

What about the Women?

Female Headship, Poverty and Vulnerability in Thailand and Vietnam

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether different types of female-headed households in Thailand and Vietnam are disadvantaged in terms of current consumption, exposure to shocks, consumption smoothing capacities, as well as vulnerability to poverty and downside risk. Using a unique panel data set of over 4000 rural households in both countries, we find that female headed households with an absent husband appear to be better off in terms of current consumption in both countries (suggesting a positive impact of remittances). However, de jure female headed households in Thailand and Vietnam are more exposed to shocks and are less able to insure their consumption against income shocks than other households. In line with this finding de jure female headed households are also more vulnerable to perceived downside risk. Instead, de facto female headed households are less vulnerable to poverty and not worse off in terms of vulnerability to perceived downside risk.

Keywords. Poverty, Gender, Vulnerability to Poverty

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