

GENDER DIMENSIONS TO LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP: A DILEMMA OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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Introduction: In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), agriculture is important for human welfare and economic growth. It contributes about 25 percent to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs majority of the population (FAO, 2006; AfDB, 2015). However, the sector faces many challenges which include an outdated land tenure system that constrains access to land, and gender gap in agricultural resource. This development calls for the evolution of a more proactive and pragmatic strategy towards enhancing agricultural productivity and output in the country. Improvement in agricultural productivity is an important factor in attaining growth in the national and continental economy. This is more so for a country with more than half in agricultural production, and Women constituting the backbone of the development of rural and national economies. They comprise 43% of the world's agricultural labor force, which rises to 70% in some countries. In Nigeria, 80% of the agricultural production comes from small farmers, who are mostly rural women (FAO, 2011a). Any attempt at improving agricultural productivity for a sufficient food production and economic growth, should not underestimate the role of women and the resource used in their agricultural production. Although, constraints faced by women farmers differ from country to country and culture to culture (Kabane, 2010). Therefore the link between women's land use and ownership and agricultural productivity is evident for a wide range of issues. This paper reviews gender dimensions to land use and ownership: a dilemma of agricultural productivity in Nigeria. It discusses the constraint faced by female farmers and how it can be tackled.

Materials and methods: The study was essentially done through desk reviews based on materials sourced from internet and documents provided by the LPI. The consultants conducted interviews with key informants working on gender and land issues (mainly in their base countries) including gathering the information on what partners and key stakeholders have achieved in strengthening/improving land rights for women in Nigeria and Africa at large. In addition, they had expert interviews with selected resource persons with regard to what strategies/promising initiatives they have used in improving women's land rights.

The consultants have used a consultative approach in identifying inter-relationships between women's land rights and socio-economic development, peace and security and environment sustainability in Africa. Based on the foregoing, this report is based largely on qualitative information. Nonetheless it brings together useful information needed to improve women's land rights and agricultural development in Nigeria.

Results: This paper identifies Land as a resource of production which contributes significantly to agricultural output and productivity in terms of its availability, accessibility, ownership and use. Land is an indispensable factor of production for an agrarian economy (such as Nigeria), where over 60% of its population is involved in agriculture. Land ownership serves as a security to a long term agricultural activities, it has been identified as a barrier to increased agricultural production in developing countries (Nigeria inclusive). Coupled with this fact exist some sociocultural, traditional, economic

and political factors that hinder this access to land use and ownership. According to FAO (2011b) "If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) by 2.5 to 4 percent." Gender gaps in accessing agricultural resources such as land, livestock, farm labour, education, extension services, credit, fertilizers and mechanical equipment would disappear if female farmers are given more access to production resources like male counterparts. This suggests that the some of the production constraints faced by female farmers limiting their productivity will be tackled.

This paper identifies land as a major barrier affecting women's participation in agricultural activities. In spite of several attempts at achieving gender equality and women empowerment in the country, gender gaps remain abysmally unacceptable and gruesome. It has been noted that systemic gender based biases or inequalities are one of the major issues limiting women in engaging and accessing agriculture related resources thus impacting on agricultural productivity. The cultures of the various groups in Nigeria provide the base for individual gender discrimination and bias in allocation of useful agricultural resources such as land, which are sometimes contradictory to elements of nation building. Patriarchy and other socio-cultural practices and traditions play very fundamental roles in promoting gender discriminations as reflected in land resource allocation in among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Securing rights to land and property for women are widely regarded as fundamental to ensuring effective and sustainable human development.

Advocacy Impact: The paper advocates that there is a need to intensify on agricultural production, in order to meet the food need of increasing population. This can be achieved through overcoming gender-related barriers limiting productivity of the women who are in majority of food crop producers in Nigeria. Achieving gender equality and equity requires innovative and practical solutions informed by a context-specific understanding of how to initiate and sustain gender transformative change in food production. In a drive to attain self-sufficiency in food production, reduce poverty, and malnutrition in Nigeria and Africa. Policy makers may need to be more eclectic in dealing with systemic disparities caused by unequal treatment of women and men in our society.

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