

# Gender, Land and Labour Relations and Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa in the era of Economic Liberalisation: Towards a Research Agenda

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## Introduction

The importance of building knowledge about the gendered nature of livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa for analytical and policy purposes cannot be over-emphasised. The promotion of secure livelihoods rooted in equitable and viable land and labour systems is a longstanding concern which has become even more urgent in the present conjuncture of global food, fuel and financial crises. These crises have exposed once again the challenges of making a living – jobless economic growth; the growth of the informal economy and informal, casual and poorly paid work; land tenure and labour insecurities and poor livelihood outcomes for the majority of people in Africa. Even more critically, the crises have highlighted the different experiences of people on the basis of the permutations of their different identities, social relations and situations – region, country, citizenship, migration status, rural or urban location, class, gender, kinship and generation. This is not unexpected given that these markers are also those which structure access to and control of livelihood resources including labour. What is unexpected is the long-term failure to take these differences into account in policy making. While recognising all these differences, it is the gendered nature of land and labour relations in the making of livelihoods which is the focus of this article.

This article argues that land tenure and labour issues have often been discussed separately. As a result, two insufficiently interconnected bodies of literature have been generated which offer useful but partial insights into the implications of gender inequalities in labour relations and resource tenures for women's livelihoods. While the livelihoods approaches have attempted to bridge the divide of the labour and land literatures using a model of livelihood

resources, the failure of certain strands to fully account for social relations and institutions in the organisation of livelihoods has limited their value for analysing the gendered land and resource tenures and labour relations at the heart of production systems. The article demonstrates the need to make conceptual linkages between land and labour issues and draws attention to some literature which does so. This is on the basis that such an approach is critical for policy efforts to tackle the enormous livelihood challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa's women in both rural and urban areas in the era of economic liberalisation.

The analytical gaps generated by the failure to link land and labour relations have contributed to some of the seemingly intractable controversies in the literature. For example, there is a debate about whether there are gender inequalities in land relations or rather, women are unable to take full advantage of the land on offer because of other constraints they face. Related to this is the broader debate of whether land tenure is a problem in sustaining livelihoods, or whether gender inequalities in access to other factors of production and reproduction such as capital, credit, technologies and labour are the real culprits. These debates can be made productive with more serious attention to the connections between land interests and control over other resources, particularly labour. Government policies have also treated land and labour as parallel entities, thus reinforcing the analytical approaches to the issue. This has resulted in the policy neglect of the interactions among the land tenure and labour regimes and the larger political economy.

There are some studies investigating the gendered character of economies, labour systems, resource allocation and livelihoods, which the article draws on (Elson, 1999; Evers and Walters, 2000; Whitehead, 2002; Tsikata, 2006, 2009; Grown *et al.*, 2000; Hansen and Vaa, 2004). Other studies, while not taking a gender perspective, have nevertheless provided insights into the integral linkages between land and labour relations and drawn attention to broad patterns in livelihood trajectories (Chimhowu and Woodhouse, 2006; Bebbington, 1999; Scoones, 1998). In general, these studies draw attention to the importance of situating analysis within the wider political economy and paying attention to historical processes, the role of institutions, intra-household labour and land relations, and of considering gender relations in terms of the distribution of work, the division of labour, access to and control of livelihood resources and decision-making. These issues will be the main focus of the article.

The paper begins with a quick survey of the literature on labour, land tenure and livelihoods, followed by a discussion of some conceptual issues which help to frame the interconnections between land and labour. A section discussing some of the empirical material on land tenure and labour relations and the importance of reproductive activities in the organisation of livelihoods follows. The last substantive section of the article discusses some elements of a possible research agenda.

It is important to state at the outset that this effort to discuss substantial bodies of literature, which cut across several disciplines, is necessarily broad, inexhaustive and unlikely to fully represent the nuances and details of the literature. It is also biased towards analyses which contribute to highlighting the linkages between land and labour relations in the making of livelihoods. The similarities and differences in colonial histories, processes of agrarian change, land tenure and labour systems in Africa have resulted in specificities in the experiences of various countries which are reflected in the literature. These provide possibilities, but also challenges for crafting a research agenda for sub-Saharan Africa which is inclusive and policy relevant.

## Surveying the land, labour and livelihoods literature

Land tenure and labour regimes are interdependent in their contribution to livelihood activities and outcomes. However, because they have often been analysed separately, their interconnections are often missed. In relation to land tenure, studies have demonstrated how inequalities between men and women in ownership, control of and access to land have resulted in gender inequalities in their livelihood outcomes (Davison, 1988; Butegwa, 1999; Wanyeki, 2003; Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003). Where they have considered labour, it has been treated in a tangential manner. One exception to this is in the studies of share contracts (Amanor, 2002; Lavigne-Delville *et al.*, 2001).

Labour studies have analysed women's predominance in the lower levels of formal and informal labour markets as a result of discriminatory employment practices and the extensive gender segregation and segmentation of labour markets (Mupedziswa and Gumbo, 2001; Hansen and Vaa, 2004; Tsikata, 2009). The literature has also noted the labour or skills deficits of women in agriculture, which are a factor in the small sizes of their farms and their lower levels of productivity. Imbalances in the intra-household division of labour which lead to women contributing high levels of unpaid labour to crop production, are also identified as partly responsible for their higher levels

of poverty. Missing from this literature on agriculture and rural livelihoods however, is a serious consideration of land tenure.

Both labour and land tenure studies suffer from an additional weakness of failing to fully integrate reproductive work in their analysis of livelihoods. Thus, while the burden of unpaid reproductive work and its implications for women's livelihoods are increasingly becoming topical<sup>2</sup>, it is yet to be fully integrated into studies of labour and land relations. Often, it is discussed in terms of its contribution to production and its costs to women's productive work. In its full ramifications, taken up in the literature on intra-household gender and inter-generational relations, questions of sexuality and sexual politics open a large arena of contestations and insights which have the potential to transform our understanding of livelihoods. After all, the conjugal unit remains an important site of negotiation of access to land and labour even in situations where it is embedded in more extensive kinship and residential units. Questions of marital residence practices, the physical and social demands of child-bearing and -rearing, the hetero-normativity<sup>3</sup>, pro-natalism<sup>4</sup> and male-child preference of many African societies have ramifications beyond personal freedoms and status. These are important in the structuring of men's and women's access to and control over land and over their own and others' labour.

The livelihoods literature makes an effort to link land and labour relations through a shared framework of the five livelihood resources. These approaches have their roots in efforts by Chambers and others to analyse from the perspectives of poor people, how they make a living (Chambers, 1989; Chambers and Conway, 1992). Using concepts such as vulnerability, risk and well-being, Chambers (1989) drew attention to the use of tangible and intangible assets and multiple livelihood activities to address risks to livelihoods. Whitehead (2002) has drawn attention to how differences in the livelihood approaches have their roots in disciplinary preoccupations as well as in geographical and situational differences. Here, Whitehead's example of a disciplinary specificity in discussions of livelihood assets is worth mentioning. While anthropologists stress their relational aspects, economists see assets as analogous to capital, and these differences have influenced approaches to research and analysis of livelihoods (Whitehead, 2002).

The Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (SRL) approaches view livelihoods as consisting of three interconnected parts: (a) assets, (b) access (mediating processes) and (c) activities. Two categories of mediating processes were

recognised in the SRL framework. The first category was the policies, institutions and processes (PIPs) and the second was the vulnerability context, composed of the risks, trends, shocks and seasonal factors affecting livelihoods. Livelihood activities included farm and non-farm activities, transfers, etc. (Ellis, 2000). While there are variations in the list of livelihood assets/capital identified<sup>5</sup>, they generally capture natural assets such as soil, water, air, genetic resources and environmental services; economic or financial assets such as cash, credit/debt, savings, basic infrastructure and productive equipment and technologies; human assets including skills, knowledge, ability to labour; and social assets such as networks, social claims, affiliations and associations. Some approaches add physical assets such as roads, buildings and tools, and cultural assets as separate categories.

Whitehead (2002) notes that although livelihood approaches stress the institutional and policy contexts which mediate and constrain households and their members' access to resources and are a critical factor in livelihood outcomes, these elements are often not fully integrated into livelihoods analysis. Similarly, the relationship between land and labour relations in livelihoods is not often fully accounted for, except in the work of certain anthropologists and political economists<sup>6</sup>. Instead, they appear in analyses based on the framework as discrete categories. Social capital is often treated simply as a resource like any other, rather than as a product of social relations, and often discussions have focused on networks of trust and their use in economic transactions (Lyon, 2000). The social embeddedness of livelihoods, the social relations of class, gender and kinship at the heart of resource tenures and labour relations do not receive sufficient attention<sup>7</sup>. The concept of livelihood diversification<sup>8</sup>, which allows a clearer view of the components of livelihood portfolios and draws attention to the connection between rural and urban resources and the deployment of different resources in various combinations in different periods, has failed to explain how labour and land resources are linked in diversification processes.

### **Conceptualising the land labour connection in livelihoods: some questions and conceptual fragments in the literature**

It is important to situate discussions of women and land in the broader context of capitalist transformations and two decades of neo-liberal economic policies in developing countries. Razavi demonstrates this, arguing that while industrial growth has absorbed the labour force released from agriculture

in industrialised countries, this has not been a strong feature of developing countries with the exception of East Asia. Instead, there has been a shift from agriculture to services operating at the level of survival (Razavi, 2007a: 1484). A successful agrarian transition usually involves the shift of labour from agriculture to industry. Small farmers are expected to stimulate the growth of non-farm jobs in rural areas in order to attract labour into industry. In this scenario, continued access to land provides some support in situations of poor wages, unemployment and old age (Razavi, 2007a: 1494). While there have been critics of the transposition of this kind of analysis to land tenure and agriculture in the developing world, it demonstrates the link between land and labour and highlights the importance of this linkage for economy-wide processes and shifts, and for the making of livelihoods.

In his analysis of rural livelihoods, Scoones (1998) identified three patterns: agricultural intensification through the use of more capital or labour; or extensification through the use of more land; and diversification of income sources and migration. His classification has some similarities with Bebbington's (1999) study of sustainable transitions in rural livelihoods in South America, which identifies certain production systems that are relevant to sub-Saharan Africa. These include: (a) capitalised family farms, (b) rural proletarianisation, (c) migration, (d) rural industry, and (e) rural and urban commerce. Each of these demonstrates the interconnections of labour and land relations in particular ways. Capitalised family farms are an important source of rural family employment and accumulation. Rural proletarianisation is linked to an expansion of large-scale, capital-intensive agricultural enterprises. Examples of these in sub-Saharan Africa are the fruit produce and horticultural industries in Kenya, Uganda and South Africa which employ labour from both urban and rural areas and favour women workers. The opportunity of waged work may enable farm labourers to stay on the land while earning supplementary income. However, in some places, land concentration arising from long-term promotion of capitalist agriculture results in widespread landlessness among agricultural labourers, who then do not have the cushion of growing their own food crops. Women are often found in the poorer quality jobs in this sector and are often poorly paid, with longer hours of work, poor conditions of service and no social protection, while facing numerous health hazards (Razavi, 2007a).

In places where rural industries have been established, some people have incorporated home-based work for these industries into their livelihood

portfolios along with industrial work in agriculture. Bebbington argues that these opportunities enable rural residence in situations of extreme land fragmentation (Bebbington, 1999: 18). With rural and peri-urban commerce, urban and semi-rural women have been engaged in building rural livelihoods around commerce. Often agricultural produce from their farms and other peoples' farms are an important source of goods which are exchanged for manufactured consumer imports.

Rural-urban linkages are a feature of livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa often discussed in the literature (Scoones, 1998; Tsikata, 2006). While certain urban informal economy operators are able to utilise resources such as land and labour in rural areas, others are not. Rural-urban linkages in livelihoods may be stronger in situations of high rural agricultural productivity. For example, some traders in Zimbabwe were engaged in farming maize in both rural and urban areas. Some were also receiving food items from relatives in rural areas – groundnuts, maize, meal and peanut butter – in return for financial support. In Ghana for example, some urban dwellers in times of hardship have sent spouses and children back to rural areas to establish income-earning activities with an agricultural base or one involving trading (Tsikata, 2006). The loss of land and natural resource-based livelihood activities in the countryside are indeed causal factors of the growth of the urban informal economy and slums where informal land markets, overcrowded and insanitary conditions and the lack of capital and training make livelihood insecurity and poverty endemic.

Some studies have drawn attention to intra-household and inter-household labour relations and their linkages with the control of land within agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa. Typically, women and children are very active in providing unpaid labour to farm households. This unpaid labour guarantees women access to household food resources and a varied range of other benefits. Labour relations between households are structured by the control of land and capital. Those who own land (mostly men) are in a position to call on the labour of others for monetary consideration or on share contract basis. Women on the other hand often experience labour deficits particularly when their children go to school and if they are unable to hire labour and do not want to transgress the traditional sexual division of labour in agriculture. This is compounded by the burden of reproductive work. The control over women's labour is enshrined in the conjugal contract<sup>9</sup>.

These conceptual fragments offer ways of making the link between land and labour relations in rural and urban livelihood activities from a gender

perspective. However, effort is needed to begin to theorise more coherently the link between economy-wide developments, policy choices, land and labour relations and gendered livelihoods.

## Gender, land and labour in the making of livelihoods

### *Land and labour in agriculture*

Labour mobility across and within borders has been one of the factors underpinning the commoditisation of land in Africa. Population movements from rural to urban and other rural areas and between countries have determined the demand for land and competition for its use. Processes which integrated African farmers into the colonial economy also integrated them into its labour markets. Migration in search of better incomes became a popular response of men wanting to establish themselves in farming. This allowed them to leave their kinship groups through which agricultural labour was organised to set up their own households. These processes resulted in the establishment of land markets powered by incomes from non-farm activities and wage labour. In both the colonial and post-colonial period in many African countries, the creation of informal land markets was exemplified by land rentals and purchases in rural areas by urban bureaucrats and politicians, by migrant farmers moving from areas of land scarcity to those of land availability, and by local farmers without lineage land (Chimhowu and Woodhouse, 2006).

Africa's agrarian sectors remain critical to the continent's fortunes because for the majority of countries, the dream of industrialisation has fast faded with economic liberalisation. And yet, African agriculture experiences cyclical crises which affect outputs, its contribution to the economy, and livelihood outcomes of farmers and food security. After a short-lived boom made possible by investments in export crops under economic liberalisation policies in the 1980s, agriculture was in a state of stagnation for much of the 1990s (Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999). Fundamental problems such as the lack of public investment in support services, land tenure and labour problems and the low capital base of farm families kept African agriculture in a parlous state. Food crop growers and unpaid family labourers, among whom women are predominant, still make up the poorest in many African countries.

Land has a vast array of uses – agriculture, housing, firewood, animal grazing, gathering food, medicine and materials for artisanal activities, and



for space for a range of economic activities. This is acknowledged in the literature, as is the centrality of land to social security, economic development, identity and a sense of belonging (Karanja, 1991; Wanyeki, 2003). For this reason, the dominant position in much of the gender and land literature is that in agricultural economies especially, unequal land rights are an important factor in the reproduction of gender inequalities as well as women's poverty (Wanyeki, 2003; Butegwa, 1991). This runs counter to debates within the World Bank and among academics about whether other factors are not more important than land in determining the problems of African agriculture in general and women's situation in particular (World Bank, 1975). There have been suggestions that in certain situations, factors such as labour, women's increased workloads, and their lack of access to capital, extension services and technologies are much stronger constraints than land (Himonga and Munachonga, 1991).

Part of the explanation for this debate is that agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa utilises small plots of land and very basic technology, with the result that labour is the most important input, and therefore the most critical household asset (Warner and Campbell, 2000; Miblinyi, 1997). Women's labour is critical to agriculture, and although statistics about women's labour need to be treated with care, it is significant that a study of agricultural labour in Mozambique found that 63 per cent of agricultural labour was undertaken by women. Labour on cassava, a highly labour-intensive staple, was mostly women's because of its food crop status and the importance of weeding labour in its cultivation (Arndt and Tarp, 2000).

Arguments discounting land as an issue for livelihoods have resonance especially in countries without a history of settler colonialism and high levels of land concentration and dispossession of local populations. Nevertheless, this position may be based on a narrow consideration of what constitutes a land tenure problem. A broader focus on processes of economic liberalisation, the growing individualisation and erosion of communal principles in land tenure, pockets of land concentration, increased competition for land in the forest, floodplain and peri-urban areas and the volume of land conflicts in some West African countries suggests that even in contexts of relatively abundant land, there are issues of security of tenure for an increasing number of people unable to access land on terms which are favourable for their livelihood activities. Some of these people are women, young people, so-called "stranger farmers" and in some cases, pastoralists.

Under customary law, both men and women could in principle acquire rights in land through membership of landholding groups, lineages and clans. However, women's tenure was often affected by a number of factors. As lineage members, their interests were adversely affected by the sexual division of labour in production. Land clearing, the main method of establishing the usufruct, was designated as men's work which women did only under extreme circumstances. This historical advantage has continued to benefit men through inheritance (Tsikata, 2003). This, combined with practices such as early marriage for women, their marital labour obligations to their husbands, clan exogamy and virilocal marital residence patterns have perpetuated women's limited ability to acquire the usufructory interest in land belonging to their own lineages. Moreover, gender discriminatory land allocations, and in some regions, a strong ideology that they are not farmers, have found women having much less land or the most infertile plots (Manuh *et al.*, 1997; Tsikata, 2003). These customary rules have been integrated into state laws, thus entrenching these gender inequalities in land tenure (Tsikata, 2008).

Economists have been concerned with women's lower productivity compared with that of men farming the same sized plots with the same crops. This has been attributed to the higher levels of tenure insecurities experienced by women (Morrison *et al.*, 2008), without fully accounting for their labour obligations, particularly the importance of household labour in agriculture (Mbilyini, 1997; Tsikata, 2003; Whitehead, 2002). Studies of cocoa growing areas in Ghana for example, have found that while women's participation in cocoa production varied, in general they were less securely established in cocoa farming, operated smaller farms and were less able to mobilise unpaid labour for their farms than men (Hill, 1963; Okali, 1983). At the same time, the importance of family labour has been demonstrated by the practice of men transferring portions of farms as gifts to their wives and children in their life-time, thus circumventing matrilineal rules of inheritance which excluded them. These transfers, when formalised through public thanksgiving ceremonies, gave women control over the land and specifically, the power to dispose of such land. There have not been many studies about how widespread these practices are at present, and there are indications that these gifts can be contested by lineage members on the death of the giver.

One of the clearest manifestations of land-labour linkages in agriculture is the growth of informal land markets. Studies have found that women in Ghana and Benin are increasingly farming rented land in situations of

increasing competition over land (Chimhowu, 2002; Amanor, 2002; Edja, 2001). The popularisation of share contracts is particularly significant. In colonial Ghana, migrants to the forest zone who could not purchase land for farming worked as labourers for the local land owners interested in cocoa cultivation. Colonial tax and forced labour policies brought in more migrant labour (Amanor, 2002).<sup>10</sup>

Three resources – labour, inputs and land – are implicated in share contracts, and each is rewarded with either a third of the proceeds from the harvest or the farm itself. There are differences in share contracts depending on region, the relations of production and the interface of land, capital and labour. The nature of the crop and when it is planted in the agreement cycle are further determining factors in the sharing formula. Changes observed in share contracts over the years include a shift from one-third of the harvest to half the crop as rent, and the application of existing arrangements to new crops, new types of land and to new parties, for example, the extension of share contracts from mining to coffee to cocoa and then to citrus and food crops (Lavigne-Delville, 2001). Increasingly, land transactions between close relations are taking the form of share contracts and other tenancy arrangements. At the same time, non-market labour and land transactions between spouses and between family members continue to be a critical source of land for certain social groups such as women, whose access to market-transacted land is compromised by their lack of financial resources.

### *Labour and land in the urban informal economy*

Livelihoods in rural Africa are linked with urban economies in ways which make it difficult to classify livelihoods as either urban or rural. With the pace of urbanisation, Africa is expected to become predominantly urban in 25 years, if trends continue (UN-Habitat, 2003). This has implications for the structure and organisation of livelihoods and therefore, their land and labour relations. Already, changes in land use patterns and terms of land access in peri-urban areas are giving some indications of the changing character of these relations.

In urban sub-Saharan Africa, livelihoods are largely located in the informal economy, which comprises “all forms of informal employment – that is, employment without labour or social protection – both inside and outside informal enterprises, including both self-employment in small unregistered enterprises and wage employment in unprotected jobs” (Chen,

2006). Economic liberalisation policies since the 1980s have resulted in the exponential growth of the urban informal economy and the contraction of the formal economy. Expanding areas of the informal economy are those at the level of sub-subsistence, predominantly populated by women. These have been distinguished from growth enterprises which are not increasing at the same pace as hawking, petty trading, and domestic work (Rogerson, 1997).

Women's predominance in the survivalist sections of the informal economy is linked with the history of colonial urbanisation. Colonial economic policies accelerated urbanisation and promoted predominantly male labour migration to mining, industrial and administrative centres in the colonies. According to Gugler (1989), in many African colonies, almost as a rule, domestic servants, secretaries and nurses were male. This and the discriminatory character of colonial education meant that women participated in the colonial economy on its margins, while performing the critical functions which reproduced the colonial labour force. This also made trading in goods and services an attractive option and resulted in female dominance in this area of the informal economy in many countries (Akyeampong and Agyei-Mensah, 2006). Today, the majority of women in urban areas make a living in the informal economy, mostly in self-employment.

The informal economy is also gendered on spatial lines. Although studies of home-based industries have shown that both men and women work from their dwellings in both affluent and poor neighbourhoods (Kazimbaya-Senkwe, 2004), more women than men do so. Thus women in the informal economy often experience the environmental and occupational challenges of their living space more intensely. These include overcrowding, poor sanitation, infrastructure, power, water, transport and other amenities. This problem, which is especially acute in peripheral urban areas, is exacerbated by planning traditions which have not acknowledged the fact that economic activities occur in areas designated as residential. On the other hand, homeless market traders and street vendors, the majority of whom are women, also face challenges of personal security and are vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and robberies in the markets and streets at night (Tsikata, 2009).

The growth of slums is a result of demographic urbanisation, which is manifested by population growth without industrialisation, employment creation and infrastructural development (Omari, 1988; UN-Habitat, 2003; Davis, 2004). Slums, which are both the dwellings and work-places of the majority of urban informal economy operators (UN-Habitat, 2003)<sup>11</sup>,

are a particular concern because they are characterised by poor housing, overcrowding, insecurity of tenure of both land and housing, and inadequate or missing basic services such as water and sanitation (Davis, 2004; see also UN-Habitat, 2003).

In peri-urban areas, land conversion has resulted in the massive loss of farmlands to housing developments. Local and migrant women constitute the majority of peri-urban farmers and are most affected by land conversion because of their lack of options and their inability to compete in the land markets (Owusu-Yeboah, 2003). Urban agriculture, either on home gardens or in the urban peripheries, is an increasingly important activity. Its growth in prevalence and economic significance since the early 1980s in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Lesotho, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa has been attributed to the impacts of economic liberalisation on the urban poor, although it has not been the sole preserve of the poor. In some of these countries, women have been major participants in urban agriculture, which has been critical to the survival of low income women (Rogerson, 1997).

To deal successfully with the livelihood challenges of slum dwellers requires attention to both the land and labour issues implicated in their livelihood activities. This includes tackling the terms of their access to land for housing and work as well as the informal labour regimes implicated in their production systems.

### *Reproductive activities in the consideration of land and labour in livelihoods*

Feminist economists have drawn attention to labour markets as gendered institutions. This is a departure from the tendency of mainstream economics to see labour markets as neutral spaces in which buyers and sellers meet. It implicates sex discrimination in labour markets as a systemic characteristic of labour markets, which bear and also reproduce gender inequalities (Elson, 1999). Feminist economists have also drawn attention to how the operation of labour markets ignores the fact that they constitute an important meeting point between the productive and reproductive economies. By externalising the costs of reproducing the labour force, labour markets treat the reproductive economy as a residual category. Women being predominantly responsible for the reproductive economy, this treatment accounts for their disadvantaged position in labour markets (Folbre, 1994; Elson, 1999). Rather

than fundamentally change the treatment of the reproductive economy, women workers are accommodated in the productive economy through informalised work which does not have the conditions and rewards of formal work (Elson, 1999).

Feminist anthropologists have also made invaluable contributions to livelihoods analysis by emphasising the importance of intra-household divisions of labour and resources such as land, as well as women's unpaid work. Their analysis has drawn attention to women's role in the everyday and long-term reproduction of the labour force (Edholm *et al.*, 1977; Whitehead, 2002; Razavi, 2007b). This analysis draws attention to the connections and inter-dependencies between the market and the unpaid reproductive economy and challenges the rational choice theories underpinning certain strands of mainstream economics (Himmelweit, 2002; Budlender, 2002; Razavi, 2007b; Grown *et al.*, 2000). An important element of this work is the recognition of labour as a produced input (Grown *et al.*, 2000).

In spite of their methodological limitations<sup>12</sup>, time use studies have provided some data on the differences in male and female participation in domestic or reproductive work. Women on average, were found to spend four hours a day as compared with less than one hour a day for men. Much of the work women do – food processing, cooking, collecting fuel and water, producing cooking utensils, sleeping mats and soap – is critical for the survival of their households. Moreover, it has often been pointed out that the time spent on these activities has implications for women's productive work (Whitehead, 1999; Omari, 1988). A study of rural households in Tanzania found that less than four per cent of men were involved in household work when their wives were not present (Omari, 1988).

While there is general agreement that women and girls do the most housework and therefore experience the associated time deficits, Sen (2008) has argued that the burden of care is a function of poverty status, location (rural or urban) and the household's status in relation to land. For poorer women, care work is critical for sustaining consumption but at the same time, it limits their choice of compatible income generation activities and their ability to participate in government programmes, social exchanges, rest, leisure, health care and recuperation.

The foregoing analysis which demonstrates the land labour linkages in the organisation of livelihoods, has not influenced economic policy sufficiently. Policy neglect of these issues constitutes the invisible rocks on which many

policies founder. For example, analyses of livelihoods which fail to take intra-household labour and land relations into account can only provide partial explanations for the inability of households to take advantage of incentives for increased production of cash crops (Warner and Campbell, 2000).

## **Summary, conclusions and some preliminary elements of a research agenda**

In this article, we have argued for the need to link land and labour relations in studies of livelihoods, which also need a gender perspective. The failure to link these in analysing livelihood activities and outcomes has resulted in sterile debates about which factors of production are most responsible for livelihood insecurities and poverty. The article notes that there are three separate bodies of useful literature on labour, land tenure and livelihood issues, which need to be integrated to generate analyses which can address some of the controversies in the literature. While the livelihood approaches have provided promising pointers with their framework of five livelihood resources, they have failed to incorporate social relations of production in their analysis and have instead focused on theorising and applying the concept of social capital, which has been contested by analysts from outside economics.

The article concludes that the livelihoods approaches and feminist critiques of mainstream analyses of livelihoods form a good starting point to address the issue of the interconnections between land and labour relations in gendered livelihoods. Four elements of the feminist critique stand out as key: the longstanding gender segregation and segmentation of livelihood activities; the disproportionate burden of care work on women; gender inequalities in the control of resources; and the role of the wider political economy in sustaining these.

A research agenda should aim at sharpening the conceptual tools for understanding and tackling land and labour issues in gendered livelihoods. This involves among other things, accounting for macro, institutional and micro elements of agrarian stagnation, informalisation of work and livelihood insecurities. A third element of this agenda is the exploration of gendered livelihood in the context of land tenure and labour insecurities, with a focus on both country and sector experiences. The agenda would not be complete without a focus on gender, reproductive labour and land tenure, and an effort to identify economic and social policies as well as institutional responses which promote gender equitable land and labour relations and livelihood

security. All such research has to be situated within the context of long-term economic liberalisation and the policy choices countries have made, as well as take full account of developments such as the HIV/AIDS crisis and conflicts, civil wars and post-conflict reconstruction.

In conclusion, pursuing these questions can contribute towards a greater understanding of land and labour in the construction of gendered livelihoods. Their pursuit may reveal how ongoing but separate efforts at addressing land and labour relations can be linked and engendered and how efforts at addressing gendered livelihood insecurities can be strengthened to ensure that they simultaneously reduce insecurity and promote gender equity and positive social transformation. It is hoped that some of these issues would inspire efforts to consolidate old knowledge and generate new analyses pushing the boundaries and contributing to the search for equitable social and economic policies. Such policies would promote full citizenship for women and men through decent work which is equitable, productive and guarantees a living wage and long-term employment security.

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## Endnotes

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2. Oppong (2001), Budlender (2002), Razavi (2007b).
3. Heteronormativity is a term used to refer to the institutionalisation of heterosexuality in a society. It is represented in societal attitudes, institutions and the law.

4. An attitude or policy that encourages child-bearing and can be manifested in the measuring of a person's worth by the number of children they have.
5. See Scoones (1998), Ellis (2000), Bebbington (1999).
6. See Chimhowu and Woodhouse (2006).
7. See Fine (1999) and Whitehead (2002) for useful critiques of the uses of the concept of social capital in the livelihoods approaches.
8. Diversification can be simply described as the presence of more than one livelihood activity within a person or a household's livelihood portfolio at any point in time.
9. Studies by feminist economists have also drawn attention to the relationship between men's control over land and their control over women's labour (Evers and Walters, 2000; Grown *et al.*, 2000).
10. Hill's (1963) economic survey of Akyem Abuakwa in Ghana in 1957 found that much of the cocoa (about 80 per cent of farms in some towns) was being managed by share contract labourers, the majority of whom were migrants from other parts of Ghana.
11. In Ethiopia and Chad, 99.4 per cent of the urban populations are slum dwellers. The West African coast (from Abidjan to Ibadan including Lagos) is estimated to have 70 million slum dwellers, described as "probably the biggest continuous footprint of urban poverty on earth" (Davis, 2004: 15).
12. See Whitehead (1999) for a critique of certain time-use studies which concluded that men did little work and were dependent on women.