

Title: Women in African Agriculture: The Invisible Pillars of Food Security and Cultural Sustainability - A Visual Ethnography from Kenya

Name: SHARON MWAKA

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Women constitute the backbone of African agriculture, contributing an estimated 60–80% of food production, yet their labor remains largely invisible within agricultural statistics, policy frameworks, and land ownership systems. This visual ethnographic study examines the multifaceted roles of women farmers in Kenya, documenting their contributions to planting, harvesting, processing, and marketing food, alongside their responsibilities in household management and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

Despite their central role in ensuring food security and preserving indigenous agricultural practices, women face systemic barriers, including limited access to land ownership (less than 20%), credit facilities, agricultural extension services, and decision-making platforms. Using participatory video documentation and semi-structured interviews with smallholder women farmers, market vendors, and members of agricultural cooperatives, the study explores the gendered dimensions of agricultural labor, time poverty, and vulnerability to climate change.

The research employs feminist ethnographic approaches to foreground women's voices, agency, and indigenous ecological knowledge systems that sustain crop diversity and climate-resilient farming practices. Findings reveal that women's agricultural work is deeply intertwined with cultural identity, community cohesion, and sustainable livelihoods, yet remains undervalued due to patriarchal land tenure systems and policy frameworks that privilege male farmers.

This study argues that gender-transformative approaches to agricultural development—including secure land rights, equitable access to productive resources, recognition of unpaid care work, and meaningful participation in policymaking—are essential for achieving food security, climate resilience, and sustainable development in African contexts. By centering women's experiences through visual narratives, the project challenges dominant development discourses that render women's contributions invisible, while demonstrating how gender-responsive interventions can empower women, enhance productivity, safeguard cultural heritage, and strengthen community resilience for present and future generations.

Keywords: Women farmers, food security, gender and agriculture, indigenous knowledge, land rights, Kenya, visual ethnography, sustainable development, climate resilience, and African agriculture