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GENDER, LAND ACCESS AND RURAL POVERTY IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to examine the link between land access (property rights) and gender (female and male) poverty in rural areas in Côte d'Ivoire, which economy is mainly based on agriculture products. The study particularly distinguishes households which head of family is a woman from those headed by a man. Several studies have shown that women headed households are the most exposed to poverty, specifically in rural areas. In effect, while this group of households can have a lucrative activity in urban areas, their activity is subject to land access in rural areas. The issue of property rights on rural lands is then essential in programs for gender poverty alleviation in rural areas.

JEL classification: I32, J16, Q15, O55

Keywords: Gender, Land access, Property rights, Poverty, Africa, Cote d'Ivoire

1. Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire's economy is specialized in production and export of forest products initiated during French colonial era, mainly coffee and cocoa since its independence in 1960. This specialization will fundamentally shape its future development.

The economic development of the country is characterized by a long period of growth lasting from 1960 to 1979. During this period, due to high international prices of coffee and cocoa, to favorable terms of exchange and to the growth in industrial sector the mean growth rate of GDP per capita was around 5.7%.

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During this twenty years period qualified by observers as “Ivorian economic miracle”, the share of services sector value added in GDP was preponderant in the economy and represented 51%, the share of agricultural value added and industrial value added in GDP were 34% and 15% respectively. Twenty years after in 1998 the relative share of industrial value added in GDP was 28% overcoming the agricultural value added (27%), but the service sector value added remains preponderant with 44%.

This structure leads to an increase in agricultural exports (managed then by the well-known CAISTAB²), and a growth in agricultural revenues that enables the government to undertake several investment programs in all sectors of the economy. Total investment represented more than 15% of GDP and grew at annual rate of 20%.

By the end of the 1979 the growth was slow down by the drop in the price of agricultural products, the decrease was confirmed in 1980. From 1980 the macroeconomic situation worsened and the increase in budget deficit constraints the government to reduce investments in the previous programs. Face with the persistent decline in the price of agricultural products the government was obliged to engage in SAP suggested by Bretton Woods institutions in an attempt to restore macroeconomic equilibrium, improve the efficiency of the economy and foster economic growth.

From the beginning of the 1990’s in addition to SAP international financial institutions suggested the privatization of several public enterprises and the liberalization of agricultural sector, including coffee and cocoa, which represents the financial earth of the state, and the CFAF was devaluated by 100% in 1994.

² Or CSSPPA (Caisse de Stabilisation et de Soutien du prix des produits agricoles), a public marketing board in charge of trading on international market.

The current situation in the country is characterized by the first serious social and political crisis since independence and an armed conflict since 2002. Several tentative to solve this crisis have been engaged by international partners (France, AU, ECOWAS, UN) without apparent solution. Several questions are at the earth of this crisis including most importantly agricultural land access.

The problem of land access is fundamental in this country where land is of the major source of welfare and power management in the society. In this country where agriculture is the basic productive activity, land access appears fundamental to generate revenue (see Hudson-Rodd et Nyunt, 2001). In economic theory, this issue is approached by property rights.

During recent last five years the problem of land access in CI results in rivalries in the western part of the country between local populations and migrant ones coming from other parts of the country (Center, North, and East) or from neighboring countries, mainly Burkina Faso and Mali.

Geographical data on CI indicates total area of 322,000,000 square km but only 22% of this territory is composed of arable land. A surface of 11.6% of the land is occupied by agriculture, 49.9% by permanent pasture, 23.2% by forest and 24.3% by other forms (see Furth 2001).

The country is populated by 15.366.672 inhabitants with a demographic growth rate of 3.3% per year between 1988 and 1998 (see INS, 1998b). The population is composed of 7.844.623 male and 7.522.049 female i.e. 51% vs. 49% of population respectively. Moreover the population is composed of 4,000,047 foreigners in 1998 (26.03% of total population) against 3,039,037 in 1988.

The population is mainly concentrated in forest southern zone with 78% against 22% in the northern savannah. The global density of population is 48 inhabitants per square km, and this population is mostly rural (57%) vs. 43% in urban area. The rural population that was 6.595.159 inhabitants in 1988 increased to 8.837.534 inhabitants

in 1998, implying a pressure on productive land. In effect the main products, coffee and cocoa require more and more new forest which is limited.

In CI the land problem in conjunction with national (inter regional) and international migrations was recently exacerbated and part of population originating from other parts of the country and from Burkina Faso have been deported from western south forest zone by local traditional owners with an impact on the pre-existent social equilibrium.

The objective of this paper is to examine the links between land access and gender rural poverty in CI as it seems evident that the perception of revenue in rural zones are subject to possession of a farming land surface, accentuating the importance issue of property rights in rural poverty alleviation.

In the following section 2 presents the poverty situation in relation with gender aspects in rural zones in CI. Section 3 links the question of land access with rural poverty, and a brief conclusion is given in section 4.

2. Rural Poverty in Côte d'Ivoire

Evolution of global poverty in Côte d'Ivoire

Poverty measured by FGT (Foster, Greer, Thorbecke, 1984) indexes indicates by strata that poverty incidence (P_0) is (50.1%) for rural forest West and (49.4%) for savannah, both regions being the poorest in Côte d'Ivoire in 1995 (see Table 1). On the other hand savannah zone became the poorest region, followed by forest East zone in 1998. We notice that poverty increases in Forest East and savannah between 1995 and 1998, meanwhile it decreases in forest West zone.

Table 1: Poverty per rural strata

	1995		1998		Variation (%) Strata
	Number	P ₀	Number	P ₀	1998 / 1995
Forest rural East	1321	41	4213	46.6	13.7
Forest rural West	870	50.1	4148	24.5	-51.1
Savannah rural	991	49.4	4930	54.6	10.5

Source: INS

Extreme poverty line that was 86,700 CFAF in 1995 grew to 95,700 FCFA per capita in 1998 (see Table 2). In rural zones, extreme poverty slightly increases between 1995 and 1998 (see Table 2). Savannah being particularly concerned with higher poverty indexes.

Table 2: Extreme Poverty by Strata

	1995		1998		Evolution (%) Strata
	Number	P ₂	Number	P ₂	1998 / 1995
Abidjan	1318	3.8	4680	0.9	0.01
Other cities	961	4.0	5991	8.3	0.04
Forest rural East	1321	13.9	4213	15.1	0.03
Forest rural West	870	14.2	4148	5.9	0.03
Savannah rural	991	14.5	4930	21.6	0.06
TOTAL	5461	9.9	23845	10.0	0.04

Source: INS

The Problem of Rural Poverty by Gender

The gender problem consists in a distinction between female and male headed households. Table 3 indicate that overall male headed households are more poor than female headed households (34.2% vs. 28.1%), but the situations are diversified when we consider gender poverty by region.

In 1995, in forest East zone, male were poorer (42.9%) than female (11.9%), as well as in savannah (49.6% vs. 48.1%) meanwhile in forest West zone female were more poor (65% against 48.7%). The situation was the reverse in 1998 in forest East and savannah compare to 1995; female were more poor than male. Moreover the contribution of male to poverty is always higher than the female one in 1995 and in 1998 as well.

Table 3: Evolution of Poverty and Extreme Poverty by Strata and Gender

Strata	Genre	Poverty		Extreme Poverty		
		Number	Contrib.	P ₀	P ₂	Contrib.
1995						
Forest rural East	Male	1239	98.2	42.9	14.8	100
	Female	82	1.8	11.9	-	-
Forest rural West	Male	800	89.4	48.7	13.3	86.0
	Female	70	10.6	65.9	24.6	14.0
Savannah rural	Male	896	90.6	49.6	14.8	91.9
	Female	95	9.4	48.1	12.2	8.0
TOTAL	Male	4881	91.4	37.6	10.1	91.7
	Female	580	8.6	29.7	7.7	8.3
1998						
Forest rural East	Male	3949	92.8	46.1	15.1	93.4
	Female	264	7.2	53.5	15.9	6.6
Forest rural West	Male	3623	93.0	26.0	6.4	95.8
	Female	525	7.0	14.0	2.0	4.2
Savannah rural	Male	4621	93.5	54.4	21.2	92.3
	Female	309	6.5	58.0	27.2	7.7
TOTAL	Male	21245	90.5	34.2	10.4	92.6
	Female	2717	9.5	28.1	6.5	7.4

Source: INS 1995, 1998

In 1995 male were more concerned with extreme poverty in savannah while female were the most concerned in forest West (24.6%). In 1998 female were more concerned with extreme poverty

in forest East and savannah (27.2%), but in forest West male were victim of extreme poverty (24.6%). The contribution of male in extreme poverty is always higher than female in 1995 and in 1998 as well.

Global Characteristics of Rural Poor

A large proportion of the population is composed of female headed household 15.3% in 1995 (see Table 4), and this part is slightly increasing between 1995 and 1998. We observe that 36.8% of these households were poor in 1995 but decreasing 33.8% in 1998. We notice that in 1998 this category of household contributes at 50.1% in global poverty.

Table 4: Female Headed Households

	Total Pop. Female	Hhd. Female	Poor Hhd. Female	Contribution to Poverty
1995	49.0%	15.3%	36.8%	---
1998	49.7%	15.4%	33.8%	50.1%

Source: INS

In addition to these general characteristics it could be underlined that rural poor are mostly landless agricultural workers living far from towns and thus having no access to basic services (clean water, hospital, school), they have no opportunity to accede to land and in general have more children than they can decently educate. We notice that it is more difficult for female headed households to have access to land and financial services as a lending to a female often requires a guarantee from a male (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2001).

Few Determinants of Rural Poverty

In rural zones poverty is principally determined by physical capital, mainly land surface and equipments owned. Moreover the lack of new farming technical acquisition by limiting the increase of production represents a potential source of poverty in that zones.

Through the Côte d'Ivoire household survey ENV98 (enquête sur les niveaux de vie, INS, 1998c), we notice that overall 68.45% of farming land are less than 50 ha vs. 31.55% having more than 50 hectares (see Table 5). Moreover larger surfaces are property of male.

Table 5: Distribution of Farm Area by Socioeconomic Group, Region and Gender

Variables	Farm Surfaces	
	< 50 ha %	> 50 ha %
CSP		
Coffee-Cocoa farmers	84.21	15.79
Other export crop farmers	40.44	59.56
Starch farmers	83.76	16.24
Other food crop farmers	67.96	32.04
Public Employees	22.58	77.42
Private Employees	52.17	47.83
Self employed	50.62	49.38
Agricultural workers	85.71	14.29
Jobless and inactive	61.76	38.24
REGION		
Abidjan	27.78	72.22
Other cities	56.59	43.41
Forest rural East	85.64	14.36
Forest rural West	80.08	19.92
Savannah rural	60.21	39.79
GENDER		
Female	92.86	7.14
Male	58.82	41.18
TOTAL	68.45	31.55

At regional level, land surfaces larger than 50 hectares are located in strata Abidjan (72.22%) and other cities (43.41%), while

small surfaces are located in rural zones. The distribution of surfaces by socioeconomic group is unequal and large surfaces are concentrated surprisingly in the hand of public employees (77.42%), explaining the geographical location of large land areas. Concerning gender, we notice that 5.56% of female own land vs. 7.14% for male (see Table 6).

Table 6: Land Property by Gender

	Female	Male
Land	5.56%	7.14%
Other properties	94.44%	92.86

Examining the ownerships for the various socioeconomic³ groups, we notice paradoxically that 25% of public employee households own land followed by coffee and cocoa farmers (16.54%) and other food crop farmers (16%) (see Table 7). For other farm equipments, only 3.60% of households own a plough and 5.68% a spray (see Table 8).

Table 7: Land Property of Socioeconomic Groups

CSP	Land %	Other properties %
Coffee-Cocoa farmers	16.54	83.46
Other export crop farmers	8.33	91.67
Starch farmers	11.76	88.24
Other food crop farmers	16.00	84.00
Public Employees	25.00	75.00
Private Employees	2.94	97.06
Self employed	2.22	97.78
Agricultural workers	3.85	96.15
Jobless and non active	7.14	92.86

³ See Aka (2004) for the construction of socioeconomic group and subsequent income distribution analysis using 1998 households' survey.

Table 8: Other ownership in Farm Assets

	Plough	Spray
Owner	3.60	5.68
Non-owner	96.40	94.32

Even though possessing land enables farmers to invest in, we notice that few farmers are owner or use the land for their own. The fact that public employee are those having a large part of farming land could have an impact on agricultural production and land transmission. In a recent study (Aka, 2004) it is found that public employees are poorer in 1998. The decrease of their income could induce a decrease of investment in agricultural sector and therefore in a decline of overall agricultural revenue.

A mean of reducing poverty in rural zone could be to allow farmers to accede to land through buying collectively or individually. Moreover land access for female could be an efficient way to improve food security of the population and reduce female poverty because cultural practices show that women are those generally in charge of food agriculture. This fact is confirmed by the proportion of female producer of starch and other food crops (see Table 9), apart from jobless and non active population.

Table 9: Gender and Socio economic group

CSP	Freq.	Percent.	Female Male	
			%	%
Coffee-Cocoa farmers	774	18.43	22.58	77.42
Other export crop farmers	203	4.83	0	100
Starch farmers	341	8.12	40	60
Other food crop farmers	274	6.52	31.58	68.42
Public Employees	216	5.14	8.33	91.67
Private Employees	844	20.10	8.28	91.72
Self employed	846	20.14	26.87	73.13
Agricultural workers	350	8.33	17.11	82.89
Jobless and non active	352	8.38	45.95	54.05
TOTAL	4200	100		

Regarding the low rate of ownership for households, institutional reforms are necessary to induce the adoption of modern agricultural techniques and more importantly improve and enhance land access in rural zones, the last preoccupation is tackle in section 3.

3. Relationships between Land access and Poverty

The Question of Property Rights and Land Access

Property rights are institutional arrangements comprising three types of rights. First the *right to use a resource*, second the *right to sell or hire the property* and last the *right to exclude the non-owner from the use of the good*. Two principal systems of property exist, mainly those recognized within a small group (as ethnic group), and those included in a general system of rights (as nation wide).

Talking about the issue of property rights on land in CI economic development is related to three questions: (i) how these rights appear in Côte d'Ivoire, (ii) how they evolved since and finally (iii) how could they be improve?

Land Access and Rural Development in Côte d'Ivoire

During colonial period, French administration created several laws in its territories, including land laws. After independence in 1960, Ivorian government restored these colonial laws which state that all unoccupied land belongs to the state. The 1963 law thus abrogated all traditional laws on lands.

In Côte d'Ivoire the law of 1984 confirms the rights of the state on all land taken back from French settlers and from traditional owners after independence in 1960, the objective being a better redistribution of land, but the real situation has been else. The essential problem was and remains the attribution of land to an ultimate producer. In effect, long time after independence only those able to use the land had a right on the land (right to use a resource).

More recently, since 1998, land access is subject to the law « N° 98-750, of December, 23, 1998 » and « décret N° 99-594, of October 13, 1999 » that fixes the modalities of application of the law to traditional lands.

The aim of this law is to transform former traditional rights into real property rights. The law of 1998 assigns property rights on land to the state and to its administrative components, installing thus an unavoidable conflict between modern and traditional laws in terms of land access.

For local rural population it appears difficult from there to accede to land. Though, if the access to land is limited their productive activity can not increase by lack of investment, all that constitutes a potential source of poverty in the future.

In a country where agriculture is the main productive activity it appears important to own individually or collectively productive goods (land, livestock, and plough) even if land is the principal capital in rural zones in Côte d'Ivoire.

How Can Rural Poor Have Access to Land?

Before the law of 1998, only the effective use of land assigns a property right and no formal market of rural land existed, even if one could accede to land through succession or donation and accessory buying (right to sell or hire the property).

To have a formal title on land in Côte d'Ivoire it is necessary to have a surface registered on the register of land. If the land is less than 50 ha surface a “*permis d'utilisation*” (use permit) is delivered by the “*Sous-préfet*”. If the surface is more than 50 ha, only the Minister of agriculture is allowed to deliver the permit. Attention should be drawn on the fact that the government allows individual ownership for only 12 ha, the remaining being hire by the state for 25 years. This procedure is relatively costly and few people use it, thus most of the lands are used in traditional way. There is thus a coexistence and tolerance between modern law and traditional

system of law (as much diversified as ethnic groups and regions) in land access in Côte d'Ivoire.

Challenges of Improving Land Access and Poverty Reduction in Côte d'Ivoire

It is already a challenge for developing countries to guarantee health, education and eradicate hunger for rural populations, but in Côte d'Ivoire one of the bigger fights in the future will be to improve land access system by integrating of the systems into a harmonized one.

In the new system to be innovated a place should be made for female in land transmission relatively to traditional rules in use within the various ethnic groups. The new system should pay attention to reduce inequality in land distribution created by the tendency of concentration of land in the hand of few owners or a particular socioeconomic group.

Another important and thorny challenge will be the explicit consideration of migrant populations (national and international) in land access policy. We think that when an objective system of land access will be settling these two preoccupations will find an optimal solution and will limit the tendency of traditional owners to use the *right to exclude* the non-owners as recently in the western part of the country giving room to conflicts.

4. Conclusion

This brief view of land access system in relation with poverty reveals few implications for policy makers in Côte d'Ivoire. Major parts of the population live in rural zones and the challenge for policy maker is to reduce poverty in these areas.

As long as property rights are weak or inexistent, farmers will not be guaranty to benefit from their effort, and any incentive to improve land tenure will not be possible. Property rights can represent a guarantee allowing them to accede to financial services.

In Côte d'Ivoire, to reach such an efficient system in the future the challenge will be to integrate traditional rules in land access and the new 1998 land law, and take into account land access for special groups, female and migrant populations (national and international) which importance in CI economic evolution appears more and more undisputable. Secure land property could thus be a mean to reduce conflicts and alleviate gender rural poverty in Côte d'Ivoire.

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