

Case Study 3. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW): Gender, Land and Asset Survey (GLAS) Project

Countries: Uganda and South Africa

Year(s) of project/ study: 2007 – 2012

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Background: The Gender, Land and Asset Survey (GLAS) is a gendered assessment of men's and women's rights over assets – including ownership, documentation and control over use, transfer and transactions – in Uganda and South Africa. The GLAS, developed and piloted by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Associates Research Uganda, Limited and University of KwaZulu-Natal, is a survey methodology for collecting and analyzing individual- and household-level quantitative data on women's rights over assets and their potential determinants. These studies point to significant gender gaps with respect to women's asset ownership in both countries and sheds light on more detailed aspects of asset ownership, documentation, control and decision-making authority over assets. The results also point to significant nuances in the nature of the gender asset gap and its drivers.

Methodology: Informed by qualitative research conducted in the study areas, the GLAS offers two main methodological advances: First, it asks not only about ownership but also about use and decision-making over assets. Second, it collects sex-disaggregated data by asking a woman and a man of the same household separately about her/his own ownership, use, decision-making, and documented claims over particular assets. To assess different aspects of ownership, the GLAS captures:

- **Perceived ownership:** GLAS data assesses which assets both male and female respondents consider as belonging to themselves and/or other persons
- **Joint ownership:** GLAS data describes the extent of joint ownership of assets such as land, housing, material assets, livestock, and financial assets
- **Documentation beyond land title:** The survey asks about multiple forms of documentation beyond a land title or certificate of registration, including purchase agreement, rental agreement, receipts, wills, and written permission from traditional authorities

Findings:

- **Uganda:** Headship emerges as a significant determinant of women's asset rights. Female headship is associated with higher likelihood of land ownership but weaker decision-making authority concerning house transactions. The findings lend support to the evidence in the literature that women, especially wives and partners of male household-heads, are particularly disadvantaged with respect to rights to sell, bequeath, or gift assets. Although a substantial proportion of women who report owning land and housing say they do so jointly, there is substantial disagreement within couples as to whether ownership is joint.
- **South Africa:** Women heads of households emerge as having comparable asset rights to male heads and much stronger rights than women who live in male-headed households. Among women, being divorced, widowed, separated, or cohabiting (but not married) is also linked to stronger asset rights, though the improvements are not as dramatic as for female headship.

For more information:

Jacobs, Krista, Sophie Namy, Aslihan Kes, Urmilla Bob, and Vadivelu Moodley. 2011. **Gender, Land and Asset Survey South Africa: Gender Differences in Asset Rights in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.** International Center for Research on Women. Available at: <http://www.icrw.org/publications/gender-land-and-asset-survey-south-africa>

Kes, Aslihan, Krista Jacobs, and Sophie Namy. 2011. **Gender, Land and Asset Survey Uganda: Gender Differences in Asset Rights in Central Uganda.** International Center for Research on Women. Available at: <http://www.icrw.org/publications/gender-land-and-asset-survey-uganda>

For questionnaire(s) or survey instrument(s), visit the project website at: <http://www.icrw.org/where-we-work/measuring-property-rights-gender-land-and-asset-survey>

Feedback on case study 3 methodology based on an interview with Krista Jacobs:

1. What are the unique gender-asset questions/indicators you collected in your survey instrument that were particularly valuable or reflective of methodologies you would like to see replicated in future work and why?

The GLAS offers two main methodological innovations. First, it asks not only about ownership but also about a spectrum of asset rights, including use and decision-making over assets. Second, it allows for disaggregation of data by sex by asking each woman and man separately about her/his rights over particular assets. The GLAS also collects information on joint ownership and asset rights from individual women and men from the same household to assess the prevalence of joint asset holding, especially of land and housing, among women and to compare women's experience and reports of joint asset ownership with men's.

2. What are the unique gender-asset questions/indicators you either collected in your survey instrument that you would have implemented differently?

Some of the unique gender-asset questions and indicators we used included:

- *Use rights:* Use needs to be more completely captured, both in terms of uses beyond agriculture and residence (for example in businesses) and in terms of any conditions on the use (asking permission, duration, payments, restrictions on planting, etc.).
- *Hypothetical questions about assets were sometimes problematic:* Examples include, "If you wanted to purchase more land, could you?" or, "If you were to sell this asset, would you need permission?" Survey enumerators reported that it was common for respondents to have difficulty answering hypothetical questions.
- *Valuation of assets:* Respondents had problems assigning values to their assets, especially land.
- *How a person's social and familial relationships influence their asset rights:* In the GLAS, these relationships would only arise if a land or housing conflict had occurred, if one of these parties' permission was required for permission to make a transaction on an asset, or if women identified one of the parties as a source for acquiring land they used or owned.
- *Communal resources:* For several communal and natural resources (e.g., wetlands, boreholes, forests, pasture, community gardens) the GLAS asked women and men whether s/he used the resource, how often, for what purpose, whether income was generated, and what barriers existed to accessing or using the resource (e.g. overcrowding, far away, poor quality). After field implementation, it was felt that it would have yielded more complete information to lead the questioning with resources people get from communal and resources (firewood, water, sand, grazing, medicinal plants, etc.) and then move to asking what lands these come from and the respondent's relationship to that land.

3. Asset-gender dynamics are heterogeneous, complex and rooted in social, economic and institutional factors—are there any background factors that relate strongly to gender-asset dynamics that you either collected or wish you had collected?

The GLAS collected information on several contextual and structural factors relevant to gender and asset rights.

- Composition of each respondent's natal family, how often the respondent interacts with them, and whether anyone from the natal family lives in the same community.
- Inheritance patterns through which persons acquire land and other assets.
- People's perceptions about the socioeconomic value of land collected through questions about how owning or losing land relates to familial and social relationships and economic security.
- Barriers to acquiring new land or new cattle, including economic, familial barriers, traditional/customary barriers, logistical barriers, and lack of supply.
- People's knowledge of what Ugandan statutory law says about women's asset rights as well as respondents' opinions about women's asset rights.

However, there were several relevant factors about which the GLAS did not collect full information.

- Information about the roles and involvement of family, traditional leaders, or local government in managing or allocating land or handling property disputes
- Roles of current and past partnerships in women's acquisition or loss of assets or rights to them.
- People's understandings of the system(s) of rules around land in which they see themselves as operating.

4. Are there any particularities about the region or country of implementation which you think are important to recognize in relation to the gender-asset indicators you collected which are important for other researchers to be aware of? Did any of these context- or country-specific factors influence your survey implementation methodology, and how?

- *Ambiguous definitions of partnership:* Ambiguous definitions of partnership and multiple forms of marriage are common in sub-Saharan Africa.
- *Widows as a sizeable and different sub-population:* Female household heads and widows are overlapping populations that are both sizeable and believed to be in unique and weaker positions in regards to assets.
- *What women can say about land:* In some cases, women do not see themselves or are not seen as having anything to say or having sufficient knowledge about land that they should engage in participating in the survey
- *Policy and current events:* During the data collection of the GLAS, many communities in central Uganda were experiencing violence and unrest between tenants and landlords. The tension and suspicion regarding land may have influenced willingness to participate and especially to discuss land values, transactions, and conflicts.
- *Sensitivity around inheritance:* In the region of Uganda where the GLAS took place it is considered bad manners to mention or discuss death as it may be considered as wishing or hastening the person's death.

5. What do you see as the largest methodological challenges in collecting gender-asset data in general and how can we as a research community work towards filling this gap?

- *Different ideas of land systems:* How people describe the rules and systems by which land is managed, allocated, and transferred do not easily align with the rules and systems that are defined by statutory law (or possibly even customary law).
- *Tradeoffs between comparability and relevance of measures of asset rights:* There is a need for gendered measures of asset rights to be comparable and somewhat standardized in order to advance the field and to

compare women's asset rights in different settings and tenures but some questions and measures may lose their relevance in different settings.

- *Focusing on particular sub-groups of women:* “Different kinds of women” – for example, female heads of household, widows, or wives of male heads – have different asset rights.