

## SHORT NOTE

### **Rural women participation in the agricultural activities in the Gezira Scheme, Sudan**

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Women's role in agricultural production in the third world is substantial. In the rural areas of the developing world, female labour is the most important factor of production that had been underestimated. Almost 87% of the female labour force are working in the agricultural sector and most of the food produced for domestic consumption is produced by women. In Sudan, women represent 49% of the farmers in the irrigated sector and 57% in the rain-fed traditional sector (FAO, 1994).

Women in the rain-fed traditional sector are primarily subsistent farmers but they also work as seasonal wage labourers in the rain-fed mechanized sector. In the irrigated sector, women play bigger roles according to the studies of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (1987), which stated that women spent about 41% of their daily working hours in farming activities. Women contribution to the agricultural labour in the irrigated sector in Sudan takes four forms:

- Family labour (unpaid) where women work on their husband's or father's farm.
- Women farmers, these represent 12% in the Gezira Scheme and 10% in the Rahad Scheme.
- Permanent migrant labour, where the women are hired to do seasonal operations.
- Seasonal migrant labour, who works in cotton picking where the women represent 80% of this labour force (FAO, 1996).

Women also play an important role in the field of animal production and animal rearing inside the house (Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, 1997).

Rural women in the Gezira play an important role in agricultural production. They work beside men in most of the agricultural operations that follow land preparation. However, the main operation in which women contribute significantly to farm labour, is cotton picking (Gussm Elseed, 1983).

This study is intended to investigate women participation in irrigated agricultural activities. Although women play a sizeable role in agricultural activities in the modern irrigated agricultural sector, this role is not acknowledged.

A questionnaire and interviews of the respondents were used, 100 respondents were selected using quota sampling procedure, from 5 villages in the Gezira Scheme, the villages namely were, Elhoosh, Elsooreeba, Wad Alnaeem, Wadi shaier, and Um magaad, representing different groups. In addition, secondary data from previous studies and observations were used. A descriptive analysis (frequencies and percentages) was employed.

The results showed that the majority of the respondents (70%) in the area of the study were in active working age (20-49) years. Most of the respondents in the area of study (79%) participated in agricultural work.

Table 1 reveals that 60% of the respondents worked not less than five years in agricultural work, they were considered as expert farmers.

Farm ownership was very poor in the area of study among the respondents. Self-owned farms represented 22% and most of the farms are owned by other persons or institutions, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents by number of years experience in agriculture.

Years of experience	Frequency	%
1-2	06	06
3-4	13	13
5-6	03	03
More than 6	57	57
Not working in agriculture	21	21
Total	100	100

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents by farm ownership.

Kind of farm ownership	Frequency	%
Self-owned	22	22
Family or husband's	13	13
Cooperative or project	41	41
Rented or shared	03	03
Not working in agriculture	21	21
Total	100	100

The results in Table 3 reveal that women in the Gezira participate more in all agricultural activities. Eight percent of the respondents participate in all agricultural activities, which means that they do not work full hours in the field but may participate in some activities only. Also, 34% of the respondents participate in most agricultural activities in the farm. This indicates that women in the Gezira engage more in field work. While 25% of the respondents participate in planting and harvesting only and women in the Gezira participate more in cotton picking which is a pure women activity, either in their farms or as daily-paid labourers. The results also show that 9% of the respondents participate in the agricultural activities indirectly through preparing food and inputs.

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to the type of agricultural work they do in the farm.

Type of agricultural work	Frequency	%
Participate in all agric. activities	08	
Participate in most of agric. activities	34	08
Participate in planting and harvesting	25	34
Participate in preparing food and inputs	09	25
Caring for livestock	03	09
Not working in agriculture	21	03
		21
Total	100	100

As shown in Table 4 most of the respondents are not engaged in agriculture all the time, but it is clear that 64% of them work not less than six hours per day in addition to the domestic work which is a heavy burden for rural women. This indicates that women in the Gezira are more active in agriculture and they depend mainly on it for generating income.

Table 4. Distribution of the respondents by daily working hours in the farm.

Number of working hours	Frequency	%
The entire day	24	24
Six hours per day	40	40
Less than six hours per day	15	15
Not working in agriculture	21	21
Total	100	100

Table 5 shows the distribution of the respondents by their daily unpaid activities. Very few of the respondents (5%) have no responsibilities for any type of activities as there is always somebody working for them even in their domestic work. It is clear that the domestic work is the dominant unpaid activity for the respondents. These results indicate that women burdens are very heavy to bear, and all the above mentioned activities are considered additional and unpaid activities for the women in the area of the study.

Table 5. Distribution of the respondents by performance of unpaid activities.

Unpaid activity	Frequency	%
No activity	05	05
Domestic activities	19	19
Caring for children	08	08
Caring for animals	11	11
Getting drinking water	01	01
Caring for old people	02	02
Fetching fire wood	01	01
Domestic work and caring for children	12	12
Domestic work and caring for animals	24	24
Caring for young animals	09	09
Fetching drinking water and fire wood	08	08
Total	100	100

The study concludes that women have a reasonable participation in agricultural development, and they bear a heavy burden in a form of their domestic work and their work in agriculture for generating family income.

Generally women need to improve their access to control production factors, services and infrastructure facilities and to reduce women workload.

There is more need for access to women studies and information bureau, with a section specialized on rural women and technology to be established with the objectives of continuously monitoring the assessment and dissemination of appropriate technologies and their evolution, whenever possible, to boost rural women's economic involvement.

## REFERENCES

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## مشاركة المرأة الريفية في الأنشطة الزراعية بمشروع الجزيرة ، السودان

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### الخلاصة

أجريت هذه الدراسة لتقييم مشاركة المرأة الريفية في التنمية الزراعية بالمناطق المروية. شملت دراسة حالة المرأة بمشروع الجزيرة. اختيرت عينة الدراسة من خمس قرى، واستخدمت طريقة الكوتة لاختيار 100 امرأة يمثلون عينة الدراسة. المعلومات الأولية جمعت عن طريق المقابلة الشخصية باستخدام استبانة معدة لذلك الغرض. وتم استخدام عدد من الطرق الإحصائية لتحليل المعلومات واختبار فروض الدراسة من بينها الجداول والتكرارات. ومن النتائج التي توصلت إليها الدراسة أن النساء المزارعات بالجزيرة ذوى خبرة في أداء العمليات الزراعية، إضافة إلى ممارستهن للأعمال غير مدفوعة الأجر. واشتملت الدراسة تأسيساً على النتائج عدة توصيات من شأنها أن تسهم في تحسين مشاركة المرأة في التنمية الزراعية بصفة عامة، بجانب توفير الخدمات الزراعية للنساء، وأهمها المدخلات (أسمدة، تقاوي ومبيدات) إضافة لتوفير الخدمات العامة للمرأة الريفية لكي تخفف من الأعباء التي تقوم بها مثل خدمات التعليم، الصحة وتوفير مياه الشرب.