

Beyond Gender Responsiveness: Assessing Women's Land Rights in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and Economic Community of West African States Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP)

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ABSTRACT

Women in Africa continue to have unequal access to and control over agricultural land and feel insecure in their rights to it. This is one of the greatest hurdles for gender equality and for changing the face of agriculture in the continent. This study examines whether two key regional development programmes, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Economic Community of West African States Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), address gender inequality in land rights beyond the rhetoric and actually challenge the patriarchal systems that limit women's rights to land. An adapted version of the Gender in Agricultural Policies Analysis Tool (GAPo) was used, but in this case, it was expanded to a more in-depth analysis of gender-transformative issues, including discriminatory social norms, patriarchal institutions, customary land tenure, inheritance systems, women's participation in land governance, and accountability mechanisms. The study evaluated the CAADP Kampala Declaration, in conjunction with the CAADP Ten-Year Strategy and Action Plan (2026-2035), and the ECOWAP 2025 Strategic Policy Framework on their own against 23 criteria. The results are quite clear and indicate a significant difference between the two. Gender responsive language on women's participation, empowerment, and access to land is included in CAADP, but there is relatively little language on women's ownership, control, land governance, customary tenure, and inheritance. ECOWAP is much less robust: 78% of the criteria were rated as being gender-blind and there are no provisions in ECOWAP that are specifically about gendered land rights at the framework level. Both frameworks fall short on all measures of being gender transformative. Most importantly, neither challenges patriarchy, customary land systems or inheritance rules, which are still perpetuating women's land inequality. To sum up, while the current regional agricultural policies are increasing women's participation and access, they do not question the institutions and power dynamics that shape land ownership and control. The study recommends more specific land-rights goals, disaggregated indicators by sex, gender-sensitive financing, harmonisation of statutory and customary law, and increased representation of women in land governance and improved accountability mechanisms in the implementation of CAADP and ECOWAP.

Keywords: CAADP; ECOWAP; Gender Responsive; Patriarchal Land Tenure; Women's Land Rights

INTRODUCTION

Less than 15% of the land owned by farmers is in the hands of women, compared with men who own about 85% of the land in the world. This disparity is even more pronounced in North African and the Near East countries where only approximately 5% of landholders are women. This is also seen in many developing countries. For instance, in Nigeria women hold less than 20% of land, and in countries such as Ecuador and Malawi, it is just over half. Where land is jointly owned, women's decision-making power and benefits are also limited. Still, laws, customary tenure systems and entrenched social norms determine these outcomes (FAO, 2018). The issue is not just ownership, however, but it is also structural and institutional factors that remain disadvantageous for women. The inequalities are particularly significant in Africa, where agriculture

is the key sector of the economy and the primary means of livelihood for the rural population. Women are a significant proportion of the agricultural labour force and are key players in food production and household food security. However, patriarchal land tenure, discriminatory customary laws and unequal power dynamics continue to restrict their access to and control over land (FAO, 2023). To improve women's land rights it is not enough to simply have them recognized in law or to have policy promises made — they need to challenge the underlying patriarchal structures of land and resources.

There has been a beginning response by regional frameworks. The African Union's flagship programme for agricultural transformation, food security and poverty alleviation is the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) adopted in 2003 under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It emphasizes boosting public investment, enhancing productivity, expanding market access, strengthening resilience and fostering evidence-based policies. West Africa has a regional expression of CAADP in the form of the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), adopted in 2005. It seeks to promote food and nutrition security, economic and social development, poverty reduction and increased equality between the member states by developing a modern, competitive and sustainable agricultural sector (ECOWAS, 2005; African Union, 2025). While recent studies have identified that there are still gender gaps within CAADP, there is limited research that systematically explores how CAADP policies tackle structural and patriarchal causes of women's land inequality. While both CAADP and ECOWAP have ambitious visions for inclusive agricultural transformation, there is not a clear grasp of how far they go in recognising women's land rights, or how far they go in addressing the barriers that limit women. This study addresses this gap by applying an adapted Gender Assessment and Policy Appraisal (GAPo) Tool to both frameworks.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: a literature review on gender, women's land rights, patriarchy and land tenure systems; the methodology which outlines how the GAPo Tool was used; the results of the assessment of ECOWAP and the CAADP Kampala Declaration; and the discussion. The article concludes by reflecting on the policy implications for the region and for more gender transformative governance of land.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Across Africa, land rights for women are well known to be a crucial factor for agricultural productivity, food security, poverty alleviation and women's empowerment. However, recent data has been consistently showing that women still own less land, have weaker tenure security, fewer inheritance rights, and less decision-making power than men, despite their significant contribution towards agricultural production (FAO, 2023; World Bank, 2023). These inequalities are no longer just a lack of the law; they are now known to be the result of deeper structural and institutional barriers that are linked to customary land systems and patriarchal social norms. The results of studies in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda are similar. Women's land rights have been formally recognized in very few instances, and this has not led to equality in practice. Although women's ownership rights and/or inheritance rights may be recognized in law, customary practices continue to place control in the hands of male household members or community leaders (Behr et al., 2023; FAO, 2023; Adekunle et al., 2024; Nyabanyi & Owusu-Ansah, 2024). In Nigeria, for instance, Obi and Aduma (2020) observed that, although on paper the laws of inheritance are being strengthened for women, they are being undermined in practice by customary laws. Similarly, Umukoro et al. (2024) reveal that the customary land governance systems are male-dominated and systematically marginalize women from access to land and decision-making about land and the environment, perpetuating longstanding inequalities in access to productive resources.

Gender Transformative approaches have their conceptual origins in feminist scholarship that views gender inequity as a product of unequal power relations found in social, political, legal and economic institutions. Naila Kabeer (1999) posits that empowerment can only be realised if women have greater access to resources, greater agency and greater ability to make a difference. Land is one of the most important of those resources in agriculture. If not, women's capacity to enhance their living situation and play a role in the decision making of their household or community is constrained. If policies fail to take into account the unequal access to land, they limit real empowerment. Bina Agarwal (1994; 2003) makes a related and

powerful argument: women's rights to land ownership, inheritance and control are not only essential for economic security, but also for their bargaining power and decision-making authority. She demonstrates how unequal land rights are maintained through a patriarchal customary framework and unequal inheritance practices. She contends that meaningful reform must not only involve women as beneficiaries of existing policies, but also change these institutions.

Gender responsive policy is based on this. It is well established in feminist policy scholarship that public policies are not gender neutral, but rather they are often shaped by and perpetuate the current power dynamics. Gender responsive agricultural policy is defined in this study as policies that are intentionally crafted to acknowledge the needs, roles and contributions of women and men and to actively address inequalities and empower women. More recent literature, however, calls for another change, from gender responsive to gender transformative approaches. These go beyond addressing different needs and aim to transform discriminatory social norms, shift power, enhance women's agency and transform the institutions that perpetuate inequality (FAO, 2023; Wanjohi and Agbere, 2025; CARE, 2021; CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform, 2020). When it comes to agricultural land governance, this requires going beyond merely engaging women and challenging patriarchal land tenure and discriminatory inheritance patterns, as well as unequal decision-making structures.

These are corroborated by policy and institutional reports. Despite the many laws that have been enacted, women are still experiencing unequal access to land and land security, as stated by FAO (2023). The World Bank (2023) agrees, noting that implementation gaps, limited institutional capacity, and discriminatory customary laws and practices remain a threat to women's land rights in sub-Saharan Africa. A review of the current CAADP Strategy and Action Plan by Wanjohi and Agbere (2025) at the regional level revealed high levels of gender inequalities in land rights, economic empowerment and climate justice, noting that the current continental frameworks are not yet well aligned to Africa's gender equality commitments. Improvements in women's participation alone are insufficient if the fundamental barriers, such as discriminatory norms, inequitable land ownership rights and institutional constraints, are not tackled (FAO, 2023).

The literature as a whole provides compelling evidence that in Africa, the primary barriers to women's land rights are patriarchal customary practices, discriminatory inheritance systems, legal pluralism, and the lack of strong implementation of land rights. However, most of the studies that have been undertaken to date are at the national or community level. Gender analyses are more likely to uncover gender gaps than to systematically look at the way regional agricultural frameworks address these gaps. While both Wanjohi and Agbere (2025) critique the CAADP framework from a gender perspective, neither that study nor the literature as a whole has applied a structured gender policy appraisal tool to both ECOWAP and the CAADP Kampala Declaration. More significantly, there have been no known studies that explicitly ask whether these regional policies recognise the existence of patriarchal practices as obstacles to women's land rights, or whether they contain specific measures to tackle these practices.

The Analytical Framework: Adapted GAPo for Gender Transformation

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (Kaaria, S. & Villani, C. 2016) has created a structured framework called Gender in Agriculture Policy Analysis (GAPo) to evaluate the extent to which agricultural policies incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment. It was later elaborated by Acosta et al. (2025) to provide a systematic and evidence-based approach to assessing the gender responsiveness of agricultural policy instruments in low- and middle-income countries. This study builds on GAPo, but refines it to explore the potential of agricultural policies to transform gender. Based on the gender transformative theory and the works of Kabeer (1999) and Agarwal (1994; 2003), the adapted framework is not just about checking whether there are gender responsive provisions, but also about examining whether those provisions are in place and functioning. It questions if policies acknowledge and actively try to shift social norms, patriarchal power dynamics and institutional structures that weaken women's land rights. In this way, the adapted tool can provide a more holistic assessment not just how far gender is included in policy, but whether the policy can bring about real transformative change.

The original GAPo structure was maintained to ensure a systematic policy assessment approach. Concurrently, an additional analytical area was introduced to focus on gender transformation and structural change. The study explores CAADP and ECOWAP in a systematic fashion using this adapted tool to understand to what extent both frameworks acknowledge and support women's land rights. It questions whether they make a clear statement about the existence of structural impediments such as patriarchal practices and whether they suggest specific gender transformative actions to tackle these constraints.

METHODOLOGY

The CAADP Kampala Declaration and CAADP Ten-Year Strategy and Action Plan (2026-2035) were considered as one policy framework for this study. The high-level political commitments are outlined in the Declaration, and the Strategy and Action Plan provides the implementation strategies, targets and indicators. A detailed account of CAADP's recognition, addressing and monitoring of women's land rights and the structural barriers to these rights is obtained by considering both documents together.

The ECOWAP Strategic Policy Framework 2025 was evaluated as a whole. It is the overall vision, strategic priorities, implementation guidance and expected outcomes of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regional agricultural policy in a single document. ECOWAP brings together policy, implementation and complementary aspects in one document, whereas CAADP is divided between complementary policy and implementation documents. The 6 general assessment criteria, 4 thematic assessments and 13 policy assessment area criteria were adapted from the GAPo questionnaire. Every policy was then assessed on the GAPo five-level gender integration scale based on its efforts to tackle gender inequalities.

Table 1. GAPo Five-Level Gender Integration Scale

Level	Definition (per GAPo tool)
1 – Gender Blind	Ignores gender inequalities, or contains measures that discriminate against women.
2 – Gender Neutral	Recognises gender inequalities or women's roles but includes no measures to promote equality/empowerment.
3 – Gender Sensitive	Recognises inequalities/roles and includes measures, but these remain very general (no implementation strategy).
4 – Gender Responsive	Recognises inequalities and purposefully tackles them through specific measures to promote equality/empowerment.
5–Gender-Transformative	As Level 4, plus at least one measure purposefully addressing harmful gender norms/roles and transforming unequal power relations.

Source: Adapted from FAO GAPo Tool (2016); Acosta et al. (2025)

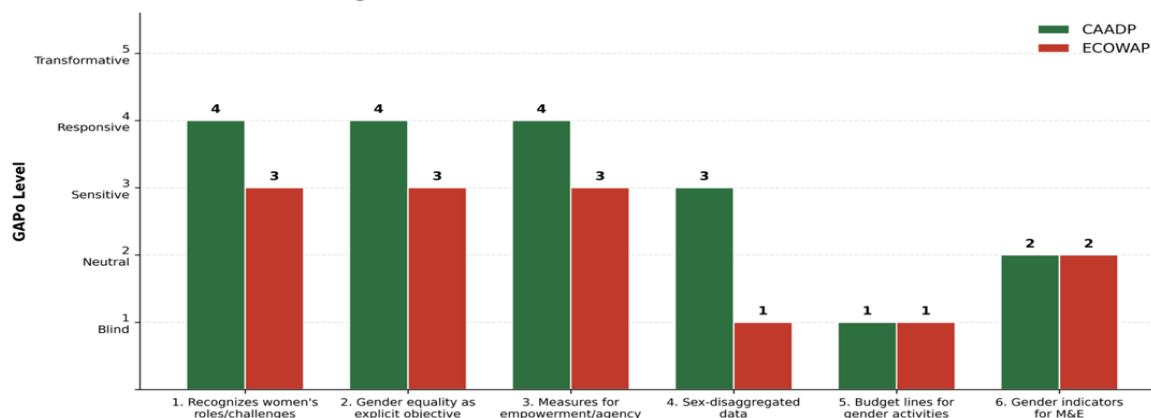
RESULTS

General Assessment

The General Assessment of the GAPo shows that both approaches have taken a significant step away from the gender-blind perspective in their overall orientation, albeit to a very different extent. CAADP meets a gender-responsive standard (Level 4) for all three criteria for recognition and measures: it substantially recognises women's roles and constraints in agrifood systems; it explicitly makes gender equality a headline objective with quantified targets — halving the male–female yield gap and empowering at least 30 percent of women in agrifood value chains by 2035; and it includes concrete measures, such as leadership quotas, support for women's cooperatives, and gender-responsive planning, with named implementing entities.

ECOWAP, on the other hand, only achieves a gender-sensitive approach (Level 3) on the same criteria: it acknowledges the importance of women in production, processing and marketing, and admits the "virtual lack of gender mainstreaming" in its investment plans; it does not set targets for gender equality, but frames it as a cross-cutting principle; and it does not define gender-specific measures, leaving preferential participation and women's strategic value chains to subsidiary RAIPFNS and NAIP processes. Both frameworks lack a clear statement of women's rights and both fall short of the transformative level, because their commitments are based on inclusion in the existing frameworks, not on interaction with the norms and institutions that create inequalities.

Figure 1: GAPo General Assessment — CAADP vs. ECOWAP



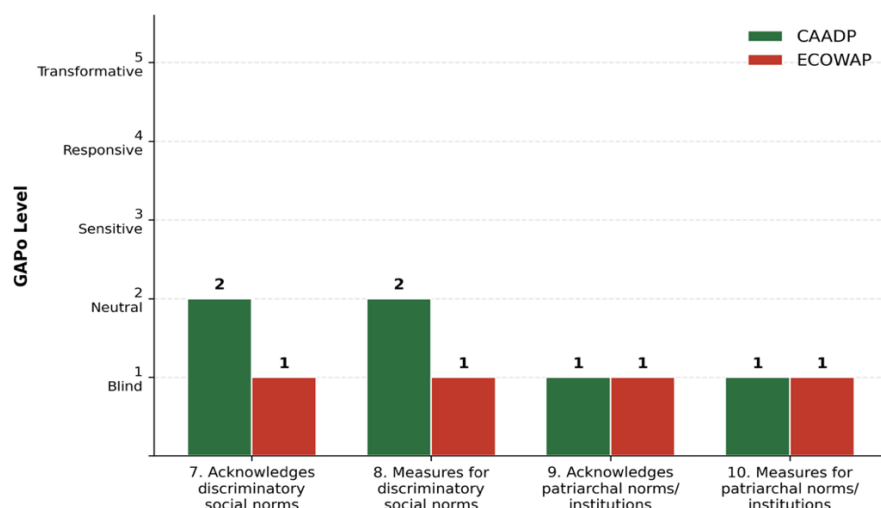
The most glaring fault of the assessment is the accountability system, which drops off significantly in both frameworks. On sex-disaggregated data, CAADP commits in general terms (Level 3) and ECOWAP is entirely silent (Level 1); on budgets, both are gender-blind, with well-developed financing architecture, but neither has a gender-tagged allocation, ring-fenced provision or gender-responsive budgeting requirement; on monitoring, both are gender-neutral (Level 2), with gender named in their results architecture, but no operational gender indicator. The general picture is therefore one of asymmetry between commitment and accountability: the frameworks' gender aspirations are real but somewhat vague at the level of objectives and measures; the budgets contain no gender funding; and the monitoring frameworks lack the capacity to evaluate whether any gender commitment is being fulfilled. This asymmetry makes the gender commitments of the frameworks aspirational in nature and constitutes the first piece of evidence for this article's core claim that regional agricultural policy is doing the work of gender mainstreaming without providing mechanisms of delivery.

Thematic Assessment

The GAPo Thematic Assessment looks at the nature of the frameworks' engagement with the deeper drivers of gender inequality — namely the normative and structural ones. It gives the most unambiguous results of the whole analysis. CAADP scores gender neutral (Level 2) on both recognition and action on discriminatory social norms. The term social norms appears just once in the Strategy, and that is in the risk management section where norms are not viewed as a problem the policy is intended to address, but rather as a risk to implementation that 'may reduce women's and youth's access to education, resources, and decision-making processes.' The corresponding action is still ambiguous.

The other substantive element in CAADP is to acknowledge, decrease and redistribute rural women's unpaid care work, including investment in childcare. This is a genuine redistributive measure, but one that is presented primarily as a removal of a hurdle for women's economic engagement rather than a change to a gendered social norm, and that is not connected to a larger norm-change strategy. ECOWAP scores gender-blind (Level 1) on both criteria. It does not refer to social norms, nor to unpaid care work, and only uses the language of discrimination to refer to positive discrimination as an affirmative measure, not to the recognition of discriminatory practice.

**Figure 2: GAPo Thematic Area Assessment — CAADP vs. ECOWAP
(Social Norms & Patriarchal Institutions)**



The two frameworks overlap completely at the lowest level on patriarchal norms and institutions. The evidence is clear: the terms patriarchy, patriarchal, power relations, and unequal power appear in none of the documents. The closest that CAADP comes to any explicit reference is to recognize 'inequality and power imbalances' that limit women — language that registers the existence of asymmetry but does not specify what it is, name it, or locate it within an institution. Neither framework contains a structure that recognizes these structural conditions, nor a proposal to change them. All gender provisions of both documents are based on the principle of bringing women into value chains, cooperatives, leadership structures, and land access programmes, without changing the power relations and institutions that lead to women's exclusion in the first place. This silence defines the ceiling for both frameworks and is why no criterion in the entire assessment reaches Level 5. The GAPo definition requires at least one measure that explicitly targets harmful gender norms and aims to transform unequal power dynamics; no such measure exists in either framework, because neither specifies the structures such a measure would have to target.

The thematic assessment is therefore the analytical backbone of the article. The absence of any mention of patriarchy in the frameworks is not a coincidence; it is the same mechanism that allows gender mainstreaming language to advance rhetorically without changing the gendered structure of land inequality.

Policy Area Assessment

The GAPo Policy Area Assessment examines the coverage of women's land rights and tenure under thirteen criteria within the CAADP and ECOWAP frameworks. The results show a distinct divergence between the two policy approaches, and a significant internal gradient within CAADP. While CAADP pays considerable attention to women's access to land, this attention falls sharply when considering land ownership, land control, and land decision-making. CAADP achieves a gender-responsive rating (Level 4) for both recognition of and measures for women's access to land. The Kampala Declaration acknowledges the need to strengthen access to land for women, youth and vulnerable groups, and the Ten-Year Strategy and Action Plan spells out specific actions to improve women's access to agricultural land. CAADP rates less well in the areas of land rights and tenure security (Level 3 — Gender Sensitive). The framework focuses on gender-responsive land policies that secure land tenure and rights for women and youth. While this is a key policy pledge, it lacks a clear pathway for implementation, specific indicators and a clearly assigned body to address women's tenure security. Furthermore, women and youth are addressed together without taking into account the specific challenges women face with regard to land rights.

This is a much less favourable picture for ECOWAP. Almost all of the land-related criteria are gender-blind. ECOWAP talks about land, but not women's rights to land, and primarily about issues such as land degradation, fertility, saturation and pastoral security. Specifically, the word tenure is not used in the framework and there is no direct reference to land access, ownership or security in relation to women. Hence, although there are explicit references to women's access to land in CAADP, ECOWAP does not

explicitly tackle gender and land issues, but instead delegates them to downstream investment plans.

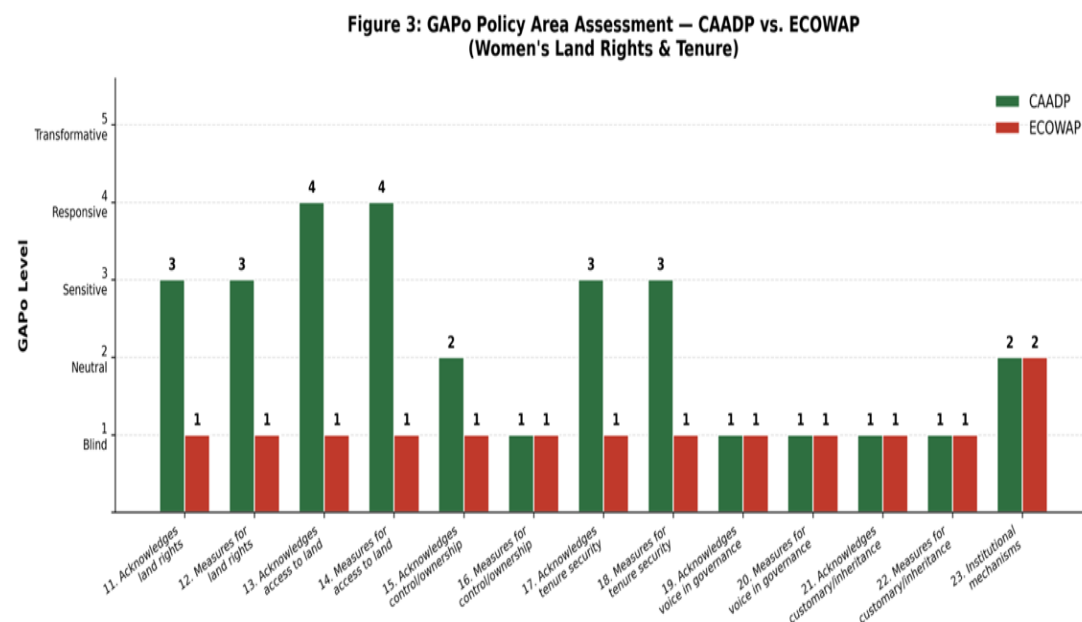


Figure 3. GAPo Policy Area Assessment — CAADP vs. ECOWAP (Women's Land Rights & Tenure)

The analysis is enriched by going beyond access to ownership, control and governance. There is a significant drop in CAADP's engagement with women's land rights at this stage. CAADP is considered gender neutral (Level 2) in terms of women's control and ownership of land, and gender blind (Level 1) in terms of measures to strengthen these rights. There are no specific provisions on joint titling, independent land ownership or women's inheritance rights. In the same way, women's participation and decision-making in land governance is not specifically mentioned because land-governance institutions are absent from the policy documents. ECOWAP likewise fails to address women's ownership, control and participation in land governance.

The most important finding relates to customary land tenure and inheritance systems. Neither CAADP nor ECOWAP specifically acknowledges discriminatory customary practices and inheritance systems as obstacles to women's rights to land. The words customary and inheritance are not even mentioned in the three policy documents analysed. This is especially significant since it is precisely these social and institutional mechanisms that most often limit women's access to land.

Overall the results indicate that CAADP offers women more opportunities to access land, but does not adequately address land ownership, control, inheritance, and decision-making. ECOWAP takes more of a 'leave it out' approach, with almost no gender-specific land provisions at the framework level. As a result, the interventions related to land continue to be largely policy-driven rather than customary-based in both frameworks. This accounts for why access to land is a crucial yet insufficient factor to bridge the gender disparity in land ownership.

Overall GAPo Rating

The overall GAPo scores make clear that there is a notable difference between CAADP and ECOWAP in the extent to which they are gender-equitable in addressing land rights issues. CAADP scores Level 2 — Gender Neutral, with Level 4 — Gender Responsive as the ceiling. But the overall score conceals stark discrepancies across individual criteria. CAADP achieves the highest rating (Level 4) on five of the criteria, especially those relating to recognition of women's contributions, gender-equality goals, empowerment strategies and women's access to land. CAADP scores the lowest levels (Level 1) on eight of the criteria, all of which are focused on structural issues including patriarchy, inheritance, customary tenure, land ownership and control, land governance and gender-responsive budgeting. CAADP has therefore achieved relatively

advanced recognition of women's involvement and access to productive resources, but has not begun to address the structures that determine who truly owns, inherits and controls land. CAADP's composite GAPo score of 2.30 reflects Gender Neutral standing, with some recognition of women's work, participation and access to land, while remaining gender-blind on the structural dimensions that affect women's land rights.

ECOWAP is rated Level 1 — Gender Blind, given the concentration of its assessment levels around the lower end of the GAPo scale (78 percent at Level 1). ECOWAP does not register a Level 4 score on any of the criteria. The only Level 3 scores it received were on broad issues — recognition of women's roles, gender equality as a policy principle and general gender-mainstreaming. This means that ECOWAP recognizes gender equality in broad political terms, but this recognition does not translate into concrete policy provisions on women's rights to land, customary land practices, or the structures that influence land access and control.

The single most important conclusion is that neither CAADP nor ECOWAP qualifies as Gender Transformative (Level 5) according to any of the 23 criteria. In order to reach Level 5, policies need to go beyond acknowledging gender inequalities and must actively seek to destabilize harmful gender norms and unequal power relations. Both policy frameworks fail to contain any provision that meets these criteria. Equally important, both remain silent on the very structural issues — patriarchy, customary tenure, and patrilineal inheritance that are related to the maintenance of unequal land rights. Based on this assessment, CAADP scores 2.30 (Gender Neutral with a Gender Responsive ceiling) while ECOWAP scores 1.35 (Gender Blind).

DISCUSSION

These results shed light on the persistence of inequalities in women's access, control, and ownership of land despite longstanding gender commitments in African agricultural policy for more than twenty years. The GAPo assessment indicates that both CAADP and ECOWAP recognise women as agricultural actors, but neither policy programme extends this recognition to women's land ownership, land control, and land governance practices and realities. This raises an important distinction: land access may be associated with land rights, but does not necessarily translate into secure or substantive land rights. Doss, Shrestha and Vyas (2015) distinguish access, ownership and control as separate dimensions of land rights, and Andersson, Djurfeldt and Sircar (2018) document ongoing inequalities in women's access, ownership, control and inheritance practices in sub-Saharan Africa.

The differences are stark in CAADP, where categories of women's land access are better scored than categories of ownership and control. Access can be easier to improve through new policies or procedures without a radical transformation of existing power structures; but ownership, inheritance and control involve more profound issues of power within households, kinship groups and villages. Evidence from Ghana also points to the fact that securing land titles alone does not address the gender deficit where inheritance is unequal (Nyabanyi & Owusu-Ansah, 2024). Therefore, the particular accent on access rather than ownership and control in CAADP may be an effort to promote more inclusive processes without challenging current land right allocations.

The results on patriarchy, customary tenure and inheritance are especially noteworthy. In both CAADP and ECOWAP, the patriarchal institutions were either unacknowledged or unmeasured. This finding is in line with Doss et al. (2019) who cite gender norms and male power as one of the underlying drivers behind women's landlessness in sub-Saharan Africa and describe restrictions on women's rights as significant in determining their landlessness. FAO (2023) also states that in many African contexts, customary institutions still determine women's access, inheritance and control over land.

Nonetheless, the observations in the literature that customary tenure need not be equal and fixed are important, as customary tenure is location-specific and is a site of contestation and resistance that may be reformist (Tadesse; Steel et al., 2021). Neither framework makes any direct references to such institutions, thereby neglecting an important institutional factor influencing women's land rights. The assessment also

highlights shortcomings of gender-specific accountability. Both frameworks have gender commitments; but gender indicators and budgets specifically aimed at promoting gender equality are few. This is a common theme of assessments conducted on CAADP — despite existing accountability mechanisms, gaps still remain in implementing commitments and tracking progress towards agricultural commitments.

Even the AU post-Malabo assessment discovered that countries were not on course to meet the Malabo commitments by 2025, and the latest assessment on the Kampala framework continues to call for more gender-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators. It is therefore important to interpret these findings as not necessarily implying a complete absence of accountability mechanisms. The much lower ECOWAP scores on land must also be read within the regional institutional context. Whereas CAADP is essentially a strategic planning tool operationalized by AU stakeholders, the ECOWAP 2025 Strategic Orientation Framework is a more overarching strategic framework which leaves a significant amount of implementation details to the RAIPFNS and NAIPs. The gender-blind scores on land are thus indicative of the weakness of the articulation of women's land rights at the regional strategic level, rather than an indication that gender-land provisions are non-existent at all subsequent levels within ECOWAS. Where a regional strategic framework contains no gendered land target, no sex-disaggregated indicator, and no requirement that NAIPs include gender-responsive land provisions, member states developing those NAIPs face no normative pressure to incorporate them. ECOWAS recognizes that implementing ECOWAP depends on both national and regional plans, with NAIPs at the national level and RAIP coordinated regionally. When the regional framework lacks clear guidance on women's land rights, patriarchal norms, customary tenure, women's decision-making, or gender-transformative accountability, national processes often interpret these directives differently. This can lead to inconsistent application of regional gender commitments across Member States. The success of the regional framework in promoting women's land rights relies partly on how well its general goals are translated into specific legal, institutional, budget, and implementation actions through NAIPs that enhance women's access, ownership, and control over land. Therefore, the regional–national link is a crucial area where gender mainstreaming can either stay superficial or become more explicitly gender-transformative.

Generally, the patterns of evidence suggest that both frameworks are more gender responsive than gender transformative. In particular, CAADP exhibits the highest levels of gender responsiveness in the area of women's participation in agriculture and land access, while ECOWAP exhibits broader gender commitments but with limited discussion of land. The lack of explicit attention to patriarchy, customary tenure, inheritance and women's land governance, ownership and control indicates that policy commitments have not addressed the institutional mechanisms through which land inequality is reproduced. Hence, advancing women's land rights requires moving along the access, participation and land ownership axis toward secure ownership, control, inheritance and decision-making and accountability, within both formal and customary institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the gender responsiveness of CAADP and ECOWAP against the FAO Gender in Agricultural Policies Analysis Tool (GAPo), with emphasis on women's land rights, tenure security, ownership, control and participation in land governance. The analysis indicates that both land policy frameworks have paid attention to gender issues, but in varying degrees and coverage. CAADP was found to be more gender responsive in its focus on gender and agriculture, formulating gender-equity targets, addressing women's access to arable land and women's participation in land governance issues, but not adequately addressing women's ownership and control of land. ECOWAP's gender commitments are more general, without any gender considerations in its provisions on land.

Although both frameworks show some prioritisation of gender-sensitive interventions, neither attains the level identified as Gender Transformative (Level 5). The greatest common areas of disparity between the two frameworks relate to: women's ownership and control of land, participation in land governance institutions, customary tenure and inheritance patterns, patriarchal institutions, gender-sensitive budgeting, and gender-responsive monitoring. These findings suggest that while policy responses have achieved some success in introducing policies that improve women's access and equality, the same cannot be said of the

impact of those responses on institutional structures and power relations. Reducing gender inequalities in the exercise and security of land rights requires a focus on ownership and control of land, inheritance and decision-making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from these results, it is advisable that future rounds of CAADP and ECOWAP should:

- Go beyond non-specific commitments to women's access, and explicitly consider women's ownership of, control over and permanence of land rights.
- Acknowledge directly the interaction of statutory and customary land systems, and include measures to enhance women's inheritance rights and safeguard them from customary discriminatory practices.
- Improve women's participation and influence in land governance by increasing women's representation and effective participation in land allocation, administration, titling and dispute-resolution institutions.
- Ensure gender-responsive accountability through clear and specific indicators, sex-disaggregated data and reporting requirements that sufficiently and systematically monitor progress in women's land rights.
- Ensure gender-responsive budgeting and resource allocation in the CAADP and ECOWAP implementation framework to enable budget support for projects or programmes to strengthen women's land rights and empowerment.
- Adopt gender-transformative policy approaches that challenge patriarchal values, unequal power relations and institutional cultures that uphold gender inequality.

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APPENDIX

Table 1 — General Assessment (criteria 1–6)

No	GAPo Criterion	CAADP Level	CAADP Justification	ECOWAP Level	ECOWAP Justification	Evidence Location (sections)
1	Recognizes women's roles and/or challenges in agriculture and rural development	4 – Gender Responsive	Repeated, substantive recognition of women's roles and constraints: 'the critical role of gender dynamics in agriculture' (Declaration preamble); women 'often have lower access to productive resources and services... which affects the returns to their labor,' within 'inequality and power imbalances' (Strategy). Stops short of L5: structural roots (patriarchy, customary systems) never named.	3 – Gender Sensitive	Recognises women's centrality to 'production, processing, marketing and distribution' and admits the 'virtual lack of gender mainstreaming within the RAIP and NAIPs' with weak gender diagnoses. Diagnostic, not connected to structural analysis or	CAADP: Kampala Declaration: Preamble ('RECOGNIZING the critical role of gender dynamics...'); Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4 — Advancing Inclusivity and Equitable Livelihoods ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: 'Ten-year achievements and limits' — Gaps to

					specific measures.	be addressed (gap no. 2); 'Strategic vision for 2025' — Emerging issues at stake (item E)
2	Has gender equality in agriculture and/or rural women's rights as explicit policy objectives	4 – Gender Responsive	Explicit headline objective with quantified targets: halving the male–female yield gap and empowering at least 30% of women in agrifood value chains by 2035 (Declaration); institutionalised as Strategic Objective 4 (Strategy). Framed as equality/empowerment, not rights; women's land rights absent as an objective.	3 – Gender Sensitive	Gender equality named as an 'additional principle on inclusiveness, gender equality and positive discrimination'; 'inclusive' defined as 'equity between men and women.' A cross-cutting principle without its own targets; rights not articulated.	CAADP: Kampala Declaration: Commitment to Advancing Inclusivity and Equitable Livelihoods; Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4 ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Review and adaptation of ECOWAP principles; 'A clear vision of agricultural development' (definition of 'inclusive')
3	Includes measures to address gender inequality and/or support women's empowerment (agency, leadership, voice, decision-making)	4 – Gender Responsive	Concrete measures with implementing entities: 'Promote leadership opportunities for women... in decision-making bodies'; strengthen women's cooperatives; 'gender-responsive planning'; 'quotas and targets for inclusion of women.' Inserts women into existing structures rather than redistributing power — hence not L5.	3 – Gender Sensitive	General measures: 'systematic gender mainstreaming'; 'entry and preferential participation of women and young people'; women's strategic value chains 'to be defined within the RAIPFNS framework.' Named but explicitly delegated downstream.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4 — priority interventions; Annex 1: CAADP Action Plan 2026–2035 (inclusivity rows) ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Emerging issues at stake (item E); Box 1 — Malabo commitments (item c); Strategic Pillar 2 (women's value chains)
4	Promotes the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data	3 – Gender Sensitive	Explicit commitment to 'Strengthen gender and age-disaggregated data collection and analysis,' but with no	1 – Gender Blind	'Disaggregated' appears zero times; no gender data commitment.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4 (data action); Annex 1

			implementation strategy; the results framework is deferred — the 59 Malabo indicators are 'to be reviewed and aligned to the current six strategic objectives.'		The acknowledged M&E weakness is generic ('shortcomings of the national and regional information systems'), with no gender dimension.	— note on review of the 59 Malabo indicators ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Gaps to be addressed (gap no. 11, M&E weakness) — absence of gender data content throughout
5	Includes budget lines for the gender activities proposed (if no budget in policy then N/A)	1 – Gender Blind	Extensive financing architecture (Strategic Objective 2; Resource Mobilization and Financial Sustainability section) with no gender-tagged allocation, no gender-responsive budgeting, no NAIP/RAIP gender-allocation requirement. A financing framework exists but excludes gender — a substantive silence. (If coding convention requires, mark N/A; document the choice.)	1 – Gender Blind	A substantial 'Funding mechanism' section exists; no gender activity is budgeted or ring-fenced anywhere in it. Same convention note applies.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 2; Resource Mobilization and Financial Sustainability — absence of gender content ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Institutional arrangements and financial mechanism — Funding mechanism — absence of gender content
6	Includes gender indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the policy (if no indicators then N/A)	2 – Gender Neutral	Well-developed M&E (Biennial Review, eBR, scorecard) and objective-level gender targets, but no gender indicator specified — the indicator set is deferred pending realignment of the legacy 59 Malabo indicators.	2 – Gender Neutral	'Gender' listed as a cross-cutting component under Strategic Objective 4 of the results framework, but no gender indicator — only a generic 'at least 75%' implementation target bundling all cross-cutting issues.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Annex 1 (results framework note); M&E / Biennial Review provisions ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Results framework of the ECOWAP 2025 SOF (SO4 row)

Table 2 — Thematic Area: Social Norms and Patriarchal Institutions (criteria 7–10)

N o	GAPo Criterion	CAAD P Level	CAADP Justification	ECOWA P Level	ECOWAP Justification	Evidence Location (sections)
7	Explicitly acknowledges the importance of gender discriminatory social norms	2 – Gender Neutral	One oblique mention, in risk management: 'gender inequalities or biases and restrictive social norms may limit women's and youth's access to education, resources, and decision-making processes.' Framed as an implementation risk, not a core structural problem.	1 – Gender Blind	'Social norms' appears zero times. The sole use of 'discrimination' is positive discrimination (affirmative preference), not a naming of discriminatory norms.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Risk Management and Mitigation section ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: absence throughout; cf. Review and adaptation of ECOWAP principles ('positive discrimination')
8	Explicitly includes measures to address gender discriminatory social norms	2 – Gender Neutral	Only a generic mitigation action ('Develop programs to strengthen governance mechanisms'). Partial exception: unpaid care work (4 mentions — 'recognize, reduce and redistribute rural women's unpaid care work'; childcare investment) — redistributive but framed as an economic-participation barrier, not a norm. (L3 argument defensible; document the call.)	1 – Gender Blind	No norm acknowledgement, therefore no measures. No unpaid-care content (zero mentions) — lacking even CAADP's norm-adjacent element.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Risk Management and Mitigation; Strategic Objective 4 (unpaid care provisions) ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: absence throughout
9	Explicitly acknowledges the importance of patriarchal norms and institutions	1 – Gender Blind	'Patriarchy'/'patriarchal,' 'power relations,' 'unequal power' appear zero times. The one reference to 'inequality and power imbalances' leaves the cause diffuse and structureless.	1 – Gender Blind	'Patriarchy'/'patriarchal' and 'power relations' appear zero times. No acknowledgement of patriarchal structures.	CAADP: Both CAADP documents: term-frequency evidence (0 occurrences); cf. Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic

						Objective 4 (‘power imbalances’) ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: term- frequency evidence (0 occurrences)
10	Explicitly includes measures to address patriarchal norms and institutions	1 – Gender Blind	No acknowledgement, therefore no measures. Every gender measure inserts women into existing structures rather than altering the power relations producing exclusion — the framework’s defining ceiling.	1 – Gender Blind	No acknowledgement, no measures; gender provisions integrate women into existing systems.	CAADP: Both CAADP documents: absence throughout ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: absence throughout

Table 3 — Policy Area: Women’s Land Rights and Tenure (criteria 11–23)

N o	GAPo Criterion	CAADP Level	CAADP Justification	ECOWA P Level	ECOWAP Justification	Evidence Location (sections)
11	Explicitly acknowledges the importance of gender inequalities and women’s land rights	3 – Gender Sensitive	Land acknowledged as a gendered constraint: ‘access to land for women, youth, and vulnerable groups’ (Declaration); ‘insecure land tenure’ identified and ‘securing land access for women’ called for (Strategy). Framed as access to an input, never as rights.	1 – Gender Blind	Never connects land to gender. All land references concern degradation, fertility, saturation, and ‘land and pastoral security’ — not women.	CAADP: Kampala Declaration: Commitment to Advancing Inclusivity and Equitable Livelihoods; Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4 ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Gaps to be addressed (gap no. 10); international/regional context sections — absence of gender-land linkage
12	Explicitly includes measures to address gender inequalities and women’s land rights	3 – Gender Sensitive	Strongest land provision: ‘Implement gender-sensitive land policies that provide secure land tenure and rights for women and youth.’ No implementation	1 – Gender Blind	No measure links land to women’s rights. The ‘regional framework for... convergent land policies’ concerns pastoral/agricultural harmonisation with no gender	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4 (land policy action); Annex 1: Action Plan (land policy reform row) ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Gaps to be

			strategy, indicator, or women-specific responsible entity; the action-matrix land row protects 'communities' land rights,' not women's.		content.	addressed (gap no. 10)
13	Explicitly acknowledges the importance of women's access to land	4 – Gender Responsive	The framework's strongest land dimension — acknowledged repeatedly and purposefully across both layers: 'access to land for women, youth, and vulnerable groups' (Declaration); 'Improve access to agricultural land for women and youth'; 'providing land access to youth and women' (Strategy).	1 – Gender Blind	Women's access to land is not acknowledged anywhere; land access appears only via household 'capital allocation (mainly land and livestock)' with no gender breakdown.	CAADP: Kampala Declaration: Inclusivity commitment; Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objectives 2 and 4 ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Strategic Pillar 3 (capital allocation passage) — absence of gendered access content
14	Explicitly includes measures to address women's access to land	4 – Gender Responsive	Concrete, women-targeted access measures in the action plan: targeted land programs under Strategic Objective 4; 'Improve access to agricultural land for women and youth'; land access as an investment area. Not L5: access is grantable without altering ownership or control.	1 – Gender Blind	No measure addresses women's land access — the sharpest divergence from CAADP.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4; Annex 1: Action Plan (inclusivity/land rows) ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: absence throughout
15	Explicitly acknowledges the	2 – Gender Neutral	Control/ownership language mostly avoided	1 – Gender Blind	No acknowledgement of women's control	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Annex 1: Action

	importance of women's control and ownership of land		for women. One action-matrix passage mentions 'control over productive resources such as land' — but for 'groups, farmers, and entrepreneurs' generically, land bundled among several resources. Ownership never acknowledged.		or ownership of land.	Plan (productive resources row) ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: absence throughout
16	Explicitly includes measures to address women's control and ownership of land	1 Gender Blind	– No measures — no joint titling, independent title, or inheritance provision. Control and ownership are precisely where patriarchal tenure operates; the silence is analytically significant.	1 Gender Blind	– No measures.	CAADP: Both CAADP documents: absence throughout ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: absence throughout
17	Explicitly acknowledges the importance of land tenure security for women	3 Gender Sensitive	– Tenure security acknowledged and linked to women — 'secure land tenure and rights for women and youth'; 'insecure land tenure' named as systemic. Real but general; women bracketed with youth, no women-specific tenure analysis.	1 Gender Blind	– 'Tenure' appears zero times. Land security appears only as 'land and pastoral security' — a conflict-prevention/resource-governance concern disconnected from women.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4 (land policy action); systemic-issues diagnosis ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Gaps to be addressed (gap no. 10); term-frequency evidence (0 occurrences of 'tenure')
18	Explicitly includes measures to address land tenure security for women	3 Gender Sensitive	– Implement gender-sensitive land policies that provide secure land tenure and rights for women and youth' — the	1 Gender Blind	– No women-specific tenure-security measure; the 'convergent land policies' framework has no gender dimension.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: Strategic Objective 4 ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Gaps to be

			high-water mark, but with no implementation pathway, indicator, or accountability attached.			addressed (gap no. 10)
19	Explicitly acknowledge s women's agency, leadership, voice, and decision-making in land governance	1 Gender Blind –	Women's leadership acknowledged in agrifood systems generally, never in land governance specifically. Land-governance institutions (customary boards, allocation/titling authorities) are absent from both documents.	1 Gender Blind –	Women's participation acknowledged via the Gender Network in ECOWAP governance broadly, never in land governance.	CAADP: Both CAADP documents: absence of land-governance content; cf. Strategy & Action Plan: SO4 leadership provisions (non-land) ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: ECOWAP and RAIPFNS leadership (Gender Group) — absence of land-governance linkage
20	Explicitly includes measures to address women's agency, leadership, voice, and decision-making in land governance	1 Gender Blind –	No measure addresses women's participation in land-governance institutions; leadership measures apply to value chains and generic decision-making bodies.	1 Gender Blind –	No measures on women in land governance.	CAADP: Both CAADP documents: absence throughout ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: absence throughout
21	Explicitly acknowledge s discriminatory customary land tenure and inheritance systems	1 Gender Blind –	'Customary' and 'inheritance' appear zero times across both documents. Since customary allocation and patrilineal inheritance are the principal mechanisms denying women land, this is the single most consequential gap.	1 Gender Blind –	'Customary' and 'inheritance' appear zero times. Complete silence.	CAADP: Both CAADP documents: term-frequency evidence (0 occurrences) ECOWAP: ECOWAP 2025 SOF: term-frequency evidence (0 occurrences)

22	Explicitly includes measures to transform discriminatory customary land tenure and inheritance systems	1 Gender Blind –	No acknowledgement, therefore no transformative measures. Land measures operate at the statutory/policy layer without touching customary systems governing most land women farm.	1 Gender Blind –	No acknowledgement, no measures.	CAADP: Both CAADP documents: absence throughout ECOWAP: 2025 ECOWAP 2025 SOF: absence throughout
23	Explicitly acknowledges and includes institutional mechanisms and accountability for advancing transformative change rather than incremental inclusion	2 Gender Neutral –	Robust general machinery (Biennial Review, eBR, scorecards, NAIP/RAIP integration) with objective-level gender targets, but oriented to incremental inclusion (share of women reached; yield-gap reduction); no mechanism attached to structural or norm-change outcomes.	2 Gender Neutral –	Institutional presence for gender (Gender Network est. 2015; RAIPFNS structures; M&E) and self-critical admission of weak mainstreaming lift it above blind; machinery targets incremental inclusion only.	CAADP: Strategy & Action Plan: M&E / Biennial Review provisions; Annex 1 (results framework note) ECOWAP: 2025 ECOWAP 2025 SOF: Gaps to be addressed (gap no. 2); ECOWAP and RAIPFNS leadership; Monitoring and evaluation