



# LEVERAGING THE SDGs TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS

Steps, pillars, and replication tips for Espaço Feminista's women-led local model to design, implement and monitor land-related processes and policies

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PHOTO ABOVE: Surveyors DoCarmo, Elvira and Talyta from local social movements doing interviews for Espaço Feminista's quantitative survey in Caruaru

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**Landesa**<sup>™</sup>  
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**T**he Sustainable Development Goals have created an extraordinary window of opportunity to increase the attention to women's rights and women's land rights in particular. Mindful of this, Espaço Feminista, Landesa, and Land Alliance have partnered to disseminate and support a model already developed by Espaço Feminista to strengthen women's land rights through a women-led local process that brings together communities, local government, and civil society to design, implement and monitor land-related processes and policies.

Our partnership was launched in Brazil, where Espaço Feminista had developed and first implemented its model in 2015. Our collective goal is to adjust the model as needed, support it, and replicate it widely, within and outside Brazil, as a powerful way to strengthen women's land

rights and monitor public policy at the local level through the Sustainable Development Goals. This document is a summary of the validation.

In this document, we introduce Espaço Feminista's model, its pillars and steps, and summarize Landesa's findings during the validation exercise, offering reasons to replicate the model and considerations for its replication. Landesa's validation exercise was based on the analysis of Espaço Feminista's internal documents, interviews with Espaço Feminista staff, and visits to locations where the model is being applied and where we conducted individual and group interviews with women participating in the women's movements in places where the model has been implemented, government officials, and key stakeholders in academic institutions and local organizations.

### The model

Espaço Feminista's model is based on its implementation in Ponte do Maduro, a neighborhood in Recife composed of four settlements that are currently being regularized in response to more than 40 years of organized demands from women and men who live in these settlements<sup>1</sup>. The model is built on four pillars that may vary with context:

- 1. Gender-responsive evidence** generated by local low-income women who partner with academics and



<sup>1</sup> References to the experience of Ponto do Maduro, Espaço Feminista's achievements in this neighborhood of can be found in: Manrique, Manuel "Brazilian slum wins land rights case" in Urban World Vol 2 (June 2010) 38:40; Yonder, Ayse; Katia Araujo and Patricia Chaves "Ponte do Maduro- Land Regularization with Gender Equality Shadow Advisory Committee's International Mission to Ponte do Maduro, Recife - January 10-12, 2011." (March 1st, 2011.) GLTN; UN Habitat; Huairou Commission; Moser, Caroline "Gender transformation in a new global urban agenda: challenges for Habitat III and beyond." Environment and Urbanization 29, no. 1 (2017): 221-236; Tavares, Celma (2018) Relatório Analítico do Processo Modelo de Empoderamento (Novembro 2017 – Abril 2018) -PRODUTO 3- Projeto utilizando a agenda 2030 para fortalecer os direitos das mulheres a terra. Maio 2018. Espaço Feminista.

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researchers to produce and use data to measure and highlight gender-based inequalities. These data, generated and validated using a feminist perspective and methodology, are used to show the impact of gender-based inequalities on women's lives and to monitor progress towards the government's land rights commitments under the SDGs.

2. **Capacity building and political formation:** Empowered women who are better able to influence policy changes as a result of the capacity building they received on political processes, on how data is generated and on how it can be used to monitor commitments and advocate for change.
3. **A strong and inclusive alliance** of social movements, lawyers, academics, researchers, and members of government developed or strengthened to share knowledge and work effectively toward the model's objectives in a sustainable manner.
4. **Influencing public policy** formulation and implementation to ensure long lasting and gender-responsive change. The model seeks to influence policy by empowering women with information and knowledge about their reality (components 1 and 2) and by working collectively to establish ongoing dialogue with policy-makers and power holders (component 3).



## The model has been validated

Landesa and Espaço Feminista found that the model created by Espaço Feminista is a powerful tool for organizations working to empower women and eliminate inequalities and can be particularly promising as an approach to leverage the SDGs to improve women's land rights. We believe it can be an effective tool to help governments strengthen women's land rights in critical ways as they work to deliver on their SDG commitments based on the following validation findings:

- The local women who are empowered to carry out the research and to monitor progress are uniquely placed to uncover relevant and pressing women's land rights constraints to achieving the SDG commitments.
- The local women who are empowered to develop and carry out an advocacy plan are well suited to identify viable and effective options for addressing these constraints.
- The multi stakeholder alliances in place enable quick, effective and sustained action to allocate resources and implement the solutions identified.



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- The data collection, advocacy, and policy decision, implementation and monitoring can be done in a timely, cost-effective and empowering way.
- The availability of local data, alliances, and a space for dialogue increases accountability and strengthens local democracy, since women and men have the tools required and feel empowered to hold their local leaders accountable.

### High-level considerations in replicating the model

Espaço Feminista's work in Ponto do Maduro and its application of the model in Pernambuco were influenced and supported by contextual conditions that may not always be easy to find. For this reason, it is important to emphasize a few factors that should be considered by those interested in replicating this model in other settings:

1. The model assumes that governments have a mandate to conduct public policy to benefit all their citizens. In a country or region where the authorities do not feel obliged to act on this mandate, a successful implementation of the model may take longer and require additional steps.
2. To date, the model has been implemented in areas with a long history of social movements. Implementing it in communities where ongoing political engagement is weaker will require the implementing organization to invest more time and resources in supporting the community and particularly the women, as they develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to engage effectively in this space.
3. The model requires that women from all backgrounds, literacy and income levels, race, marital status, sexual orientation, and religion are included in every step of the process: selection of the issues, research design and implementation, validation of the information, generation of policy goals and advocacy plan, and monitoring progress. This requires time, resources, and skills and should be planned for from the beginning of the project.
4. The model must be implemented by an organization willing and equipped to take a political stand, with multi-disciplinary staff prepared to engage with women and men in the communities in an egalitarian, respectful, democratic, non-violent, and political manner.
5. The model must be implemented by an organization equipped with clear ethical protocols and staff capable of handling personal, complex and possibly difficult conversations.
6. The model must be implemented by an organization that has the capacity, will, flexibility, and resources to carry out this intervention, understanding that it will organically evolve in ways that may require adjusting or extending the original plans.

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