

## HUGE BARRIERS IMPEDE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS AND POLICIES PERTAINING TO LAND OWNERSHIP FOR WOMEN IN IGAD MEMBER COUNTRIES.



*Hon. Mutuuzo Peace Regis, State Minister for Gender and Cultural Affairs and other Ugandan delegates at the IGAD side event during the CSW69 in New York*

**By Joshua Kyalimpa**

On the sidelines of the 69th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), the Minister of State for Gender and Cultural Affairs, Hon. Mutuuzo Peace Regis, decried the slow implementation of laws and policies that grant women land ownership rights in the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region.

Speaking at an IGAD-organized side event during the CSW69 in New York, Hon. Mutuuzo emphasized that IGAD member states are obliged to implement gender-sensitive labour laws and policies in line with commitments made. However, whereas progressive land laws have been put in place, implementation remains slow.

According to Joselyn Bigirwa, IGAD Head of Mission for Uganda and a Gender and Land Expert, IGAD has supported its member states, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda, in undertaking a gender assessment of the land sector in their respective countries.

Bigirwa, also a gender and social inclusion specialist with vast experience in gender mainstreaming in development and humanitarian programming in the Horn, East, and Southern Africa, says that despite constitutional and legal frameworks promoting gender equality, implementation gaps persist.

Mrs. Dorcas Okalany, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Lands, Housing & Urban Development, says Uganda has been a champion of gender and equity budgeting and therefore the women's land rights agenda.

However, she blamed the weak implementation of the laws and policies, including the Gender Strategy for the National Land Policy, on the resource constraints that all IGAD Member States face. She called for the support of development partners in implementing the Member States' Women's Land Rights Agenda and Action Plans as well as the IGAD Women's Land Rights Agenda.

Hon. Mutuuzo emphasized that achieving gender equality in land ownership is a commitment at the global, regional, and national levels. The IGAD side event was held under the theme: A Review of Progress Made in Women's Land Rights, Property, and Resource Rights since the Beijing Conference: Accelerating Implementation to Achieve Gender Equality and Sustainable Development.





The AU Agenda 2063 commits to ensuring that African women are fully empowered in all spheres, with equal social, political, and economic rights. This includes the right to own and inherit property, sign contracts, register and manage businesses, and access productive assets such as land, credit, inputs, and financial services.

The agenda also seeks to eliminate systemic inequalities, exploitation, marginalization, and discrimination against young people, while ensuring youth issues are mainstreamed in all development agendas. Agenda 2063 aligns with SDG 5, which explicitly focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls in Africa.

One key SDG 5 indicator tracks the proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women equal rights to land ownership and control. It also monitors legal reforms that strengthen women's rights to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land.

Progress toward this goal is measured by the extent to which countries integrate the following six internationally recognized legal standards, drawn from the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

- Mandatory joint registration or economic incentives for joint registration.
- Spousal or partner consent for land transactions.
- Equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters, as well as protections for surviving spouses.
- Budgetary commitments to enhance women's land ownership rights.
- Legal protection of women's land rights in customary land tenure systems.
- Quotas for women's participation in land administration and management institutions.

Several instruments reinforce women's rights to access, use, and control land.

The AU Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa calls on member states to address gender inequality in land ownership. It recognizes that women make up approximately 80% of Africa's agricultural workforce, playing a vital role in food production, household sustenance, and community well-being.

Furthermore, the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges mandates Regional Economic Communities (such as IGAD) to:

- Provide technical guidance to member states on land rights.
- Monitor progress in the land sector.
- Promote regional harmonization of land policies.
- Ensure women's land rights are integrated into national land reforms.

The declaration also urges IGAD member states to address tenure insecurity, enhance transparency in land administration, and ensure equal land access for all users.

