



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE

Changing Gender Relations?
Women's Experiences of Land Rights
in the Case of the Land Tenure Reform Program in Rwanda.

av

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a compilation of a *kappa*, a binding text of six chapters, and four related papers. The overall aim is to explore women's experiences of land rights in the context of the Land Tenure Reform Program (LTRP) in Rwanda. In order to fulfil this aim, the thesis addresses research questions concerning how the process of the LTRP was implemented and how it can be understood, and how women's experiences of the land reform can be described and analysed. Other research questions focus on the conflicts some women face when claiming their rights to land and the experiences of women living in polygamous relationships.

The empirical study is based on fieldwork conducted in Rwanda in 2012 and 2013. It is mainly an explorative, mixed methods study combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through structured interviews with 480 women from agricultural households. For the qualitative data, 23 semi-structured interviews and 9 Focus Group Discussions were conducted with local level policy implementers, women, and members of women's associations.

Theoretically, the thesis is guided by triangulation of feminist/gender and bargaining approaches and a wide range of previous studies, which provided an overall orienting lens through which the material could be understood.

The study findings stress the efforts of the Government of Rwanda to ensure land rights for women through the elaboration of gender-sensitive land laws and policies that have challenged some gender norms and ideologies related to male supremacy. However, the implementation of these laws and policies still face challenges. Most of the challenges identified stem from the perpetuation of customary practices and deeply embedded socio-cultural norms and beliefs that often clash with the intentions of new laws and policies. This study emphasizes that legal reforms do not completely undo the old forms of discrimination. Instead, situations are created in which new forms of inequality are emerging and some old practices of discrimination are persisting. Although it differs from country to country, this study concludes that gender norms and ideologies affecting the implementation of gender-equal laws and policies are not only of concern in Rwanda but an important issue worldwide.