Scoping Study

WOMEN’S ACCESS AND RIGHTS TO LAND AND PROPERTY
IN PAKISTAN

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1. Introduction

“The villagers don’t own any land. They have land only for their graves”.

In Pakistan, livelihoods of rural men and women revolve around arable land. Land as an asset is one of the basic physical resources which provide food, space for livestock and home. It is also a source of security and power. In fact land ownership is an important determinant of social status in rural and urban areas across the country. The landmark Participatory Poverty Assessment study\(^2\), identified non-ownership of land as a key factor of poverty. This was as true of the farmers and harris (landless share croppers) of Sindh, as of the landless tenant farmers of Punjab, NWFP and Balochistan. Besides being a source of food, income or employment land provides cash in times of need; poor rural families owning small measures of land (up to one or two acres) were often found in the PPA sites to have mortgaged their land.\(^3\)

Notwithstanding people’s perception of food and livelihood security being closely linked with ownership of land, or at least self-owned homestead land, the reality is that less than half of rural households in Pakistan own any agricultural land and 40 percent of the land is owned by 2.5 percent of households. In rural Sindh landlessness is most acute with two-thirds of rural households not owning any land and just 0.4 percent of households accounting for nearly 24 percent of the total area.

Any examination of women’s land and property rights therefore has to be within the context of the above skewed pattern of land ownership in the country. This does not mean that women’s inheritance is not an issue especially from the point of view those women who are not in the category of “absolute poor”. Shirkat Gah, which works for women’s rights with a special focus on rural women, in its recent mapping exercise in three provinces (Punjab, Sindh, NWFP) to prioritise women’s issues in its areas of operation found inheritance as an issue that bothered women a great deal. Women felt manipulated out of their inheritance, were not happy that they had to forfeit their share in favour of a brother or son, expressed their inability to pursue their inheritance in court, among others. For the poorest women on the other hand important

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1 A man of village Hasso Daho, District Ghotki, Between Hope and Despair, PPA Sindh Report, Government of Pakistan, 2002
2 The study captured the perceptions of men, women and children in the poorest sites of 54 districts across the four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, NWFP, Balochistan) of the country and Federally Administered Northern Areas. Shirkat Gah was responsible for carrying out the study and its documentation in Punjab and the documentation in Sindh.
3 PPA National Report, 2003
questions are of access to other (than land) livelihood resources that they specifically have to rely on given their gender prescribed roles of fetching water, gathering fuel wood and fodder, looking after livestock and producing natural resource-based craft goods (e.g. mats, baskets, brooms, etc.)

The other defining context is women’s social position in society. Pakistan is a class and caste based society with caste and kinship relations of prime importance in rural areas. There are the poor landless and sharecroppers on the one hand and some of the occupational groups like potters, and cobblers, etc. on the other who are at the lower end of the social ladder. Other marginal groups are the gypsies who move around working on construction sites and begging, and brick klin and mine workers. Obviously these groups seldom own land and women within these are even less likely to do so and so far one has not seen any evidence of collective action. In fact the majority of this category of people is tied in bondage against loans they have taken from their employers and women are particularly victimized.

Women’s secondary position is reflected in the poor female literacy rate (40 percent in 2004 – 05) compared to that of males (65 percent); low labour force participation (15.93 percent); a high maternal mortality ratio (450 per 100,000) besides perhaps the highest morbidity rate in Asia. Women’s life expectancy is barely equal to that of men’s and the country is one of the few in the world to have a negative sex ratio (100 women to 108 men). Not surprisingly women have little access or control over productive resources, even in situations where they may have the legal right to own and inherit property. Nothing brought out more poignantly the sorry state of women’s right to assets than the earthquake of 8 October 2005 which rocked the northern parts of the country leaving an average of 60 percent homes damaged and destroyed across twelve districts of the country and 2.8 million displaced. Since household title invariably rests with males women survivors or those with minor children found themselves left high and dry when relief and reconstruction compensations were made, and their claims were superseded in favour of the claims of male relatives (deceased brothers, nephews).

The view of women as dependents and their general invisibility is rooted in customary practices and often reinforced both by law (like the Hudood Ordinances) as well as the lack of attention and sensitivity of policy makers. For instance, there are gaps in official data reflecting gender blindness at the official level. There is no gender disaggregated data regarding: women’s occupational categories, their participation rate and nature of work in the informal sector where the vast majority of women are concentrated, ownership of land, intra household division of work and decision-making, women’s role in natural resource management among others. This lack of recognition results in policies that fail to address women’s needs as in the informal sector where the minimum wage rate or other protective measures remain unapplied, a fact equally true for men except that there are more women in this sector than men, and there are fewer opportunities for women to do anything else.

This paper, a part of a wider research study under the Rural Poverty and Environment program, attempts to understand gender, and social and power relations that govern women’s land and property rights, their access and control over land and other related resources. It seeks to identify: a) key critical issues in the area of women and land/resource tenure, b) key organizations engaged in research and/or action on the issue of gender and land tenure, and c) areas of future research.

4 Khawar Mumtaz, Gender and Poverty in Pakistan, Pakistan Poverty Assessment Update, Background Paper Series ADB, 2005
5 Hudood Ordinances 1979, wherein no distinction is made between consensual sex and rape, and the evidence of women and non-Muslims is not admissible for maximum conviction.
The paper is divided into five sections:

1. Introduction

2. An overview of the laws and norms governing women’s land rights and access to resources in Pakistan

3. Impediments to women’s ownership and access to land and other related resources

4. Work and experience of key organizations working on women and land/resource tenure and their success stories if any

5. Critical issues emerging from the study and proposed areas of research.

The paper is based on an extensive literature search and review which was followed-up by interviews with key individuals in organizations that are involved in research or are working on rural women’s rights and livelihoods issues. Important to point out at the outset is that women’s land rights have not been a major issue taken up by women activists and researchers in Pakistan. However studies on women’s status, violence against women, political participation, poverty or rural women invariably acknowledge the lack of access and control of women over assets/resources. Women’s right of inheritance has perhaps received more attention but that too usually from the legal perspective as a right over which customary practice takes precedence.

2. **Pluralistic Norms Governing Land Rights**

2.1. The Law

Article 23 of the Constitution of Pakistan states that, “every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold, and dispose of property in any part of Pakistan.” It further guarantees the “rights to property and equality of citizen as fundamental rights”, and calls for bringing all laws in conformity with the Holy Quran and Sunnah and to strike down any custom having the force of law as far as it is inconsistent with fundamental rights. There is no direct provision in the Constitution on women’s right to inheritance but it does provide guarantees and principles of policy to ensure justice without discrimination. While the right to acquire land is that of every man and woman under the Constitution the capacity to do so is limited to those with monetary resources. Women from within the social strata that have such resources acquire and own property with varying degrees of control. A study on livelihoods in seven selected sites in rural Pakistan found that in the village in Chakwal district (a rain fed area of north Punjab which is also the recruiting ground for the military) 4 percent of women were found to own land and that the ownership of land was positively correlated with the voting patterns and mobility of women. The study also found that women’s education was a correlate for both mobility and exercise of

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8 Ibid. p.52
vote. Whether male out migration combined with remittances is a contributory factor would need further investigation.

Professional women in urban areas are known to acquire land mainly for building homes or for commercial purposes. However women even among the well off largely come into land and property through inheritance. On the basis of observation, as empirical work is absent, it can be said that at least some women from among the leading landed families have inherited agricultural and urban land and property, like former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, or former parliamentarian and Minister Syeda Abida Hussain and many others like them. Moreover they also seem to have control over their properties.

For the poor there have been government land transfer/distribution schemes, from time to time, for homestead land and housing in both rural and urban areas. These are almost always in the name of the male household head. With reference to such transfers women activists have raised the demand of registering land jointly in the names of both husband and wife and that of women in the case of female headed households.

Inheritance in Pakistan is governed by Islamic Shariah as codified in the Family Laws Ordinance 1961, the overriding law in this matter, and the West Pakistan Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act (V of 1962) that consolidated and amended the various Muslim laws. Prior to the Shariat Acts, introduced in the sub-continent form early 20th century, custom defined inheritance and courts referred to personal laws only in the absence of a local custom. The MFLO, 1961 provides for a complex table of shares in inheritance of a deceased person's movable and immovable property according to the nature of relationship within the family and number of surviving family members. The law provides for the distribution of shares according to the personal law of each religious group in the country (Christians, Parsi, etc.). The Quranic principle underlying the Islamic law of inheritance is that "blood relationship is cause of title to succession." The proportion of shares varies not only according to the relationship to the deceased but also by sect, i.e. Sunni and Shia.

Under the Sunni law there are 12 shares in a deceased person's property, four for males and eight for females. The Shia law recognizes nine shares and does not include grandfathers, grandmothers and son’s daughter/s. Female shares are similar under both the laws:

- wife (or wives) gets ¼ of the share if there is no child or child of a son, otherwise 1/8
- mother gets 1/3 if there is no child or child of a son, otherwise 1/6
- daughter gets ½ the share of the son
- in the absence of a son the daughter gets ½ the share of the inheritance and if there are more than one daughter they collectively get 2/3 share

The law elaborates shares of grandmothers, son’s daughter/s, uterine sisters, full sisters etc., and the circumstances under which they can receive inheritance. The MFLO provides for the children of a predeceased son or daughter to inherit from the grandfather’s property the share their parents would have received had they been alive. This provision remains hotly contested as interpretations of the Quran under traditional Hanafi (Sunni) law do not recognize this provision.

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11 Ibid. p.168
12 Ibid.
Wills under the law are not legally binding however gifts of movable or immovable property can be made during a person’s lifetime. Under Islamic law inheritance should immediately take place upon the death of a person however the property has to be free from all encumbrances like debts, dower payable to the widow, etc. In practice the division can stretch on for years, even generations if the property in question is under litigation or dispute. Notwithstanding the right under the law to own property or inherit it women do not automatically receive their share of inheritance. Given that land size is a strong determinant of social status and power there is the desire to keep property within the family (discussed in detail in later section) and as the National Commission on the Status of Women rightly states, rights of women are denied on multiple pretexts.

2.2. Other Official Measures

Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996 and has committed itself to removing discrimination against women through legislative and administrative measures. While the Convention does not explicitly address women’s right to inheritance it implicitly does so through Article 15 which secures their legal status and grants them property rights. Furthermore the CEDAW Committee’s General Recommendation No.21 noted the discrimination against women under the inheritance laws and practices of many countries and stated that “men and women in the same degree of relationship to a deceased are entitled to equal shares in the estate and equal rank in the order of succession.” This provision is in conflict with the provision of inheritance law in Pakistan as is evident from the information given above.

The National Policy for Women’s Development and Empowerment, promulgated in 2002, acknowledges women’s disadvantaged position and is aimed at empowering women irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Among its primary objectives is to remove inequalities, protect women’s human rights and to eliminate negative customary practices. That custom is a major barrier for women’s exercise of rights is now acknowledged at all levels of policy in Pakistan, however, steps to address the barrier have proven to be ineffective so far. The executing agency for the National Policy is the Ministry for Women Development, one of the weaker ministries with inadequate manpower and capacity.

Its mandate is to ensure that gender concerns are integrated into all line ministries. It has initiated a major reform program for making this possible in all provinces (Gender Reform and Action Plan). Women’s land rights or access to resources has not been taken up directly by it yet and nor does it seem to be on its horizon.

The permanent National Commission on the Status of Women, a statutory body, was established in 2000 to act as a watchdog to monitor government policies and advocate reforms to improve women’s status and situation in Pakistan. The creation of NCSW as a quasi autonomous body was a result of almost two decades of campaigning by women’s rights activists, and while it does not have the powers that activists were demanding (e.g. to adjudicate, to report directly to the parliament, greater autonomy, etc.) it nevertheless has undertaken research on the issue of inheritance as well as carried out an extensive review of the Hudood Ordinances (among other burning issues like women’s share in public employment)

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13 Ibid.
14 National Policy for Women’s Empowerment and Development. GOP. 2002
and campaigned vociferously for its repeal.\textsuperscript{15} On inheritance NCSW advocacy thrust is for policy and legal reforms to secure women’s existing rights.

Credit is one of the measures actively promoted by the government in recent years for addressing poverty in the country especially for creating income generating opportunities for women. Recognising that women do not possess land or any other form of collateral several group guarantee schemes have been introduced, through banks like the Khushali Bank (especially set up for provision of micro-credit to the poor), the First Women Bank, Pakistan Agriculture Development Bank, special institutions like the Poverty Alleviation Action Fund (PAAF), and NGOs (Kashf, Rural Support Programmes), and have gradually expanded their net of services. In 2005, micro-credit to women formed 36 percent of PAAF’s disbursement, and 22.5 percent of the borrowers of the Khushali Bank were women. Evidence in Pakistan so far is that micro-credit does not always reach the poorest and often credit accessed by women is meant for family enterprises or use and is not necessarily in their control. However the impact study of Kashf’s programme revealed that even though loans are given for family enterprises the fact that these come via women enhances their position in the household. The role of micro-credit in asset creation for women and its impact on their decision making needs to be further investigated as also its impact on women’s decision making.\textsuperscript{16} In any case so far no formal data or studies exist to provide evidence of micro credit influencing poverty.

\section*{2.3 Customary rights}

Rubya Mehdi’s \textit{Gender and Property Law in Pakistan, Resources and Discourses}, is perhaps the only study that examines systematically the situation on the ground regarding women and property laws in Pakistan. Through seven case studies each in all four provinces of Pakistan Mehdi finds that there is a history of usufructuary rights exercised by women in the country’s rural areas, a finding that was corroborated by the Pakistan PPA in its study of the causes of poverty in Pakistan. Defined as, "the right to the use, and to take the fruits of land for life only"\textsuperscript{17} usufructuary rights exist in different forms starting from communal land, to a woman’s right to the house and land of her parents. The dependence in rural areas on common property resources for food and housing is high, especially for the poor. Women, as members of the village community thus have had grazing and gathering rights on these lands.

In her study Rubya Medhi reveals the differences and similarities across the country, in relation to women’s access and control to land. Usufructuary rights established through practice over time are not regulated by law anywhere but recognized in all four provinces, especially like the right of residence in father’s or husband’s land for single, widowed, or divorced women and protection during their lifetime. If the father is dead this responsibility implicitly devolves upon brothers. In NWFP women’s usufructuary rights are recognized not only in the natal family but also her husband’s house, and in Punjab elderly women are ensured protection and security in their son’s home. Mehdi concludes that these rights are extremely important for women but represent only the right to maintenance and fall short of ownership.

\textsuperscript{15} A private members Bill to amend the law was finally admitted for debate in parliament in 2005 and is now with a standing committee of the National Assembly (lower house). In the meantime a Government Bill to amend the law was tabled in the National Assembly on August 21, 2006.

\textsuperscript{16} For a detailed discussion on this with reference to recent studies on the subject see, Khawar Mumtaz, \textit{Gender and Poverty in Pakistan.} ADB, Islamabad, 2005

\textsuperscript{17} Rubya Mehdi, \textit{Gender and Property Law in Pakistan, Resources and Discourses.} 2002, Page 25
As stated above, these rights are accepted and applicable unless superseded by a new law. However, the institutions managing common properties (where common interest determines the usage) have weakened over the years, to the extent that they neither effectively manage nor have control over them. Often they collude with local powerful elements and permit the appropriation of such property. There are also instances like the allotment of the forest to members of the displaced community after an India Pakistan war (PPA Punjab) which then cut down the forest. Other instances exist of common property being used for setting up a community school or service which while of significance to the community as a whole nevertheless reduces women’s access to those resources that were previously available on that land. A combination of poor governance, widespread corruption, ineffective implementation of law, as well as degradation of natural resources through indiscriminate usage, has certainly restricted the space for women.

From the perspective of livelihoods the right to land and access to it for cultivation, pasture and other usable natural resources is critical from the perspective of the poor and landless. In one instance reported in Mehdi’s study about NWFP, women were found to have customary rights to collect firewood form the mountain. In Punjab access to women is available in shamlat dah, i.e. the village common land. This includes pasture, uncultivated lands, the inhabited village site, and the goradeh (vacant space) reserved for expansion of the village. The PPA study also revealed access to commons where women were able to graze their animals, collect fuel and other natural resources (reeds, herbs, etc.) across the provinces. Access to water sources is also a customary right available to women for domestic use, drinking and livestock, though they sometimes have to walk distances to get potable water from springs or agricultural tube wells, one and a half to two km in the case of women e.g. in the village in Khanewal in South Punjab and even further in arid Sindh and Balochistan.

However, this space is getting restricted due to misappropriation of common property resources by the local powerful people, its take over by the government, changing agricultural practices, overexploitation of natural resources, or natural disasters like floods or droughts, and the recent earthquake in northern Pakistan. The allotment in south Punjab of the state forest to an India-Pakistan conflict displaced community (mid-60’s) who did not belong to the area led to the cutting down and selling of the entire lot of trees, with damaging consequences for the environment and livelihoods of the poor, particularly for women for whom the forest was an accessible free source of much needed fuel and medicinal herbs. Similarly, the restriction of entry to state forests like in Khanewal left poor village women in the vicinity deprived of fuel wood which in the face of the high price of kerosene oil was their major energy source for cooking. They reported resorting to poaching wood after dark and when caught had to suffer punishments from forest guards.

In Balochistan, the PPA found that the kind of free access that local people had to mountains and natural resources some ten to twenty years ago is no longer available. Their livelihoods depended on these resources particularly the wild bushes they cut and sold. And while local people still lay social claim to these resources they were finding access increasingly difficult as mountains had been allotted to rich people who now denied the use of natural resources to the poor except for grazing livestock. Similarly, with changing patterns of cropping from traditional maize to commercial vegetables and general denudation of forests and undercover in NWFP has resulted in a substantial decrease in livestock holding. As women usually manage and look

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18 PPA Punjab Report
after livestock and have some control over its produce they find themselves left without an asset.

Many other instances abound like the establishment of the Fisheries Department with the authority to exercise control over the river’s resources that customarily were available to local people. Fishing licenses were introduced that were invariably given to powerful outside contractors leading to the marginalization of the fishing communities along the rivers and curtailment of rights. In the case of Maliwal, a village in Central Punjab while fishing was not a principle activity of women they were closely involved in associated tasks and felt unprepared for the shift to alternative agricultural work.

3. **Barriers to Women’s Access to and Control over Land**

3.1. **Law versus Customary Practices**

Shirkat Gah’s field based study, *Chart of Customary Practices in Pakistan in Comparison with Statutory Laws* clearly shows that although the Constitution of Pakistan gives women the legal right to own property, in reality customary practices dictate what women are allowed to own and their right to inheritance is easily evaded. It found that according to customary practice, generally in all the four provinces of Pakistan, women do not inherit property and widows customarily lose their right to inheritance if they remarry outside the family of the deceased husband even though the law prescribes a prompt division of the deceased’s assets and the widow’s right to her share.

In Sindh, property is rarely in a woman’s name. Only, if there is no male member in a family, or if the son is very young, a woman may manage land through a kamdar or agent. Here a woman’s dowry is considered to be a compensation for her inheritance except in Thar, the remote desert region of Sindh, where some of the women inherit property. The above study found it equally rare for women in Balochistan to own or control property except for older women who sometimes have a say in the use or sale of property and women do not inherit if there is a male offspring. But where there are no males, some tribes like the Hazaras, provide for women’s inheritance though the control remains in the hands of uncles. Where in isolated instances women are given land, the property is always outside tribal lands.

In NWFP too in the presence of a male offspring females do not inherit land neither is there a tradition of inheriting immovable property from the father except in some areas (Dera Ismail Khan, Mardan and Swabi) where in rare cases, daughters are given a share in moveable and immovable property. However, women can own land as rawaji malika, when as part of the marriage contract a groom transfers some property to the woman that he either has or is due to inherit. In these cases, men manage and decide about the land but cannot sell it. Often this is a transaction on paper only. A recent judgment of the Peshawar High Court where the evasion of the rawaji malika was challenged by a divorced woman ordered that either the property pledged be given to the woman or an equivalent amount assessed at current market rates be paid to her.

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20 Shirkat Gah’s findings in Maliwal village where it works in partnership with the local women’s organization.
In Punjab inheritance plays out in a variety of ways. Women in general may inherit property but are not permitted a say regarding its usage or income. In case of only female offspring, immovable property is very rarely transferred to women except in a handful of very rich families. On the other hand in the same category of people dowry is expected to compensate for landed property which is not given to women. In other cases daughters may receive a share in property after the mother’s share has been deducted. It was also found that female control of property is restricted to widows and economic control possible only under specific circumstances (e.g. minor children, disabled household head). Exceptionally, the practice of transferring property by the rich (men) in the names of wife or daughter (or even son) to avoid taxes is quite established. In such cases (known as benami, literally “nameless”) the papers are kept by the person who is making the transfer and he retains full control over the property. A woman’s chance of owning and controlling property in the benami situation is tenuous until the man dies and she actually inherits the property. Benami transfers are often used to deprive certain members of the family from inheritance. While subject to challenge in court mala fide intentions are difficult to prove.23

Another widespread practice is of forfeiture of the inheritance share by women in favour of their brothers or sons often through force. Social pressures are so strong, that women are alienated by their own family, and even women within their family. The fear of putting kinship relations at stake prevents them from claiming inheritance. In the absence of protective measures women generally rely on the parental home and brothers in times of need (bad marriage, illness, economic pressure) and therefore forgo their share in property as insurance for the future. Shirkat Gah in its field work found that a broken relationship with brothers (the bond between brothers and sisters is romanticized and exalted) is seen as affecting their children’s marriages (as marriages within the kin relationships are preferred) and could also lead to ostracisation by the extended family. Divorced women are known to give up their dower in order to enhance the share of their sons in inheritance.24

Even those who under specific custom, like among the Hazaras and settlers in Balochistan, can inherit parent’s property feel compelled to surrender their share under social pressure. According to Rubya Mehdi’s study, in most cases women’s names are registered in the property transfer papers on inheritance, but in practice they do not get the land. The case studies in her book give examples of women’s names having been entered as owners on paper, but with the understanding that the brothers would take the land, and the sisters would receive in return a share of the harvest, or gifts from their natal family. In rural Punjab, it is also not uncommon for brothers to enter into an understanding with the patwari (land revenue official) to not include the sisters’ names under the pretext that they have surrendered their share. Otherwise as soon as a woman’s name has been entered in the transfer papers, a gift is made in favour of the brothers. The courts have now made it mandatory for women to appear in person to submit an affidavit (signed legal document) declaring that they have not been forced to forfeit their share. The extent to which this decision is being followed needs to be investigated.

Among extreme practices is the practice of haq bakhshwana (giving up rights, literally) whereby girls are either never married, or married to the Quran as in southern parts of Punjab (Multan and Bahawalpur) and of Sindh in order to prevent property going out of the family. Similarly cousin marriages and watta satta (exchange marriage whereby one set of brother and sister are married to another) marriages are designed to prevent break up of property as the size of land and property is associated with power and status.

24 Shirkat Gah field team
There are also situations on the other hand when the property is not very large, and a woman feels that dividing it further would be of no use to anybody and therefore decides not to exercise her inheritance right. Or in instances of disputes especially when parties go into litigation inheritance settlements, as stated earlier, can stretch over years.

Information from members of Shirkat Gah’s field team reaffirms the above. Where women do own land it is not always looked after by themselves. Usually someone else in the family takes care of it. If it is a substantial piece of property she employs people for dealing with details like accessing water. In addition the team reported that women actually want to receive their share and feel bad about not claiming it (although there were also some women who took pride in stating that they had given up their share of inheritance). Mostly however, women do not consider dowries as being equal to inheritance. In their view if they were to receive gold instead of bedding, furniture, clothes or crockery as dowry it would give them greater negotiating and decision making powers. Women also highlighted the hypocrisy of their male relations who restrict women’s mobility and enforce segregation but at the time of inheritance don’t mind taking them to the land revenue office, in front of strange males, to sign on papers to forfeit their inheritance right or gift their share.

During the research for this study, not many successful cases of agency were found, i.e. instances where women have been able to negotiate for land rights effectively except where women have gone to court and succeeded in getting inheritance. The latter course, is often pursued by a woman’s male relative and only occasionally on her own. Legal procedures are complex and complicated, and the duration of a case may go beyond the litigant’s lifetime. The law lays no restrictions on women for claiming rights as defined by Islamic law (the Family Laws Ordinance). In fact the courts have been very sympathetic to women’s claims even if they have come years after the death of the person they were to inherit from. In addition, the costs of such suits (court fees, lawyers, copies of papers etc.) are prohibitive. Added to these is the cost of travel to capital cities where superior courts sit, both the expenses and the actual travel is a constraint for women. Above all women are not aware of how the law operates, what their share in inheritance is, and where and how revenue records are kept. It is not uncommon to have female names removed at the instigation of male inheritors. There are procedures for getting this reversed but are cumbersome and compounded by corruption.

3.2. Other Impediments

Women’s lack of information about legal, economic or political rights, violence that is imbedded in customary practices, absence of available and accessible protection and justice to women, and restricted mobility collectively deny women opportunities of owning and accessing assets and resources. A very important barrier for women is their lack of knowledge about their rights under the law. As stated above they do not understand the nature of land registration systems, papers, transaction procedures nor processes involved in taking possession of land or retaining their share. Equally they are not aware of judicial recourse that is available to them. The courts have set important precedents to ensure that women are not denied their due rights. A 40-year review of superior court cases related to women’s inheritance reflected that courts have by and large been sympathetic but the cases were few and far between.

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26 Opcit. Kamran Arif and Shaheen Sardar Ali, in Shaping Women’s Lives
Living in a highly segregated social system women are not equipped to deal with tenants, sale of produce, or reach the land if it is at a distance. Managing land also means dealing with the patwari (the land revenue official) who keeps and manages land records and is one of the most corrupt individual in Pakistan’s administrative system. For single women the situation is compounded as they are not clear whether they are being compensated for their rights of maintenance, or receiving inheritance. The fact that different institutional arms of the government lack co-ordination works to the disadvantage of women. For instance the Union Councils where the records of the nikah (marriage) registrar are kept has no linkage with the revenue department where land ownership records are kept. It is therefore easy for a man to hide the provisions of transfer of property to a woman at the time of marriage and evade giving her the promised share. Brothers are known to have produced succession documents in the revenue department without the names of sisters and cheat them out of their inheritance because of the lack of information sharing between departments.

Women’s mobility is yet another barrier that mediates women’s access or control over land and resources. Maliha Khan Tirmazi in her study investigating women’s mobility in an irrigated area of South Punjab, points to the practical problems of getting permission to leave the house and the restrictions of purdah (seclusion) to physically get to the land. However, the same women can leave their homes to fetch water without any restrictions, a fact that highlights the contradiction in the rules governing women’s movement in the family unit and underscores women’s role as a service provider being perceived as acceptable while that with the potential of autonomy as not.27 Similarly, whereas women are the principle managers and users of potable water at the domestic level and affected by its accessibility, they are not allowed to participate in the local Water Users Associations. These social and practical barriers, according to Tirmazi, make it almost impossible for women to own and control land and by extension have decision making powers.

The law does not make a distinction between male and female once ownership is established with regard to accessing water or other resources. Since women are by and large not the tillers of land the challenge of access to irrigation water is not something they have to confront. They however, have to face the challenge of getting water for their domestic chores and drinking, and of fetching fuel and fodder. These resources usually are accessible under customary rights which prevail unless some legal provision overrides them. As far as water users associations and women’s participation is concerned the fact that these do not include water for domestic usage within its ambit women are not interested in sitting in such associations despite provision for their participation.

Violence and fear of violence are equally potent realities that constrain women. Castigated for violating cultural norms e.g. of mobility, speaking to men outside the family, going to the market, not servicing the family, can invite physical abuse and can even result in the loss of life for a woman. Property disputes are often at the root of violence against women and a number of crimes against women in the name of so-called honour are to appropriate property or deny share in inheritance.28 Even when women work for wages to augment household incomes (women’s entry in the informal sector is a widely adopted strategy for poor households) women have limited control over their earnings, their household division of labour remains unchanged and they suffer from the double burden.

27 Maliha Khan Tirmazi, Land, Water and Gendered Motilities in Pakistan: Exploring the Contradictions. 1999
28 Shirkt Gah, The Dark Side of Honour
Socially excluded groups like the landless and service providers at the village level are further isolated from public assets and decision-making arenas. Lubna Chaudhry’s in-depth enquiry in six sites of rural Punjab and Sindh focuses on power relations that “marginalize, silence, and oppress the poor, thereby perpetuating poverty” and brings out the “specificities of women’s experiences.” In the study Chaudhry captures the complexity of people’s lives including gender relations in the household, their class and social position as these link with the operation of state and market institutions locally as well as nationally. For instance, women from better off households are able to exercise control over their lands but do not participate in elections as it is not honourable to do so, while poor women, those without family and social backing are unable to keep what is legally theirs from male relatives. But a “kammi” caste woman is put up to contest local elections and is returned because the powerful in the village so decided. Similarly “powerlessness” of women is further accentuated as they are either excluded by not possessing national identity cards or being forced to turn the cards over to the landlord.29

Finally it is indeed the nature of power structures that determines the extent of women’s exclusion, or for that matter inclusion, as the above study demonstrates. In the rural areas of Pakistan land is owned and controlled by wealthy feudal families. Land owners, zamindars, sardar’s, or waderas, have tremendous power over the rural poor as well as what is accessible to them especially water. The relationship is exploitative, aggressive, and oppressive. Men and women in areas such as Mirpurkhas, who work on the land as haris or bonded labour, have no rights at all despite legislation that bans bondage. Access to water was often in the control of the landlords and was seen as an instrument of power over the rural poor. The relationship between the landless who work as tied labourers and the sharecroppers (who share the inputs to the landlord’s land and get a share in the harvest) with the landlord while a longstanding one is also an unequal one leading to generations of dependence and bondage. Women in these situations end up working as domestic help in the landlord’s homes and are subject to sexual abuse and violence.

“Control over land, plants, animals and crops rests with the landowners. The landless have no control over these resources. The access of the landless and poor to resources is very limited and depends on the permission of landlords. For example, potters (kumhars) who are landless and belong to a very poor category need clay for making pitchers. When they need clay, they have to request the landowner’s permission to get it from their land. The landlords, in return for permission, can demand as many pitchers or pots as they want”30.

“The crop is not much, and whatever there is, the Zamindar has a right to it. The Zamindar deducts the cost of fertilizer, seeds, water and the tractor. The tenants do all the hard work and the Zamindar has rights over the yield. At the end the tenant gets one or two bags of wheat only”31.

29 Getting National Identity Cards that are needed for voting in elections, accessing credit, opening bank accounts emerged as a major issue among poor women in the Transformative Social Protection study referred to above.
30 Landless and the lack of power in Yarik, District Dera Ismail Khan, PPA NWFP Report, Government of Pakistan, 2002
31 A woman of Gharibabad Mohalla, District Sanghar, PPA Sindh Report, Government of Pakistan, 2002
4. Key Organizations Working on Women and Land/Resource Tenure

For this study the authors first did a search of literature related to the subject of the study (list of institutions visited and individuals interviewed attached as Annex) and then followed up with interviews with those who had either taken up the issue or mentioned their intent to work on it. In addition they spoke to women’s organizations working with rural women at the grassroots level, others whose work we are aware of and Shirkat Gah’s staff and field team in its Women Law and Status programme. The paper reflects what various organizations (by typology) are doing. None of the research institutions is currently engaged in research on women and land rights. The only ones gearing up and planning to undertake it are Roots for Equity, Thardeep and SDPI.

It needs to be reiterated here that women’s land rights have not received much attention in Pakistan. Despite a fairly large body of literature on agriculture, land use, soil, water and its distribution, land reforms, etc. which fails to mention women. Women’s rights activist have focused more on making women’s work in agriculture visible and have agitated for the inclusion of their work as unpaid family workers in the country’s official data. Under MFLO greater focus has been on women’s rights in marriage (choice, divorce, custody of children, etc.). NCSW is not incorrect in its assessment that women’s inheritance rights are one of the most ignored gender issues become of biased interpretations of the law, and deeply entrenched patriarchal customary practices. Further the lack of political will to implement laws contributes to the perpetuation of existing social structures. In fact the land rights discourse has not entered mainstream women’s rights debates in civil society or political parties; the activists’ concern too, to the extent it is expressed has been with existing provisions of the law and getting them implemented. Furthermore, there are organizations working on the rights of bonded labour but the issue of land rights is not a priority as getting rid of the bondage is more important.

In recent years however the role of social structures in keeping sections of people marginalized on the basis of their ethnicity, caste, religion or occupation has begun to be highlighted with the need for changing existing power relations. Voices for land reforms as well as asset building for the poor are now being raised including women’s asset building and ownership. Land reforms however are not on the government’s agenda as clearly stated by officials in high position, e.g. the Prime Minister.

4.1. Aurat Foundation

Nuzhat Shireen Regional Coordinator AF was interviewed. AF is a leading women’s rights and advocacy organization with a particular focus on women’s political participation. The organization in 1999-2000 developed a number of suggestions for women politicians as measures for women’s empowerment to include in their election manifestos. This was in response to government’s move at the time to distribute land to the peasants. AF raised the issue that women be included in the scheme and receive half the share in the distributed land or at least be given joint ownership. It proposed that marginalized women, widows and single women should get property rights when they become heads of households. AF’s position was premised on the belief that ownership of land would lead to securing economic rights and the security of property would reduce women’s vulnerability.

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32 Women’s Right to Inheritance and its Implementation, National Commission on the Status of Women, 2005
33 Khawar Mumtaz, Reducing the Gender Gap/Engendering PRSP II. UNDP. May 2006
AF also initiated a signature campaign on the issue, publicized it through the media and sent the suggestions to the government and political parties before the elections of 2002 (see Annex) that asked for:

- the inclusion of women in government’s land distribution schemes;
- strict enforcement of inheritance laws and registration of property in the name of women;
- legislation to ensure that women’s share in all properties and assets acquired by spouses after marriage is legally recognized and secured for her;
- land reforms and imposition of progressively scaled agricultural income tax;
- redistribution of available arable land to landless peasants ensuring half the recipients were women or had joint title deeds with men.

Some parties agreed in principle. Pakistan Peoples Party - Shaheed Bhutto (a splinter of the mainstream Pakistan Peoples Party) added that peasant women should have access to easy loans and be trained to operate agricultural machinery. Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) suggested that fertilizer, seeds and subsidies should be made available to women. Nuzhat felt that the issue in spite of the above effort has not received due attention from civil society or the grassroots and there is not enough awareness about it. The issues identified by her were of feudal structures and waderas and zamindars who are opposed to women’s empowerment. In Nuzhat’s view mobilization on this issue is possible by providing information to political parties and by building pressure for legislation. The ground work however will have to be done by NGOs.

4.2. Pattan Tarraqiati Tanzeem

Dr. Farzana Bari was spoken to about Pattan’s work around women’s land rights. The organization works with riverine communities of south Punjab and was involved with the rehabilitation of flood affected people following the flood of 1992. At the time through its lobbying it managed to get official funds for the repair of flood destroyed homes to be given jointly to male and female heads of households -- probably one of the first successes of this kind. Pattan has pushed for joint ownership of property in other disaster areas but without success.

4.3. Roots for Equity

An organization working on land rights in the villages of Sindh, Roots has done some landmark research on globalization and its impact on women, especially female workers in sunflower farms in Sindh. The organisation has been involved in awareness-raising about women’s rights as women have no rights to land, have some control over livestock but more in name than reality, and do not have access to credit. With the increase in the cost of production of agricultural items like fuel and water the small farmer is being driven out of livelihood and forced to migrate. In Pakistan out migration in search of jobs is quite common. Usually males go out to cities and towns and seasonally to richer agricultural areas largely as menial, unskilled labour. Women are left behind and have to bear the burden of looking after the family and their needs. Roots is planning to initiate an experimental project where it wants to lease two acre plots of land in two villages and turn them over to women to manage on their own. It wants to study the dynamics at the local level if poor women have total control over the land.

4.3. Shirkat Gah
Shirkat Gah’s teams in Karachi and Lahore offices were asked to share their experience with reference to women’s land rights. Some of it is incorporated in the analysis in earlier sections. Shirkat Gah in its Women Law and Status programme focuses on women’s legal rights specifically those related to personal laws (covered under MFLO). It works with local women’s community based organizations to, on the one hand, understand the complexity of personal law issues as they affect women in different local/regional contexts and on the other to build capacity of local organisations through information sharing on rights (especially filling of the marriage contract), training in legal and negotiation skills, and provision of legal aid in select cases. The information and learning from the field feeds into SG’s policy advocacy. Property and land rights have been the subject of discussion in the field with reference to inheritance. As mentioned in the sections above women are very perturbed by the denial of inheritance and one of the communities near Sukkur (Sindh) had asked for a special session on inheritance from the legal and Islamic point of view as far back as 1998.

Additionally, the experience from the field shows that women are not valued in fact land is seen to be more valuable than a woman. The common perception is that land, water, animals and even women themselves are the property of men. In Sindh women’s lack of knowledge is used to deny their rights by saying that Quran does not give women the right to own land. Women work and labour on the land, they look after livestock but are not permitted to drink more than a cup of milk; and in many instances payment for wage work is received by men. Women’s lack of control even when they get ownership is exemplified by the case supported by SG in Sanghar (1995) where a girl filed a civil suit for land rights and won and exercises control over the land. But the community declared her “too strong” and no one was prepared to marry her. She remains unmarried to date. In another case in Rahim Yar Khan (Punjab) a woman who became head of household due to the death of her husband gave her daughters land but her kinship network disapproved and was upset by her action.

Positively, SG’s legal awareness and legal literacy programmes have had some results. In a large number of its work areas parents now seriously fill out the marriage certificate (nikah nama) ensuring that all clauses are filled and women protected in marriage. In Swabi, a very conservative area of NWFP where there is no concept of women’s right to ownership of land, information about the legal right of women to inherit land led to the father of one of the trainees to give a share from his inheritance to his sisters and mother. Relatives and community members were again not pleased. Moreover SG’s research and evidence from the field shows that whenever women have approached the courts for protection of inheritance rights the courts have given a positive response. However, the number of cases being brought to the courts is very limited, only 100 reported cases from 1947 to 1992. Women do not have the wherewithal, do not know judicial procedures, and do not receive support for such action. As the field teams reported women feel that it would alienate them from their families, embarrass brothers and family members and affect their children’s future due to withdrawal of family support.

In this scenario the only potential space for women is widespread awareness raising regarding land rights among women (and also men so that they are moved to giving women their due share.) The other is to support community based organizations through legal literacy so that they can take up women’s cases in their communities. Shirkat Gah’s capacity building of CBO’s has lead to a young widow receiving her share in her husband’s property ( in village Maliwal, District Sheikhupura). One member of the local CBO whose members has undergone paralegal training took up her case with support of Shirkat Gah. The revenue records did not contain her dead husband’s name as one of the successors in his father’s property when the latter died.

34 Opcit. Kamran Arif and Shaheen Sardar Ali
The name was included and she finally received her share. Local level pursuit in this case created moral pressure on the family as she was a young widow with a child and her parental family was very poor.

4.4. Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)

Dr. Saba Khattak Executive Director of SDPI was interviewed after we learnt that the institute was planning research on women and land rights. SDPI primarily engages in policy research including women centred research. Recognising that there is little information on women’s right to land SDPI in collaboration with Action Aid is at the stage of defining the research. They would like to establish the situation on the ground, initially by conducting a literature review, study of policies and research, the correlation between empowerment and land ownership in different geographical locations e.g. mountainous, coastal, plains, with reference to the value of land and inheritance rights of women. SDPI is interested in having this paper shared with them.

4.5. Thardeep Rural Development Programme

Farzana Saleem, the General Manager, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research, was interviewed. She has conducted a study on land rights in Tharparkar, the desert area of Sindh. The organization felt gaps in information with reference to their work about land ownership, the status of common property grazing lands (livestock is the mainstay of the local population that has traditionally been pastoral), and other related matters and was therefore prompted to undertake the research. The study covers both men and women and is based on old records from the British times. Women of the area, like their counterparts in most of Sindh collect fodder and fetch water but do not have rights over the land they work on, nor ownership of livestock though they take care of it. Tharddeep wants to use the findings of its research for its social mobilization work and will share it widely once it is published.

4.6. Other organizations

Discussions with the Anjuman Mazariain Punjab that spearheaded the movement for tenancy rights in the Military owned Okara dairy farms (Punjab) and where women were in the forefront of militant action revealed that the struggle has looked at tenancy rights from the perspective of the household where the tenancy agreement is in the name of the male head of the household. On the death of the house hold head the agreement is transferred in the name of the son. According to Meher Abdul Sattar of AMP they have not had a situation where there was no male in the household to take on tenancy responsibilities. Bandhar Hari Sangat, in Sindh works on the issue of bonded labour and not on land rights as their primary focus is on release of labour from private jails, violence and abuse of women, and displacement when they try to escape bondage. Sindhiani Tehrik, women’s wing of a nationalist political party of Sindh and very active on women’s rights issues said that land rights have not been on their agenda while other women’s rights issues like political participation, mobility, etc. were. South Asia Partnership-Pakistan, is a development organization working in rural areas across Pakistan and is engaged in group formation, social mobilization and advocacy for the rights of the marginal and deprived. It has been focusing on the rights of the landless and agricultural wage labourers. While very interested in the gender dimension of this section it is in preliminary stages of planning research on women among the landless.

35 Like Lubna Chaudhry’s study mentioned in this paper.
5. **Conclusions**

5.1. **Key issues:**

To sum up, the above review clearly shows that women's land rights are inextricably linked with access and control of assets. The key issues that emerge from the above review are:

- perception of women’s place in society and the prevalent social structures that perpetuate unequal relationships and prevent the poor and marginalized generally, and women in particular from getting their due rights;
- customary practices that get reinforced by social structures and restrict women’s mobility, keep her secluded and deny her rights which have no basis in law but often have primacy over it;
- women’s lack of control despite ownership of land or resources;
- women's lack of autonomy and dependency on male members of the family;
- widespread lack of awareness and knowledge about women’s land rights both among men and women and absence of social legitimacy of the right;
- weaknesses, corruption and long drawn procedures in the implementation of law;
- discriminatory laws like the *Hudood* Ordinances that undermine women’s space for action and reaffirm her secondary status;
- inadequate support structures/mechanisms for women's protection when they claim their rights which under current situations can invite physical threats;
- the absence of political will to address the issue among politicians and policy makers;
- not enough empirical data for lobbying and advocacy.

5.2. **Suggested strategies:**

Within the context of the multi-layered social structures women in Pakistan are struggling to find a place for themselves. The complex situation of women’s land rights and access to resources and tenure demand multiple strategies that can lead to the removal of social barriers, enhance capabilities, and increase opportunities. From the civil society perspective initiatives are required that on the one hand highlight prevailing inequity and injustice and on the other lead to pressure on the government, parliamentarians and policy makers for action. Among measures that may be taken are:

- research and generation of baseline information for effective advocacy where data gaps exist like the pattern of male-female land ownership, its impact on intra household division of labour, resources and decision making; the role of micro-credit in asset creation for women and its impact on their decision making; and the extent to which favourable interventions/decisions of courts are followed, etc..

- initiation of debate and discussion with policy makers, media, forums/NGO networks and elected representatives especially local government councilors towards creating social legitimacy for women’s land rights, inheritance, and control over resources;
• raising awareness about women’s rights in general under the law among both men and women and specifically about the rights relating to assets and their control (like wages, livestock and its products, inheritance, etc.);

• strengthening organizations already working on land rights and supporting innovative initiatives like the pilot project to see the impact of women’s control and decision making over land;

• developing a network of organizations with interest in land rights issues to draw up advocacy strategies to legitimize women’s asset ownership and access;

• working towards building women’s agency through mobilization, enhancing organizational capacity, and providing relevant information;

• lobbying for minimum wages for women’s work to be paid directly to them; joint ownership of land in government’s land transfer schemes; land reforms and land redistribution with half the titles for women; creation of off farm employment opportunities; towards asset creation;

• building women’s capacity for economic autonomy through skill development; micro finance (rather than micro-credit) which includes management and marketing training;

5.3. Key agencies

The above review shows that from among the official agencies that are looking at women’s right of land/property the NCSW is perhaps the most active. Superior judiciary has been the other institution sympathetic to women albeit few women have the capacity or wherewithal to reach the courts. The civil society organizations can be clustered under the following categories:

• Those directly engaged with women in rural areas: Roots and Thardeep with reference to land rights and Shirkat Gah in the wider framework of women’s rights.

• Research organizations: Roots, Thardeep and Shirkat Gah combine research with grassroots level work. SDPI is a major policy research institute.

• Advocacy organizations: Aurat Foundation, SAP-PK, Shirkat Gah and SDPI all engage in advocacy.

There are many other human and women’s rights organizations like the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Women’s Action Forum (that is responsible for getting women’s rights on the national agenda), SUNGI Development Foundation, Pattan and research institutions like Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Social Policy Development Centre, Applied Economic Research Centre, The Collective for Social Research, Lahore University of Management Sciences, among others would be interested in taking the issue forward. The creation of a thematic network could potentially have a far reaching effect.

5.4 Priorities for IRDC
A broad range of possible strategies are listed in the section above, of these the ones that IDRC can support as priorities are given below.

- **Supporting research** to establish baseline information regarding the pattern of male female land ownership, the extent to which they exercise control and have a say over decisions. Other possible area of research would be to investigate the barriers that impede seeking redress from courts and implementation of favourable interventions/decisions of courts.

- **Carry out** in depth interviews of randomly selected five to seven women who own land in different locations about how they manage the land, what obstacles they face, the impact of owning and managing land on their lives, and other insights. The findings can the be shared in a conference to begin a campaign on the issue.

- **Supporting innovative initiatives** like the Roots’ pilot project, to see the impact of women’s control and decision making over land.

- **Supporting** the development of information material, for raising awareness, about women’s rights relating to land / assets and their control (like wages, livestock, and its products, inheritance etc.) and inclusion of the issue of women’s land rights as part of their ongoing campaigns.

- **Supporting** the development of an advocacy network on women’s land rights to strategise for the legitimization of women’s asset, ownership and access, and initiate debate and discussion with policy makers, elected representatives, at all tiers, NGO’s, and media towards.
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• Manifesto Suggestions for Women’s Empowerment, (for political parties). Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation. 2002

Annex 1

Women’s Land Rights in Pakistan: Institutions Contacted

The institutions listed below were visited for their research on social issues, women’s rights and/or work in rural areas with women as well as local communities.

1. Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER), Karachi: This organisation is not exclusively working on women land rights but participates in general land rights movements, such as the Okara movement.

2. Pakistan Women Layers Association (PAWLA), Karachi: PWLA provides legal aid and legal awareness to women, but does not have any written information on land rights.

3. Roots For Equity, Karachi: It plans to work on women land rights in the future.


5. Thardeep Rural Development Program: Thardeep has completed a study in Thar on women’s land rights but this is not yet published.

6. Bandhar Hari Sangat, Karachi: It is working on land rights in general, and do not have any written reports.

7. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Karachi & Lahore: HRCP is not working on women’s land rights. HRCP undertakes activities in the areas of awareness, monitoring, activist mobilization, lobbying, agitation, and interventions in courts against rights violation and deprivation. HRCP works with bonded labour, in Sindh. It was visited to see if they had any information on women’s land rights, since they work with landless peasants.

8. Lawyers for Human Rights & Legal Aid (LHRLA), Karachi: It is not working on women’s land rights. LHRLA works on juvenile justice, child abuse, trafficking in women and children, harassment of women, crisis intervention and counseling, Hudood Ordinances, legal aid, legal education, jail reforms, and paralegal training. It was visited to see if they had ever taken on cases regarding women’s rights to property.

9. Pakistan Fisher Folk Forum, Karachi: Generally working on fisherman and fisherwomen’s rights. The PFFF has been active in awareness, mobilization, and community organization for the protection and sustainable management of fisheries, and other community livelihoods. It was visited to find out if they focused on the issue of women’s rights to natural resources.

10. Indus Resource Centre (IRC), Karachi: The organisation is not working on women’s land rights. It was felt that it may have information on women and land rights as IRC works on participatory governance, education and literacy, economic initiatives, and natural resources.
management. IRC is based in interior Sindh, and was visited because it has worked with marginalized communities in rural Sindh.
Annex 2

AURAT Foundation's Manifesto for Women’s Empowerment - 2002

The Manifesto recommended the following for inclusion in political parties’ election manifestos:

- Increase women’s access to ownership and control of assets, particularly government distributed land and property, through the registration of title-deeds of all state-land allotted for lease or housing schemes, jointly in the names of husband and wife, and in the case of female headed households to the woman.

- Register property inherited by women, particularly in the rural areas, in their names and strictly enforce inheritance laws, ensure that inheritance cases of widows and orphans are taken up on priority basis by courts and settled expeditiously.

- Introduce legislation to ensure that a woman’s share in all property and assets acquired by the spouses after marriage (excluding her inherited property, marital gifts and other dues from her husband) is legally recognized and secured for her in case of divorce or death of husband.

- In the rural areas, political parties should carry out land reforms and impose progressively-scaled agricultural income tax, ensuring that peasant women benefit equally with men from the revenues.

- Redistribute available arable state land to landless peasants, ensuring that half the recipients are women, or are joint title deed holders with men within a household or family unit. Where they are women-headed households, they will have sole title deed to state distributed land and housing initiatives under various poverty reduction and agricultural development programmes.