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GENDER DIMENSIONS OF YOUTH ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL LAND UNDER CUSTOMARY TENURE SYSTEM IN THE TECHIMAN TRADITIONAL AREA OF GHANA

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Abstract

This study investigates youth access to agricultural land under the customary land tenure regime in Ghana focusing on gender dimensions. Using the Techiman Traditional Area as a case study, the study applied multiple sampling techniques in a multi-stage sampling process to select the study communities and the respondents. A total sample of 455 youth respondents comprising 299 males and 156 females were covered in 20 communities. The results from the study revealed that majority of the youth, especially female, accessed agricultural land under non-market mechanisms such as licence, gift and inheritance; while predominantly male youth also accessed land under market mechanisms such as rentals and sharecropping. Both male and female youth held small land sizes. The underlying challenges facing both male and female youth were in two-fold: demand-related such as high cost of accessing land, competition from residential developers and wealthy adult farmers among others, and supply-related such as unwillingness of the elders to release land, scarce productive family land, land grants to outsiders among others. There is the need to ensure a well-functioning land market coupled with credit support system to enable both male and female youth access land. The study recommends further research into youth access to agricultural land under the main customary tenure regimes across the country as a means of formulating an evidence-based youth agricultural land access policy in Ghana.

Keywords: Gender, Youth, Land, Access, Customary tenure, Techiman, Ghana

1.1 Background of the Study

Youth are important human capital for the socio-economic development of Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in general. Their sheer numbers and strength make them a valuable source of labour to drive economic growth. SSA has been described as the 'youngest' region in the world due to its demographic transition (Garcia & Fares, 2008). SSA alone is projected to have about 295 million youth by 2035 and 362 million by 2050 (World Bank, 2014: 26). In Ghana, the youth population is estimated to be about 34.1% of the entire population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014a). This youth bulge could be impetus for economic development if they are fully engaged in productive economic activities.

Despite this youth bulge in Africa, unemployment and underemployment is a common feature among the youth. In the SSA, the unemployment rate among the youth was estimated at 11.8% in 2014 and projected to remain close to 11.7% in the coming years (ILO, 2015; 2013). The youth were the worst affected by the 2008/09 economic crisis in terms of job losses (Annan, 2013; ILO, 2012; Shankar, 2010). Government of Ghana for instance, has also noted in its youth policy document that, a large number of Ghanaian youth were affected by poverty, social exclusion and economic marginalization (MYS, 2010). Unemployment rate among the youth in Ghana was estimated at 12.1% in 2015 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2016). The youth are often not the target of most governments and policy makers especially in developing countries and ministries set to cater for youth needs are poorly resourced combined with other sectors such as education, sports and culture (Bennell, 2007). The youth in Africa are marginalized in the social and political discourse (Abbink, 2005).

This is a sheer waste of the energies and productive efforts these young people possess. Their economic marginalization and deprivation are a threat to peace and social stability. Lack of employment and economic opportunities make the youth vulnerable to manipulations and exploitations. Failure to channel youth into productive pursuits could prove too costly for the society (World Bank, 2007). Arab Spring, which occurred in 2011, reiterates the threat posed by huge numbers of unemployed and impoverished youth to the political order (Lintelo, 2011).

In view of the dangers pose by the youth when they are not engaged in productive activities, more attention is being paid to youth issues. There is increasing acceptance that developmental policies should at least address the needs and aspirations of the youth (Lintelo, 2011). Abbink

(2005) noted a number of responses have been suggested in the academic literature to cure the state of doom and despair surrounding the African youth. Abbink (2005) discussed the responses as the 'agency', 'interventionist' and 'a descriptive-analytic'. Abbink (2005:9, 10) noted that the agency response focuses more on the ability of youth to find their own answers to their problems and shaping their own destiny. Agency response is premised on the notion that the youth are versatile, resilient and can do whatever possible to survive and thus require minimal support. *Descriptive-analytic* response rather attempts to explain things happening to the youth over the years from a historical and sociological perspective and attempts to offer current scenarios. This measure does not really offer immediate redress to the youth problems. *Interventionist* response views the youth as deprived and require that remedial policies should be developed and implemented to uplift the youth from their deprivation. It further calls for the active involvement of both local and international NGOs in developing and implementing remedial policies towards making young people attain independence, employment and social status and civil representation.

Interventionist response is relevant to the present discourse. As already noted, the youth are economically deprived and requires policy support to attain economic independence through employment creation. Interventions through educational training and acquisition of higher qualifications appear not to provide a holistic solution to the youth problem. Such intervention rather aggravates unemployment especially among the educated youth. While higher education is expected to reduce unemployment level, the situation in Africa is different. It is noted that, in Africa, education does not necessarily reduce unemployment among the youth and in some countries, youth unemployment is rather very high among the educated youth (Garcia & Fares, 2008). In Ghana, there is even Unemployed Graduates Association of Ghana (UGAG¹) with thousands of members. Jeffrey (2009) also found high level of unemployment among educated young people in the Meerut, India. Another study in Mali similarly found high unemployment among the youth who have had some form of formal education but cannot find the kind of work their education is believed to have trained them for (White, 2012).

¹ Unemployed Graduates Association of Ghana (UGAG) is an association of some graduates in Ghana, who are unemployed and still search for job. See <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Unemployed-Graduates-Association-registers-thousands-of-members-369789>

There is therefore the need to widen the intervention strategies to give equal attention to other sectors to complement the modest gain made in graduate training for the job market. Agriculture has been noted to offer enormous opportunities for the young people. It is the largest employer of people especially in Africa (Anyidoho et al., 2012; White, 2012; 2011; IFAD, 2010) and could be depended on to alleviate or curb youth unemployment especially in the rural areas where agriculture is a dominant economic activity. According to the World Bank (2014) and Brookes *et al.* (2013), more than two-thirds of the youth in SSA especially in the rural areas are already engaged in agriculture and majority will remain in the sector in the coming decades even if the non-farm sectors develop well. Agricultural sector according to the World Bank (2014) offers broadly three employment pathways for the youth. These are full-time work on family farms, part-time farm work and wage work.

Access to land by the youth is thus crucial for them to fully harness the employment potentials in the agricultural sector. Besides the technical, financial and other material support the youth would require to take up agriculture-based livelihood opportunities, land access remains hugely important. Land is an essential resource in any agrarian activity (Bennell, 2007). Its access encompasses availability of land and ownership security, desirable physical and economic attributes as well as transparency and fairness level of transactions (Ahene, 2009). However, the youth are noted to be ‘vulnerable and powerless in the land markets’ and in the hands of their local elders who control land (Kidido et al. 2017a; Amanor, 2010, Boni, 2008; Richards, 2005). They thus require outside support to be able to access land for agricultural purposes.

Enhancing the youth land access prospects for agriculture-based employment opportunities would require deliberate interventions through policy support. But this must be developed backed by empirical appreciation of the scale and dimensions of the youth land access challenges and how it resonates among the different youth segments. In Ghana, Kidido et al. (2017a; 2017b) have studied youth land access dynamics, dimensions and emerging challenges in the Techiman area. Mortensen (2017) has also focused on agrarian change and youth access to land in the Atebubu area of Ghana. It is also instructive to note that, Amanor (2010) and Boni (2008) have also studied youth land issues within the context of land commodification; changing family values and land contestations in cocoa growing areas in Ghana. The current study focuses on the gender dimensions of youth land access under the customary tenure system in Ghana. This is to widen the understanding on the youth land access needs for all-inclusive intervention response. Research on gender land access and tenure issues under the customary system in Ghana (see Kuusaana et al., 2013; Bugri, 2008, Bortei-Doku, 1997,

Benneh et al., 1995) have solely been limited to the adult population to the neglect of the younger generation. It is equally imperative to appreciate the land access dimension of the youth from the gendered perspective to inform policy and possible interventional response for inclusive land rights across the social spectrum.

1.1.1 Overview of the Study Area and Land Ownership Arrangement

The geographical scope of the study was limited to the Techiman Traditional Area (TTA) in the Brong Ahafo region. The area lies within the middle belt of Ghana as depicted in Figure 1. The area comprises of two political administrative districts i.e. Techiman Municipality and Techiman North District. The area shares political administrative boundaries with Offinso North district to the south, Nkoranza Municipality and Nkoranza North district to the east, Kintampo South district to the north and Wenchi Municipality in the West.

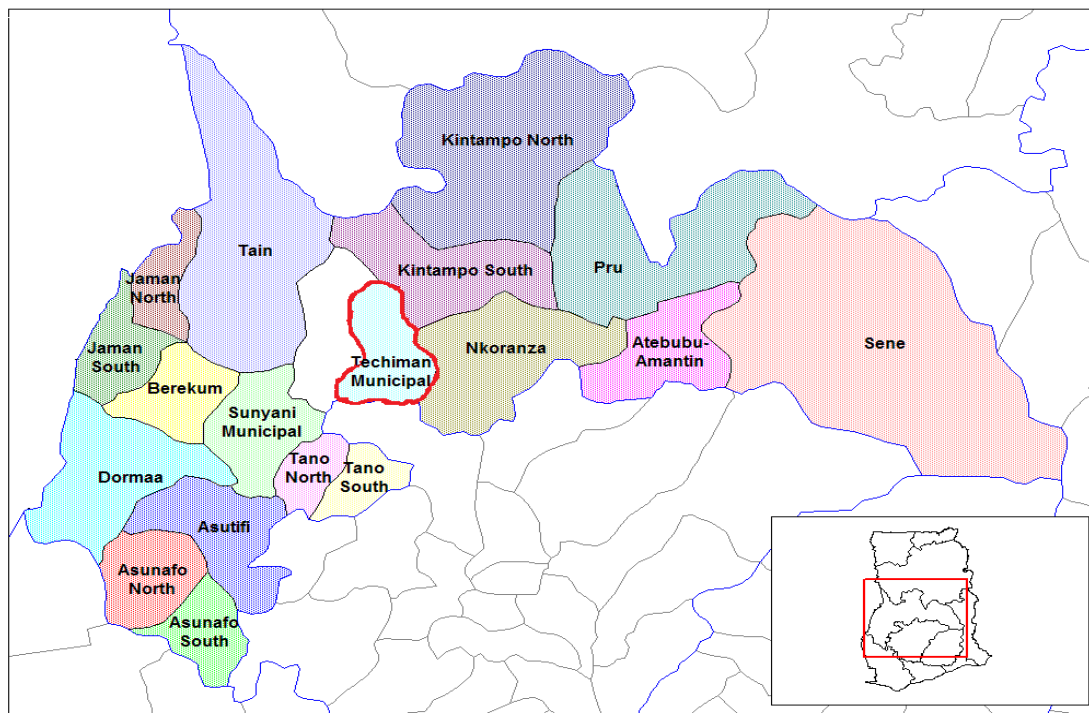


Figure 1: District map of Brong Ahafo Region highlighting the Study Municipality

Source: Modified from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Brong_Ahafo_districts.png

The population of the area was estimated at 206,856 with 47,627 households as at 2010 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). There is a relatively more female in the area than male. From the 2010 Census data, the male population was estimated at 100,498 (49%) while the female population was also estimated at 106,358 (51%). The youth population (15-34 years) in 2010

was estimated at 67, 197 representing 32.5% of the district population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The area covers a total land area of 669.7 Km² (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014a) with population density estimated to be over 227.7 persons/Km² (TENDA, 2013). When compared with the regional density of 58 persons/Km² and the national density of 103 persons/Km² (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012), the area can be said to have a high population density. This has implication for the socio-economic situation of the area (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014b) and also access to land.

The land ownership arrangement in the Techiman area is similar to the system in Ashanti (see Benneh et al., 1995; Gildea, 1964) where chiefs are regarded as ultimate owners of land and the families hold usufructuary interests. It similarly reflects the land tenure situation in most parts of southern Akan areas of Ghana where land ownership in communities, which exist as chiefdoms or stools, is vested in the chiefs who hold land in trust for their subjects. The chiefs and council of elders on behalf of their subordinate members administer land.

The actors with traditional authority to transact land in the TTA are the *Omanhene*², the division and sub-chiefs, *Odikrofo*³ and family heads. Lesser interests such as leaseholds, share tenancies, and rentals emanate from either the allodial level (granted directly by the chiefs) or the family level (granted by family elders). Customary or traditional authorities vested with allodial rights are responsible for the allocation, management and administration of customary lands in Ghana (Bugri, 2012). In terms of agricultural land rights however, family elders are the principal source of access in view of the fact agricultural lands have been fully appropriated by families with no unoccupied lands any more to be granted by the stool occupants (chiefs) (see Asiama, 2008; Da Rocha and Lodoh, 1999). In the Akan areas including the Techiman area as noted by Crook et al. (2007: 28), “access to land is governed by a complex network of reciprocal bonds within families, lineages and larger social units”. Community membership is a key determinant of access to land under customary tenure system (see Bugri, 2008; Berry, 2009) and rightly the case in the TTA under the customary arrangement. The exercise of power by these customary actors, chiefs, family and household heads has influence on youth access to land for agricultural purpose within this traditional set up. It is important to understand how in practice, the youth access land for agricultural purpose under the above customary

² *Omanhene* is an Akan word for paramount chief

³ *Odikrofo* are caretaker chiefs

arrangement and the inherent challenges they face from gender perspectives and also developing an intervention model to enhance the youth access to land.

1.1.2 Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods research design based on a case study approach to investigate youth access to land focusing on gender dimension. Mixed methods research is where a researcher employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches at any stage in the research processes including design of research questions, sampling strategies, data collection and analysis techniques and conclusion (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Lisle, 2011; Creswell & Garrett, 2008). The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the research processes is geared towards complementarity, in-depth understanding and corroborations (Ganle, 2013; Creswell and Clark, 2011). The mixed method is grounded on pragmatic research epistemologies or philosophical assumptions [consequence-oriented, problem centred and pluralistic perspective] (Creswell, 2003). By collecting both closed ended quantitative data and open-ended qualitative data under the mixed methods it helps to best understand a research problem (Creswell, 2003). The customary tenure system is noted as dynamic, fluid and negotiated (Boni, 2008; Oomen 2002; Berry, 1993) and centred on people's interpretation and experiences. Thus, the processes and power relations governing land ownership and access cannot be fully appreciated by consigning to only one particular research method. The ability to address the complex land problem of the youth within the larger social structure needs a blend of approaches to fully unravel the dynamics; hence the choice of mixed methods design for this study.

The study covered 20 communities in the Techiman Traditional Area (See Table 1). Multi-stage sampling techniques were employed. The communities were first sampled guided by the sub-structures of the two local government administrative districts in the area. The Techiman Municipality has five zonal councils; namely Techiman Urban council, Nsuta, Nkwaeso, Tanoso and Tano zonal councils (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014b). Techiman North District recently carved from the Techiman Municipality similarly has five zonal councils comprising of Tuobodom, Offuman, Buoyem, Aworowa and Krobo zonal councils (TENDA, 2013). In order to attain a broad coverage of the area, a deliberate attempt was made to represent each zonal council in the sample communities. To achieve this, the capitals of the various zonal councils excluding Techiman itself were chosen as the first stage in sampling the communities.

This ensured that all the zonal areas across the entire traditional area were covered in the first place and this avoided the possibility of some zonal council areas being left out by chance if all were randomly selected. This first stage produced a total of nine communities. The remaining communities were then randomly sampled. A list of the communities was generated from the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 Population and Housing Census data for the communities in the TTA, which then provided a sample frame. The communities were numbered and a table of random numbers used to select additional 11 communities making a total of 20 as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of youth respondents in the selected communities in the Techiman area

Community	Male	Female	Total
Hansua	14	6	20
Sansama	7	6	13
Tadieso	9	2	11
Tanoso	27	26	53
Tanoboase	3	3	6
Buoyem	9	5	14
Offuman	31	20	51
Kokroko	4	1	5
Fiaso	17	5	22
Nsuta	14	4	18
Amangoase	7	2	9
Nkwaeso	15	5	20
Adieso	4	1	5
Tuobodom	62	27	89
Kuntunso	7	5	12
Bamiri	8	4	12
Krobo	15	12	27
Twimia-Koase	13	8	21
Aworowa	27	12	39
Mesidan	6	2	8
Total	299	156	455

The youth respondents were then purposively sampled based on the age criteria of 15-34 years and involvement in agricultural activities. Households were used as the reference point in sampling the youth respondents. Where a household had more than one youth qualified and willing to participate in the survey, one was randomly selected through a ballot process. In

order to gain full appreciation of the issues underlying youth access to land and the associated challenges, the study targeted the youth both male and female who had accessed land for agricultural activities. The research was thus limited to the youth who operated farms. In all, 455 youth were interviewed using a structured questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions. The quantitative data were entered into IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences software, which was then used to generate descriptive statistics used in carrying out the analysis as contained in this report. The qualitative data from the open-ended questions were summarized for relevant information and then used to support and explain the quantitative data. The results are presented below.

1.1.3 Results and Discussion

1.1.3.1 Gender Composition of the Respondents

In this study, 299 (65.7%) male and 156 (34.3%) female youth were covered under the survey. There were more male than the female. Since the study purposively targeted the youth engaged in on-farm agricultural activities, it can be inferred that, more males were into farming and thus qualified to participate in the survey than the females. This is not surprising as engagement with the female respondents during the survey revealed that, the females were not very interested in the farming but rather preferred operating businesses as a means of livelihood. For instance, even among the female respondents who were engaged in agricultural activities and participated in this survey, 81 (51.9%) out of the 156 were running businesses such as hairdressing, tailoring among others as a secondary occupation compared to only 24 (8%) out of the 299 in the case of their male counterparts. The dominance of male youth in this survey clearly shows that majority of them eke out a living from the agricultural sector and this finding is corroborated by the national level data on youth engagement in agriculture. According to Ghana Statistical Service (2014a), more male youth (45.1%) were employed by the agricultural sector compared to 38.3% among the female youth in Ghana.

1.1.3.2 Gender Dimension of Land Ownership and Access Mechanisms

In terms of gender dimension of land ownership among the youth respondents, out of the 299 male respondents, only 43 (14%) owned the lands they occupied while among the female respondents, 31 (20%) out of the 156 owned land. The data showed that land ownership was a bit prevalent among the female respondents compared with their male counterparts. This is not

too surprising given the matrilineal cultural background of the respondents. As depicted in Table 2 below, the female youth were more likely to gain access to land through inheritance and gift which give complete ownership rights than their male counterparts. For instance, among the female respondents, 21 (14%) acquired their land through gift, and another 10 (7%) accessed through inheritance compared with 32 (11%) and 10 (3%) respectively among the male respondents. This is partly attributable to the matrilineal inheritance practices in the area. Mothers who owned lands prefer to dispose of their property to their daughters. When the current senior lineage members aged especially the female landowners, the tendency to pass land to their young daughters or sisters through gift or inheritance in the case of death is much higher. For instance, Benneh et al. (1995) had also noted that most women in the peri-urban areas of Kumasi, a matrilineal society, would obligingly pass on their family agricultural lands to their daughters and granddaughters rather than to their sons. Sarkodie, a male youth respondent in Tuobodom throws more light on the inheritance and how it operates in the favour of the female in the following:

In this area, we the boys do not have control over land. Even with your mother's land, it is our sisters who control the land. They say as a male if you marry your children belong to another family. So when we are given land, it will go out of the family (Interview, Sarkodie, 29 years old male youth, Tuobodom, 2017).

The claim that women are secondary land right holders and cannot own land under the customary tenure regime (see Kuusaana, et al., 2013; Adiaba, 2006; Toulmin 1999) is not entirely the case in the Techiman traditional area based on the evidence of this study. The female youth dominated in terms of outright ownership of land they occupied.

Table 2: Gender dimension of youth land ownership and access process

Item	Gender		
	Male	Female	
Owns land			
Yes	43 (14%)	31 (20%)	74
No	256 (86%)	125 (80%)	381
Total	299	156	455
Access mechanism	Male	Female	Total
Purchase	1 (0.3%)	0	1
Gift	32 (11%)	21 (14%)	53
Sharecropping	46 (15%)	14 (9%)	60
Inherited	10 (3%)	10 (7%)	20
Customary License	132 (44%)	92 (59%)	224
Pledged	1 (0.3%)	0	1
Rented	77 (26%)	19 (12%)	96
Total	299 (100%)	156 (100%)	455
Source of land acquired	Male	Female	Total
Community elders	0	1 (0.6%)	1
In-law	6 (2%)	5 (3%)	11
Chief/ Queen mother	2 (0.7%)	2 (1%)	4
Father/ Mother	126 (42%)	84 (54%)	210
Government	1 (0.3%)	0	1
Family head	13 (4%)	5 (3%)	18
Other land owners/Usufructs	129 (43%)	37 (24%)	166
Grand Father/Mother	14 (5%)	8 (5%)	22
Uncle	2 (0.7%)	3 (2%)	5
Others	6 (2%)	11 (7%)	17
Total	299 (100%)	156 (100%)	455

It is also apparent from Table 2 that, notwithstanding the fact that a relatively more female youth owned land than their male counterparts, majority 92 (59%) of the female respondents were customary licence holders compared to 131 (44%) among the male youth. Their licence emanated largely from their ‘Fathers/Mothers’ and husbands in the case of those married. During the survey, the female respondents were more specific on their ‘mothers’ as those who gave them land. Mortensen (2017) study in Atebubu area of Ghana similarly revealed that female youth largely acquired land on licence basis, gift and inheritance from their households as opposed to their male counterparts who mainly accessed land through rentals or sharecropping. Similarly, in the Techiman area as revealed by the study, the female depended more on their households for land and in the majority of cases accessed the lands on licence basis waiting to be assigned full ownership rights through inheritance or gift. A female youth

respondent affirmed this position during the interview. She opined that: “As a female, land is not a problem for me. When I need land my mother will readily offer me a parcel to farm and when she dies, I will take over the land.” (Interview, Faustina, 24 year old female youth, Tanoboase, 2017) Given that more of the female youth were licensees, this presents a more plausible path to assume ownership over those lands in future under the customary mode of land transmission.

On the other hand, the male youth respondents were rather more able to access land from outside their households or immediate family. Majority 129 (43%) of the male youth acquired their lands from other land owners compared to 37 (23%) among their female counterparts. The male youth were able to access land on sharecropping and rental terms outside their households than their female counterparts. A considerable number of the male youth respondents, 46 (15%) were engaged in sharecropping and 77 (26%) rental arrangements. Among the female youth however, only 14 (9%) were sharecroppers and 19 (12%) were renters (see Table 2). While the male youth were more able to negotiate their way with other landowners to rent or engage in sharecropping, the female youth mostly depended on their immediate family especially ‘Fathers/Mothers’ for land on gift, inheritance and licence terms.

It is important to point out that, the female youth despite depending mainly on their households for land through non-market access modes such as inheritance, gift and customary licence held small land sizes almost similar to their male counterparts who largely accessed their land through the market access modes.

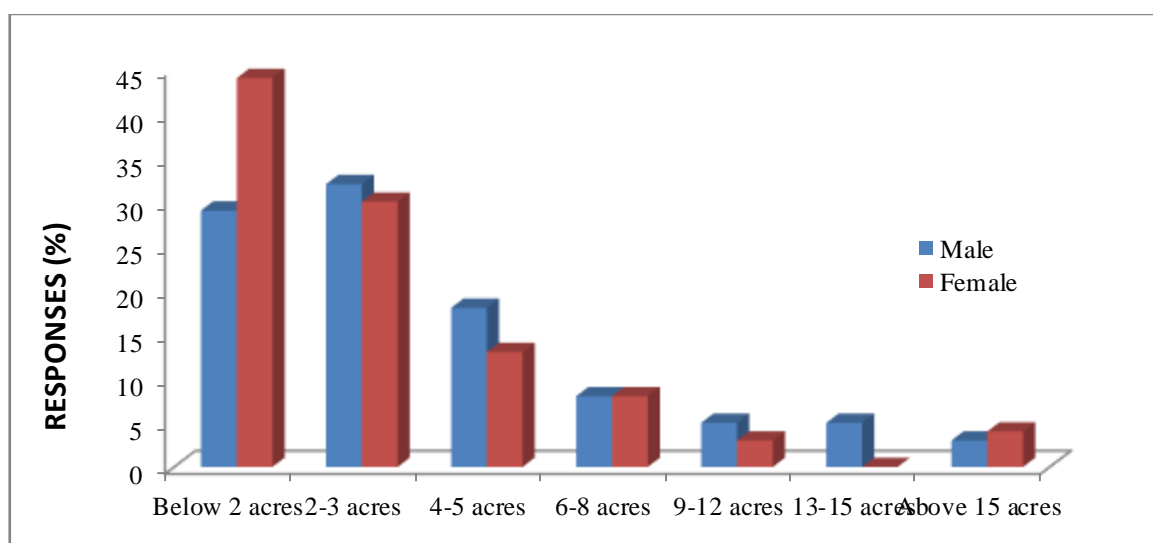


Figure 2: Land sizes both male and female in the Techiman area

As depicted in Figure 2, small landholdings cut across both male and female youth respondents albeit a bit more pronounced among the female respondents. For instance, 44% of the female respondents held land sizes less than 2 acres, while among the male youth respondents 29% also held lands of the same size. This difference in landholding sizes among the respondents as shown in Table 3 is significant. For instance, 60.9% of the male youth respondents held land sizes not exceeding 3 acres compared with 73.1% among the female youth respondents. This difference is statistically significant (Chi-square value= 6.720, df =1, p-value=0.01) at 95% confidence level and margin of error of 5%. Across the genders, overwhelming majority indicated they wanted more land for their agricultural activities. For instance, 86% of the male youth and 81.4% of the female youth respondents wished for more land. As noted by Ahene (2009), access to land encompasses desirable physical space. However, the youth (both male and female) access to agricultural land in the Techiman area is limited in terms of desirable size among the majority of the respondents. Thus, regardless of gender, the youth respondents were constrained in their ability to access desirable landholdings for agricultural purpose.

While the male youth appeared to be constrained by cost due to their heavy reliance on the market access modes, the female youth also appeared to be constrained by certain socio-cultural factors at the household level which also impeded their ability to access desirable land parcels. The real challenges defining the youth land access outcomes in terms of quality of rights and size of holdings as revealed in this study are considered in the next section.

Table 3: Analysis of land size of male and female youth in the Techiman area

Residence	Land Size ²		Total
	1- 3 acres	≥ 4 acres	
Male	182 (60.9%)	117 (39.1%)	299 (100%)
Female	114 (73.1%)	42 (26.9%)	156 (100%)
Total	296	159	455

² Land size categories not exceeding 3 acres were merged and other remaining categories exceeding 3 acres were also merged together to allow for Chi-square statistical analysis.

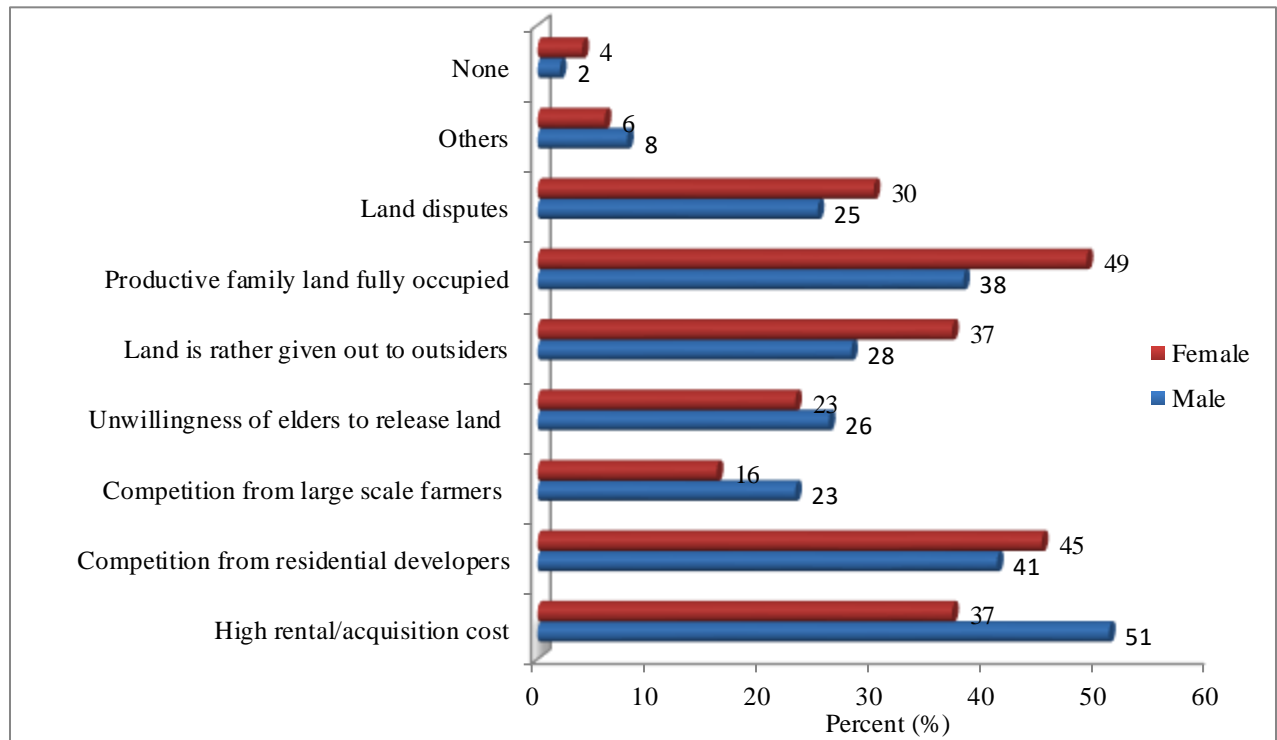
1.1.3.3 Gender Dimensions of the Challenges

In terms of understanding the challenges from the gender perspective, it can be seen from Figure 3 that, among the male youth respondents in this study, the dominant challenges included high rental/acquisition cost and competition from large-scale farmers. For instance,

51% of the male respondents out of the 299 noted 'High rental/ acquisition cost' as a key challenge compared to 37% among the female respondents. This situation is not so surprising considering the fact that, the male youth largely depended on market access mechanism such as rental, which is cost driven. The male youth were exposed to the market access mechanism than the female youth who depended largely on non-market mechanisms such as gift; inheritance and licence from their households compared to their male counterparts (see Table 2).

Moreover, among the male respondents more (26%) mentioned 'Unwillingness of to release land' as a challenge compared to 23% among the female respondents. This reinforces the point that, the female respondents in this study generally have leverage in terms of accessing land from their immediate households or families than the male respondents.

The high dependency of female youth on their immediate households for land also explains why, challenges such as 'Productive family land fully occupied' and 'Land rather given out to outsiders', 'Land disputes' and 'Competition from residential developers' were a bit more prominent among them than the male youth respondents. For instance, 49% of the female respondents cited 'Productive family land fully occupied' as a key challenge compared to 38% among the male respondents. The female respondents were more affected by appropriation of productive land by their senior household members due to their dependency on their households for land compare with the male youth.



Male (n=299), Female (n=156)

Figure 3: Youth land access challenges from gender dimension

The decision of elders to give land to outsiders especially residential developers in the peri-urban areas affected female more than the male as confirmed in Figure 3. For instance, among the female youth respondents, 37% complained of land allocation to outsiders by the elders as one of their land access challenges compared to 28% among their male counterparts. The narration of these female respondents during the interview sums up how competition from residential developers and the response of their elders to meet the land demand by the ‘outsiders’ through displacement of other family members especially the young female members. She noted:

The chief went to erect pillars on the whole land and demarcated it into building plots. Later, our family head came to inform me that, when I harvest the maize I have cultivated, I should leave the land because somebody has bought it to build a house. (Fosuaa, 26 years female, Interview, Kuntunso, 2017)

The male respondents largely accessed their lands under the market mechanisms (i.e. rental and sharecropping) outside of their households/families. Therefore, decisions of their elders to give out land to developers do not affect many of them. The youth are powerless in the ongoing land contestations and even fear to resist the actions of their elders to demand some level

of compensation. For instance, Fosuaa, a youth respondent expressed fear in putting up any resistance to her displacement by the village chief and her family head. She opined that, “I do not want to challenge these elders and get into their trouble. You can even die.” (Fosuaa, 26 years female, Interview, Kuntunso, 2017)

Land disputes as a challenge in accessing land was more of a concern for the female (30%) than the male respondents (25%). This is explained by the fact that, more of land disputes emanated largely from family holdings and actions of other extended family members. As the youth category that depended more on the household/family land stock, the female tended to suffer a bit more from the effects of family land disputes compared to the male.

As shown in Figure 3, despite the minor variations in terms of the challenges facing both male and female in accessing agricultural lands under the customary tenure regime in Ghana, the identified challenges remained impediment to the youth in their land access effort especially access to desirable space for farming purposes. This therefore requires *interventionist* response as noted by Abbink (2005) to lessen the constraints, which undermine the youth’s land access ability. The challenges as identified in this study reinforce the land access problem in Ghana. For instance, a couple of studies in Ghana have shown that the youth experience land shortage occasioned by land alienation by their elders to outsiders. As a result, many local youth have been compelled to either abandon farming or seek alternatives means of survival such as ‘galamsey⁴’ and chainsaw activities (Amanor, 2010). Land access difficulty has been noted as a major ‘push factor’ which forces the youth out of agriculture (Sumberg *et al.*, 2012). According to the World Bank (2014), land as a key resource in agricultural enterprise could seriously hamper youth’s involvement in agriculture if they find it difficult to access it and set up farms. The Bank further noted that constraints underlying youth access to land needs to be relaxed, in order to raise productivity of the pathways to agriculture employment for the youth.

1.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

Access to land for agricultural purposes is a critical matter as it creates the platform for economic wellbeing. Consequently, a gendered perspective on the matter deserves attention. The paper has delved into the youth land access focusing on the gender dimension. The study has established that, the female youth relatively have an edge in terms of outright ownership

⁴ Galamsey is term used in Ghana for illegal small-scale mining.

of land compared to their male counterparts. This is contrary to the popular believed that women are only secondary land rights holders. The case in the Techiman area is driven by the customary practice of matrilineal inheritance which makes female more able to inherit land and also more likely to receive land as a gift from their mothers. Despite this modest advantage on the part of the female youth in terms of outright ownership, a considerable proportion of the female respondents were merely licensees only waiting to inherit or receive land as a gift. As licence holders, their rights of usage of land are hugely restricted and insecure which is not conducive for economic activities. Their land sizes too were generally small and not suitable for serious agricultural venture to raise sufficient income.

The male youth on the hand, however, depended more on the land market through rental and sharecropping. Their effort under these mechanisms is constrained by cost thus limiting how much land they can access. Thus, regardless of gender, the youth respondents were constrained in their ability to access desirable landholdings for agricultural purpose. While the male youth appeared to be constrained by cost due to their heavy reliance on the market access modes, the female youth also appeared to be constrained by certain socio-cultural factors such as unwillingness of their elders to release land, land alienation to outsiders who offer higher bids at the household level also tended to impede their ability to access desirable land parcels.

Customary mode of accessing land especially through gift and inheritance are highly unpredictable and offers limited choice to the youth. As revealed by the results, these mechanisms were limited among the youth. These should only complement market based modes and also serve as a long-term transition mechanism for the youth towards becoming landowners. Thus, attention should be paid to improving market based land access mechanisms.

To this end, there is the need to ensure a well-functioning land market (rental and sharecropping land access modes) to enable both male and female youth access land. These market access modes have the potential to prepare the youth to climb the agricultural ladder. Agricultural ladder is where “landless households lacking capital can start as renters or share tenants, build up knowledge and savings and eventually become small owners” (Deininger, 2003:86). The youth’s ability to participate effectively in the land market especially through rental arrangements is contingent on their financial ability to pay for the rental charges. As noted by Deininger (2003), fixed rent land access arrangement may not be feasible or optimal for many potential market participants due to wealth constraints.

High cost of accessing land under rental arrangement emerged among the top most challenges the youth especially the male faced in the Techiman area. Most youth lack resources and collateral securities to access credit in the market to finance their land access cost and agricultural operations in general. There should be deliberate programmes tailored towards making credit facilities available and affordable to the youth. Tax exemptions, partial guarantee schemes and other incentives can be provided by the government to financial and corporate institutions that offer credit facilities to the youth to acquire agricultural land and cultivate same. For instance, in Mexico the government in early 2000s initiated ‘Youth Rural Entrepreneur and Land Future Program’ which provided credit to the landless rural youth to acquire land for agricultural purpose. The programme also helped older landowners who transferred their lands to the youth to access social welfare schemes for their retirement. It was highly successful and accelerated intergenerational land transfer to the youth in Mexico (see Brooks *et. al*, 2013:27). A similar programme can be modelled in Ghana through the Youth Enterprise Support (YES) operated by the Youth Employment Agency (YEA). A proportion of Youth Enterprise Support funds could be dedicated to support youth investment in agriculture including land acquisition financing.

Moreover, due to limited outreach of commercial banks in rural areas, alternative institutions such as savings and credit associations, self-help groups; mobile money system and cooperatives should be explored to address credit constraints of the youth (World Bank, 2014). These alternative means of credit other than the conventional credits from the commercial banks should be developed for the youth to invest in agriculture from land acquisition through rentals or share cropping to cultivation and marketing. Allowing alternative forms of collateral such as the future harvest from farms can also ease the credit market for the youth. Such arrangements will make credit be within the reach of many youth to be able to participate in the land market. Rural and Community Banks (RCBs) can also play a critical role towards providing credit to the youth in Ghana. According to Brooks *et al*. (2013), RCBs in Ghana are estimated to have about 2.8 million depositors and 680, 000 borrowers and this could be potential funding source for the youth in the rural areas.

To sustain credits channels to the youth and reduce risks, it is important to make agricultural extension services available to the youth to offer them the needed technical assistance for improved yields so that the youth can refinance the credits. Youth needs for finance can be addressed by linking credit to agricultural extension services, an approach adopted by BASIX

Social Enterprise Group, in India (see World Bank, 2014). The ‘Youth Rural Entrepreneur and Land Future Program’ initiated by the Mexican government to ease constraints associated with youth land access also included training and technical assistance to the youth (Brooks et al. 2013). The approach makes it possible to link financial services and advice to credit towards achieving output efficiency and profitability. Combining financial services and information or mentoring allows the financial institutions to identify agricultural products in great demand (World Bank, 2014) which the youth can invest in. NGOs and CSOs could also play a support role in this regard by providing technical assistance to the youth to productively invest in agriculture. Of course, linkages with general investment in the agricultural sector, infrastructural development by government as well as market availability are all important to sustaining any credit programme to the youth. These investments help reduce post-harvest losses, increase output levels and make agricultural investment profitable so the youth can repay the loans to keep the system running.

There is limited legal protection for the youth landholders under the customary tenure system. Arbitrary dispossession by the elders without compensation as seen in the Techiman area can be mediated by proper legal regime that seeks to protect vulnerable persons including the youth. This should be coupled with access to information and well-resourced institutions to enforce the rights of the youth in land transactions. Efforts should be made by the relevant stakeholders such as CSOs and NGOs to sensitize the public on the existence of such laws if passed, so that they can rely on them to assert their land rights and benefits where necessary.

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