Village Executive officers (VEOs), Ward Executive Officer (WEO), religious leaders and women advocates. Thus, more justifications for understanding an appraisal of women's land rights campaigns were obtained.

The information from focused group discussions was gathered from rural women and men. The purpose of using focus groups was successful because the researcher was able to receive immediate responses about the study. Participants shared their interests with one another and proposed opinions as people with the same interests (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). Also, it was a good technique which used to assess the possibility of intervention as well. The discussion rose suggestions among the group members which led to obtaining different ideas at one time which could not be obtained from individuals.

Observation helped the researcher to link what was being observed and what was discussed during the interviews and focused group discussions. The researcher involved multiple methods to collect detailed, relevant and concrete data to avoid biases and increase the internal validity of women's land rights campaigns.

Thematic Analysis (Ibrahim, 2012) is a type of inductive strategy of qualitative analysis which the researcher selected for data analysis. It was used to analyse, classify and present themes or patterns that relate to the data. It demonstrated the data in huge aspects and involved different themes through interpretations.

### *3.5. Ethical Considerations*

As commented by Gray (2014), the researcher sought permission from relevant authorities for fieldwork in Missenyi District – Kilimilile Ward. This included obtaining a research permit which formalizes the research and is brought by the researcher to the research subjects. Permission was obtained from the Head of the Department of Sociology at the University of Saint Augustine Tanzania (SAUT), and a letter of identification was obtained from the office of the Region Administrative Secretary of Kagera (RAS), introducing the researcher to the District and Ward Governmental Officers and the respondents. On other hand, the researcher considered the participants' informed consent. According to the nature of this study, the researcher was aware of the sensitivity of the study that women rights concerning land rights in the societies is not well acknowledged, thus, some issues might arise if ethical consideration is not taken into account. Respect for privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of participants were considered during study procedures.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

### *4.1. Introduction*

The study aimed to assess the impact of land rights campaigns on women's land access in Kilimilile ward, Missenyi district. The findings were obtained through observation, semi-structured discussions and focus group discussions. Referring to the analysis method, the researcher has drawn various themes from the results of the participants. From there, the presentations and discussions are presented below.

#### *4.1.1. Women's Campaigns in Kilimilile Ward*

It was informed by various researchers that the work of liberating women has always been carried out in collaboration between private and public institutions. Likewise, the participants were able to identify government and non-government organisations such as Missenyi Aids and Poverty Eradication Crusade (MAPEC) (This project aims to motivate and provide grants for technical training on promoting organic farming and encouraging afforestation and reforestation activities in Missenyi division, also, to facilitate enhanced access for Tanzanian orphans and marginalized youngsters, adolescents, and individuals facing vulnerabilities due to HIV and various challenges, so that they can utilize suitable services related to HIV and AIDS and other relevant areas ), MHOLA, ELCT, World Vision, and legal institutions involved in providing training to women. Although each organisation has its own goal of liberating women, they are able to work in partnership, so there is solidarity among them. Every institution that stands firm brings about significant changes.

The participants reported on the presence of various non-governmental organisations that promote women's rights awareness apart from governmental organisations. During group discussion, women in sequence explained:

There are non-governmental organisations like World Vision that conduct seminars to educate us about our rights. They teach us many things, among which women's rights are and how we can claim them for the benefit of society. In fact, these seminars have helped us a lot. We were in darkness, but now we know our rights and no one can cheat us like in the past.

ELCT (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania) gives seminars to different groups of women about entrepreneurship and women's basic rights. For instance, getting an education and educating our children, as well as knowing our rights about ownership of land and other family properties. For example, my brother wanted to take the inherited land of our parents by himself; I went to the

Ward Tribunal Council, and I was given my share of my parents' land. So, the seminars helped women become aware of their rights and brought about equal rights within the family. Another non-government organisation that tries to bring awareness to women is called MAPEC. At first, this organisation was interested in children's rights but later found that children are tampered with because of their parents. If women's rights are not realised, children's rights are also in danger. Therefore, this organisation also started educating women about their rights to help women take care of their children. So, with MAPEC seminars, we have been helped to understand our rights!

Also, one man explained the contribution of MAPEC: "There is MAPEC, its workers are passing through the villages to find women and educate them. They have their village representatives as well; they pass and gather women's groups in the rural areas to educate them."

The success of Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was sometimes obtained through local women's groups. The researcher observed the presence of local groups in Kilimilile, where she found some groups in meetings before focus group discussions started. Women themselves seemed to assist each other through their local groups called *Tuinueane*, *Upendo*, and *Umoja*. They were elaborating for their fellow women, who were new members, had not attended any seminars, or had no idea about women's rights. During group discussion, most of the women appreciated this, and one of them said that:

Another place where we get awareness is through women's local associations. There are various social groups like *Tupendane*, *Tuinueane*, *Umoja*, and so many others. Now, these local women's groups assist us greatly. On the other hand, we are getting training from women consultants from MHOLA. When those new members join us, we educate them about women's rights. That education has helped a lot of women get their rights when they are oppressed.

The findings above were related to women consultants from the Mamas Hope Organisation for Legal Assistance (MHOLA). She revealed that today's women are aware of their rights because of the training that has been given to them through seminars and workshops. For that action, the woman consultant from MHOLA stated:

Nowadays, women are aware of their rights, we meet them in their local groups, village meetings, or ward meetings. Therefore, we go and educate them in those places because meeting one by one could be very difficult. On the other hand, we are providing training by taking a few of them. Therefore, the chain becomes big, and many women attain an understanding of what is being taught because one teaches the other, and so the message spreads.

In addition to that, she said:

Apart from village or ward meetings, we, as MHOLA, are following up by meeting them in their local groups. As we prepare our schedule, we find that on a certain date in a certain month, a certain group will have a meeting. So, we go to such groups, meet them there, and educate them. Although sometimes time is very limited, women get some awareness and are then oriented to find out more about their rights. I can say that we have liberated many women who gained their violated rights concerning land access; now they are owning or inheriting the land as theirs.

In general, women's advocacy groups in the Kilimilile ward have shown great effort to make society aware of women's rights. It is through the hard work they have put into educating women and the Kilimilile community that women have been seen to be able to own land in their families and in the community in general. The work they do is to educate society to understand women's rights because they have been violated for a long time. It is the hope of the researcher that, society will gradually change and obey the law without coercion. As was the aim of this study, land rights campaigns to defend women will bring developmental changes as many women in rural areas depend on agriculture, so a woman's lack of land is holding development back in society.

#### *4.1.2. Women's Awareness of Land Rights*

The study revealed that, currently, women are aware of their rights. This is due to the findings obtained from the participants during focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. It exposed that today's women can demand them, protect them and sometimes teach them to other women. In this regard, during focus group discussions, the researcher asked about the participants' experiences with women's awareness of their land rights. In their response, the participants indicated that they were quite aware of women's land rights. In this remark, one woman said:

Some revolutions have been brought about by various institutions in our village through various seminars. These seminars have been very helpful to us and have tried to create balance in the family. I did not attend primary school, and those rules I had never heard of. But through the seminars, I got... I am not deceived anymore. We learned a lot about our rights and the rights of children. This has helped me to know my rights and the steps to take if they are violated.

In the same line-up concerning women's awareness, the District State Attorney also had this to say:

As women face conflict and come to the office, you see that they are people of understanding. Even when they come to the office with their problems, they tell you, I did this and that until I came here. Compared to past decades, today the number of women who come into the office to demand their rights is high. This shows that they already understand the procedures to follow to get their rights, and they feel obligated to do so.

Furthermore, one of the Village Executive Officers clearly explained during the interview that:

We give training about women's rights during public meetings. At these meetings, we normally have some perennial agendas concerning the village's development, including women's rights such as women's land access and general human rights. Therefore, during our public meetings in villages, village members get educated on their rights, including

women's rights. In addition to that, there are other organisations that help us a lot on that issue.

Moreover, in expressing awareness of women's rights and government support at the ward level, during the interview, one of the religious leaders has this to explain:

Some women have understood so much about human rights and land rights. This is possible due to the education provided to them. For instance, education from women's advocacy groups: governmental and non-governmental organisations has created an understanding of women rights. This led them to be aware of their rights and to demand them where necessary; today, we can see that women are owning more land compared to the past.

According to the data collected, women's awareness was also attained through listening to various programmes on the radio, as the Ward Social Development Officer explained:

There are people, including women, who gain awareness through radio programmes. For example, in our locality, there is FADECO Radio (Family Alliance for Development and Cooperation) and Karagwe Radio, which provide programmes on the law. There is one lawyer called Ally Chamani who is very helpful to the community in legal matters through the various radio topics he provides.

The findings show that women's rights to land have been recognised, which enables them to improve women's access to land. Due to that, women are owning land, as discussed below. Most of the participants showed that, currently, women know the procedures for demanding their rights. They know the offices where to take their cases, and they can identify that this case can be taken to this office, not that one. This was possible because women's training was provided by women's advocates, who built awareness among women about their rights. This concurs with [Moyo \(2017\)](#), who discovered that there is an increase in awareness of women's rights and property issues. For example, land titles that identified spouses as joint owners were previously issued in the name of the man, as head of the family. Therefore, this implies that, after the efforts of women advocates, awareness of women's rights and land issues has increased.

The views above are supported by [Nienaber and Moraka \(2016\)](#) who explained that liberal feminists rely on empowering women, which raises awareness in society about women's rights. Awareness has the capacity to shrink gender inequality in land access that can be demonstrated and bring about gender stereotypes. Therefore, this hinders women's participation not only in various social positions and decision-making but also in property ownership, particularly land. It can be suggested that women's awareness is the source of social development. As it is said, educating women means educating the entire society.

#### *4.1.3. Women's Access to Land*

The participants, especially women, seemed aware of women's land access. This was revealed when they reported that they own land in various forms, like by inheriting, renting and buying. Access to land ownership by succession or inheritance was the most common form of land ownership in the study setting, as participants declared.

Referring to the findings gained from the participants, it seems that there is a large number of women who own land compared to previous periods. The participants voiced their excitement about the familiarity of current women's land acquisition. At the same time, they agreed on the efforts of women's advocacy groups, the enforcement of laws, and the use of media, which helped women become aware of their rights to land ownership. For that concern, during the focus group discussion, one woman explained:

Various trainings we received have helped us. We own land through inheritance, purchase, or renting in our areas because of our understanding of our rights. Before the realisation of land rights, I got nothing because I was evicted by my husband's relatives when I got married for the first time. Now we have a farm we bought with my second husband, and we own it together. I also own the land I inherited from my parents, and we also rent and earn the same. This is because the seminars I attended made me realise my rights.

During the men's analysis of women's land access in the discussion group, one of them describes:

It seems now that women have begun to be given priority in inheriting their parents' land as the means of land acquisition. On the husband's side, it is understood that the wife must own her share. If you look at a large percentage, male dominance disappears. And saying women should not own land is dead; as we see, even when a parent dies and leaves a will, daughters are sometimes given land in large portions differently than in past years.

In addition, another woman said:

I thank my father, before his death he called all his children and everyone got their portion of the land. This has helped me to rise economically; otherwise, I would struggle after the death of my husband, who was a distant man and did not own a farm. This has created equal rights for all.

The concept associated with renting land to women was also classified as a means of getting land. This form enabled women to choose what they wanted to plant during the season. Women could plant crops for sale and for family consumption. In the focus group discussion, one of the women explained that:

My husband and I agreed that I should rent land from the village's government and that what I would harvest would help me with my needs. It has now been fifteen years since I have been planting and harvesting for my needs and those of my family as well. I own the land, though it is for rent. This also did not prevent me from farming, even on our inherited farm.

The issue of women renting land was also clear to local government leaders. During the interview, the District Social Development officer had the following to say:

Nowadays, women acquire land in the village council; they are given land to use for growing various crops for their families and for meeting their basic needs. Probably it is

given to them and completely becomes their property. For example, due to the women's need for land for cultivation in Kilimilile village, there is apportioned land distributed to women who now own it as theirs.

There was a connection between the information of the District Social Development Officer and the Village Executive Officer concerning land renting, whereby the VEO said that:

In my workplace, there is an area of land that has been used for renting to both men and women or a family, although women are many. Most women have no other place for cultivation and have no family (they are single parents). As we know in our area, when women have a child or children without a husband (this is after being abandoned by them), they live uncomfortably until they have a place to live. Due to that, they took their need to the office of the Social Development Officer, and that problem was solved by giving them their portions of land permanently. Now, women who own land are many in this area.

In addition to the forms of land above, purchasing land seemed to be adopted by women for some reasons. The findings show that some women are accessing land through purchases. Through focused discussion, one of the women said:

Others we own through purchasing land and ownership in the clan. This helps us to get food and to sell it. We are used to having two parts so that if there is a separation in the family or a dispute with the clan, it will find us a place of refuge before the case is resolved.

Likewise, one woman clarified that: I tell you; inherited land is sometimes problematic. If the land you used to own is small and your husband dies, you start to panic, but if you have enough land, you feel strong. I bought the land that I own for that reason.

It was found that the inheritance form of ownership was the prevailing means of attaining land in Kilimilile ward, as it was in the past. The study found that most of the women had acquired land by inheritance, either through family or clan land, after the death of a parent or a husband. Moreover, the participants revealed that women currently own land during the existence of their parents or husbands. Female participants manifested this, as some had inherited land from their parents or their husbands before dying. This means that women will gradually be able to own land and earn a living. Even those who are not able to, because of the efforts of their peers, will succeed as well.

The above findings are in line with previous studies, which explain that most women in Africa, including Tanzania, own land through inheritance through family or clan land. For instance, [Moyo \(2017\)](#) reported that in Tanzania, women own land in their husbands' or sons' names. Moreover, the situation of women's land ownership is increasing. It is a fact that the process of empowering women and raising social awareness of women's rights is the cause of the reforms being witnessed today. Thus, the status of women inheriting land in the family is the basis of women's liberation and social development in general.

It was found that some women have been purchasing land as a means of being permitted to use it. The findings are solely the same as those of [Namubiru-Mwaura \(2014\)](#), who reported that Pakistanis' and Indians' women rely on purchasing land because of traditional gender roles and a shortage of financial resources. Also, in Nigeria, [Chigbu, Paradza, and Dachaga \(2019\)](#) observed that women focused more on buying land to invest in commercial kiosks for rental purposes. Likewise, [Moyo \(2017\)](#) and [Shayo \(2016\)](#) observed that women purchase land to compensate for the absence of land to inherit, which resulted in unequal land allocation in Tanzania. Also, women seemed to purchase land individually or jointly for family development.

The action of purchasing land for women is done for reasons such as a woman being abandoned by her husband, a lack of enough land for cultivation, divorce, fear of demanding her land right in the family or clan, the need for economic continuity, and land discrimination. This implies that the feeling of belongingness encouraged women to purchase land that has no restrictions. Purchasing land for ownership seemed to be preferred by some women because they were searching for freedom in land use.

Renting is also a means of acquiring land through village administration and village rents. The findings expressed that village leaders were fulfilling their roles by assisting people to rent land on village administrative land. Some women who were renting village land were given the right to own it forever. Land renting to women was classified as a means of getting freedom on what a woman wanted to plant during planting season. Women could plant crops for sale and family consumption as they wished. This implies that women are free to ask for the land in the village administration and get it. The reasons women to demand land depend on being abandoned by their husbands or having a small plot for cultivation, among others. Also, due to land scarcity, or families having limited land, many women see land renting as part of the solution to that need.

#### *4.1.4. Social Recognition of Women's Land Rights and Status*

The response from the majority of participants revealed that women and society today realise women's rights more than in past decades. The participants in different situations during focus discussions and interviews agreed that society today knows how women are recognised. Society, including the government, is aware of women's land rights and land access due to the education they require. In supporting that, one man clarified that:

Education has brought light, whether it is for schools or seminars offered. After people became educated, for example, like us in Buhaya, we knew that a girl child inheriting land was a waste of land. But as we got to know later, we realised that even a girl is a great supporter in the family. We have already discovered that what made us understand that was education. So, if the state educates the people on the laws at the grassroots level, we will have a good foundation for building justice and understanding the role of the law.

Sticking to that direction, the responses from the majority of participants revealed that women and society today realise women's rights more than in past decades. In support of that, during a focus group discussion, two of the men in sequence clarified that:

Education has dramatically helped raise awareness of women's rights. For us Muslims, for instance, we are advised to marry wives whose husbands will be able to meet their needs. Therefore, a woman who gets married knows that there is a right to own what is there. The

seminars offered also reveal that. So, the husband knows that I must give my wives equal rights in the allotment of land, and women are aware of that.

A woman is more valued today than ever. If you look at the parents' heritage, they give it to both girls and boys. In families, the sensitive men give their wives land when they are still alive, and as a united family, they farm together. If the husband happens to be preceded in death by a will, the wife is currently given a share that could not be abusive. There are changes towards women in society today, and equality between husband and wife continues to be recognised.

Women also realised social consciousness, which brought knowledge obtained in various trainings and led to social recognition. During focus group discussions, two women explained:

Compared to the past, the situation has changed, and there is a significant improvement in a woman's life. The education I got from knowing my rights and that I am also entitled to own or buy a piece of land, has made me conscious. Presently, the understanding is strong compared to the past, when education was limited. Now we get it at conferences and seminars, even on Women's Day (8/03), which helps us remind society about the rights of women.

There is a substantial enhancement in women's education, for example, in the past, men could sell land without family sharing, and after selling, you would not know where the money had gone. But now the situation has greatly reduced until the land is sold, and the wife must have a say in it. This is the result of the education given to society, specifically to mothers.

However, despite all efforts to liberate and empower women, there are some people who are still conservative and whose minds are not changing. According to the findings, some women and men do not understand why women own land while married. Some women find it tolerable not owning land, and some men see women's access to and ownership of land as copying other cultures. During the focus group discussion, one of the women said:

Traditionally, a woman was prepared by her mother or other relatives for marriage and only listened to her husband; other things should not be interfered with, as long as the husband fulfilled the needs of the family. For me, it will be hard to compete with my husband because I want to land. I can be asked where you are taking the land. If land does exist and you cultivate whatever you want, what is the problem again? As we have been taught, gender balance has been brought about by Europeans. For us Africans, the men stand as the symbol of keeping peace and solidarity in the family or clan.

On the other hand, during group discussions, it was found that among almost all the men participants, no one was ever invited to attend a seminar concerning women's rights apart from village or ward meetings. For the good implementation of women's rights, particularly land ownership, most male participants suggested mutual training on women's rights, as one of them suggested:

Surprisingly, every day you hear about women's rights, there are women's seminars about their rights. However, they forget to include those who are deprived of such rights. If the one cause of injustice is not involved, where will a woman then get those rights? It is good that the seminars provided involve both men and women. Each one should know his or her rights and which rights each should receive, thus creating balance.

The state of women's rights and social recognition have been discussed above. This reflects the relationship between awareness and recognition of women in the Missenyi community, especially in Kilimilile ward. This has been fuelled by governmental and non-governmental organisations, groups of women campaigners, community awareness, and the delivery of justice to law enforcement agencies. It is clear that there is a greater social awareness of women compared to previous years, but it needs to be monitored regularly. The main reason is that people's traditions and cultures are ongoing processes that change all the time. There is a possibility that the understanding will become clearer or diminish due to the way society develops.

However, seriousness is still needed in implementing women's land rights. The main reason societies carry cultural beliefs Women's land rights can be implemented in all Tanzanian societies, with a particular focus on positive developmental, social, economic, and political outcomes. It should be noted that, what is required is not competition between men and women but equality for the benefit of all.

#### *4.1.5. Enforcement of Land Laws among Women*

During focus group discussions, the majority of women clarified land law enforcement as a way of giving them confidence and equipping them for justice when applied well. Women were happy to express that today women's rights are considered in case of land dispute that emerges from family conflicts, one woman had to say:

The changes have been brought into our culture due to government laws. These laws have helped us to claim our rights and get them. For instance, the law now states clearly that in cases of divorce, the man and woman have to divide the land and other family properties equally.

For more explanation about the enforcement of the laws in rural areas concerning women's land rights, during an interview, one of the women advocates commented:

In the past, ward tribunals did not do well. Women's rights were probably violated because of patriarchy. But these days, they do a good job. When women submit their cases, justice is done. That is why land cases are decreasing nowadays. The law is clear, so men understand it and know that if they go against it, it will take its course.

Also, a consultant woman from Mamas Hope Organisation for Legal Assistance (MHOLA) said that:

Now women are getting their rights accordingly. The rules work. If a woman has a case, if she fails this level, she steps to another level until she gets it right. For example, she can start at the village office, ward office, and social welfare office up to the court level. A woman uses them to get her rights, even though there are meanders.

Similar to the explanations above, the [United Nations Human Rights \(2014\)](#) and [SIDA \(2015\)](#) display the efforts of putting law enforcement into practices that seemed to free women from the unknown and help them understand the laws. In the same line, [Sylvester \(2013\)](#) suggested that, if every part plays its role as claimed in order to get rid of the problem of land ownership discrimination, women would be aware of the legal rights that



protect them and help them own land and other properties. The intention here is that when women own land and have access to it, it is easier for them to manage their families and promote social development through farming activities.

Different from the above observations, some scholars, including Landesa (2012) and Mhango, Malima, and Lukumay (2014), argue that legal institutions are trustless about justice, which oppresses one part. Several African countries have promulgated legal statutes to address women's lack of land rights. On the other hand, Dancer (2017) recognises African countries, including Tanzania, as being recommended to improve and reinforce laws that discriminate against women in various spheres. Nevertheless, McFerson (2010) submits that unfortunately, most African countries do not implement measures of correct law enforcement.

For instance, McFerson (2010) states, while Kenya's constitution outlaws gender discrimination, it also upholds customary law on marriage, divorce, and inheritance. In Tanzania, two land acts, the Land Act and the Village Act, repeal customary rules that exclude women from property possession. However, in the view of Mhango et al. (2014), they have not been fully implemented due to a shortage of awareness in general.

Along with the confusion above, in this study, the participants have acknowledged the existence of access to women's rights, in a unique way; the right to access land for women. Therefore, the enforcement of laws in this study came to demonstrate the changes in the previous observations. Women's awareness about their basic rights in the Kilimilile ward was raised by various institutions, including legal bodies. Findings show that most of the participants appreciated the work done by legal institutions today and that justice is observed sincerely. These give equal rights to both women and men to own land.

So, the laws helped women realise their rights because, if they own land, it helps them engage in agricultural activities, which improves their livelihoods. For instance, during group discussions, men explained that women are not disturbed because justice is done. Similar to that, men reduced family violence because they knew if they were taken to court, there would be no joke or giving a bribe as in the past, and they knew they would be taken to jail.

#### 4.1.6. Government Involvement in Women's Land Rights Campaigns

During semi-structured interviews, participants revealed the presence of government and private bodies that carried out strategic planning to emancipate women and make them aware of their basic rights, including rights to land ownership. The findings reported a number of social institutions like ward tribunals, social welfare development offices, and legal bodies like Mamas Hope Organisation for Legal Assistance (MHOLA), Missenyi AIDS and Poverty Eradication Crusade (MAPEC), World Vision, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT), which are involved as tools of women's land rights awareness and enforcement.

Even if some of the organisations mentioned above are non-governmental organisations, the government is still concerned about allowing them to follow up with them and know their contributions to society. The views were explored by one of the religious leaders during the interview, who explained:

The government has its facilitators; for example, there is a Ward Executive officer, a District Social welfare development officer, a ward coordinator, and a gender desk (*Dawati la jinsia*) who take care of women. The gender forum is really used, and that is why we direct people to go there. For instance, I had a case here, but I had to send it there after realising that there is a need for lawful conduct in such a matter. The government nowadays provides education on the rights of women and all people; this has helped us as well in reducing the cases we have been facing in previous times.

Also, the District Social Welfare Development Officer assured:

Laws are now well regulated, especially after the (United Republic of Tanzania, 1999). Land reform legislation has eliminated much discrimination and brought about equal rights. It reduced those traditions that were depriving women of justice. Currently, women's voices are heard, and they are given their rights accordingly. So, the situation is at least not as bad as before. Nowadays, women own land and other things by inheritance, whether they have bought them or rented them.

The participants were impressed with the services provided by the ward tribunals, the ward social development office, and the gender desk (*Dawati la Jinsia*). Women and men, when they had family disputes, the cases seemed to be taking a short time, and justice was obtained quickly. One man in the group discussion explained that:

For those who are fortunate enough to come to the judiciary, such as the courts, the judiciary has given them legal rights, and law enforcement has brought about a great revolution and self-awareness as well. Men feel it is right for a woman to get land and not be abused.

Generally, the findings above revealed how women access or own land through possession, purchasing, and renting. The study revealed that sometimes women's ability to own land in another way is obtained through legal enforcement or legal justice. The participants agreed on law enforcement through district legal bodies, the Ward Tribunal, and *Dawati la Jinsia*.

On the above views, some scholars like Dancer (2017) and Kameri-Mbote (2005) claimed that currently, many countries have formulated laws that protect women from land access in their societies. International and national bodies are struggling to eradicate this belief that undermines women, especially rural women who depend mostly on land as a means of survival. Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania, 2016) specifically signed various international treaties that protect women's rights. It has also formulated laws that have been enforced to bring justice to women concerning land disputes. Similarly, two land acts, the United Republic of Tanzania (1999) and United Republic of Tanzania (1999) of Tanzania, undermine customary laws that exclude women from property ownership (McFerson, 2010). This is in correspondence with liberal feminists, as stated by Nienaber and Moraka (2016), who criticise practices that deny women equal protection under the law and inequality in access to legal, social, political, and economic institutions that lead to women's oppression. Furthermore, they condemn laws that truly discriminate against women in various spheres and undermine their freedom of choice.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The collected findings revealed that awareness of women's land rights has, to some extent, brought about changes in Kilimilile society. In most cases, workshops and seminars provided by governmental and non-governmental organisations raised the knowledge of women and some men on women's land access. Likewise, the big support from the ward tribunal council, village, and ward meetings was observed, whereby through them women's rights were addressed and justice was applied to those who went for family dispute resolution. Most women were seen to be aware of land rights, and most of them seemed to own land in various forms, like land ownership for an inheritance, land ownership for renting and land ownership for purchasing.

This indicates that the trend of holding customary laws and traditional beliefs, which have been delaying women's awareness, has been changing and women's understanding of their rights has been rising. However, what has sucked with women from traditional backgrounds needs individual and social efforts to be reduced, if not eradicated. With the cultural beliefs and traditions that have been nurtured and taken root in social life, it is difficult for them to be quickly abandoned by the majority. That is to say, efforts to create equity in land tenure are still needed.

Also, the findings recognised the social understanding and attitudes towards women's land rights. This implies that individual mindset and social realisation brought social revolution and recognition, which seemed to maintain gender equality in land ownership. People have been able to gain understanding through training provided by various groups that enable women to recognise themselves and realise their rights as well. This is possible if society is aware and law enforcement is done effectively.

Moreover, participants were asked to comment on current agencies that have been promoting women's land rights. They were able to state that women's awareness is currently highly perceived, and the recognition of women's rights is also clear. The findings reported several social institutions like ward tribunals, social welfare development offices, legal bodies, MHOLA, MAPEC, World Vision, and ELCT that are involved as tools of women's land rights awareness and enforcement. This means that the contribution of government and social institutions to bringing about equality within the community is great. Every organisation or party strives to liberate a woman so that she can understand her rights and take action wherever needed.

On the other hand, despite the efforts to liberate women from the darkness of not understanding their rights, there are still a few who do not see the importance of a woman claiming her basic rights. They see claiming or owning land as an act of disrespect for African traditions and customs. For that future, community education is still needed.

The researcher would like to give recommendations concerning what she has witnessed during the field study. The government, NGOs, and other women's advocacy groups should continue to rethink new strategies on how to maintain and improve their services. New strategies are needed to reach more women who have not yet received information about women's rights and women's land access. Training on the importance of human rights towards women's land access should be provided to community members as motivation for realising women's contributions to development in society.

Men and women need to be educated in order to stabilise social life by realising the existing laws of each part. The government and its legal institutions should continue to provide fair justice to both men and women to maintain the role of laws and justice. There should be deliberate efforts to ensure awareness of the law among women and the entire society is achieved. This was also recommended by Mhango et al. (2014). Village and ward meetings should be modified and organised to enable each person to recognise his or her rights. This will eliminate the exclusion of women from various decisions, including the implementation of their rights; this will raise more awareness about cultural beliefs that hinder women from realising their rights to land access as also observed and recommended by Shayo (2016).

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