

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR- 59495

Title: CUSTOMARY NORMS AND DIFFERENTIATED ACCESS TO LAND : THE CASE OF WOMEN IN KEIBLA (CENTRAL-WESTERN COTE D IVOIRE).

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality			✓	
Clarity			✓	
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name : Dr. Abdul Haseeb Mir

Detailed Reviewer's Repot

General Overview

This manuscript presents a empirical investigation into how customary land tenure arrangements regulate women's access to land, shape their economic productivity, and constrain their participation in local decision-making bodies in rural Côte d'Ivoire. Focusing on Keibla, a village in the agro-forestry zone of the Daloa Department (Haut-Sassandra Region), the study investigates how patrilineal lineage organization creates structural gender asymmetries in land ownership and usage.

Adopting a mixed-methods research design, the empirical dataset combines a quantitative household survey (\$N = 100\$ agricultural operators) with qualitative semi-structured interviews (\$N = 10\$ key informants, including village chiefs, lineage heads, and leaders of women's associations) and direct field observation.

The empirical findings are structured around three core themes:

1. **Predominance of Land Marketization and Derived Rights:** The quantitative data show a shift toward land monetization. Direct land sales account for 56.4% of land access modes, followed by sharecropping arrangements (*planter-partager*) at 24.9% and rental leases at 18.7%. Traditional gratuitous mechanisms (such as customary gifts, loans, or expanded inheritance) have largely disappeared due to land pressure and commercialization.
2. **Patrilineal Ideology and Symbolic Exclusion:** Women are culturally conceptualized as "in transit" within their birth lineages due to exogamous marriage, creating the fear that transferring

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land to female family members would alienate ancestral estate to outside lineages. Women access land primarily through secondary, derived rights mediated by male relatives—specifically via social mediation (\$55.6\%\$), marriage alliances (\$33.3\%\$), or informal land development (\$11.1\%\$).

3. **Economic Precarity and Political Marginalization:** Land insecurity limits women's agricultural investment capacity, restricts their farming activities to small-scale or seasonal food production, and lowers overall income generation. Furthermore, because political legitimacy in village governance is tied to land ownership, women are excluded from formal decision-making spaces and customary dispute resolution arenas.

The manuscript provides a grounded sociological contribution to West African agrarian studies, gender literature, and legal pluralism.

Key Strengths

1. **Methodological Rigor and Triangulation:** Combining quantitative survey trends with qualitative thematic coding provides empirical depth and internal validity.
2. **Clear Conceptual Framework:** The paper distinguishes between state legal rights and "lived rights" (*droit vécu*), explaining how market forces and customary rules interact to reinforce structural gender inequality.
3. **Contextual Analysis of Land Marketization:** The manuscript captures the shift from communal lineage stewardship to individual transaction-based land markets in Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa belt.

Recommendations for Improvement

While the manuscript is methodologically sound and conceptually well-argued, the authors should address the following minor points before final publication:

1. **Ensure Complete Language Consistency (English Language Submission):**

The abstract, key terms, and titles are presented in both French and English. However, the manuscript body (Sections I through III) is written entirely in French. Since the required publication review language is English, the authors should complete a full English translation of the body text to align with journal submission requirements.

2. **Refine Descriptive Narrative Around Graphical Charts:**

In Section II.1.2 and Section II.2.2, embedded pie and bar charts present key percentages. While the text summarizes these findings clearly, adding brief analytical notes detailing sample sub-group breakdowns (e.g., distinguishing native Bété women from migrant Baoulé or Sénoufo women) will deepen the socio-demographic discussion.

3. **Bridge State Legal Frameworks with Customary Realities:**

International Journal of Advanced Research

Publisher's Name: Jana Publication and Research LLP

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In Section III (Discussion) and the Conclusion, the author notes the gap between formal statutory law and lived customary practices. Adding 2–3 sentences explicitly citing relevant national Ivorian rural land legislation (such as Law No. 98-750 on Rural Land Domain) will better contextualize how national legal tenure reforms interact with local village practice.

4. Editorial and Reference Cleanup:

- Standardize bibliographic citations in the reference list (e.g., ensuring consistent formatting for author initials, publication years, and publisher locations).
- Correct minor typographical errors and spacing inconsistencies across section headings in the text.

Final Evaluation and Verdict

This manuscript contributes valuable empirical research to the literature on gender, legal pluralism, and rural land tenure dynamics in West Africa. The mixed-methods data are sound, the theoretical grounding is appropriate, and the conclusions are supported by the evidence.

The manuscript is **accepted with minor revisions**. Completing the full English text translation, incorporating the national legal framework context, and standardizing the reference list will render the paper fully ready for publication.

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