



THE EXTENT AND IMPACT OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN LANGO SUB - REGION (Research carried out in Lango sub - region)

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews some of the studies relevant to the role of women in rural development projects. The significance of their participation in the project benefits and on the family welfare. The constraints and barriers that limit their participation and the suggested strategies to involve them in the mainstream of these projects.

Introduction

Recently governments of many developing countries and financing agencies have been making efforts to involve farmers in the development projects stages. This approach helps the planners to design more efficient projects, which address the beneficiaries' problems. Whereas male farmers are increasing in various phases of these projects. Women are still left out. No efforts have been made to encourage women participation. Moreover, they are not considered as direct beneficiaries from these projects.

Involving women in development projects is a major factor in the success of these projects, in improving the living standards and the wellbeing of the rural people, who are the intended beneficiaries. The participation of all the beneficiaries of development projects, both men and women are necessary for appropriate design, implementation and management of improved facilities. The lack of knowledge about constraints (social, cultural and technical barriers) and problems faced by rural women and also the impact of rural development projects on them and their families make it difficult to evaluate the accomplishments of the project's goals. Women have to be specifically approached to encourage their participation in new projects.

Investing in women's education, health, family planning, access to land agricultural inputs, credit and extension would lead to higher productivity and more efficient use of resources. It also contributes to environmentally sustainable development and produces significant social gains, such as better household nutrition and reduced infant, child and maternal mortality. The failure to specifically include the needs of women in rural development projects often leads to their exclusion from project planning and design and limits the benefits from these projects.

In a World Bank operation evaluation study Murphy J.L (1995)¹ stated that insufficient attention to the roles of women was detrimental to project efficiency and sustainability.

The overall goal of this paper is to study the participation of women in irrigation development projects and its impact on the household and family wellbeing. From this study it should be possible to recommend strategies, whereby women can participate efficiently in irrigation and agricultural development projects. The direct participation of women should help them capture their fair share of benefits for greater welfare of the household.

Women's Role in Rural Development

The women's position has been neglected and her role in production has been underestimated. The concept that the male is the head of the household has guided development planners to focus their attention on male farmers. This contributed to the weakening of the household unit and the position of women (**Patricia Amne Aceng, 2018**). Detailed empirical studies of women's roles in local production systems have grown. There has been increasing pressure for more accurate estimates of women's contribution to national production systems.

The proportion of women in the agricultural labor force is around 34% for Lango sub region. Cloud 1984 gave two possible explanations for the question of what benefits women receive from their unpaid agriculture labor work. One is that women are altruists. They derive their utility from the satisfaction of others, from serving their families, to be healthy well cared for and well fed. Second that woman has little choice, societies are arranged in such a way that women's independent access to productive resources, to labor markets to information, to political and legal rights are seriously constrained.

Even though governments are well aware of the need to improve the living conditions and

the status of women living in rural areas, higher level policy makers interested with the implementation of such programs are often males. Either they don't have a specific knowledge of the problem of female non-participation in development, or else underestimate women's needs. My research carried out in (2017) stated that the most common reaction among male planners in the field, who are asked question about the role of women, is, **"I never thought about that"**.

My extensive review of the literature on the gender aspects of irrigation management shows that most irrigation plans and designs continue to be based on the assumption that farm households consist of a male farmer, wife, and a number of children. The difference between male and female access to resources (including irrigation) and the assumption that women can be automatically counted upon to provide free family labor to irrigate crops lead to irrigation projects that are poorly designed. Irrigation Project designers seldom realize that men and women have different incentives to invest in irrigation and thus evaluate new irrigation opportunities differently. Johnson (1996) stated that advancements in agricultural, irrigation and environmental technologies failed to acknowledge and include the role women play in these areas and left them unprepared for meeting the needs of today's agricultural activities. Most women argued that current national development strategies in both rural and urban areas in Uganda focus on women as consumers and passive recipients of new technologies. Women continue to be seemed as social welfare problems and are not yet considered as a critical key to the solution of the rural development problems. This was confirmed by local women in the community when they reported that there is a well-documented tendency to ignore women's productive activities in projects that focus on agriculture production. In order to solve these problems Ayo (2017) reported that many governments have made isolated efforts to lift the profile of women through the appointing of women to higher level decision making positions. Yet these appointments are not supported by sustained efforts to transform policies and create rural developments in such ways that will improve the living conditions of women.

The Factors Influencing Women's Participation

The lack of investment in women's education is strongly associated with women's relatively low rates of participation in development. Also education and other social and

cultural barriers contribute to women's inability to obtain credits [World Bank, 1995]. Jiggins (1986) pointed out that there is insufficient attention by agricultural researchers to the institutional barriers which prohibit the exchange of relevant experiences and information between women, agricultural researchers, and extension agents.

One of the most critical issues addressed during the women's decade of 1975 – 1985 is the effectiveness of national development policies and institutional machinery in facilitating the empowerment of women. The ability of women to control the products or income earned from their labor and to expand their economic activities through capital formation is severely constrained by institutional and socio-cultural barriers. Cloud (1984), however, a number of other factors that affect the structure of female participation and decision making in the household. Such as the economic status of the household, a women's age, and the availability of child care. A major factor influencing women's productivity is the extent to which they have access to education and training. There is a general agreement that education increases productivity and substantial literature, exists documenting the positive effect of women's education on human capital development, paid labor force participation and agricultural production.

I found that there is a wide diversity in laws (civil, religious and customary) governing women's rights to own or lease land. In some developing countries where women don't have the right to own land, however, it pointed out that some evidence suggest that independent land rights for women could enhance both the efficiency with which resources are used and the wellbeing of women and their households.

The Impact of Women's Participation and the Benefits of this Participation on the Welfare of the Family

There is considerable evidence from past experiences that increases in women's wellbeing yield important integrational benefits and productivity gains in the future. Improving the status of women and increasing their access to assets and services will increase the returns on investment in human resources and improve the prospects for sustainable economic growth. Further studies show that if women and men share the same educational characteristics and input levels, farm specific yield would increase between 7 – 22 percent. An educated mother who seeks preventive care and early treatment of illness for herself and her children will reduce the cost of health care and in

many cases, prevent premature death. Other studies showed that women's productivity in agriculture could be higher than that of men, if women have the same access to services and they kept control of the income from their work. Evidence also indicates that women are equally, if not more likely than men to be innovators when given priority to excel and given capital.

In societies where women participate in the market economy and have direct access to resources, women have higher status and greater power in intra household decision while men tend to allocate resources on personal decision. And it is widely perceived that men spend a higher portion of their incremental income on goods for their personal consumption; by contrast, women are more likely to purchase goods for their children and for general household consumption. So, providing credits directly to women and also their access to resources will have a positive effect on household and individual welfare and improved gender equality. The study also showed that female borrowing has a greater effect on girls schooling and per capita expenditure than men's male borrowing. The possibility of receiving credit may give women greater bargaining power within the household. Ps. Charles Okello (2016) confirmed that both economic theory and empirical observation have generally shown that increasing the women's' share of income (the value of women's time) results in a higher marginal utility for household food consumption, child nutrition and other investments in the quality of human capital than income from other sources.

A multi country study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and a World Bank publication on time allocation support the commonly held belief that women spent more hours in productive activities per day than men. Consequently, the daily level of nutrition and the living standard may depend more heavily on the woman's income than the men.

Therefore, failing to include all the beneficiaries, both men and women in rural development projects is one of the main reasons for project failures to contribute to the welfare of rural people, the main beneficiaries of these projects.

Dr. Peter Otim Odoch (seed agronomist - 2016) reported that some of the reasons for the failure of agricultural activities in Lango sub region due weather challenges were:

- 1 There is a gap between the irrigation needs and the equipment provided to meet these needs
- 2 The lack of user participation in the planning stage of the project gave rise to the gap in the understanding between the planners and the participants about the role of the project in the local economy.

How to get Women Involved in Development Projects

The problem of how to get women involved in the development projects are not fundamentally different from the problems of how to get a local population involved in the adoption of a new technique or process [Benson Apita, 2015] stated that “Like the need to provide inputs and resources to small farmer’s improving women’s access to productive resources will require innovative policy approaches. Increasing women’s participation in design and implementation of policy mechanisms is crucial to ensure that women receive the intended benefits”.

One of the barriers to translating research activities about women into effective and beneficial development programs has been the absence of an adequate analytical framework for integrating women into project analysis. Integration of women is essential for transforming policy concerns into practical realities. So, I suggested the basic elements of a framework for project analysis to be:

- 1 Analysis of women’s productive activities within the agriculture system.
- 2 Identification of factors influencing women’s productivity.
- 3 Application of this knowledge to each stage of the project process

In the paper, Towards Gender Balance in Irrigation Management. Saddam Rafie Ayo and Patricia Amne Aceng (2019) discussed the research and experiments that were undertaken to include all community of Lango sub region, both male and female in the participatory approach. The three measures that to improve gender balance in formal decision-making are

- **women’s view point Uganda requires that at each meeting a minimum of 50% of the present should be females.**

- **A women - only meeting is necessary to discuss the role of women in farming and their ideas about participation in committees.**
- **The women's ideas on gender composition of committees should be discussed with the whole group, group consensus has to be reached on the issue and subsequently election is held supervised by equal gender staff.**

The evaluation of the women's view point Uganda indicates that in 2019 – 2020:

The percent of women in gender balance can increase from 10% to 45% on average. The participation of women in discussions and decision making in the meetings did not change.

Women - only meetings were received well, 90% of the women indicated the wish to have equal number of female and male representatives in the committees. In the majority of the groups, half of the chosen representatives were women, The performances of the chosen women during the implementation period were similar to their male colleagues.

In the area of participation in the design procedures, right of way negotiation, and leadership training, men continue to be much more involved than women.

The number of women with knowledge about the project increased from 50 - 60% to around 90%.

The researchers recommended that men should also be addressed with gender issues, so that they could understand and underwrite the involvement of women in decision making concerning irrigation - related activities. Also, they recommended the change of the women - only meetings to a general sensitization meeting. Men and Women need to split into groups to enhance open discussions on issues like gender composition of committees and the role of men and women in farming. Probably this will convince men of the need for women's participation in these committees.

In Lango sub region (2018) according to our research (women's view point Uganda) described the integrated development project.

The projects overall objectives were to raise agricultural production without damaging the environment, and solve the rural population most urgent problems related to water,

health care, education and illiteracy with special attention to women. However, the projects documents don't describe the women's productive role or differentiate it from the men's role, whether with respect to production, the use of natural resources or organizations. The proposed plan of action for women is not related to the other plans, which the project intends to support, indicating that women's development is regarded as unrelated to mainstream development.

The study of women's view point Uganda emphasized that ;

- Gender training of both decision-makers and field staff must be included in the project activities.
- It is important to include a women and development specialist in the project team.
- The project proposal should be worked out in detail to be able to shape and cover gender related aspects.

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