THE PARADOX OF GENDER EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The Role of Land Rights

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Abstract: This Element provides an in-depth analysis of the role of women’s ownership of and access to land in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in determining gender equality and women’s economic and social outcomes and gives suggestions to inform effective gender-sensitive land policies. Using cross-sectional regression analysis, we find that ownership of land by women positively contributes to women’s absolute employment. Conversely, results from pairwise correlation show that a lack of ownership of land by women is highly correlated with increased women’s unemployment. Despite these findings, the proportion of women who own land in SSA is lower than that of men. Moreover, women usually acquire land through either purchase from the market system or marriage, and even then their rights of ownership are usually very limited and precarious compared to the rights of men.

Keywords: land inheritance, land ownership, land access, gender equality, sub-Saharan Africa

JEL classifications: B54, J16, J21, O55

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