



# GENDER, POVERTY & LAND RIGHTS

Gender, Poverty and Land Ownership  
Linkages, Global Perspectives on Women's  
Access to Land Rights & the Way Forward

# AIM OF STUDY

- ◉ To examine the link between land ownership (property rights) and gender (specifically female) poverty in T&T
- ◉ To focus on the global perspective of women's access to land rights and its effect on T&T
- ◉ To reflect policy recommendations to guarantee women land rights and ownership.

# BACKGROUND

*"Trinidad and Tobago possesses a total land area of 5,126 sq. km. Overall, 52% of this land area is owned by the State. However, in Tobago only 34% of the land are owned by the State."*

- Assets are important for reducing poverty
- Women are far less likely than men to have ownership or control of productive assets
- Land is a vital asset and is the foundation of all human activities.
- Women's rights to land are often restricted by local customs and laws

# GENDER, POVERTY AND LAND OWNERSHIP - LINKAGES

## INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

- ◉ Women are not only less likely to own land than men, but female landowners tend to own less land than men.
- ◉ FAO study (1997) found women were less likely to have any landholdings and when they did have land, the mean value of men's holdings was almost three times the mean value of women's holdings.
- ◉ Women make a major contribution to household well being through their domestic and productive labor. However, they are not fully rewarded for their contribution, neither in terms of control over the resources nor in any form of income.
- ◉ Gender inequalities in resource entitlements such as land and income are clear. These inequalities leave women with limited flexibility to respond to economic challenges.

# GENDER, POVERTY AND LAND OWNERSHIP - LINKAGES

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S CONTEXT

- The Government of T&T affirms women's rights to property ownership, and there are no legal restrictions on their access to land
- Yet statistics show app. only 14% of private land owners are female

Area of Residence	Gender	Total All Ages	Age Group					
			Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Trinidad & Tobago	Both Sexes	19051	439	2019	4679	5162	3859	2893
	Male	16249	393	1802	4088	4416	3182	2368
	Female	2802	46	217	591	746	677	525
Trinidad	Both Sexes	18092	411	1949	4463	4918	3663	2688
	Male	15428	366	1742	3902	4205	3019	2194
	Female	2664	45	207	561	713	644	494
Tobago	Both Sexes	959	28	70	216	244	196	205
	Male	821	24	60	186	211	163	174
	Female	138	1	10	30	33	33	31

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS IN T&T

- The figures show more single parent female headed than single parent male headed
- income gap exists as male headed households generate higher income than female

Gender of head	Percent distribution of households	Average size of household	Average number of children per household	Average monthly household income	Average monthly household expenditure	Average gross monthly household income
Male Headed Households	68.99	3.84	1.41	4754.21	3360.40	4157.10
<b>Female Headed Households</b>	<b>31.01</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>1.35</b>	<b>3669.74</b>	<b>2705.46</b>	<b>3167.19</b>
Single parent male headed	4.55	3.91	1.46	4566.45	3079.92	3947.98
<b>Single parent female headed</b>	<b>19.23</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>1.68</b>	<b>3951.85</b>	<b>2874.32</b>	<b>3468.59</b>

# GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND RIGHTS

## GLOBAL TREND

- ◉ Disparities in male/female access to land are virtually universal
- ◉ In Latin America, men and women do not have equal access to land even in those countries where legislation has removed gender barriers to land ownership
- ◉ In the Caribbean and much like other countries, women's access to land and to other property generally takes place through a male relative
- ◉ African women usually lose the rights to land following the death of their spouse. **Widows and divorced women have virtually no tenure or inheritance rights**
- ◉ In the Middle East, women rarely own land, and when they do, the land is often controlled or managed by male relatives until marriage, after which the titles are transferred directly to their sons.

# GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND RIGHTS (CONT'D)

## INDIAN CONTEXT

- ◉ Women, like all other Indian citizens, have the legal right to own land
- ◉ Due to their lack of independent financial resources and traditional gender role, **women rarely purchase land**
- ◉ Household land is most commonly titled only in the name of the male head of household
- ◉ Women are not legal owners of property purchased and registered in their husband's name
- ◉ **India does not recognize joint ownership by husband and wife of land purchased during marriage**

# GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND RIGHTS (CONT'D)

## AFRICAN CONTEXT

- In sub-Saharan Africa both formal law as well as customary practice contributes to women's limited access, control and ownership of land.
- Largely ineffective as customary regimes with patriarchal norms prevail.
- Gender-neutral laws particularly are constantly operating in a predominantly gendered social, economic and cultural context
- Women scarcely benefit from these legal elements due to lack of enforcement and knowledge
- **Access to land is decided within a male-dominated community system or clan where women play little or no role**
- Inheritance practices are patrilineal

# WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND RIGHTS

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S CONTEXT

- ◉ The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago prohibits all forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender.
- ◉ Although there exists no legal restrictions to women's access to land tenure, Trinidad and Tobago still has a gender disparity of distribution of land ownership
- ◉ Trinidad and Tobago's Succession Act was passed by Parliament in 1981 and Legislation on Property Rights was also passed, revising provisions on real property and women's property rights
- ◉ However, much like the Indian and African experiences, Trinidad and Tobago's **land ownership is predominantly male dominated due to the same customary regimes like patriarchal inheritance practices.**

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two key arguments for promoting women's land rights:

- Women's human rights are violated
- Women's key role in food security and natural resource management is not recognised

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Legislative reform must be undertaken to ensure inheritance and property rights are administered and are gender neutral
- Add safeguards to ensure that women understand their rights and obligations as owners
- Make improvements to the current legal aid system and effective ways of disseminating information about legal rights

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide greater government assistance to widowed women who have no means of support
- Place safeguards in the probate process to ensure the involvement of women
- Banking regulations- opening an account
- Gender Research and analysis- a lack of information necessary to implement reform and change perceptions

# CONCLUSION

- ◉ Women are the core to the welfare of their families
- ◉ Socio- economic structures continue to deny women's rights to major economic resources such as land
- ◉ Land is a fundamental asset for the economic empowerment of the poor
- ◉ Women's land rights should be treated as a fundamental human right
- ◉ Rights of marginalized groups need to be articulated as part of a solution to gendered land security problems –entails overcoming deeply, rooted patriarchal institutions, attitudes, practices and policies.

# QUESTIONS?

