10-10-2017

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Keywords
gender, Uganda, land, water
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Introduction

Land and water are arguably the most important natural resources in most developing countries. These two inextricably linked resources are vital for sustaining life, promoting development, and maintaining the environment. The relationship between water and land is of equal significance and usually it is almost impossible to separate one from the other. Water is necessary for most productive uses of land. At the same time, the use of land has major impacts on both the quality and quantity of water resources. In other words, decisions regarding the use and allocation of one resource directly or indirectly impact the use and allocation of the other (Hodgson 2004). Over 80 percent of Uganda’s people depend on land and water resources for their livelihoods, either directly in the form of agriculture, fishing, and forestry, or indirectly through services like trade, tourism, transport and communication. Although the country is experiencing rapid growth in the industrial sector through agro-processing, water electricity supply, and manufacturing, all these sectors equally depend on land and water resources. About 50 percent of households’ wealth in Uganda is held in the form of land, and land provides the majority of employment opportunities.

Agriculture alone contributes 22.9 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while industry and services contribute 18 percent and 39 percent of the GDP respectively. The agricultural sector employs over 66 percent of the working population of which the majority are women (UBOS 2012) and is the major source of household income for most rural households in the country. It also contributes over 90 percent of the nation’s total export earnings (UBOS 2010). The livelihoods of most of Uganda’s rural poor depend on the ability to access productive land-based resources; therefore secure access to land and water rights, agricultural inputs, technology, training and markets is extremely important in improving rural household incomes, improving food and nutrition security, and ensuring sustainable land use in Uganda.

While it has been relatively easier for women to make some gains in education, access formal employment, and participate in politics, achievements in land rights have been rather difficult because of the male-centered nature of land tenure systems in Uganda. Despite several ambitious land-reform processes and gender-sensitive policies created by the Government of Uganda, indigenous and customary land inheritance practices driven by patriarchal norms persist, and women’s rights to land are primarily through husbands or male kin. Lack of secure access to land hinders women’s access to other vital resources like water. However, land without water access is unproductive for agriculture and most other land-based economic activities (e.g. forestry). Traditionally, women (and children) in Uganda are responsible for all household domestic activities that have a strong dependence on land and water. Over 90 percent of domestic water is collected by women and children, especially in rural areas of Uganda. Besides domestic labor, women significantly contribute to agriculture: they do 85 percent of the planting, 85 percent of the weeding, 55 percent of land preparation and 98 percent of all food processing (IFAD 2000). Decisions to market are usually made by men (70 percent), or are made jointly (15 percent). Traditional ownership rights to land are vested in men, while women can only exercise user rights through permission obtained from male land owners. As women often have unique and valuable contributions to make toward the efficient use and governance of land and water resources due to the intimate nature of their involvement with these resources, gender issues must be mainstreamed in all land and water governance reforms to enable equal representation and participatory decision-making, especially among rural women, from the local to the national level.

Gender Mainstreaming in Land and Water Governance

Definition of Concepts

In order to understand the significance of mainstreaming gender in the development process, it is imperative to first understand the meaning of the key concepts, which are often interchangeably used and/or misrepresented in many governance debates. ’Gender’ refers to a range of socially constructed roles, behaviours, attributes, aptitudes and relative power associated with being female or male in a given society at a particular point of time (Esplen 2009). In many male-dominant societies, gender debates have been misunderstood as only referring to women’s rights — yet the real debate should be about both male and female rights and responsibilities in a given society.

Gender mainstreaming is not a new concept; it has been used in diverse contexts (especially in development literature) but until now has been poorly defined and interpreted in several different ways. Due to the significant degree of confusion that exists in understanding this concept, this study adopts a working definition of the term ’gender mainstreaming’ traced from the Fourth World Conference on Women (held in Beijing in 1995), where development agencies agreed to adopt gender mainstreaming as “a new strategy for ensuring the incorporation of gender perspectives in all areas and sectors, and at all levels, to promote gender equality.” The strategy would go beyond focusing on women in isolation to look at both women and men as actors in, and as beneficiaries of, development, and how their rights are defined relative to each other (UNDP 2006).

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The term ‘governance’ has gained great usage in contemporary public administration. Toward the end of the twentieth century, the term gained the prominent attention of donor agencies, social scientists, philanthropists and civil society (UNESC 2006). The concept of governance was first traced in the 1989 World Bank report titled, “Sub-Saharan Africa, From Crisis to Sustainable Growth”. In this report, the World Bank defined governance simply as “the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs” (World Bank 1989) and criticized governments and state officials in Africa for only serving their own interests without fear of accountability. This narrow definition, however, focused on “governments” without clearly recognizing the role of other key actors like the private sector and civil society in governance. Realizing that governance is not only about governments, the World Bank redefined the concept to encompass “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s political, economic and social resources for development” (World Bank 1992). Exercising power to manage a country’s resources involves both state and non-state actors such as civil society, the media and private sector, and religious and cultural institutions, among others. In this study, the definition of ‘governance’ is that exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels” (UNDP 1997).

This term “governance,” and specifically the notion of “good governance,” has become a common catchphrase used in management of natural resources. In the context of natural resources governance, however, understanding gender issues requires examining the participation and decision-making of both men and women in different institutions. Although the role of women is increasingly being recognized in most international development discourses, there is still a lack of empirical studies highlighting the significant contribution of women in land and water governance. The role of women can only be understood if, similarly, the incoherent concepts of governance, and particularly what constitutes good governance, in land and water management, are fully understood and localized in languages that best suit the socio-cultural contexts of the society.

**Why Good Land and Water Governance Matters**

Land and water are among the sectors most prone to corruption. In many developing countries, corruption in the land and water sector is often a factor in, or a symptom of, the breakdown of a country’s overall governance. Weak governance in land tenure and administration is a common and severe problem that is increasingly being recognized. It is commonly a substantial issue in developing economies and it is not alien to the developed world either. Weak governance, whether in formal land administration or customary tenure arrangements, means that land rights are not protected. This is especially true for the poor, often leaving them marginalized and outside the law. Weak governance may also mean that land is not used appropriately to create wealth for the benefit of society (FAO 2007). It’s important to note that good governance in land administration is one of the central requirements for achieving good governance in society. Nor can governance in land tenure and administration be separated from governance of other sectors. As such, we define “land” in a comprehensive way to mean “any portion of the earth over which rights of ownership, stewardship, or use may be exercised, including the earth’s surface, water-covered lands, water and mineral resources, and any other features and resources attached to the earth whether they be natural or artificial” (Barlowe 1986).

While there is a growing volume of literature defining “land governance” and “water governance,” there is very little information on “land and water governance.” Despite the growing interest in the two, it has become extremely difficult for most land and water managers to govern these two resources jointly in an effective manner. In most developing countries, water management agencies are in conflicting roles with land management institutions. In Uganda, the legal and regulatory framework treats water as a separate resource from land, and therefore vests the ownership and control of water totally in the hands of government. On the other hand, the 1995 Constitution vests land ownership in the citizens of Uganda. As a consequence, governance challenges often arise in cases of lands with water bodies, to which both the state and citizens claim the rights. Institutional mandates often contradict one another and result in the duplication of land- and water-management interventions.

**Working Definition for Land and Water Governance**

Although land governance features strongly on the international development agenda, in many countries water governance is in a state of confusion. The quest for improved land and water governance is receiving increasing attention among development practitioners, donors and policymakers. However, no agreed-upon definition of the term “land and water governance” currently exists. This study attempts to help fill this gap by defining land and water governance as: a range of rules, processes, and structures about access, development and management of land and water resources; the manner in which these decisions are implemented and enforced; and the way in which competing interests in land and water resources are managed at the different levels of a society.

**Study Objectives**

The overall objective of the study was to investigate gender dimensions in land and water governance in Uganda. Specifically, the study analysed the barriers faced by rural women in accessing secure land and water rights in Nakasongola district in central Uganda.

**Administrative and Historical Background of the Case Study Area**

Nakasongola attained district status in 1997. It was formerly part of Luweero district, and currently it is made up of three counties, namely Kyabujejo, Budyobo and Buruuli. Although the people in Nakasongola ethnically belong to the Baruuli...
tribe, they paid allegiance to the Buganda Kingdom until early 2000. Most of the land in Nakasongola district belonged to the Kabaka (King of Buganda) and a number of absentee landlords from Buganda Kingdom, who had acquired their land as a result of the 1900 Buganda Agreement between the British and Buganda Kingdom. The Buganda Agreement allocated 958 square miles of land to the Kabaka (King) and members of the royal family and 8000 square miles to the Kabaka’s subjects (Buganda chiefs) who were loyal to the British colonial masters (Batungi 2008). Most Buganda chiefs who were allocated these “mailo” land titles have died and/or their descendants no longer be traced. This resulted into a lot of unutilized land in Central Uganda which attracted “illegal” settlers. After many years of occupancy, the settlers legally became bona fide occupants (Kibanza holders), protected by the law from eviction but liable to pay an annual ground rent of 1,000 Uganda Shillings (less than 1 U.S. dollar), regardless of the land size, to the lawful owners. Most purported landlords have resisted this unfair treatment, which is one of the major causes of conflicts with the tenants.

Land tenure insecurity is partly responsible for the rampant deforestation in the district as it curtails the chances of tenants getting involved in long-term conservation projects. Approaches by government through the District Land Board to improve land tenure security through registration and transfer of land not owned by any person or authority have not solved the problem. District Land Boards (DLBs) are mandated under the 1998 Land Act to hold and allocate land in the district which is not owned by any person or authority, and facilitate the registration and transfer of interests in land. Currently, the District Land Board, as provided by the 1998 Land Act, is not functional in Nakasongola district. With the absence of a functional DLB, registration and transfer of interests in land are likely done in an inefficient and opaque nontransparent manner. The land office that acts as the DLB lacks the financial resources to efficiently carry out land registration in the district. Land transfer documents, titles and other important public documents are poorly stored, and the safety of land titles/documents is highly compromised; this explains why over 100 forged land titles were reported by the office of the Resident District Commission (RDC). Additionally, the land registration process is full of delays and inefficiencies, and is exposed to corruption. According to 72 percent (101) of the respondents to our survey, the District Land Office is perceived as one of the most corrupt government departments, after the Uganda police.

The presence of absentee landlords equally retards willing land buyers and has grossly affected the land market in the district. Most land transactions are informally done through negotiations with the sitting tenants and sometimes with family representatives or agents of absentee landlords. At times, the close relatives of the absentee landlords sell land to investors and sometimes to wealthy politicians willing to set up ranches and other large-scale land developments, which often results in illegal evictions of poor occupants. Such evictions mainly affect women and children, whose only livelihood survival asset is land. Despite the recent anti-eviction decree passed by the President of Uganda, tenants are tied in continuous land-related disputes with investors and landlords.

### Overview of Land Tenure Security in Nakasongola District

Land tenure security refers to the degree of confidence of land users that they will not be arbitrarily deprived of the rights they enjoy over land and the economic benefits that flow from it (UN-Habitat/GLTN 2008). The dominant land tenure systems are mainly mailo and customary tenure in Nakasongola district, although many customary lands are currently being transformed into freehold through the Nakasongola District Land Board. About 40 percent of land is held under the mailo land tenure system with absentee landlords. Most tenants, usually referred to as “squatters,” on mailo land, are subject to evictions by landlords and therefore they are limited to some extent in the kind of investments they can make in the land.

2 The mailo system was introduced by the colonial authorities in mutual agreement with the Buganda Kingdom in 1900. It gave the King and the feudal landlords freehold rights over large tracts of land, often inhabited by poorer subjects, who then became tenants of the Kabaka. The 1995 constitution guarantees the security of occupancy of tenants and other ‘bona fide’ occupants, who have occupied, used or developed land un-challenged un-challenged by the owner for at least 12 years. Recent legislation (the Land Amendment Acts of 2004 and 2010) has further strengthened the security of tenure of tenants vis-à-vis that of the landlords by controlling the land rents and protecting tenants from eviction (Ravnborg et al., 2013)
with land and water scarcity has accelerated environmental degradation, especially through drainage of wetlands and degradation of forest reserves. The land and water shortages are worsened by long droughts and seasonal flooding in the district. The seasonal burning of grass and bushes occurs widely in Nakasongola district, but is more evident in the cattle grazing areas, (e.g., Nabiswera, Nakitoma, Kalungi and Lwampegwa sub-counties). It is carried out as part of land preparation for cultivation, for rejuvenation of pastures, or to facilitate hunting of game. Also, traditionally the burning of bushes is believed to drive away evil spirits. After the fires, the exposed land is subjected to erosion by water in the rainy seasons and wind during dry periods. Overgrazing is common in many cattle-corridor districts and often accelerates soil erosion, land and water conflicts, as well as various land-cover changes.

Wetlands in the district are generally degraded, especially those along the shores of the Sezibwa River and Lake Kyoga, where extensive crop cultivation is common even during droughts, and along the Lugogo River, where overgrazing is prominent due to livestock migrating there over the course of the dry season for water and pasture. The district experiences serious water shortages, especially for livestock, during long dry spells, and very little potable water- 49 percent of portable water, provided through protected wells, boreholes, shallow wells and rainwater harvesting tanks - is available for human consumption (NDC and NEMA 2008).

Piped water is only available in the town of Nakasongola, the Army barracks, and for about 20 percent of the population in the town of Wabigalo (NDC and NEMA 2008). Most open water sources are heavily polluted due to contamination by animals, siltation and erosion. The “protected” sources like boreholes and wells, especially those surrounding the town, face contamination due to contact with human feces. Some boreholes are no longer functional due to the ever-dropping water table, especially during the dry season. This has resulted in an increase in water-borne diseases such as typhoid, dysentery, and diarrhea, among others.

Methodology
The study was based on both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data were obtained through an in-depth review of published literature on gender mainstreaming and on land and water governance. Secondary data were supplemented by primary data collected using semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, and focus-group discussions with key informants in the case study area. A case study approach was adopted in order to explore in greater depth the challenges of rural women in land and water governance. Nakasongola district was identified as a case study area rich in information due to its location in Central Uganda and within the dry cattle corridor districts. Central Uganda is famous for its unique historical land tenure system (mailo tenure). The inheritance of property, especially land, in Nakasongola district is through patrilineal access, and is a critical factor in why women’s rights to land

\[\text{Land is governed by the rules, norms and traditions that reflect the interests and needs of local communities and are generally accepted as binding and authoritative to the class of persons to which they apply. These and differ from one society to another. A customary tenure system provides for communal ownership, use, and acquisition of land guided by local customary regulation and management. The system has no written rules, and customs are passed on through oral literature. Administration of customary land rights is usually vested in the hands of male clan leaders, and women are generally excluded from the decision-making process. In some instances, women can only pass their opinions on managing such lands through their male children. Customary tenure accounts for 68.6 percent of all land ownership in Uganda (MLHUD 2010).}\]
and water are still a major challenge in this purely male-dominated society.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Household Survey Statistics in Selected Counties

A household survey was carried out in all three counties of Nakasongola district, namely Kyabujingo, Budyeb and Buruuli. A random sampling method was used to select 140 respondents from the three counties. The target was to have an equal number of households in each county; however, due to the inaccessibility of some counties, 35 respondents (25 percent of the entire sample) were selected in Kyabujingo, 55 (39 percent) selected in Budyeb and 50 (36 percent) in Buruuli county. Out of the entire sample (n=140), 82 respondents (59 percent) were male, while 58 (41 percent) were female. The high proportion of male respondents is due to the central role of men as household heads and major land owners responsible for decision-making in the family. It was observed that, with the exception of a few female-headed households, most rural women were not at liberty to independently discuss the politics of land and water governance without the consent from their husbands.

Although the Government of Uganda put in place several laws banning discrimination against women in any form, most such laws lack enforcement and are sometimes overpowered by the strong cultural practices that favor male domination. Sometimes, women are faced with land violence. At times, when violence escalates and requires police intervention, law enforcement officers act with cultural bias against women. There is a common assumption by men that most “women have grown wings” and are being disrespectful of their husbands due to adoption of western cultures (Ellis et al. 2006). Such perceptions tend to influence even legal judgments and result in injustices to women since most qualified judicial officers are men (Ellis et al. 2006).

Demographic Characteristics of Sampled Households

The total number of households sampled for the study was 140 (n=140), as shown in Table 3. The average age of respondents was 33 and they fell within the age group of 20–51. Most households are headed by males (77 percent, 108) while 23 percent of household heads (32) are female. With the recent increase in HIV/AIDS infection rates, especially among married couples, there is an increase in the number of households headed by widows/widowers (38, 27 percent). HIV/AIDS and other illnesses has resulted in an increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Nakasongola district. The mean household size is 6.7 persons. Poverty remains firmly entrenched in Uganda’s rural areas, with the majority of the rural population living on less than U.S. $1 per day. An average household size of approximately 7 members is too big for most families to afford basic needs like adequate shelter, food, health and education. Although illiteracy levels remain quite high, the introduction of non-formal Functional Adult

Table 2: Respondents according to sex in selected sub-counties (n=140)

Source: Data from questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Sub-County</th>
<th>Men (n=82)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Female (n=58)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency (f)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>Frequency (f)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyabujingo</td>
<td>Kakooge</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kalongo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kalungi</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budyeb</td>
<td>Nakitoma</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nabisiwera</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rwabiyata</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buruuli</td>
<td>Lwanpanga</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wabinonyi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nakasongola Town Council</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Descriptive Demographic Statistics of Selected Households. Source: Data from questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Total in Sampled Households (n=140)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age of Respondents (years)</td>
<td>33 (20–51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Size of Household (# of people)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Size of Land (ha)</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Household Head Male</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status of Respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level of Respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Secondary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Adult Literacy (FAI)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
has seen some moderate success. IFAD’s gender study in 2000 for Uganda shows that women acknowledge that FAL classes play an important role in empowerment and poverty reduction. They identified the following benefits: participants learn how to read and write, generate income through modern farming methods, control crop pests, improve household sanitation and hygiene, and improve food planning and preparation; moreover, they get to know each other, creating networks and forming groups, and learn to work together to establish poverty-reduction strategies (IFAD, 2000). About 17 respondents (12 percent) had participated in FAL programs in the study district. Only 4, male, respondents (3 percent) reported having attained post-secondary education.

According to the findings, 72 respondents (51 percent) reported to be married. In most rural areas, marriage makes a strong contribution to wealth and property accumulation. According to Human Rights Watch (2003), most traditional practices cherish marriage due to the bride price. Bride price was once a gesture of appreciation to the bride’s family—now men literally purchase their wives. As in a commercial transaction, the husband’s payment entitles him to full ownership rights over his acquisition. Bride wealth payments lead to the perception among both men and women that men own women, and that it is therefore a women’s job to both provide for and serve men (Ellis et al. 2006). As a result, most women are treated as domestic servants whose rights are totally vested in their purchasers (men). Although the legally accepted age of marriage in Uganda is 18 years, in Nakasongola district, many girls get married as young as 13. On the other hand, once a boy gets married, the society tends to accord him much respect, and he often climbs to a higher rung on the social ladder in terms of decision-making in the community. Usually his parents or grandparents apportion some land for him to start a new life as a married man. This entices many boys to get married as young as 15 years old. The practice of looking at women as domestic servants and a source of farm labor also encourages men to become polygamous, sometimes marrying 3 or 4 wives. The more wives and more children a man has, the more secure he becomes in terms of acreage and labor.

Although domestic violence was cited to be the major cause of divorce, only 3 female respondents (13 percent of total women respondents) reported to have been divorced. Most women rear divorce, as they cannot afford to pay back the price of cows, clothes and/or other gifts to the families of their husbands. Upon divorce it is difficult for a woman to assert her rights over matrimonial land, as under customary law she has no rights to it. Even under formal law, when a wife seeks to claim a stake in marital property not directly acquired during the marriage, she is deemed to lack legal and equitable rights, and her contribution to the home during the marriage is usually not taken into account when the assets are divided between the divorcing spouses (Banenya 2002).

**Gender Distribution in Economic Activities**
The findings from Nakasongola district show that women in particular play a significant role in domestic work such as cooking (96 percent, 134) and fetching water (91 percent, 128) in addition to other household activities like taking care of

![Figure 1: Gender Distribution in Family Labor (n=140). Source: Data from questionnaires](image-url)
children, and collecting firewood. Unfortunately, most of their work is not quantified in monetary terms, and as a result, their contribution to household income tends to be undervalued, especially by men.

In agriculture, women in the Nakasongola survey contributed 84 percent (118) of the labor force required in planting and 66 percent (92) of the labor force required in weeding crops. Men are mostly involved in preparation of the land (58 percent, 81) which normally involves slashing and burning of trees to create space for planting. During land preparation, men are also involved in preparation of charcoal for commercial purposes. Women, and often children, are the main collectors of water for their families. The long dry seasons mean that they walk long distances in search of water for their homes. But with women making up the majority of the labor force in agriculture, these long absences mean that productivity on farms is affected, and additionally, girls sometimes end up missing school as they are waiting in long queues to collect water. The few boreholes constructed by the District Local Government often dry out due to rapid drops in groundwater levels caused by overuse and prolonged droughts, leaving only unprotected shallow wells for use.

Close to 20 percent (28) of the respondents — most of them women — in agriculture are involved in crop farming as their main economic activity. Though limited venues for training exist, some of the women have had the opportunity to receive training from various NGOs like Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO) in improved farming practices, post-harvest technologies and agribusiness marketing skills.

When it is time for harvesting, the gender distribution in labor is almost equally shared — 51 percent of men (72) and 49 percent of women (68) are actively involved in supervising crop production. After harvesting, men will then assume the major role of marketing the farm produce (81 percent, 113). Most rural women are excluded from the financial side of agribusiness systems. Even where women do market the farm produce (19 percent, 27), the money is brought to the husband, who decides how it should be used. As discussed earlier, land rights are also denied to women, despite their significant effort. This leaves all decision-making capabilities around land use and economic activities solely in the domain of men. Combined with low levels of agricultural training for women farmers (Ellis et al. 2006), opportunities for women to gain financial independence appear very low.

According to the findings, 68 percent of male respondents rear livestock. Livestock rearing is maledominated because it involves moving long distances from place to place looking for water and pasture for livestock while women remain home to do domestic work. Aside from looking after the animals, it is mostly men who are involved in other related activities like milking cows, as well as transporting milk and poultry products to nearby markets. Although rearing livestock has improved most household incomes, it was observed that many young boys have dropped out of school to herd cattle. This has a negative impact on education enrollment rates. Additionally, the demand for livestock has created problems of overgrazing and soil erosion, and competition for allocation of the scarce water resources between animals and humans. Many families have to depend on less than 25 liters of water per day; moreover, this water is typically polluted. Other occupations reported by respondents include fishing (9, 6 percent), small business/trade (12, 9 percent), private sector/NGO (4, 3 percent) and civil service (6, 4 percent).

**Gender Dimensions in Access to and Control of Land in Nakasongola**

During the Third World Conference on Women, held in 1984, the late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania said, “Women of Africa toil all their lives on land that they do not own, to produce what they do not control, and at the end of their marriage, through divorce or death, they can be sent away empty handed.” This statement is particularly true for most women in Uganda. The findings show that out of the survey respondents only 7 percent of women (10) own land in Nakasongola. Generally, all land is owned and controlled by men (93 percent).

![Photo 2: New Drought- and Disease-Resistant Cassava Variety.](image)

*Photo credit: Author*

![Figure 2: Land Allocation and Control in Nakasongola District (n=140) Source: Data from questionnaires](image)

4 During the field survey, some men who were found fetching water (9 percent, 12) reported that it was actually not for domestic use. They were collecting water mainly for brick making – which is one of the economic activities done mainly by men. Also some boys collect water from boreholes and wells purposefully to sell to urban households.
130) yet women bear the brunt of most productive land tasks like planting (84 percent), weeding (66 percent), collecting water (91 percent), and cooking (96 percent). In Central Uganda, particularly in Buganda, a wife is traditionally called “Omukyaala” which literally means “a visitor,” from the Luganda word okukyaala, “to visit.” This is evidence of a cultural perception of women as visitors in their own family, in which they are not allowed to own land.

As a result, land allocation practices continue to ignore women, who are rarely registered on the title. Land allocation practices are a fundamental constraint to women entrepreneurs, especially as they affect access to credit, as banks often require land as collateral. Most government utility service agencies in Uganda (e.g., water and electricity) also require a land title or a certificate of occupancy before connection. This implies that all water rights are granted on the basis of land rights, and ultimately exclude most women. Although Uganda has made several legislative efforts to enhance the rights of women, e.g., the Land Act, Succession Act, Divorce Act and the Constitution, very few women are able to enforce their rights due to lack of awareness about gender legislations, low representation of women in the judiciary and police force, illiteracy, social intimidation, and cultural barriers, among other reasons.

**Land Acquisition and Form of Occupancy**

According to the findings, most respondents acquired land through inheritance (53, 74 percent). Traditionally, inheritance is the most common method of passing on land from parents or grandparents to children. Inheritance results in fragmentation of the land, and often the rules discriminate against women and weaker minorities. Even where land is redistributed following religious laws, the laws do not favor women and often exclude them from any form of land acquisition. The inheritance system creates numerous problems, especially if succession issues are not clear at the family level. It results in land disputes and conflicts over access to some common lands, such as spiritual and burial grounds where all family members (men and women) have rights.

The legislative framework is equally weak and often compromised by weak governance systems. For instance, the 1998 Land Act provides for protection of the land rights of women, children and persons with disabilities, but the Act does not specifically provide for joint ownership of land between husband and wife through registering both the husband’s and wife’s names on the certificate of title, which would strengthen the rights of women. Even where both the husband and wife contributed toward the purchase of land using jointly accrued income from family agricultural production, the land transfer and agreement normally bear the husband’s name. Women are often victim to land grabbing, especially when the husband dies and the relatives of the deceased take the family property. Despite provisions under which a wife inherits 15 percent of matrimonial property upon the death of her husband, women are often dispossessed of their rights to matrimonial land upon divorce, or the death of, their husbands, and are not consulted about the disposition of family land (Ellis et al. 2006). Dispossession threats are even more likely where the woman did not give birth to a male child who would become the heir to protect the family property.

However, it is not only Uganda’s legislative framework, inheritance and ownership practices that limit women’s access to economic resources. A perhaps more important issue is the fact that Uganda’s population remains largely unaware of its legal rights or how to enforce them. This is especially true for women, who have even less access than men to legal advice and representation (Ellis et al. 2006). Most justice delivery agencies are dominated by men, and at times male judges and court staff may have traditional attitudes and biases against women (Ellis et al. 2006). According to the survey, 18 percent (25) of the respondents acquired land through rent and sharecropping. Under the sharecropping system, the landlord agrees that the tenant may use the land on condition that a certain proportion of the harvest is shared. The landowner reserves the right to revoke the agreement if the tenant fails to furnish the agreed-upon portion of the harvest. This system is not regulated by law, and is often subject to abuse. However, even when women are able to afford to purchase land, some social norms exclude them in favor of male purchasers. About 9 percent (13) of the total respondents (5 women and 8 men) had acquired leaseholds, especially on public land held under the District Land Board.

**Gender Dimensions in Public Administration**

In order to examine the extent of women’s involvement in decision- and policy-making on land and water governance in Nakasongola district, an investigation into the number of women employed in top decision- and policy-making positions at the District Local Government (DLG) was carried out. The findings show that women are discriminated against and often lack a voice in decision-making both at the household level and in the public sphere. Out of the twelve most influential positions related to land and water governance, only two positions - the District Agricultural Officer and District Education Officer - were occupied by women. The remaining nine senior positions in the district are occupied by men. Even at

![Figure 3: Mode of Land Acquisition (n=140). Source: Data from questionnaires](image-url)
the grassroots level, most Area Land Committee and Water Users Associations are headed by men at the village level. Traditionally, women are often discriminated against with respect to recruitment for public positions, political representation, and training opportunities related to land and water governance. The absence of women in top decision-making positions means that women’s voices are not adequately represented. Weak governance flourishes where there is lack of participation by all stakeholders and consensus-building. Transparency and accountability in the land and water sector becomes highly compromised without full participation of women. It is not clear where in Nakasongola district the accountability for implementing gender mainstreaming lies. At the village level, only a few representatives for women’s affairs have been appointed, but they do not receive any facilitation or training since the district has not allocated any budget for their activities at the grassroots level. Since gender mainstreaming cuts across almost all sectors, like land, water, agriculture, health and education, every sectoral department should prioritize gender mainstreaming programs and activities in their departmental budget and workplan in order to address the needs of vulnerable groups, especially women and children in rural areas.

Recommendations
Based on the lessons learned from the case study, the following recommendations are provided to improve women’s land and water governance in Uganda.

Strengthen Gender Mainstreaming Capacities at All Levels
The findings show that there is a general lack of gender mainstreaming programs and activities at all levels of governance. Capacity building on gender mainstreaming strategies in land and water governance should be prioritized, from the level of the village land and water user to the national level. This can be done through allocating the necessary financial and technical resources to ensure equal representation of women at all levels of governance.

Reform in Legislative and Policy Framework
Reforms to the existing legal and policy framework are urgently needed in Uganda. The existing laws to protect women from discrimination are weak and lack clarity on implementation. It’s simply not enough for the existing laws to that women’s rights should be protected without providing a clear framework for protection of these rights.

Need for Cultural Change
There is an urgent need for a change in all cultural practices that discriminate against women in any form. Inheritance rights should consider women as equal stakeholders in the family property. All acts of discrimination and “commodification of women” through bridal pricing should be changed in order to protect the rights and dignity of women. The traditional marriage practices should instead revert to gift exchanges by the families of both the bride and the groom rather than a system that converts women into a commodity of purchase.

Promote Equal Education for Both Men and Women
Several studies have shown that equal access to education opportunities for both men and women improves their ability to make meaningful social, economic and political decisions. Promoting girl-child education reduces the risks associated with early pregnancies and maternal mortality. Education improves women’s contribution to household health and sanitation since they are at the forefront of most domestic duties such as cooking, caring for children, and cleaning the home. In terms of agriculture, women’s access to training and services improves their productive capacity and enhances their ability to engage in agribusiness marketing. The Ugandan government should expand FAL programs to reach all villages, and increase adult enrollment and training. Both men and women who have participated in FAL programs attain extra skills in natural resource management, income-generating activities, sanitation and civic education, among other areas, which improves their livelihoods and enhances their decision-making abilities. Therefore, there is a need for equal education of both men and women so that all can be in a better position to make meaningful decisions that promote sustainable use of land and water resources.

Conclusion
Mainstreaming gender, particularly regarding rural women in land and water governance, is critical for achieving a variety of development goals in Uganda. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) — in particular eradicating extreme hunger and poverty (Goal 1), halving by 2015 the proportion of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top District Local Government Positions</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Chairperson (Local Council V)</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Natural Resources Mgt</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Lands Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioner Registration of Titles</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Secretary District Land Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registrar of Titles</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Agricultural Offcier</td>
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<td>District Environment Officer</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Health Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Education Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Water Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident District Commissioner (RDC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Typology of Top District Administration Positions Related to Land and Water. Source: Data from questionnaires
of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation (Goal 7), and improving maternal health (Goal 5) among others — cannot be achieved without promoting gender equality and empowerment of women (Goal 3). The findings from this study show the significant contribution of women to Uganda’s economic development despite facing numerous barriers, ranging from unequal access to land and water resources to unequal education and employment opportunities. Barring women from rights to land translates to exclusion from water rights, since from a farmer’s perspective, it is almost impossible to separate land from water. Secure access to land ultimately results in secure access to water resources. Failure to protect women’s rights to land negatively impacts Uganda’s economic development in the form of increased food and nutrition insecurity, diseases emanating from lack of access to water and sanitation facilities, and increased maternal mortality, among others.

Works Cited