



# Gender and sustainability: Emerging issues

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## Sustainability and Gender-emerging issues

- Resource Inequality
- One of the barriers to SD and transformative change
- Unequal access to socially and economically marginalised groups to NR
- Access to basic services- 1.1 billion people are without access to clean water; 2.6 billion people without access to sanitation; 1.6 billion not connected to the grid; 2.8 billion reliant of traditional biomass.
- 1.3 billion people are living in absolute poverty and 70% are women

- False separation between the social, economic and environmental drivers of “development”. In practice, however, the root causes of these drivers are often interconnected.
- Unequal social and political power over resources- poor and marginalized (mostly women) contend with power asymmetries over resources that define economic opportunities- eg land and other NR being sought by private sector
- As land value increases due to greater global demand, access to land for poor communities/groups is diminishing
- Women face distinct obstacles to property rights and land use as a result of social, economic and political disempowerment- effecting their economic rights

# Multiple functions of land

Function	Example
Economic functions	Productive activities (farming, livestock, land sales and rental)
Food security	Source of food and income- sustenance and income generation
Reduced vulnerability/ shock mitigation	Collateral for credit, source of food , employment, income
Social functions	Social standing, bargaining position, cultural identity, religious functions, membership into a group
Conservation	Authority to make decisions, incentives for SD

# Gender and Land rights

- Land and environmental resources are central to the life of an African...
- Land ownership is an indication of persons' identity and social standing
- Daily activities of women anchored on NR
- Exclusion- denies women social, economic and political autonomy which is vital for their wellbeing
- Critical asset and resource for economic empowerment; and land rights (customary or formal)- important economic and social access to market and non-market institutions . Also confer rights to other NR- forests, water, pasture and food.

- Property ownership increases a woman's bargaining power within the household , community and in society
- Marginalisation of women from means of production- critical in subordination of women
- Women's rights to land and related resources have been affected by
  - the convergence of conflicting laws, policies, socio-economic change towards greater commercialization of and competition for land and to discriminatory customary law.
- Land is mainly controlled by males household heads on the assumption that the rights are held in trust for all in the household.
- Land therefore represents the vehicle through which women can move from the reproductive realm to the productive.

- Laws alone not enough- to address the entrenched question of women's rights to land esp with a plural normative context where policies and constitutional provisions are mediated by customary law.
- Law can empower/ disempower its subjects in the quest for access to resources- legal equality may result in substantive inequality if prevailing situation not considered- eg group/clan recognised by customary law
- Patriachal social ordering make access to resources in favour of male members- eg male dominated local level institutions

- Customary law is commonly interpreted to exclude women from land ownership and access,
  - availability of literature suggesting women have in the past been able to access and utilize land- despite them not being legal owners.
  - Some believe women's rights were better off in more traditional societies as women were accorded greater protection as mothers, even when they not exercise political leadership.

- Most women have access/possession of land but do not legally own it
- Women's rights to land resources not secured, even though women pre-dominate in the agriculture labour force
- Structural barriers that hinder women's access to land and resources
  - Women still excluded from decision making on NR. gender inequality underlying the differences unequal power relations, gender roles, needs, knowledge.

- Access and control of NR (land, water, forests, biodiversity)- important for securing livelihoods, very central to their survival.
  - Women hold considerable responsibility for use of resources, little control over them
  - privatization of the commons and public goods deprives women of their resources, contribution to the local economy and women's indigenous knowledge is devalued.
- Women use their knowledge to maintain a workable balance between drawing sustenance from land and allowing for regeneration within their limits of defined rights of access and utilization

# Emerging issues

- Emerging issues that complicate the situation
  - Globalisation of agricultural trade and impact on women
  - Globalisation- resulting in new forms of economic and social exclusion. Women 'integrated' into global market, reinforcing gender inequality- majority get insecure low paying jobs (gender wage gap)
  - Land grabs

- Informal economy- lack legal recognition and social security
- Privatisation of NR- and movement of public good from state to private sector
- New technologies that exclude women
- Care work- interface between social, economic and ecological aspects- care economy is invisible, regarded not productive and unpaid. The double burden women- care work and paid work- private problem- results in lack of income and lack of time

# On customary law...

- Its important to debunk the notion that ALL customary law is regressive and to capture the positive 'living' customary law aspects.
- Need to engage customary law in order to
  - deconstruct, reconstruct and reconceptualise customary law notions around the issues of access, control and ownership with the view of enhancing the positive aspects and intervening at points where it makes a difference for women to improve their lives
- Statement of Nana Ofori that land belongs “to a vast majority of whom many are dead, a few are living and countless are unborn”.