



A Comparative analysis of women's land rights in Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

The study sought to make a systematic and critical comparative analysis of the distribution of land between men and women in the three regions of Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa in order to establish if there was any discrimination against women using a gender approach (or analysis). In the study, the focus was on use rights in state-owned land or resettlement land and a critical evaluation on whether these rights were differentiated and distributed on the basis of sex. The study used archival data and document reviews. The analysis was based on farms or land acquired by governments and later redistributed to smallholder farmers. Studies in the three regions showed that women were considered a marginalised social group in land ownership although slightly better conditions were observed in Latin America. A majority of the studies blamed customary, religious and statutory laws but failed to estimate the relative importance of these variables in explaining the gendered pattern of land distribution. Women's lower access to land in the three regions increased women's economic dependency on men and consequently made them more vulnerable to socio-economic and environmental shocks.

Keywords: Comparative analysis; gender; land rights; resettlement land

Introduction

Generally, land distribution programmes are expected to deliver household incomes, food security, empowerment and promote agricultural growth but very little is known about how they affect or are affected by differential access to and control over land between men and women. This is notwithstanding that in most developing countries, women are often the major actors in agriculture. While there has been significant research on the distribution of land between men and women in developing countries, there is surprisingly little information pertaining to the actual intra-household distribution of assets including land between married partners. The study sought to examine the distribution of land between men and women in the three regions of Latin America, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, what factors influenced land distribution between married couples in the three regions? Are women really neglected in the distribution of land? What problems do women face due to lack of secure land rights? What changes are needed to improve gender equality in land ownership? This study attempted to answer some of these questions but no claim will be made here as to the finality of the answers and suggestions discussed.

In this study, the household economic theory was used to analyse the distribution of land between men and women and in the process the relevance of women's land rights to rural development, household welfare and empowerment within the context of resettlement areas. What avenues are available for women to access land? The study used the framework presented by Agarwal (2003) and extended by Deere and Leon (2003). More specifically, the focus was on family and state as these avenues were the most relevant to the distribution of land rights. The family contributed to land access through inheritance. while the state avenue consisted solely of the land reform

programme. However, often too little attention is put to protecting women's land rights during land reform programmes.

This paper is divided into four parts of which this introduction is the first section. Section 1.1 provides research questions. The research methodology adopted for the study is presented in section 2.0. Section 3.0 provides findings of the study while section 4.0 presents conclusion and recommendations.

Research Questions

- 1 How can land access and control be characterised to establish if there was any discrimination against women in Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa?
- 2 What are the intra-household and extra-household factors that determined the security of women's land rights in Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa?
- 3 Do women have the same land rights as men in Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of farm size, soil type (or quality) and availability of agricultural infrastructure?

Research Methodology

Literature review on land and gender relations in Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa was used to address the research problem. Generally, there are three sources of arable land, namely, the state, the family, the community and the market. The study considered how the state distributed arable land as part of the land reform process. The nature and content of land rights vary across and within countries including individual freehold property rights, use rights in state owned land and legally recognised customary rights. In the study, the focus was on use rights in state-owned land (resettlement land) and a critical evaluation on whether these rights were differentiated and distributed on the basis of sex in the three regions of Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. The study used archival data and document reviews. The analysis was based on farms or land acquired by governments and later redistributed to smallholder farmers.

Regional Overview of Women's Land Rights

This section is divided into two parts. Section 3.1 examines the theory and objectives of land reform and its implications on gender relations. Section 3.2 provides the methodological approaches to gender relations on land by other researchers in the three regions of Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Theory of the Land Reform and Gender Relations

Land reform, in this study refers specifically to government policies that intend to redistribute the whole or part of the bundle of property rights on land from landed elite to smallholder farmers or workers. The neoclassical theory of land reform looks at land reform as an integral part of the strategy and policy of economic development (Doner, 1972, Warriner, 1969, Zahir Ahmad, 1975 cited in Zarin and Bujang, 1994). The emergence of the human development paradigm and the concept of human poverty in the 1990s led to a shift from the emphasis on economic growth and efficiency as the goals and measures of "economic development", to well-being, equity, dignity and fundamental human freedoms to develop and realise one's human potential, or in other words a move away from market-based criteria for evaluating "development" to an approach in which the importance of social relations, institutions, norms and politics is emphasised (Elson and Çagatay, 2000). According to the human development perspective, the distinct areas central to development include life expectancy; maternal health and safety; health care in general; educational opportunities; gender equality; access to sanitation and safe drinking water and access to the political process. In this view of development, gender equality is a core objective in itself. If gender equality is an important component of economic development, was the distribution of land in Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa executed in a gender sensitive manner? What factors influenced access to and control over land between men and women?

There are three motives of land reform, namely, economic, social and political (Deininger et al. 2002; King, 1974 cited in Zarin and Bujang, 1994). The main economic rationale for land reform lies in the inverse relationship between farm size and productivity where for given technology levels,

small farms are more efficient than large farms due to higher density of management coupled with motivated family labour available on a continuous basis (Deininger et al., 2002). The inverse-farm-size-productivity relationship estimates output per acre as a function of total farm size. According to Deaton (1997) cited in Deininger et al., (2002), such an estimation is sensitive to measurement error and omitted variables like land quality. When data on land quality are available (Bhalla and Roy, 1988 cited in Deininger et al., 2002) or when quality and measurement error are controlled for by instrumental variable methods (Deininger et al., 2002 citing Benjamin 1993), there is little or no evidence of a negative relationship between farm size and productivity. The social motive is concerned with social equality or social justice (Zarin and Bujang, 1994). Equity considerations create the need for land reform especially in countries where agriculture is the main source of livelihoods and where a majority of the population have been denied access to and ownership of land. The available literature on poverty traps shows that under certain circumstances a redistribution of assets (including land) leads to both greater equity and higher production (Deininger et al., 2002). The political motive is often considered as the last resort but in most cases tends to be the most decisive (Zarin and Bujang, 1994). According to Zarin and Bujang (1994), many governments use land reform or the promise of it to gain or retain power. In the case of Zimbabwe, the ZANU-PF Government used land reform to retain power in 1990 (Palmer, 1990. According to Walker (2002), the political objective may be primary in order to reduce conflict or redress past injustices as with the land restitution programme in South Africa or to increase electoral support through programmes that target actual and potential party supporters during farm invasions and occupations in Zimbabwe. The same story obtained in the Philippines where the issue of land reform programme was always brought at the fore just before and during national elections (Hayami et al., 1990 cited in Hayami, 1998).

But how did the governments view the land reform programmes? Politically, the land reform programme was seen as a vehicle that would enable the government to achieve peace and stability in Zimbabwe (Masiwa and Chipungu, 2004). Socially, for most countries in Southern Africa, the land reform programme was intended to redress the historical injustices and imbalances in the distribution of land between indigenous blacks and whites. In Peru and Japan, the land reform was used to neutralise and limit the power of the landed elite. The implementation of redistributive land reform in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan immediately after World War II effectively transferred nearly all the farm lands owned by non-cultivating landlords to tenants resulting in highly egalitarian agrarian structures (Hayami, 1998). But it is not very clear how much the reforms contributed to increases in agricultural productivity. However, it cannot be denied that the establishment of egalitarian agrarian societies consisting of homogenous small landholders increased social and political stability as the basis of rapid development of these economies (Hayami and Yamada, 1991 cited in Hayami, 1998). Economically, the land reform programme was designed to improve agricultural productivity among the resettled families and bring unutilised land into production (Auret, 1990; Peters and Peters, 1998). In 1980, the distribution of land was not only extremely inequitable, but was characterised by dualism where a dynamic, modern large scale sub-sector (which received extensive state support) existed alongside a credit-starved traditional and densely populated small scale sub-sector (Deininger et al., 2002). While there was extensive underutilisation of large scale commercial farming land (Auret, 1990; Deininger et al., 2002; Mutuma et al., 1994 cited in Moyo, 1995), there was growing agricultural productivity among small farmers (Mutuma et al., 1994 cited in Moyo, 1995). According to Deininger et al., (2002), this unutilised land was not offered on the market such that in addition to the efficiency and growth with equity reasons, an additional economic rationale for land redistribution existed in Zimbabwe: to equalise the marginal product of land across the two subsectors.

Comparative Analysis of Landownership between Men and Women

The literature on unequal access to and ownership of land between men and women in developing countries has been growing (Agarwal, 1994, 2003; Deere and Doss, 2006; Deere and Leon, 2001, 2003; Doss et al., 2008; FAO, 2007; Saito et al., 1994; Walker, 2002; UNECA, 2003). In this section, a review of the literature on the distribution of land between men and women in Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa is presented. The section identified a number of conceptual aspects of the distribution of land between men and women with a deliberate bias to ensure gender balance. The selection of the literature reviewed was based on their availability to me rather than on any

deliberate preference of some works over those which are not mentioned in this study.

When making a regional comparison of land rights between men and women, the researcher was aware that the nature and content of these rights could vary across countries (for example, individual freehold property, use rights in state-owned land and land legally recognised customary rights). In this section, the focus is on whether these rights are differentiated on the basis of sex (whatever their nature and content) in the three regions of Asia, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. In order to make this comparative analysis, data on landholdings were essential. The major challenge was that sex-disaggregated data on landholdings were rarely collected in some countries. This section therefore, referred to field studies which provided insights on the distribution of land rights between men and women in the different regions.

Landownership between men and women in Asia. Land rights in Asia are extremely diverse and include state ownership (Vietnam), ownership by peasant collectives (post 1978 China), private ownership (Philippines) and owner cultivation and tenancy (or share cropping) (FAO, 2007). This diversity is reflected in a great intra-regional variation in the distribution of land between men and women. FAO (2007) observed that the enforcement of statutory legislation was scarce in rural areas while customary and religious laws were applied. The customary law systems were also diverse. Entrenched customary norms and patriarchal culture prevented women from gaining direct land rights in Punjab, (Pakistan) and Vietnam, while in matrilineal and bilateral systems in Thailand and the Philippines women owned, inherited, acquired and disposed of property in their own right (FAO, 2007). In Uzbekistan and Kyrgyz, women had access to land only through their husbands and/or male relatives (Giovarelli and Duncan, 1999 cited in FAO, 2007). In predominantly Muslim countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh, Sharia norms limited women's inheritance rights (usually to half of men's share). Meanwhile, in communist/socialist countries such as China and Vietnam statutory laws ensured that women had "equal" access to land as men.

The Philippines has a long history of agrarian reform programmes. The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (1988) provided for a comprehensive land redistribution programme where women rural labourers have equal rights to own land and to participate in advisory and decision making bodies (Hayami et al., 1990 cited in Hayami, 1998). However, the selection of beneficiaries indirectly disadvantaged women. At the top of the priority list were agricultural lessees and share tenants while permanent farm workers (who were mostly men) ranked second and seasonal farm workers (mostly women) ranked third (FAO, 2007). A 2001 household survey in Pakistan reflected that women owned less than three percent of the plots even though 67 percent of the sampled villages reported that women had a right to inherit land (Mason and Carlsson, 2004 cited in Doss et al., 2008). According to Malla (2000) cited in Doss et al., (2008) the 2001 population census in Nepal showed that only 11 percent of women owned land and among these, around 90 percent owned less than one acre. A number of surveys in South Asia found that those women who owned land had greater say in household decision making than women without land (Agarwal, 1994; Mason, 1998 and Agarwal, 1998, 2002 cited in Doss et al., 2008).

In India, Agarwal (2003) found that the distribution of land was gender-biased as the government allotted land to male household heads and adult sons. According to Agarwal (2003), unmarried adult daughters were totally excluded as they were not counted as members of their natal families and being unmarried had no marital families from which to claim. Agarwal cited a study by Gupta (1993) of a village in Midnapur District where 98 percent of land holdings distributed went to men; land went to women's sons in nine out of the ten female-headed households; eight of the 18 single women received land and none of the married women received joint titles. Agarwal (2003) identified four factors that underlined gender bias in land distribution in India. These factors included cultural perceptions which treated men as breadwinners and women as dependents; the social perception about women's lesser capabilities and their appropriate roles; the assumption of the household as a unitary entity and the assumption of the household as a space of harmony that property considerations would shatter.

Agarwal (2003) observed that as more men shifted to non-farm livelihoods, agriculture became more feminised yet women seldom owned or controlled the land they cultivated. She observed that land access to men alone cannot be assumed to benefit women and children equitably.

This is because of systematic gender inequalities in access to basic necessities within households (Agarwal, 1994; Haddad et al., 1997). According to Agarwal (1994; 2003), women's access to land led to improvements in welfare, agricultural productivity (efficiency), equality and empowerment. Agarwal (1994, 2003) further argued that while the welfare and efficiency arguments are concerned with women having some land in absolute terms, the empowerment and equality approaches are concerned with women's position relative to men and particularly with women's ability to challenge unequal gender relations within and outside the home.

On the welfare argument, Agarwal (1994, 2003) argued that women's access to land improved both their own and their households' poverty standing because of the perceived correlation between an improvement in women's position in relation to land and an improvement in household food security and child nutrition. There is a growing body of evidence of the links between assets in women's hands and child welfare (Agarwal, 2003) and sometimes that of the whole household (Deere and Doss, 2006; Thomas, 1990). In rural India, children are more likely to attend school and receive medical care if the mother has assets (Strauss and Beegle, 1996 cited in Agarwal, 2003) and in Ghana, households where women have a higher share of asset ownership have better health and nutritional outcomes (Doss, 2005).

On the efficiency argument, Agarwal (2003) stated that enhancing women's land rights would increase agricultural productivity because women will invest more in their land and the knowledge pool will be increased. She argued that secure land rights and control over its produce would motivate the farmer to put in greater effort and investment in the land. A study in Kenya found that where men and women cultivated both separate and joint plots, the introduction of weeding technology in maize production raised yields on women's plots by 56 percent where women controlled the output and only by 15 percent on the men's plots where women also weeded but men got the proceeds (Elson, 1995 cited in Agarwal, 2003).

The equality argument states that recognising women's rights in land is necessary for justice for women while under the empowerment argument, land rights will empower women and strengthen their ability to fight for equality, dignity and additional economic rights (Agarwal, 1994; 2003). On empowerment and equality, Agarwal (1994), argued that land rights can make a notable difference to women's bargaining power within the home and community, enhance their confidence and sense of self-worth, enable them to negotiate better deals in the wage labour market, increase respect they command within the community and facilitate their participation in village decision-making bodies. According to Agarwal (2003), the four arguments are best served by programmes that extend independent rights to women rather than programmes that continue to locate women within restrictive and repressive family and household structures.

In India, 86 percent of the land is in private ownership mostly in the form of small family plots of less than six hectares each (Walker, 2002 citing Agarwal, 2001) and thus communal tenure systems, unlike in Sub-Saharan Africa are not that significant (Walker, 2002). The major form of property transmission according to Agarwal (1994; 2003) is not through the market and government, but through inheritance within families. Agarwal's tenure model is one of private title though she draws on African data to suggest a wider application including some land reform projects in South Africa (Walker, 2002). Agarwal's (2003) proposition has gained resonance among the international development community (World Bank, 2001) and has been incorporated into gender policy documents and training materials by the Department of Land Affairs of South Africa (Walker, 2002).

Landownership between men and women in Latin America. Although countries in Latin America have a long history of agrarian reform aimed at eliminating the great land concentration and the dualistic *latifundio-minifundio* land tenure structure, women rarely own and administer land due to legal and socio-cultural obstacles (FAO, 2007). Land reforms in a number of countries (Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Brazil) combined aspects of efficiency, equity, poverty reduction, reduction of racial tensions and environmental stress (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2002). That is, on efficiency (large tracts of under utilised land coexisting with over-used and ill-located small plots); equity (the *latifundio-minifundio* dualism and the corresponding dominance of landed elites); poverty (rural poverty still dominates total poverty in many countries in spite of a high rate of urbanisation and the incidence and depth of poverty are always higher among rural than urban

populations); racial tensions (claims for restitution of ancestral territories as the necessary condition for social reproduction of indigenous groups) and environmental stress (land claims established on the basis of deforestation, subsidised non-sustainable livestock and forestry operations, mining of land associated with poverty in excessively small plots with no options for off-farm earnings).

A majority of the agrarian reforms targeted household heads and permanent agricultural workers in formal employment (groups which predominantly consisted of men). Katz, (1999) cited in FAO (2007) observed that while sex-disaggregated data on land reform beneficiaries was scarce, the available evidence indicated that only a very small percentage of women benefitted from land redistribution programmes (between four and fifteen percent in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru). According to FAO (2007), only a few countries (for example Cuba and Nicaragua) have women as direct beneficiaries of the land reform programmes. In Nicaragua, the Agrarian Reform Act (1981) does not apply the household head criterion for land allocation and specifically recognises women as direct beneficiaries of the land reform programme regardless of their family status (FAO, 2007).

In Brazil, land reform programmes still register land mainly with the husband (FAO, 2007). According to Guivant (2001) cited in FAO (2007), joint registration is rare because a substantial number of rural women lacked the necessary documents (such as identity cards, tax registration number and marriage certificates) required in order to obtain land titles. An Agrarian Reform Census of 1996 revealed that only 12.6 percent of land reform beneficiaries were women due to socio-cultural factors concerning gender division of roles within the family which in rural areas are widespread and internalised by women themselves (Barsted, 2002 cited in FAO,2007).

In a 12-country study in Latin America, Deere and Leon (2003) found that gender asset gap in land ownership was substantial. According to their study, the share of female landowners ranged from 11 percent in Brazil to a high of 27 percent in Paraguay. Deere and Leon (2003) observed that gender inequality in land ownership was related to male preference in inheritance, male privilege in marriage, male bias in community and state programmes of land redistribution and gender bias in the land market, with women less likely than men to buy land. Their study showed that women were not only less likely to own land than men, but female landowners tended to own less land than men. In household surveys for eight Latin American countries, Deere and Leon (2003) found that the mean amount of land owned by women was always less than that of men although only in Chile and Paraguay was the gender difference statistically significant. Their study showed that inheritance was the principal means for land acquisition for a larger share of women than men (although sons were the preferred heirs). The implication, according to Deere and Leon was that other forms of land acquisition such as market purchases, allocations through land reform or redistribution by peasant or indigenous communities were even more biased against women. However getting an accurate figure on gender asset gap in Latin America is made more difficult by the absence of good data (Deere and Leon, 2003). They argue that it has been and continues to be the norm to consider agriculture as a male activity and that this is confirmed by agricultural censuses when women rarely declare themselves as agriculturalists unless where they are landowners. Deere and Leon (2003) also blame the design of agricultural surveys which did not include the variable "sex" in the questionnaire to indicate who controls or owns the plot.

Deere and Leon (2003) however, observe that the pattern is reversing in a number of Latin American countries as female inheritance is becoming more and more common and state-led land reforms become more gender-sensitive. More gender equality in land inheritance is attributed to rising literacy including legal literacy of national laws favouring equality of inheritance shares among children and/or property rights of widows, partible inheritance practices, greater emigration from rural areas by children of both sexes and growing land scarcity and/or decline in peasant agriculture which is associated with a decreasing reliance by households on farming as their primary income generating activity (Deere and Leon, 2003).

Deere et al., (2005) cited in Deere and Doss (2006) hypothesised that female land ownership was positively associated with whether a woman's parents were land owners; the amount of land they owned; the gender composition of women's siblings (with those without brothers being more likely to inherit land); age; widowhood; household headship and education. Women with higher education were assumed to be able to defend their land rights more successfully. Also, education served as a

proxy for labour market opportunities and hence the possibility of purchasing land independently. Deere and Doss (2006) argued that in countries with full or partial community property marital regime, marriage also increased the likelihood of women acquiring land through the market because if a couple bought land, it pertained to both husband and wife. Deere et al., (2005) cited in Deere and Doss (2006) estimated a logit model of the above determinants of female land rights and found that for both Paraguay and Peru, whether the adult woman in the household had land rights was positively and significantly associated with female headship and a woman's age. Katz and Chamorro (2002) explored the determinants of the total amount of land owned by women in Honduras and Nicaragua and found that a woman's age, education and headship were all positively and significantly related to the amount of land owned. Their results showed that land area owned by the parents of the woman or her husband was not significant in explaining women's land ownership.

In Peru, Fuentes and Wiig (2009) analysed the effects of a Rural Land Titling Project on women's rights to land. They hypothesised that women's rights to land were neglected during a national rural land titling project. Using statistical tests and regression analysis on secondary survey dataset which was supplemented with qualitative data, Fuentes and Wiig (2009) did not find evidence of discrimination of women in the land titling process. The study showed that there were geographical differences with respect to the prevalence of joint titles with coastal areas registering lower numbers of joint titles while the highlands had more. The study revealed that although women had gained rights both individually and together with their partners as joint titles, there was still a significant gender gap in land titles as men owned more and larger plots than women. According to Fuentes and Wiig (2009), educated and married women had higher probabilities of getting land rights as joint titles, but not as individual titles. The ability to use land for productive purposes depended on the characteristics of the land as much as having a title or other kind of property document. Fuentes and Wiig (2009) found that if the land was of poor quality or lying in hilly areas with more problems with erosion and salinisation, the right in itself was not as valuable. The same applied to the access to water for irrigation which was often interlinked with land rights. There was a higher probability for men to have irrigation than women. The study did not find any evidence of differences in women's and men's land with respect to soil quality, erosion or salinisation.

Deere and Doss (2006) claimed that there was emerging recognition of the dual-headed households among some Latin American countries. FAO (2007) concurred and asserted that joint titling programmes had led to a considerable increase of women landowners in Latin America. The rise in the number of female-headed households and feminisation of agriculture (due to male-urban migration) were some of the factors pushing some governments in Latin America to focus on women's land rights during land reforms (Deere, 2005, Katz, 2003 and Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2008 cited in Fuentes and Wiig, 2009).

Landownership between men and women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Land ownership in Africa is more difficult to interpret because much of the land is held collectively and/or is untitled (Doss et al., 2008) and there are overlapping rights to land in different categories of land ownership (private, communal and state-owned) (Doss et al., 2008). In Southern Africa, the amount of rural land that was privately owned ranged from five percent in Lesotho to 67.5 percent in South Africa (Walker, 2002). A sizeable gender asset gap in land exists in Africa as (FAO, 2007). A study by FAO (1997) cited in Doss et al., (2008) showed that for a number of countries in Africa, women were less likely to have any landholdings and when they did had land, the mean value of men's holdings was almost three times the mean value of women's holdings.

In Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia women smallholders dominated the agricultural sector and accounted for over three-quarters of food produced (Saito et al., 1994). According to Saito et al., (1994), although women worked for longer hours (combining their reproductive and household maintenance duties with agricultural work), their land rights had worsened due to population pressure and deteriorating land with the effect of reducing plot size compared to men. Their study found that in Kenya, women-headed households cultivated two thirds of hectares that men cultivated while in Nigeria, holdings of male-headed households were over three times that of women-headed households. The average size of women's landholdings was 0.98 hectares compared to 1.76 for men in Benin; 0.53 hectares compared to 0.73 for men in Tanzania and 1.86 hectares compared to 2.73 for

men in Zimbabwe (FAO, 1995 cited in FAO, 2007). Women's rights to land were often restricted by local customs and statutory laws (Chingarande, 2008; Mgugu and Chimonyo, 2004; UNECA, 2003; Wach and Reeves, 2000) and needed to rely on male partners or kin for access to land (Wach and Reeves, 2000; Walker, 2002). In the Kilimanjaro and Bukoba regions, 98 percent of the economically active women were small-scale farmers on other people's land (McCall, 1987 cited in Peters and Peters, 1998). UNECA (2003) observed that socio-economic constraints such as lack of resources to claim land rights, high female illiteracy rates, limited participation in decision-making bodies on land tenure issues and internalised discrimination prevented women from owning land in Southern Africa. On internalised discrimination experienced by women in land ownership, UNECA (2003) observed: "ironically, society has made women the custodians of the very cultural values that lead to their oppression". This means that women tend to accept that men are better leaders than they are.

In the case of Zimbabwe, what was established was that the land reform programme was gender selective (Chingarande, 2008; Gaidzanwa, 1994, 2011; Mgugu and Chiponyo, 2004; UNDP, 2002). The studies blamed discriminatory customary law (or practices) as the main reason for the exclusion of women from the land reform programme (Chingarande, 2008; Gaidzanwa, 1994; Peters and Peters, 1998; Mgugu and Chimonyo, 2004; UNDP, 2002; ZWR CN, 2008); laws governing land (Chingarande, 2008; Mgugu and Chimonyo, 2004; Ncube et al., 1997); workings of marriage, women's rights and gender norms in pre-colonial times (Jacobs, 2000) without looking at the gender dynamics and power relations within households. Power relations exist within the household and economy and therefore must be considered in all economic models. In the case of Zimbabwe, understanding power and patriarchy will assist to analyse how male-dominant institutions actually function and why women are often at a disadvantage in such institutions (Moyo, 1995). Other factors identified as constraining equal land rights between men and women included education and agricultural training (Ncube et al., 1997; ZWR CN, 2008), institutional effects of colonial rule in Zimbabwe (Moyo, 1995; Peters and Peters, 1998) and lack of basic infrastructure such as access roads, clinics, service centres, clean water and schools (Chingarande, 2008).

Njaya (2014) provided a quantitative analysis to confirm the relative importance of the factors identified as influencing the distribution of land rights between men and women in Zimbabwe. He found that intra-household factors (marital status, level of education, household size, age of household head and number of males or females in each household) were not significant determinants of women's land rights in A1 resettlement areas. Instead, extra-household factors such as the method used to make beneficiaries aware about the fast track land reform programme, the size of arable area cultivated and provincial differentials of male and female beneficiaries determined the probability of women's land holding. Social assets were a strong determinant of women's land rights in A1 resettlement areas. This was attributed to the political environment under which the fast track land reform programme was undertaken. The study showed that belonging to ZANU-PF party (governing party) guaranteed one's access to land in A1 schemes. Given that the distribution of land rights between men and women mirrored the distribution of assets, division of labour and decision-making within households, the study depicted an improvement in women's socio-economic status. Although the gendered relations of production still shaped the division of labour within households, women had equal status in decision-making on crop production and acquisition and disposal of livestock as well as household and productive assets (Njaya, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Studies in the three regions of Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America showed that women were considered a marginalised social group in land ownership although slightly better conditions were observed in Latin America. A majority of the studies blamed customary, religious and statutory laws but failed to estimate the relative importance of these variables in explaining the gendered pattern of land distribution. Women's lower access to land in the three regions increased women's economic dependency on men and consequently made them more vulnerable to socio-economic and environmental shocks. The lack of gender focus in land ownership had negative consequences for married women as they were not considered for land redistribution and/or titling programmes and consequently lost the land they jointly owned with their spouses in the event of separation, divorce, widowhood and abandonment. However, secure land and property rights,

particularly for women played a central role in helping achieve development outcomes across several sectors and hence must be a priority in any global development agenda. Generally, land is a resource with foundational linkages to multiple dimensions of poverty and cross-cutting effects for all the Sustainable Development Goals. There is need for further research and case studies on how land rights serve as foundational building blocks for numerous development objectives, including: income and asset redistribution; women's empowerment and gender equality; food security and nutrition; domestic violence and HIV and AIDS; and environmental sustainability. One of the root causes of poverty in developing countries is lack of access to land and/or absence of secure land rights. Governments should therefore expand their efforts to increase the number of women and men with secure land rights in all their development plans. Women should be made equal partners in land inheritance and ownership especially with particular attention to marital property. There is need to give women legitimate spaces for engagement, awareness and back-up support to deal with bureaucracy.

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