

# Is rainfall gendered in rural Ethiopia?

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GENDER Impact Platform



World Food Programme

# 1. The issue

Evidence on the mechanisms by which access to rainwater for agricultural production might be gendered is absent in Ethiopia, while evidence on gendered access to irrigation for agriculture is limited. In this light, the World Food Programme, UN Women, UNICEF and CGIAR commissioned an exploratory qualitative field study in the Somali region of Ethiopia to determine whether there is gendered access to rainwater and irrigation for agricultural production.



# 2. The mechanisms

There are 4 possible ways access to rainfall for agriculture might be gendered:

Land managed by women may have poorer soil quality.



Women may not have time to spend on soil fertility management activities.

Women's lesser assets and incomes reduce their ability to respond to increased rainfall variability and changes in the length of the growing season.



Women have different sets of information than men, which affects their ability to respond to increased rainfall variability and changes in the length of the growing season.

There are two additional mechanisms by which irrigation might be gendered.

5 Access to water from irrigation on land managed by women is less than that of land managed by men; and



6 Community and household gender norms produce household structures that sustain gendered irrigation access for agriculture.



Ten villages were visited around Jigjiga and Gode, ranging in size from 2275 people to a multi-village cluster of 33000 people. Men's focus groups ranged in size from 10 to 19 people, while women's focus groups ranged in size from 8 to 15 people. All the villages were agro pastoralist.

### 3. The evidence

**TABLE 1: Ethiopia – Labour, decision-making and intimate partner violence**

	Who makes decisions on assigned land?	Women work on men's plots of land?	Unpaid care and domestic work limits women's farm labour	Control of money from crop sales?	Who makes major spending decisions?	Is intimate partner violence present?
10 kebeles in total	9 of 10: Joint or men	10 of 10: Yes	10 of 10: Yes	7 of 10: Joint or men	7 of 10: Men	4 of 5: Yes

The key findings are:

- 1** Women work on plots of land assigned to them by men in their household, on plots of land retained by men, and in unpaid care and domestic work. Women must work on men's plots of land first, and when combined with unpaid care and domestic work this limits the amount of work that women can do on the land that they manage. Women's "time poverty" means that soil fertility management activities needed to sustain or restore soil biomass capacities are not undertaken, and in many cases women's plots of land have poorer soils.


- 2** Women's assets and incomes are less than men's, as only men "own" land, men control money from crop sales, and men make major spending decisions. This hinders women's capacity to respond to increased rainfall variability and changes in the length of the growing season. It also means that women need to find an income to meet household needs, thereby reducing time spent on soil management.


- 3** Access to irrigation on land managed by women is usually different from land managed by men, and this constrains women's agricultural productivity relative to men's.


- 4** Gender norms produce household structures that place men in positions of decision-making authority while ensuring that women are subordinate. This is sustained by the threat of intimate partner violence.


- 5** Therefore, access to rainwater and irrigation for agriculture is gendered. It is a function of women's time and resource poverty and social norms that sustain material inequalities between women and men. This facilitates resource flows to men from women's labour, suggesting the men act as managers of women's labour.



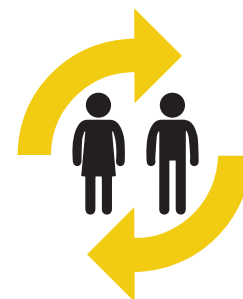
## 4. The policy implications

These findings lead to 4 recommendations:

- 1 Reduce time poverty by drastically scaling up programmes of water harvesting and storage, which can include water pan and community pond provisioning appropriate to the local context so that the capture of rainwater and surface runoff in arid and semi-arid lands can be significantly increased. This water harvesting and storage solutions should be governed to ensure equitable access to women.



- 2 Transform the gender relations within households by introducing programmes of gender transformative couple's interventions that both seek to reduce intimate partner violence and improve household livelihoods.



- 3 Build gender-responsive climate-responsive agricultural extension and training services that provides agronomic best practices that reflect the needs of women and men in communities, including regenerative and agroecological practices delivered using farmer-to-farmer methodologies.



- 4 Undertake further research into gender and access to water for agricultural production, given the glaring lack of evidence.

