



***Gender dimension of agriculture and rural employment:
special focus on Afghan rural women's access
to agriculture and rural development sector***

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Executive Summary

Women constitute roughly 49% of Afghanistan's 25 million populations. The current situation of women in the country presents a serious challenge to human development. The women of Afghanistan are among the worst off in the world, both in comparison to Afghan men, and to women in most countries. Their situation is particularly poor in the areas of health, deprivation of rights, protection against violence, economic productivity, education and literacy, and public participation. The average Afghan woman has a life span of 44 years, around 20 years short of the global average.

Regarding agriculture and rural sector, land and livestock are considered to be key assets for rural livelihoods, yet little is known about the factors that enable or constrain different women's access to these. A longitudinal study of rural livelihoods launched in late 2002 revealed that very few women actually owned land, and only some widowed women owned livestock. But what these rights of ownership mean in practice is not known, nor is much known about women who come forward to claim their rights. This study of rural villages in Badakhshan, Bamyan and Kabul Provinces sought to examine these issues in greater depth, as well as build understanding of the factors that enable and constrain different women's access to land and livestock.

The findings show that while women in the study villages (who represented a range of religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds) have a great deal of involvement in agriculture, few own land or livestock themselves. Where women were found to own either asset, most women were able to use them productively, though their level of control over those assets varied. Moreover, this study found that though the numbers of women who claim rights to land and livestock are not great, they were surprisingly higher than anticipated, with poverty and a sense of not being cared for by family being major reasons why women stake those claims.

Access to land and livestock can be a necessity for household security for both rural women and men. The research uncovered many reasons why women would benefit from improved access to land and livestock, including:

1. Land and livestock ownership is considered to increase a woman's decision making power inside the household, and women are often able to control the income gained from the sale of livestock produce inside the village.

2. Both assets, especially land, can provide security for elderly women who are often solely dependent on their family. These assets can act as bargaining tools for greater care from relatives in old age.
3. Ownership and access to land and livestock can generate more income than most activities women are currently involved in. This in turn can enable women to support a family, which may give some young widows the choice over whether to remarry and potentially lose custody of their children or support their children themselves.
4. Few other income generating options currently exist for women that can be carried out inside the village, as compared to men who can work outside the village and migrate for work.
5. Many women already possess knowledge of crop agriculture and livestock management. Improving this knowledge could contribute to increasing food security at the household level.
6. Ownership of land and livestock can open up possibilities of accessing credit.

The findings also show that there are many constraints that women face in accessing land and livestock, as well as some enabling factors. Some of these constraints include culture and tradition; lack of credit, land and shelter for livestock; and poverty. Much can be done to overcome these constraints, though some will be harder to tackle than others. The following recommendations to non-governmental organizations and government are based on the findings in the three studied provinces, and offer some suggestions for how to improve women's access and ownership of these key assets:

Support Women's Role in Agriculture Through:

- Developing a more nuanced understanding of women's role in agriculture and women who own land and livestock, and use this to inform programme design.
- Emphasizing the importance of women's agricultural activities to both men and women through extension work.
- Incorporating women into agricultural training.
- Training more women as basic veterinary workers.
- Providing women with adult literacy classes that would enable them to read labels on agricultural inputs, to read wills regarding their inheritance, as well as earn them more respect within the community.
- Providing women with credit to: purchase fodder for animals if they do not own land; hire a shepherd if they lack mobility; or enable group rental of land for cultivating crops or for building animal shelter and keeping livestock.

Support Women's Ownership and Claims By:

- Exploring the possibilities of providing large amounts of credit to groups of landless women to enable them to buy land when it is for sale.
- Exploring the potential of providing sheep, or other livestock, as payment for work. Livestock has many extra benefits as compared to cash, in terms of animal produce

- for household consumption, as well as income from the sale of an animal and its produce.
- Ensuring, if any land distribution schemes go ahead, that women and widows in particular are included in such schemes.
 - Coordinating and scaling up a legal rights outreach programme that educates women and men about inheritance rights at the village level.
 - Establishing family courts in rural areas and training and employing more female judges to adjudicate on inheritance claims cases.

1. Introduction

Analysis of Women's Situation in Afghanistan

Women constitute roughly 49% of Afghanistan's 25 million populations. The current situation of women in the country presents a serious challenge to human development. The women of Afghanistan are among the worst off in the world, both in comparison to Afghan men, and to women in most countries. Their situation is particularly poor in the areas of health, deprivation of rights, protection against violence, economic productivity, education and literacy, and public participation. The average Afghan woman has a life span of 44 years, around 20 years short of the global average.

While women around the world generally live longer than men, women in Afghanistan die at a younger age than men. And despite the high level of male casualties during the 25 years of war, men still outnumber women by significant levels in the contemporary era, with an average ratio of 104 men to 100 women for all ages.

It is the unusually harsh realities for women in Afghanistan that circumscribe women's situation and consequently shorten their life. It should be noted, however, that such realities cannot be viewed in isolation from the circumstances that the country experienced during the past decades of conflict or from cultural thinking that has shaped the current position of women in the family and society.

Women Living Status in Rural Area

The total rural population of Afghanistan is estimated by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to be approximately 18.7 million, most of whom are engaged in agriculture. Given the rural nature of Afghanistan society, the country's current demographic profile highlights the scope of the development challenge. The average life expectancy at birth is 43 years.

Fifty-four percent of the population is male and 46% female. Women above 24 years of age have higher mortality rates than men of the same ages, which may be related to the cumulative effect of disadvantageous conditions of women and the biological burden of giving birth to several children. On average, each woman gives birth to 6.6 children, but only about 19% of women give birth in suitable health facilities. In short, Afghanistan has a gender gap which favours male survivability. This is the case despite decades of war which should have skewed survivability more in favour of women.

The average number of people per rural household is 7.5, and the larger the household the more likely that it will be poor. Two percent of households in Afghanistan are headed by females and 4% are headed by disabled males. In rural Afghanistan, the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) estimates that approximately 5.4 million (30%) do not meet their basic dietary requirements, which results in chronic malnutrition (50% of

children under 5 years of age) and micronutrient deficiency diseases (70% of mothers and children under 5 are iron deficient).

Access to safe drinking water, sanitation, social services and markets is the lowest in the region and amongst the lowest in the world.

Survey findings indicate that 74% of Afghans in rural areas do not have access to safe drinking water and only 4% have access to sanitation (safe toilets) and a further 28% do not have toilets.

Regarding gender dimension of rural employment, there is a growing body of work on land and, to a lesser extent, livestock issues in Afghanistan, yet the gender dimension of these issues has been little explored, despite the fact that land and livestock are considered to be key assets for rural livelihoods. As a result, little is known about the factors that enable or constrain women's access to land and livestock.

In 2002, the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) launched an 18-month study aimed at building understanding of the realities of Afghan livelihoods by monitoring households over time. A key finding of the AREU Rural Livelihoods Monitoring project was that some (though very few) women were considered to own land and that some widowed women owned livestock. However, what these rights and ownership mean in practice is not known.

Similarly, little is known about those few women who actually come forward to claim their rights and whether they have been able to make use of the land or livestock. This study, developed as follow-on to the initial rural livelihoods research, aimed to fill in some of these knowledge gaps.

Access to land and livestock can be crucial for women's livelihoods in rural (and urban) areas, especially for widows, who often lack sufficient income generating alternatives.

The purpose of this research was to examine access to agricultural land and livestock through a gender analysis lens and thereby build understanding of the factors that enable and constrain different women's access to land and livestock. This paper does not suggest that men do not face problems in accessing land and livestock, but rather focuses specifically on women due to the lack of attention these issues receive with regards to women. The goal is to raise awareness of these issues with examples from seven villages in three provinces, and to offer recommendations as to how these issues can begin to be addressed. The next section of this report will explain the study methods and limitations.

Section III provides a background on the villages, which differed greatly in terms of location, size, and ethnicity, and draws out the similarities and differences in the roles and responsibilities of women and men in agriculture (crop agriculture, horticulture and livestock) across the sites. It also looks at the factors that affect the level of women's involvement in agriculture. Section IV addresses the issue of ownership of land and livestock, looking largely at obstacles to women's ownership through inheritance, as well as other forms of ownership. It also examines claims made by women for their rightful

shares in land, reasons behind these claims, the outcomes of these claims and the reasons why women often do not claim their rights. The final section summarizes the key factors enabling and constraining women's access to land and livestock and provides some recommendations as to how access can be increased and improved.

2. Methods

This study was conducted using qualitative research methods, including in-depth emistructured conversational interviews, as well as focus group discussions and participant observation of activities. A checklist of key questions was used, around which interview questions were directed where possible (see key questions below). Due to the perceived sensitivity of the subject matter, questions were asked in a broader context of what men and women were doing in agriculture in general and then the information needed for this research was extracted. Male and female team members spoke with men and women respectively. Information gained from the interviews was then shared between teams each evening.

Key Questions:

- What access to land and livestock do women have? Has this changed over time?
- Which women are able to claim their rights and why do they claim?
- What channels do women go through to claim their rights?
- What are people's perceptions around these claims?
- Does owning land affect women's ability to own livestock and vice versa?
- How does women's ability to access land or livestock affect their ability to access other resources (such as credit)?
- What does ownership mean in reality?
- What other resources, besides ownership rights, do women need to be able to use land as a productive asset for themselves and their families?
- How does women's access to land and/or livestock affect their decision-making power?

It was decided from the beginning that three geographic areas would be visited. The number was chosen as it was manageable in the time given and would allow for an in depth understanding of each village studied. The villages were selected for the following reasons:

- They were in areas where land and livestock were available;
- Most were villages where women were known to have claimed land; and
- They were in areas where non-governmental organisations (NGOs) interested in participating in the research were present and were operating agricultural programmes, the intention being that these NGOs would be able to use the findings in those areas.

The original intention was to visit the district governor in each area, who would assist with the selection of the exact villages. This was to be done by asking the district governor about cases of women claiming land or livestock and then selecting the villages on the basis of where these women came from. In Badakhshan this did not prove possible, as the governor was not present and the researchers could not access this information. The two villages were therefore selected based on Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) recommendations as well as their location. In Bamyan, AKF recommended working in Taga Bargh District, as information collected would be useful for their future programming in the area. One of the claims, however, turned out to not be over property. The two villages within this valley were very small and did not take as long to study as those in Badakhshan so the team also visited another larger village near the district center to look at the possible effects of village size on mobility. Due to the ethnic composition of the previous villages studied, the researchers then chose to visit Pashtun villages in Kabul Province.

Within each village the researchers met with different types of women and men: those from landed and landless households, those from households with livestock and those without, as well as widows and married women. The number of people without land or livestock interviewed varied depending on whether there was a high number of landless households, etc. Landless households were the minority in all villages studied (though this is not the case in many parts of Afghanistan), and were therefore a smaller part of the sample. A total of 166 interviews as sub-sample of the 360 household surveyed were conducted with 87 women (such as married women, unmarried women, divorced women, older women, women household head), including 28 widows, and 79 men from different households. Each interview lasted between one and two hours.

Analysis of the data was carried out by using the set of key questions to compare and contrast responses from different people in different areas.

Limitations

A number of limitations to this study should be mentioned. Due to the sensitivities, perceived or real, of discussing women's rights and activities with men, fewer questions were asked of men than was originally planned. The researchers were, however, able to ask women all of the necessary questions but would have preferred to get a better idea of men's perceptions of women's access to land and livestock.

It was originally intended to conduct repeat interviews with a small number of people. As this increased suspicion as well as raised expectations, the team decided to avoid repeat visits in all but a few highly interesting cases where interviews were conducted in a very informal manner.

Insecurity limited the study areas and delayed the research several times. In Badakhshan the team had intended to visit Jurm District but had to relocate due to the start of poppy eradication in the area. Insecurity also meant that Pashtun areas went unvisited,

but instead the researchers visited Pashtun villages in a largely non-Pashtun area (which is likely to be somewhat different to Pashtun villages in Pashtun dominated areas)

The study sample is in no way representative but does provide useful insights and indications of trends, given that similarities in access were observed across all villages despite their differences. In order for the sample to have been representative a very large number of villages would need to be studied. It is hoped that the findings from this study will raise interest in these issues and that various organisations can use the lessons learned in their own geographical areas of work, as applicable.

3. Men and Women's Have Different Access to Agricultural Assets

This section offers a brief introduction of the villages and then discusses the different roles and responsibilities of women and men in agriculture in these villages, drawing comparisons across the sites. It then examines the factors that were found to affect those roles and responsibilities.

3.1 Background on the Villages

Village 1, Ishkashim, Badakhshan

Village 1 lies in a valley upon rocky land about a 45-minute drive or a three-hour walk from the district centre of Ishkashim. The valley runs adjacent to a tributary of the Amu River, which separates it from Tajikistan. The population of the village is mostly Tajik Ismaili, with only four Sunni households out of a 42 household population. There are no absolute landless households, though most people own only one to two jeribs (one jerib is equal to one-fifth of a hectare) of agricultural land. All households own at least one animal. The village suffers from many problems which affect its agriculture: occasional flooding of arable land that washes stones onto the land, rendering it unusable; high salinity of the water; crop diseases; as well as the flooding of the pasture land due to flood protection measures being taken on the Tajikistan side of the river, resulting in water washing on to the village's riverbanks.

Village 2, Ishkashim, Badakhshan

Village 2 crosses the district centre of Ishkashim and is made up of four sub-villages. The 75 household population is almost evenly comprised of Tajik Ismaili and Tajik Sunni households. During previous years, people in this village faced many economic problems as the route into Ishkashim was closed due to a Taliban blockade. This meant that accessible food was exceptionally costly (800 Afs [US\$16] for 7kg of wheat) and many are still in debt from this period and/or have not regained the parts of their land that they had to sell to pay for food. There are more landless households in this village than in Village 1. Most of the landless households are Sunni, and as they were not originally from the area they only have land if they were able to buy it. Those without land also tend to be without livestock. The average size of land owned is around five jeribs.

Village 3, Panjao, Bamyan

Village 3 lies adjacent to the main road that runs through Taga Bargh valley, on the right-hand side of the road, about a 40-minute drive from Panjao centre. Village 3 is very small, with only 18 households, five of which are landless. All households are Hazara Shi'a. The landless households are still very involved in agriculture, working as sharecroppers for landowners within the village. Most households own a few livestock. The villagers face huge problems of water shortages and with pasture; therefore, they are currently unable to cultivate all of their land. With few other income generating activities in the area, many of the men migrate to Kabul at certain times of the year.

Village 4, Panjao, Bamyan

To the right-hand side of the main road running through Taga Bargh valley, across a stream and up and over the hilly valley floor, lies Village 4. Village 4 has greater water access than Village 3 and therefore more productive agriculture. Village 4 is also small, with only 20 households, all of which own some land and livestock and are Hazara Shi'a. There are another four landless families also living here who have come from other villages. These families, as with other sharecroppers in Panjao, have no land or shelter and so are locked into exploitative sharecropping cycles in order to secure some accommodation that landlords provide.

Village 5, Panjao, Bamyan

Near to Panjao district centre is Village 5. Village 5 is larger than the previous two villages and is made up of 88 households, all of which are Hazara Shi'a. Village 5 has an interesting history, as its land was originally bought from the government, which had seized the land around 200 years ago from a female arbab (village leader) who had held a lot of power, but been accused of rebelling against the government. Interestingly, the researchers were told that in the past many women held a lot of power and villagers named several women who had been arbabs in Bamyan. Educated women of this time were also consulted by all members of their communities regarding their problems.

Village 6, Shomali Plains, Kabul Province

Village 6 lies on the right-hand side of the road going through the Shomali Plains from Kabul near to the Qara Bagh bazaar. The village is quite large, with around 360 households. Most households are Pashtun though there are a few Tajik women living in the village who were married to men here. While all households were said to own land, few are now able to cultivate it due to a severe lack of water. Most of the land is vineyard but the grapes no longer grow properly. Very few households own livestock now as there is no fodder to feed them.

Village 7, Shomali Plains, Kabul Province

Village 7 is on the other side of the road from Village 6 and faces the same agricultural problems. It too is large, with a population of 785 households, and is comprised of several sub-villages. As with Village 6 the vast majority of the population is Pashtun. There are more landless households in this village, who in previous times worked on the land of

others in the village. As with landed households in Village 6, many members of landless households now work on cash for work projects and migrate to Kabul to find work.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Table 1 summarises the key characteristics of the roles that women and men play in agricultural work in the seven villages studied. As the table illustrates, women in all villages were involved in agriculture, despite differences between villages in terms of ethnicity, religion or location. This was also found to be the case in the five villages in Faryab and Saripul studied as part of the Rural Livelihoods Monitoring project, though in these areas it was largely poorer women who were most involved in agriculture.

Table 1. Women and Men’s Roles in Agriculture in the Seven Villages

Village	Women’s Activities	Men’s Activities
Village 1 (Badakhshan)	<p>Women were said to do as much agricultural work as men. Ismaili and Sunni women are mostly responsible for: weeding, and cultivating vegetables and tobacco. Ismaili women are also involved in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removing stones from the land, • harvesting, • gathering the crops into bundles, • threshing, and • cleaning the seed. <p>Sunni women here tend to be less involved in agriculture due to less mobility.</p> <p>Women are responsible for livestock and carry out all activities from breeding, to milking to making dairy produce, spinning wool and selling small animal products inside the village and outside during an annual two-three month migration to pasture land.</p>	<p>Sunni, Ismaili and Shi’a men are mostly responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ploughing, • irrigating, • sowing, • harvesting, • threshing, • separating the wheat from the husk, • cleaning the seed. <p>All men bring fodder and water for the animals in winter and one man from a household often accompanies the two women to the pasture land.</p>
Village 2 (Badakhshan)	As above but few Ismaili women migrate to the pasture as there are fewer animals and children are more involved in grazing around the village area.	As above
Village 3 (Bamyan)	<p>Women are involved in all agricultural activities on land except for ploughing, planting and separating the wheat from the husk and irrigating. Most women are involved in agriculture. Women also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collect stones, • turn the soil where the oxen can’t reach during 	<p>Men are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ploughing, • irrigating, • sowing, • harvesting,

	<p>ploughing, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • break up hard large clumps of soil. <p>Women also collect cumin and other plants used for medicinal plants and sell cumin to traders who visit this village. With livestock the shepherding is often carried out by young boys and girls in return for cash or food and is a very important source of income for some families. As in Villages 1 and 2, livestock is considered to be the responsibility of women.</p> <p>Women bring grass in summer to feed the animals, sometimes twice a day. As in the other sites, women feed and milk the animals, clean the animal shelter, spin wool and make namads (felted woolen rugs) and make other goods such as dairy produce and dung cakes for fuel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threshing, • separating the wheat from the husk • cleaning the seed. <p>Men bring fodder for animals in winter.</p>
Village 4 (Bamyan)	As above	As above
Village 5 (Bamyan)	As above	As above
Village 6 (Kabul)	<p>In the past some women gathered weeds and cleared stones from the vineyards and cut grapes when they were ready. Women would dry the grapes and clean the raisins. When the grapes were ready poorer women would come and cut them in return for money. Then they would take turns on each other's land. Wealthier women worked less in agriculture in the past as labourers were hired though they still visited the land with their husbands and observed. More women are working on land now that most households are poor due to drought and war. In the past and present (among those households who have them), women were responsible for feeding and watering animals inside the compound and making dairy produce.</p>	<p>As above. In the past when people owned livestock men and young boys were grazing animals. Men were more involved than with livestock outside the household than in the other villages due to greater restrictions on women's mobility.</p>
Village 7 (Kabul)	As above	As above

Women Activities based on their status:

Women are living in rural and doing following activities based on their categories as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Women Activities based on their status:

S.N	Women status	Women activities
1	Married poor women with livestock	Married poor women owned livestock are also doing same work as breeding, to milking to making dairy produce, spinning wool and selling small animal products inside the village and outside during an annual two-three month migration to pasture land.
	Married poor women owned land	Married poor women owned land are also doing same work as weeding, and cultivating vegetables and wheat Also doing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removing stones from the land, • harvesting, • gathering the crops into bundles, • threshing, and • cleaning the seed. Eventually they are doing all agriculture related works as labor on their owned land
2	Wealth women	Wealth women are doing home work, cooking, cleaning and washing and looking after livestock
3	Old women	
4	Widow women owned livestock	Widows are responsible for livestock and carry out all activities from breeding, to milking to making dairy produce, spinning wool and selling small animal products inside the village and outside during an annual two-three month migration to pasture land.
5	Widow women with land	Landed Widows are planting, weeding, and cultivating vegetables and wheat. Also doing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removing stones from the land, • harvesting, • gathering the crops into bundles, • threshing, and • cleaning the seed. Eventually they are doing all agriculture related works as labor on their owned land

Widows and old women (the women who are household heads) only have the rights to retain and spend their income from their land and livestock products and show their decision-making and bargaining power. The male-controlled women only doing work under their husband instruction and don't have the right to retain the income with weak and or no decision-making and bargaining power.

Specifically, women across all sites were involved in weeding and to a lesser extent harvesting. Most were also involved in post-harvest work such as threshing and cleaning seeds. Women were also found to be responsible for livestock in all of the villages, most notably in Badakhshan Village 1. Despite this, organisations still work with men in livestock and veterinary training in this village. With the exception of Villages 1 and 2 there was little animal health care inside the villages, though both women and men were able to diagnose when an animal was ill. In Kabul Villages 6 and 7 women had, in the past, given some home remedies to their livestock, and the advice of elderly women living in the villages had been sought when an animal was ill.

Women in all villages are able to sell some animal produce such as eggs and qrut (dried yoghurt) inside the village if they need the money and if their family owns livestock. Whether they are able retain the income from their sales differs from household to household. Most women use any income generated for household, rather than personal, needs. If produce is sold at the bazaar, men are responsible for transport unless a woman has no male relative who can take it for her. Men are mostly responsible for the sale of any crops and for the final decision about what is bought with the income generated.

The delegation of agricultural roles based on gender were said not to have changed in living memory in Villages 1-5. In Villages 6 and 7, however, women and men felt the roles had changed to some extent. Most agreed that women now play a greater role in agriculture, as they can no longer afford to hire labour now that the productivity of the land is very poor, but there was a lack of consensus over the role women played in the past. Some said that in the past women never worked on land. Indeed, a group of women said, "We were like queens sitting at home without work. We would only go to the land for leisure to visit. We only cooked and sent the food for the men and looked after the livestock." Others, including elderly men, said that women had always worked alongside them. Given the strong purdah norms in this village, expressed by the villagers, it seems unlikely that people would say women had worked in the fields in the past if they had not. To some extent there seemed to be a desire to represent the past in an idyllic way, presenting life in terms of how it is "meant" to be. This was also observed in Villages 1 and 2 where the researchers were often told by women and men that women, especially Sunni women, were not working in agriculture. When women and men were then asked whether women were carrying out specific activities such as weeding, they said that yes the women were. Thus, this may have been another presentation of the "ideal" reality, rather than the "lived" reality.

3.3 Factors Affecting Gendered Roles in Agriculture

This section looks at the factors that were found to affect the level and nature of women's involvement in agricultural activities as compared to men. These include:

- Whether a woman belongs to a landed or landless household;
- Village-specific resource sharing arrangements;
- Household composition;
- Knowledge of agricultural activities;
- Marital status;
- Wealth;
- Tradition;
- Location and size of villages; and
- The nature of NGO projects working in a given village.

Each of these factors is discussed in greater detail below.

Landed or Landless

Whether a woman belongs to a landed or landless family, regardless of who owns the land, affects the amount of access she will have to land and therefore the number of agricultural activities she will carry out. The same applies for livestock.

Few women work on the land of others and where they do, this tends to be largely reserved for the very poor, and for poor widows in particular. However, the researchers did uncover four cases of women working as labourers on others' land.

Women from sharecropping families may work on the land of others with their husband if he is a sharecropper. However, if the men of the family do not own land or do not work as sharecroppers, it is highly unlikely that women will have any physical access to agricultural land, since villages do not usually contain common land that can be cultivated, as is found in other countries, such as India.

Household Composition

The number of people in a household, and in particular the ratio of women to men, affects the activities household members carry out. For example, women in all of the sites were said to work less in crop agriculture, and in a few cases not at all, if there are "enough" men in the household. Conversely, where there are few men in a household women may transcend the boundaries of the "normal" activities they carry out with regards to agriculture.

The number of females in a household was also found to determine whether certain activities could be carried out all. Several women in Badakhshan Village 2 for example said they could not keep livestock because there were not enough women in their

household to look after them as well as carry out other housework and agricultural work. While some women work on both land and with livestock, it is not always the same women carrying out both types of activities. For example, if a household is comprised of more than one family, meaning there are several females in the house, the tasks may be split between women, with some women working with livestock and others with crops. Actually, getting twice marriage is normal habits of Afghan rural community around less than 50% of women are only first wives and the rest of them are second and third. This is especially the case in households where women migrate to the ailoq. There did not appear to be any particular reasoning in choosing which women go to the ailoq, though households generally preferred to neither send young girls nor old women.

Therefore, while most of the interviewed women identified by village elder as a village women representative called Qabila, work in agriculture in general, at an individual level, they may not always work with both livestock and crop agriculture. In households with few women, however, women may be working with both. The household composition will therefore play a role in determining which activities women carry out and where their expertise lies, how much time they have, and when they might be able to engage in other projects. This is of significance for programming as it shows the need not only to look at the different tasks which “women” and “men” carry out but also differences between the genders. This will be important for example in deciding which household members to include in which types of training, while recognising that these roles may change over time.

Related to this is the fact that in joint households, where more than one family live together almost 90% of the rural households are joint households as it is an Afghan rural tradition to live jointly for roughly three to four generations in same household, decision-making over who does what, and also who controls what, often lies with the head of the household, most often the parents or the oldest brother. This means that men also do not have equal decision-making power and that simply working with “women” would not necessarily lead to increased decision-making for all women in the household where an age hierarchy is in place. An understanding of both who does what, as well as who controls what, is needed to target the right people within a household, if increased decision-making is the aim.

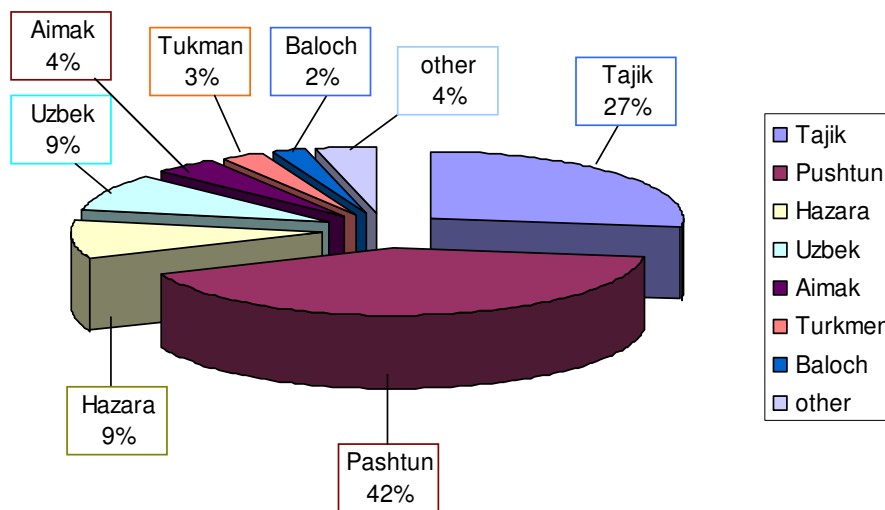
Location and Size of Villages

The size of a village and its proximity to the district centre also appear to affect women’s mobility. The smaller the village, the greater the apparent trust in neighbours due to greater knowledge of them and the further away from the district centre, or from a through road, the more women may have mobility inside the village.

In one of the villages with a mixed Ismaili and Sunni population (see the Afghanistan population and ethnicity chart below), near to the district centre for example, Ismaili and Sunni women were observed wearing their burqas to the land, then removing them once

there to work. This was in comparison to the majority Ismaili village studied which was far from the road, where no women wore burqas inside the village.

Afghanistan Population and Ethnicity by Percentage



Afghanistan has a population of around 25 million people excluding of migrants, living in 34 provinces. The majority of Pushtuns speak Pashto while the majority of other ethnic groups speak Dari, a dialect of Persian. Both languages are official languages of overnment. A majority of the ethnic groups (80% of the population) espouse Sunni Islam, the primary exceptions being the Hazaras and the Ismailis who are Shi'a (19% of the population). The Hazaras have tended to be marginalized politically and economically and they have also been the victims of a number of massacres over the past century or so.

Knowledge

Several aspects of women’s agricultural knowledge, as well as lack thereof, affect women’s role in agriculture.

Lack of Agricultural Knowledge

When some women in Bamyan Village 4 were asked about why women do not plant seeds, the women said they do not know how, and men do not show them. They also said they are not interested to learn, as if they do, this work will become their responsibility. Another elderly woman in Village 5 said she did not know how to plant. She said in the past she had

wanted to learn but other women in the village told her not to, as then they would also have to do this work. This demonstrates how the appearance of a lack of knowledge can be perceived as very useful in minimising one's workload.

Traditional/Hidden Knowledge

In another example, in Bamyan Village 4, when women said they couldn't separate the good seed from the bad, some women were asked if they had ever wanted to learn. To this they replied that they know how, but women in their culture do not do this. The women also said that planting on irrigated land takes place when the weather is very cold and planting on rain-fed land takes place when there is still snow on the ground so they are unable to take their children there and cannot go (if they have young children).

Another group of women in Village 5 said they could not plant seeds. When asked if they would like to learn, they said that there is no need, as they already know. They explained that women spend a lot of time on the land with their husbands and so they watch and learn. When asked if their husbands know that they know how to plant, they said no, again for the same reason as the other women gave—then they would have to do the work and “what would be left for the men to do?”

Being known to possess certain knowledge can be seen as negative and the desire by one woman for a certain type of knowledge could possibly have a negative effect on others in terms of increasing their workload. This may suggest a need to reach a consensus with women in a given village about the desire for new forms of training, as well as to guard against both the assumptions that women do not know how to do activities that they do not carry out, as well as that knowledge is always positive for all people.

The marital status of women also affects the activities they may be involved in. Unmarried women, especially if near to the age of marriage, are less likely to be allowed to carry out agricultural tasks outside the house.

Women in female-headed households on the other hand, whether temporary or permanent, are likely to have more of a role in managing activities on land as well as livestock (see Box 1). This will not always mean that the women will carry out more activities on the land themselves, but they will be responsible for recruiting day labourers or giving their land to a sharecropper to work. This will also depend on whether they have male children and how old these male children are. If the sons are old enough they may work on the land instead of labourers. The research team also came across several cases where members of the community or relatives were also helping to work on a widow's land, sometimes without any form of compensation.

Box 1: Women Managing Their Own Land

A Sunni widow in Village 1 was left the land of her husband. Her three brothers-in-law also left their land with her for cultivation, as they moved to other areas. She is able to keep 50 percent of the production. Her son works on the land when he can, but is a soldier and so is often away. The rest of her children are girls who are not allowed, for cultural reasons, to work outside. Though she said “women don’t work on the land in our culture” she then said that she does help in weeding and at harvest time, though qualified this by saying she was able to carry out these tasks because the land is close by. She said women also cultivate vegetables. To carry out the tasks she is unable to do she hires a young farmer – between 12 and 15 years old. In order to raise the cash needed to hire the farmer her son brings her opium from various places, which she then sells for a higher price to the opium addicts inside the village.

A Sunni widow in Village 2 hired people to work on the land she received from her father-in-law when her husband died. She also claimed land from her brothers in another area. She said they knew she was in a difficult situation so she said they didn’t mind her claiming. She sold it back to them and bought land in this village. Last year she mortgaged both pieces of land to large landowners and used the money from one piece to trade in Wakhan and then used profits to get the land back. The other piece of land remains mortgaged. They have little money left now but use what there is to buy opium, which her son sells for a profit in the Wakhan Corridor.

Another elderly widow in Village 6 in Kabul was managing her own land. She had only one son and he committed suicide. She now gives her land to a labourer to work on when she can afford it and supervises him. Sometimes she also works on the land herself. She dries grapes and sells them herself to businessmen either in the village or in the bazaar. She is able to pay the labourer with the money she raises from this and her occasional work with an NGO, delivering educational messages to women inside the village.

In most cases widows and the few temporary female-headed households studied were able to manage the land, though some lacked adequate knowledge of seed and fertiliser types. Indeed, one example was found in Village 1 in Badakhshan of a woman who had cultivated five jeribs (one hectare) of land by herself when she was widowed and her children were too young to work on the land. Where difficulties do lie is in finding sufficient income to pay for labourers where there is need for them. If a sharecropper is hired, female-headed households face problems in getting enough produce to feed the family, if the land is small. Many women in Afghanistan are married to men in their natal village, making it easier for them to control any property they do own through inheritance. However, even if they are married to men in another village, they can still utilise the land through renting it out or giving it to a sharecropper to work.

In general, poorer women tend to be more involved in agricultural tasks than wealthier women. This has however changed in some areas. For example, in both of the villages in the Shomali Plains women and men explained that women in richer households were much less involved in agriculture in the past when there was an abundance of production and enough income to hire agricultural labour. Now that war and drought have severely limited the accessible water sources and households have become poorer, more women are involved in trying to help the household increase food production.

There does appear to be more room for maneuver with poorer women in terms of involving them in activities than would not traditionally be considered appropriate, but can contribute towards gaining livelihood security.

Tradition

Mobility, as dictated to some extent by tradition, was also found, not surprisingly, to affect the level of agricultural involvement of women. A difference in the mobility of Sunni and Shi'a Muslim women was noted, with a greater level of mobility observed amongst Shi'a people, though this varied according to the location of the village, as discussed in the following section. Ismaili women in Badakhshan Village 1 appeared very free to move within the village and are able to sit with men from other households in meetings and to graze their animals and to work on land. Similarly the Shi'a Hazara women in Panjao also seemed free to move around and so could take animals to pasture. In these villages it is not considered acceptable for Sunni women to take animals for grazing. Instead they hire someone, or if they are poor, their children will graze the animals. They may go if there is no one else, otherwise they will not keep livestock in the first place. This is not to suggest that tradition is predicated solely on religion, but rather that religious traditions intersect with ethnicity, location and wealth.

Tradition dictates not only what people should do. As mentioned earlier a difference was observed between the answer people gave to questions about women's role in agriculture and the reality of women's role in agriculture, a difference that might be better understood with in-depth investigation into women and men's roles.

Factors that affect or contribute to change regarding women's access to productive assets and employment

There are sorts of factors that affect and or contribute to change in accordance women access to productive assets and employment such as Non Governmental Organization programmes can also affect the agricultural work women carry out. For example, a CARE project carried out in Village 6 in Kabul resulted in women and men being paid to work on the vineyard of a widow without children. Given that it is not considered appropriate for women to work on the land of others, the idea met with some resistance at first, but was later welcomed after much negotiation at the village and district level. Both men and women alike felt this was a very good income generation opportunity for the women.

Those women involved were mostly widows and elderly women, as this work is considered more acceptable than for younger women, and these women were considered the most in need of work.

Another proposed project from an organisation working in Village 7 in Kabul might also affect women's roles and mobility. The proposal is for a livestock project and came about after a lengthy process (see Box 2). Unable to supply livestock to all households, the NGO suggested a member of the community give or rent out their land and the women create a farm, the animals for which are to be supplied by the NGO. One woman from each household is allowed to participate and the women have organized themselves into teams led by a team leader. The teams are to take turns in working on the farm. NGO staff apparently told the women that when the farm is established women have to go work on the farm with other women and not with their husbands. When asked what their husbands thought about the project, a group of women, including a team leader, said that the men said, "If this is an income source then you can go." They said the men told them to go, but that they are also happy to go.

Box 2: Farm Project

According to several women from Village 7 in the Shomali Plains, NGO staff asked the women of the village to come up with some income generating ideas. The women decided a good business would be for the NGO to bring them pots and pans and other vessels they could rent out for weddings. The elders of the village disagreed with this idea, however, and said they should ask for livestock. The women then met again with NGO staff and discussed this with them.

At first they asked for one cow per family but the NGO said this was not possible and suggested they give one goat for seven households but that they establish a farm to keep all of the animals and that the women work on the farm without taking their husbands as maharrams.

In the three villages in Bamyan, Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) asked the researchers to find out about the possibilities of women being trained as basic veterinary workers. Almost all women and men said that this work would be possible for women and felt that this would be a good idea, as women are responsible for livestock. People said women would be able to go alone to treat animals in the houses of others inside the village, but would need a maharram to go outside the village. If this idea goes ahead then women's activities and responsibilities for livestock will be increased. The women seemed very interested in "learning anything new" and felt that such knowledge would command respect from other members of the community. Women and men in Kabul Villages 6 and 7 also felt this would be a good idea, though women would only be able to carry out this work in their own homes.

Most women have some physical access to land and livestock. While this means that many women have access to the food produced by themselves and their family members, this access does not necessarily translate into rights and control over produce and what to sell and buy. This is in part due to lack of ownership, which in turn is linked to socio-cultural norms. This shall be discussed in the following section, which examines women's access to land and livestock through ownership.

4. Factors Affecting Women's Ownership of Land and Livestock

This section examines the different factors found to affect women's ownership of land and livestock. The focus of this section is largely on inheritance, as this is the main means by which women gain ownership of land and livestock. It begins by looking at inheritance and other ways in which women can gain ownership, then examines the factors that prevent the majority of women from inheriting land and livestock.

4.1 Means of Gaining Ownership of Land and Livestock

There are few forms of coming into land and livestock other than through inheritance. Few women own land that was not inherited. The AREU Rural Livelihoods Monitoring project found that of 360 households studied, only 1.87 percent of women owned land by themselves, and only 11 percent of women were found to own livestock individually, and these were almost all widows. The few possibilities of gaining ownership of land and livestock are outlined below.

Jaez

At the time of marriage women receive mostly small house items and clothes from their parents. In both the Badakhshan and Bamyan villages women receive livestock through a tradition known as *Jaez*, the first visit of a new bride to her parental home after marriage. This appears to be a form of pre-mortem inheritance. The woman then takes the animals to her marital home. In theory the animals belong to her but whether this ownership is respected, and whether it translates into control over the animals and their produce, varies from household to household. In some cases the husband's parents take control and even sell the animals without asking the woman's permission. In other cases other household members will consult her before making decisions over the animal and its produce.

Buying Land

One possibility of gaining access could be to buy land, however, there does not appear to be much of a land market in Afghanistan. The research team did not come across any cases of women buying land. Given the lack of income generating opportunities available to women (and men), it is highly unlikely that even if there were a land market, women, especially poor women and men, would ever be able to purchase land without access to

large amounts of credit, to which they currently have little access. The poor people interviewed told of how difficult it is to access credit if you do not already own land or livestock at least. Where it is possible, most land tends to be bought by those who already own it, since those are the people with financial means to purchase land.

Borrowing Livestock

As discussed earlier, women in both of the villages in Badakhshan access livestock such as sheep, goats and cows, through a local practice of borrowing animals from wealthier households. In some cases, because women are fully responsible for arranging this, they are considered to own the animals, though this appears to depend on the relations inside the household. Several women said they have all authority to sell the animals they brought through this system without anyone's permission, and that if anyone else wants to sell them they have to ask the women. In a few cases, where women had brought several animals through these means, men said that women were able to keep one of the animals which they brought and could decide what to do with the animal; if they choose to sell it they can decide how to use the income. Where women cannot control decisions about the sale of an animal they often have some control over the animal produce, which women in all the villages were found to trade inside the village, and in some cases, decide how to use the income.

Inheriting Land

The Civil Code of 1978 governs inheritance law in Afghanistan and is based on Islamic jurisprudence. Under Shari'a law women have rights to inherit both as daughters and as widows. Divorced women, however, are given no rights to their husbands' property. The inheritance rights that do exist for women are clearly laid out in the Koran (see Box 3) and therefore in the Civil Code. Widows are to receive one-eighth of the property or one-fourth if they have no children. Where there is more than one wife, this proportion is shared among them. Provision for widows is priority.

Box 3: Shari'a Law: From Chapter 4 of the Koran: The Women (Surah 4 – Al Nisa)

God (thus) directs you as regards your children's inheritance: to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance: if only one, her share is half. For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each, if the deceased left children; if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third; if the deceased left brothers (or sisters) the mother has a sixth. The distribution in all cases is after payment of legacies and debts. Ye know not whether your parents or your children are nearest to you in benefit. These are settled portions ordained by God: and God is all-knowing, all-wise.

While the law dictates that women have rights to inherit as daughters and as wives, the reality is far removed, particularly with regards to daughters. In the seven villages studied, 12 cases of daughters actually inheriting land without having to claim were found, though there may have been more. These were usually special circumstances, however:

- Seven cases were of women who had no brothers.
- Three women were given land because they had never married (see Box 3) and therefore had no one to support them.
- One woman's parents gave her land because they had not been able to give her any dowry when she married.
- Another woman was given land because her father was very wealthy and owned a lot of land.

Widows do in general appear to receive the land, at least nominally, though they often transfer the land into their sons' names to avoid any confusion later on. Often these women do still appear to be able to exercise some control over the land and some sons may still consider the land to belong to their mother. Unfortunately, not all widows are clear about their rights to property (see Box 4). If old enough, the sons are often the ones who make the decisions about the land, though they will usually consult their mother about any sales of land.

Box 4: Women Who Never Married

An elderly woman in Kabul Village 6 said that some people give land to their daughters. She and her sister were given land, for example, as they had never married. A cousin had come to marry the younger of the two sisters but she refused and her parents accepted her decision. Her cousin subsequently stopped anyone from coming to marry her. Her sister had not wanted to marry when she was young as was happy being wealthy and living with her parents and thought life would always be this way. When their father died, she and her sister gave the land to a sharecropper.

Another elderly woman in the same village was in a similar situation. This woman was living alone and had also never married, as she had to look after her mother who was widowed and blind. She also said her cousins were very cruel to her and did not want her to marry as they wanted to keep her poor and working for them. Her father had land which should have all gone to her, but when her cousins returned from Pakistan after the Taliban left, they divided the land and only gave her two rooms, one of which was inhabitable, and 100 taks. She is ill now and so has given the land to her niece who she lived with during both periods as a refugee in Pakistan (during the Soviet invasion and Taliban). She gave the land to her niece rather than her nephews, as they never came to visit her or help her. In return for the land she asked that her niece visit her and bring her food, which she does.

Box 5: Lack of Knowledge of Rights

One widow present had sold 300 taks to pay for her husband’s funeral. She still has 2-300 taks. She had land in her own village but her husband sold it and took the money. She is now unclear what rights she has to her husband’s property and is very worried, as her daughter-in-law wants to evict her from the house. She asked the research team if she had rights to the property. No will was written. One woman present tried to stop her talking about it and told her not to tell secrets. She said she thinks if a woman has no children – and she has none from her second husband (her first husband’s brother) – she gets two-thirds. Other women present told her she should speak to the mullah, but others also asked her very questioningly: “You’re not going to claim, are you?”

As will be discussed next, there are many differences in the way inheritance law is actually practiced among different groups, and many socio-cultural and socioeconomic reasons given by people to account for these differences.

4.2 Claiming Rights to Land and Livestock

This section looks at cases of women who have claimed their legal land rights, as opposed to accepting offered rights, and reasons behind these claims. Most of these cases happened long after the land was inherited.

Reasons for not claiming land were largely the same as reasons why women do not inherit in the first place: it is not the culture and women do not want to upset brothers or other family members. Though men in Village 7 in Kabul also said that, while in some cases a woman’s husband may encourage her to claim from her brothers, in other cases he will not accept her claiming, as “people will say you’re dependent on your wife – you can’t stand on your own two feet.” One other reason not mentioned earlier, however, was the strong perception of both women and men that in most cases the community would and do think very badly about women who claim. Several men expressed very strong views about women who claim, with one man saying, “If I thought my daughter would claim land I would kill her now.”

In total the researchers came across nine cases of women who had claimed, seven as sisters (one from Bamyan Village 5, one from Badakhshan Village 1, two from Badakhshan Village 2, and three from Village 7 in Kabul) and two as widows (both from Village 2), and one case of a woman who had tried to claim her livestock (from Bamyan Village 3). The latter case arose when a joint household separated into smaller households and all property was divided, including the livestock the woman owned, which she had brought with her through the custom of *pie wasi*. She did not continue to pursue the claim, however. The team also encountered a further five cases of women who were planning to claim, one as a sister (from Village 7) and four as widows (one from Village 2, one from Village 7 and two from Village 1).

While the sample size is perhaps too small, there did appear to be religious differences with regards to the number of women who claimed their land rights. Not surprisingly, few Ismaili women in Badakhshan did due to the age-old ruling that they could not inherit if they have brothers, though cases were still found, but less than among the Sunni women in the same area. Only one case was found in the three Bamyan villages, and the woman had been forced to claim by her husband who had repeatedly beaten her for not claiming. More cases of women claiming their rights as sisters were found among the predominantly Sunni villages in Kabul. Interestingly, it appears that at least within this village sample, Sunni women are more likely to claim their rights, despite the fact that they sometimes have less physical access to the land or livestock.

The majority of cases were found to have been raised and solved at the village level, most often according to Shari'a law, though two cases of widows going to the district governor were found. The distance to the district governor's office and the fact that all district staff are male in most rural areas (if not all) makes it very difficult for women to go altogether, but especially so if they do not have a male relative to support them.

Several reasons were given as to why the women who had claimed their legal rights, or were intending to, did so. These included:

- Not receiving dowry at the time of marriage;
- Not being properly taken care of by their brothers;
- Not being properly taken care of by their in-laws; and
- Poverty.

These are discussed below in greater detail.

Village-specific Resource Sharing

Village-specific systems affect the roles women and men play in agriculture in terms of their level of involvement and responsibility, though other factors such as ethnicity, religion and location also interact. For example, in Badakhshan Village 1, and to a lesser extent Village 2, villagers have a system of sharing livestock that is entirely arranged and managed by women (see Box 6). This exchange is carried out by both Ismaili and Sunni women, though Sunni women in Village 2 are less able to do this, as many are from landless households and are renting a house that does not provide enough space for livestock.

Most women seem able to participate in this arrangement, though one Ismaili woman from a neighbouring village to Village 1 cannot as her husband is an opium addict and people think her husband will sell the animal to buy opium.

Box 6: Borrowing Livestock

One village in Badakhshan exemplified how a village-specific system can affect access to livestock. The system is arranged as follows: a woman from a household with no or few livestock borrows a female animal such as sheep, goats and cows from a household including man and women as household head that has more. Often the system begins with the woman wanting to borrow the animal cooking two pieces of bread and taking it to the livestock owning household, who are then aware why the woman has come. She will often have helped them with some tasks before taking the bread to them.

The recipient mates the animal with a neighbour's animal of the opposite sex and keeps it until it produces offspring. During the time of keeping the animal the woman will feed and milk the animal, make grut, butter and yoghurt, a share of which will go to the household that lent the animal. She does not allow the animal to go to pasture with other animals until it has been in her household for long enough to become used to her and return to her. Once the animal has finished nursing the offspring, the adult is then returned to the owner and the woman who looked after it keeps the progeny.

This system acts as an excellent means of accessing livestock, and as a major source of income—extra livestock can be an asset that is sold to make up the shortfall in grain needed for the household. Some women had managed to rear several animals without having to sell them. The livestock provides produce that is used for household consumption and the grut is sold where possible, if the woman needs goods or money. If the household needs income to buy food, the animal can then be sold.

The system seen in Badakhshan enables those with few or no livestock to gain access to it, meaning that even poor households and poor women in particular can access livestock. In some cases women are considered to own the animals they bring to the household in this manner. In a couple of other cases where women had brought several animals, they were allowed to keep one, sell it, and decide how to use the income. It is very difficult for the poorer households to retain the animal, which is most often sold to buy food, to make up for the shortfall in wheat. Even if the animal can be retained there are few decisions to be made over how to use any income generated, since it is used for basic household necessities. This system was not in place in the other study villages, though it does happen in other areas of Afghanistan such as parts of Laghman.

Another type of system, again only found in Village 1, and to a lesser extent in Village 2, is that of migrating to what is known as the *ailoq* — a designated upland pasture area. Two women and one boy or man usually migrate together to the pasture, many hours' walk away, for a period of two to three months. This migration is partly due to a lack of pasture land inside the village and therefore the need both to feed the animals as well as keep them away from the crops grown inside the village prior to and during the harvest. During this time it is the men's responsibility to watch over the women and the animals while the women carry out many tasks such as milking the animals and making dairy

products such as oil, butter, qrut and yoghurt. Upon return from the ailoq women are then responsible for the breeding of animals. This is often done with neighbours' animals if there are not sufficient livestock within the household. The income women can make from dairy produce inside the village depends on how many other people in the village or area have livestock, as well as whether there is a tradition of giving, rather than selling, dairy produce, especially milk. In the two Badakhshan villages, for example, the idea of selling milk made people laugh. It was considered ridiculous given that most people in the area own livestock and therefore have their own milk. In the two villages in the Shomali Plains, the sale of milk was a recent phenomenon, one that was said to have been learnt in Pakistan, and one which many people disapproved of, referring back to when milk was given for free to those who needed it.

This period of migration to the ailoq (during which time less men are present with the animals) means that livestock is clearly seen as women's responsibility, though only certain female members of the household will go. This greater responsibility for livestock does, to some extent, appear to translate into more decision-making power over the produce of the animals, as women appear to be able to sell this produce and sometimes make decisions over how to use the income generated.

Did Not Receive Dowry

Some women felt that they were entitled to claim their land rights, as they had never received anything at the time of marriage. This was the case in two instances in the Badakhshan villages where women wanted to claim. In one case, the woman first went to her brothers to ask for her dowry. She did not like the way her brothers responded to her request so she decided she would claim land. She then intends to sell the land and buy livestock to earn her livelihood. She said she has a right to if she did not receive dowry. Views from others in the same village on whether she does indeed have the right differed. The villagers did, however, agree that a woman who receives no dowry at the time of marriage does have the right to ask for dowry in some form at a later stage.

Brother(s) Did Not Take Care of Me

Four cases were found of women claiming land from their brothers because they felt that their brothers had not treated them properly. One elderly woman from Village 6 in Kabul said that women sometimes give land to their brother and say, "If you cannot give us our rights on land then you must support us in other ways." If the brothers do not then some will claim. She said she had heard of a few cases and the community thought it was good, as their brothers were not treating them properly. It therefore appears that the right to claim land was an asset itself, as it is a way for women to bargain with their brothers for support in times of need. Men are well aware that if they do not look after their sisters well, the women may turn around and claim their rights from them. As Agarwal¹³ puts it, talking mainly about Indian women, "The appearance of compliance need not mean that women

lack a correct perception of their best interests; rather it can be a survival strategy stemming from the constraints on their ability to act overtly in pursuit of those interests.”

Family Not Taking Care of Them

As discussed earlier, it appears that it is easier for widows in separated households to receive their rights. Those living in joint households at the time of death who do not receive their rights or are not taken care of may claim. The research team came across four such cases of widows claiming land, who had been poorly treated by their husbands’ families (see Box 7).

Box 7: A Widow’s Claim

One widow in Badakhshan had been living with her brother-in-law and his family when her husband died. His family constantly pressured her to remarry and leave her children and the house with her. Because of this she claimed her husband’s share of the land. She claimed through the elders, but her brother-in-law would not accept this and so she went to the governor and after a lot of difficulty received the land. Her brother-in-law and his family then moved to another house.

The researchers also came across several cases of disputes between sisters over land. In one case, a woman had bought her sister’s share of the land but the sister had then stolen the land document and was claiming that it was her land. The woman had witnesses, however, that she had sold the land. So the problem of women’s ownership of land is not only between women and men but also between women.

Poverty

Another of the main reasons why women may and do claim land is poverty. The team encountered four cases of women claiming or planning to claim because they could not bring sufficient income to the household. One of these women was married, but her husband could no longer work. She is worried as her husband is very old and she is also getting old and they can no longer bring all of the necessary items they need to the household. Poverty was also given by many interviewees as one of the main reasons why women might claim.

5. Ways Forward

5.1 Conclusion

The findings of this research show that women in the study villages have a great deal of involvement in agriculture, yet few own land or livestock themselves, and where women do, they sometimes still lack control over it. Where women were found to own either asset,

most women were able to use those assets productively – that is, to gain produce from them – though more could be done to assist them. Most women and men are aware of the basic laws that grant women rights to inherit property. The findings have shown that though the numbers of women who claim are not great, women will claim if necessary and those numbers doing so were higher than expected. There were doubtless countless more cases of women who had wanted to claim but could not due to social pressure or other reasons.

The findings have also shown that there are many constraints that women face in accessing land and livestock as well as some enabling factors.

5.2 Recommendations for Gender Equitable Rural Employment and Poverty Reduction

There are numerous ways in which women’s access and ownership of land can be increased in order to improve livelihoods security and strengthen women’s ability to make their own decisions.

This is not to suggest that ownership of land in particular (as opposed to livestock) is always beneficial for women. Indeed where women do inherit land before marriage, for example, they are likely to have even less choice over who to marry since relatives may wish to keep the land inside the family and they will therefore be married to a relative.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that unmarried female landowners may sometimes fall prey to commanders. Nevertheless in the majority of cases, increased access to land and livestock would benefit the livelihoods of rural women.

Agriculture is still only a part of people’s livelihoods in rural areas and other areas of their livelihoods, such as non-farm labour, also need to be supported. Nonetheless, improving women’s access to land and/or livestock could go a long way to increasing livelihood security for many rural women and their households. The following are recommendations for tackling different aspects of women’s access to land and livestock.

Support Women’s Role in and Knowledge of Agricultural Activities Women appear to be able to learn from others in the village about agricultural work but could also benefit from training in the same way as men. Several measures could be taken to support and improve the knowledge of those women who work in agriculture:

1. The government through National Solidarity Program (NSP) establishing and leading Community Development Councils (CDCs) promoting local governance and community empowerment, Ministry of Women affairs (MoWA) representative and or Women Directorate at provincial level, the provincial and district governor, in cooperation with UN relevant agencies and NGOs should search nationwide and collect the data about who does what, what they need, what is the alternative and what is the solution way in each villages across the country, and use that knowledge

- for programme design. The CDCs will know what men and women are doing, yet programming does not always reflect this knowledge.
2. The CDCs as government representative at local level should emphasise the importance of women's agricultural activities to both men and women. This could be incorporated into agricultural extension work.
 3. The CDCs in cooperation of UN agencies and NGOs should ask questions about whether there are women with land or livestock, especially widows in the village. This would of course have to be done in a sensitive manner. Visits to these households could then be made to assess if these women need support in terms of information or credit, which would enable them to use their assets as productively as possible.
 4. As part of extension activities the government through CDCs in cooperation of UN agencies and NGOs should investigate whether there is a need and/or desire for women to be trained in agricultural activities that they are currently working in and/or not working in. Consent among all women may need to be sought with regards to new activities, as there is a worry by many women that some new knowledge brings new responsibilities and therefore more work.
 5. The possibly district level government officials beside CDCs in cooperation UN relevant agencies and NGO's should ensure that women are able to access market price information so that they are aware of the correct market prices when they buy and sell from traders who come to the village.
 6. The government, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Ministry of Women affairs (MoWA) in cooperation of UN relevant agencies and NGO's should train more women as basic veterinary workers. Almost all women who were asked whether they would be interested in learning these skills said they were and men also felt this would be a good idea.
 7. The government through CDCs in cooperation of UN relevant agencies and NGOs should provide adult literacy to women. This would enable women to read labels on agricultural inputs as well as to read wills. It may also be a small step to enabling women to purchase and sell goods in the bazaar, though so-called tradition currently dictates that most rural women do not have this level of mobility. Some men argue that women cannot go to the bazaar because they cannot read monetary notes or do not know the prices of goods. If women were able to read or write this could not be given as a reason for not allowing them to go. Education is also perceived as increasing a person's ability to participate in decision-making at both the household and community level.

Providing Credit to Women the provision of credit would also be highly beneficial for increasing women's access to land and livestock and improving household livelihood security. Credit could be provided by the government in cooperation of international community, UN relevant agencies and NGOs and the government should encourage the private sectors to investment as microfinance providers and used in the following ways:

1. The possibilities of providing credit to groups of women to rent land could be explored. Similarly the possibilities of providing credit to enable groups of women who have no space for shelter for livestock to rent a small piece of land to build an animal shelter, buy livestock and grow fodder could be explored.
2. Credit to buy fodder would enable those without sufficient access to pasture and who lack the income to purchase it to access fodder (if available) in order to raise livestock.
3. Similarly, women who are unable to graze animals outside and do not have other family members to do so could be provided credit to hire with others, or fully hire a shepherd so they can keep livestock.
4. For all of the above, there would first be a need to ensure that there is a market for livestock and its produce, and that women are able to find out about, and access, those markets.
5. Credit for life-cycle ceremonies such as weddings or funerals would allow widows who may otherwise have to sell part or all of their land or livestock (if they have any) to pay for such ceremonies, to retain their assets, by which they can then repay the credit.
6. Provide credit to enable groups of women to purchase land where it is for sale.
7. Provide credit for the initial outlay of money for tools, seeds, etc. which women may need to begin to cultivate land, given that they often lack other means of finding the income needed for this.

Improve Women's Ownership of Land and Rights to Claim

1. The government in cooperation of UN relevant agencies and NGOs could explore the possibilities of suggesting systems of reciprocal arrangements where richer households lend livestock to poorer households to mate in return for work.

2. The government in cooperation of UN agencies and NGOs should explore the possibilities of providing sheep instead of cash for public works programmes.
3. The government, together with NGOs, should work to improve women and men's knowledge of inheritance rights. While most women and men have a basic idea of their rights.
4. The government should introduce more family courts in rural areas with some female judges. Currently, there are hardly any family courts in rural areas. Family courts enable cases such as claims on inheritance to be looked into in greater detail and may therefore be more beneficial to women.

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ANNEX

Glossary

ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ailoq	upland pasture area
arbab	appointed village leader
burqa	full-length garment that covers a woman's face and body
jerib	unit of land measurement; one jerib is approximately one-fifth of a hectare
maharram	male chaperone
mullah	religious teacher/mosque prayer leader
namad	felted woollen rug
jaez	custom whereby women receive livestock upon marriage
pardah	tradition of seclusion of women from public view
qrut	dried yoghurt
shura	local council
taks	unit of monetary measurement or taxes
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
Qabila	local female doctor