

PROPOSAL: HOUSEHOLDS, LAND RIGHTS AND AGRICULTURE IN BURKINA FASO

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Agricultural production in West Africa is organized at the individual level: men and women farm separately, and keep separate accounts of their household activities. This means that their separate activities can be used to gain insight into the organization of households and into individuals' relationships to the larger society along a variety of dimensions. I am trying to disentangle evidence regarding household organization, land tenure rights, investment, and agricultural productivity on these small-scale farms in West Africa.

The specific aim of this project is to reconcile two empirical findings. I found evidence (Udry, 1996) that women in Burkina Faso got much, much lower profits on their farms than did their husbands, even when farming land of similar quality. I used this and related evidence to argue that there were important inefficiencies in the allocation of resources in households. More recently (Goldstein and Udry, 2008) a co-author and I found a similar pattern in Ghana. However, in this more recent work we had more complete data, so we could go a step further and trace those gender differences in agricultural productivity to gender differences in land tenure security.

The massive gap in productivity between men's and women's plots in Ghana can be attributed to the land tenure system (and systematically greater political power in the hands of men), but not to inefficiency in the household.

A natural question, then, is the extent to which the earlier results from Burkina Faso can also be attributed to the land tenure system, rather than to inefficiencies in the allocation of resources in households. This project requires a student who will be able to read broadly in a multidisciplinary literature on land rights, agriculture, and household organization in Burkina Faso. Hence, French reading will be a large plus.

In addition, he or she will use Stata to analyze plot level data from the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics Village Level Dataset from Burkina Faso.

References

Goldstein, M. and C. Udry. 2008. "The Profits of Power." *Journal of Political Economy*.

Udry, C. 1996. "Gender, Agricultural Production and the Theory of the Household." *Journal of Political Economy*.
