

Understanding Women's Land Ownership in Rural and Peri-Urban Uganda

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Introduction

Land is a vital resource for rural and urban livelihoods in Africa. It is also a critical asset in the domestic product of African countries, whose economies mostly depend on Agriculture (Agarwal 1994, FAO 2011, Kameri-Mbote, 2013). Land is also central to women's quest for rights, since, due to the gendered division of labour, women spend a lot of time working on land and yet they are limited in terms of land ownership, access and control.

Land represents the vehicle through which women can move from the reproductive realm to the productive (Kameri-Mbote, 2013). According to Kameri-Mbote, women's land ownership remains one of the most important sites of social, political and economic contestation in post-colonial Africa. Land has long been recognised as key to advancing the social-economic rights and wellbeing of women and their position in society (Kameri-Mbote, 2013). Yet access, control and ownership of land largely remain a male privilege, entrenching patriarchal structures of power and control over community resources, history, culture and tradition (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2013). In light of the gendered nature of power relations, land rights issues are constantly negotiated, contested and resisted by the affected women in various ways. Since land is a fundamental resource for sustaining or improving living conditions and economic empowerment, the limited access and ownership of land for women undermines efforts to promote gender equity and equality within a patriarchal society. Thus, we investigate land access of women and the ways women deal with, negotiate or contest access to land in two particular villages in Uganda.

Mukono district lies in the central region of Uganda. Mukono municipality, the district's headquarter is located approximately 20Km East of the capital city of Uganda, Kampala. The Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability (HRV) profile (2016) for Mukono district indicates that among other factors, the district has a higher population density (332 persons per square km), an annual growth rate of 2.6%. It is important to note, as stated in the HRV profile that over 80 % of Mukono is agriculturally based, characterised as subsistence production. Accordingly, women provide most labour, and the men claim the biggest share of the farm proceeds.

Kamwenge district on the other hand, has a land area of 3439.4 square kilometers which is 1.0% of Uganda's total land area. Kamwenge's district population varies from sub-county to sub-county due to numerous reasons such as the level of soil fertility, and as well economic activities. Land in Kamwenge is mainly used for agriculture (Kamwenge Development Plan 2016). In the two case study areas, the informal sector complements livelihood strategies through job creation and generation of incomes to populations that are locked out of structured systems of employment and access to resources, of which women are a big proportion.

The examination of issues that are specific to women and land ownership in peri-urban and rural Uganda substantiates the need for cultural-context specific interventions, towards laying a ground for the realisation of women's land ownership.

In this paper, the nature and the status of women's land ownership in the study villages is discussed. The factors influencing women's land ownership are analysed comparatively between the peri-urban and the rural villages, and finally the paper discusses, the challenges of women's land ownership in the context of rural and peri-urban settings. The contribution of this study research paper is the presentation and articulation of the understanding of land ownership by the women themselves as a target group within the cultural context of the study areas, as opposed to the analyses of women's land ownership within the generalisation of western frameworks that are in most cases detached from specific cultural contexts, due to the homogenization and universalization tendencies (Kwashirai & Kezia 2020).

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The women expressed strongly about the interconnectedness of the concepts of documentation, confidence and capacity (as reflected in Figure 1). Our study revealed that, the understanding of land ownership by the women in the urban and peri-urban settings is distinguished by the capacities of the women. Not only have the women in the peri-urban settings every day and technical knowledge about land processes i.e. access possibilities, buying, procuring process among other, but also have the requisite resources and funds to procure land that they need given their societal responsibilities due to their ability and possibilities to take on, and pursue small business. This is an important highlight and underground work for successful policy development and implementation for the same.

Women's land ownership in the context of African peri-urban and rural settings.

Land ownership is not detached from land rights- usually conceived as the rights and legitimacy to access, use, own, control, enjoy and exploit land. In terms of gender construction, land rights go beyond merely the rights to use or control land as a vital economic asset, but also involve laying claim to information about, decision-making around (for instance, lease or sell) and ultimately enjoying the benefits thereof (Wanyeki 2003). In South Africa for instance, despite the constitutional guarantee of gender equality, land reform in many rural areas has not benefitted women due to customary law practices which deny women access to land (Rangan and Gilmartin, 2002: 633).

One of the challenges of women's access to their husbands' properties and wealth is the structural obstacles associated with women's registration of properties. In terms of obtaining a deed of land ownership, very few women have their land fully registered in Kenya for example, and many are sometimes subjected to male arm-twisting, especially within communal relations (Kameri Mbote, 2009: 88). Within families, men are fond of selling family land without consulting their wives or female family members and every attempt for the women to push for the rights for joint - ownership (husband and wives, or male and female) of land has been unachievable.

It is also important to note that land tenure² systems – ranging from informal to formal – determine who can use what resources for how long and under what conditions. In practice, land tenure may take a variety of forms, such as ownership, rental (public and private) agreements, cooperatives, leasehold or informal settlement – including informal occupation of land (Akinola 2018: 24).

According to Action Aid, there is a positive correlation between ensuring women's rights to land and improved household welfare, as well as enhanced enjoyment of a broad range of rights for women. This holds true in both rural and urban areas. As a consequence, women acquire more power and autonomy in their families and communities, as well as in their economic and political relationships. Rural women also feel that secure land rights in particular increase their social and political status and improve their sense of confidence and security (Action Aid 2008). Action Aid also notes that important progress has been made in legal protection of women as regards land. For example, over the past few decades, many countries have reformed their constitutions and national laws. Women's land ownership through land reform all over the world has taken place on a gendered, incremental basis. In the case of Zimbabwe for example, the percentage of women landowners for example was less than 5% before and soon after independence, thereafter, rising to a range of 12% to 27% for both small- and large-scale farms (Action Aid 2008).

It is established through narrative analysis that the meaning of land ownership by women, seen from the Western context, gives a limited representation of what is occurring on the ground in African communities (Kwashirai & Kezia 2020). According to Kwashirai and Kezia, the main argument that came out of the field-based evidence from Masvingo District in Zimbabwe is that women's land ownership may not merely be viewed from the perspective of ownership and possession of a document called a title deed, 'offer letter' or 'permit'. Ownership of land goes beyond these, because it is tied to totemic, clan and lineage relations. These gendered relational nuances, are accordingly, better understood from an African perspective, which, is more attuned and positioned to explain the gendered inequalities and structures that women navigate as they negotiate access to and ownership of land. For instance, the African culture and customs compared to Western allows for the deployment of the cultural idiom of 'honorary husband', deconstruction of the highly patriarchal society, and engagement with the gendered inequalities and politics around land inheritance and transfer to the next generation.

² Land tenure - understood as a "bundle of rights in land" which can include the right to occupy, enjoy and use; to cultivate and use productively; to sell, gift or bequeath; to mortgage or rent; or to transfer.

The paper, aims to bring forth a specific cultural context as regards women's land ownership when compared to for example European- American contexts.

Location of the study areas

Two districts (highlighted with a red ring in map 1 is Kamwenge and Mukono in orange color) were selected for the study. In Kamwenge, the research study was undertaken in village N, which is a short form for the name of the village in Kamwenge district. A village is the lowest planning unit at the local level in Uganda. In Mukono district the study research was conducted in village S, also a short form for the name of the village.

Map 1: Map of Uganda showing the location of the study areas



Adapted from: www.bing.com/images/uganda

Economic activities in the study villages

Mukono district is one of the major industrial districts in Uganda. Accordingly, partial commercial agriculture exists. Subsistence agriculture is characterized by low acreage due to increasing family sizes and slicing of land. It is noted that there is productivity per unit acre arising from deteriorating soil fertility over cultivation and soil erosion. The females provide most labor and yet the men take most of the biggest share of farm proceeds. In Kamwenge district, there are several agro-forestry establishments for middle income earners. Moreover, it is noted that value addition facilities are still on small scale, mainly engaged in grain milling especially maize, millet and sorghum. Thus, the district has potential for agro-based factories among others (Kamwenge Development Plan 2016: 37).

It is important to note that the informal sector in the study areas complements livelihood strategies through job creation and generation of incomes to populations that are locked out of structured systems of employment and access to resources.

The informal sector is of a heterogeneous nature, that is, that the sector participants are engaged in a variety of activities, ranging from street vending and hawking to retail trading, implying that the heterogeneity of the informal sector shapes its dynamics and evolution (Mugada et al 2020, 11). The dynamics and interplay of the informal sector have a great reflection of the situation of women's land ownership as we shall see in the later discussions of this paper. In the following section, we give a highlight of the study methodology as regards empirical study.

Methodology of the study

The research mainly relied on qualitative data collection methods. The researchers used both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to collect information on women's land rights. The study respondents were situated through village contacts, who again recommended people that could support the research process as assistants and thus, snowball sampling technique was used to locate the different categories of women for interview and gather information about the villages, community structures and organization. "Grounded theory was adapted in this study, as a set of systematic inductive methods for conducting qualitative research aimed toward theory development Charmaz (2003). The term grounded theory denotes dual referents: (a) a *method* consisting of flexible methodological strategies and (b) the *products* of this type of inquiry. In this study research, the approach was used to mean the methods of inquiry for collecting and analyzing data. The methodological strategies of grounded theory were used to construct middle-level theories directly from data analysis. The resulting analyses built the base for strong empirical foundations. These analyses provided focused, abstract, concepts regarding land ownership by women in the study areas.

The table below gives a detailed account of the household in-depth interviews conducted during the field research. In the case of village S, a peri-urban village, 20 women respondents were interviewed. While in case of N, a typical Ugandan village, 30 women were interviewed. The difference in the number of interviews in the two villages was influenced by the availability of the women to be interviewed and the population densities in the two villages, whereby the later was very populated, with closely spread households. It is also important to note that, at the 20th interview, the researcher had reached a point of circulation, meaning that conducting more interviews could hardly reveal new information, rather provided further clarification and confirmed the different points raised by the women, while emphasizing others.

Due to logistical dynamics and arrangements, two well represented focus groups discussions were organized for the two villages. In village S, the group discussion was attended by 12 women, while in village N, 24 women attended. The focus group discussion in N village was held in a church compound after the researcher had also participated in the Sunday service which became an entry point for meeting to discuss and interview with the biggest group of women in the field process. For village S, the FGD was held in the compound of a woman mobiliser and councilor of the village, who is popularly known in the village although previous arrangements had indicated that the discussion was to be held at the Parish quarter premises.

Table 5: In-depth interviews with women by interview site

Categories	Married	Single	Cohabiting	Widow	Divorced	Separated	Total
Village N	8	2	14	1	4	1	30
Village S	7	4	4	2	1	2	20

Towards establishing the economic and the social situation of women in relation to land rights, we also sought information from women in the two villages regarding their sources of income, social welfare options, decision making, the roles and responsibilities ascribed to women in the villages.

Characterizing s women's land ownership in the study villages

It emerged that when approaching the concept of women's land rights in the study villages, it cannot be separated from the roles that women play as mothers, care takers and providers of their families. Women apart from making household decisions (related to feeding and care for the family), majorly decide on and about animal keeping (goats, cows, pigs), what and where to grow crops but not decisions regarding changes in land, especially selling. A respondent had this to say, 'What I know is that women are supposed to be consulted and involved in land matters'. However, we are always undermined.' Women usually have no say on land and property. One respondent put it thus: 'I think no woman makes a decision on household property or land except when they have contributed to it.' Indeed, the responses from the interviews confirmed that women who have land ownership

have worked together with their husband to purchase and own land. On the other hand, widows and divorced women tended to have freedom to make all the decisions, including those related to land ownership. This category of women was in most cases residing in the peri-urban, where they moved to find a new life through establishing small business. It is this independent life, away from communities of birth, after, in most cases having lost husbands or become single parents that they discover new abilities and venture into expansion including purchase of land from the market.

As regards the women's land ownership status, the expression from the focus group discussions was that land ownership is mainly influenced by two situations: (1) when the man had bought the land before marrying the woman. In this kind of arrangement, the woman usually can only stay and use the land without having disposing and transfer permission; meaning that the woman has no much say over this type of land. The woman in this case uses the land for the benefit of the family. (2) There are cases when a woman has inherited land from her father or family, the woman in this case usually can use, dispose, and transfer the land as deemed appropriate. In response to this situation, the women have reported such cases to the local councils (LCs) or even have pursued the cases in local courts to challenge their husbands' interference with their rights to such land (these cases were prevalent in the rural areas).

It also emerged that, in some cases, women co-own land with their husbands through a shared title / land agreement. This usually happens when the couples have worked together and contributed to purchasing the land. In this case, they register and own the land jointly. This, however, does not give the woman authority to dispose, or transfer the land when she has need. Women recounted that the man is still the holder of the title; and in most cases women just become witnesses during the purchase and signing of land agreements and nothing more beyond this formal process. This is true for both peri-urban and rural areas of the study. Analyzing the definitions and understanding of women's land rights in the study areas, three concepts and their description emerge:

Capacity:

'It means the capacity to own land and use land without interference.'
'The capacity to use land and dispose of it when faced with a situation or a problem.'
'The capacity and the right to initiate change on the piece of land.'
'Capacity to utilize land without consulting anybody.'

The requisite capacities however, varied in terms of knowledge levels, technicalities involved, resources and funds needed for land acquisition and ownership. For example, the case was that it is almost impossible for a rural woman who faces injustice in a land situation- has a court case with a spouse to follow up such a case and receive justice because of the large amounts involved to facilitate travels to administrative centers, and possibly the need to pay up a lawyer or higher a technical person for guidance. The projects and work of Non-governmental Organizations are visible in the urban centers and benefit the peri-urban women and put them in a better situation.

Confidence:

'The ability to practice, pursue, undertake activities on land without any interference.'
'A situation where the woman is mandated to use land without interference.'
'Being able to use the land without fear or doubt.'
'A situation where one has a right to practice any activity, initiate change on the land, having a sense of security over a piece of land.'

Although confidence is an innate attribute, our interlocutors during the interviews linked this concept to capacity. When the women in the peri-urban centers are trained and equipped with skills from organizations that offer support in land related situations, then the women know what to do when faced with a conflict, or a land situation concerning ownership and the processes involved.

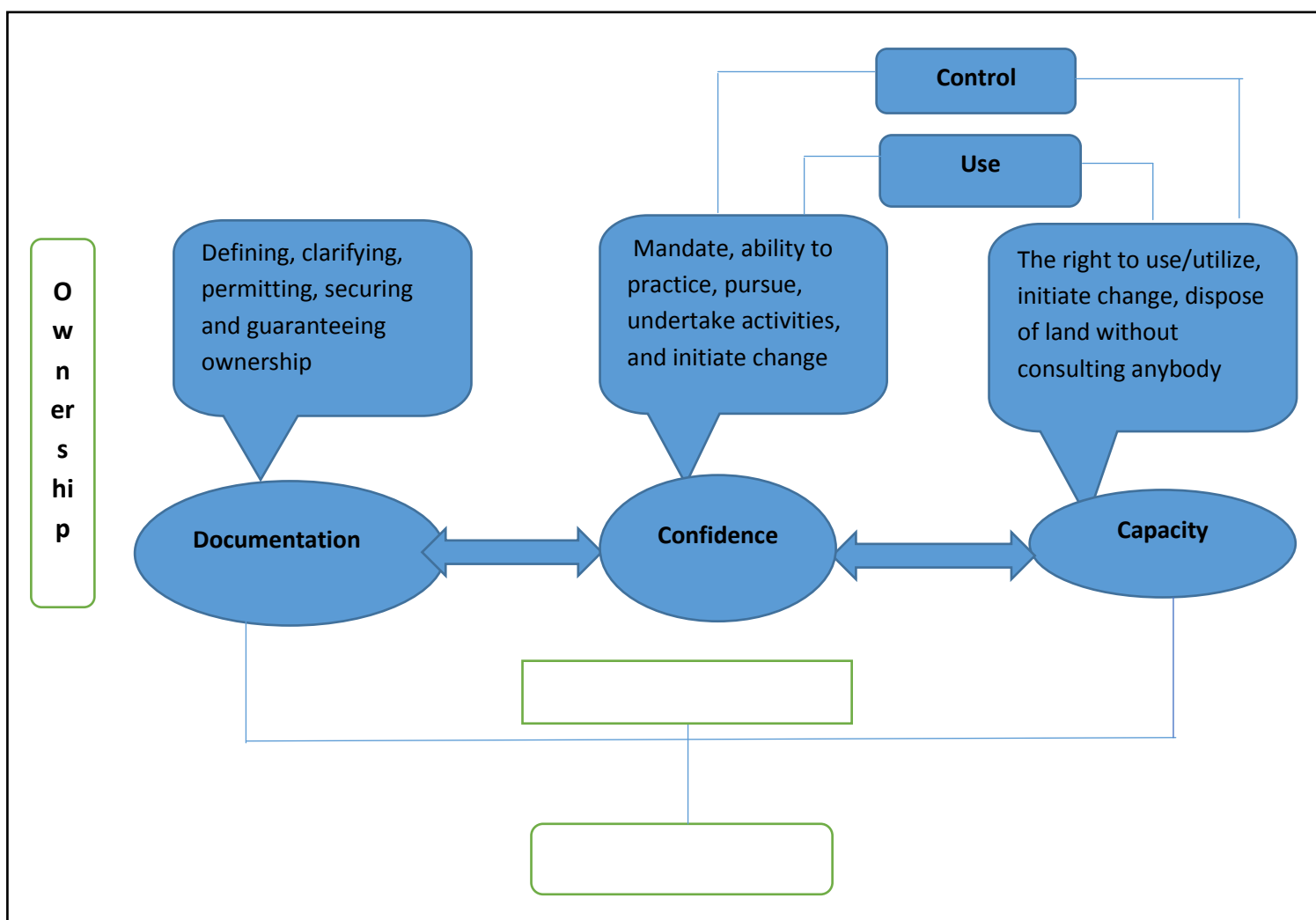
Documentation:

'A situation where one lives on the land, can put up permanent or temporary projects, and has all the documents in her names.'
'Having all documents that guarantee land ownership.'
'Is where by a woman has all the documents defining the land and ownership.'
'The right to own land, and build a permanent house on it, and having documents about and clarifying land ownership.'
'It means having a sense of security, and permission to utilize and invest on the land.'

Thus, women's land rights in the study areas are not either about documentation, confidence building or capacity and neither are the three concepts linear in terms of packaging and describing women's land ownership. They are interwoven, connected and linked to one another to provide a full view and meaning to the situation of women's land rights in the study villages.

The variations for women in the peri-urban and rural areas, are more to do with the capacities to acquire land through market for example, which puts the peri-urban woman in a better position because they have ability and possibilities to generate income through small business engagements. The trainings received by the peri-urban women from Non-Governmental Organizations puts them at a better position than their rural counterparts. The location of the women in terms of geographical, community, societal setting determines and influences their opportunity to own land. To own land as a woman means everything, including the ability to sustain life through provision of food, having a home, taking care of family children’s needs. In Figure 1 below, a visual interpretation of the meaning of land ownership is presented and interpreted by the researchers from the data collected. Furthermore, security, ability to initiate change, living and building on the land, were the other words mentioned by women in defining land rights. While the documentation of land is closely associated with ownership, ability to control and use the land, the variables: capacity, freedom and confidence operationalize and support pursuance of the right to land by women in the study villages. This affirms the need to separate operational variables and definitive ones.

Figure 1: Conceptualizing the understanding of women’s land ownership in the study villages.



Source: Authors construction based on data analysis.

Factors influencing women’s land rights.

The following factors emerged as influencing women’s land rights in the study villages.

Income and poverty

The sources of income for women in the study villages are very limited. Village S has some diverse income-generating activities for the women, ranging from operating small businesses like hair-dressing saloons, food stalls

by the roadside. Some women are engaged in professional activities like teaching, pursuing developmental project activities which bring in income daily or monthly.

In village N, most of the income-generating activities for the women are related to agricultural produce, i.e. selling of food crops, animal products and art crafts. Although the main source of livelihood and income in both villages is through growing and selling of crops whose returns are very minimal to enable women buy and own land, the women in village S (peri-urban) have better chances of increasing their incomes, and so have been able to purchase their own land rights through engaging in various income-generating activities, compared to women in village N who depend primarily on the growing and selling of crops. Thus, one can conclude that the women in village N are poorer than in village S who have diverse income-generating activities.

According to most of the women who were interviewed, earning income is empowering and helps women to make life choices and guarantee them freedom to even own land as expressed by some respondents in the following quotes: ‘If a woman has money, the right to own land is almost guaranteed’; ‘the freedom to buy land is guaranteed when women earn income and are independent of the husband’s situation’.

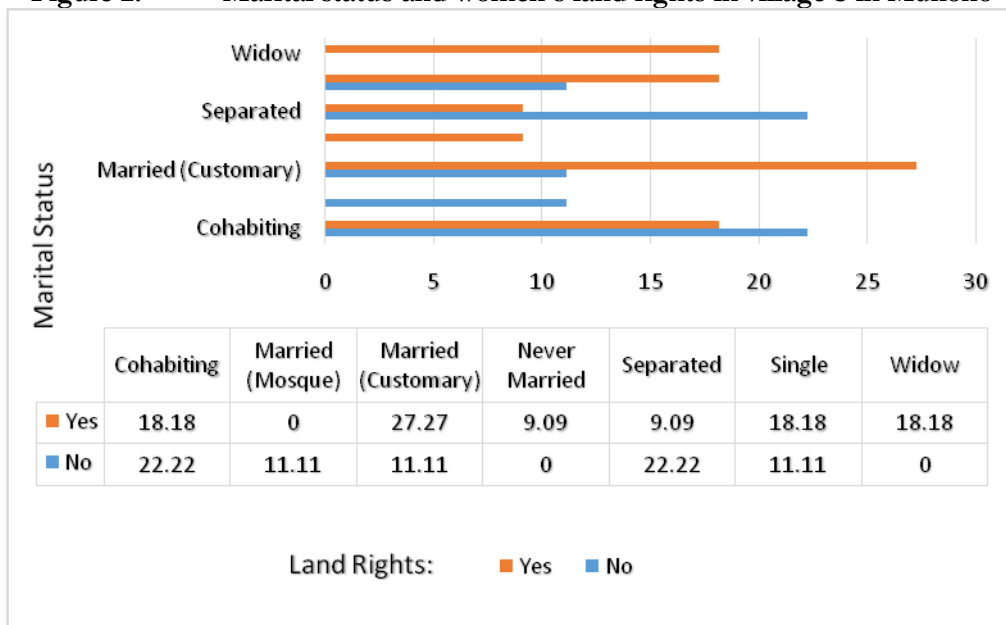
Marital status

We are like birds in the air, at our parents homes, they do not want us to own land because the culture says we shall have land at our husbands’.... when we are married, we can only use the land at the husbands’ places. Once your husband dies, that is the end of the story’ (Jackline Opar, *The New Vision*, March 11, 2014).

The marital status of a woman in a village setting is a very key aspect given the research subject. The land law (Land Act, Section 33) also upholds the marriage status of a woman in terms of land ownership and entitlements within a family setting. The woman’s land rights in a home are guaranteed if she married her husband officially (in church, mosque or culturally). A marriage certificate is required and is symbolic to confirm the relationship with the husband. The certificate also serves as security for the right to land in case of deprivation, death of the husband and or land conflicts in the family.

Moreover, the discussion with women raised issues concerning the promiscuous tendencies of their husbands and polygamous practices which affect marriage relationships and influence property (ownership and sharing) decisions. It emerged that, in most cases, the husbands want to sell the land to finance a relationship with another woman, divide or in some cases take away all the land to another woman in situations where the marriage has not been formalized. Figure 2 below compares the marital status and the situation of women’s land rights.

Figure 2: Marital status and women's land rights in village S in Mukono

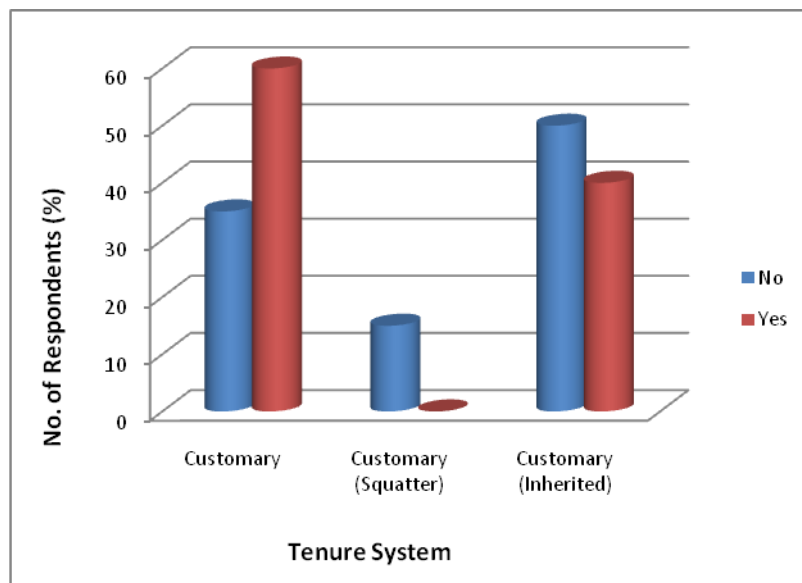


Tenure system and inheritance rights

Inheritance is the main mechanism of transferring land rights in the study villages, and generally in Uganda. This is in consideration that much of the land, especially in the study villages, is under the customary tenure system. The data from the field indicates that some women, although few in number (mostly in the peri-urban setting), have been able to inherit land from their parents.

Women mentioned the fact that land inheritance is a cultural practice which tends to favor the male child (this practice is more prevalent in the rural area, where the patriarchal culture is mostly emphasized). Moreover, when it comes to land rights, boys are favored and treated differently than girls, with boys being preferred to inherent land. As understood from the women, this is so given that most of customary land is family land, and giving the land to a woman could mean passing it to another clan, i.e. in case the woman remarries after, for example, the death of the husband. In this context, it became essential for the researcher to assess which tenure system is better at safeguarding the women's right to land (Figures 3 and 4 below).

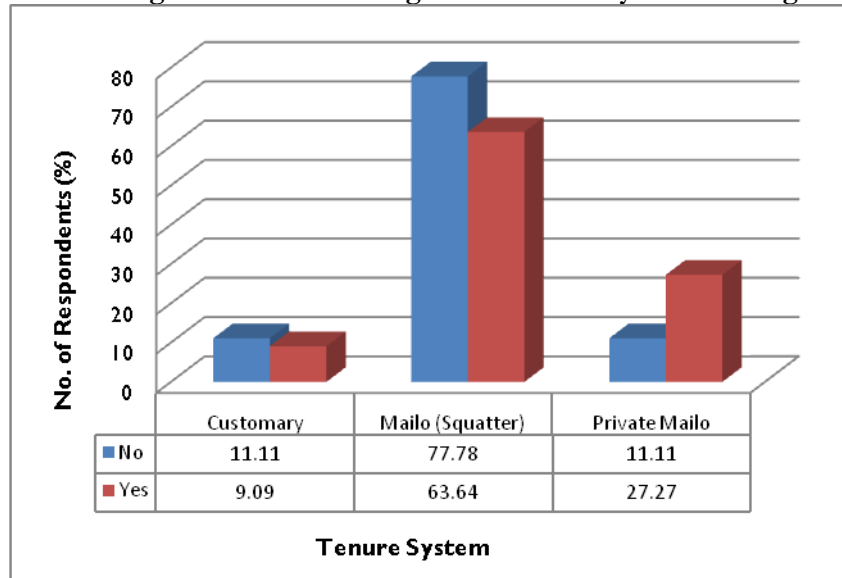
Figure 3: Land rights and tenure system in Village N



In village N, the predominant tenure system is customary, although there are differing ways by which the women in the different households acquire the land i.e., through access and use of family land, inheritance or just squatting because a family member or any other person has given permission. As seen from Figure 3 above, the major way women and their households acquire land rights is through customary or family land (at around 59 percent), individual inheritance (about 39 per cent), and 11 per cent of the women are squatting with no land rights. In village S on the other hand, two tenure systems are prevailing (see Figure 4 below): Customary, Mailo³ (squatter and private). Largely, village S is under the Mailo tenure arrangement, given that it is in the central region of the country, where the system is predominant (evidenced in Figure 4 below). Over 60 per cent of the women respondents in village S (Peri-urban setting) have accessed their land rights through Mailo tenure, although as squatters, meaning that most of them have land agreements, as opposed to land titles since the landlord is usually the only one person with the title. In this village, a peri-urban setting, a small percentage of the women respondents (27 per cent) can process land titles to confirm ownership and land rights. Many of the respondents both rural and peri-urban dwellers expressed that although they would like to secure their land ownership through acquiring land titles, it is usually an expensive process.

³ One of the four land tenure systems in Uganda. The basic unit of the "Mailo" is a square mile which is equal to 640 acres. The term which is associated with "milo" as a basic unit of measurement came into effect at the signing of the 1900 Buganda agreement with the British Colonialists.

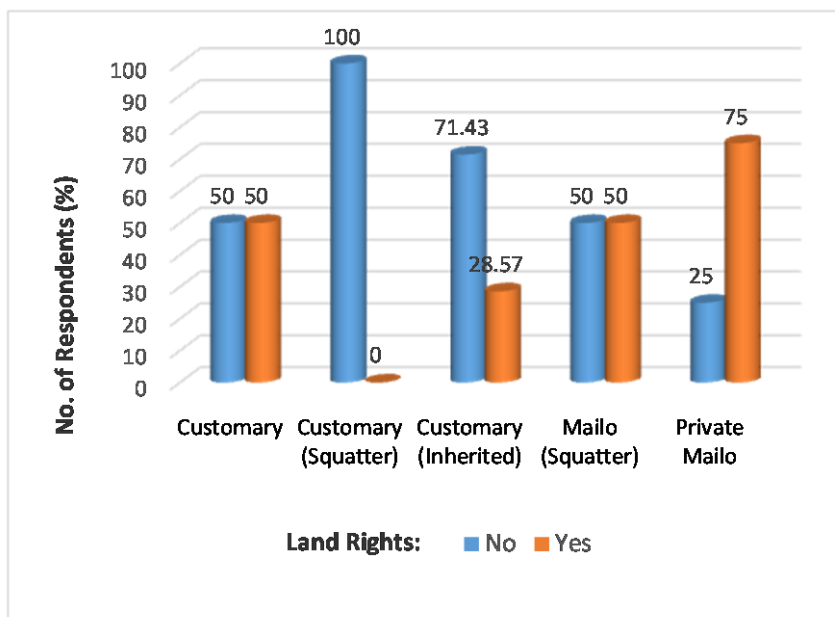
Figure 4: Land rights and tenure system in village S



The calculation for processing the land title of about an acre in village S was, for example, estimated at Uganda shillings 4 million (equivalent to 1,300 euros), which is difficult for a woman to put together.

In Figure 5 below, a comparison is made for both villages N (rural setting) and S (peri-urban setting) with a combination of the tenure systems. The analysis reveals that private Mailo (at 75 per cent) gives women more land rights and control to land. Mailo tenure (whose land rights are secured through land purchase, implying private arrangements), and customary tenure (whose land rights can be purchased/ with independent owners or titles) at 50 per cent, are moderate in terms of giving women the right to land. This leaves customary tenure that is inherited at 28.57 per cent as not being an accessible system through which women’s land rights can be guaranteed. This is despite the fact that much of the land in the country, of which the two villages are not exceptions, is accessed through inheritance rights. From the analysis and relating to the experience as shared by the women, squatting (practiced mostly in peri-urban) does not give any land right to women. From the women’s experience as shared with the researchers, as low as less than 2 per cent have inherited land, at least in village S (peri-urban), reason being that land in village S is more commodified, thus available for purchase rather than acquired through inheritance mechanisms.

Figure 5: Land rights and tenure systems in village S and N



The Local Council (LC) structure and governance, the clan system and practices are at interplay in terms of guiding, enabling, facilitating and influencing the achievement of women's land rights in the study villages. On one hand, in village N, the LC structures are in charge and commanding for the respect of a woman's right to access and use land in situations where the husbands have attempted selling the household land. The councils have been able to order against the selling and recovery of household land. On the other hand, women in village S shared that the local councils that are charged with addressing local issues including land conflicts have become part of the land problem in most cases. 'They are usually not in support or on the side of women in case of a land conflict/ wrangle,' an interviewee narrated. Accordingly, the male members of LCs tend to side with their fellow men, and are involved in double dealing of selling land without any due respect or consideration to pursue and secure justice for women. Due to the well-developed land market in village S (peri-urban setting), the LC is usually seen as preferring to engage in land deals as opposed to engaging in the process of searching for the truth behind the land conflict/wrangle.

Father's will

The culture and practice in the study villages is that land inheritance is passed through the male children who are usually the sons. Therefore, for a woman or girl child to inherit land is completely the decision and the will of the father. Many interviewees alluded to the fact that, when it comes to land ownership, women are treated differently from men especially in village N, a typical rural setting whose family land is guided by patriarchal culture, clan and family rules. A particular reference was made to situations of land conflicts within a household whereby the woman is unlikely to get justice on interface or engagement with the local council or local courts as regards a land ownership issue, whereby the ruling will usually favor the male person. Such sentiments are also reflected in Kameri-Mbote's assertion:

"The predominance of patriarchy in law, policy, and practice ensures that the land has owners but that they are not women."

Patricia Kameri-Mbote (2008).

Non-functional land management institutions

In village N (village setting), a woman shared a situation where her husband sold land without seeking permission or agreeing with the wife. The wife sought help from the LC 1, who referred her to LC 3, and then later she was referred to the officer in-charge of women's issues at the sub county level. From the sub county, the woman was sent to the district, where a case was recorded by State prosecutors. At the district, the State prosecutors asked the woman to bring relatives of the husband to serve as witnesses in the case. However, the woman was skeptical as to whether they would agree to go and witness against the husband since they were his relatives. She ended up not asking her husband's relatives to come to court since they were not going to be on her side.

On top of the long process, she had to pay Shs 40,000 (around 17 euros) as case fees, making the whole process unaffordable and expensive for her to follow-up. She therefore had to give up the processes of securing her right to the land which she was being deprived of by her husband. The system under which the woman sought justice made it even more impossible and inaccessible for her to realize her right to the land they owned together with her husband. Besides, there were no processes and systems in place to track the government's laws and policies which guarantee the right and protection of women's land rights as stated in the 1995 Constitution of Uganda (Art. 237) and the 1998 Land Act (Section 27, 33, 34, 35). The women expressed dissatisfaction at the government and the lawmakers not passing the Domestic Relations Bill (DRB); which has been shelved on grounds that it will bring disharmony in families. The bill entitles women to share property equally with men in case of separation even in a cohabiting relationship.

Challenges to women's land rights

What hinders and or are the obstacles to women's land rights?

The study villages are bound by patriarchal cultural practices (rural setting mostly bound by these practices), which favor the male over the girl child when it comes to land inheritance. This accordingly gives men authority and power to manage and control land even when the women have purchased land rights from their own hard-earned money. This leaves women with limited bargaining power following societal practices that encourage and treat the female person different from the male. The preceding case reflects how women with inherited land rights (LR) have been treated by men through the use of their masculine power to promote self-interest, which suppress and deny women land rights.

In one story as shared during the field activity, 'Namwandu' (a widow) and her late husband had rented land equivalent to an acre to a man before the death of her husband. To date, the widow is finding it difficult to send away the man from the land because she is powerless and aging.

The land, being under customary tenure, is guided by family rules and held without an agreement, implying that the widow has no proof of ownership. The widow's rights would be secured by the clan head. However, he stays out of the country and the situation awaits him. These, cases and stories presented depict a society with dominant power over the woman and the right to land. The clan as a social arrangement actually seems to exist to ensure and sustain the dominant posture of the man in society. In the cases, therefore, what is hindering women's land ownership revolves around masculine power and the clan identity as a social setting. However, in a more general sense, the inheritance practices and patterns and level of income were shared by women across the study site as hindering.

Limited income and capital: Poverty was cited as the biggest challenge influencing women's land rights. Poverty (affecting mostly the rural setting due to limited income generating activities) is influenced by the background and earning opportunities prevailing for women in the study villages. There is a difference between a woman born from a well-off background, at least where the father owns land, which he passes to the children including the girl child, than, the woman who, for example, has to work hard to acquire land rights. The real challenge is the limited source of income, which accordingly in the study villages the sources of income are limited to the sale of agricultural products, i.e., sale of crops which in most cases fetch low prices making (in the village) where accumulation of capital and income to invest in land by the women is practically impossible. Besides, it is the case that the actual ownership of land attracts other resources (as the case was for peri-urban settings women) and provides opportunities to acquire capital through loans to possibly start up business with an aim of accumulating wealth through increased incomes that would implore women to invest in a valuable resource like land.

Limited land: Any development activity carried out to generate income takes place on land, yet the sizes of land owned and controlled by women in the study villages (particularly in the peri-urban setting) are insignificant to practice agriculture for food production and let alone engage in commercial activities that would have otherwise increased opportunities for higher incomes, an important factor especially when it comes to maintaining and facilitating the control of women's land rights.

Family relations: To the women, lack of co-operation, mainly between husband and wife in a family not only leads to backwardness but also limits discussion, planning around resources available to the family including control and pursuance of activities on the land, which affects women negatively. It all builds up from the fact that usually, the head of the family (the man) is charged with managing land, and therefore a woman's role is limited in terms of making decisions regarding the land resource. This implies that a woman is entitled to access land as opposed to taking decisions including sale or transfer rights. Women were concerned that their husbands end up selling land without the women's knowledge, denying them decision making power to land (in particular, a woman in a rural setting explained that they would never question the decision of the man as regards land).

In some situations, women have been displaced from the family land because the husbands used the land to secure a loan to pursue personal pleasures and satisfy selfish interests (was popular in the peri-urban setting due to promiscuousness of the men).

Limited government implementation and intervention: Women are being deprived land ownership as provided for by the law in the 1998 Land Act (Art. 33) and the 1995 Constitution (Art. 237). The women in the study villages pondered and wondered about the role of government and land management institutions. The women, both in rural and peri-urban setting expressed that the government is inactive and perhaps silent about the situation of women's land ownership. This accordingly influences the position and achievement of land ownership at least from the position of enforcing and monitoring the implementation of women's land ownership in rural and peri-urban settings of the study sites in Uganda.

Conclusion

The situation of women, particularly in the rural settings being that they have limited opportunities to generate income, and the fact that they are engaged mostly in domestic activities, makes it hardly impossible for these women to attract income to buy and later own land. It is thus, a problem and a dream for these women to get jobs, work and earn income which would facilitate them to buy land. The aspiration for both the rural and peri-urban woman is to have independent land ownership, which to them is everything in terms of achieving life goals and family needs.

Mostly the peri-urban women highlighted the necessity for them to have independent land ownership such that besides sustaining their families and providing necessities, they would pursue entrepreneur projects. For the woman, land ownership is more oriented to their security- having a place to stay and being able to feed and take care of the family needs while depending on tiling and growing of crops for consumption and sale.

As such, the ability to generate and have a source of income is key for women to own land in both the peri-urban and rural settings. Accordingly, to the women in peri-urban settings, access to free-interest and non-secured loans, business support services like training in managing small projects, would lead to improved incomes of women, which in turn would empower and facilitate them to buy and own land. Some women in the peri-urban study villages have been able to receive financial support to start up entrepreneur projects through small loan acquisition. Some women are also involved in saving schemes and microcredit enterprises, which provides them with some form of economic support to start up self-help projects. These self-help groups have also initiated women's forum to deal with issues related to difficulties faced by women in accessing land.

It is hoped that the discussion about land ownership in the peri-urban and rural settings of Uganda gives insight and as well, an outlook on women's land ownership, while adding a specific knowledge and awareness about contextual issues that require attention, when dealing with land policy change, and improvement. The study results can be generalized in African settings, with similar contexts. Moreover, it is also hoped that this study will contribute to: improving the situation of land ownership by women through strategic policy development and implementation considering the specificity of the study environment, and the meanings attributed to land ownership by women as a target group; an enhanced decision-making power as regards ownership of land by women participants in the study villages (and elsewhere) in their efforts to obtain more secure access to land within the framework of developing capacities, enhanced knowledge and practices.

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