



Joint Certification and Household Land Allocation: - Towards Empowerment or Marginalization?

Project leader: Stein Holden, Department of Economics and Resource Management, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB)

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The research will take place in two regions in Southern Ethiopia where joint land certificates to husbands and wives have been issued since 2005 based on new land laws that were enacted from 2004. Women traditionally have a weak position in this part of Ethiopia and have been considered the property of men, as evidenced by a widow being required to remarry the brother of her late husband. The step from being mere property to becoming equal owner can therefore be long and tough. The project benefits from having a detailed baseline survey in 2007 when the reform was under way with a special focus on the intra-household and gender effects of the

reform (Holden and Tefera a, b). This survey covered more than 600 household of which 15% were polygamous households. The survey included separate interviews of husbands and wives and the new project aims to repeat this exercise to get good data on the changes that have taken place from 2007 to 2012. This should be a long enough period to start to see impacts of the reform. The individual data collection includes questions to assess the participation and decision-power of men and women in land-related issues, knowledge of the law, and perceptions, opinions and experience questions such as experience of land-related disputes. In addition a bargaining game experiment will be used to assess how far apart independent and joint decisions of husbands and wives turn out and to compare this with their real life decisions. Another experiment will be used to assess whether there is an “endowment effect” causing men to value the land more than their wives and therefore being unwilling to give it up. Key informants such as local conflict mediators will be used to assess the extent of within family disputes and the legal support provided to handle such disputes.



Fig.1. A women's group in southern Ethiopia discussing land rights issues.

The overall objective of the project is to identify the impacts of the recent land law and administrative reforms in Southern Ethiopia where land certificates were distributed jointly to husbands and wives in a setting where women traditionally had very weak rights and were considered the property of their husbands. More specifically the project aims to assess how the reform has affected the participation and relative bargaining power of husbands and wives in land-related decisions, the extent of intra-household and extended family disputes over land and the outcomes of such disputes, how the reform has affected land allocation when there are changes in marital status of households, and finally how the reform has affected individual land valuation.



Fig. 2. A man showing his land certificate (green booklet) in Sashemene, Oromia Region.

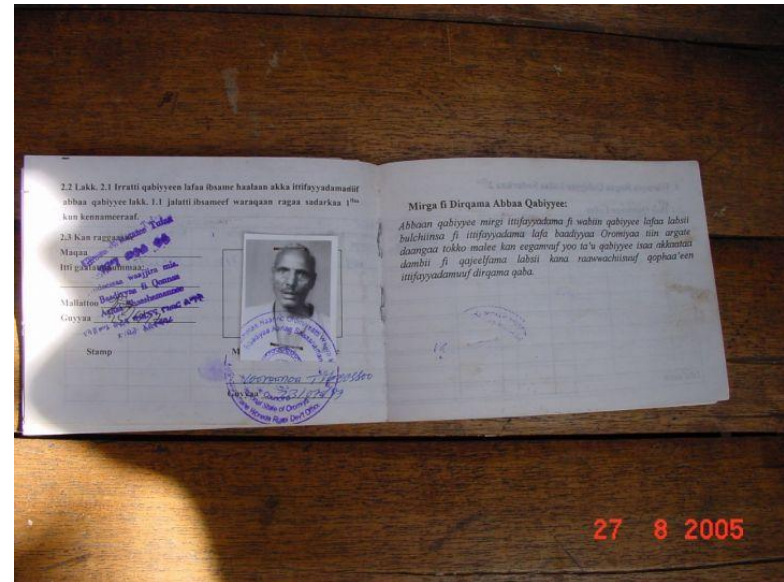


Fig. 3. Picture of the head of household inside the land certificate in Oromia region.

References:

Holden, S. T. and Tefera, T. (2008). From Being Property of Men to Becoming Equal Owners? Early Impacts of Land Registration and Certification on Women in Southern Ethiopia. . UN-HABITAT, Shelter Branch, Land Tenure and Property Administration Section. Nairobi. **See:** [Link](#)

Holden, S. T. and Tefera, T. (2008). Early Impacts of Land Registration and Certification on Women in Southern Ethiopia. Summary Report, UN-HABITAT, Shelter Branch, Land Tenure and Property Administration Section. Nairobi. **See:** [Link](#)

Contact details:

Email: stein.holden@umb.no

Homepage: www.steinholden.com