

Tenure Insecurity, Gender, Low-cost Land Certification and Land Rental Market Participation in Ethiopia

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Summary

Can low-cost and pro-poor land reforms be implemented and scaled up in Africa? Can such reforms even be beneficial to female-headed households who traditionally have weak property rights? This recently published paper in *Journal of Development Studies* provides new evidence on the impacts of low-cost land registration and certification on female-headed households in Tigray region in Ethiopia.

Female-headed households in Ethiopia are typically widowed or divorced females with a family responsibility and a farm to manage as a basis for their livelihood. Cultural norms imply that females in Ethiopia do not cultivate the land with oxen but rely on male children or male relatives for this task or they rent out the land under a sharecropping arrangement entitling them to a share of the output. Land certification has contributed to strengthening of the individual households' land rights and particularly so

for female-headed households who had weak property rights because of their limited ability to farm the land themselves.



Figure 1. A man holding up his land certificate in Tigray. Women typically positioned below the men.

A tenure security effect depends on the initial level of tenure insecurity. The baseline survey in 1998 revealed that 51% of the sample households feared losing their land due future land redistributions, indicating a high level of tenure insecurity based on the land policy where land redistributions within communities have been an important element.

Our study revealed that the receipt of land certificates improved their tenure security and made them more willing to rent out their land. The analysis of household panel data revealed increased land rental activity after the land certification and particularly female-headed households became more active in the land rental market as landlords and rented out a larger share of their land. Female-headed households were estimated to on average to increase their area rented out by 1.1-1.6 *tsimdi* (1 *tsimdi*=0.25 ha) in response to receiving a land certificate if they already were renting out some land and by 0.23-0.36 *tsimdi* if they were initially not renting out any land. Having a certificate may thus have strengthened the bargaining power of these female-headed households in the land rental market and this may have a poverty-reduction effect.

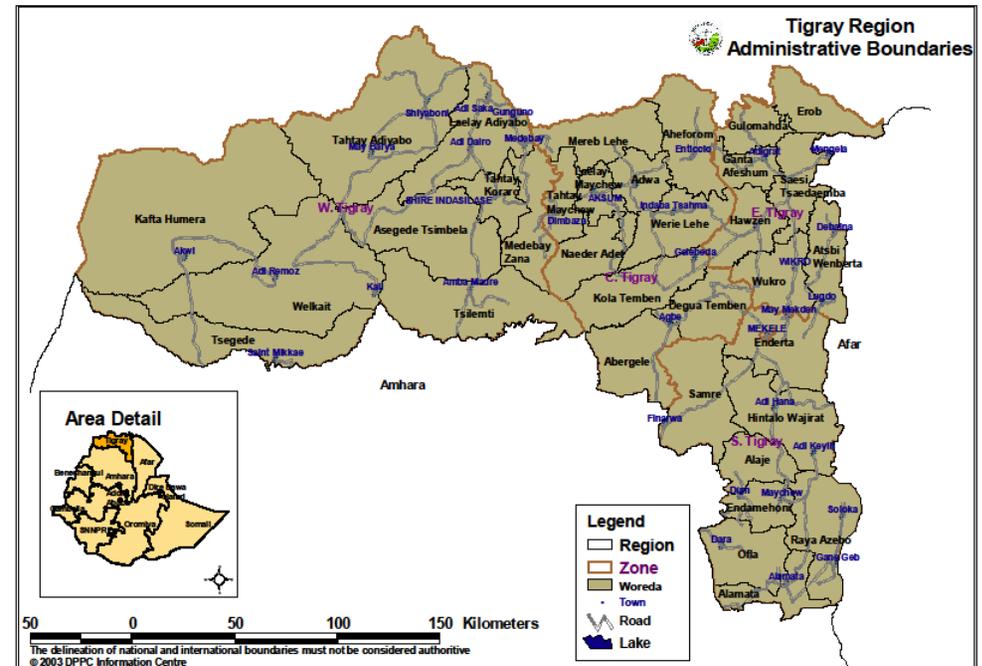


Figure 2. Map of Tigray region.



Figure 3. Ploughing with oxen is carried out by men in Ethiopia