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## Journalists receive training on writing punchy women's land rights stories

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 16, 2017 (ECA) – Journalists covering the ongoing 2017 conference on land policy in Africa on Thursday were trained on how to write about women's land rights in a session organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Thomson Reuters Foundation and the Pulitzer Centre.

Thomson Reuters Property Rights Editor Astryd Zweynert said the training of journalists is important because it shows the scribes new innovative ways of doing in-depth reporting on such crucial issues as land property rights, in particular women's land rights.

"We are trying to broaden the narrative of land rights reporting to bring it to a much broader audience, pretty much make it a niche subject. We want to bring it to a broader audience by using innovative reporting tools and addressing the issue as a global development issue rather than just a legal issue focusing on land titles," said Ms. Zweynert.

She said through a network of well-trained journalists, African media can change the scale of coverage of land rights on the continent.

"At Thomson Reuters, we have a global network of journalists with over 800 land rights stories so far published. This shows how media can change the narratives of land rights reporting," she said.

"In as far as land rights issues are concerned governments on the continent have a lot of issues to answer and giving a more in-depth narrative on these issues will go a long way in pushing land property rights in Africa."

Steve Sapienza of the Pulitzer Centre on Crisis Reporting said it was crucial for journalists around the globe to receive continuous training on such subjects that are crucial to development and people's livelihoods.

He shared some of the Pulitzer Centre's journalism projects on property rights that were produced through funding African journalists to report on women's land rights. One was a gender and property rights reportage from Uganda looking at women being disposed of their land following the deaths of their husbands.

In another, Nigerian journalist Bukola Adebayo of Punch in Nigeria and 2016 Pulitzer Centre grantee, screened her multi-media piece; "Shifting Sands: Lagos Communities Count the Cost of Dredging" on property rights in her country.

“There is need for us as journalists to innovate ways of telling land stories in Africa that can capture more audiences through the use of new media,” said Ms. Adebayo, adding the media in Africa was largely constrained by strict media laws, culture and editors who lack interest in land issues.

Mr. Sapienza said the Pulitzer Centre will continue to shine a light on critical issues around the world by funding journalists on the ground, in particular to do innovative pieces on land property rights.

“Property rights sit at the heart of every global development issue we face today and it means largely we need to continue making this issue relevant by providing travel grants for journalists and training workshops to expose local journalists to creative ways of telling stories related to property rights issues, make them more familiar with the issues, policy makers in their respective countries,” he said.

In the next three years the Centre will provide grants to journalists in Africa, Asia and Latin America to produce innovative reporting projects on land and property rights. He said women's land rights are crucial and only accurate, responsible journalism can help bring these issues to the fore.

The journalists said they were happy with the training on writing about women's land rights, the topics and learning new tricks for telling the story with impact.

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