Common Property, Women’s Livelihood and Large Scale Agriculture Investment in Ghana

Paper presented by

Gertrude Dzifa Torvikey/Bernadette Araba Adjei
Institute of Statistics, Social and Economic Research,
University of Ghana

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Introduction

- Ghana has become one of the global hotspots for large scale agriculture investments
- These investments are altering the opportunity space for men, women and youth
- For women, the implication is seen in changing rights and common property access (Tsikata and Yaro, 2011)
- The paper explores in what ways women’s common property user rights can co-exist with large scale agriculture investments
Statutory vrs. Customary Land Governance in Ghana

- Ghana’s land governance typifies a plural legal system
  - Statutory
  - Customary

- Statutory seeks to regularize the customary system to promote investment

- Customary is derived from the tradition and customs of the various communities

- While in Ghana all natural resources are held by the State, land does not feature here and currently, 80% of the lands are customarily held (Aryeetey et al., 2007)
Women’s Relationship to Land

- A women’s land access and control remain transient more or less and dependent on relations of affinity or consanguinity which impacts land rights, control and access (Dowuona-Hammond, 2008).

- Common property remains the most ‘secured’ source for land-based livelihoods for many women.

- However, with the incidence of titling which accompanies large scale agriculture, enclosures are occasioned and with it the diminishing of women’s access to the commons.
Common Property Users vrs. Large Scale Agriculture Investments

- Land formalisation within the spirit of communality is not a novelty in Ghana
  - Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the Environmental Protection Agency Act (1994) Act 490
  - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Projects

- However, the land acquisitions do not recognise secondary users as conceptual right holders, hence the enclosures and the physical prevention of women to access previous commons
What is Possible under this Regime?

- Accommodation of livelihoods of common property users with the investment models

- Continuous dialogue in the frameworks of EIA and CSR

- Incorporation of indigenous agriculture practices within the usual monoculture investment models (see Tsikata and Yaro, 2013)
Conclusion

- Commercial agriculture can co-exist with common property if the latter is properly conceptualised.

- The possibilities of a total hiving off of communal user practices and rights in cases of large scale commercial agriculture and its impacts on sustainable livelihoods for rural women should be a pertinent concern in any large scale agriculture investments.

- As much as this is advocated, there is the caveat that where accommodation is considered, the communal user is not in principle being given permanent rights that can be devolved or transformed into titles.
Thank you
References


