



Access of rural women to productive resources in a rural area of northern Nigeria

H. I. Ibrahim and H.Y. Ibrahim

Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

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ABSTRACT

Access to resources is one of the elements of women empowerment and a base for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The study examined the access of rural women to productive resources in Nassarawa Eggon Area, Nasarawa State. Data were collected from 100 women farmers that were purposively selected from five districts in the study area. Descriptive statistics and Likert scale were utilized to analyze the data. The findings indicated that 60% of the rural women farmers were between the age of 36 and 40 years, 62% of the respondents were married whereas 31% and 7% were single and widowed, respectively. About 43% of the respondents had primary education, whereas 62% had farming experience of between 1 to 10 years. Furthermore, 54% of the respondents had farm sizes of less than 1 to 2 hectares. The major income generating activities of the respondents are crop production, livestock production and tailoring. The respondents had better access to land (mean = 3.00), seed (mean = 2.95) and labour (mean = 2.86). However, access to rural institutions and capital were limited. The constraints faced by the respondent were high cost of inputs and inadequate access to credit facilities. It was recommended that rural women should be given the opportunity to have access and control over productive resource in the rural area through public enlightenment, extension services and access to capital.

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Introduction

Women play a significant role in agriculture the world over. About 70% of the agricultural workers, 80% of food producers and 10% of those who process basic foodstuffs are women and they also undertake 60 to 90% of the rural marketing, thus making up more than two-third of the workforce in agricultural production (FAO, 1985). Generally, development assistance has failed to reach women in the rural areas, both in absolute and relative terms compared to men, for two reasons. First, agricultural development programmes were traditionally focused on men as producers and secondly, a lack of knowledge or a false assumption about the role of women in agriculture (BOSADP, 2002). The new farming methods and machinery made available to men caused a shift in the cropping pattern with potential adverse impacts on food diversity and nutrition of the family. Nigerian women perform multiple roles for the survival of their homes and the nation. They constitute a substantial proportion of the nation's farmers and provide about 60 to 80% of the rural labour input (Adekanye, 1988a). Despite the important roles that women play in farm and household production, they have not been given due recognition in the agricultural sector, there has been a great disparity between women and men in the size of landholdings as well as over trends of increasing landlessness (Quisumbing, 1994). There are also constraints on women labour time as they cannot call on the labour of other households' members in the way men can (Malena, 1994). Women interest and involvement in farm decision on production are limited. The limitation has a lot of implication for women access to and control over resources of their own (Rahman and Alamu 2003). The 4th World Congress of Rural Women held in South Africa in 2007 reiterated the need to provide full and equal access for rural women to productive

resources, including the right to inheritance and ownership of land and other properties, credit/capital, appropriate technologies, markets and information. Considering this complex situation, researchers have attempted to examine some of the productive resources accessible to rural women and explore enabling and limiting factors with the intention of making them powerful agents for change over time.

Women are the most disempowered, experiencing inadequate right to land and decision making about its productive use, to decision about water resources to control, over the resources they require and there are inequalities in the distribution of foods, healthcare, access to employment opportunities which lead to women's unequal and declining access to land (Adekanye 1988a; Jazury, 1992; Agarwal, 1989; Power 1992). Poorer women have temporary and uncertain access to land, labour, capital and even decision making while better off women and men are more likely to have long term control. Today women have additional work and less assistance and are therefore under greater pressure. It is of special concern that many projects ignore or do not understand this chain of events. The consequence of this is that women are passed in the development effort particularly rural women.

Access is the right or opportunity to use, manage or control a particular resource (Nichols *et al.*, 1999). Resources may be economic (e.g. land and credit) political (e.g. participation in local government and community decision making) and social (e.g. education and training). In general, women require different levels of access to resources based on their productive, reproductive and community managing roles (Moser, 1993). When disadvantaged women have the ability to control their own environment by gaining greater access to material and intellectual resources, Musokotwane *et al.*, (2001) have called

the process empowerment. Many studies have already found that access to productive resources for women enhances knowledge on farm management and income generation, develops bargaining and decision making power, improves children's schooling and health, increases self-confidence and social networks and provides security in old age (IFPRI, 2000). Poverty alleviation in rural areas is significantly related to women's increased access to productive resources (Adereti, 2005). Thus, efforts to build social capital among rural women are necessary for sustainable production and household food security through provision of facilitating resources (Meludu *et al.*, 1999; Flora, 2001). All actors in development must provide them with support in this regards. At the same time raising social awareness of people about the symptoms causes and consequences of oppressive economic, cultural, familial, religious and legal practices is necessary for changing traditional gender roles and mindsets (Acharya, 2003).

Access to resources is one of the elements of women empowerment and a base for the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Many international conferences have been held to improve rural women equitable access to and control of land and property in recent years. The United Nations has outlined seven interdependent strategies priorities with regards to MDG's in altering discrimination against women. Two strategies are to ensure women property and inheritance rights and to eliminate gender inequality in the economic sector. Due to lack of land ownership, women are getting inadequate attention by many development agencies. For example, the agricultural extension delivery services in Nasarawa state are still concentrated on male farmers and consequently fail to reach the majority of rural women with modern information and technologies. There is a lack of quantitative and qualitative data on gender disparity in resource accessibility, labour contribution and productivity, especially the extent of women's role in agricultural production. Women access to productive resources (e.g. land) tends to be related with men, whether by kinship or through marriage. Furthermore, economic, extension and other public institutions are gender-biased and often ignore the needs of women. Gender biased differentiation within the household including access to productive resources, control over family labour, rigidities in division of labour, inequality in consumption and responsibility for domestic chores is reinforced by the unequal allocation of resources. Thus, the lack of access to and control over productive resources is the main factor limiting women equal participations in economic activities, thereby hampering the human development process (Acharya, 2003). Based on the forgoing, the present study seeks to (i) describe the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents (rural women), (ii) identify the income generating activities of respondents in the study area, (iii) determine the constraints to accessibility to productive resources by respondents, (iv) determine the extent of the respondents' access to productive resources. The study is significant because the findings will alert the policy makers to potential gender-differentiated outcomes for the purpose of reducing gender inequality in Agricultural production. The study will also help in producing useful information about the socio-cultural or economic barrier limiting the women in their productive attend significant role in Agricultural process which in turn will assist the government, as well as NGOs to take initiation for sustainable development.

Methodology

Nasarawa Eggon, the traditional headquarters of the Eggon

people, is comprised of five (5) districts, namely; Umme, Alogani, Aligaza, Agungi and Nasarawa Eggon, covering an estimated land mass of about 2035 km². It has a projected population of about 149,129 (NPC, 2006). About 70% of the residents are subsistence farmers who cultivate crops such as yam, maize, sorghum, millet, cowpea and groundnut. The area shares boundaries with Akun and Agidi development area to the west and Lafia east development area to east respectively. The climate of the area is of the savannah type with two major seasons, that is the rainy season starting from the late April to late October and a dry season which starts with harmattan from early November to late March. The area lies approximately between latitude 70⁰ and 90⁰ North and longitude 70⁰ and 100⁰ East. The topography of the area is fairly undulating and has greater influence on Agricultural activities. The soil is sandy loam and good for crop production. A multi-stage sampling technique was used for the study. The first stage involved the purposive selection of one women cooperative society from each of the five districts in the study area. The second stage involved the selection of respondents from the membership list of the five cooperative societies as documented by the Local Fadama Desk Office (Table 1), using the technique of simple random sampling. The respondents were selected proportionately using the expression below:

$$n = \frac{X}{P} * N$$

P

Where:

X = number of members of a cooperative society

P = total number of women in the five cooperatives

n = number of respondents selected from each cooperative society

N = Required Sample Size (100).

* = multiplication sign.

Primary data were used for the study. These were collected with the aid of an interview schedule which was administered to the sampled women by the researcher. Data were collected on socio-economic variables, level of accessibility to productive resources inputs and constraints. Data was collected over a period of two (2) weeks.

Analytical Techniques

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means and percentages were used to describe the socioeconomic characteristics, income generating activities, and the constraint to accessibility to productive resources by the respondents respectively. The extent of access of rural women to productive resources was measured using the Likert Scale with a weight of '0' representing no access, '1' for low access, '2' for medium access and '3' for high access. Finally a rank order was developed among the eleven resources based on the mean score obtained for each item. In this study, access, means the ability of rural women to get eight socio-economic resources and accrue benefits from them. The full meaning of these resources are illustrated below;

(a) Access to land: Authority to use family farm land, ownership of land and control over it

(b) Access to capital: Opportunity to get loans, micro-credit and banking services from any formal or informal institution.

(c) Access to extension service and training: Opportunities to develop technical skills for production through training and obtain information about development aspects from any extension agency.

(d) Access to technologies: Availability of cost-effective and

appropriate technologies for production, post-harvest and household tasks, these technologies include improved varieties/breeds, vaccines, threshers, grinding machines, sewing machines and improved stoves.

(e) Access to production input: Availability of technological inputs such as quality seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and water supply.

(f) Access to livestock rearing: Opportunities to rear chickens, cattle, sheep and goats for income generation.

(g) Access to rural institutions: Any cooperative or associations within the locality providing production inputs, financial supports, saving facilities and other opportunities through women active participation.

(h) Access to labour: Ability to use family labour or hire from outside.

Results and Discussions

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2. The results revealed that majority (60%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 36 – 40 years, while 24% are within the age range of 30 – 35 years. This implies that a large proportion of the respondents were middle aged, and can therefore be regarded as active, agile, and physically disposed to pursue economic activities. Majority (62%) of the respondents were married, 31% were single, and 7% of the respondents are widows. Similarly, the results revealed that 43% of the respondent had primary education, 38% had secondary education. The fact that majority of the women farmer in this area had some level of formal education is an advantage since education is generally considered as an important variable that can enhance the rural women's adoption of new technologies (Olawoye, (1994). The table also revealed that 62% of the respondents had between 1 – 10 years of farming experience, about 25% of the respondents had farming experience of between 11 – 20 years. This renders them familiar with improved practices which in turn can exert a positive impact on the production process and adoption of new technologies. The result also shows that majority (54%) of the respondents owned between 1 – 2 ha, while 28% owned between 2 – 3 ha. Furthermore, 36% of respondents had access to capital from Fadama III, 24% from friends and relative, 7% from local lenders, 9% from commercial banks and 6% from NACRDB.

Income-generating Activities of Respondents / Total annual income of the respondents

The income generating activities of respondents are presented in Table 3. The table revealed that crop production, tailoring, and livestock production, were the major income generating activities for women in the study area. Olawoye (1985) and Adekanye (1988b) reported that women constituted a substantial proportion of the nation's farmers and provided about 60 to 80 percent of the rural labour Input, though in different degrees in Agricultural production. The annual income of the respondents is presented on Table 4. The table shows that 53% of the respondents earned between ₦100,000 to ₦200,000 while 17% earned above ₦200,000 annually.

Extent of rural Women's accessibility to productive resources

The extent of rural women accessibility to productive resources is presented in Table 5. The table revealed that the respondents had better access to land (mean = 3.00), seed (mean = 2.95) and labour (mean = 2.80). However, their access to livestock rearing, fertilizer, capital, extension services and

training, rural institutions, herbicides and pesticides were limited. Power (1992) and Agarwal, (1989) opined that in many places, women were not allowed to own some productive resources and control family finance.

Constraints Faced by Women

The constraints limiting the accessibility of the respondents to productive resources are presented in Table 6. The major constraints cited by the women farmers as limiting their productive activities are inadequate access to extension contact, inadequate access to credit facilities and High cost of input. This in turn calls for ensuring constant availability of these inputs to rural women's. Nasiru *et. al.*, (2004) also reported that extension package should be backed with adequate input supplies and the government should subsidize the cost of such inputs.

Conclusion and recommendations

The most important income generating activities of the rural women are crop production, livestock production and tailoring. The rural women do not have adequate access to production resources due to the constraints faced by them. Eliminating these constraints and ensuring access to productive resources by women is pertinent, therefore the followings are recommended:

-Women farmers should be given preference in agricultural credit delivery by granting them credit at concessional interest rate.

-There is need for sustained governmental assistance to women farmer through provision of inputs at subsidized rates.

-Adequate members of female extension agent should be trained and be charged with reaching out to rural women to enable them have access to modern technologies, credit and increase the level of awareness.

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Table 1: List of Cooperative Societies, Sampling frame and sample size

S/N	Name of cooperative societies	District	Membership	Sample size
1	Kauna widows poultry production cooperative society	Nas/Eggon	23	20
2	Salama widows cooperative society	Alizaga	23	20
3	Oshala groundnut production cooperative society	Alogani	25	22
4	Neko groundnut production cooperative society	Umme	24	21
5	Lambaga windows farmers cooperative society	Agungi	20	17
	Total		115	100

Source: Nasarawa Eggon Local Fadama Desk Office

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
31 – 35	24	24.0
36 – 40	60	60.0
41 – 45	14	14.0
46 – 50	2	2.0
Total	100	100
Marital status		
Married	62	62.0
Divorced	7	7.0
Widowed	31	31.0
Total	100	100
Education		
Primary school	43	43.0
Secondary school	38	38.0
Tertiary	9	9.0
Adult education	6	6.0
No formal education	1	1.0
Qu'ranic	3	3.0
Total	100	100
Farming experience (Years)		
1 – 10	62	62.0
11 – 20	25	25.0
30 and above	12	12.0
Total	1	1.0
Farm size (hectares)		
<2	54	54.0
2 – 4	38	38.0
> 4	8	8.0
Total	100	100
Source of credit/capital		
Commercial bank	9	9.0
NACRDB	6	6.0
Local lender	7	7.0
Friends and relatives	24	24.0
Fadama III	36	36.0
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2010.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to income generating activities

Activity	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Crop production	66	66.0	1 st
Livestock production	37	37.0	3 rd
Petty trading	26	26.0	4 th
Weaving/knitting	10	10.0	7 th
Hired casual labourer	9	9.0	8 th
Hair dressing	10	10.0	7 th
Crop processing	23	23.0	5 th
Food vendor	11	11.0	6 th
Tailoring	60	60.0	2 nd

Source: Field survey, 2010. * multiple response was allowed

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to their annual income

Annual income (₦)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
< 100,000	30	30.0
100,000 – 200,000	53	53.0
> 200,000	17	17.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2010

Table 5: Extent of rural women's accessibility to productive resources

Resources	Extent of access				Mean	Rank
	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at all		
a) Land	100	0	0	0	3.00	1 st
b) Capital	34	59	3	4	2.23	6 th
c) Extension service and training	3	53	20	24	1.88	7 th
d) Seed	97	2	1	0	2.96	2 nd
e) Fertilizer	70	23	6	1	2.62	5 th
f) Pesticides	1	49	34	16	1.35	11 th
g) Herbicides	9	41	40	10	1.49	9 th
h) Livestock rearing	76	17	7	0	2.69	4 th
i) Labour	81	18	1	0	2.80	3 rd
j) Rural institution	11	62	22	5	1.79	8 th
k) Improved technology	11	38	32	19	1.41	10 th

Source: Field survey, 2010. n = 100

Table 6: Constraints faced by women in the study area

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage	Rank order
Inadequate access to land	20	20.0	4 th
Inadequate extension contact	57	57.0	3 rd
Inadequate credit facilities	78	78.0	2 nd
Inadequate labour	12	12.0	6 th
High cost of inputs	83	83.0	1 st
Pressure from spouses	16	16.0	5 th

Source: Field survey, 2010 *Multiple response was allowed