



INSTITUTIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Addressing the Missing Middle between Women's Grassroots Actions and Government Obligations



Date: Tuesday March 12, 2024 / 2 - 5.30 pm followed by a reception

Location: New York, Industrious Venues Clearing (780 3rd Ave)

Background

Despite repeated global and national commitments to strive for gender equality and protect women's rights, women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by global crises such as hunger, climate change and conflicts, depriving them of their basic needs and increasing their vulnerability to gender-based violence. According to the **SDG Gender Snapshot 2023**, 1 in 4 women and girls are expected to be moderately or severely food insecure by 2030. An estimated 736 million women and girls aged 15 years or older have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner or sexual violence by a non-partner at least once in their lifetime (UN Women). The intersection of food insecurity and gender-based violence emerges as a critical nexus, that has often been overlooked.

Governments often lack targeted and timely data, statistics and analyses on the infringement of women's rights, that are critical to well-informed, gender-sensitive responses to urgent needs and women's rights violations. Women's voices and perspectives also go unrecognized, while they often lack participation in decision-making processes, for example to tackle the climate and hunger crisis. This leads to inadequate responses of state and community institutions to protect women's rights, specifically their right to food, land, safety, and gender equality.

Women's organizations and community institutions have an important role to play, in holding duty bearers and other power-wielders accountable for failures to respect, protect and fulfil women's rights. Through equitable and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, they can jointly shape effective responses to tackle challenges women are facing. This requires establishing, developing, and strengthening organizations, structures, or systems within and between state institutions, women's organizations, and communities.

TMG Research and our partners have worked on solutions to strengthen women-led civil society organizations in Kenya and South Africa to address challenges around food insecurity and gender inequality and to hold governments accountable for effective responses.

In Kenya, we developed a decentralized rights reporting tool, called Haki Ardhi, that enables women to report infringements of their tenure rights to local, community-based support actors as well as a national umbrella organization supporting women through legal support and advocacy. With pressure on land increasing through climate change and the upsurge in land intensive measures such as carbon markets, violations of women's tenure rights are increasing, also often resulting in gender-based violence and impacts on food insecurity. The Haki Ardhi rights reporting tool enables community-based and umbrella organizations to build a coherent database with evidence of rights violations that supports communication and provides information that strengthen community-based and state institutions, to develop effective responses to protect women's rights.

In South Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fact that the constitutional mandate of state entities to realize the right to food and nutrition is not supported by policy or budget allocations. **Community kitchens responded to the hunger of families and individuals in informal and low-income areas of Cape Town by cooking and distributing 1,000's of meals per week. The community kitchens also serve as safer havens for people escaping**

rising gang violence and gender-based violence. Most of the kitchens are run by women who volunteer their time and money to serve communities. Through TMG’s research and network building, community kitchens became transformative spaces that effectively address the intertwined challenges of gender-based violence and food security. Alongside our partner FACT, we are piloting community-driven knowledge generation through (digitally) collecting and processing data on food insecurity and coping strategies in Cape Town. This data addresses knowledge gaps, making visible critical challenges faced by communities in their day-to-day struggle to cope with hunger, energy shortages, violence and food price spikes. **Through establishing a social accountability platform building on community food dialogues, the data is to strengthen both community and state institutions in their work to address the multifaced challenges of the polycrisis.**

Objectives

TMG Research and its partners from Kenya and South Africa are co-hosting this event, which will showcase successful grassroots accountability initiatives that use digital tools to empower women. Speakers from Kenya, South Africa, Peru, Europe and the US will talk about how local action and data can create better gender-responsive institutions. We aim to:

- Explore how locally collected data can support evidence-based advocacy and women's empowerment to hold governments accountable.
- Discuss paths of integrating local innovations into government responses to protect women's rights and scaling social and digital innovations for broader contexts such as climate action.

The various speakers will provide insights from different geographical and policy contexts and demonstrate how grassroots action and government accountability can intersect to strengthen institutions at different levels.

Programme

Time	Details
2:00 – 2:05 pm	Welcome By TMG Research
2.05 – 2:15 pm	Empowering the missing middle: Assessing policy impact and strengthening institutions Keynote (World Bank, TBC)
2:15 – 2:25 pm	Building institutions for gender equality Keynote by Dr. Jemimah Njuki, UNWOMEN

2:25 – 2:30 pm	<p>Grassroots action for effective responses and accountable institutions that protect women’s rights</p> <p>Input by TMG Research</p>
2:30 – 3:30 pm	<p>Community kitchens provide bottom-up solutions to address the intertwined challenge of food insecurity and GBV in the context of weak institutions</p> <p>Part 1: What is cooking? A review of three years of action-driven research in community kitchens in Cape Town to understand the interconnection between food insecurity and GBV?</p> <p>Input and discussion by TMG, FACT and HBF</p> <p>Part 2: An external view on the role of informal social protection systems in the global care debate</p> <p>Input and discussion round by external experts</p> <p>With inputs and discussion by:</p> <p>Patricia Cortes (UN Women)</p> <p>Caroline Peters (FACT)</p> <p>Claudia Lopes (Heinrich Boell Stiftung South Africa)</p> <p>Nicole Paganini (TMG Research)</p>
3:30 – 4:00 pm	Coffee break
4:00 – 5:00 pm	<p>Haki Ardhi Rights Reporting Tool</p> <p>Part 1: What is the tool about?</p> <p>Inputs by Kenya Land Alliance, Shibuye Community Health Workers, Rainforest Foundation UK and TMG Research</p> <p>Part 2: An external view on women’s land rights reporting and the potential for increasing accountability</p> <p>Input and discussion round by external experts, including Huairou Commission and Stand for Her Land Campaign</p>

5:00 – 5:25 pm	<p>Looking ahead: Addressing the Missing Middle between Women’s Grassroots Actions and Government Obligations.</p> <p>Panel discussion</p> <p>Huirou Commission</p> <p>World Bank (TBC)</p> <p>UN-Women</p> <p>Rainforest Foundation US</p>
5:25 – 5:30 pm	Closing
5:30 – 6:00 pm	Reception