Exploring Gender-Biased Customary Land Tenure in Ghana

RESULTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS WITH MEN AND WOMEN SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN THE NORTHERN REGION

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Households Cultivating Soy in Ghana’s Northern Region

Ghana’s Northern Region

- 74% of adults engage in agricultural production – primarily as small-scale farmers\(^1\)
- 22% poverty rate\(^2\)
- 31% moderate-to-severe hunger rate\(^2\)
- 39% stunting rate among children 0-59 months\(^2\)
Theory

- Ostrom’s new-institutional economics
- **Institutional arrangements:** What explains cooperation despite rational behavior?
- Hierarchical governance structures create adverse investment incentives
- **Disincentives:** Can reduce opportunities for economic and political development
Customary Land Tenure

- **Access to land:**
  - “Right to enter upon and use land”\(^7\)

- **Control over land:**
  - Ability to make decisions in regards to land\(^7\)
  - Ability to transfer land titles\(^7\)

- **Women farmers** have secondary access and little control over land\(^7,17\)
Ghana’s Land Tenure System I

- Evolution of customary land tenure systems towards *individualized rights*\(^{8-15}\)
- **Legal framework:** plural land tenure system
- **Predominant form:** customary land tenure
- ~80% of land own by traditional communities\(^{17}\)
## Ghana’s Land Tenure System II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land ownership</th>
<th>Ghana 8%</th>
<th>Northern Region 17%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owned by men</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned by women</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jointly owned</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods

- Gender Equity & Land Tenure Focus Groups
  - **Goal**: explore gender inequality in customary land tenure systems
  - Six focus groups among separate groups of men and women soybean farmers in Northern Ghana (N=72)
  - Recordings and notes analyzed by lead author
Results: Access & Control of Land I

- Inheritance from father to son is typical
- Sons take over the land after their father retires
- No transfer of plots to daughters – who marry out of their natal village
“so your father will know that you are of age to farm, then he would give you a piece of land and then tells you: use this land to farm.” (Male, Chereponi District)

“How the plots are passed on to the next generation? After dying they pass to the son, not the daughter(s)” (Female, Tolon District)

“When your son is of age and he is farming, you the man, you give your land to him to farm and then you will be resting.” (Male, Chereponi District)
Results: Access & Control of Land II

- Local male elders are crucial to land assignment
- Men represent the entire household:
  - Exercise bargaining power for plots within and outside village
- Women’s access to land is determined by marriage
  - Have limited ability to change/expand their plots
“Often the parent does not have the land but then they can come to the chief to ask for a small portion to give it to the son.”  
(Female, Saboba District)

“As long as she farms,” a woman’s plot access is relatively secure  
(Male, Saboba District)

“The land belongs to her”  
(Female, Chereponi District)

“Her plot can be shifted – just shifted – for some comparable piece of land”  
(Male, Chereponi District)

“they give it to the wife so they let rest the land or use it to grow a different type of crop. ”  
(Female, Chereponi District)
Results: Gendered Farming Challenges

- Women farmers have less access to:
  - Agricultural knowledge, technical trainings
Results: Gendered Farming Challenges

- Women farmers have less access to:
  - Agricultural knowledge, technical trainings
  - Agricultural inputs
  - Cash income
  - Fertile land

- Childcare and household duties: complicate their farming activities

- Such challenges impact women farmers’ agricultural productivity
Results: Soybean Farming Challenges

- Men and women farmers’ challenges include:
  - **Inoculant**: difficult to access
  - **Planting**: difficult to sow in rows
  - **Harvesting**: gloves are needed
  - **Threshing**: lack of mechanical threshers
    - Hand threshing is labor intensive
    - Can damage soybean seeds, introduce debris
“Soy crops can be profitable and the yield is good” (Female, Tolon District)

“If the land is fertile, once you plowed it you can get really good yield. If the land is not fertile, then it comes the challenge. ” (Female, Saboba District)

“And if you cannot get the inoculum, it can be even harder, you are not harvesting enough. ” (Female, Saboba District)

“Harvesting is more difficult, especially with children. ” (Female, Tolon District)
Design, fabrication and evaluation of soybean thresher for smallholder farmers in Ghana

Gabriel Abdulai, Kerry Clark, Clifford Mongler, Gordon Ellison
University of Missouri

Introduction
Soybean is an important grain crop which contributes to soil fertility and improved nutrition. The production of this crop in Ghana is faced with many challenges during planting, harvesting and threshing. Threshing of soybeans is accomplished manually by flogging (photo below). This results in poor threshing and quality of seeds. Manual threshing and harvesting results in 15% losses in crops in Ghana (Silva, 1998).

Although threshers are available in Ghana, they are usually imported from India and China. Imports are typically expensive, too large and heavy for farmers that do not own tractors, and are difficult to repair and find parts for.

This study focuses on the design, fabrication and evaluation of mechanical threshers for smallholder farmers in Ghana. The goal was to produce a thresher that is small, durable and affordable enough to be purchased and used by groups of female farmers.

Objectives
- Design and fabricate both an engine-powered and bicycle-powered thresher.
- Evaluate the performance of the thresher.
- Design a training manual to teach this technology to local blacksmiths in Ghana and other parts of Africa using this design as a prototype.
- Conduct blacksmith training in Africa to teach thresher design and fabrication.

Materials and Methods
A training was conducted in August 2016 for 12 Ghanaian welders at the Tamale Implement Factory by Gabriel Abdulai and the Soybean Innovation Lab. Three threshers were produced and distributed to three rural communities for field testing. A smallholder thresher was also fabricated at the metal shop of the Agricultural Systems Management Department at the University of Missouri. The thresher was evaluated by running the threshing drum at a set speed and feeding 1 kg of soybeans to evaluate its performance.

Results and Discussion
Initial results from testing the thresher show excellent threshing efficiency and cleaning efficiency (100% and 94.81%). They were, however, high losses which could have been associated with low grain moisture content (7.5%) and the type of concave (perforated type) used in the test.

Currently, issues relating to losses in terms of broken seeds and percentage of seed blown out are being worked on by modifying the concave, exit chute, and air blower exit to enhance the crop performance.

Top left photo: Prototype thresher built at M.U in 2017. Top right, finished thresher in Ghana. Lower right, three threshers built during 2016 fabrication training led by Gabriel Abdulai. Photo below: prototype bike-powered thresher built at blacksmith training in Ghana in August 2016. Threshing drum and concave below top right and bottom right.

Funding

Reference
Conclusion I

- General consensus: customary land tenure systems impact women’s agricultural decision making

- Land tenure insecurity may inhibit women farmers’:
  - Economic incentive to invest in their plots
  - Ability to secure loans for inputs or other economic development activities
Conclusion II

- **Lack of gendered** perspective can perpetuate women’s exclusion from equitable land rights

- Women farmers have less incentive to invest in their plots when land can be taken without recourse

- Future directions: How does polygamy impact women’s land tenure security?
REFERENCES

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