

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE IN TANZANIA: CHALLENGES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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Rural women play a significant role in domestic and socio-economic life of the society such that national development is not possible without developing this important and substantial segment of our society. This paper examined the participation of women in agriculture activities. Data were collected from various publication and journal, papers and articles related to the topic of interest. According to various studies it was discovered that the socio-economic characteristics of the women farmers significantly affect participation of women in agriculture. However, other factors militating against women in their participation in agricultural production are many, some of which are socio-cultural and economic in nature. The task of surmounting such obstacles can be very daunting, even though women have largely succeeded in

“...After decades in which agriculture and nutrition didn't always get the attention ... to the lack of credit, especially for small farmers, most of whom are women. ... and play a role -- because government cannot and should not do this alone...”

President Jakaya Kikwete on the African Development Bank Group Opening Statement at the 47th Annual General Assembly, 31st May 2012 – Arusha – Tanzania.



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rural women play a significant role in domestic and socio-economic life of the society such that national development is not possible without developing this important and substantial segment of our society. This paper examined the participation of women in agriculture activities. Data were collected from various publication and journal, papers and articles related to the topic of interest. According to various studies it was discovered that the socio-economic characteristics of the women farmers significantly affect participation of women in agriculture. However, other factors militating against women in their participation in agricultural production are many, some of which are socio-cultural and economic in nature. The task of surmounting such obstacles can be very daunting, even though women have largely succeeded in overcoming some of them.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Agriculture is a principal source of livelihood for the Tanzanian population (URT, 2003). Agriculture provides 27.8% of Tanzania's GDP (ibid). Women play an essential role in agricultural production (Leavens and Anderson, 2011). The sector is characterized as female intensive, meaning that women comprise a majority of the labor force in agriculture (54%). Moreover, there over 15 million smallholder farmers in the country, more than half of who are women (Nyomora *et al.*, 2012). Most cultivate one and three hectares, with limited access to modern machinery, inputs and improved technologies (ibid). Agriculture also comprises a greater part of women's economic activity than men's: 81% of women, compared to 73% of men, are engaged in agricultural activity. In rural areas, that number rises to 98% for women. Moreover, in Tanzania, the share of adult population working in agriculture is higher than regional averages, especially for women: 81% of the female population works in agriculture in Tanzania, compared to 55% in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

Box 1

There should effective programs and policies to empower African women and allocate more resources towards gender equality and women's empowerment- Honorable Sophia M. Simba, Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children (MCDGC) - 7 April, 2011.

Source: mcdgc.go.tz

Ironically, women are known to be more involved in agricultural activities than men in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. Agriculture is an important source of employment for 84% of economically active women and 80% of economically active men (Blackden and Rwebangira, 2004). Women constitutes 51% of the economically-active labor force in Tanzania and only 4% of women are in paid jobs, as compared with 10% of men (ibid). Data suggest that women comprise 38% of the informal sector, a share that is lower than their 51% share of the active labor force (Blackden and Rwebangira, 2004). Key among these policies are those that help increase incomes of the rural poor. Participation of women in agriculture is inevitable. The role that women play and their position in meeting the challenges of agricultural production and development are quite dominant and prominent (Jeckonia et al., 2012). Their relevance and significance, therefore, cannot be overemphasized (Ibe 1996 and Rahman 2008). Tanzania is among the world's poorest countries with a per-capita income of about US\$ 280 (NBS, 2011).

Tanzania pursued socialist policies which resulted in extended periods where economic performance was clearly below Tanzania's potential (URT, 2005). In the mid-eighties, Tanzania embarked on economic reforms which were not sustained and after an initial

Box 2

"...The impact of higher food prices on women is particularly profound. Women play key roles in Agricultural Societies. Sub-Saharan Africa, Women contribute about 80 % of the total food production. Their contribution is about 65 per cent in Asia and 45% in Latin America. In rural communities, in particular, women play a central role in ensuring food security; when women have access to income they tend to spend a high percentage on food for the family, while men tend to spend more on themselves. When there is less money for food, women go hungry. The challenge is on how to enable them use their land more productively (Mizengo Pinda, 2008)

Source; Eleventh Sokoine Memorial Lecture, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, 17th October 2008.

period of economic growth in the late eighties, the early nineties were again characterized by macro-economic disequilibria and poor economic growth.

According to the United Republic of Tanzania data (URT) (2003b) showed that 98% of the rural women defined as economically active are engaged in agriculture and produce a substantial share of the food crops for both household consumption and for export.

Moreover, women constitute 61% of the farmers in the communal areas and comprise at least 70% of the labour force in this area (ibid). Agriculture provides 70% of employment and 30 % of Sub-Saharan Africa's gross domestic product. Cognizant, the sector contributes 27.8% of GDP in Tanzania (Tanzania Economy Profile), 30% of the GDP in Kenya, 37% in Uganda, 33% in Rwanda and 43% in Burundi.

According to Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) press release on budget analysis 2010/2011. The Government of Tanzania allocated 7.78% of the budget to

Agriculture compared to the 10% target of Maputo accord. The budget suggests that the needs of organised large scale agriculture producers are prioritized in terms of planned expenditures as well as numerous tax and tariff exemptions.

Furthermore, women are responsible for as much as 80% of the staple food items and provide 70-80 % of all agricultural labor and 90 % of all labor involving food production in Uganda, 75% in Kenya, 90% in Rwanda and 70 -80 % in Burundi. Increasing attention is also being given to the role of smallholder subsistence agriculture in ensuring the food security of the continent, as 73% of the rural population consists of smallholder farmers (IFAD, 1993:6). Hence women empowerment is paramount important this segment want to enjoy form the sector.

By most accounts, women in Tanzania take charge of weeding, harvesting, processing and storing food crops; they also contribute significantly to these tasks for cash crops, though men tend to help more with agricultural tasks for cash crops (National Sample Census of Agriculture, 1996; Keller (1999) cited in Ellis (2007). Accounts of specific divisions of labor differ, one source found that tasks in which men tend to contribute more include site clearing and land preparation and heavy-labor tasks like construction of fences. The project by FAO in Mogabiri, Mara region found that generally in crop production, men and women participate fairly equally in land clearance, land preparation, sowing and planting, while women take most responsibility for weeding, harvesting, transportation, threshing, processing and storage. National Sample Census in Agriculture (NSCA) data from 2002-03 found no significant difference between men's and women's responsibilities for crop-related activities with data that was not disaggregated by cash and food crops. The analysis did find that men strongly dominated animal husbandry and construction. Conflictingly, another analysis of earlier NSCA data found significant differences between men's and women's agricultural responsibilities, and produced

Moreover, this abstract paper is in line with current government efforts to empower women and enhance their productivity; Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to reduce hunger and poverty by 2015 and National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGPR) programme in reducing the prevalence of income poverty in Tanzania of which according to the household budget survey of 2000/01 the proportion of population below the national basic needs such as food, shelter and water is 35.7 % (URT, 2005). Moreover, this s policy brief is in line with Tanzania Agricultural Food Security Investment Plan (TAFSIP), Agriculture Sector Development Plan (ASDP) and Agriculture first "Kilimo Kwanza" (2011) that promotes Agriculture and food security in the country.

2.1. Definition of Key Terms

- **Gender inequality;**

Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure and hormonal differences

- **Gender mainstreaming**

It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated (ILO, 2012). The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

2.2. Methodology

This part aim at explaining the methodology used in conducting the study and justification for using those methods. It describes the rationale for the selected techniques and procedures and data collection methods and data analysis and presentation plan. Secondary data was the main source used to obtain sufficient and realistic information (Kothari, 2004). This method included review of relevant literature including journals, papers, thesis and various documentation. Under this design the data was collected from the following sources; Sokoine National Agricultural Library (SNAL), Tanzania Bureau of Statistics, websites, journals and other sources relevant to the study. This approach was very useful hence the reviewer selected the relevant articles for the study.

Box 3

Rural women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. In Tanzania women make up 70 percent of agricultural labour force (Courtesy of FAO)

3. KEY FINDINGS ON WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE

Findings from a study financed by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) on the role of women in agriculture revealed that women make up more that 50% percent of agricultural labour force in East Africa (FAO, 2011).

Smallholder farmers characterize Tanzanian agriculture. The average size of land cultivated varies between less than 1 ha to 3 ha of land. Agriculture accounts for three

quarters of merchandise exports and represents a source of livelihood to about 80% of the population (URT, 2003). Agricultural income is the main source of income for the poor, especially in rural areas. But households that rely heavily on such income tend to be extremely poor. The poor are more likely to grow and sell crops than the non-poor, but the majority of production is not sold but consumed by the households.

In Tanzania women make up 70 percent of agricultural labour force (URT, 2003b). Yet, in spite of these, widespread assumption that men and not women make the key farm management decisions has prevailed. Sadly, farmers in the Tanzania are among the voiceless, especially with respect to influencing agricultural policies. Such policies, which are aimed at increasing food security and food production, tend to underestimate or totally ignore women's role in both production and the general decision-making process within the household.

Socio-economic characteristics of the farmers, among other factors, affect their decision-making in agriculture. (Source: IFAD's Governing Council- 14- February 2007)

However, gender inequality which adversely affects their overall performance and output has persistently manifested in a number of ways: high level of poverty (World Bank, 2001), vulnerability to external and uncontrollable hazards (IDB, 2000), low strength or energy level (Kaul, 1996), low educational attainment (Filmer, 1996), poor anthropometric variables (Kaul, 1996) marginalization by agricultural extension (FAO, 2006), high productive and reproductive work load (Commonwealth, 1992), and restricted access to productive resources (Saito and Spurling, 1992; Saito *et al*, 1994; Quisumbing, 1994; Gray and Kevan, 1996). It is common knowledge that gender inequality is one of the most pervasive forms of inequality, particularly because it cuts across other forms of inequality (Franklin, 2007). Different rules, norms and values govern the gender division of labour and the gender distribution of resources, responsibilities, agency and power. These are critical elements for understanding the nature of gender inequality in different societies. Gender segmentation in household arrangements in sub-Saharan Africa is prevalent in the face of highly complex lineage-based homesteads. Much of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) is matrilineal, with women's access to land being through usufruct rights through their husband's lineage group. Since women's obligation to the family includes provision of food and caring for their children, they are granted this access to enable them carry out these responsibilities.

In parts of West Africa women generally have usufruct rights to separate holdings through their husband's lineage. Women's low participation in national and regional policy-making, their invisibility in national statistics and their low participation in extension services have meant that those issues of most concern to women have been neglected in the design and implementation of many development policies and programmes. In some countries such as the Benin Republic, the programmes developed were far from addressing the main concerns of women as they were neither involved in policy making decisions nor were they directly consulted to articulate their needs. In

some countries, despite legislative and tenure changes in favour of smallholders, women continued to be placed in a disadvantaged position in terms of access to land. Women's access to land was rarely discussed and thus their benefits from land reforms were few (FAO, 1988).

The study by Franklin (2007) in nine countries in Africa, he found that while women are present in greater degrees in agricultural/rural organizations, they tend to comprise a low proportion of the membership and are often not represented in the higher levels of leadership. While women's membership is most often limited by their lack of formal land ownership, many rural organizations do not sufficiently concern themselves with the needs of rural women. Women's participation as office holders in these organizations tends to be even more limited. The most striking example is in Zimbabwe, where despite the fact that women constitute 75% of the members in the Zimbabwe Farmers Unions, only 5% of the officials are women. However, the largest numbers of women decision makers are found in the Sudan, where 14% of the office holders in agricultural cooperatives are graduate women. In Africa, few women hold policy-making positions at the national level and those that do tend to be concentrated in social ministries such as education, health and women affairs. Only rarely do women hold such positions in technical ministries such as agriculture, which has far-reaching implications for the policies generated there. Overall, women hold an extremely low number of decision-making positions in the ministries dealing with agriculture and rural development. It is clear that the sharing of decision-making between genders varies substantially from country to country and among different cultural and ethnic groups within the same country. While women's decision-making power tends to increase in many countries when the husband is not present, men may remain involved in many of the most important decisions

According to Afolabi (2008) on role of women in household economy, food production and food security: focusing on the activities of rural women in Ondo State of Nigeria made a careful analytical study of women's agricultural activities and discovered that they are very strong pillars of the economy in the state. Women in the state are organized into groups, which are often engaged in more than one economic activity. (Source: IFAD, 2007)

Emerging from the study were the following facts: (a) that rural women in the state are major contributors to food production (b) that these rural women have successfully managed human and economic resources to achieve optimum results; (c) that they became employers of labour, thereby reducing unemployment; and (d) that output from the farms of these rural women contributed to reduction in food shortage crisis. By so doing, they contribute substantially to national agricultural output, maintenance of the environment and family food security (Brown *et al.*, 2012).

3.1. Division of labour in Agriculture

Division of Labor in Agriculture	% of hrs spent on task	
	Female	Male
General crop production	56	44
Food crop production	75	25
Land tilling	56	44
Sowing	74	26
Weeding	70	30
Harvesting	71	29
Marketing	73	27

Source: National Sample Census of Agriculture, 1996. Keller (1999) cited in Ellis (2007)

Furthermore, Overholt *et al.*, (1984) described five patterns of women’s involvement in crop production as follows:

Box 4

“...Participation and the involvement of women, youth and vulnerable groups in Agriculture are of paramount importance in reduction of rural-urban migration...”- Hon. Stephen Masato Wasira- Former Minister (MAFSC) – Tanzania.

- Separate crops system, where women undertake the responsibility for producing, processing and marketing subsistence crops, while men handle cash crops
- Separate fields system, where women and men produce same crops but on different fields
- Separate tasks systems, where much of the work in the cropping cycle is assigned by gender, and while men prepare the ground, women do the planting, weeding and harvesting.

- Shared task system, where men and women undertake same tasks on same crops, especially during labour bottlenecks like weeding and harvesting; and women-managed farms with *de facto* situations, where men are away for a period of time and women managed the farm in their absence; and *de jure* situations, where farms are controlled by widowed, divorced, abandoned or never-married

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Box 8

Agriculture and Livestock Policy Statement

In order to enhance and guarantee women's access to land and security of tenure, women will be entitled to acquire land in their own right not only through purchases but also the land through allocations. However, inheritance of clan land will continue to be governed by custom and tradition provided such custom and tradition is not contrary to the constitution and is not repugnant to principles of natural justice. (URT,1997)

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1. National Land Policy and Women Access to Land

The overall objective of the national land policy of 1997 was to promote and ensure land tenure system, encourage the optimal use of land resources, and facilitate broad based social economic development without upsetting or endangering the ecological balance of the environment. Moreover all land in Tanzania is public land vested in the president as trustee on behalf of all citizens. According to section 4.2.1 of the National land policy of 1997b women access to land under customary law, women generally have inferior land rights relative to men and their access to land indirect and insecure. Traditional provisions which used to protect women's land use rights have been eroded. In allocating land village councils have been guided by custom and have continued to discriminate against women by allocating land to heads of households who are usually men.

Box 7

Agriculture and Livestock Policy (1997) on Women Participation in Agriculture

According to Agricultural and Livestock Policy 1997. It is estimated that the ratio of males to females in the agricultural sector is 1:1.5. Women in Tanzania produce about 70% of the food crops and also bear substantial responsibilities for many aspects of export crops and livestock production. However, their access to productive resources (land, water etc.), supportive services (marketing services, credit and labor saving facilities etc.) and income arising from agricultural production is severely limited by social and traditional factors..(URT,1997)

5. CONCLUSION

The contribution made by rural women to agricultural production and rural development in Tanzania is grossly underappreciated in spite of the dominant role women play in the sector. That women compete more favourably with their men folks in terms of their over-participation in agricultural activities and contribution to household economy and food security would be an understatement. The survival and sustenance of agriculture and rural development in Tanzania, as well as in many sub-Saharan Africa countries, rest squarely on the rural women. They therefore deserve to be given due recognition as far as participation in agriculture is concerned.

5.1. Recommendations and Implications

Rural women's productive role in agriculture continues to be underestimated in many countries including Tanzania as unpaid workers are frequently excluded from national statistics and/or farm women are considered housewives in agricultural statistics. Such underestimation must be addressed in order to clearly demonstrate the importance of rural women-in-agricultural production.

- Support systems for women farmers within a holistic gender-sensitive framework are urgently needed to form a policy development, project design and implementation agenda.
- Women must be directly involved with the development and implementation of the new technology especially in production, processing and marketing.
- Government should have police related to legal right for women to use lands, women can then pledge them as collateral when applying for bank loans.
- Government should encourage efficient and sustainable use of the existing cultivable land, by further investing in agricultural research and extension, with a view to increase the agricultural output as well as the corresponding income for households especially for those investing in commercial agriculture.

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