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Impact of Insufficient Land Rights to Women on Food Security in Bangladesh

SADIKA HAQUE¹, MD. NAZMUL HOQUE²

¹*Justus-Liebig University Giessen, Dept. of Project and Regional Planning, Germany*

²*Justus-Liebig University Giessen, Inst. of Rural Sociology and Extension, Germany*

Abstract

In most of the developing countries, men are the land owners but women are mostly the land users. Although women comprises more than half of the agricultural labour force in Bangladesh, they are significantly less likely to own land those are poorer quality. Though evidence shows that women have a pivotal role in improving household food security, lack of land rights leaves many women almost entirely dependent on men in assuring food security. This paper examines the importance of women's land and property rights in the context of food security. The study considered 100 households from which 50 with female members having land ownership. It has been found that when women have secured property rights, they take decisions to cultivate land, have greater influence over household decisions that improve the food and nutrition needs. It has been found that families spend more money on food, where women have land use right. Women with land title get better nutrition and enjoy better prenatal care. The HHs where the women have land rights consume more oil, pulses, vegetables, fish, egg, meat, fruits. On the contrary, the other types of households consume more rice only. It has also been clear that men mostly tend to plant crops with a high market value, whereas women tend to plant crops that can supplement a family's diet. Several reasons have lied behind the gender disparity of land ownership. Land is usually transferred though inheritance and it is almost always men who inherit the land. Sometimes, women are usually less able to purchase land. Where formal land and property laws do not discriminate against women, enforcement of those laws can be challenging. Enforcement institutions may be weak or reflect deeply rooted structural factors, social norms or traditional attitudes that suggest women should not be equal participants in ownership or control of land. As governments, the private sector, multilateral institutions, and international development organisations weigh the options for improving food security around the world, they must address one of the most promising elements – secure land rights for women.

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