

# EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN – IN – AGRICULTURE IN IBARAPA EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*In Nigeria, agricultural extension services and supports have traditionally been focused on men and their production needs despite the fact that women make up 60 to 80 percent of the agricultural labour force and produce two third of the food crops. Unfortunately, more than two-third of the world poorest who relied solely on agriculture and related activities are women, despite their role in agriculture. Based on this premise this survey was conducted to determine the activities of women – in – agriculture in Ibarapa East Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State, Nigeria, with the intention of identifying reasons and constraints to their active participation. Purposive sampling of 120 women in agriculture was carried out. The results obtained from the survey revealed that major constraints to women active participation in agriculture, in order of their importance, were non-access to finance, Fulani herdsmen menace, high cost of farm inputs, unpredictable weather and inadequate extension support services. The study also showed that majority of the respondents engaged in agriculture purposely to provide foods for their families and to earn income for household sustenance. Hence, the paper recommended that empowering women farmers by governments and philanthropists at all tiers will result in socio-economic improvement of the community as they channel their renewed empowerment and income to educating their children and household sustenance.*

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## **Introduction**

Around the world, resilient and resourceful rural women contribute in a multitude of ways through different livelihood strategies to lifting their families and communities out of poverty. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. They constitute a significant proportion of the labour on their family farms – whether producing for household consumption or for enterprise or both (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005). 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. They also, work in permanent and temporary employment and work along a rural-urban continuum and cross-border context, with increasing numbers of rural women migrating for daily, seasonal, or permanent work in urban areas (Hill, 2011). Although, rural women work long hours but many of their activities are not defined as “economically active employment” in national accounts but are essential to the well-being of their households (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2011).

Therefore, the involvement of women in agricultural activities cannot be underestimated as they play vital roles in food production chain and food security. An

interesting aspect of this is that they combine their home chores with various on-farm and off-farm operations they are involved to successfully sustain the household. Gender roles prevent nursing mothers and widows from engaging in long distance trade, thereby forcing them to sell their agricultural produce in the local market.

The role women play in agriculture and the rural society is fundamental to agricultural and rural development in sub-Saharan Africa. The Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA, 1993) reported that women in Africa make up more than one-third of the farming work force. In another report by Fresco (1998), rural women accounted for 70% of agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, and 60%-90% of them engaged in marketing and food processing. Also, 4-10% agricultural workers in the world were also reported to be women (United Nations, 1986).

In Nigeria, women produce 60 - 80 % of the agricultural food in the country (Ogunbameru and Pandey, 1992; Buckland and Haleegoah, 1996). According to Ironkwe and Ekwe (1998) more than 60% of the agricultural production is carried out by women in the Nigerian traditional setting. Mijindadi (1993) estimated that women are responsible for 70% of actual farm work and constitute up to 60% of the farming population in Nigeria. This report was supported by Yahaya (2002) who observed that 76% of women from Oyo and Bauchi states were actively involved in farming activities or were engaged in their husbands' farms. The author further stated that even women in religious seclusion (Purdah) generate substantial income through food processing. Benjamin (1998) observed that Nigeria women generally achieved farming objectives through collective work. The spirit of cooperatives in Africa has been cultivated and expressed among its members in different ways. However, the

agricultural activities of women go beyond crop production to other agricultural aspects like fisheries, rabbitry, poultry, and small ruminants rearing as well as distribution and processing of agricultural produce.

Unfortunately, despite the stated roles of women in agriculture and rural development, more than two-third of the world poorest who relied solely on agriculture and related activities are women (Madeley, 2008). Jaggins, Samanta and Olawoye (1997) also observed that in spite of the contributions of women to household welfare, agricultural productivity and economic growth, they continue to be marginalized and undervalued in many agricultural and economic policies while men's contributions remain central, often the sole focus of attention. Nwaze (2010) while reporting on the progress made by the International Fund for Agricultural Development in 2009 in eliminating poverty and hunger in the developing countries suggested the need to focus our energy increasingly on women and entrepreneurs who are engaged in agriculture, marketing and other agro-services.

Categorically, women in Nigeria have little access to productive resources such as finance, land and information. A major constraint is their lack of land titles which prevents them from exercising or improving their expertise in farming activities because of security of tenure (Famoriyo, 1979; Hills, 2011; Oladejo, Olawuyi & Anjorin, 2011). Women have, at best, only usufructuary rights and not permanent land tenancy and most use a part of their husbands' land and consequently their plots were generally small. Folashade (1991) emphasized that lack of separate land for women and inadequate contact with extension agents were serious constraints faced by women farmers.

In addition, many women's work in agriculture is unpaid, but some women are employed as agricultural labourers (Karl,

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1997). It has traditionally been difficult for women to obtain bank loans or other forms of credit through the banking system because they do not generally own land or other assets (Hartwich, Kormawa, Bisallah, Odufote & Polycarp, 2010). It has been observed that less than 10% of women had access to extension and farm inputs and less than 7% had access to credit (Karl, 1997). Also, Saito and Surling (1993) observed that women did not have access to adequate agricultural information and innovations as majority of them used low yielding and unimproved planting materials, primitive and labour intensive farm implements, traditional farming practices, which have adversely affected agricultural production.

Again, women and men living in rural areas, particularly those that typically face environmental shocks (droughts, floods, etc.), face substantial impacts of the natural hazards. Global warming poses significant threats to agricultural production and trade and consequently increases the risks of malnutrition and extreme hunger. However, recent research has indicated that global warming can have differential impacts on women and men because of the different roles and responsibilities they have, for example, in collecting fuel wood and water for their families' use. Hills (2011) suggested that mitigation and adaptation policies and strategies will be best served by understanding the differential constraints of women and men and the impacts they face. Moreover, such policies will be more effective if they learn from and build on the different environmental and resource knowledge and skills those rural women and men hold because of their particular roles and responsibilities.

### **Objectives of the study**

Based on the above premises, this study was conducted with the main objective of determining the activities of women – in – agriculture in Ibarapa East LGA of Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives included the following:

- (i) profiling of the socio-economic characteristics of women – in – agriculture;
- (ii) determination of reasons for women participation in agriculture in Ibarapa - East LGA of Oyo State; and,
- (iii) examination of various challenges confronting women in agriculture in the study area.

This study aimed at highlighting the potential roles of rural women as an integral component to meet the challenges of gender mainstreaming, food insecurity and malnutrition and reduction of rural poverty.

### **Methodology**

The main economic activities of women in the rural communities of Oyo State are farming, agro-allied businesses, including processing and marketing of produce (Yahaya, 2002). Hence, this study was carried out in Ibarapa - East Local Government Area of Oyo State, Southwest Nigeria, a community with over 50 percent population in the rural areas (Oladapo, Ogundele and Akindele, 2012). This study was carried out in Maya market which is about 7km north of Lanlate, a major town in the area. Maya market remains the major commercial point of exchange between the local farmers and traders from various parts of Southwestern Nigeria and beyond (Oladapo, Ogundele & Akindele, 2012). For this study, women that were involved in farming and agriculture related activities

were purposively selected and random sampling of the respondents was carried out in Maya market. A total of 120 questionnaires and interview schedules were administered to the respondents. Primary data were collected with the use of pre-tested questionnaires, which sought for the following information among others, socio-economic characteristics such as age, tribe, and education background, sources of finance, labour type, reasons and constraints to women participation in agriculture. Contact administration was carried out and all the administered questionnaires were recovered.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentages, as frequency tables are useful in knowing the trend related to a particular variable (Ayanwale & Adeyemo, 2011). Also, a 4-point likert scale was used to analyze and rank constraints and reasons for women participation in agriculture. The point ranges from 4-1 for very important, important, fairly important and not important respectively.

### Results and Discussion

*Table 1:  
Distribution of the Respondents by Socio-Economic Characteristics*

| Item                              | Variable             | Frequency<br>N = 120 | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Age (years)                       | < 20                 | 13                   | 10.83      |
|                                   | 20 – 39              | 83                   | 69.17      |
|                                   | 41 – 60              | 07                   | 05.83      |
|                                   | > 60                 | 17                   | 14.17      |
| Education                         | Primary              | 12                   | 10.00      |
|                                   | Post Primary         | 81                   | 67.50      |
|                                   | No formal            | 27                   | 22.50      |
| Marital status                    | Single               | 35                   | 29.17      |
|                                   | Married              | 85                   | 70.83      |
| Family size                       | 1 – 5                | 26                   | 21.67      |
|                                   | 6 – 10               | 80                   | 66.67      |
|                                   | > 10                 | 14                   | 11.66      |
| Source of labour *                | Self                 | 36                   | 26.47      |
|                                   | Family               | 24                   | 17.65      |
|                                   | Hired                | 76                   | 55.88      |
| Participating segment             | Crop Farming         | 83                   | 24.34      |
|                                   | Produce Distribution | 117                  | 34.31      |
|                                   | Processing           | 73                   | 21.41      |
|                                   | Input supplies       | 68                   | 19.94      |
| Experience in agriculture (years) | 1 – 5                | 21                   | 17.50      |
|                                   | 6 – 10               | 42                   | 35.00      |
|                                   | > 10                 | 57                   | 47.50      |
| Tribe                             | Yoruba               | 78                   | 65.00      |
|                                   | Hausa / Fulani       | 23                   | 19.17      |
|                                   | Igede                | 14                   | 11.67      |
|                                   | Others               | 05                   | 04.16      |
| Land area (ha)                    | None                 | 13                   | 10.83      |
|                                   | 1 – 5                | 95                   | 79.17      |
|                                   | 6 – 10               | 10                   | 08.33      |
|                                   | > 10                 | 02                   | 01.67      |
| Source of finance                 | Cooperatives         | 11                   | 09.17      |
|                                   | Personal savings     | 78                   | 65.00      |
|                                   | Family and friends   | 17                   | 14.17      |
|                                   | Private lenders      | 14                   | 11.66      |

**Source: Field survey, 2015**

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Table 1 shows the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. From the table, it was revealed that 69.17 percent of the respondents were within the age range of 20 - 39 years. This signifies that many of the respondents were within their productive years. The table also shows that majority of the respondents were married (85%) and with post primary education (81%). Education, is believed, will make the respondents better in their farming activities as various studies have shown the positive impacts of education on farmers (Idrisa, Ogunbameru, Ibrahim & Bawa, 2012; Asfaw & Admassie, 2004). The table also showed that hired labour (63.33%) was engaged by majority of the respondents. Although majority were small holders (66.67%) and cultivated less than 5 hectares (90%), being women, there is a limit to which they could combine farming activities with home chores (Hills, 2011; FAO, 2011) as farming system in the study area is still

manual. Again, from the table, majority of the respondents financed their business through personal savings (65%) as access to external finance is very hard to come by, since most women possess no collateral to secure loans (Karl, 1997).

The study area is a farming community and the respondents had farming experiences while growing up. The main segments of agriculture women in the area were actively involved in were marketing of agricultural produce (34.31%) and crop farming (24.34%). This was in agreement with Yahaya (2002) that observed that the main economic activities of women in the rural communities of Oyo state were farming, processing and marketing of produce. Although majority of the respondents were Yorubas (65%), being a Yoruba community but there was active involvement of women from other tribes in agriculture in the area. This can be explored to foster unity among various tribes in the area.

**Table 2:**  
***Reasons for Participation in Agriculture***

| Reason                          | Very important | important      | Minor important | Not important | MEAN | RANK            |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|------|-----------------|
| Source of food for family       | 84<br>(70.00%) | 27<br>(22.50%) | 2<br>(1.67%)    | 7<br>(5.83%)  | 3.57 | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| Opportunity to earn income      | 75<br>(62.50%) | 31<br>(25.83%) | 11<br>(9.17%)   | 3<br>(2.50%)  | 3.48 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Unemployment                    | 54<br>(45.00%) | 49<br>(40.83%) | 9<br>(7.50%)    | 8<br>(6.67%)  | 3.24 | 6 <sup>th</sup> |
| Opportunity to be self-employed | 72<br>(60.00%) | 30<br>(25.00%) | 10<br>(8.33%)   | 08<br>(6.67%) | 3.38 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |

|                                    |                |                |                |               |      |                 |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|------|-----------------|
| Sustainability of family business  | 65<br>(54.17%) | 33<br>(27.50%) | 12<br>(10.00%) | 10<br>(8.33%) | 3.27 | 5 <sup>th</sup> |
| Alternative source of income       | 61<br>(50.83%) | 29<br>(31.67%) | 18<br>(15.0%)  | 12<br>(10.0%) | 3.16 | 8 <sup>th</sup> |
| Existence of profit                | 66<br>(55.00%) | 32<br>(26.66%) | 18<br>(15%)    | 4<br>(3.34%)  | 3.33 | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| Availability of government support | 5 (4.16%)      | 10<br>(8.33%)  | 15<br>(12.51%) | 90<br>(75.0%) | 1.42 | 9 <sup>th</sup> |
| Personal interest/passion          | 49<br>(40.83%) | 54<br>(45.0%)  | 8<br>(6.67%)   | 9<br>(7.50%)  | 3.19 | 7 <sup>th</sup> |

Source: Field survey, 2015

The reasons for participation in agriculture by women in Ibarapa East LGA of Nigeria were as shown in table 2. The reasons in order of their importance varies from provision of food for the family (1<sup>st</sup>), opportunity to earn income for children education/training and family sustenance (2<sup>nd</sup>), opportunity to be self – employed (3<sup>rd</sup>) and unemployment (6<sup>th</sup>) as there are minimum opportunities for employment

outside agriculture in the study area. Other reasons were existence of profit (4<sup>th</sup>), sustainability of family business/culture (5<sup>th</sup>), personal interest / passion (7<sup>th</sup>), alternative source of income (8<sup>th</sup>) and expectedly availability of government support came last as there are minimum support for women participation in agriculture in the studied area.

**Table 3:**

**Constraints to Women Participation in Agriculture**

| Problem                      | Very important | important      | Minor important | Not important | MEAN | RANK            |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|------|-----------------|
| Inadequate finance           | 84 (70%)       | 16<br>(13.33%) | 8<br>(6.67%)    | 12<br>(10%)   | 3.43 | 3 <sup>RD</sup> |
| Difficulties of getting loan | 68<br>(56.67%) | 31<br>(25.83%) | 10<br>(8.33%)   | 11<br>(9.17%) | 3.30 | 4 <sup>TH</sup> |



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|   |                |                |                |                |      |                  |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------|------------------|
| Non-existence or low profit   | 53<br>(44.17%) | 38<br>(31.67%) | 22<br>(18.33%) | 7<br>(5.83%)   | 3.14 | 9 <sup>TH</sup>  |
| Lack of collateral for loan   | 77<br>(64.17%) | 31<br>(25.83%) | 10<br>(8.33%)  | 02<br>(1.67%)  | 3.53 | 1 <sup>ST</sup>  |
| Difficulties in finding suitable labourer   | 43<br>(35.83%) | 31<br>(25.83%) | 34<br>(28.34%) | 12<br>(10%)    | 2.88 | 10 <sup>TH</sup> |
| Poor infrastructural facilities like electricity, good roads, water   | 36<br>(30%)    | 38<br>(31.67%) | 27<br>(22.5%)  | 19<br>(15.83%) | 2.76 | 11 <sup>TH</sup> |
| Inadequate extension support services   | 61<br>(50.83%) | 29<br>(24.17%) | 18<br>(15%)    | 12<br>(10%)    | 3.16 | 8 <sup>TH</sup>  |
| Shortage/high cost of farm inputs   | 65<br>(54.17%) | 33<br>(27.5%)  | 12<br>(10%)    | 10<br>(8.33%)  | 3.28 | 5 <sup>TH</sup>  |
| Unpredictable weather   | 66<br>(55%)    | 32<br>(26.66%) | 11<br>(9.17%)  | 11<br>(9.17%)  | 3.28 | 5 <sup>TH</sup>  |
| Low recognition of people that were involved in agriculture in the society  | 54<br>(45%)    | 49<br>(40.83%) | 8<br>(6.67%)   | 9<br>(7.50%)   | 3.23 | 7 <sup>TH</sup>  |
| Problem with Fulani herdsmen (destruction of farms, pollution of water sources and cases of rape and molestation) | 72<br>(60%)    | 35<br>(29.16%) | 11<br>(9.17%)  | 2<br>(1.67%)   | 3.48 | 2 <sup>ND</sup>  |
| Non – access to land  | 37<br>(30.84%) | 43<br>(35.83%) | 10<br>(8.33%)  | 30<br>(25%)    | 2.73 | 12 <sup>TH</sup> |

Source: Field survey 2015

Table 3 examined the constraints to women participation in agriculture in the study area. These constraints were ranked in their order of importance. Lack of collateral for loan (1<sup>st</sup>), inadequate finance (3<sup>rd</sup>) and difficulties of getting loan (4<sup>th</sup>) were all related to access to finance.

Paucity of fund had hindered women in agriculture to expand their scale of operations or take them out of subsistence farming and take advantage of profitable packages of technology to boost productivity (Hill, 2011; Oladejo, Olawuyi and Anjorin, 2011). Hartwich, Kormawa, Bisallah, Odufote and Polycarp (2010) observed that this problem was more

pronounced for the female headed household who had nothing to offer as collateral.

Also, menace of Fulani herdsmen (2<sup>nd</sup>) had grave consequences on women participation in agriculture in the study area, as majority of them reported cases of frequent destruction of their farms, pollution of available water sources and cases of rape and molestation by the herdsmen. Unpredictable weather (5<sup>th</sup>) due to incidence of climate change and global warming has increased the risk of uncertainty associated with agriculture. This was so because farmers in the study area engaged mostly on rain-fed agriculture which made production and income unreliable and erratic, and made women spend more time searching for water for their family use. This was in line with Hill (2011) which observed that global warming poses significant threats to agricultural production and trade, and consequently increases the risks of malnutrition and extreme hunger, although these have differential impacts on women and men because of the different roles and responsibilities they have in household sustenance.

The study also revealed that inadequate number of extension men and women (8<sup>th</sup>) to take information to the farmers and get feedbacks is an important constraint. Specifically, women extension agents are few to handle gender issues relating to female farmers. This shows the need for well planned and purposeful extension services for the women in agriculture in the study area. Other important constraints revealed by the study were low recognition of people that were involved in agriculture in the study area (7<sup>th</sup>), non-existence or low profit (9<sup>th</sup>) and difficulties in finding suitable labourers (10<sup>th</sup>) due to paucity of fund to engage extra hands. Poor infrastructural facilities (11<sup>th</sup>),

especially water for domestic uses were also reported as the respondents had to travel long distances and spent much of their productive time searching for water during the now prolonged dry season. Non – access to land (12<sup>th</sup>) was not really a problem to women participation in agriculture in the study area as a majority of them cultivated small area of land which were readily available for agricultural production as women in the area had usufructuary right on land.

### **Conclusion**

From this study, the main reasons women got involved in agriculture were provision of food for the family, opportunity to earn income for children education/training and family sustenance, existence of profit and sustainability of family business/culture. The study also revealed that the major constraints encountered by many of the women surveyed were non-access to finance, menace of herdsmen, unpredictable weather, shortage of water, especially during the dry season, and inadequate extension services.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Women in agriculture should be empowered by governments at all tiers to engage in mechanized farming for them to be more productive in their farming activities.

Loan should be provided to the women group in agriculture at affordable interest rate to boost their investment capital. At the same time formation of women cooperative society should be encouraged to ease access to loan



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Women extension agents should be engaged to cater for the need of women in agriculture for better productivity in their farming activities.

Water should be provided in rural areas of Ibarapa East Local

Government Area to ease stress and reduce time women spent looking for water especially at the peak of dry season (January – March).

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