

Examination of gender specific roles in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity in southern Kebbi State

*¹Yohanna John Alhassan, ²Muhammad Alhaji Muhammad and ³Yahaya Musa

¹General Studies Department Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

²Department of Entrepreneurship Education Development, Kebbi State College of Agriculture, Zuru

³Department of Agricultural Technology, College of Agriculture and Animal Science Bakura, Zamfara State, Nigeria

Corresponding author: yjohnalhassan@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The study was carried out to assess the role of men and women in agro-inputs business and to describe the socio-economic characteristic of men and women in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity.

Materials and Methods: Data for the research were obtained from forty eight (48) respondents who were actively involved in land use, water management and agricultural productivity. It was included 24 were men and 24 women which were purposively selected for the study.

Results: Results revealed that the majority (62.5%) of men and women who were actively involved in sustainable land use water management and agricultural productivity had senior secondary school education. Also, majority (81.3%) of land resources were owed by men. Self-generated income was found to be the major source of fund for sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity for both men and women. The types of operations carried out by the male farmers were grouped into three; such as pre-planting operations such as land clearing bush burning, tillage (rigging, harrowing etc), planting operations such as sowing, weeding, fertilizing etc and post planting operations such as harvesting, threshing, packaging, loading/off-loading and driving, while winnowing, processing, marketing, sales and records keeping were mostly done by women (53%). Major challenges to sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity were high taxation (45.1%) and difficulties in sourcing foreign exchange (21.9%).

Conclusion: It was concluded that sustainable land use and water management led to improved agricultural productivity in the study area. Agricultural policies aimed at encouraging more men and women participation in land use, water management and agricultural productivity and low taxation were recommended by the research as ways of addressing the challenges affecting men and women in the execution of their specific roles in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity.

Keywords: Gender specific roles, sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity.

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Introduction

The productivity and sustainability of a land-use system is determined by the interaction between land resources, climate and human activities. Especially in the face of climate change and variability, selecting the right land uses for given biophysical and socio-economic conditions, and implementing SLM, are essential for minimizing land degradation, rehabilitating degraded land, ensuring the sustainable use of land resources (i.e. soils, water and biodiversity) and maximizing resilience (Adegbidi, 2012).

According to Oguntela *et al* (2009) the international development community has recognized that agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the main occupation of the poor. Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural

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crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes.

Many of these activities are not defined as “economically active employment” in national accounts but they are essential to the wellbeing of rural households. This paper contributes to the gender debate in agriculture by assessing the empirical evidence in three areas that has received much attention in the literature: But the agricultural sector in many developing countries is underperforming, in part because women, who represent a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources. Efforts by national governments and the international community to achieve their goals for agricultural development, economic growth and food security will be strengthened and accelerated if they build on the contributions that women make and take steps to alleviate these constraints.

Men and Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not defined as “economically active employment” in national accounts but they are essential to the wellbeing of rural households. This paper contributes to the gender debate in agriculture by assessing the empirical evidence in three areas that have received much attention in the literature (Mtsor *et al.*, 2014).

Mainly rural women are engaged in agricultural activities in three different ways depending on the socio-economic status of their family and regional factors. They work as: Paid Labourers.

Cultivator does labour on their own land, Managers of certain aspects of agricultural production by way of labour supervision and the participation in post-harvest operations. The types of agricultural activities taken up by women include the following: Sowing, Nursery management, Transplanting, Weeding, Irrigation, Fertilizer application, Plant protection, Harvesting, winnowing, storing etc. They also involve in animal related activities as: Cleaning of animal and sheds, Watering of cattle, milking the animals, Fodder collection, preparing dung cakes, Collection farm yard manure. Except grazing, all other livestock management activities are predominantly performed by women. Men, however, share the responsibility of taking care of sick animals. It is evident that the women are playing dominant roles in the livestock production and management activities. Poultry farming is one of the major sources of rural economy. The rate of women participation in poultry farming at household level is central in poultry industry (Hiroiyuki, 2011).

Globally, there is empirical evidence that Men and women have a decisive role in ensuring food security and preserving local agrobiodiversity. Rural men and women are responsible for the integrated management and use of diverse natural resources to meet the daily household needs. With women predominant at all levels-production, pre-harvest, post-harvest processing, packaging, marketing – of the agriculturally value chain commodities, to increase productivity in agriculture, it is imperative to adopt gender specific interventions. An ‘inclusive transformative agricultural policy’ should aim at gender-specific intervention to raise productivity of small farm holdings, integrate women as active agents in rural transformation, and engage men and women in extension services with gender expertise. The importance of involving both men and women in the management of water including agricultural water and ensuring equitable access to and control over water resources have been overwhelmingly recognized by the international community. Agricultural water management has been effective in increasing yields and food production worldwide. Water professionals have developed and promoted agricultural water management techniques such as rainwater harvesting and flood control. In many places, however, planners, engineers, extension staff and

decision-makers still fail to perceive women as farmers. Consequently, policies, programmes and projects frequently overlook the knowledge, tasks, needs and requirements of women and other vulnerable groups (e.g. ethnic groups) in agricultural water management (Dickson, *et al*; 2014).

In many societies, men and women have distinctly different roles in agriculture and food production, roles that are influenced by the social and economic context. Today, urbanization and outmigration of men and youth are changing roles and responsibilities. Women are increasingly taking on greater and more varied responsibilities in farming—including irrigation, managing labor and procuring inputs. The importance of women in agricultural production is increasing in most regions. Although the contributions of women to agriculture and food production are significant, women often lack formal rights to the land they farm and the water resources they need to irrigate their fields. In many regions, women suffer discrimination in land rights with respect to communal lands, which are controlled largely by men. Women also lack status in their communities to influence natural resource governance decisions and practices. According to Okello (2010), Land is an important economic and social asset. It provides opportunities for women and men to generate income and improve the overall well-being of their families and communities. It also gives standing within communities – a point that is often ignored by development programs. A detailed study of Ethiopia's land registration program in three states concluded that registering land jointly in women's and men's names enhanced gender equality. However, additional effort is needed to raise awareness of opportunities to use the land more productively, facilitate access to credit and farm inputs, and strengthen men's and women's legal literacy.

According to World Bank (2013), access to water for irrigation and other domestic and productive purposes has large potential for bringing economic and nutritional benefits to women and men. Women make important contributions to the agricultural and rural economies of all regions of the world however, the exact contribution both in terms of magnitude and of its nature. Rural women perform numerous labour intensive jobs such as weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, cotton stick

collection, separation of seeds from fiber, keeping of livestock and its other associated activities like milking, milk processing, preparation of ghee, etc. Details of activities taken up by women in Agriculture and its allied activities are as follows. Women play an increasingly greater role in agriculture. Ensuring that they have opportunities—equal to those of men—to participate in transforming agriculture is a prerequisite for sustainable intensification. Increased gender equity in agriculture is both a practical and a social justice issue: practical because women are responsible for much of the production by smallholders; and social justice because in many cases they currently do not have rights over land and water resources, nor full access to markets, and often they do not even control the crops they produce. Strategies to promote gender equity must be tailored carefully to the social and economic context.

According to World Bank (2013), women in developing countries receive less than 10% of available credit to expand trade, such as agrobusinesses. This is mainly due to lack of collateral security in rural areas. In order for women to access financial credit, government needs to intervene to encourage the development of rural micro-credit institutions whose regulations are friendly to women. Intervention can be in form of accepting other forms of collateral such as machinery, furniture and any other tangibles that women own.

There is a general belief that sex inequalities issues in areas of ownership and access to productive resources such as land, education, extension services and health care which hitherto have contributed to lower employment opportunity and higher poverty levels. Given that gender matters in all domains of value chain development, which ranges from inputs supply business to production and marketing, there has been established gender issues in agricultural production. Conversely, very little is understood about gender roles on sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity. Spearman rank correction coefficient was used to test hypothesis of the study. Based on this, the study was design to investigate gender specific roles in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity in Southern Kebbi, Nigeria; specific objectives were to assess the role of men and women in agro-inputs business and to describe the socio-economic characteristic of

men and women in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity.

Materials and Methods

This research was carried out in Southern Kebbi State (Zuru Emirate), Nigeria. Zuru Emirate is one of the four Emirates in Kebbi state. The Emirate comprises of four Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely; Danko-Wasagu, Fakai, Sakaba and Zuru. The Emirate is located within latitudes 11° and 12° N and longitudes 4° and 5° E of the equator (NPC. 2006). The state was carved out of the former Sokoto State in 1991; the Emirate is located in the extreme South-eastern part of the state and covers an area of approximately 9,000 square kilometers. It is located on a hilly terrain and is bounded to the north by Gummi Local Government Area of Zamfara State, North-west by Koko Local Government Area, South-west by Yauri Local Government Area, North-east by Bukkuyum Local Government Area of Zamfara State and south by Rijau Local Government Area of Niger state (Girma, 2008).

The estimated population of the Emirate is 582, 106 people (NPC, 2006). The various indigenous cultural and ethnic groups of the Emirate are the Dakkarkari, Fakkawa, Dukkawa, Kelawa, Kambarawa, Katsinawan laka and Achifawa. Other nonindigenous ethnic groups in the area are the Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo and other tribes found in Nigeria. The different religions found in the area are Islam, Christianity and traditionalist, like any other African society, these came as a result of the interaction with the outside world (NPC., 2006). However, the traditional worship of different deities is still upheld in the area with many festivals celebrated at various times of the year. The weather is marked by a single rainy season and long dry season, the average rainfall of the area is between 1025mm and 1050mm/annum. Mean temperature range between 31°C and 38°C, the rainy season is between April to October. The climatic condition of the area is characterized by hot and wet seasons as in the tropics; the months of November to February are the hamattan period. The soil type is sandy loam and rich, which makes it suitable for agriculture (NPC. 2006). It is important to point out that production of agricultural goods in pre-colonial Zuru society was geared mainly towards the production of use-values. This is not to say that exchange did

not take place. There was exchange between the produce peasant families and commodities of non-peasant households who specialized in the production of agricultural implements and other necessities which were fundamental in the working of family units. Animal husbandry was practiced side by side with crop production, even though on limited scale. The people of Zuru Emirate depend largely on the pastoral Fulani for meat, milk and butter. Hunting was the second important economic activity after crop production. Hunting was regarded as a supplementary occupation and was carried on throughout the year because it provides a means of getting meat for consumption. It also serves as a source of obtaining skins of animals for shoes, warfare robes and for making local drums. Other important economic activities are local handicrafts like pot-making and weaving by women and blacksmithing by men (NPC, 2006).

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic Characteristics of Men and Women Land Users

The male respondents (81.3%) were reflecting that agricultural land users' were responsibly male profiting to cater for the wellbeing of their family (Table 1). The findings of majority of male respondents were in agreement with Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009), who reported that women in the rural areas had very limited access to marketing of agro-chemicals and reproductive resources. The findings also revealed that most of the respondents 56.3% were between 31–40 years of age, indicating that the female land users were headed by men in their active age. Only 10.4% were above the age of 50 years. Educational level of the respondents' showed that more than half of the respondents' 62.0% had secondary education. This was followed by those with tertiary level of education, representing 20.8%. Ayansina (2011) reported that small-scale resource-poor farmers in Nigeria are either non-literate or have low level of education. Extension messages should therefore be prepared with the intent of taking care of all and sundry involved in a particular programme of development. Level of educational attainment can enhance the capacity of the sustainable land users to access relevant information on inputs usage and marketing of agricultural commodities (Kotze, 2003). Similarly, majority of the land users 52.0% sourced their funds for agricultural production through

personal savings. Those who source through sales of farm produce constitutes 22.9%, while those sourced from cooperative societies representing only 6.3% of the respondents.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of men and women land and water users

Variable	Percentage (n=100)
Sex	
Male	81.3
Female	18.7
Age (years)	
Less than or equal to 20	4.1
21 – 30	12.5
31 – 40	56.3
41 – 50	16.7
Above 50	10.4
Educational level	
Non formal education	4.2
Primary education	12.5
Secondary education	62.5
Tertiary education	20.8
Sources of funds for Sustainable land use	
Sales of farm produce	22.9
Loan	14.6
Personal saving	52.0
Parents/Relatives	4.2
Cooperative Societies	6.3

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Role of Men and Women in sustainable Land use, water Management and Agricultural productivity

Results showed the level of participation of respondents by gender in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity. It was indicated that 81.3% respondents were into harvesting of agricultural produce, 18.7% were discovered to be involved in operating farm machines, 67.5% participated actively in land clearing, 64.8% were involved in burning debris prior to planting, 35.2% were into tillage practices 73.2% actively involved in threshing agricultural commodities, 70.0% obtained and applied fertilizers on their farms, 89.9% practiced sustained weeding of their crops and 30.0% engaged in packaging processed agricultural output (Table 2).

From the results, it was apparently indicated that male farmers played significant roles in weeding agricultural crops (89.8%), harvesting agricultural produce (81.3%), threshing of harvested crops (73.2%), fertilizer application (70.0%) land clearing and bush burning activities. These activities led to improve agricultural productivity. This implies that men dominated sustainable land use activities, water management and subsequently improved

agricultural output in southern region of Kebbi state and beyond. It was also cleared from the results that female farmers (10.2%) were into livestock rearing venture, (83.5%) were involved in sowing of agricultural seeds, (52.9%) were extensively involved into winnowing especially cereal crops, (82.8%) actively participated/involved in processing harvested agricultural produce, (10.7%) engaged in milking activities, (81.0%) were into marketing of agricultural produce, (42.4%) engaged in transplanting activities, (39.5%) were into low land irrigation activities and only (51.7%) prominently engaged in weeding activities. The findings were in agreement with the findings of Mtsor and Idisi (2014) which stated that women are mainly involved in the production, winnowing, processing and marketing of such food crops as maize, rice, cassava, yam and palm oil, they are rarely connected with agro-inputs trading. Sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity are interwoven and when adequately utilized by both men and women could lead to improved agricultural productivity.

Table 2: Role of men and women in sustainable land use

Variable	Percentage (n=100)
Men	
Harvesting	81.3
Operating Machines	18.7
Land Clearing	67.5
Bush Burning	64.8
Tillage	35.2
Threshing	73.2
Fertilizer application	70.0
Weeding	89.8
Packaging	30.0
Women	
Keeping Livestock	10.2
Sowing	83.5
Winnowing	52.9
Processing	82.8
Storage	47.1
Milking	10.7
Marketing	81.0
Transplanting	42.4
Irrigation	39.5
Weeding	51.7

Source: Field Survey, 2019.*Multiple responses were recorded

Perceived men and women disparity in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity

Results showed that the majority of the men and women indicated a lot of differences on the methods of land use, water management and

agricultural productivity by gender (Table 3). Total 64.6% of land use activities were carried out by men as compared to 35% by women. Almost all 89.6% of men and women made adequate usage of agro inputs in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity. However, a lot of disparity existed between men and women on their agricultural output in which 41.6% for men and 58.3% for female respectively were their output as found out by the survey.

Table 3: Perceived disparity in Land Use, Water Management, Agro-input use and Agricultural output by gender

Variable	Percentage (n=100)
Differences in Land Use by sex	
Yes	64.6
No	35.4
Disparity in water management	
Men	83.3
Women	16.7
Use of Agro-inputs	
Yes	89.6
No	10.4
Disparity in agricultural output	
Men	41.6
Women	58.3

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Challenges confronting sustainable land use, and agricultural productivity

Results revealed the challenges confronting sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity in which majority 45.1% of the respondents indicated mode of land acquisition as the main constraint affecting sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity in the study area (Table 4). While 21.9% were indicated financial constraints as a factor affecting sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity. Similarly, 18.2% of the respondents saw inadequate agro-inputs as constraint affecting sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity. The findings may not be unconnected with the issues of the problems of pests and diseases facing both crop and animal productivity, the challenges confronting sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity. Empowering men and women requires transformation in the way governments devise budgets, make and enforce laws and policies on sustainable land use, water management that may stimulate small and medium, entrepreneurs', including agro-inputs business.

Table 4: Challenges confronting sustainable land use and agricultural productivity

Variables	Percentage	Rank
Mode of Land Acquisition	18.2	3 rd
Financial Constraints	45.1	1 st
Inadequate Agro-inputs	21.9	2 nd
Problem of Pests and Diseases	14.6	4 th
Inadequate Precipitation	8.8	5 th

*Multiple responses were recorded. Field survey-2019.

Conclusion

There were low women participation in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity in most agriculturally inclined activities in the study area compared to their men counterpart. However, women were more involved in processing, marketing and record keeping activities while men were mostly involved in activities such as land clearing, bush burning, tillage, operating machines, harvesting and threshing. Men and Women should have equal access to productive resources like land to be able to actively participate in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural activities and other income generating activities. This may lead to employment opportunity and reduce poverty level among women and men. Furthermore, the study revealed mode of land acquisition as the major constraint affecting sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity in the study areas. Agricultural policies aimed at encouraging and promoting more men and women participation in sustainable land use, water management and agricultural productivity should be encouraged. Due attention to be given by government to both men and women groups by empowering them in land use activities and agricultural development so as to contribute in agro-input utilization and agro- business activities. Men and Women be given special courtesy in the Anchored Borrowing Programme of the FGN/CBN and by reducing the administrative bottlenecks associated with bank loans. The government should put in place a law to compel private organizations and other institutions to mainstream gender in their operations. Systematic participatory methodologies can effectively support diagnosis of gender roles and

thus enable decision makers to achieve greater gender equity.

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