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Encouraging Women's Land Right and Promoting Female Land Professionals: A
Breakthrough Using a Twin-Track Approach to Enhancing Land Governance

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Abstract

In Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State, Second Level Land Certificates (SLLC) have been issued to 10,634 households on 36,590 parcels. Proportionally, 63.9%, 21.5% and 14.5% of the certified households are married couples, female-headed and male-headed households, respectively. As married couples are registered with equal rights on their joint holding, females with recognized land rights are much higher than males. This result is a significant breakthrough in view of the challenges.

In total, 154 technicians are trained on rural cadaster and land registration. Proportionally, 28.6% of the graduates are female. Yearly percentage of female graduates varies from 26.3% to 45.5%. In 2019, there are 219 trainees attending courses on rural cadaster and land registration; of which 37% are female trainees. The female trainees at different levels vary from 30% to 51.9%. Proportionally, there are more female trainees in the current attendees than graduated ones. This breakthrough using a twin track approach enhances land governance and contributes to SDGs goals, targets and indicators.

Breakthrough, Equal rights, Female-headed, Male-headed, Married couples

1. Introduction

The Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia projected that in 2017 the country's population would reach 94.4 million inhabitants¹ with males (50.2%) slightly outnumbering females (49.8). Looking into the rural population, the distribution would be about the same. Rural population projection reach 75.3 million; of which 37.9 million (50.3%) are males and 37.4 million (49.7%) females. The Ethiopian government recognizes that bringing women on board in the development process is key to attain an inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic and social growth. Women's empowerment is an essential component in any development policy. The Ethiopian government advocates strongly that the share of women participants in any activity should be at least 25%. In the current ministerial positions of the country, women occupy 50% of the posts. At the lower level, specifically in the rural traditional societies, the case is different.

In many developing countries, rural women work nearly in all stages of the farming cycle to ensure their households' livelihood needs even if they do not have land rights. Deeply ingrained cultural norms have made these practices acceptable – part of the everyday life for women and girls. Challenging them by granting tenure security to women and girls is not an easy task. Yet it is also recognized in Ethiopia that securing women's land tenure enhances their position within the household, enables them to take part in intra-household decision making, and contributes to improving household food security and economy as well as in reducing poverty. Recognizing the land rights of women will ensure that the land rights of young girls will be also be respected and protected. This is the transformation that the Government of Ethiopia in collaboration with donor-funded projects, such as REILA, is steadfastly working on.

This paper will present early outcomes of women's empowerment in the rural cadaster and land registration work in Benshangul Gumuz regional state and the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program. It will particularly examine how female TVET graduates have been integrated into the rural land sector and how they have contributed to the delivery of services particularly in securing the land rights of women.

2. Methodology

Methodology employed in this assessment is mainly review of relevant documents and reports. Policy and legal tools reviewed to get the extent of considerations in empowering women, specifically empowering

¹ Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, projection made for the year 2017

women for equal land right with men. Statistical data, revealing women land right registration, from REILA project reports are the main data used and presented. Trainees' data on rural cadaster and land registration is obtained from the Assosa Agricultural Technical, Vocational Education Training (TVET) College. A Rapid assessment was conducted to examine the integration of TVET graduates into the regional land sector. Descriptive statistical method was used to analyze the data and discuss the result.

3. Result and discussion

3.1. Available policy and legal tools

Cognizant to the importance of women empowerment, Ethiopia is making progress in establishing policy and legal instruments to ascertain women's land right. The Ethiopian constitution endorsed in 1994, article 35 and sub article 7, states that women have the right to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer property. In particular, they have equal rights with men with respect to use, transfer, administration and control of land. They shall also enjoy equal treatment in the inheritance of property. Federal proclamation, proclamation 456/2005 article 5.1.c stipulates that women who want to engage in agriculture shall have the right to get and use rural land. The Proclamation 85/2010 of the Benishangul-Gumuz region grants women land right in article 6 (C) and article 8(6), stipulating that "Spouses shall obtain land holding certificate jointly for their common holdings". The land law provides inheritance rights of land for both sons and daughters. The new proclamation of the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, proclamation 152/2018, article 5.2 affirms that any person living in the regional state or any farmer reserves equal right to get land without partiality on sex or gender. The law strengthen joint holding of spouses.

3.2. The challenge

When the first phase of the REILA project initiated and implementation launched, institutional arrangement was limited to regional bureau level. Lower levels structures, which include Zonal and woreda levels, were developed side by side with project implementation. Putting in place the necessary structures was not the only shortfall; finding professionally trained human resource in diversified land related subjects was additional problem. This challenge was managed by providing induction and in-house training by project staffs for newly recruited government employee coming from different discipline. Providing Public Information and Awareness creation was other priority managed side by side with stretching the organizational structure down to the woreda level and technical capacity building.

The challenges were multifaceted. The Socio-economic baseline study conducted in 2012 to set direction for REILA phase one project implementation came up with facts that are not corresponding with the laws presented above. The study revealed that women in Gumuz and Berta communities are not allowed to access land by their own while the husband is still alive. The father in the family is the one who has land use right. According to the Gumuz tradition, if the husband die, the land use right can be transferred to the wife. If both parents die, the elder son is eligible to inherit the land. Daughters are not entitled to inherit land use right. In Berta community, land right is similar to that of the Gumuz community. This traditional norm of tracing family relationship through the father pushes away the female from land tenure right and to own other production resources. Kalkidan Bekele, 2007, concluded that Gumuz women right to control and administer resources is limited to stored grains.

The cultural influence made the women to believe that the system that denied them land right is a perfect system and there is no need to change it. Yehuala Tamir, 2017, found out that, out of 338 male and female respondents interviewed, 92.3% were not in favor of equal land right between men and women. When respondents were disaggregated by gender, out of 94 female respondents interviewed, 89 of them (94.68%) disagree on equal rights of male and female on land tenure right.

After detail analysis and synthesis, the baseline study presented above concluded that state rules are not applied in land administration in Benishangul Gumuz; traditional rules applied and recommended that the land registration work in kebeles must be preceded by an intensive awareness campaign to make possible a shift to state land administration rule.

3.3. Breakthrough

Rural cadaster and land registration in Benishangul-Gumuz region started from scratch. By the time the project started, there was no sufficiently developed organizational structure reaching down to the woreda and kebele levels and there were no professionally trained land experts. On top of these, people were unaware about the importance of cadaster and land registration, as explained in the challenge section. The project designed two parallel approaches to realistically address the problems by using and enhancing existing government structures and to make the break through. The two approaches were 1) properly designed Public Information and Awareness creation (PIA) campaign and 2) establishing and running a Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program. The PIA campaign is done in the form of face to face communication and discussion with targeted groups, information dissemination through print media, radio programs designed, organized and broadcasted in different local languages and

information disseminated through key informants in the kebele. For the decision makers, especially government personnel, printed media is used in the form of desk calendars with key messages on the importance of supporting land registration, brochures and articles in the regional newspapers.

The TVET program on rural cadaster and land registration was designed to cover from Level II to Level IV following the country's TVET qualification framework. Initially, it was started to produce rural cadaster and registration technicians at Level III. For this level, Occupational Standard (OS) and curriculum designed and endorsed by the ministry of agriculture and registered by the Federal TVET Agency. After two years of implementation and based on demand, Level II and Level IV were included into the training program.

3.4. Rural population in target area

The Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia projected an increase in the country's rural population in 2017. Projected rural population of the five REILA project woredas in 2017 was 253,752, (Table 1). Using an average household size of 4.41, the number of rural households is estimated to be 57,540. Till the end of 2018, total registered rural landholders are 10,634, (Table 2). This shows that 18.5% of the rural households have received land administration service.

Table 1. Projected rural population

Rural population of the REILA project woredas in 2017					
Zone	Woreda	Male	Female	Total	Estimated household ²
Metekel	Bulen	24,773	23,274	48,047	10,895
	Pawe	22,513	21,212	43,725	9,915
Assosa	Assosa	49,825	48,675	98,500	22,335
	Bambasi	24,654	24,081	48,735	11,051
Kamashi	Kamashi	7,469	7,276	14,745	3,344
Total		129,234	124,518	253,752	57,540

3.5. Rural cadaster and land registration

Based on the existing legal frameworks and socio-economic baseline study recommendation, the Responsible and Innovative Land Administration (REILA) project has been assisting the Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State on rural cadaster and land registration since 2011. Accordingly, Second Level Land Certificate (SLLC) were issued to 10,634 households on 36,590 parcels, (Table 2).

² Estimated from the Central Statistical Agency population projection for the year 2017

Proportionally, 63.9%, 21.5% and 14.5% of the certified households are married couples, female-headed and male-headed households respectively. As married couples are registered with equal rights on their joint holding, females with recognized land rights are much higher than males. Taking together the female spouses in the joint registration category, which is 63.9%, and female headed category, which is 21.5%, the total women with recognized land rights is 85.4% from the households which have certificates of their landholding. This is considerably high and indicates a positive outcome of the two approaches adopted by the project: strong public information and awareness and human resource capacity building through staff training and the TVET program.

Table 2. Registered land holders and parcels³

Wereda	Married		Female Headed		Male headed		Total household	Total parcels
	# of HHs	Parcel	# of HHs	Parcel	# of HHs	Parcel		
Bambasi	2,251	8,543	683	2,141	453	1,406	3,387	12,090
AssosA	1,085	6,127	417	1,827	337	1,231	1,839	9,185
kamashi	84	142	5	44	50	86	139	272
Pawe	2,002	7,176	892	2,712	574	1,641	3,468	11,529
Bullen	1,374	2,706	294	633	133	175	1,801	3,514
Total	6,796	24,694	2,291	7,357	1,547	4,539	10,634	36,590
Percent	63.9		21.5		14.5		100	

3.6. TVET program

The Bureau of Environment, Forest, Land Administration and Use in Benishangul-Gumuz region seeks to improve the delivery of services to its rural population. One of its strategies is to increase the number of rural land experts at the woreda⁴ and kebele⁵ levels. When the REILA project started in 2011, there were no rural land experts assigned at the woreda and kebele levels. The regional government and the project committed to gradually increase the number of professionals in the sector. The regional government and the REILA project initiated and implemented a TVET program on Rural Cadaster and Land Registration in the Assosa Agricultural TVET College.

Broadly, the curriculum covers surveying, mapping, tenure registration, conflict management, land use, GIS and data management. Structured set of classroom lectures accompanied by practical training are offered. More hours are allocated for practical trainings using appropriate tools. REILA's social scientists also provide lectures to the trainees, focusing on gender issues and land certification based on the REILA experience and PIA strategy.

³ Compiled from the REILA project reports

⁴ Woreda is equivalent to district

⁵ Kebele is the lowest level of political administration

Through the TVET program 154 technicians have been trained on rural cadaster and land registration, (Table 3). Proportionally, 28.6% of the graduates are female. Yearly percentage of female graduates varies from 26.3% to 45.5%. Currently, in 2018-2019, there are 219 trainees attending courses on rural cadaster and land registration, (Table 4). Female trainees comprises about 37%. The female trainees at different levels vary from 30% to 51.9%. Proportionally, there are more female trainees than graduated ones. This indicates that there is big potential for increased female land professional in the land sector of Benshangul Gumuz regional state in the immediate future.

A rapid assessment was conducted in January 2019 to find out integration of the graduates into the land sector. In total 27 technicians were interviewed; 16 of who were females. They qualified to join the training program after passing the entrance exam set by the woreda land office. After they completed the training they were employed and assigned at the kebele level as land administration experts. Employment opportunity is provided equally for female and male graduates. Some of them were assigned at the woreda level where there is a serious shortage of trained human resources. The respondents have been working for more than a year. This implies the commitment of the woreda administration to improve the delivery of services to the rural population by creating positions and allocate budget for rural land experts. Given the number of technicians that are already employed, this also indicates graduates' interest to work in the sector and serve their region.

Table 3. Graduated technicians from the TVET program⁶

Graduation year	Male		Female		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
2015	6	54.5	5	45.5	11
2016	0	0	0	0	0
2017	45	71.4	18	28.6	63
2018	59	73.7	21	26.3	80
Total	110	71.4	44	28.6	154

Table 4. Students attending in the TVET program⁷

Levels	Male		Female		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
II	29	61.7	18	38.3	47
III	25	48.1	27	51.9	52
IV	84	70	36	30	120
Total	138	63	81	37	219

⁶ Compiled from Assosa Agricultural TVET reports

⁷ Compiled from Assosa Agricultural TVET reports

3.7. Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The UN agenda for 2030, adopted in 2015, put right to land and access to land at the center of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognizing importance of access and tenure security on land holding to alleviate poverty and to enhance food security (anonymous 2018). The SDGs put in a very specific terms the significance of women's empowerment and securing their land rights to move forward with vibrant rural economy and prosperity. Practitioners, government officials and other stakeholders must understand local needs in order to localize the 2030 Agenda. Fifteen SDG indicators aim to achieve progress in the land sector, through the application of the continuum of land rights and tenure security paradigm, spanning across individual and communal rights to land and physical property, land governance and administration. Furthermore, International Land Coalition (ILC) says that land right is the main factor for the successfulness of SDGs. The SDG framework explicitly includes three sex-disaggregated indicators which form the basis of women related interventions, specifically, these indicators state the following:

- 1.4.2: Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure;
- 5.a.1: (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure; and
- 5.a.2: Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control

The progress made by REILA and the Bureau in addressing the challenges described earlier in this paper provides a solid foundation to attain the SDGs. Public awareness alone would have been insufficient to make progress in securing land rights especially of women and girls. For sustainability, improved delivery of land administration services through the deployment of trained young land experts, including women, in the rural areas is vital to sustain earlier achievements. The breakthrough achieved through twin track approach to enhance land governance is apparent fact that can contribute to achievements of the SDGs.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Second Level Land Certificate (SLLC) is issued to 10,634 households on 36,590 parcels. Proportionally, 63.9%, 21.5% and 14.5% of the certified households are married couples, female-headed and male-headed households respectively. As married couples are registered with equal rights on their joint holding, females with recognized land rights are much higher than males. Taking together the wives in the joint registration category, which is 63.9%, and female headed category, which is 21.5%, the total women with recognized land rights is 85.4% from the certified households. Considering the challenges in the area, such great achievement is commendable. Strengthening and expanding this experience to other areas of the region can be achieved with assignment of technicians from the TVET program.

The project and the regional government anticipate that the increase of female graduates from the TVET program will have a significant positive impact in service provision in the rural land sector of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state. In a traditional society, like Gumuz and Berta in Benishangul-Gumuz regional state where customary land right is still practiced dominantly due to the fact that higher level policy statements and legal frameworks are not implemented as they should be implemented at grass-root level, having technicians that walk and work at village level is very important.

In Berta and Gumuz society, women are heavily involved in agricultural activities. REILA and the Bureau have made a significant headway in securing the land rights of women and girls in the project areas. However, outside the project area where rural cadaster and land registration is yet to be done, the women do not own the land they cultivate and produce food for the family. They do not have decision making power on how to use the land and what to produce. Formally recognizing them as owners and co-owner is the first step to promote an inclusive social and economic development in the rural areas of Benishangul-Gumuz region. REILA and the regional Bureau have laid the foundation for strengthening land administration in rural Ethiopia. This paper described a twin-track approach supporting land administration by increasing public awareness on the importance of land registration and securing the land rights of women and girls and in building institutional and human resource capacity to deliver series to the rural population.

Many scholars believe that there is direct relationship between making women land owners, economic empowerment, food security and poverty reduction. Land is also a social asset that is crucial for cultural identity, political power and participation in decision making. Women's ownership of property extends their capabilities, expands their negotiating power, and enhances their ability to address vulnerability. It is

also serves as a critical factor of social protection against gender-based violence. Women's equal right to land is also a human rights issue. The graduates from the TVET program especially female graduates, as they will be assigned at kebele level, will be an advocate for women's land right. As the REILA project will continue up to the 2021, a lot will be achieved together with the regional land bureau. The exercise and achievements recorded will contribute to achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 1, target 1.4 and indicator 14.2. It will also contribute to goal 5, target 5.a and indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2. Achievement statistics are regularly reported to the national statistics through the ministry of Agriculture. As countries report achievements to the international monitoring system, achievements reported in this paper will be part of the country's report. However, conducting impact evaluation is an immediate need to be performed.

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