

Gender Roles and Practices in Natural Resource Management Among the Kilosa Maasai in Tanzania

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Abstract

This article empirically describes gender roles and practices in natural resource management among the pastoral Maasai society of Kilosa, Tanzania. Through a qualitative approach, a descriptive case study design was adopted to collect and analyse data using content analysis. Results show that gender roles and practice in land management is gender differentiated. There is a strong patriarchal system in Maasai societies that govern access to, and use of, land. Women have limited access/ownership to land and have to seek permission from men to use land. In this regard, the hardest hit are women who use land without having independent access or muscles for negotiating due to existing norms and values that license their exclusion. The article argues that unless customary practices are addressed, women issues will remain unchanged given the presence of a male-centred customary practice built on strong patriarchal system that side-lines women in land management.

Keywords: gender, gender roles, natural resource management, pastoral Maasai women

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the issue of gender in natural resource management is increasingly becoming a global concern. Literature on the management of natural resource—such as land and land related resources (water, forest, wood, and medicinal plants)—indicates that the exploitation of natural resource in most African societies is gender-differentiated (Mbilinyi, 2018). Men and women perform different roles, and have different benefits, framed within the nature of the ownership and access to natural resource management (Fonjong, 2008; Wangui, 2008). Such roles are socially constructed following the attribution of customary practices. Equally, the planning and control of natural resources rests in gender. Nevertheless, literature also indicates that women in pastoral societies are free to access and use land (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). On one hand, men enjoy primary rights of ownership, access to, and benefit to use and control land, while on the other hand, women access to, and use of, land is mediated by their relationship with men as their husbands, brothers, sons or fathers since they are only granted usufructuary rights as land title pass through the male line (Agarwal, 2009; Achandi et al., 2019).

Gender relates to socially constructed characteristics associated with being male or female—such as roles and relationships of and between groups of men and women—

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and it varies across societies and cultures that construct and shape the roles of women and men in natural resource management. Gender roles and practice in natural resource management reflects the distribution of roles and resources within households. This implies that the roles and responsibilities that men and women have in a society influence how natural resources are accessed, controlled, and managed. Such a configuration is also evident in pastoral societies (Massoi, 2015; 2018; Eyenew & Mengistu, 2013; Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008; Mkutu, 2008).

Studies indicate that the management of natural resources rights in pastoral societies rests in the responsibilities of the community that women are part of (Hodgson, 2000; 2011, Flintan, 2008). There is a body of literature that indicates that the management of natural resources in pastoral societies is governed by customary institutions that constrain women from accessing resources (Hodgson, 2011; Ridgewell, 2008; Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008; Mkutu, 2008; Wangui, 2008). Traditional customary institutions usually empower men to have access to resources, including land (Flintan, 2008; 2010; Yngstrom, 2002; Flintan, 2011; Massoi, 2016; URT, 1998).

In Tanzania, the question of gender in natural resource management is a complex issue, and literature accounts that this status quo is a result of the co-existence of dual system of land governance: 'legal pluralism'. On one hand, statutory laws in Tanzania uphold the equal rights for men and women to access, own and control land (The Land Act of 1999¹; Village Land Act, 1999; Gender and Development Policy, 2000 and the National Land Policy, 1995). On the other hand, the law also recognises customary practices as sources of laws governing land, which are mostly evident in local communities under communal ownership. Such laws mediate gender roles and practices governing access to and use of land among the Maasai societies (Duncan, 2014). As a result, women remain disadvantaged because they have limited access to and ownership of land. In this regard, the hardest hit are women who use land without having independent access or negotiating power due to existing norms and values which license their exclusion. This paper, therefore, provides an analysis of the gendered dimensions of natural resource management among the Maasai communities in Kilosa district in Tanzania.

2. Theoretical Arguments

The genealogy of gender and natural resources management debates is well documented in literature. Generally, two key theoretical standpoints may be identified that generally map onto the growing concern that women are an integral part of their societies, and that sustainable development must include the full participation of men and women.

The first standpoint is that of the Women in Development [WID], which assumed that, regardless of women's subordinate positions comparative to men in their

¹The right of every woman to acquire, hold, use and deal with land shall to the same extent and subject to the same restriction be treated as a right of any man [Section 3(2), Village Land Act, 1999]

households, they play a central role in the livelihood of their community, and particularly within their family as mothers and care providers. The subordinate position of women emanates from gender stereotypes and customary expectations held by men, which are internalised by women on one hand, while at the same time they are promoted by various institutions of socialization (Misafi, 2014). Therefore, integrating women into the development processes of economic, political and social growth and change will improve their access to resources by challenging existing gender roles and relations that excludes women from the market sphere, and consequently limited control over resources like land (Mwangi, 2009; Razavi, 2000). Unfortunately, the WID approach failed to significantly narrow the gender gap, as it overlooked the fact that the subordinate position of women and the problems of women in development cannot be solved in isolation from men by just integrating women in the development process, (Elson, 1991). This has led to a rethinking of the WID approach.

A second strand is the Gender and Development (GAD) approach, which seeks to empower women and transform unequal relations between men and women (Misafi & Malipula, 2016), by tackling the socially defined causes of women's subordination and the existing power relations between women and men. The GAD approach maintains that both men and women are socialized differently, and often function in different spheres of the community, although there is interdependence (Brown, 2006). Due to gender roles, women options can be constrained or expanded by men. This study supports the GAP approach by arguing that gender roles and practices mediates the management of natural resources, including land.

3. Methods

3.1 Setting

This article draws from an empirical research conducted in Kilosa district, located in Morogoro region of Tanzania, from 20th February to April 2017. The district is among the six (6) that comprise the Morogoro region, which is in East-central Tanzania, 300km west of Dar es Salaam. It has a total area of 14,245km², of which 483,390ha of land is under natural pasture. The district has nine (9) pastoral settlements, including Twatwatwa and Mabwegere, which were the central focus of this study. The two settlements make a relevant case since pastoral Maasai subsists and highly dominate in these areas (Benjaminsen et al., 2009).

The Maasai society is an interesting case to study because the roles of women and men are different. Inheritance and ownership of resources is also based on gender. Literature on the subject of gender and poverty in Tanzania and elsewhere is dominated by the theory (theories) of patriarchy (Misafi, 2014). Men's ownership and control of both the economy and ideological institutions seem to be absolute in Maasai land. Similarly, a very strict gender role exists among the Maasai, where men are in charge of security issues, herding, raiding for cows, and decision-

making. Women, on the other hand, are round-the-clock household managers, care for the fields, and manage daily life. Recent studies argue that, increasing change in land use patterns, sedentarisation, land privatization and increase in livestock marketing is currently transforming gender roles in many African patrilineal communities (Massoi, 2016), hence there is a good case to find how gender roles have been transformed over time

3.2 Procedures and Participants

The study employed a descriptive case-oriented research design to collect information on gender and natural resource management due to its flexibility and holistic features that allow researcher to focus on a real problem while at the same time providing in-depth and meaningful facts and background information (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). Similarly, it approached the case qualitatively so as to connect with other people in deeply personal ways, while at the same enabling the persons researched get an opportunity to better describe the rich meanings of their actions, thoughts, and events in their lives. The study also drew on both primary and secondary data sources (regulations, policies, and scholarly works) on gender and natural resource management.

Moreover, the study applied a qualitative approach to explore information on the engagement of women and men in planning and control of land and land-related resources. Given the nature of the study area, we had to undertake field visits twice. During the first visit (between 20th February – 28th February 2017), we conducted interviews with key informants at the district and village levels (Twatwatwa and Mabwegere village). These included interviews each with one government official/expert in gender and natural resources at the national, district and village level, who were purposively selected. In the second round of field work (10th April – 20th April 2017), we conducted interviews and two focus group discussions (FGDs)—one from each village. Each FGD comprised of 8 participants.

The selection and determination of the sample size was built on the argument that there is no fixed rule in qualitative research on sample size selection (Travers, 2001). Within the two villages studied, we purposely selected 10 pastoralist households in each village. In each household we purposely selected one female pastoralist² and a male pastoralist (spouse). This made a sub-total of 40 respondents (2 villages × 10 households × 2 respondents from each household). Moreover, we purposively selected one traditional leader from each village, one government official/expert in gender and natural resources at national, district and village levels, as well as one official from civil society involved in gender and natural resources. In this regard, the total sample size for this study was 61 respondents.

²Here, we mean the wife. But in cases of households where polygamy exists, as it is a traditional practice of Maasai, we selected the elder wife.

We used the observation method throughout the study to enable us (researchers) to obtain first-hand information, develop a familiarity with the cultural milieu and relationships amongst and between the people (researched), contexts, norms, and events; and people's behaviours and activities performed (such as what they do, how frequently, and with whom) (Walliman, 2006). We continuously observed existing customary practices regarding land management. Likewise, we conducted in-depth interviews with male and female pastoralists to obtain information in relation to existing customary practices and land management. In addition, we conducted interviews with elders/traditional leaders, as well as with experts on land and gender in Tanzania, government officials, and civil society organizations; both at national, district, and village levels.

As mentioned earlier, we also carried out FGDs in small groups consisting of pastoral women and men of different ages. According to Butler (1996), this method is appropriate because it elicits more spontaneous responses, making it an efficient method of collecting data. The FGDs enabled the researchers get more information on existing customary practices in land management. The collected text data were qualitatively categorized, analysed, interpreted, and organized in the context of their occurrence using the structural content analysis technique. The technique was chosen because of its flexibility in analysing text data (Cavanagh, 1997; Walliman, 2006); while at the same time "... providing knowledge and understanding of the studied phenomenon" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992: 314).

4. Findings, Analysis and Discussion

First-hand interviews and FGDs revealed that, generally, rights of access to and use of property, including land, is framed within customary arrangements that are strictly gender-specific. The results pinpoint that, unlike men, women's rights to access to and use of land in pastoral Maasai society are usufruct. While on one hand men have more access and control over land and land resources than women, at the same time Maasai women are not involved in the planning process of land use. Such arrangements have licensed the exclusion of women from these resources as the subsections hereunder details.

4.1 Diversity in Kinship and Inheritance Patterns

Kinship needs to be seen as providing the organizing principles for inheritance and land distribution, socialization, and women's relationship to space. The very notion of entitlement to land can be understood by keeping in view the fact that it is the kinship system that gives them legitimacy. Differences in kinship systems account for some critical differences among societies in the ways in which gender operates. Many kinds of gender disparities and parities in Maasai societies are explained, at least in part, by their kinship systems. This is especially important for pastoralists societies, where kinship is a very strong force. Gender relations across pastoralists communities in East Africa are shaped primarily by kinship rules and prescriptions with respect to marriage and inheritance, thereby legitimizing both

entitlements and responsibilities (Mkutu, 2008; Massoi, 2015). At times these complement state laws, at others they contradict them. The pluralism of legitimization systems can be a disadvantage in situations where access to land is mediated by gender, which eventually empower men to have access to and control over land than on women (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003; Hodgson, 2011).

Gender is highly mainstreamed within the formal institutional framework governing land management in Tanzania.³ All citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity and gender, have equal rights to land access patterns. However, gaps still remain, particularly in relation to gender equality in matters of inheritance (Coast, 2001). We must also recognize that national statutory legislations act in tandem with customary codes, which in pastoralist areas have much greater authority. These continue to be discriminatory towards Maasai women, especially in terms of their inheritance rights (see, e.g., Massoi, 2015).

Broadly speaking, gender influences the ways in which villagers use and manage land resources in a community. Women access land through their male-lineage, and are only allowed to use but not to own, distribute or even dispose the given land. Similarly, inheritance of land is strictly to men. Interviews showed that women do not have free access to land and land resources, including their inheritance. Customary rules of pastoral Maasai overtly denies the right of women to property ownership (including land) and inheritance, because they themselves are properties of men. For instance, one elderly woman recounted her experience:

“In our society, land belongs to men and I am just the user. He decides on its distribution among his wives including selling... a recently trending practice.”

Focus group discussions with women confirmed that, according to customs of the Maasai communities in Mabwegere, women cannot directly inherit land, but can only use it. Nevertheless, their male children can inherit it. Likewise, men can inherit land from their families, or clan elders can give it to them. For families that have started farming, the power of women to decide on the use of land, such as on which they can cultivated, is very little. Equally, land distribution within households (*bomas*) is done by men to their wives. A woman in Mabwegere noted:

“Our patrilineal inheritance rules prohibit daughters from inheriting land from their fathers. Even wives cannot inherit land from their deceased husbands. We only have rights to use it as we care for our children, collect firewood and medicinal plants. Our traditional system only allows men to inherit clan land.”

Male inheritance remains the norm despite national legislations enforcing equitable inheritance of property, including land. Thus, pastoral women continue to fall into a legal blackhole because of customs and traditions that restrict their access to land.

³See, for example, the National Land Policy (1995), the Land Acts (Land Act Cap 113) and the Village Land Act (Cap 114 revised editions of 2002).

The bottom line is that issues surrounding the inheritance of family land continues to remain on the periphery despite legal reforms on land, and thus in pastoral settings, women and men have different rights in access and use of land. This is attributed to existing patriarchal systems that mediates land access rights through kinship systems that places male inheritance as a norm. These results are in line with findings by Fonjong (2008), which pinpoint that the result of the disregard of women in the exploitation and management of local resources is that their livelihood activities have been limited to particular marginal areas where they overuse and misuse resources to survive. The chauvinistic nature of most of these norms, taboos, and beliefs -- including male-dominant positions in all traditional decision-making and sacred institutions in this predominantly patrilineal society -- protects men's interests in all these arrangements (ibid. 2008).

An interview with an elderly woman at Mabwegere village revealed that there was strong patriarchal system in Maasai societies that favours men over women. The patriarchal system provides dominance to men over women in all spheres of life, including the right to own land. For instance, I observed that although women own houses that are constructed under male support, they had no right to the land in which a house is built. Land rights remained a property of their spouses. A woman in pastoral Maasai society has a right to use and not inherit it, as confirmed by an elderly man who stated that: *"A woman has no powers or decision over land in a family. It is our tradition."*

This was stated with strong feelings, implying that it is against the Maasai tradition for a woman to own property, including land. Similarly, an interview with a village chairperson at Mabwegere village revealed that land acquisition is essentially through the Maasai traditional systems of inheritance, or being given by elder members of a clan and, in some occasions, through village government systems. However, this is not the case with women in Maasai society: women cannot inherit land as men. Here, one can observe that although the statutory system provides equal rights for men and women to own and use land in Tanzania, it is not enforceable. A gap is still evident on the ground when it comes to women's rights to own and inherit property, particularly land, despite series of reforms in the institutional framework governing land and women in the country (Bourdon, 2013). This is partly because, on one hand, there are laws governing land and land resources that provide equal rights for men and women to own and use land; on the other hand, there are law that provide for customary practices to govern land matters. In this situation, when customary practices can run parallel with statutory practices, customary practices usually prevail. Thus, since customary practices favour men more than women, women become the most hit hard.

A key informant interview with the village council chairperson of the Mabwegere village revealed that, given the unique traditional governance systems among the Maasai, in many cases women's concerns are usually handled by the pastoralists

themselves through their traditional leadership system. It is only in situations where their leaders have failed to resolve concerns that they are brought to a village council (a state organ) for resolution, as per the following excerpt:

“It is known here in the village that Maasai issues are dealt with and resolved among themselves. They have their own setup to deal with their issues. We (the government) do not interfere them, they are only brought to us when their traditional leaders have failed to resolve them. I have been a chairperson for the past five years, and have I can hardly remember Maasai cases being brought to my attention.”

This implies that a majority of Maasai women still face legal or customary barriers to their rights to own and inherit land: the inherent systems have sentenced them to second-class status as it favours men more than women. In this regard, pastoral women are at a disadvantaged position in access to and use of land.

As mentioned earlier, customary institutions usually empower men to have access to resources, including land (Flintan, 2011; URT, 1998). For instance, customary practices often require women to access land through their fathers, brothers, spouses, or other men who control the land. As such, when a woman loses a connection to a male relative/spouse—either through death, divorce, or migration—she loses access to land, home, and the means of supporting herself and her family (Mkutu, 2008; Massoi, 2015; Dancer, 2017). Therefore, whereas national and local state structures and initiatives are significant, implementation of statutory requirements remains fundamental, as one official from the council recounted:

“There has to be a family law, which recognizes the rights for women in inheritance and so on. Then Maasai women can come truly into their realm as land owners.”

For meaningful land reforms, it is crucial to have an awareness of existing traditional claims over clan and family land that are based on kinship relations; which in most cases oppress women.

4.2 Shift in Traditional Land Access Mechanism

Given the evident gender biased customary laws and discriminatory norms that set women’s claim to land through their relationship with a male relative, one might have thought that Maasai women have not been able to acquire land. However, this is no longer the case. First-hand interviews and FGDs revealed that some Maasai women in Kilosa, Tanzania, have started acquiring land as the following testimony from a woman interviewee ascertains:

“Our customs and traditions do not acknowledge the right of women to independently own property like land. Tellingly, as women, we do not have a say on how land should be used. In my family for example, I am the only woman who own a piece of four acres of inherited land from my parents. Before my father died, he had already told the elders that the land should continue to be under my possession even after their departure.”

Another woman participant had this to say:

“These days life is not as it used to be amongst us in the past. Nowadays everything is money-centred; actually, money controls everything. Formerly, if you want a piece of land you had to go to an elderly man who will give you a portion of land to farm. But nowadays, if you have money you can go to the village and buy a piece of land and start farming. I have two acres of land that I purchased from a certain family which moved to Morogoro. However, this was not easy as I faced several challenges from my relatives, and even from my fellow Maasai women. Most of them saw me as violating the Maasai traditions which restrict women from owning land. The matter became very serious until when the district government came to intervene through land tribunal that insisted that it was my right to own land.”

The fact that women in Maasai society have started owning land suggests a shift in traditional land access, and awareness of Maasai women in acquiring natural resources, including land. The perspective that women are required to get land through male lineage or spouses is changing, and at the same time economic access through purchase is now taking place, albeit slowly. This supports the WID argument that the problems of women lie on women themselves. Women lack support, including financial support, which would have made them powerful in the management of natural resources, including land. Unless supported or facilitated, women’s emancipation will continue to be a challenge. The argument here is that the problem of women is the lack of facilitation; once facilitated, they gain economic muscle that can promote their emancipation (Razavi, 1995).

4.3 Discriminative Attitudes and Socialization

Gender discrimination in land rights is often culturally and socially engrained in a traditional setup of a society, especially the patriarchal customs, norms and traditions that determine the social position and identity⁴ of men and women in a society (Hodgson, 2001; Misafi, 2014). Therefore, it is through a socialization process that Maasai women get a sense of who they are in the community, and their rights to access or own land.

We noted that the social norms enforced by community elders (both men and women) still exist among the Maasai, irrespective of the growing body of gender sensitive legislation enacted to protect and promote women’s rights to land. At their early age girls are socialized to accept themselves as helpers to their mothers, who are themselves subordinate to their husbands. As a young girl grows older and enters marriage, she also tends to occupy the same position as her mother in a household that her husband heads.

Generally, the society views women as weak, and unable to control and own land. As one elder put it:

“Women are ours – the children, the wife, the land are owned by men and none can refute or dispute this tradition.”

⁴Social identity is a person’s sense of who they are based on the group in which they are part of (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012).

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A close link between social norms, traditions and women's position in relation to land acquisition was also noted. Generally, the society views women as weak creatures, without independent decision and properties, including land. Therefore, since women are viewed as property of men and not persons, they thus cannot independently own properties.

Similarly, one village elder also explained:

"In Maasai culture, women are not supposed to own property. The land which is owned by community belongs to men."

Since property cannot own property, women continued to be discriminated against land access, regardless of specific provisions such as Section 20 (2) of the Land Acts of 1999, which protects the rights of women in Tanzania in general.

Equally, the study results showed that social norms had an influence in determining pastoral women's access to and use of land as they defined a woman's position in a household and community as being lower than that of a man, and a woman was socialized to be obedient to men. During the interviews, a Maasai woman who happened to be against pastoral Maasai traditions, had this to say:

"Our husbands are free to decide about the land we even farm in the family, including the produce, sometimes without our consent or knowledge. Can you imagine that even when you want to harvest maize or sorghum from the farm for food to feed the family, or even to sell, you must secure permission from them. I have the ambition to help my fellow women to realize their dreams of owning property, especially land. This will help them develop and be financially empowered. I have decided to secure my own piece of land myself. Anyhow, I am not aware of any new land reforms policies or gender equity policies."

Furthermore, interviews revealed that Maasai women are strongly subjected to social norms that limit their freedom of expression. For instance, we observed that it is still a norm that when men are talking, women must keep quiet and listen. Women are not allowed to contribute in meetings. This has a negative implication to women as it limits their participation in the planning process, let alone decision-making in matters that affect them; including decision in land issues. For example, land distribution at the village level is done by village meetings, such as village assemblies, in which women are part of. The limited freedom also suggests that women's roles in the distribution of village land is also curtailed. Linked to this is the lack of men's trust on women, as revealed by one elder in an FGD:

"A woman is not trusted with the property like land and cattle. They can easily decide to sell or give to their husband after marriage. From our customs, a female child cannot be given land, only male children."

Traditions, stories, legends, sayings and proverbs shared and taught by male and female elders at different stage of a girl's life, does facilitate the reinforcement of prescribed roles and discriminative positions of girls and women within the Maasai society.

4.4 Legal Pluralism: Complexity on Rights to Land

Tanzania has the most gender-sensitive legal framework governing land management in the entire Sub-Saharan Africa (Knight, 2010). Tellingly, the framework reads along gender lines by safeguarding equal rights of access and use for all, including women. However, given the presence of a pluralistic legal system that allows the co-existence of statutory laws and customary laws, FGDs in the study area revealed a different situation: that customary practices and structures that mediate access to and use of land work to women's disadvantage. Supporting this argument is an explanation from a woman interviewee who said: "*Our customary practices in relation to land inheritance continues to severely discriminate heavily against women.*"

Both the Land Act and Village Land Act in Tanzania provide for equal ownership of land, regardless of gender. However, as mentioned earlier, the obstacle is that laws allow customary practices/laws to be read parallel with statutory ones. Such customary practices include laws regarding marriage and inheritance, which continue to heavily discriminate against women. Even though the country's constitution upholds equal rights to property for men and women, it does not clarify whether it is statutory laws or customary laws that take precedent when there is a conflict. As we mentioned previously, Maasai customary laws strictly do not allow a woman to own land, something that contradicts the country's statutory laws.

In this regard therefore, sustaining the current legal position serves only to reproduce gender power inequalities that operate at the disadvantage of women. As Whitehead and Tsikata (2003) argues, to ask women to wait until customary practices have themselves evolved through contest within their societies is to deny them a level-playing field, and that is discriminatory. The central issue is on how to bring statutory regulations and policies governing land closer to citizens, including the Maasai people; and how to promote their implementation in an equitable manner. It is clear that while leaving customary laws to continue to evolve within local communities, legal interventions are imperative to repeal discriminatory customs and traditions that discriminate against women.

Equally, the study results showed that social norms had an influence in determining pastoral women's access to and use of land as they defined a woman's position in a household and community as being lower than that of a man, and a woman was socialized to be obedient to men. During the interviews, a Maasai woman who happened to be against pastoral Maasai traditions, had this to say:

"Our husbands are free to decide about the land we even farm in the family, including the produce, sometimes without our consent or knowledge. Can you imagine that even when you want to harvest maize or sorghum from the farm for food to feed the family, or even to sell, you must secure permission from them. I have the ambition to help my fellow women to realize their dreams of owning property, especially land. This will help them develop and be financially empowered. I have decided to secure my own piece of land myself. Anyhow, I am not aware of any new land reforms policies or gender equity policies."

Regardless of what statutory laws state, customary laws have the power to override statutory laws (Walker, 2003). Law enforcement depends on institutions, which in this regard frequently disadvantage women, such as those that regard only men, as household heads, have the right to own land. Legal frameworks and policies that do not explicitly address gender differences work to the disadvantage of women. This challenge the WID approach that focuses on empowering women as way to emancipate women, while at the same time neglecting the gender and development approach that focuses on institutions as key in dealing with women issues, including access to and use of land (Sendalo, 2009; Msigwa & Mvena, 2014; Misafi, 2014). Unless gender and traditional governance institutions are dealt with in pastoral Maasai societies, women problems regarding access to and use of land will continue to persist.

5 Conclusion

We can conclude from the study findings that gender roles and practice in land management is gender differentiated. There is a strong patriarchal system in Maasai societies that governs access to, and use of land. In this regard, men have more advantages than women when it comes to the management and control of land. Women have no access or ownership of land, and must seek permission from men to use land. Existing customary practices in pastoral societies are strongly built on strong patriarchal system that is male-centred and sidelines women in almost all spheres of life, including natural resource management. In this scenario, the hardest hit are Maasai pastoral women who have no rights to own or access land use due to existing norms and values which 'license the exclusion' of women from these resources. As a whole, we argue that unless these customary practices are addressed, pastoral Maasai women issues, especially in access to, and use of land will remain unchanged. Therefore, we call for the facilitation of the 'adaptation' rather than 'replacement' of customary practices, at the same time considering strengths and weaknesses of existing land tenure systems. Changing statutory land laws alone without considering the patriarchal norms and values in pastoral setting does not suffice to ensure tenure security among pastoral women in Tanzania. Here, it is imperative to manipulate traditional customs and practices that act as constraints to women's making use of wider opportunities in accessing and/or using land.

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