Beyond ownership
tracking progress on women's land rights in Sub-Saharan Africa

Ensuring equal rights in ownership and control over land for women and men is essential to achieve gender equality (SDG5) and eradicate poverty (SDG1). Yet, capturing the real status of land rights and measuring progress in the SDGs targets related to land tenure is still a challenge, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where:

1. Land tenure is often governed by customary and statutory laws.
2. Large swaths of land remain unregistered and women’s plots are less likely than men’s plots to be documented.
3. Few surveys collect sex-disaggregated data and inquire about the owners and the managers of land separately.
4. Land ownership, management and other rights over land are often used interchangeably.

To capture the real status of land rights in countries and monitor progress in the SDGs, surveys need to consider the different rights and different levels of decision-making of women and men over land.

**AN ANALYSIS IN 6 COUNTRIES FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA SHOWS THAT:**
- A significant share of reported owners do not have the rights to sell or use the land as collateral and women are particularly disadvantaged.
- Women often participate in the management of plots owned by men.
- For women farmers, management of land and decision-making about the use of the output are strongly linked to land ownership.

To ensure equal rights in ownership and control over land for women and men, the evidence shows that:
- Women are disadvantaged not only in the ownership but also in the management of land (Figure 1).
- Ownership and management are correlated but the overlap is not complete. For example, in Ethiopia and Malawi almost half of sole female owned plots are managed jointly with a male family member.
- Many owners do not have the right to sell land or use it as collateral. For example in Malawi male land owners report rights to sell for 55% of their plots while female owners report rights to sell for 46% of their plots.

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**THIS MEANS COLLECTING SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA ON:**
- Land ownership
- Right to transfer land
- Land management
- Right to benefit economically from land

When surveys consider different rights over land, economic benefits derive from accessing to agricultural production or selling the plots. Control over the use of these outputs captures women and men’s rights to derive economic benefits from land.

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**Figure 1. Distribution of ownership and management of plots by sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male, sole</td>
<td>Female, sole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia, 2014</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi, 2013</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria, 2011</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania, 2013</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda, 2011</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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