

## Land tenure of African women

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not 'owners of land' but 'owners  
of crops'

- Rights to use, but not to alienate
- Rights declining over time

## What are rights?

- Socially agreed rules about relationships among people
- Multiple rights
- Overlapping rights
- Contradictory rights
- Use rights, transfer rights
- Rights contingent on social status
- Understood meanings

## Land in Africa

- Usufruct rights from first settling
- Matrilineal vs. patrilineal
- Chiefs and earth priests
- No land sales
- 'Borrowing' land OK
- Waqf land

## Excluding women: changing incidence

- Increase in elopements

## Excluding women: Changing meanings

- Call a crop a man's crop- Malawi staples vs garden plots
- Ghana self-acquired land belongs to matrilineage or to man? Inter-vivos transfers

### Excluding women: new rights from the state

- State is premier entity for dispensing rights
- Kenya land registration – cadastre
- Irrigation projects
- Sometimes try to include women
- But adjudication all male

### Responding to exclusion:Markets

- Women increasingly buying land

### Responding to exclusion:Political association

- Schroeder – NGO gardens
- Intestate succession laws- combatting 'property grabbing'

### Responding to exclusion:Custom

- Using relationship with sons
- Women-woman marriage

### Overview

- Underestimated chaos and confusion, so now out of registration business
- Cash-cropping changing, so need for intervention
- Interventions increasingly gender-targeted