



Wikigender Online Discussion

13-22 February 2012

Equal rights to resources: the key to empowering rural women.

But what's stopping it?

Full transcript of the online discussion

Please note that the newest comment appears first.

Estelle [35 minutes ago](#)

A lot of interesting comments there...for my part, I tend to agree strongly with two key points that came up quite a few times throughout the discussion: first, it is crucial that women are more involved in decision-making processes at all levels (and this implies of course training and educating them in speaking out); second, this can be fully achieved if men support women (and this implies training and educating men on what is at stake if they do not do it...). In a nutshell, it is necessary to change discriminatory attitudes through education and awareness-raising campaigns at all levels, and at the same time women need to be trained adequately to stand up for their rights so that they are able to claim them fully. This is one of the obstacles that rural women face when wanting to access resources in the same way that men do: lack of decision-making power and an inability to express themselves. More generally, I would say that working with men is not easy but it has worked: for example, EngenderHealth as a programme called "Men As Partners", where both women and men share the responsibility for maintaining strong reproductive health (See: <http://bit.ly/kzJhBF>). This would work very well in addition to the legal enforcement, if applied to access to resources too.

thai555gender [5 hours ago](#)

In Thailand the role of private sector is also important to promote occupations for rural/agricultural people in the form of Contract Farming such as the Chareon Phokpan Co.(CP) provide chickens, pigs, fishes to villagers to raise up, support finance, animal food, technical advice and control the hygienic and quality of animals. The company buys all animals back when they grow up at the standard weight. This project extended to neighboring countries such as Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia. With this strategy agriculturists have occupation, income and away from poverty. The company plays Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and reduces the burden of the government.

thai555gender [5 hours ago](#)

Rights of Thai women including rural women are protected by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (2007). In Section 30 "All persons are equal before the law and shall enjoy equal protection under law". Also in Section 85 "distributing the right to hold land fairly, enabling farmers to be entitled to the ownership or the right in land for agriculture thoroughly by means of land reform or by other means, and providing water resources for the distribution of water to farmers for use in agriculture adequately and appropriately".

Though there are laws and regulations to protect women in practice Thai women, especially those in rural areas, still lack opportunities and accesses to resources and services, especially financial services, sources for the distribution of water to farmers for use in agriculture adequately and appropriately, etc.



The current Thai government realized the problems and trying to solve the problems by issuing policy to raise up the quality of life of Thai rural women at the grass roots level by promoting the access to various sources of Funding, credit and soft loan for the poor people to have occupations and supplement occupations for the rural women after the farming season and dry season. Strengthen the role and responsibility of the communities (villages) by increasing the Village Fund 1 Million Baht to each village. Set up Fund for Women Development average 100 Million Baht for each province. Promoting education and training to increase knowledge and skills for women as the Philosophy of His Majesty the King Bhumibhol on Sufficiency Economy by increasing budget to the Capacity Development Fund of Small, Medium and Large Villages. The main idea is to introduce His Majesty Philosophy to people to practice in the middle way spending of their lives which the final end is the alleviation of poverty of people in rural area especially women. (1US\$ equal to 31 Baht)

Sources: Policy of Thai Government presented by Ms. Yingluck; Shinawatr, the Prime Minister to the Parliament on Tuesday 23 August 2011.

In conclusion, to solve problems of rural women from exploitation should let them look after themselves in their communities. Set up Cooperative in the village. Educate them to know their rights and provide them with lifelong learning and training in the area that suitable for them to tackle all the problems that may occur. The village/community should have enough budget to manage for the well beings of the members in the communities by the supporting of the government. The spending of budget should be transparency and responding to the demand of villagers for their well beings. If any problem occurs should have mechanism and process to solve or to tackle the issue. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play vital role as advisor and step in when they cannot solve problems.

The success story of Thailand is the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) Project. This project let the villagers think what they want to produce from the raw materials or from the indigenous wisdom in the village. Then the committee of the village helps them with managing, budgeting, training, packaging, marketing by selling to the nearby villages and extend to other provinces. Now some products are export abroad. People are happy and away from poverty.

For the developing countries in Asia and Africa Thai government has fellowships for them to come to study the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy and the Success of OTOP Project in Thailand by making request through the Thai Embassy or Consul Office in their countries.

Diana Zinkl [12 hours ago](#)

Many of the issues affecting the lives of rural women also influence urban women or men and children in rural areas of developing countries.

If you consider conditions in developed countries one hundred or one hundred and fifty years ago, the advancements that improved life for rural women also helped men and urban women. Public health improvements, transportation and communications improvements, constitutional and statutory voting rights, equality for other civil rights, like testifying in court, educational opportunities. This is consistent with outcomes of community development programs that generally are most successful when the entire community is assisted, rather than assistance flowing to select individuals.

Issues such as who inherits property and how the contributions of women are perceived are not solely legal, they represent culture changes. A change in law is not going to change culture—i.e., even if the law is changed to make it possible for women to inherit property, parents still decide to leave property to sons and nephews rather than daughters.

In developed countries, programs that help young girls, like Girl Scouts, lead to adults with more confidence and life skills. In the U.S. the 4-H program (www.4-h.org), backed by the United States Department of Agriculture, emphasizes life skills and provides recognition to children who display excellence in both traditionally male pursuits (wood working, animal rearing) and traditionally female pursuits (cooking, baking, sewing), as well as gender neutral activities, like art. While this may



contribute to stereotyping, “women’s pursuits” are recognized for their social value on par with “male” pursuits. Also, these basic skills can lead to employment in adulthood.

Anna Eliseeva [1 day ago](#)

In most developing countries land is a crucial agricultural asset which could be used as a tool for rural women’s empowerment. Equal land rights, customary and formal, could provide rural women with access to markets, productive resources and improve social status of female landowners within community. However, access to land is usually undermined by gender discriminatory social and legal practices, particularly inheritance law which varies considerably from country to country. Though some regions (e.g. Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America) have enacted legislation to guarantee women’s property and inheritance rights, on average women still experience discrimination in access to land. For example, Food and Agriculture Organization reports that women represent less than 5 percent of landowners in North Africa and West Asia and 15 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa.

I think elimination of gender gap in access to land could bring significant social and economic benefits. Provided with solid agricultural plots, women could increase their bargaining power within household that would ensure greater investments in children’s nutrition and education. Furthermore, land ownership could facilitate an access to bank loans and other resources required for food production. Having equal access to land and other resources rural women could become ‘leading actors’ in poverty reduction and economic development.

For further information and examples, please, refer to my wiki article on gender inequality and land rights: <http://wikigender.org/index.ph...>

1 person liked this.

Diana Iskreva [1 day ago](#)

My experience is in the sphere of water, sanitation and hygiene. At household level these all lay on the “fragile shoulders” of the women, but at decision-making and management level almost everything is in the “strong hands” of the men...

Women have to be empowered to seek information actively; to insist on participating in decision-making process from the very beginning; to be able to present their specific gender rights; to be trained not to feel shy to demand meeting their specific physiological needs in sanitation and hygiene – including the specific needs of their female children in schools. Women have to stand for their right to be trained and educated equitably with men, and take jobs relevant for their competence.

In Bulgarian society, these tasks are more difficult for girls born and raised in a rural family as the life in the villages is very much traditional. Rural girls since childhood learn observing the lives of their mother and grannies that their obligations are much more compared to their rights.

Oberoisunil1 [1 day ago](#)

India has a plethora of initiatives and laws that should have helped in the empowerment of women, but if latest statistics are any indication, they have failed miserably in achieving their objectives. Indian lawmakers had thought, for instance, that the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments reserving one-third seats in urban and rural local bodies’ elections would help women at the grassroots take control over their own destinies, however minimal. That hasn’t happened. Instead, men have ensured that their wives, sisters, mothers or aunts have stood for these elections as proxies for them, while power remains in the hands of these men. Besides, there are numerous government schemes through which women are supposed to have access to resources such as credit, but even here whatever credit women manage to get, ultimately it is spent by the menfolk. It is the stranglehold that menfolk have over women that needs to be broken, but that’s light years away in countries like India.

Leigh Gatt [2 days ago](#)

Question posed: What are the measurement issues surrounding this topic?



A short response is shown below. This is not exhaustive but illustrates some issues. Measurement indicators would ideally be both quantitative and qualitative:

1. Quantitative indicators such as:

- Ratio of males to females employed in key institutions/sectors (e.g. government institutions/banking sector) and of those employed: ratio in key areas of responsibility.
- Ratio of males to females seeking grants, and ratio receiving grants (this could also apply to land and credit).
- Other gender ratio measures regarding access to resources; health; literacy and so on.
- Number of institutions/sectors having gender relevant policies aimed at advantaging women.

Comment: one drawback to such indicators is that measurement can become a numbers game rather than an effective change of policy and subsequently, culture within the institution/sector. In addition, it would seem difficult to enforce the application of measurement tools within an institution/sector – accountability is an issue.

2. Qualitative indicators such as:

- Females' perceptions of their role and status within their village/township etc.
- Females' perceptions on areas for change.

Comment: one drawback to such indicators is that the current perceptions may be so shaped by the culture (e.g. of a woman's role), that respondents don't see that they have a choice to change and their responses may reflect that - thus skewing the results.

There are of course many other issues around the measurement that have been well documented. For example, around the availability of data; practicality of data collection methods; data sources; bias; who decides what to measure; etc.

A quick word on indicators: there are well documented issues around the types of indicators that might be used for gender measurement. For example, headline indicators are lately in use for selecting the most critical and highest level issues - but who decides what is most critical and important? Indices are often used for brevity of reporting - but how do you unbundle the findings in a way that can effect policy specific change?

In summary, I believe that gender measurement, to stimulate change, should be conducted at a state/institutional level as well as an individual level, using qualitative and quantitative indicators that show causal links (where possible). This may be the most effective way of showing systemic and cultural gender variances.

Chadwickhannah [3 days ago](#)

In the Pacific, particularly in Papua New Guinea, women undertake the majority of food production as well as being the principal carers for children. Whilst traditionally revered for their reproductive capacities and the contribution that they make to household economies, social change, widespread gender inequality and the discriminatory application of 'culture' and 'custom' contribute to women in rural areas having limited agency and their lack of protection from abuse and violence.

Some studies of domestic violence in the Pacific show that more than 40% of women suffer from violence and abuse, including physical, emotional, mental and financial. Throughout the region and in particular in rural areas, 'culture' and 'custom' are frequently invoked to justify discrimination against women and girl children. The customs and culture called upon are however, often distorted versions of the original, modified to suit the needs of the males of the family. In rural PNG some fathers have used the traditional practice of bride price as a justification for trading their daughters for cash or goods with transient logging and mine workers. This practice in increasingly monetized economies and cash poor



societies, characterised by severe gender inequality has led to the increasing commodification of girl children, it leaves women disempowered, unprotected and in a situation of effective indenture.

The discrimination suffered by women is having an impact on their children, particularly in rural areas. Low birth weight, maternal mortality and malnutrition are significant throughout the region and commonly linked to women's heavy workloads and certain 'cultural' practices. For example, in some parts of Fiji, women and girl children are reported to eat last.

Throughout the region, women's groups are increasingly taking a stand against the inequality and discrimination that they suffer and speaking up, however in line with Salamata Garbu's post, it is important that men be engaged in processes as well. Considering the strength of patriarchy throughout the region, it doesn't matter how empowered or educated women are of their rights, if their male counterparts are not in agreement, there will always be a limit to what can be achieved.

Social protection, in the form of conditional cash transfers (CCTs), is an important tool that can help to address these issues. In countries throughout Latin America, CCT programmes have been implemented with great success in rural areas where gender inequality is severe and have shown to have huge benefits for both women and their children.

Nadège Chell [3 days ago](#)

Il importe à mon avis déjà de revoir nos propres conceptions et héritage du concept de discrimination. Les femmes certes ont des problèmes d'accès aux ressources autant dans les sociétés du Nord que du Sud, mais il nous faut capitaliser les expériences spécifiques du sud et les introduire comme outils efficaces aux déficits politiques mondiaux. Nous-mêmes avons mis en place des réseaux de leaders au sud, voir notre site www.reso-femmes.org comme base d'observation d'expérience difficiles mais qui peuvent réussir dans la lignée de nos programmes de formation et surtout parce qu'ils interpellent en premiers lieu les politiques régionales, nationales et remontent ensuite jusqu'aux politiques internationales depuis notre siège à Genève). (démarche bottom up)

Les mesures existent, il faut donc mieux soutenir les contributions des chercheurs et les spécialistes des milieux et non pas que les gouvernements ou les sociétés civiles locales qui manquent d'instruments et d'outils à identifier les priorités d'action ou à quel niveau se manifestent véritablement les discriminations. Nous travaillons nous mêmes sur les points de vue des femmes et leurs stratégies dans leur quotidien et sur les expressions de leur revendication spécifique. Nadège Chell, Présidente

Badra Kamaladasa [4 days ago](#)

It is always the cultural beliefs that influence the position of women in the society, whether it is rural or urban. In Asian context not only men expect that women has limited rights over the resources, but women also believe it is so. This attitude has to be changed from the childhood of both sex for women to assume the due role in the society. It is not the equal rights but the due rights. There were recent laws to ensure the women also have equal access to the grants/credits the family receives from government. But her share was most of the time grabbed by husband if he was addicted to alcohol. The women in this situation must be strong enough to oppose this act. This is one area where empowerment is necessary.

salamatuGarba [4 days ago](#)

in as much as i agree with Moiyattu Banya that rural women are mostly not given a chance to speak and act on issues affecting them, i will also advocate strongly that more attention be paid to creating awareness to the menfolk to support equal opportunities to natural resources. Men who in most cases act on behalf of women do take the giant strides in decision making at all levels. If the men dont appreciate the value of women being economically empowered, then how would solutions be achieved? the men must first agree to even allow the rural women to incerease her literacy level and participate in economic empowerment activities. Therefore men and women empowerment should go hand in hand for greater results- from WOFAN- Kano, Nigeria and member of women for water partnership(wfwp)

ATTACHED FILES



Sonnie [4 days ago](#)

Certainly the factors contributing to the increased misery and poverty among African women are unemployment, lack of access to primary health care. If there are ways of providing jobs, food and basic drugs to these poor women their economic prowess and well being will definitely improve. Oftentimes lack of access to abortion, sterilization are depicted as the cause of poverty among African women. This is very untrue. The people who say this are not really in touch with African women otherwise they would have known that these women essentially from nothing except poverty. Peter, Nigeria

Nathalie Me-Nsope [4 days ago](#)

As much as I agree that external conditions constrain rural women's access to resources, my recent experience with rural women in West Africa pointed greatly to the fact that change must come from within. While eliminating the external inequalities is a relevant step, as Moiyattu and irenevanstaveren mentioned, these women have a good knowledge of their situation with respect to access to resources. However, they are not able to speak out. Working with them, I realized that it was so hard for them to verbalize or articulate their needs. They had no vision of a situation better than their current one. Each time a question was asked to get them to identify a need all they saw was improving the welfare of their husbands and to a lesser extent that of their children. It is also unfortunate that many of the projects that are supposed to help in the process of addressing some of these inequalities, do nothing or at best make conditions even worse. No gender analysis is done prior to a lot of these projects to identify clearly the needs of rural women. In one of my experiences, a project introduced a new variety of potato that was meant to "increase incomes for these women". However, the women still had to supply their full share of labor on the "household farm". Of course the household farm is a nice way of saying the "husband's farm" because he controls both the output and the revenue from sales". The project helped women get a piece of land, where communally, they cultivated potatoes. However, it took about 8km to fetch water to water the potato gardens. Questioning the women on how the introduction of potatoes has been beneficial to them, their response was "we have been able to feed the family well, our husbands love the potatoes". In an area with no schools or healthcare center, it is had to see the cycle breaking. If you do not realize a need, you can't even begin to look for the resources that will bring about a change in situation. Suppose that all the external barriers to women's access to and control over land is removed, they might not even know how that can help. There is a need for grassroot initiatives that will sensitize and mobilize these women!

Rchandler82 [5 days ago](#)

What measures are being taken to provide financial support for rural women interested in running for public office, both at the international and national level?

1 person liked this.



Moiyattu Banya [6 days ago](#)

@Wikigender @UN_CSW The issue is not about empowerment but by listening to those women in the rural regions. THEY themselves have the power to change, they know their issues ranging from lack of access to economic, to educational opportunities for younger girls. Create arenas for these women to express their needs to their governments, and also for them to build capacity with other rural women communities to advocate for their rights.

irenevanstaveren [6 days ago in reply to Moiyattu Bany](#)

I largely agree with you, Moiyattu. Empowerment cannot be brought from outside but needs to come from within. However, this can only happen when both internal and external conditions are favourable to speaking out. For internal conditions, I refer to Amartya Sen who explained that poor rural women often suffer from 'adaptive preferences': they have learned not to want much, not to express their thoughts and feelings, not to demand things from the state and not to negotiate in the household. For external conditions, I would like to draw attention to discriminating social norms that constrain women's behaviour in society and the economy and politics. What makes it even more difficult for poor rural women to simply demand what they want, is that the internal and external constraints re-inforce each other.....So, what I think is needed are grassroot initiatives, like SEWA in India, to consciously develop the internal and external conditions for poor rural women to speak themselves out, and thereby, to empower themselves.



Moiyattu Bany liked this

Raul Hopkins [6 days ago](#)

Dear all, I found your comments very useful. Let me share this article closely related to the ongoing discussion.

<http://www.e-agriculture.org/n...>

Best regards,

Raul

Nkirubanjoko [1 week ago](#)

In Nigeria, one of the factors affecting the development of rural women is the lack of data. Women's access to and control over property varies from region to region and in some regions have changed, while other regions are experiencing gradual changes. Determinants of women's control over resources also varies from one region to another. While some are socioculturally determined, others are either socio-politically, socio-economically, religiously or educationally determined. We need facts on all these to determine what actions governments, donors, UN bodies and civil bodies should take to address extreme discrimination against women and girls in rural places. It will be surprising to find out that it is women that are at the helms of affairs of discriminating against fellow women and girls. What data do we have on women development ten years ago and now? Very scanty. What decisions and actions are to be taken without current statistics on women development? Ineffective ones.



Moiyattu Bany [5 days ago in reply to Nkirubanjoko](#)

I have to agree Nkirubanjoko data is extremely important when advocating for our needs as African women. Unfortunately the bandwidth of organizations to have these tools are few and far between. You may find this article written by make every women count on a tool they utilized in tracking women's political involvement in African elections in 2011. It could be a start to thinking about best practices, and challenges around the influence on data.

angini ★ [1 week ago](#)

There are also issues of data collection and indicator creation here. There is a lack of quality data in some countries and data for rural regions is even more difficult to obtain.

In terms of measuring well-being for rural women, there should be a very good system of measurement at the country level. Indicators of progress should be chosen in a bottom up consultation process and reported regularly.



Use of new technologies can help to collect survey data and also empower women. However, there are some policy issues here such as illiteracy, infrastructure and electricity access which need to be looked at for both women and men in order to make this possible.

Finally, a powerful way to empower rural women and to change some of these discriminatory social institutions is to convince men that allowing equality of access is in their interest, the interest of the community and for sustainable development.

irenevanstaveren [1 week ago](#)

I am Irene van Staveren, professor of Pluralist Development Economics and expert in feminist economics. My first contribution on the topic is that we need to go back one step further: not access to resources is the key to empowering rural women, but eliminating discriminating social norms. My research, as well as that of some of my former PhD students (Ramzi Mabsout and Bilisuma Dito) has indicated that such gendered institutions - both formal ones, such as inheritance rights, and informal ones, such as practices of wife beating - are the key constraint to rural women's empowerment. They do not only constrain women's access to resources, but also their agency. This has two consequences: gendered institutions limit women's control over resources once they have access, and they affect women's self-esteem and confidence in using the resources for improving their own wellbeing, even if they are in control.

My second contribution to the topic is that my institution, the ISS (International Institute of Social Studies, of Erasmus University Rotterdam), has recently made available a free online database called Indices of Social Development (www.IndSocDev.org) which includes a Gender Equality Index (GEI). This index is available for almost every country in the world and for five year periods between 1990 and 2010. The GEI is a useful tool for cross-country analysis of gender inequality and is broad-based, going beyond existing gender indices focusing on either capabilities or wellbeing achievements or institutions. Also the underlying indicators are made available on the website, which include both formal and informal gendered institutions as well as indicators for access to resources.

ATTACHED FILES



Jackline Gakii Kaburu [1 week ago](#)

In some of our African setting women have been viewed as part of man's property therefore they are not entitled to property ownership. This has led to disrespect of women especially by men who are seen as "the better sex". Women being viewed as property have no say as far as financial decisions are concerned. Women have been enslaved in marriages as they are property to men. Socially they have been abused for example to extents of being inherited when the husbands die. Girls get married off to old men even before completing school so as to generate dowry which will be used by their brothers as dowry to get them wives.

Women empowerment begins with girl child education which has served as perfect example that women are equally competitive as men. Through community outreach programs, media, magazines, churches the society can be educated on the importance of equal rights to property for both men and women. The establishment of SACCO offering credits to women with small interests rates has empowered women financially an example is Tigania Women SACCO in Tigania East District- Meru county. Women should also be encouraged to participate in local and national leadership and/ government. Community help programs targeting women should be encouraged and supported as they have helped women in both rural and urban areas.



The government should set aside funds at constituency level for women development which should be separated from funds for men. The one third which has been set for women- in Kenya should be implemented. The government and UN should come in to assist girls who are married to older men without them realizing it. Child labor should be banned completely as those mostly affected are girls in rural setting. Government should place mechanisms to ensure women have equal rights to inheritance.

AFPPD [1 week ago](#)

Getting women involved in governance, starting at the local (village) level is one way to ensure their right to resources. Women's lack of representation in the political arena has a significant impact on their limited access to resources, healthcare, education, training, employment and economic opportunities. It is estimated that women constitute less than 20% of members of parliament worldwide. However, averages vary significantly between and within regions with many countries having no women representatives in their parliament. Therefore, it is imperative that women be encouraged to participate in the political process, that they be empowered to engage in politics, and be groomed for positions of political leadership in order to increase women's representation in governance. Governments, donors, UN bodies and civil society can help realize this goal by ensuring girls' education starting at the village level, and working to identify and develop the capacity of emerging women leaders for participation in governance at the local, state and national levels.

Somali [1 week ago](#)

Discriminatory social institutions, such as laws and practices that restrict women's access to resources or practices such as early marriage play a significant role in shaping women's economic and social outcomes. These discriminatory social institutions are often more entrenched in rural areas and policies to address these dimensions of gender inequality often fail to reach rural populations. Even where women are afforded equal legal rights to land and property in national constitutions or land legislation, discriminatory attitudes or the failure to change administrative practices in rural areas or the lack of resources allocated to the implementation of laws and policies may mean that rural women continue to lose out. This discrimination has critical flow-on effects for broader development outcomes including food security. As was shown in an earlier An At Issue paper (<http://bit.ly/x7U3rM>) by the OECD Development Centre, in countries where obstacles to women's ownership rights are widespread, the levels of hunger and malnutrition are also high. In countries where women lack any right to own land there were on average 60 percent more malnourished children compared to countries where women have some or equal access. For example, there are on average 60% more malnourished children in countries where women lack any right to own land, as opposed to countries where women do have some or equal access to land. Where women lack any access to credit, the number of malnourished children is 85% above average. The research also found that in countries where women have few land rights, the proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water is on average lower as well.

The OECD Development Centre will be hosting a side event at CSW with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland and Government of Kenya to discuss these issues further and to present new findings linking discrimination social institutions, food security and agricultural production. Key themes from this online discussion will feed into the event. More information can be found here <http://bit.ly/x7U3rM>

Areeya Rojvithee [1 week ago](#)

It is good initiated to study this issue as Thailand is developing country in Southeast Asia and also an agricultural economy. Women plays vital role as bread winner in the family working hard in the fields/ plantations as well as looking after the family and solving all the problems of the family. The voices of mothers in the family are strong. So, I am not sure that Thai culture that respect "mother" and put all the burden upon their shoulder is in a way for them to be exploited. There are cases in Thailand concerning rights of their lands, houses, prices of agricultural products, livestock etc , women fought and finally won the cases because of the support of civil society, NGO and community.



Wikigender liked this