About this training course

This training course from the Global Land Tool Network is part of the Network’s activities on Islamic dimensions of land. In most Muslim countries, Islamic law, principles and practices make an important contribution to shaping access to land. GLTN therefore has as one of its objectives the identification and development of Islamic land tools and case studies through a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and global process, owned by Muslims, but also including other civil society and development partners. More information on work in this area is available on GLTN’s website (www.gltn.net).

The training course, designed as an introduction to the field, is divided into eight stand-alone Modules, intended for use across Muslim societies. It is generic in nature, encouraging local adaptations where applicable. In addition to the Modules, the package includes a Guide for Facilitators and a set of annexes to draw upon during the training course.

The target groups for the course are policy makers or an audience at beginners or undergraduate level without prerequisite knowledge of Islamic land law but having basic experience with land issues in the Muslim world. The course builds on the baseline study by Sait S and Lim H (2006) Land Law and Islam: Property and Human Rights in the Muslim World (London: Zed Press/UN-HABITAT).

HS/158/10E
Training course on land, property and housing rights in the Muslim world

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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00108, Kenya
Tel: +254 20 762 3120
Fax: +254 20 762 3477
www.unhabitat.org

HS/158/10E

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Cover Photos: Claudio Acisido, Åsa Jonsson, Carlos Morales, and Photos8.com

Acknowledgements

Principal author: Siraj Sait

Editing and layout: Robert Wagner, Andrew Ondoo and Britta Uhlig
Sponsors: Norwegian Government and Swedish International Development Cooperation
Printer: UNON, Publishing Services Section, Nairobi, - ISO 14001:2004-certified

THE GLOBAL LAND TOOL NETWORK

The main objective of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) is to contribute to poverty alleviation and the Millennium Development Goals through land reform, improved land management and security of tenure.

The Network has developed a global land partnership. Its members include international civil society organizations, international finance institutions, international research and training institutions, donors and professional bodies. It aims to take a more holistic approach to land issues and improve global land coordination in various ways. These include the establishment of a continuum of land rights, rather than a narrow focus on individual land titling, the improvement and development of pro-poor land management, as well as land tenure tools. The new approach also entails unblocking existing initiatives, helping strengthen existing land networks, assisting in the development of affordable gendered land tools useful to poverty-stricken communities, and spreading knowledge on how to implement security of tenure.

The GLTN partners, in their quest to attain the goals of poverty alleviation, better land management and security of tenure through land reform, have identified and agreed on 18 key land tools to deal with poverty and land issues at the country level across all regions. The Network partners argue that the existing lack of these tools, as well as land governance problems, are the main cause of failed implementation at scale of land policies world wide.

The GLTN is a demand driven network where many individuals and groups have come together to address this global problem. For further information, and registration, visit the GLTN web site at www.gltn.net.
Module 5
Powerpoint presentation

Session Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session participants should be able to:

1. Appreciate some of the key features of the Islamic legal rules of inheritance, including the benefits and disadvantages of the fixed share system
2. Explore some of the legal rules on inheritance as part of wider Islamic inheritance systems and their implication
3. Examine post-inheritance adjustment practices including consolidation and renunciation of inheritance rights, with particular reference to the position of women

Your opening thoughts!

- What experience do you have of Islamic inheritance principles?
- Do you think Islamic inheritance principles are significant in the access to land?
- How can Islamic inheritance systems promote land, property and housing rights?

What are the key concepts?

- Inheritance of land owned by Muslims is governed by compulsory rules, except State land rights
- As per divine formula, specific fractional shares of estate distribution to define relatives or ‘shares’
- Muslims can only bequeath or make a will (wasaya) of up to one-third of their estate.
- Women have specific (lesser) rights to fixed shares under the inheritance rules
- Inheritance rules cannot be seen in isolation but must be considered as part of a dynamic inheritance system

Why are these concepts relevant?

- The inheritance rules are derived from religious sources – verse in the Qur’an.
- Inheritance remains an important source of access to land for women and others
- Changes to shares of 'adopted' children and orphaned grandchildren justified on basis of the Qur’anic bequest verse
- A wider flexible system for property takes place across the generation and within the family.
- Estate planning debated; maybe seen as socially commendable to protect rights of women

How can the concepts be used?

- Inheritance rules apply to all size estates, residential or commercial, liquid assets or investments
- Islamic wills have an important role with respect to provision for particularly vulnerable children.
- Land consolidation and readjustment, through collective rights can be facilitated.
- Through a holistic approach, women are ‘compensated’ for their lesser inheritance shares.
- Need to take a closer whether the renunciation is voluntary and legally sanctioned.
- Islamic inheritance rules are complex and sensitive issue, cannot be avoided.
What is inheritance?

- Means of acquiring property/land upon death
- In some societies, free choice on who should succeed to property through series of gifts or legacies.
- In other contexts, no choice or only a limited choice as to who will enjoy his or her property after death
- Islam recognises freedom for one-third of property with rest being determined by legal rules which define who will succeed to a deceased person's estate as well as the shares in the property of each successor.

Why Islam deals with inheritance?

- Common way of acquiring land or rights in land in the Muslim world
- One of the most detailed fields of Islamic law
- Most Muslims are aware, many follow it
- Provides for the compulsory division of an individual's property upon death
- Derived from the Qur'an

What is the basis of Islamic rules?

- Based on divine formula
- Specific fractional shares are distributed to certain defined relatives
- 'Shares' are sons, daughters, a father, a mother, or a spouse.
- Absence of children, sisters, and brothers, according to compulsory rules

How is inheritance in Islam?

- Same inheritance rules apply to big or small estates – residential or commercial property, liquid assets or investments.
- Distinction between two forms of landholding.
- Land held in full ownership, known as mulk/milk, is inherited according to Islamic rules of inheritance.
- Rights of possession in state land (miri) are traditionally regarded as outside Islamic inheritance rules, although such rights can be inherited.

Who inherits under Islamic law?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heirs under Islamic law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentions in the Qur'an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother, father, husband, sibling, full sister, uterine sister, consanguine sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added by juristic method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maternal grandfather, matrif, maternal grandmother, agnatic granddaughter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible after heirs inherit their fixed shares – the remaining estate is inherited by the residuaries.

Legitimate claimants can be disinherited, in extreme circumstances such as causing the death of the deceased.

Is an Islam will possible?

- Possible for Muslims to make a will (wasaya).
- But Islamic inheritance principles do not give the absolute freedom to decide where property will develop upon death as some other systems.
- Up to one-third of an individual’s estate can be bequeathed through will.
- For a Sunni Muslim a bequest cannot be made to anyone who is entitled to a share under the compulsory inheritance rules.
- Shi'a Muslim do permit bequests to those entitled to fixed shares in some circumstances.

Are Islamic wills important?

- Importance in compensating those not in inheritance rules, such as vulnerable children.
- Orphaned grandchildren do not receive a defined share.
- Not recognize formal adoption, but children are raised within families without sharing a blood relationship with the family members.
- The will is a useful means to benefit such 'children of the family' and orphaned grandchildren.
Are Muslims aware of these rules?

- The Islamic inheritance principles represent a source of pride because of their close association with the Qur'an.
- Muslim men and women in all social classes and of all educational standards, tend to have some knowledge of the basic inheritance rules.
- The rules are in the main rigorously implemented by families, communities, legal officials and state authorities.

What advantages in the system?

- Compulsory specified shares have the benefit of spreading ownership of property, including land.
- Creating rights amongst a range of family members, creating rights.
- They reduce family strife and promote cohesion.

What are the disadvantages?

- A land parcel may follow application of inheritance rules, and involve many partners with equal or unequal shares.
- The Islamic system of compulsory shares can lead to fragmentation of property into minute divisions.

Is Inheritance Important to Women?

- Where women own land, it is frequently inherited land.
- Inheritance rules provide women within the family of the deceased with their own specific shares support.

Do women enjoy same shares as men?

- Women’s lesser shares in inheritance are often regarded as marker of their inferior status.
- These rules violate the non-discriminatory provisions of CEDAW.
- View not shared by most Muslims, fixed shares a good starting point.
- In practice, barriers and constraints on women’s access to inherited land, irrespective of ‘paper rights’.

Do the rules discriminate?

- Muslim women often argue that taken as a whole the inheritance system is fair, supportive of the family and that it fosters interdependence.
- Within Islamic framework, women’s property rights should be approached holistically.
- Women are to be ‘compensated’ for their lesser inheritance shares.
- Practices surrounding inheritance lead to discrimination rather than the rules themselves.

How to interpret inheritance rules?

- Muslim women often argue that taken as a whole the inheritance system is fair, supportive of the family and that it fosters interdependence.
- Within Islamic framework, women’s property rights should be approached holistically.
- Women are to be ‘compensated’ for their lesser inheritance shares.
- Practices surrounding inheritance lead to discrimination rather than the rules themselves.

How can women be compensated?

- Other avenues for women to obtain property exist.
- Includes gifts, payments from the husband to the wife upon marriage (mahr) and as a beneficiary under an endowment (waqf).
- Qur’an requires that a husband support and maintain a wife out of his property, providing shelter, clothing, food and medical care, but she has no equivalent obligation towards the husband.
Does compensation work?

- In practice ‘compensation’ variable and uneven
- Impact depends on custom, family, kinship and local interpretations of Islamic law
- Some women may be ‘compensated’ for their losses in gaining access to land, by periodic gifts of money or other personal property.
- But this may not fully compensate the woman regarding exclusion from rights in land

Does estate planning benefit women?

- Legal principles may be manipulated both to the benefit and detriment of women in terms of their property rights?
- In order to concentrate ownership within the hands of one person, or a small group, within the family.
- In Indonesia and other countries, it seems that estate planning as a means of re-compensating some women and girls for their disadvantage position under the compulsory Islamic inheritance rules is readily used and socially acceptable.

Are inheritance rules independent?

- Rules on inheritance shares are part of a wider flexible system for the transmission of property
- Rules include tools such as lifetime gifts which enable ‘estate planning’ and post-inheritance adjustment practices.
- Rules cut across the generation and within the family

Can beneficiaries reject their shares?

- Islamic inheritance process doesn’t conceive of a rejection by a beneficiary of his or her share.
- But, there is a widespread practice of renunciation, post inheritance.
- A person typically a woman voluntarily renounces (tanazul) her inheritance rights in favor another family member.
- This is a customary practice or informal process which co-exist along side Islamic law in many countries.

Can inheritance rules be avoided?

- Legal techniques for person in form of ‘estate planning’ when concerned about the distribution of property after death.
- Particularly the case with regard to agricultural land, where fragmentation in ownership of the land is great concern.
- Most obvious tool of estate planning is the lifetime gift or transfer.
- Land categorised as state land (miri) too is often subject to lifetime transfer, since it lies outside the compulsory inheritance rules.

How is renunciation implemented?

- Renunciation is tolerated or has been incorporated into the legal process
- It takes place after legal confirmation that the person renouncing is competent and fully aware of her actions.
- Renunciation of inheritance rights across a range of Muslim societies has little to do with Islam and is a socio-cultural practice that requires close scrutiny.

Is estate planning acceptable?

- There is debate and some tensions surrounding their use
- But commonly used in modern Islamic societies
- A wide range of different versions of lifetime gifts developed with distinctions between various schools of law
- ‘Estate planning’ techniques may be seen also as socially acceptable means of mitigating the effects of unequal legal status of women with respect to inheritance in some Muslim societies.

Is renunciation always bad?

- Women may be forced to renounce their limited inheritance rights, which needs to be addressed
- Some women renounce their rights in order to preserve relationships with more powerful family members, particularly with their brothers.
- The benefit may include a continuing rights of access to family homes
- The reality ‘on the ground’ may be compex
Can shares be sold or exchanged?

- Consolidation: though this process a division of an estate into fractional shares may be followed by a series of sales or exchanges to reduce the number of co-owners.
- Example: a daughter of the decease may exchange her share in land for cash from her brother.
- Compensatory payment: this may be paid, thereby giving the transaction clear authority, or it may be a symbolic exchange or ‘payment on paper’.

Have reforms impacted inheritance?

- Exchange codification of inheritance rules, as part of Personal Status and Family Codes, in many Muslim countries.
- Little change or addition to inheritance rules, relatively modest impact.
- Focus on the position of ‘adopted’ children and orphaned grandchildren, justified on the basis of the Qu’ranic verse of bequest.
- Even limited adjustments remain in the subject of juristic debate.

Are legal reforms acceptable?

- Number of NGOs and liberal personalities in Muslim countries have called for equal inheritance rights.
- But, Islamic inheritance rights rules are complex and sensitive.
- Change of inheritance is resisted the basis that it breaches Islamic law.

Thank you for your attention!

GLTN Secretariat
UN-HABITAT, P.O Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
Telephone: +254 20 762 5199, Fax: +254 20 762 4256
E-mail: gltn@unhabitat.org
Web: www.gltn.net