

GENDER EQUALITY - GOAL OR TOOL?

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Abstract

This paper focuses on discussing gender equity and equality and how in many countries over the world, women's rights is overseen, diminished and is outweighed by the rights of men. We use our personal experiences, knowledge and perspectives as basis for this paper.

There is a need for paradigm shift in logic and reasoning. What we are doing now is not good enough – we need to change. Since the way we are doing things now isn't giving us the results we need we must switch to something we believe in.

What happens at home, in the private life, reflects on how we act outside, in the official. The world is in so many areas exploding but we remain failing to create the same opportunities for all and gender equality is one of the areas we are failing in.

We need a new approach! We all need to see gender equality as a powerful tool to reach other goals. Doing this we are convinced we will have “nice number” to show and enormous results will be achieved in so many areas. Unleash the power of women for the good of humanity!

Key Words:

Gender, Equality, Tool, Development

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on discussing gender equity and equality and how in many countries over the world, women's rights is overseen, diminished and is outweighed by the rights of men. We use our personal experiences, knowledge and perspectives as basis for this paper. Many of the ideas, examples and suggestions are from the Scandinavian countries since not only are they the countries we live and work in but also the countries often considered leaders in gender equality. However as we show in this paper we still have a long way to go and the approach used too often, according to our opinion, putting goals (numbers, statistics) on gender equality and trying to find appropriate activities and ways to measure to reach these goals is not sufficient. Maybe the approach itself is wrong, can changing the approach give better results?

We, the authors of this paper are working for Kartverket from Norway and Lantmäteriet from Sweden with International Services, mainly as Senior Advisors and Project Managers. That being said, we are not gender specialist and this is not a formal research document. This the reality as we see it, problems we encounter, frustration we feel and solutions we believe in. All based on who we are, where we come from and what we have experienced.

We all know that efficient management of land, forests and natural resources is recognized as being a vital ingredient` in combatting poverty, climate change and improving socio-economic and environmental development. Land management is a powerful tool that is used to secure rights, ownership and access for indigenous and low-income persons, minority groups and women. Land management, if mismanaged, can be a severe hindrance for sustainability, democracy and gender equality.

To start with, is gender equality a real factor we need to consider seriously in land administration and management? Is it not too much focus and talk about gender instead of focusing on the key issues such as new technology (such as drones, high resolution, and IT), capacity building, anti-corruption, work processes, privatization, taxation, 3D-models etc.? How can gender equality improve the situation regarding land? Is it not enough to invite half men and half women to the trainings and other activities? Use some fancy presented statistics to show half of the participants are women and everyone is happy? In this paper we argue it is not enough, not enough at all and even the wrong approach – using the approach where gender equality is something you measure to reach some goal without understanding and caring why. Gender equality is NOT about fancy statistics, not something you have to do to make others happy. It can be an extremely powerful tool if you realize that gender equality is the perfect tool to help you achieve progressive results. Unleashing women's power for the benefit of all of us. Imagine using 100%

of everyone's full potential instead of wasting at least half of the potential of half of us? The results would be extraordinary!

Working for different donors and donor funded projects in different parts of the world for several years has shown us, the authors, there is a lot remaining to be done in this field. This goes not only for developing countries but also for our Scandinavian countries. Since we have had gender inequality for so long (way too long) and not been at all successful enough we need to use another approach. Doing the same things over and over again and expecting different (better) results by measuring and sub-optimizing in different ways is not what we believe to be the most appropriate way. We believe shifting approach, to realizing that gender equality is a powerful tool that will enable us to reach progressive goals instead of being a goal (often forced upon a project without being really understood) itself, is the way to go.

The difference between having gender equality as a goal itself instead of using gender equality as a tool to achieve the results you need is significant. If you use the often outdated approach to setting goals (defining success using female/male percentages) for gender equality, and attempt to determine what to do to reach and measure these goals, the risk is you end up with an inaccurate view of obtained gender equality. We have noticed that in many cases striving to reach this type of goals will end up sub-optimizing and performing costly activities with no other results than e.g. 52% of the participants in the training where women. Therefore we assume, hope and try to convince others that we have in this project achieved gender equality. What are the results, what does this bring to mankind, to the society or the participants in the training? Too often nothing - no new jobs or opportunities, no improvement in land management and no strengthened position for the women involved. But yes, we have measured it, we have reached the goal we set out. Is this enough, can we go to bed satisfied and convinced we have contributed, is this even moving towards a greater good we all need? How about instead using gender equality as a tool to reach something we know is needed, such as an improved land management in a developing country? E.g. set the goal to register 90% of the properties (owners, boundaries etc.) in a peri-urban area using a well-functioning system to ensure the rightful owners (women and men) can keep their land, stay in their properties and share it with their children in the future. To do this in an efficient way we need to find, train and dedicate qualified staff. Since women are roughly half of the population and in many countries have a larger un-employment rate it means if we want the most qualified and appropriate persons for the job we need to find most of them among these women. It will not only enable the staff needed to reach the 90% registration rate we need, it will also contribute to a more equal employment rate. So, in this way we use gender equality to reach another goal, making use of this powerful tool. We unleash the power of women for the good of the society.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Nearly twenty years after the Beijing Conference on Women (September 1995), when the agenda for women's empowerment was established, still many obstacles remains to overcome regarding women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. The new Sustainable Development Goals puts gender equality in focus, both as a goal in itself but also as a driving force for democracy, sustainability, poverty reduction, stability and peace. Sweden and Norway are in many aspects internationally recognized as being a "top performer" when it comes to gender equality. For example the Global Gender Gap Index 2016 put Norway as number 3 and Sweden as number 4 out of 144 countries. One positive example is Rwanda, breaking into top five for the first time and closing 80% of its gender gap and doing very well in several areas, such as Economic Participation and Opportunity. Globally, 54% of working-age women take part in the in the formal economy, on average, as compared to 81% of men. To close this gap we believe improving the situation in the area of land management and administration can have a significant role. Having access to land increase the opportunities for access to credit. Moreover a more gender balanced access to land and real property (the home and platform for personal and social development) will have a positive impact on women's participation in the formal economy.

Despite the positive overall ranking there are areas where also leading countries are struggling. One example is the "violence against women ever experienced" (in the statistics for 2015) where Sweden is ranked 64 and Norway is ranked 24. This is, as we see it, a serious issue in Sweden and one milestone in Sweden is that men's violence against women must stop. We shall all, girls, men, boys and women have equal rights and opportunities to physical integrity.

Looking at the Global Gender Gap Index, 2016 has been a year with insufficient progress, as we see it. It is stated that "*68 countries have increased their overall gender gap score compared to last year, while 74 have seen it decrease*". For us it is not good enough – we need to do better!

This paper will elaborate on differences, positive experiences and possible tools and means to improve the situation especially in developing countries. What can we do, how can we contribute and what is needed to achieve actual hands on results that make a difference for the vulnerable person in the local community?

Using international statistics regarding gender equity, land management and financial development is one angle used to highlight the current situation and what can be achieved as well as what need to be addressed. Regarding the situation for owning property in Sweden the statistics at Lantmäteriet (from December 2015) show that women own 43,3% and men 56,7% of the privately owned properties. The

situation is similar in Norway where 54% of the apartments are owned by women but when it comes to agricultural land, actually 75% of the private agriculture properties are owned by men. The main reason for this difference is considered being due to traditional patterns; the farm was historically inherited by the oldest son, traditions that are changing thanks to changes in legislation but also due to general change in mindset and view of traditions. Also in Sweden men used to own more land than women but the situation in Sweden has changed during the last years and the main reason is somewhat unexpected; In 2008 the Swedish government introduced a tax deduction system to stimulate “house hold related services” (ROT/RUT in Swedish) and reduce the amount of illegal un-taxed work. The structure of this tax reduction, allowing only a maximum amount per home owner, resulted in a substantial increase of women registering ownership of their properties. The custom was for many to have the property registered in only the husband’s name, despite the fact that the wife had legal right to half of the property. To enable a higher tax reduction many families ended up registering this ownership (women) and thereby strengthening the women’s position and access to credit. This one example of how financial stimulation can have a positive effect on gender equality related to land and real property.

When it comes to gender and corruption we have not studied the correlation and but others have and our impression is that it in some cases can be related. In the land and property sector our experiences is that women tend to be in a weak position. Women are, in our experience, many times in a weaker financial situation and in positions where they can be threatened into paying bribes. On the other side, receiving bribes, the women are, as we have noticed, less active then men. If this is due to biological differences such as physical strength or other reasons is of course debatable. Unfortunately there have been reports on women ending up being forced to trade sexual favors for land, e.g. to keep the land there are legally entitled to they must in some situations perform sexual favors not to be kicked out. In the same situation a man could, having access to more funds, pay a bribe to keep the land. Not having the means to pay of the man the women is forced into unwanted sexual activities. Not saying corruption and bribes are in any way good, our experiences are anyhow that women are in less extent than men on the “receiving end” of corruption. Can it be that women are less inclined towards corruption? If so, would gender equality be a tool suitable to be used in the fight against corruption?

The general situation in too many countries with men having more power and access to decision making is also resulting in negative effects for women. This can for example be non-inclusion in discussions regarding transfer of land and properties, e.g. if a major investor is buying land from people in a village. It is a risk that women do not get the share they are entitled to, especially in context where the position for women is already weak. Not having access to the money paid put them in an even weaker position.

In the global challenge, striving towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, gender equity has the potential of being the most powerful tool of them all. Putting this in focus will contribute to securing land rights for equity, sustainability and resilience, all driving towards democracy, poverty reduction and peace spearheaded by efficient, inclusive and transparent modern land administration services, systems and organizations.

HOW TO APPROACH THE PROBLEM

Many organizations throughout the world do important work related to women's rights to land and gender equality. One example is the Landesa Rural Development Institute (<http://www.landesa.org/>) who identify and discuss several challenges such as the land laws and policies which in many countries at least hinder the women's access and rights to land. In other cases, where the legal framework is not formally hindering or denying women their rightful access to land, other obstacles such as lack of enforcement of the law, sex-discrimination and other factors are the problem. Often the only access to land for women is through a relationship with a man, e.g. father or husband putting the woman in a vulnerable situation being dependent on the man. Furthermore Landesa (and others) point at several benefits that can be the result of a more equal access to land, such as family health, educational situation for kids and reduction in domestic violence. Our experience from working internationally is that most of us, no matter where we come from, what we do for a living etc. believe in equal rights and that it will have a positive effect on so many things throughout society. Again this indicates we need to use another approach since the current way of doing things is not sufficient.

As stated in the Swedish National Report for Habitat III

(http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/9ba7657429e846abbb8aaf62bad721e2/swedish-national-report-habitat-iii_webb.pdf) gender equality a prioritized issue especially striving for a sustainable urban development. One area mentioned as important is public transportation, being used more by women than men. This implies improving public transportation will have a positive effect on gender equality and of course make it easier for everyone to get to work more efficiently. Lowering the risk of accidents, less time for transportation and less money spent on local transportation will enable more time, money and efforts to be spent on work, taking care of the household and improve the living conditions. Furthermore the work in Habitat III in several cases put the light on the importance of gender equality not only in rural but also urban areas.

In Sweden, gender mainstreaming is used as one main strategy to achieve gender equality. Doing so gives a wider view and perspective and implies that gender equality should not only be considered at the highest level of all organizations, where some of most important decisions are taken, but be considered at

all levels. To do this Swedish organizations, such as Lantmäteriet, need to systematically identify, analyze and take action when needed. In reality this means that anything that have an effect on individuals, be it employees or property owners, should be looked into from a gender perspective. What will the effects be, will men and women, girls and boys benefit equally?

The positive example of Rwanda is worth mentioning and as many of us already know the Government of Rwanda has pursued an ambitious land tenure reform program. In this program the gender inequality has been one of the focus areas. We believe this is one of the reasons Rwanda has been so successful and again we note that economic growth is related to gender equality. Is it so that this is another proof of the hypothesis that gender equality is a powerful tool for economic and social development? Can we use the positive experiences from Rwanda to use gender equality as a tool to fight poverty in other countries? We believe we can, instead of seeing gender equality as something we strive for and find different ways to measure we can change approach and use it to achieve other goals.

Working with strong, positive and hardworking organizations such as Rwanda's Department of Land and Mapping, (part of Rwanda Natural Resources Authority) we found that women, either individually or jointly, own most of the registered plots of land in the capital, Kigali. As informed by The Deputy Registrar of Land, Grace Nishimwe, The Land Tenure Registration has been successful in the gender perspective. Looking at the statistics for owners of privately owned land, from March 2016, we note that:

- 27% are made up of women
- 23% comprise men
- 50 % of the land is joint-persons co-ownership

Ms Grace Nishimwe, was quoted (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2014-06-28/92236/>) in the New Times saying, *“This shows the changes that have been implemented by national gender mainstreaming programme. Previously, land titles were registered in the husband's names only, and it was forbidden for a woman to own a plot of land. We women), applaud such great initiatives that make us feel worthy,”*

Furthermore we also see several other positive steps towards gender equality in Rwanda. For example the *Land Sub-Sector Strategic Plan 2013/14- 2017/18*, (dated October 2015, section 3.5 a. Gender) clearly describe the importance of strengthening the women's right to land. The existing Land Law, from 2005, gives equal rights to men and women in Rwanda. *“any discrimination either based on sex or origin in matters relating to ownership or possession of rights over the land is prohibited. The wife and the husband have equal rights over the land.”* Furthermore the Land Tenure Regularisation in Rwanda can be seen as a very modern, progressive and positive since it provides titles in the name of both husband and

wife, also identifying children as interested parties. At a high level the Land Tenure Regularisation provides a foundation contributing to extending women's statutory land rights. To ensure this foundation is used to build an equal society the process of land registration in Rwanda is participatory and community led. Understanding the local context and ensuring involvement from all stakeholders is of high importance particularly when it comes to the hands on processes of registration of rights related to land. In Rwanda both men and women are requested to be present in the process of land registration or land transactions. For couples who are legally married it is seen as especially important to ensure they are both registered as joint owners of the property with equal rights on land.

To continue this work and even improve the situation the *Land Sub-Sector Strategic Plan* is set out to focus on:

- Sustaining existing efforts and also strengthening women's ability to assert their land rights
- Promote gender related research
- Impact assessment of Land Tenure regularization program on gender

Our opinion is that often in land administration projects, gender equality is being used as a goal in itself, something that can be easily measured; resulting in inadequate activities and measures. In many cases switching perspective and using gender equality as a tool to achieve results, e.g. increased capacity within a government land administration organization enabling more transparent, efficient and reliable service to the citizens is a more appropriate way. The activities performed and measures taken using this approach can be completely different from the other approach. Generally it can be dangerous and contra-productive to generalize, simplify and only scratch the surface when it comes to planning activities and measuring results in the area of gender equity. In most cases a more professional equality analysis is needed to understand the local context and describe it to all stakeholders involved. When the major stakeholders appreciate and understand the local situation we are in a much better situation to look at what changes are needed what results can be achieved and how to efficiently contribute to the change needed.

The list below gives a few examples of what can be done using the approach seeing gender equity as a powerful tool to having an efficient land management, combatting climate change and reduce poverty.

- Instead of counting number of women/men employed in a land administration organization you can provide day care center for the children of all employees at a local office. This will give women more equal conditions and better opportunities to be an efficient full time employee. In many countries the women have the main responsibility for household and children, which in some cases hinder the professional career for the individual, and is at the same time an obstacle for the sustainable development of the organizations. Giving women access to such assistance and thereby strengthening their ability to

focus on work will not only empower the women but also provide a better basis for a sustainable land administration organization providing improved service to all stakeholders.

- Use donor funds for registration of ownership if “all” owners are registered instead of just counting number of properties registered. This will contribute to strengthening the position of vulnerable people by formalizing their rights to assets (such as land and property) and removing some hinders for access to credit. The complex situation for a poor country where an efficient land administration requires huge financial investments and trying to fund these investments by imposing costs to poor property owners can backfire. The people may try saving money by not registering their land or transfer of rights because it comes with a cost. This will however probably result in a weak situation for them and the person buying their property as well as a weak land administration organization. Since women are often in a more vulnerable situation as it already is they will be even more exposed in such situation. The risk is that they end up not having their land formally registered giving them low security and no access to credits using the property as collateral. If we can turn this around and give access to land for women they will have improved opportunities to access funds and to an increased extent a more stable, secure and reliable situation. If you have a stable home, a reliable source of income and formal ownership of your real property we are convinced this will reflect in so many ways.

- Putting young women in charge of modern technology as operators, trainers and leaders instead of counting e.g. number of devices within an organization. This will not only avail more technically skilled individuals (which is often a lack of capacity), it will also empower the women and put them in a better situation socially and professionally as well as contributing to changing the traditional roles. We know from our work that new technology is a powerful tool not only to solve problems, make business and services more efficient but also to empower the individuals and organizations having control of and the ability to master the technology. We have seen so many examples where people who master the technology, be it software, GPS-equipment or something else, gain a strong position not only at work but also in society, at home and in the private life.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a need for paradigm shift in logic and reasoning. What we are doing now is not good enough – we need to change. The change is needed even if we cannot be sure the alternative approach is the best way to go. Our view is that we see much of the same situation and problems today as we did 15 years ago. Since the way we are doing things now isn't giving us the results we need we must switch to something we believe in.

One of our beliefs is that what happens at home, in the private life, reflects on how we act outside, in the official life - be it work, school or elsewhere. If you find comfort, safety and stability in your home, in your property on your land, you will be more willing to change the world outside. You can argue that a confident person dare to change whilst an insecure person are afraid of the unknown (changes) and hold on to what is familiar, no matter if it is good or bad. But why does the change move so slow in this area, why can we not change and progress in the area of gender equality in the same pace as e.g. technical development, social media etc.? The world is in so many areas exploding but we remain failing to create the same opportunities for all and gender equality is one of the areas we are failing in. Why is this? Do we need to be better at critical thinking? DO we need to realize we are all equals?

We need a new approach! We all need to see gender equality as a powerful tool to reach other goals. Doing this we are convinced we will have “nice number” to show and enormous results will be achieved in so many areas. Unleash the power of women for the good of humanity!