

**THE IMPACT OF LAND CONVERSION ON WOMEN  
AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS\***  
**The Case of Pavia, Iloilo Province**

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**ABSTRACT**

Several studies have been undertaken to examine the impact and implications of land conversion in the Philippines. However, minimal attempts have been taken so far to tackle the issue from an intra-household perspective, more specifically how gender relations and division of work within the household change in response to development strategies (such as land conversion).

This exploratory study strives to fill this gap and put a human face to the development process by utilizing qualitative analysis to compare the conditions of women and their households before and after land conversion. It is based on a premise that a household is not a homogeneous unit. In particular, this study: (1) describes the magnitude of land conversion in the municipality of Pavia and the three case barangays (Balabag, Jibao-an and Pandac) from 1990 to 2000; (2) draws insights from the experiences of five case households on the effects of land conversion on household economies, intra-household allo-

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cation of responsibilities, resources and benefits, with particular attention to women; and (3) recommends guidelines towards integrating concerns of women and their households in land conversion decisions and post-land conversion development interventions.

The research inquiry is based on the life histories of five purposively selected case households, interviews with barangay and municipal key informants, ocular survey of the case barangays and secondary data from the case barangays, the local government of Pavia and line agencies concerned.

The study showed that, due to land speculation, the magnitude of land conversion in Pavia from 1990 to 2000 exceeds what is officially reported by the Department of Agrarian Reform. Contrary to the envisioned land use for Pavia drafted in 1990, the actual land use in 1999 and the land conversion trend since 1990 tend to veer towards residential rather than industrial development.

The disturbance compensations paid to the displaced farmers paved the way for asset accumulation, particularly among the CARP beneficiaries (three cases). Except in one case, however, capital investment among the farmers was minimal or naught; a big chunk of the disturbance compensations was invested in house renovation. Beyond differences in the amount of disturbance compensations, asset accumulation was influenced by the households' demographic composition, priorities, values and norms within and outside the household.

The capital investments made by the displaced farmers, along with available family labor, defined their primary income sources after land conversion. The CARP beneficiaries in Jibao-an were able to diversify into or shift totally to non-farm activities, generating daily income or a mix of daily and seasonal income. On the other hand, those affected in Balabag and Pandac shifted to

farm wage work, oftentimes irregular and unstable. In four cases, primary income sources shifted from collective and unpaid family labor to specialized, individual and paid work. Households still relying on agriculture are gradually pushed outside their residential pace. Off-farm activities have not diversified and remained small-scale in operation, serving as contingency reserves. Household income remains multiple in composition.

Gender roles in the production and reproduction sphere have generally been maintained after land conversion. Except in one case, male spouses remain to be the primary income earner. Female spouses are most visible in off-farm, small-scale, manual and labor-intensive work. Unlike the male spouses, the female spouses were hardly able to shift to new economic activities. Notable in three cases is the increased involvement of the children in the households' production activities after land conversion. In the reproduction sphere, major home maintenance activities have remained to be the female spouse's domain. In two cases, the increasing involvement of male spouses and children (male and female) in specialized, non-farm activities has reduced their visibility in home maintenance activities.

Access to land (the major household resource) before land conversion was defined by class background and family traditions generally favoring the men. However, cultural factors and market-driven economic forces manifesting during and after land conversion prevailed upon this gender divide. On the other hand, the disturbance compensations improved both sexes' access to non-land productive resources. Control over land and other productive resources has been defined by one's sphere of work.

Affordable credit facilities in the case barangays are generally wanting. Except in one case, access to informal credit sources was influenced by factors generally favoring the men. While this gender gap remains after land conversion, access to credit has

been curtailed by the inability of two cases to establish stable income sources.

By gaining better access to and control of agricultural land and means of production after land conversion, one case household improved its sustenance ability, particularly in meeting food needs. The other case households have difficulty mainstreaming in a cash economy since cash income is inadequate to cover basic household expenses, particularly food and education. Heavy dependence on the market for food after land conversion was a common concern expressed by female spouses, especially those who were relatively food self-sufficient as farmer-tenants. With the shift from collective to specialized individual economic activities, distribution of household income tends to move towards a non-pooling scheme where control over income varies according to the earner.

In view of these findings, the study recommends that plans be pro-actively designed to facilitate the post-land conversion transition process of affected farmers. This includes: (1) providing a 'land transfer' option to farmers who opt to remain in on-farm work; (2) providing economic opportunities to farmers through the promotion of a variety of off-farm and non-farm enterprises; (3) equipping farmers with investment skills in the non-agriculture sector; and (4) improving the delivery of agricultural support services to make agriculture an attractive option. Integral to these plans are measures to make women's contribution to production more visible, improve their access to credit/extension services and strengthen their command over household resources/benefits. To anchor development plans on existing-gender relations, the study also suggests to improve targetting mechanisms and involve both men and women in land use decision-making processes.