Two-name Land Use Certificates and Gender Inequality: An Empirical Investigation for Vietnam

Abstract

The new 2003 Land Law marks an extraordinary change in the land titling policy in Vietnam. It strongly requires that the names of both the husband and the wife must be stated on the land use right certificate of the land plot that they both own. This regulation not only officially recognizes the property rights of women as land is a crucial asset for every household but it also improves the position of the wife relatively compared to the husband. We examine how the intra-couple issues change in association with having two-name land use certificates which are considered as a legally recognized proof of property rights for women. We expect some correlation between the outcome of the two-name land titling policy and the allocation of human resources between the husband and the wife; the income gap between the husband and the wife, the investment in their sons and daughters’ education; and ‘bad’ consumption on smoking and alcohol drinking of the husband which consumes resources without generating utility (in terms of good health). We use the data from two waves of Vietnam Household Living Standard Surveys (VHLSS), before and after the two-name land use certificates came into effect to identify the correlation. The investigation is conducted for a wide range of outcomes, namely, the difference of the working time that the husband and the wife allocated to the first and the second time consuming jobs; the difference of the wife and the husband’s time doing house work; the difference in individual income of the wife and the husband; the difference in expenses on their sons and their daughters’ education; the change in expenses on smoking and alcohol drinking. Though divorce is one of the most interesting outcomes that should be investigated, the household survey data observed only a few cases of new divorce in the two year period and does not ensure enough variations to conduct the analysis. Therefore, we leave the relationship between having two-name land use certificates and divorce unknown. We find that, in association with having two-name land use certificates, the non-Kinh (or non Hoa) wife works for individual income less while the Kinh or Hoa wife seems to work more relatively compared to her husband. The correlation is opposite for the number of hours spent on house work. The difference in house work time of the Kinh wife and her spouse is significant reduced while it turns to increase in the case of non-Kinh couples. This gap also decreases for non-poor couples. Two-name land use certificates seem to be uncorrelated with the income gap between the wife’s and the husband’s personal income. Interestingly, the two-name land use certificates encourage rural couples to invest in their daughters while observing the opposite for urban couples. Finally, we find no correlation between the ownership of two-name land use certificates and the husband’s bad habits (smoking and drinking).
Gender Connection: Gender Focused Intervention

Gender Outcomes: Gender disaggregated income, investment, labor force participation, intrahousehold bargaining

IE Design: Difference in Difference

Intervention: The 2003 Land Law replaced the 1993 Land Law. The most relevant new feature of the 2003 law is that the wife's name appeared on the land use certificate.

Intervention Period: 2003-Present

Sample population: The study utilizes the 2004 and 2006 VHLSS panel dataset. The dataset samples 4200 households.

Comparison conditions: The study compares households with two-name land use certificates in 2004 to those who do not have a two-name land use certificate in 2004.

Unit of analysis: Household Level


Results: The two-name land certificates are not associated with the gap in income between the wife and spouse's personal income. The certificates increase rural couples' investment in their daughters, while urban couples decrease investment in daughters. There is no significant relationship between the two-name land certificates and male smoking or drinking. For ethnic minority women, the certificate reduces the time the wife works by about 120 hours per year, but the relationship is the opposite for Kinh (ethnic majority) women increasing work time from 40-60 hours.

Primary study limitations

Funding Source: Gender Action Plan


Link to Studies: http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/dpcwpaper/1908.htm

Microdata