# WHY ASSETS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE?

Papa Seck, Research and Data, UN Women

# Why assets?

- Assets that people own are an essential component of their welfare;

- Can serve different functions – intrinsic and instrumental value – means through which:

  ◦ Important for social status & security
  ◦ produce goods, generate an income (land, livestock, car, bicycle etc.)
  ◦ wealth accumulation (e.g. physical & financial assets);
  ◦ shelter/comfort for them and their families (e.g. dwelling, bed, TV etc.)
  ◦ buffer against shocks (sale of assets during emergencies)
  ◦ All of the above

# Why gender?

- monitoring gender equality, women's empowerment, human development
  - can determine whether women have fallback positions (e.g. ability to leave violent relationships)
  - can reduce economic vulnerability (e.g. divorce, widowhood); women's dependency to men
  - links with positive outcomes for women (e.g. source of income, bargaining power, violence etc.)
  - positive externalities (e.g. children)
- economic and social consequences – women may acquire, use and dispose of assets differently than men – links with policy

# Better data to refute gender myths

- Myth 1: women produce 80% of the world's food by only own 10% of its land
- Myth 2: if female farmers had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields by 20–30% and list 100–150m people out of hunger
- Many others…
- These myths have at least two commonalities:
  ◦ they are wrong
  ◦ they denote a strong demand for these statistics

# poverty data and dynamics

Poverty data

- Better asset data for proxy means testing – stronger basis for social protection
- Better understanding of poverty from a gender perspective – income poverty from a gender perspective notoriously difficult. Asset data may be easier to collect

Poverty dynamics

- Low levels of asset accumulation can point to structural poverty but income fluctuations below poverty line can be transitory (Carter 200x)
- Poverty traps result from asset poverty (below a certain threshold) and exclusion
  ◦ women more than men suffer from exclusion
  ◦ better data on women's assets can shed light on poverty traps

# Better data for policy-making

- Is there a difference in quantity and quality of assets women and men own, manage?
- Do women acquire, use and dispose of assets differently from men? Why?
- Are women's assets and businesses less productive than men's? Why?
- Can specific assets increase the yield on women's and men's assets?
- Better understanding of why there is segmentation in informal employment: assets as barriers to entry for women and men?
- Can specific assets reduce the time women spend on household chores?

# Better data for monitoring

- Minimum set of gender indicators (moving from tier 3 to tier 2, eventually to tier 1)
- HLP report: under goal 1, suggest monitoring "increase by x% the share of women and men, communities and businesses with secure rights to land, property and other assets"
- UN Women: proposal to monitor housing, land ownership
- Sustainable use of natural resources

# Better data to complement SNA

- link 1: SNA gives level of economic activities over certain period and level of economy's **assets** and liabilities
- link 2: Complementing information in SNA
  - ✓ consumer durables not considered assets in SNA – services they provide are not in the production boundary;
  - ✓ but thin line between personal and productive use (e.g. refrigerator for household use and selling ice)
- link 3: (distant dream) making the SNA gender sensitive?
- for what other purposes do you measure assets?

# thank you