

Women's Rights and Resource Allocation in Rural Livelihoods in Ghana and Pakistan

Abstract submitted by

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Abstract

The paper examines trends shaping gendered character of labour systems and resource allocation in rural livelihoods in Ghana and Pakistan. The concept livelihood covers broadly the collection of activities that social groups such as the rural poor rely on to meet their survival needs. A number of studies outlining the range of resources deployed to meet survival needs and enhance well-being in rural communities note that adaptive strategies are dependent on inter and intra household social positioning. The gendered differentiations of the political economic contexts of rural livelihoods result in highly discriminatory access to household resource allocation for securing livelihoods. Rural agricultural livelihoods in Ghana and Pakistan are challenged by a myriad of factors. Defective land tenure systems in Ghana and Pakistan subjected to reforms geared towards meeting the needs of private capital generates contestations around access and control for meeting rural livelihood needs. Farmers in rural communities therefore have constrained access to land, a principal agricultural resource. Natural disasters and poor farming practices tend to compromise the quality of land available for agricultural production. Rural livelihoods are threatened by unstable market prices and inadequate infrastructure leading to a weak financial position of farmers. More important are the gender dynamics, generated around women's access, allocation and management as well as control over livelihood resources and benefits such as incomes.

Studies note that owning land and other landed properties in rural communities provides access to additional productive resources like finances, water and grazing privileges. Others conclude that having their own plots of land strengthens women's voices in decisions about the use of household resources. The paper is the outcome of qualitative studies in two rural communities in Ghana and Pakistan utilising in-depth interviews and focus group discussions as well as key person interviews. Observations constituted an additional data gathering method]. The paper describes emerging gender orders within varying intensities of patriarchal control over productive resources in rural Ghana and Pakistan. It pays attention to the historical processes, the role of institutions, as well as intra-household labour and land relations. It examines in addition the changing trends in rural livelihoods and their implications for women's access to productive resources. It concludes by highlighting the viability of the range of rural women's collective agency to secure their access to productive livelihood resources.