

# Is rainfall gendered in rural South Sudan?

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GENDER Impact  
Platform



World Food  
Programme



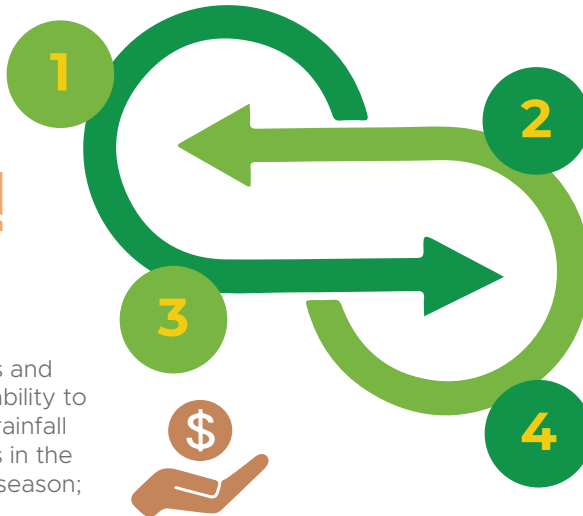
## 1. The issue

Evidence on the mechanisms by which access to rainwater for agricultural production might be gendered is absent in South Sudan. In this light, the World Food Programme, UN Women, UNICEF and CGIAR commissioned an exploratory qualitative field study in Warrap state to determine whether there is gendered access to rainwater 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 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.

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



Underlying these mechanisms are:



Community and household gender norms that produce household structures that sustain gendered access to water for agriculture.



Six multi-cluster villages comprising 17 “sub-villages” were visited around Kuajok and Wunrok, ranging in size from 3900 to 12861 people. Men’s focus groups ranged in size from 10 to 42 people, while women’s focus groups ranged in size from 10 to 23 people. All the villages were agro-pastoralist.

### 3. The evidence

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

	Assigned land has poorer soil quality?	Women work on men’s plots of land?	Unpaid care and domestic work limits women’s	Sharing of men’s incomes?	Who makes major spending decisions?	Is intimate partner violence present?
Six multi-cluster villages in total	6 of 6: Yes	6 of 6: Yes	5 of 6: Yes	5 of 6: No	6 of 6: Men	6 of 6: 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 may not be undertaken. Women’s plots of land have poorer soils.



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- 2** Women’s assets and incomes are less than men’s, as only men “own” land, men do not share their income from wages or from the sale of livestock, 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.



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- 3** 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.



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- 4** Therefore, access to rainwater 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, including 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 using farmer-to-farmer methodologies.



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

