



Modes of Access to Land, and Gender-Related Productivity Gap in Burkina Faso

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Abstract

This study analyses the sources of gender-related productivity gap and measures the impact of land access patterns on the productivity gap in Burkina Faso. The data used in this research are drawn from the latest available study on the measurement of living standards with respect to integrated agricultural surveys carried out in 2013-2014 in Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso, like most countries in the sub-Saharan region, is essentially an agricultural economy. As such, knowing the causes of productivity gap between genders appears to be crucial for the formulation of policies designed to empower women. The

econometric approach used in this work is based on the estimation of the Oaxaca-Blinder model, which explains the agricultural productivity gap by three (3) clusters of effects: the endowment effect, the structural effect, and the interaction effect. The results indicate that women farm managers are 26% less productive compared to men. Breaking down the sources of productivity gap reveals that the mode of access to land accounts for -300% of the endowment effect and 211.54% of the structural effect, with land purchase and land renting being the statistically significant modes of access to land. This implies that policy makers need to reform the customary laws that exclude women from land ownership.

Introduction

Land is the main factor of production in agrarian economies (Obeng-Odoom, 2012). Consequently, the way in which it is accessed, allocated or transferred, controlled and used is an important factor in socio-economic policies and associated activities. This is a fundamental issue for socio-economic development planning, often at the root of conflict especially within the political economy of any country. Inequality in land rights stemming from different status, religion, customary and local norms disadvantages women and perpetuates poverty and deepens gender inequalities. Women account for only 15% of farm owners in Africa (FAO, 2011).

Land has always been recognized as a primary source of wealth, social status, and power. It provides housing, food, and economic activities. It is the main source of employment in rural areas and is an increasingly scarce resource in urban areas. Access to water and other resources, and to essential services such as sanitation and electricity, is often dependent on access to land rights. The willingness and ability to make long-term investments in arable land and housing depends directly on the protection that a society gives to owners of land rights. Therefore, access to and security of land rights is a key element of any concept of sustainable development (FAO, 2003). Thus, access to land is an important aspect of power in decision making at family, community, and national levels.

According to FAO (2003), access to land is governed by land tenure. Land tenure refers to the relationship, legal or customary, that people as individuals or as groups have with respect to land resources. Land tenure arrangements define how land ownership rights are to be distributed within societies along with the associated responsibilities and limitations. More simply, land tenure systems are used to determine who can use what resources, for how long and under what conditions.

Although there may be a broad and varied range of rights, rights of access to land can take three main forms. Firstly, use rights: the right to use the land for grazing, food crops, gathering of small forest products, etc. Secondly, control rights: the right to

decide how the land is to be used and to receive the proceeds from the sale of crops, etc. Thirdly, transfer rights: the right to sell or mortgage land, to transfer it through intra-community reallocations or inheritances, and to redistribute rights of use and control (FAO, 2003). In many cases, the poor in the community only have use rights. For example, a woman will have the right to cultivate land to feed her family, but her husband will benefit from the proceeds of selling crops on the market. While such clarifications may be useful, the exact way in which land rights are apportioned and used can be extremely complex.

In Burkina Faso, from the colonial period to the present day, modern or affirmative law and customary law have coexisted in land matters, sometimes leading to contradictions. At the legal level, existing international, regional and national legal texts, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women¹ in its Article 14, ratified by Burkina Faso in 1987; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women² in Africa, in Article 15a; the Constitution³ of June 1991, in Articles 1 and 15, and the Land and Agrarian Reform (RAF), in Article 62⁴, call for equal access to land for all social categories without discrimination (FAO, 2008). Marriage and inheritance are the main modes of access to land for women in Burkina Faso under customary law (Mariatou, 2011).

1 Available in French on the following site: http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/WOMEN_F.PDF.

2 Available in French on the following site: http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/women_protocol/achpr_instr_proto_women_fra.pdf

3 Article 1 of the Constitution: "All Burkinabe are born free and equal in rights. All are equally entitled to enjoy all the rights and freedoms guaranteed by this Constitution. Discrimination of any kind, including discrimination based on race, ethnicity, region, colour, sex, language, religion, caste, political opinion, property and birth is prohibited".

Article 15 of the Constitution: "The right to property is guaranteed. It may not be exercised contrary to social utility or in such a way as to prejudice the safety, freedom, existence or property of others. It may be infringed only in cases of public necessity established by law. No one may be deprived of its enjoyment except in the public interest and subject to fair compensation determined in accordance with the law. Such compensation must be paid prior to expropriation, except in cases of emergency or force majeure". Available at: https://www.assembleenationale.bf/IMG/pdf/loi_072_portant_revision_de_la_constitution.pdf

4 Article 62 of the law relating to the Agrarian and Land Reorganization (RAF): "Rural ... land in the national land tenure system shall be allocated to natural persons, without distinction as to sex or marital status, and to legal entities under the conditions laid down by the laws in force". Available at: <http://www.droit-afrique.com/upload/doc/burkina/Burkina-Loi-1996-14-reorganisation-agraire-fonciere.pdf>

It was observed, however, that women's access to land in rural areas is hampered by a multitude of factors, which include customs barriers, illiteracy and land conflicts caused by population pressure, soil degradation and overgrazing. As for illiteracy, it leads to inaccessibility and ignorance of legal instruments related to land. This situation perpetuates perceptions and practices that disadvantage women's access to land resources (Serdev, 2016). Any conflict at the community level is settled according to customary laws. However, these customary norms are unfavorable to women at the grassroots level in terms of access to land. Some conflicts may result in prohibition of land use for a widowed woman or a woman who has left her husband (Serdev, 2016).

In general, these factors differ significantly depending on whether the land is in remote areas or developed areas. In "remote areas", access to land is based on customary laws, in an unequal social relationship of dependency, negotiation and precariousness for women. According to Françoise (2004) study on "Rural women and access to information and institutions for securing land rights: Case study of Burkina Faso", "the exclusion of women from control over land management is one of the major characteristics of customary rights".

The main cause is that a woman comes from another family lineage that owns land in her native village. Thus, in general, women do not have a right of ownership, but only an "authorization", a tolerance for the use of land, and nothing more. Not only do women have less access to land than men, but their access is also often restricted to what are known as secondary land rights, which means that these rights are held by male family members. Women therefore risk losing their rights in the event of divorce, widowhood, or migration of their husbands.

Disparities also exist in other areas that widen the productivity gap. For example, at the school level, the proportion of female enrolments at different levels of education and training remains generally low. The literacy rate was 29.4% for men and 12.5% for women in 2003. This situation is because the socio-cultural system in Burkina Faso has often been unfavorable to girls' education, women's literacy and even their vocational training (World Bank, 2003).

It therefore appears that increasing women's access to land is crucial in the fight against hunger and poverty. Existing evidence strongly links land tenure to increased investment in land and improved agricultural productivity (Deere and Doss, 2006). The overall objective of this study is to analyze the effect of women's access to land on the gender-related agricultural productivity gap and technical effectiveness.

Specific objective 1: Identify the causes of gender-related productivity gap.

Specific objective 2: Measure the impact of land access mechanisms on the gender-related productivity gap.

The context of Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso's economy is essentially based on agriculture, livestock, and forest resources, which account for nearly 40% of the Gross Domestic Product (INS-B (National Institute of Statistics of Burkina Faso), 2009). The rural sector plays a dominant role in the national economy; nearly 80% of the population lives in rural areas and depends on land uses and other natural resources (water, forests, grazing land) for their livelihoods (FAO, 2007). According to the 2003 Burkina Faso Household Living Conditions Survey (EBCVM), 46.4% of the population were living below the absolute poverty line, which was estimated at 82,672 CFA per person per year. Poverty is much more pronounced among women (47.1%) than men (45.7%). There are many ethnic groups with varied customs and traditions, namely the Mossi (the most populous representing 50% of the population), the Tuareg, the Fulani, the Lobi, the Gourmantché and the Bobo.

The coexistence of different religions such as animism, Christianity and Islamism are permeated in the population and influences the distribution of land rights (FAO, 2008). Indeed, religious beliefs have often had the effect of protecting women and rescuing wives from land grab, widows, and daughters through other means other than, for example, the equal sharing of land assets. For example, under Islamic law, girls can receive, as a dowry, half of the land assets inherited by boys on the death of the father. Also, sons are responsible for providing for their unmarried sisters and mother, which in theory requires more land (FAO, 2003). In most societies in Burkina Faso, customary habits confine women to household chores. This excludes them from income-generating activities, while men are seen as heads of households and breadwinners (Lonkila, 2009).

Agriculture, mainly dependent on rainfall, is geared towards the production of food and subsistence crops, 60% to 70% of which are intended for household consumption (World Bank, 2008). Regarding human development, 17% of the population is undernourished (FAOStat, 2004). Life expectancy is 52.9 years for women and 49.8 years for men. Data on literacy rate show a significant gap between women with a rate of 16.6% and men with a literacy rate of 31.4% (UNDP, 2007). AIDS prevalence in 2005 was estimated at 2% for people between 15 and 49 years old (UNDP, 2007).

According to UNDP (2007), the female economic activity rate reached 77.6% in 2005 and about 95.0% of women in rural areas practice subsistence farming, with the use of very rudimentary techniques and non-mechanized inputs. In agriculture, work is divided along gender lines; women spend up to 16 hours a day on domestic work, including vegetable supply, harvesting food crops, and preparing food for daily meals, while men focus more on the economic administration of the household (FAO, 2005).

Regarding land, the Law on Agrarian and Land Reorganization (RAF), which governs land tenure, stipulates that land belongs to the State and access to it is in principle regulated by the State. The essence of this measure consisted in the creation of a single land block: the National Land Sector (NLS) and the attribution of exclusive ownership to the State. This is the essence of Articles 1 to 3 of the RAF (Herman and Brice, 2015).

The NLS is made up of land formerly held by traditional owners, land title holders and the State itself. But there are deficiencies within it that limit women's equitable access to land. Firstly, Article 46 of the 1996 RAF stipulates that: at the village level, the allocation, evaluation, and withdrawal of land falls within the jurisdiction of village land management commissions organized into specialized sub-commissions whose members are elected and/or designated "according to historical, social and cultural realities" (Diallo, 2002), which are not favourable to women's participation in land management as discussed above. Secondly, these elected members form the Village Development Council (VDC) and Act No. 2007-032 on the powers, composition, organization and functioning of local land management structures, Article 3 of which stipulates that: within the VDCs, out of 12 members, there are two (2) representatives responsible for the advancement of women. The VDC is the "gathering of all the vital members of the village". This is a real contradiction that disadvantages women in the local decision-making body in terms of access to land and land rights.

However, in 2007, the country adopted a National Policy for Land Security in Rural Areas (PNSFMR) aimed at formalizing access to land rights and thus offering a legal guarantee and better financial prospects for people living and working in rural areas (IDLO (International Development Law Organization), 2008). This policy is marked by three major points. First, is the notion of land tenure security. This involves the merging of modern and customary rights: legality and legitimacy of land tenure. Secondly, is land tenure security and decentralization, which means considering local realities. Thirdly, is the issue of securing women's land tenure in the ongoing process (Herman and Brice, 2015).

However, this policy has shortcomings in terms of communication and awareness-raising around the national policy on land tenure security in rural areas and has been confronted with resistance from local populations opposed to modern land management laws. Thus, the situation of women's access to land has not changed. Also, despite the positive discrimination measures provided for to allow and promote women's access to rural land, particularly in areas developed by the State, the application of this law remains difficult, and it does not provide explicit guidelines on women's land rights. In practice, community laws prevail, and women depend on their husbands, who are considered the head of the family and the one who owns the land, the one who determines its use and distributes the work among family members (Diallo, 2002).

The Government's commitment to reducing these gender inequalities has materialized with the adoption of the National Gender Policy (NGP) in July 2009. The NGP is part of a long-term process (2009-2019) and is based on the various commitments made by the Government of Burkina Faso at the international and regional levels, and on the provisions made at the national level in favor of gender equality and equity. The overall objective of NGP is to "promote participatory and equitable development of women and men, ensuring them equal and equitable access to and control over resources and decision-making spheres, with respect of their fundamental rights" (Serdev, 2016).

The implementation of the NGP has led to significant advances, particularly in policy, with the introduction of a 30% gender quota for women. However, in the areas developed by the State, the specifications do not always consider the specificities of women. The plots allocated to village women's groups are often located in poorly leveled areas and the areas allocated do not consider the number of women group members (FAO, 2008). For example, according to the World Bank in 1994, the proportion of arable land allocated to women was barely 8% to 16%.

However, women in Burkina Faso bear 90% of the domestic burden and rural women devote 90% of their time to agricultural activities, thus contributing significantly to food production. This situation hinders women's increased productivity compared to their male counterparts. The poverty rate among women is 54.3% compared to 45.7% for men (Lonkila, 2009). In addition to the NGP, the State has adopted the National Policy for Land Security in Rural Areas, which aims to ensure equitable access to land for all rural actors, the guarantee of their investments and the effective management of land disputes to contribute to poverty reduction, the consolidation of social peace and achievement of sustainable development.

Additionally, in traditional communities, the right of ownership is exercised by the chief of the land, called "Tengsoaba" in the Mossi community (which represents 53% of the ethnic groups in Burkina Faso), who is the intermediary between the ancestors and the living (B-HDI (Burkina Faso Human Development Index), 2007). The "Tengsoaba" among the Mossi is the chief or master of the land. This function, which only men and indigenous people can exercise, is due to the general recognition of the land rights of the first occupants, namely the ancestors (FAO, 2007). In general, the chief of the land, the eldest of the lineage, ensures the lineage management of the land, which guarantees the preservation and transfer of the land heritage from one generation to the other. This function covers two dimensions: a religious and mythical dimension, concerning links with ancestors and peace, and a judicial dimension, in support of conflicts and the distribution of patrimony/land ownership.

In addition, the powers of the chiefs of lands, as masters of land management, extend beyond the boundaries of the village area (Bary et al., 2005). Thus, the chief of land or lineage as an agent of the community or rights-holders - and not the owner of the

land - is in charge of tasks that can be summarized in five points : i) performing agrarian rites that ensure peace and productivity for the village community; ii) ensuring the sustainable and equitable management of the common land heritage, including land reserves and the distribution of land reserves among the lineage members of the community; iii) allocating land to "outsiders"; iv) monitoring the proper use of natural resources; v) arbitrating the settlement of land disputes within the community or land disputes with neighbouring villages (Bary et al., 2005). A distinction should be made between customary authorities responsible for land management and customary political authorities, including the village chief (Bary et al., 2005). While in the Central Plateau, the chief of land and the village chief represent two distinct roles, in the West, the chief of land may be the village chief at the same time. Where the two functions are separated, the land chief reports to the village chief (Ouédraogo and Sorgho, 2007).

Even if land belonging to ancestors is occupied and assumed ownership on behalf of the entire ethnic, clan or family group, women are excluded in terms of land acquisition (Ministry of Agriculture-B, 2007). Indeed, according to the customary distribution of land and resource rights, women and youth have no control over land management in the sense that land can be taken away from them at any time. Within this framework, customary marriage practices offer some protection (FAO, 2005). Women who do not have direct rights to land have access to it through their husbands and male relatives. Every married man has an obligation to give his wife a piece of land for her own agricultural activities. In this regard, women have control over the produce they grow in their own fields - even if these crops are to be used for household subsistence needs - and a portion of the produce they grow in the fields belonging to their husbands (FAO, 2007). In the specific case of Comoé Province, young wives must work in their husbands' farms in addition to the work they do in their own fields. The extent of the above-mentioned obligation varies according to certain population groups, but it is particularly important among the Turka and Gouin. In general, women are released from these obligations around the age of 45, when their children are old enough to provide their own labor force (FAO, 2007).

As another example, in the Province of Seno, custom occupies a predominant place in social organization and appears to be the driving force behind the organization of social relations. This custom excludes women of this community from land management. The Peuhle tradition is strongly dominated by patriarchy. This type of social organization recognizes the full power of men and considers women as having to obey and submit (Serdev, 2016). In fact, in the event of the father's death and at the time of sharing the inheritance, brothers of the same father share the cultivated land at the expense of their sister because the woman will marry and leave. Her share is with her husband in his in-laws. However, in-laws of women have access to land for their small farms, but securing land for their benefit poses a problem because of their lineage. Sahelian women, therefore, have no right of inheritance on the land. Production is culturally the responsibility of men, given their status as

heads of households with responsibility for feeding the family, and women play the role of reproductive health. In this community, the generally accepted explanation is that if women were to have access to land, there would be no more memories of the land. One would no longer know to which family lineage this or that land belonged. It will be the death of the tradition. For example, women cannot trace genealogies because of their status (GRAF (The Research and Action Group on the Land), 2006). Thus, while Peuhl women may have access to land for agricultural production, they remain excluded from land ownership, which undermines their secure access to land.

In contrast to this culture, in the Gurounsi community, every person in the family is entitled to a piece of land through family inheritance. Thus, when the father passes on land to his children upon his death, it is divided indiscriminately between the girls and boys of the family (Sidwaya, 2014). But this is an exception in communities in Burkina Faso.

As for divorced women, they could remarry to access the new husband's land and could benefit from land allocated by their family of origin. Alternatively, they can access land by borrowing land from non-family members, although they will have no security of tenure and their rights of use will be limited, such as prohibition on planting trees (FAO, 2007). Widows may, depending on the levirate, remarry the brother of the deceased husband. If the woman refuses the levirate, she can return to her family of origin, but she is supposed to leave her sons with the family of the deceased husband and she loses any kind of right to the land (Diallo, 2002).

Inheritance is still the main mode of access to land, especially within local communities. Current local practices provide for the inheritance of land from father to son. The rights of the eldest child to all lineage lands are becoming less and less effective (Bary et al., 2005). Women, whether wives or daughters, generally do not inherit land, although in some areas they enjoy more extensive inheritance rights. Even Muslim women, who under Muslim law generally inherit half the share of land from men, tend to give up their rights in favor of their brothers (FAO, 2007). A widow may return to her family of origin and receive land, marry a younger brother of her deceased husband, according to the levirate, or remain in-laws as a widow. In the latter two cases, the widow retains her access to her husband's family land. Women's degree of freedom in levirate choices varies, ranging from almost compulsory marriage in some groups to considerable freedom of choice in others. Levirate marriage is formally prohibited by affirmative law as provided for in Article 234 of the Persons and Family Code (FAO, 2007).

Women usually have access to some of the land left by the deceased. However, widows are not sure whether they can enjoy the right to use the land left by their husbands. Widows with young children are usually dispossessed of their land by

their brothers-in-law (Françoise, 2004 and WILDAF, 2002). This is very often the case in the village of Mogtédou in Burkina Faso. Girls often give up their legitimate inheritance rights over land to their brothers, on whom they often depend (FAO, 2007), with a few exceptions within the lowland areas where rice fields are customarily passed on from mother to daughter, but this original exclusive right of women is being put into question.

Migrants, even temporary rights owners, sometimes enjoy the right to inherit land on their farms through succession to their children (Bary et al., 2005). A woman is generally excluded from inheriting ancestral land. At the same time, the modes of transfer of ancestral land heritage are changing from the traditional practice of exogamy, where a woman is supposed to leave her original family lineage to marry into another family lineage, to the current mode of transfer of ancestral land heritage from elder son to elder son, to the paternal mode of succession from father to son (Bary et al., 2005).

In view of the above, contradictions or discrepancies between statutory and customary laws exist. Even if there is a palaver record, with the presentation of an official document signed by the administrative authority when the allocation of land is requested, in practice conflicts and disputes are settled outside the official institutional legal framework. Consequently, affirmative law intervenes only as a last resort and as the ultimate sanction if the disputing parties do not find common ground (Françoise, 2004).

The Agrarian and Land Reorganization (RAF) is full of contradictions that strengthen the continuity of customary logic; for example, article 505 of the decree of 6 February 1997 states that: “persons using land in the National Land Reserve Area for agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry activities at the time of publication of the decree, shall continue to use it”. However, new farm acquisition is mandatorily subject to the prior authorization by the administration and can only be carried out under the supervision of competent authorities and services (Françoise, 2004). Regarding inheritance, Article 733 of the Personal and Family Code stipulates that girls and boys inherit property without discrimination as to sex or origin of descent.

In customary practice, however, girls do not inherit property. To enjoy the right and have access to land, girls are supposed to marry and leave their family of origin to join the husband's family (FAO, 2007). Although the Land Reorganization Act provides for equal land rights for both men and women, regardless of their marital status, in practice, married women have major benefits and their access to land is more protected compared to divorced or widowed women. Moreover, although levirate is prohibited by the Persons and Family Code, as provided for in Article 234, in practice, this custom is widely practiced (FAO, 2007).

Finally, we have noted that during the rainy season in Sahel, agricultural land is allocated both by family lineage segments or individuals, and after the harvest, it is allocated to “communal easements” according to well-established rules (Bary et al., 2005). In this regard, local practices for accessing land in rural areas include inheritance, open-ended or short-term land rentals, and lease/sale (Asséta, 2002).

Data sources

To analyze the productivity differentials between genders, this paper uses variables developed from the latest available study on measuring living standards - Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) conducted in 2013-2014 in Burkina Faso. This is because few studies have been conducted for the Sahel region, to our knowledge. LSMS-ISA datasets are implemented by the national statistical agencies in each country under the overall management and supervision of the World Bank. The LSMS-ISA datasets are nationally representative and cover all geographical regions of the countries. They apply a relatively similar survey design and survey questionnaire, which is extremely important for country comparative analyses. The surveys have collected information on almost all aspects of household and community activities.

In total, the 2013-2014 survey collected data from 10,860 households, of which 475,238 individuals were interviewed. These individuals are in both urban and rural areas. After removing observations with missing data, and observations containing collectively managed land parcels, we finally considered a total of 571 individuals. The survey includes three instruments: household questionnaire, agriculture questionnaire and consumer goods and services price questionnaire. The different modules of the questionnaires contain information on socio-demographic characteristics of households, the different means of access to land used by individuals, and other information that allows for calculation of variables used in this study.

The data structure of LSMS-ISA allows us to identify farm managers and to locate those using GPS. All analyses in this study are done at the level of the farm manager. The choice of farm manager in lieu of household head is justified as follows. First, the use of farm management instead of ownership implies the integration of intra-household dynamics concerning agricultural activities. Indeed, male, and female managers in the same household may have completely different approaches or perspectives regarding land use, the type of input to be applied, or whether to hire labor (Croppenstedt and al., 2013). Second, many peasant households own several pieces of land that are not necessarily adjacent to or at equal distance from their family property. In this case, it is reasonable to assume that other family members may also be responsible for some pieces of land at the same time as the household head (Adamon and Adeleke, 2015). Third, as many empirical studies have recently shown, non-agricultural employment is increasingly becoming an important source of income, especially in rural areas.

In many cases, it is the head of the household who is engaged in non-agricultural employment activity or salaried employment, while the wife or another family member manages the agricultural land (Adamon and Adeleke, 2015). Therefore, the use of the farm manager represents a more realistic view of actual agricultural practices and the division of labour within the household. In addition, for simplicity, we limited the analysis to pieces of land with a single manager and thus excluded co-managed pieces of land. In this study, productivity will be measured by the amount of production (in kg) per unit of cultivated land (ha).

Conclusion and policy implications

The structural transformation of African agriculture is a prerequisite for improving agricultural productivity, food security and poverty reduction on the continent. However, gender equality is an essential element of this transformation, given its potential impact on social inclusion and job creation. However, it is a fact that Africa's agricultural landscape is characterized by disproportionate gender inequalities against women. These gender-related differences range from access to productive resources to low rates of technology adoption. Thus, a good understanding of the magnitude and origins of gender productivity gaps is critical to the success of policy interventions aimed at empowering women (Adamon and Adeleke, 2015). This research analyses the causes of the gender productivity gap, the technical effectiveness of producers, and measures the impact of land access patterns on the gender productivity gap.

Using available microeconomic surveys, within the framework of the Integrated Study of Living Standards Measurement - Agricultural Surveys (LSMS-ISA), we have highlighted some empirical results. The main results suggest that in Burkina Faso, women farm managers are clearly disadvantaged in most of the contributory factors to agricultural productivity, such as the quality of the land being farmed and the use or intensity of inputs. The analysis reveals that agricultural land managed by women is, on average, 26% less productive compared to their male counterparts. But there are several reasons for this discrepancy.

Breaking down the causes of productivity differences between men and women indicates that in Burkina Faso, access to land through land purchase and loan, the quality and quantity of land used, and the use of improved seeds are the levers that can be used to reduce the productivity gap between farms managed by men and those managed by women.

On the policy side, there are important implications. Elimination of gender disparities in agriculture could unleash the productivity potential of women and improve their social status as their incomes increase. For this to happen, policy makers must take the necessary steps to improve and secure women's access to land. First, as this

research shows, access to land through formal purchase significantly reduces the productivity gap. However, in Burkina Faso, customs are a real obstacle for many women to acquire and/or conserve land. Therefore, improving land tenure systems and addressing inequitable laws and constraints on access to land are essential if we are to target the gender productivity gap. Second, reforming rural land rights, by addressing all the contradictions within it as mentioned in this paper that are often developed at the expense of women can help increase women's inheritance and ownership of land. Finally, reducing the productivity gap between men and women will require addressing problems of access to inputs through increased extension services and improving levels of human and social capital to enable broad adoption of technology to improve farm productivity.

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Mission

To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa.

The mission rests on two basic premises: that development is more likely to occur where there is sustained sound management of the economy, and that such management is more likely to happen where there is an active, well-informed group of locally based professional economists to conduct policy-relevant research.

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