Do inheritance reforms increase women’s access and control over land? Evidence from Punjab, Pakistan

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Executive Summary

• Gender friendly inheritance reforms have varying impacts on women’s access and control over land
• This is due to pre-existing familial, kinship, political, institutional and historical relationships with land rights
• Thinking/evaluation around women’s decision-making dynamics and their inter-play with land rights needs to be reshaped
• Inheritance reforms are a necessary first step BUT they need to be accompanied by complementary interventions to have a meaningful impact on women’s land outcomes
Motivation

• Focus by policy makers on gender friendly inheritance reforms in most parts of South Asia

• Evaluations of these reforms show mixed direct and indirect impacts on women (Roy, 2015; Rosenblum, 2013; Hariri, 2019; Bhalotra et. al., 2016)
Motivation

• Focus by policy makers on gender friendly inheritance reforms
• Impact evaluations of these reforms show mixed direct and indirect impacts on women (Roy, 2015; Rosenblum, 2013; Hariri, 2019; Bhalotra et. al., 2016)

The low impact of such reforms is attributed to pre-existing relationships of individuals, households and families within the larger political economy but no initiative to try and empirically measure the impact of such relationships
Research Questions

• Which pathways/relationships in my expanded decision-making model help women gain access and control over their land rights?

• What are the policy implications of these findings?
What is access and control?

• Access: woman has land legally transferred in to her name on paper through a legal authority (village council, court, state etc.)

• Control: woman can use or sell land without the permission of household or family
Methodology

• Mixed Methods
1. Data Sources
2. Key Informant Interviews
Data Sources

• Land Record Management Information System (2015)
• Agriculture Census of Pakistan (2010)
• Population Census (2008)
• Pakistan Health and Demographic Survey (2012-2013)
• Election Commission Data (2013 Provincial Election)

➢ Emphasis on data pre-reform to determine relationships/norms prior to the reforms
Key Informant Interviews

• Two kinds: landed families and key respondents with knowledge about inheritance matters (revenue officials, women political reps, lawyers, women’s rights organizations)

• Landed families had to own 150 acres + (definition of large landed estates)

• Why these families, these women? Historically landed, longer timeline to discern patterns, hypothetically greater bargaining power of these women to IRL gain access and control over their rights
Background of land rights in Punjab (Pakistan)

- Religious rights always existed
- Historically women were excluded from inheritance process (customary + colonial)
- Post 1947, legal rights were established but not implemented
- Until 2015 when enforcement mechanism for women were introduced by the state
- Historically land rights differed between the 3 regions on Punjab
- Historically North and South Punjab were under indirect colonial rule
- Central Punjab was site of large-scale irrigation project which led to the commercialization of agriculture in Punjab
- Some parts of South Punjab also received canal irrigation after Independence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factor 1 (North Punjab)</th>
<th>Factor 2 (South Punjab)</th>
<th>Factor 3 (Central Punjab)</th>
<th>Communality</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% literate females in district (1998)</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women in formal employment in district (2012-2013)</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% literate males in district (1998)</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average no. of household members (1998)</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of brick houses in district (1998)</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of HHs not involved in agriculture (2010)</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women married to paternal first cousin in district (2012-2013)</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women married to maternal first cousin in district (2012-2013)</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of landed estates 150+ acres in district (2010)</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of tenants employed in large estates in district (2010)</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of estate under cultivation in district (2010)</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average no. of fragments of large landed estates in district (2010)</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash crops grown in district (2010)</td>
<td>-0.61</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynastic political families in district (2013)</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female political candidate in 2013 election (0/1)</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of land under canal irrigation in district (2010)</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of land under tubewell irrigation in district (2010)</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canal colony classification (0/1)</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalues</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This led to different patterns of familial, kin, patronage and historical relationships across North, South and Central Punjab which can be used for the purpose of analysis.
### Possible Outcomes for Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Characteristics</th>
<th>Household/Family Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither access nor control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control but not access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Access but not control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Access and control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enforcement of existing inheritance reforms

Should woman be given access over land?

**Yes**
- Literacy, employment, marriage choice
- Familial choices
- Household and family’s position in existing networks
- Women in public sphere
- Women’s historical role in HH, family, community

Women gain both

**No**

Women gain only access

Women gain only control

Women gain neither

Role of woman in HH and family

Marriage choice

Household and family’s position in existing networks

Women in public sphere

Women’s historical role in HH, family, community
Literacy makes a difference: Case study of North Punjab

- Emphasis on individual power/characteristics
- High literacy
- Diversification of income streams; lack of dependence on agriculture/land as main source of income
- Out-marriages
- Movement away from historical economic and political networks
- Increase in women’s public representation
- Changes in gender norms/sanctions is mixed – only when it suits the family
Enforcement of existing inheritance reforms in North Punjab

Should woman be given access over land?

**High** literacy levels of woman + **High** literacy levels of household → Yes

**Low** ties with family, kin and larger community → No

Some women in public positions → Yes

Limited role of women in historical male-dominated positions → No

Should woman be given control over land?

**High** literacy of women + **individual decision** → Yes

Household and family’s **low** position in existing networks → No

Lack of women’s historical role → No

Women gain both → Yes

Women gain only access → No

Women gain only control → Yes

Women gain neither → No
Women’s role within familial interests: Case study of South Punjab

• Emphasis on family power and characteristics
• Low literacy
• Dependence on agriculture/land as main source of income
• In-marriages largely within kin group
• Intra-gender differences – based on age, natal family
• Entrenchment of old networks
• Low involvement of women with formal institutions
• Emphasis on gender-based social sanctions
Enforcement of existing inheritance reforms in South Punjab

Should woman be given access over land?

- Low literacy levels of women
- Low literacy levels of household & family
- Household and family’s strong position in existing networks
- Few women in public positions
- Women’s historical role in HH, family, community is well-defined

- Low literacy levels, high economic needs
- Marriage choice is strategic by family
- Household and family’s strong position in existing networks
- Women’s historical role in HH, family, community is well-defined

- Yes
  - Should woman be given control over land?
    - Yes: Women gain both
    - No: Women gain only access

- No: Women gain only control

- Women gain neither
Reward for entrepreneurial behaviour: Case study of Central Punjab

- Emphasis on household-level family unit
- Emphasis on commercial and diversification
- Women play a pivotal role in economic and political networks albeit informally
- In-marriages but within immediate family
- Out-marriages only to develop new connections
- Political reserved women seats highly coveted
- Much public appreciation for women of the household
- No gender bias in norms/sanctions but women still shy away from public sphere due to public perceptions
Enforcement of existing inheritance reforms in Central Punjab

Should woman be given access over land?

Medium literacy levels of women + High literacy levels of household and family + Household’s strong position in existing networks + Some women in public positions + Women’s historical role in HH, family, community is well-defined

Yes

Should woman be given control over land?

Women’s role within family firm is defined + Marriage choice is strategic by HH + Household’s strong position in existing networks + Women’s historical role in HH, family, community is well-defined

Yes

Women gain both

No

Women gain only access

No

Women gain only control

No

Women gain neither

Women gain only access

Women gain access
What factors help women gain access and/or control over land?

- Higher literacy of individuals, households and families
- Household and familial positions within existing economic and political networks
- Change in economic/political circumstances (individual/familial) can create opportunities for women to gain pivotal positions within the decision-making process especially through marriage choice
- Current and historical role of women within households, families and larger political economy of land rights
What factors help women gain access and/or control over land?

• Higher literacy of individuals, households and families
• Household and familial positions within existing economic and political networks
• Change in economic/political circumstances (individual/familial) can create opportunities for women to gain pivotal positions within the decision-making process especially through marriage choice
• Historical role of women within households, families and larger political economy of land rights

**Inheritance reforms targeting women create leverage for them to start the process BUT needs to be accompanied with other channels to have a more significant impact.**
Policy implications

• One size does not fit all in the context of Punjab; policy makers need to be aware of local context while designing reform.

• Women’s threat utility needs to be strengthened. Reforms are a good first step in this direction but they need to be strengthened by other social safety nets for women such as labour market opportunities, opportunities within family firms etc.

• Engagement of women (from all walks of life) with the public sphere needs to be encouraged and social sanctions for doing so reduced.
Future interventions to investigate

• Literacy is good but not only school education; awareness of resources, facilities available; how to avail them; finding a way to get women to engage with the land rights system

• Articulating women’s developing role within leadership positions; at the village-level as well as political positions

• Training women from landed families on agricultural markets, resources and how to engage more women from the community in land activities (enhancing women’s role)

• Providing incentives for women to be involved in family business activities (tax breaks, subsidies etc.)
Thank you

For further questions and comments, please contact:
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