

Helpdesk Research Report: Girls' Access to Natural Resources

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Query: Identify a selection of key recent (2005-2011) studies looking at the link between girls' access to natural resources and empowerment in the context of rural poverty

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1. Overview

This report looks at girls' access to natural resources and how this contributes to their empowerment. As girls' roles in the household are closely linked to women's, mainly domestic roles, this report looks in particular at resources associated with household tasks, including water, agricultural land and labour. Literature on girls' access to other natural resources appears extremely limited.

The report has a focus on rural adolescent girls. Adolescence is a time of transition and vulnerability for girls. High drop-out rates from school, poor quality and inappropriate education, early and forced marriage, early pregnancy, exposure to violence and high maternal mortality are all risks encountered for adolescent girls. This is also the time where gender roles for girls become more entrenched and girls may increasingly become limited to the domestic sphere.

Girls' labour and access to natural resources

Adolescent girls are often involved in agricultural or domestic labour. Lack of data on non-economic activities makes it difficult to ascertain how much time girls spend such activities, but research indicates that girls' labour burden continues to be higher than that of boys (de Lange 2009).

Labour that impacts on girls' school attendance impairs their long-term livelihood prospects, which in turn perpetuates the cycle of poverty and exploitation from one generation of women to the next.

Girls' work, which often includes child care, collecting water, washing clothes, sweeping and subsistence farming, is often invisible and is typically not given the same value as work performed by

boys (Murray and Hurst 2009). In addition girls often face a double burden of domestic work on top of agricultural work.

Easy access to resources required for everyday household tasks, such as water and firewood, is likely to reduce girls' labour burden (Assad 2010; Fisher 2006). Girls are likely to be impacted negatively by the effects of climate change, such as draught or flooding, which might require them to spend more time fetching water or walking further to gather firewood (Plan 2011). Research also indicates that easy access to water reduces girls' vulnerability to violence, as it prevents them from having to walk to remote and dangerous places to fetch water (Fisher 2006).

In addition, poor access to sanitation facilities such as latrines and washbasins reduce adolescent girls' ability to attend school, especially when menstruating (Fehr 2010; Fisher 2006).

Girls' asset ownership

There is limited research available specifically on girls' asset ownership and inheritance rights, though it may be assumed that they are closely linked to women's rights and ownership. Girls' inheritance rights (where they exist) are often not realised: relatives often grab land or property, leaving girls vulnerable to poverty or forced labour (Rose 2006).

In Ghana, however, increased reliance on women's labour in cocoa fields has increased women's inheritance rights and control over land and improved educational attainment among girls. There is thus some indication that where women's labour increases in 'value', the asset ownership and empowerment of women and girls are enhanced (Quisumbing et al, 2004).

This report is to be read in conjunction with the prior Helpdesk Research Report on Women's Control of Productive Natural Resources (12/08/2011).

2. Natural resources and girls' labour burden

Girls' labour in the agricultural sector

de Lange, A., 2009, 'Gender Dimensions of Rural Child Labour in Africa', Paper presented at the FAO-IFAD-ILO Workshop on Gaps, Trends and Current Research in Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: Differentiated Pathways Out of Poverty, Rome, 31 March - 2 April 2009

http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/Papers/17_March/Delange_final.doc_12_may.pdf

This report provides information on key issues of the gender dimensions of rural child labour in Africa, with a particular focus on Ghana. It highlights the exclusion of non-economic activities (such as household chores and child care for siblings) from most child labour surveys to date as a major constraint to any quantitative, gendered, analysis of child labour. This results in most cases in an underestimation of the incidence of girl child labour.

Most child labour in Africa consists of unpaid family work. In rural areas, most estimates indicate that over 90% of children's work is in their parents' farms, fishing enterprises or households.

Worldwide there are more boys than girls working in agriculture. While boys and girls between 6 and 9 years do more or less the same tasks in the field, the work of older children increasingly take on the tasks that are typical for the adults of their gender. Adolescent girls in Africa are therefore more likely to be involved in the local food crop farming rather than crops for export.

There is a lack of quantitative data available on the labour divisions within subsectors in Africa, such as fisheries. Some research such as the Ghana Child Labour Survey, however, shows that almost seven times more boys than girls are estimated to work in fishing, though it remain unclear whether this number also includes the processing activities in the fisheries sector, such as drying and frying (usually done by females). Girls in Ghana are also involved in fish processing and trading, often in combination with household chores and sometimes farming.

Cattle herding is another activity typically done by boys, and only exceptionally by adult men, women or girls.

Overall, available data suggest that in rural areas, boys appear to spend more time on agricultural activities but that girls spend more time working than boys. Girls' longer working hours suggest that work affects the education of girls more than that of boys, in terms of non-enrolment and drop-out.

Children (boys and girls) do overall more 'women's tasks' than men's and their work is often assigned by women. The author therefore argues that unequal rural labour distributions between adults can contribute to the demand for household child labour. However, this also means that interventions aimed at reducing rural child labour must consider the possible impact on women's workload.

Murray, U. and Hurst, P., 2009, 'Mainstreaming Responses for Improvement of the Girl Child in Agriculture' Paper presented at the FAO-IFAD-ILO Workshop on Gaps, Trends and Current Research in Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: Differentiated Pathways Out of Poverty, Rome, 31 March - 2 April 2009

http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/Papers/20_March/Murray_Final.pdf

This report looks at the role of girls in the agricultural sector. There are indications that the agricultural workforce is being increasingly feminised with self-employed women farmers, waged agricultural women workers and girl child labourers. Despite this, research focussed on girl child labour in agriculture is limited. In addition, girls face a double burden of domestic work on top of agricultural work. Due to work commitments (in agriculture and in the domestic sphere) fewer opportunities for obtaining an education exist for many girls despite the importance of investing in the education of girls for equity and efficiency reasons. Educating girls has enormous repercussions for the future prosperity of families and societies. Leaving school prematurely impairs girls' future job opportunities and long-term livelihood prospects, which in turn perpetuates the cycle of poverty and exploitation from one generation of women to the next.

Rural girls face a number of challenges in continuing their education, including the following:

- They are less likely to live close to a school and the route to the school may be considered dangerous for girls.
- They may face traditional attitudes in some cultures, which do not allow girls to continue schooling after puberty.

- They may experience gender based discrimination in school (as well as ethnic or religious discrimination).
- The school calendar may be incompatible with agricultural work.
- Combining school attendance with agricultural work and domestic responsibilities (including cooking, washing, fetching firewood and water, and childcare), may impact on girls' schooling both in terms of quality and leaving prematurely.

The article also provides case studies of the extent and conditions of girl child labour in selected agricultural commodities, including cotton, coffee and tea.

Broadening the training offered to adolescent girls to complement agricultural work is important, as is ensuring that older boys opt for agricultural related skills training. Without training, especially in agri-market oriented alternatives, it will be difficult to build a new generation of farmers and rural workers who can increase local agricultural productivity and profitability.

Girls' access to water

Fisher, J., 2006, 'For Her It's the Big Issue: Putting Women at the Centre of Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene: Evidence Report', Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council
http://www.unwater.org/downloads/EvidenceReport_eng.pdf

This report is a collection of evidence and brief examples highlighting the effect and benefits of placing women at the core of planning, implementation and operations of WASH programmes. It highlights links between women's empowerment and the improvement of water supply, sanitation facilities and hygiene practice.

The report shows how taking women's needs and preferences into account in WASH programmes has resulted in:

- 'an increase in attendance and a decrease in drop-out rates from school of young women, due to the provision of separate and adequate sanitation facilities
- an increase in girls' level of education and literacy rates since easier access to water supply and less time spent caring for sick family members allow them to spend more time at school
- reductions in child mortality and maternal morbidity and mortality as a result of appropriate access to water supply, sanitation facilities and improved hygiene during child birth
- improved health for women and girls who no longer have to delay defecation and urination
- increased privacy and dignity for girls and women particularly when symptoms associated with menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth can be managed discreetly
- less physical injury from constant lifting and carrying heavy loads of water
- less harassment or risk of sexual assault and increased safety as women and girls do not have to go to remote and dangerous places to defecate or to fetch water during the hours of darkness (p. 22)

Fehr, A., 2010, 'Summary Report for CARE Ethiopia: Stress, Menstruation and School Attendance: Effects of Water Access Among Adolescent Girls in South Gondar, Ethiopia', Emory University and CARE Ethiopia
http://water.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/CARE_A.Fehr_REPORT.pdf

This report looks at the social and emotional effects on girls of having poor access to proper water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). This is an area where there is currently very little research. The author argues that '[u]nderstanding the degree to which WASH may affect stress and emotional well being and social relationships might assist development organizations in better addressing the holistic needs of their beneficiaries' (p. 3).

The research was carried out through a survey administered to 156 girls as well as a number of focus group discussions in South Gondar, Ethiopia. The survey revealed that out of the 156 girls surveyed, only three were not involved in the collection of their family's water supply. Sixty-four percent of the respondents were the primary person responsible for collecting their family's water, with the remaining respondents revealing that there were other women/girls in the family that collected water.

With school-age girls being so prominent in collecting water for the family's needs, it is important to consider the distance to the primary water source and consequently how much time is spent on this activity. The survey revealed that the distance travelled was often different for the rainy and dry seasons.

Distance to the primary water source was measured in the amount of time spent travelling for the round trip to the source and back. This distance varied greatly among the respondents. As a result of the time spent collecting water, 38% of girls involved in water collection had been late for school in the last 30 days. Of these respondents, 35% said this was a 'large problem'.

The study also looked at the hygiene situation at the schools. A large proportion of respondents stated that, for various reasons, they did not feel comfortable using the latrines at school and that there was no washbasin present to wash their hands at school. This was a particular problem for girls who menstruated and 90% said that their school did not have a place to adequately maintain hygiene while menstruating.

The report concludes that WASH-related issues are therefore a cause of stress and barrier to attending school for adolescent girls. However, the report acknowledges that WASH-issues are just one of many other causes of stress and barriers to education facing girls in South Gondar, Ethiopia.

O'Reilly, K., 2011, "They Are Not of This House": The Gendered Cost of Water's Commodification', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 30, XLVI (18):49-55.

http://www.waterworld.com/index/display/news_display/1410397126.html

This report looks at the gendered impact of a project on clean drinking water supply in rural Rajasthan, India. In this project, community participation involved villagers beginning to pay for water and maintaining the system inside village boundaries. However, in some villages it was decided that households did not need to pay for the drinking water for girls. Villagers justified this by arguing that girls are not household members until they join their husbands' family, therefore, should not be counted as water consumers before they are married.

The traditional system of water payment used in the villages studied, divided the cost of water consumed by the total number of water consumers (people and livestock) in the village, giving a unit price. Each household pays the unit price multiplied by its number of members and livestock. In most villages, one animal counted as one person. However, out of the 43 villages receiving project water,

10 villages did not charge girls for water. The researcher could find no obvious similarities among villages that chose not to charge girls, nor any clear dissimilarities between villages that did and those that did not.

The author argues that village-scale social norms and the introduction of neo-liberal water governance in the project area combined to diminish the status of girls in some project villages. The incorporation of girls into the new water supply system as unpaid labour reinforces naturalised, gendered divisions of labour, standardised before the arrival of the new system. However, the new system provided an opportunity to reinforce girls' identities as temporary household workers. 'Once taken, a decision that girls should not be charged for water became daily practice, thereby strengthening beliefs about the girls' lack of community ties before marriage'. This renders girls invisible as village citizens, with additional potential discrimination in the areas of education and work burden.

Girls' obligations in the domestic sphere and their reliance on natural resources

Assaad, R., Levison, D., and Zibani, N., 2010, 'The Effect of Domestic Work on Girls' Schooling: Evidence from Egypt', Feminist Economics

http://www.hhh.umn.edu/people/rassaad/pdf/domestic_work_girls_schooling_egypt.pdf

This report examines the need for girls to contribute to domestic work and parents' decisions to either not send her to school or to have her drop out, in the context of Egypt.

Girls' work in the home is often assumed to be more flexible than it really is. When meal production and/or childcare are required, the times at which chores take place may be rigid and not compatible with attending school. Using an econometric model and data from the Egypt Labour Market Survey, the authors show that many girls who work would have been in school had they not been expected to work 14+ hours per week. Consequently, work appears to have a direct and detrimental effect on girls' schooling and thus their level of human capital.

As girls primarily carry out domestic work or market work, an approach that bans labour force participation of children will have little impact on them. Rather, approaches that reduce the drudgery of household work or that compensate families for the opportunity cost of a girl's time at home would be much more effective in increasing their school attendance. The authors therefore suggest that access to better infrastructural services, such as piped water, sewerage, and garbage collection would go a long way toward reducing girls' domestic work burdens. Lack of access to piped water imposes the greatest burden on women and girls by forcing them to use canals and other waterways to wash dishes and clothes and to spend time and effort fetching drinking water from public taps.

Additionally, the authors found that poor urban girls living in unserved informal settlements might be more vulnerable to not attending school than poor girls from rural Upper Egypt, as families in these informal settlements have fewer options to fetch drinking water, get rid of wastewater and garbage, and wash their dishes and clothing, leading to a heavier burden on girls.

Interventions to reduce girls' domestic burdens could include:

- providing adequate energy sources for cooking
- reducing marketing time via refrigeration
- providing solid waste and sewage disposal services

- providing easily accessible piped water

Shivalli, R., Rao, S., and Chitagubbi, G., 2010, 'Resourcefulness of the School Going and Non-school Going Girls to the Family in Rural Areas', Stud Home Comm Sci, 4(2): 129-132

<http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/S-HCS/HCS-04-0-000-10-Web/HCS-04-2-000-2010-Abst-PDF/HCS-04-2-129-10-019-Shivalli-R/HCS-04-2-129-10-019-Shivalli-R-Tt.pdf>

This short study looks at the role played by girls in the family and agricultural production in rural India. The research found that both school-going and non-school going girls were actively involved in domestic chores, childcare, animal care, unpaid agricultural activities and paid activities. However, there were significant differences between the two groups in their mean time spent per day on different activities except for child-care activities. Despite this, school-going girls were found to spend a significant number of working hours every day carrying out domestic work and animal care. They also managed to spend an average of 23 minutes per day on paid activities. However, in order to be this resourceful for their families, school-going girls spent little time on studies at home.

The article recommends a revision of content of the curriculum to increase the relevance of school learning and to change the attitude of parents towards education. Flexible timing of school could also be introduced to enable more girls to attend schools after completing their other work.

The effect of climate change on girls' access to natural resources

Plan International, 2011, 'Weathering the Storm: Adolescent Girls and Climate Change'

<http://www.ungei.org/files/weatherTheStorm.pdf>

This report argues that girls' productive and reproductive roles and responsibilities, their reduced access to education and to participation in local organisations and decision-making all contribute to their greater exposure to climate risks. With climate change causing yet more poverty, adolescent girls will become more susceptible to gender discrimination and poverty, preventing an even greater number of girls from realising their rights.

The report argues that ensuring that adolescent girls have access to relevant quality education needs to be a priority. Better educated girls are more likely to complete their education, find paid work, support the education of their own children and potentially build more resilient families, as well as challenge gender discrimination. This in turn will help to reduce vulnerability to disaster and climate risks.

The report identifies the following vulnerabilities for adolescent girls associated with climate change:

- If domestic work becomes more arduous (e.g. it may take longer to fetch water everyday) it will become increasingly difficult for adolescent girls to stay in school. This will have a long-term impact on girls' well being throughout their life.
- Draught may decrease the availability of water for sanitation and hygiene at school, making it difficult for girls to attend school.
- Flooding or other natural disasters may lead parents to travel to towns to collect aid or emergency food relief, during which times girls will be required to fully take care of the household.

- Women and girls are also more likely to be discriminated against in the distribution of resources such as medicines or healthcare, so the chance of them falling, or remaining, sick is higher than for men and boys.
- Having been confined to the home, girls are less likely to understand early warning systems or have life-saving skills (such as first aid, swimming or tree-climbing), which in many at-risk countries are not deemed suitable for girls.
- In post-disaster situations women and girls are more likely to experience violence, including sexual violence.
- Emerging evidence suggest there may be a rise in early and forced marriage and 'bride price' as a result of poverty. Once married, girls are unlikely to continue at school, are expected to take on marital duties in their new household and are more susceptible to early pregnancies.

The report recommends that policymakers and donors support gender-sensitive strategies for climate change adaptation and address gender inequality as a root cause of vulnerability to climate change.

Brody, A., Demetriades, J. and Esplen, E., 2008, 'Gender and Climate Change: Mapping the Linkages: A Scoping Study on Knowledge and Gaps', Bridge Project

http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/Climate_Change_DFID.pdf

This paper outlines key linkages between climate change and gender inequality, with a particular focus on adaptation and mitigation policies and practices. It identifies gaps in the existing body of work on gender and the environment, which so far has focused primarily on women's agricultural livelihoods, access to natural resources, or disaster risk reduction. It is now commonly recognised, even where there is a lack of hard evidence, that climate change exacerbates existing inequalities with regards to wealth, access to and understanding of technologies, education, access to information and access to resources.

The report looks at the following areas affected by climate change to assess the effect they are having/are likely to have on men and women, boys and girls:

- health
- agriculture
- water
- wage labour
- climate change-related disasters
- the aftermath of climate change-related disasters
- migration
- conflict

It concludes by arguing that there is 'an urgent need to clearly identify obstacles to women's participation in decision-making, and find ways to address these constraints through supporting grassroots awareness-raising, confidence-building and advocacy and leadership training programmes' (p 22). In particular, attention needs to be focused on promoting girls' participation, since girls may be doubly excluded from decision-making processes on account of being both female and child/youth.

3. Girls' asset ownership and poverty

Cooper, E., 2010, 'Inheritance and the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policy Considerations', Chronic Poverty Research Centre Working Paper No 159

http://sfu.academia.edu/ElizabethCooper/Papers/741141/Inheritance_and_the_Intergenerational_Transmission_of_Poverty_in_Sub-Saharan_Africa_Policy_Considerations

Inheritance is a major means for the transfer of adults' accumulated physical capital and as such can have positive or negative effects on different people's poverty status over the life course. On the positive side, the transfer of physical assets to children may provide start-up material for the younger generations' more independent future livelihoods and economic productivity. On the negative side, studies of poverty trajectories of households and individuals in Sub-Saharan African societies have identified that exclusion from the inheritance of assets exacerbates vulnerability to chronic and intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Women and children are commonly excluded from opportunities for wealth accumulation through inheritance, as they often do not have secure property rights. Widows, orphaned children and households affected by HIV/AIDS are even more vulnerable to disenfranchisement through the rules and practices of inheritance.

Despite significant gaps in empirical data concerning how inheritance systems work to prevent, reduce or exacerbate individuals' and households' poverty, there has been significant attention in recent years to reforming inheritance laws and practices, to achieve equity between men and women. Less attention so far has been paid to how children fare under existing inheritance systems and what might be done to improve their inheritance rights.

Most African countries' constitutions make little or no mention of children and several land laws to discern children's land rights scarcely acknowledge children's rights. Instead, children's rights are often subsumed under a mother's property rights. In several countries, children born out of wedlock are not recognised as legitimate heirs. Rwanda's Law on Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities and Successions' of 2000 is one of a small number of laws that have been passed in the region with the aim of enhancing and ensuring women's and girls' property and inheritance rights.

The report notes that: 'While the link between inheritance (or disinheritance) and IGT [Intergenerational Transmission of] poverty has not yet been systematically established from research, gender discrimination in inheritance systems has been documented'. It sets out the following issues and considerations for policy and research:

- It makes sense to acknowledge from the start that policy attention to inheritance focuses on upholding the rights of those most vulnerable to alienation from heritable property and consequent poverty, most notably women and children, and is not necessarily a strategy for maximising the economic potential of heritable assets.
- Gaining social legitimacy for principles enshrined in law but not usually practiced customarily requires long and sustained engagement with the local people who operate in local processes of arbitration.
- Finding entry points on the ground, at the local level, is critical to effecting such change.
- To improve understanding of how inheritance can affect the intergenerational transmission of poverty, more research is required. This should seek to broaden analysis of inequity from the focus on the legal domain to address the power structure of a society in a broad sense, as

well as everyday processes that mediate people's access to, and opportunistic use of, physical assets for poverty alleviation.

Quisumbing, A., Payongayong, E. and Otsuka, K., 2004, 'Are Wealth Transfers Biased Against Girls? Gender Differences in Land Inheritance and Schooling Investment in Ghana's Western Region', Washington, DC: International Food Policy Institute.

<http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/pubs/divs/fcnd/dp/papers/fcndp186.pdf>

This report looks at the relationship between increasing demand for women's labour (due to the expansion of labour-intensive cocoa cultivation) and inheritance rights in Ghana. Using a retrospective household survey of land inheritance, gifts, temporary allocation of family land, and schooling over three generations, the paper explores statistically the determinants of the bestowal of land and investment in schooling between sons and daughters during the shift from communal to individualised tenure institutions.

While daughters receive less land than sons, the bias against daughters in land transfers has weakened among the Akan tribe, as a result of declining social discrimination. One of the reasons for this is the adoption of an agricultural technology that increased demand for female labour and hence increased women's economic value and bargaining power. The authors argue that '[i]ndividualization of tenure was, in part, a means of providing an incentive to invest in land, particularly by women' (p. 3). Furthermore, although daughters continue to be disadvantaged in schooling attainment, there are encouraging signs that the gender gap is beginning to close for the younger generation.

Gifts have recently emerged as an important way to transfer land from men to women, thus reducing the social discrimination against women in land transfers. However, it must be noted that gifts are allowed by the extended family only if wives and children help the husband establish cocoa fields. This change in improved equity in land transfers has been achieved without sacrificing farming efficiency.

Rose, L., 2006, 'Children's Property and Inheritance Rights and Their Livelihoods: The Context of HIV and AIDS in Southern and East Africa', LSP Working Paper

<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/ah622e/ah622e00.pdf>

This paper focuses on legal and institutional aspects of children's property and inheritance rights in Southern and East Africa. There are significant gaps in the understanding of how children's rights are upheld and violated and there is little consideration being given to how children's property and inheritance rights should be monitored and how violations of these rights should be sanctioned.

Individuals who deny children their property and inheritance rights commonly argue that customary law supports their own rights to inherit and/or use the property of the children's parents. This makes it difficult to ascertain when children's property and inheritance rights have been violated. The members of extended families usually have rights to the property of their deceased relatives, as stipulated by the laws, and because the guardians of orphans have the right to determine how the property that the orphans inherited from their parents should be used to provide for their needs.

The problem is that many members of extended families confiscate the property of deceased relatives to which they are not entitled by either customary or statutory law, and many guardians/estate

executors use the inheritance for their own benefit instead of for the benefit of the orphaned children. Thus the consequence of these property confiscations and abuses is that many orphans become destitute and vulnerable to mistreatment, including forced labour and prostitution.

In the countries of Southern and East Africa that were surveyed for this report, property rights continue to be governed mostly by customary law and practice. There is a gap between *de jure* property and inheritance rights, as stipulated by law, and *de facto* rights, as realized in daily life. This is produced when people deliberately ignore statutory law in favour of customary law or when they ignore both.

The report also contains a section which outlines a large number of NGO initiatives that have attempted to strengthen children's property and inheritance rights, as well as case studies from five countries in Southern and Eastern Africa.

4. Additional information

Key websites

SSRN, PEP, World Bank, Women's Refugee Commission, Siyanda, Bridge project, Dimitra Project on Gender: Rural Women and Development, FAO, World Bank, IFAD

Experts consulted

John Cockburn, Université Laval

About Helpdesk research reports: Helpdesk reports are based on 2 days of desk-based research. They are designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues, and a summary of some of the best literature available. Experts are contacted during the course of the research, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged.