

Chapter 6

Gender Participation in Kano River Irrigation Project, Kura

AbdulRahim M. Adekunle and Muhammad N. Bala

Introduction

In Nigeria, the agricultural work environment is observed to be dominated by males from planning to implementation stage and they mostly benefit from the agricultural work (UNDP, 1997). Besides the observed dominance of men over women in agricultural work environment, the few women involved in farming have restricted access to factors of production such as land, labour and capital. This observed generalised problem is hereby specifically examined in the Kano river irrigation project at Kura, Kano State. The paper is divided into five sections; besides the introduction, section two contains the theoretical framework and the related literature while the study area and the methodology are described in the third section. The results and discussion of the extent of disparities in gender participation and access to agricultural factors of production are in section four while the concluding remarks are in the last section.

Conceptualising Gender Disparities in Production

Longwe Gender Frame work

The theoretical basis of this study is Longwe Gender Framework referred to as women's empowerment framework. This framework was developed as an instrument for assessing women participation in and access to benefits derived from any community development project. It pointed out that in most community development activities, women are left behind. Therefore, an enabling environment should be given to them in order to empower them through participation in policy formulation (decision making) and implementation. Consequently, in order to assess the level of gender participation in the Kano river irrigation project, the Longwe framework is considered significant. This is because it reveals gender gap that arises in work environment which include the rigid division of labour and unequal access to resources; in other words, inequalities in the amount of work inputs or benefits procured by men and women. The inequality points to gender discrimination in access to, and benefits derived from, shared community development.

Furthermore, in this theory, it is postulated that conscience encompass the realisation of any level of plights through systematic discrimination against a particular set or social group which disfavour or affect mutual relationship and general well being of the others. Apparently, in most communities women are the disfavoured group. This is as a result of socially and culturally constructed roles of men and women. These stand out as impediments or stumbling block to their development. Furthermore, the framework considers gender disparity in access to resource and service (factors of production) in work environment. The major problem associated with human development is the thrust of this study.

Gender Participation and Access to Factors of Agricultural Production in Irrigation Work Environment

Women Status: Women constitute half of the world's population and contribute significantly to the wellbeing of the human race. Women play five key roles; as mother, producer, home manager, community and socio-cultural and political activists (Enemu, 1999). In spite of these enormous roles by women, they are still placed in subordinate position in most work environments. Their contributions are often unrecognised and unrewarded (Op cit). These problems have been popularised in the 1995 Beijing fourth World Conference on women which enjoins governments, international communities and nongovernmental organisations amongst others to take strategic actions on gender inequalities in all endeavours which include management of natural resources.

Gender Participation in Irrigation Farming

Agriculture is the act of crop production and animal rearing. In agricultural production, women produce 70 %- 80 % of food grain through irrigation that is consumed in developing countries including Nigeria (World Bank, 2000). In spite of women involvement in household maintenance work such as cooking, cleaning, fetching fuel wood and water, still they constitute 40% of the world's work force in agriculture. The women grow at least 50% of the worlds food which is almost 80% in some African countries (Op cit). Similarly, according to Brohi (2006), women in agriculture account for 51% of the agricultural labour force around the globe. They participate in land clearing, planting, weeding, harvesting, winnowing, drying, harvesting, threshing and rearing of livestock. In Bangladash, women performance in irrigation activities is higher than that of their men counterpart (Jordans and Zwartereen 1996). In

Zanzibar 74% of women contribute to the labour force in irrigation farming (FAO, 1997).

Despite the fact that the contribution of women in irrigation is remarkably commendable globally, yet, they are considered as inferior sex by most patriarchal societies which incapacitate their ability to participate in socio-economic and environmental decision making that concern their lives. This constrains their access to community resource and full integration into most development projects which are aimed at improving their well-being. This fact is akin to Riley's (1997) postulation that the ability to act requires access to resources such as land, finance, education amongst others which most women seem to be lacking.

Gender Access to Factors of Agricultural Production

The extent of accessibility to factors of production positively correlates with the extent of productivity and empowerment. This serves as vital device in assessing the level of community participation in any environmental and development performance. It indeed serves as indicator to the nature of work environment with respect to level of job satisfaction. Factor of production in agriculture are land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship.

In Burkina-Faso, irrigation agencies vested far reaching decision making power in male farmers only and excluded female farmers. This subjected women farmers to having no claim or rights to water and irrigated lands and caused decline in productivity (Koppen, 2001). Among the Beti women of South Central Cameroun, most of the farm work was performed by women, while men controlled the production process and the initial clearing that defined the field size and length of fallow. Most of the small holder schemes have either failed or are underutilized due to negligence and poor management techniques and

inadequate access to inputs and credit facilities (Fleshman, 2006). This rendered irrigated farm products expensive which calls for improved access to and reduction of subsidies on factors of production.

Poor infrastructure and lack of experience coupled with high level of illiteracy among men and women act as obstacles to accessing agricultural loans from banks or saving associations (World Bank, 2000). This affects more women than men because of collateral securities required, especially in form of land ownership in order to have access to credit facilities. Thus, women are viewed as being high credit risk because they hardly own personal land. Tradition and custom have been identified to limit women's control over land and money matters, especially with regard to the mobility and interaction necessary to access credit facilities. Consequently, in many countries, women often resort to obtaining credits informally and generally from family members which in most situation leads to household and community breakdown.

Study Area and Methodology

Kura in Kano State is located between longitudes 8° 21' E to 8° 38' E and latitudes 11° 33' N to 11° 52' N. It is made up of ten administrative wards. The headquarters of the irrigation project is situated at Kura, 35 km south west of Kano, along Zaria-Kano road. The data collected was on gender activities and the extent of accessibility to factors of agricultural production. The data was collected from primary and secondary sources. The instruments used for primary data collection were questionnaires and check list questions for Focused Group Discussion. Cluster random sampling technique was used to sample five sectors out of the 21 sectors under five zones of the project areas. The five sectors sampled are Makwaros Gabas, Domawa, Gori North (Rakauna), Agolas, and Karfi Dalili. In each of the sectors,

40% of the project beneficiaries which translate to 77 respondents out of 192 farmers in the entire project area (60 men and 17 women) were randomly selected from the males and female farmers' lists in the project area. For the Focus Group Discussion, there were five groups, one each from the five sectors. Each of the groups had 8-10 participants who responded to the set of questions presented as checklist. The responses were tape recorded and translated from Hausa language to English.

Results and Discussion

Gender Participation in irrigation Agriculture

The respondents are 60 male and 17 females. This certainly informs that more men participate in the irrigation farming than women. In other words, 56% difference in participation with attendant production gap. The entire females are married and all fall within the age group of 20 to 45years. The outcome of the Focus Group revealed that the men are practically involved in land preparation, sowing, weeding, daily maintenance of the crops, fertilizer applications and harvesting. The female group finances most of the production activities of their farms under the custody and supervision of their husbands, male children or caretakers. The aspect where female physically participate is in harvesting, especially in maize which involves removing the maize from the stalk. They also participate in transplanting of onions, in hand weeding, winnowing and bagging of harvested cereal crops which is dominated by aged women. The problems inhibiting full participation in the irrigation farming activity are listed as follows: shortage of fund, water and the cultural factor of stereotyping. The first two problems cut across the entire participants while the third is focused on women in irrigation agriculture.

The proportional disaggregation of the problems are however as follows; 30% of both male and female complained

about shortage of fund; when further disaggregated 18% of the women participants complained about fund while 33% of the males talked about paucity of fund. 18 % male and female spoke about inadequate water for irrigation due to blockages at the upper part of the canal. At the level of disaggregation, 47% of the women and 10% of the men are facing the dilemma of water inadequacy on their farms. The cultural factor/ stereotyping problem is exclusively presented by the entire women who are 22% of the whole irrigation farmers in the Kano project area. It is to be noted from the Focused Group Discussion that there is vehement rejection of women, especially the middle age, in physical participation in irrigation activities due to cultural norms and rules which is strongly not unconnected to being married and as such, their husbands mostly frown at their physical involvement. The women rather employ labour for their farm activities.

Access to Agricultural Factors of Production

Land: Whereas 67% of the men own their plots, 37% of the women own their plots. Thus, the difference of 33% of men and 63% women have to hire farm plots. The result also indicated that men have 30% level of access to land more than women. The extent of irrigable land available to cultivation between man and woman indicated that men have 37% while female have 24%. This indicates that women are 13% backward in production than men. The mode of acquisition of the irrigable land by rent as earlier discussed reveals that 33% male and 63% female acquire through rent. The mode of inheritance is 40% and 33% for men and women, respectively. In purchase category men occupy 27% to 7% women. The value indicated in all spheres men have better access than women when it comes to irrigable land within the context of mode of acquisition, it is the inheritance mode that has closer gap of 7% between men and women unlike, 30% in difference in respect of rent and

20% difference as regards purchase. Perhaps, the Islamic intervention which has been used in the aspect of inheritance that favours minimal differentials between men and women explained the small difference.

Labour: The sources of labour indentified are self, hired and family labour, 68% of the men employ hired labour in addition to self and family labour. However, the entire women make use of hired labour to complement their labour needs at one stage or the other in their farm work. It is important to note that 32% of the men do not hire any labour at all. They, however, occasionally use family labour. It is also to be noted that the labour of girls and old women are not exempted in the farm work as further elucidated from the Focused Group Discussion.

Capital: The source of capital for takeoff of production by both male and female are through self and family assistance. It is unfortunate that both male and female had no credit facilities. It is however, apparent that most of the women in irrigation agriculture had more money to spend on their farms than their male counterparts. This is in spite of the fact that the women hire labour throughout the process of their agriculture activities. The reason might not be unconnected to the fact that men take virtually the daily domestic expenditures while women keep their monies largely unspent on family upkeep

Concluding Remarks

From the foregoing, it is quite obvious that males participate more in irrigation farm than the females. In terms of accessibility to the basic factors of production men are more advantaged than women, except in the area of finance where some of the females are more financially advantaged than the men. The aspect of gender stereotyping is also significant

in the Kano irrigation work environment. In the light of this, women who have limited land rights should be strengthened by land rights law to invest in new infrastructures and processes of irrigation management transfer which offer such opportunity of reallocating land in the areas affected.

References

- Brohi, S (2006) NDP Irrigation Reforms lacks gender equality:
Cited at *www. Telmedpak.com/ Agriculture news*
- Eneomou, A. U (1998) "Gender and women Empowerment" In
Enomou, F. and Anifowose R. (Eds) *Element of Politics*.
Malhouse press Ltd, Lagos.
- Fleshman, M (2006) "Boosting African Farm Yields". *Africa
Renewal*, Vol. 20 No.2.
- FAO (1997) "Assessment of the socio-economic impact of
Smallholder irrigation Development on Smaller holder
farmers in Zimbabwe" *A report prepared for FAO*.
- Jordans, E. H., Zarteveen M. Z. (1996) "Gender analysis of
irrigation programme" *International Irrigation Management
Institute Bangladesh*. Colombo, Sri Lanka,
- Koppen, B. V. (2001) "Gender Analysis for Improved
Performance" In Hilmy, S. and Charles, L.A (Ed) *Private
Irrigation in Sub- Saharan African*. International Water
Management Institute, FAO. ACP – EU and Sterling VA.
- Riley, N. E (1997) "Gender Power Population Change" *Population
Bulletin Vol.52 No..*
- UNDP, (1997) *Nigeria Human Resources Development Reports*, Lagos,
p.9
- World Bank (2000) *Implementation Completion Reports of the National
Fadama Development Project, Nigeria*, p.2-10.