

Title of Article: Women's Land Rights and the Challenge of Patriarchy: Lessons from Ozalla Community, Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Every community of people has its cultural and economic life rooted in the soil it occupies. The term land may take on a physical as well as a spiritual meaning. Land is a major production resource and lack of control over this important resource has constituted a limiting factor to women's productivity in rural Nigeria. It is not customary for women to own land as this is a male dominated society where patriarchy is practiced. Women's access to land depends on marriage and they retain access to land as long as they remain in their husband's household. Surprisingly, women rarely speak and hardly perceive the inequalities in the division of labour in agriculture because they are culturally legitimized. Yet lack of accessibility to land has created increased poverty, frustration, constant disputes and enmity between men and women. The situation has also become overwhelming, bearing in mind the fact that a greater population of women and children, the vulnerable in society reside and find their livelihood in the rural areas. Also, women contribute more in terms of food production for the family. Ironically, women suffer more due to land deprivation and discriminatory cultural practices just as their contribution to the sustenance and persistence of rural agriculture is neglected due to male bias. This paper therefore examines women's land rights and the challenge of patriarchy in Ozalla community, in a bid to guarantee gender equity and social justice by reducing the level of discrimination and ensuring that women have rights to fertile agricultural land so as to arrest to an appreciable extent the food crisis in the country by improving their production output and ensuring higher incomes.

KEYWORDS: Cultural practices, customary, economic life, food crisis, food production, gender equity, land rights, patriarchy, rural agriculture, rural areas, social justice