

42nd KUASS (Kyoto University African Studies Seminar)

Date and Time: 16 November 2015 (Monday), 15:00-17:00

Venue: Kyoto University Inamori Memorial Building, 3rd floor, #318 Seminar Room

Title: Gender and Poverty Dynamics in Uganda: Exploring Women's Rights to Land and Property at Household Level

Speaker: Dr. Florence Akiiki Asiimwe (visiting professor of ASAFAS from Makerere University)

Abstract: This presentation explores how women's lack of control over productive resources like land and matrimonial property is a contributory factor to their poverty in Uganda. Inequity in marital status and property ownership not only intersects with cultural attitudes and beliefs but also with the patriarchal institutional legal framework to create formidable obstacles to women empowerment. The presentation is based on the study carried out in Uganda among married women in Kampala. Using married women's lifestories and based on purely a qualitative design, the presentation shows the complex gender dynamics at household level between married women and their husbands in regard to land and property. Evidence shows that married women in Uganda remain in a subordinate position in terms of ownership rights. Various factors account for lack of gender equality in property ownership. These vary from economic, social-cultural, to psychological and Institutional legal framework.

For example in cases where women did not have regular income to contribute to matrimonial property they had no power to claim legal rights to the property. Hence upon divorce or separation, the women are left homeless. In cases where married women did not use their financial contribution to the matrimonial property as a tool for negotiation with their husbands to have their names included on the title deed they ended up with only user rights. In these cases the husbands automatically registered the property solely in their names.

Although the Registration of Titles Act is gender sensitive and allows couples to co-own property, married women have to find ways in which they can utilize this legal instrument to exercise ownership rights. In practice, there are various factors that account for married women's lack of ownership rights for example lack of regular income, awareness of their rights, and male cultural ideology. The findings also confirm that much as legal reforms are important, these have to go hand in hand with social changes at interpersonal level.