

Gender and Access to Land for urban agriculture in Kampala, Uganda

Urban and periurban farming are increasingly important as a source of income and food for the urban population in Uganda. Access to land is a fundamental asset affecting women's role. Women lack access to land, and so do the poor marginalized migrant young men. Legal and policy frameworks are not fully promulgated for protection of urban farmers and women especially. Irrespective of some cultural inhibitors.

LAND AND GENDER

Most of the urban women connect land to shelter and agriculture, but men hold most of the land. Women in Uganda make up 51% of the total population 24.7 million people (UBOS 2002) and contribute more than 80% of food, provide 70% agricultural labour, 97% have access to land while only 7% own land (Kiguli 1995). Men provide only 30-40% labour.

Women, men and the children perform different roles within the household and in urban agriculture. Some roles are defined according to biological sex while others are through socialisation. Factors like ethnicity, customs and taboos determine the gender division of labour. The children assist the women in planting and weeding or tethering the animals. For some women are poor and cannot afford advanced technologies. The men usually focus on animal keeping but not growing vegetables and other food crops like the women.

There are also differences among women. Some women have higher incomes and reside in flats and planned residential areas although they carry out urban agriculture. Middle income women mainly keep animals (poultry) on a grand scale in their backyards or on the balconies, whereas the poor women with earning of less than \$1



Juliet Kiguli

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per day grow mostly diversified crops on scattered plots in swampy areas.

ACCESS TO LAND

The majority of poor women who depend on land for their livelihood are either landless or have limited and insecure rights to land. In addition, they access land mostly as customary land but lack decision-making rights on how the land should be utilised. Plots of land utilised for urban agriculture range from less than 0.2 acres in the city centre to 3 acres in periphery areas. It was observed that most women access land through a male relation—father, husband, sons and brothers. Some women own the land but these are rather small areas. Access to land is a key factor affecting women's emancipation.

Women are more likely to have access to customary or mailo land, which they occupy as squatters. (Focus Group, Ndeeba Division - Kampala, 2003, unpublished)

These women, as squatters, have usufruct rights for food production and can be evicted any time. Without this security of tenure they are less concerned with sustainable environmental concerns such as land degradation and development of the land.

Urban women farmers reportedly emphasised in interviews: *Fellow women occupy the wetlands/swampy areas because land is cheap and readily available- I think...the poor access marginal lands, people with small means resort to the informal areas for mainly agriculture and then*

settlements develop in these areas overtime. (Married women in Kigobe-Rubaga Division-Kampala, 2003)

Urban crop production has been "feminised", as the men move out to other informal sectors like petty trading. It is common to find women as farmers and a few migrant men as hired labourers on small plots, scattered over the city and owned by women. Women could access land much easier than the young men due to cultural considerations like pity for AIDS/war disasters' implications and trust from landlords, and friendly networking. Women tend to concentrate their agricultural activities around the homes or seek out garbage areas or undeveloped land, to farm close to each other. They access land through various means such as squatting, borrowing, and searching for free unused pieces of land in the neighbourhood, which they clear for cultivation. Land inheritance, purchase and receiving land as gifts from close kin relations were the other forms of how women access land.

TENURE PATTERNS

In Kampala, about 60% of the land is held under mailo-land tenure system (see UAM no. 11), while the remaining 40% is under freehold and customary tenure. One acquires land through purchase, which requires huge financial resources. Poor women do not own land but many have access to plots on mailo-land or public land. Most women access land for urban farming through their spouses, older women own patches through arrangements of borrowing while middle aged and younger women rent, squat or purchase user rights. All a result of marriage, age, income, social relations and distance.

Access is a key factor determining the practice of urban agriculture in Kampala city. Most women are landless, and the majority of women interviewed that use land in Kampala, hold no control over it as they are squatters or borrow the land. Again others have access to land, but no right in decision-making on how to utilise the land. The few women who own land through inheritance, cannot sell it, because

Juliet Kiguli

Makerere University, Kampala - Uganda

✉ jkiguli2002@yahoo.com

Lillian . N. Kiguli

Organisational Development Consulting Limited,

Kampala - Uganda

✉ lilyki@go.com

the land belongs to the family and selling requires written documents. Marital status greatly determines ownership and access to land. The level of income and amount of savings determine access to land. Another issue that affects the access and ownership of women is the limited education.

A married woman would use the land next to the house for farming but the husband determines which type of crops to grow and how to utilise the output. One woman said: *I grow sugarcane and vegetables for sale, but my husband has restricted me to which types of crops to grow. He does not want sugarcane or banana trees* (Interview with middle aged married woman, Ggaba Water Zone-Kampala).

The Land Act of 1998 (section 28) caters for women in respect to land ownership, however enforcement is difficult as it is not locally interpreted. It is apparent that the ordinary women do not understand the laws. These have not been translated into the indigenous languages to facilitate the women fight for policy change and improvement of the law.

FARMER INITIATIVES

Women continue to find means of survival strategies through farming. Non-government organisations fighting for the rights of women to land are mushrooming (like the Uganda Land Alliance and UWONET). Women have formed associations to improve their involvement in urban agriculture and welfare in general. For instance, Ggaba Women's Development Association is a group of women led by a local council leader (also a woman) who meet on a monthly basis and have neighbourhood support networks. They collect membership fees and access loans and use the rotating fund to buy agricultural inputs. They meet their household needs. Urban women create social networks to ameliorate the effects of urban poverty and in this way can become agents of change (Ssewakiryanga, 2002).

Women borrow land from other persons, for instance from some rich single women (like those from the Ganda royalty who inherited land from their fathers) and may return part of the harvest to the owner. Other women work as hired labourers and through this way they access land and grow food crops for themselves and their families. Another strategy is that women encroach on wetlands. They hire male migrant

labourers to clear the wetland for growing yams and sugarcane.

Women have been economically empowered and increased their decision making level at the household. The women have also saved money and gained access and ownership to land. Some are able to pay school fees for their children, yet this has been an outstanding male role. Those

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belonging to the farming groups have gained access to new farmer technologies to ensure food security for the families.

CONSTRAINTS

There are various types of conflicts and tensions encountered by urban farmers. These range from land boundaries to evictions by environmental NGOs (e.g., NEMA), city council authorities and landowners. Poor policies and laws deterring women from gaining access to land. However, co-spouse ownership is high on the parliamentary debate agenda. Women also lack access to new technologies and information on agriculture e.g., improved machinery, fertilizers and seeds, and the predominant male extension workers face cultural inhibitions in approaching female farmers. Finally, reproductive and domestic roles such as child-care interfere with the female labour and time contribution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Farmer participatory diagnostic research should be carried out and include urban women to identify gender needs and problems specific to kampala city dwellers. This is to ensure that gender disaggregated data is generated through research, and utilised by the government and city administrative authorities to promote gendered planning and development. Gender responsive development planning is a prerequisite as it identifies the inequalities existing between men and women. Land laws and, property rights need to be revised in favour of women as majority farmers. Already gender sensitisation in relation to improving the justice system is funded by DANIDA, a Danish donor organ. The agricultural policies should be

decentralised and attention be paid to female headed households and farms which are increasingly involved in the urban cash economy

Empower women with income generating skills through trainings as part of capacity building so that they can make decisions in the household and on farming methods if they have access to their own resources Women farmers in the city must be realised and allowed to participate in on-farm and adaptive research/demonstrations at district farm institutes that teach new crop technologies.

Technologies must be gender sensitive to enable women to operate them. For example, light hand hoes requiring less energy designed specifically for women while heavy ones are for the men.

Women need access to land and so do the marginalised migrant young men who practise urban agriculture. Policy support is necessary to redistribute the land.



Kiguli Juliet

Other women work as hired labourers

NOTE

Urban farming started in kampala as a result of socio-economic and cultural features as studied by Dan Maxwell and Samuel Zziwa in 1992, later by Gertrude Atukunda, Juliet Kiguli and Augustus Nuwagaba in 2001 who targeted the urban poor. Two types of people farm, Traditional landlords and migrants to the city in search of employment. Almost 50% land in Kampala is under urban farming.

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