

PhD project at the Agrarian Change Research Group

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An Investigation of Gender and Food Security in the context of Wetland Transformation

Keywords: Gender, Wetlands, Agrarian Change, Food Security

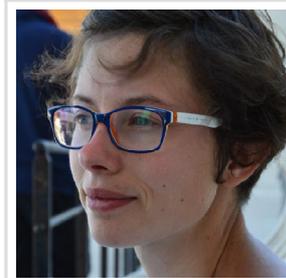
As part of the GlobE-Wetlands in East Africa project, this PhD-thesis will focus on the social and cultural dimensions of wetlands in Rwanda.

In the past two decades, Rwanda has undergone some extraordinary transformations. My research will closely investigate the reciprocal effects of two major achievements: First, the policies concerning marshland development and second, the progressive laws implementing women's rights and gender equality.

Rwanda was the first East African country to declare wetlands as state property and effectively placing them under governmental control. Around 10.6% of Rwanda's territory are wetland areas. A wetland inventory was conducted in 2008 classifying the wetlands into three different categories. Whereas before, small wetland plots were mostly perceived as community land and distributed according to customary tenure, the access to the marshes is now regulated on district level. Plots are no longer given to individuals but reorganized into larger entities and distributed to cooperatives. Today, many wetlands have been modernized and specialized on cash crop production.

The second transformation has been Rwanda's new gender legislation. Due to the many female headed households after 1994, there was a need to put women in a secure position concerning land titles. The 1999 succession law recognizes women's right to inherit land and guarantees the equal distribution of land among male and female heirs. Also the 2003 Rwandan Constitution acknowledges women and men as equal. Currently, Rwanda is the country with the world's highest number of female parliamentarians and often is referred to as a success story of women-friendly politics.

By doing participant observation in two wetland communities and using a mixed method approach (biographical interviews, expert interviews, network analysis and focus group discussions) this research will reveal how the transformation of wetlands has resulted in a new organization and stratification of agricultural labor with special regards to gendered patterns of labor division. Secondly, this study seeks to find answers as to how the new gender laws and policies have redefined gender roles and responsibilities within society. Finally, in view of the fact that food security is a highly gendered issue, I will point out, how the recent transitions raise possibilities as well as challenges in securing access to sufficient and nutritious food in the rural areas of Rwanda.



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Work Package	A3
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