



Women's Agricultural Labour and Its Contribution to Women Empowerment in the Limpopo Province, South Africa

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Abstract

Globally, agricultural production is largely undertaken by women. Nevertheless, there are numerous challenges that come with being a female farmer. The burden of agricultural productivity is further exasperated by the tendency of males to migrate urban areas in pursuit of employment. This leaves women with the enormous task of being responsible for 90 percent of food processing activities, water and firewood collection. Regardless of these contributions in agriculture, the plight of women is still largely unaddressed by policymakers in our society. This paper explores, women's labour in agriculture, and the role it plays in the empowerment of women living in rural areas. A sample of 16 was drawn from two women-led agricultural projects, namely Kwadikwaneng nursery and the Lahlapapadi goat project in the Limpopo Province. The study was carried out qualitatively, with focus groups and in-depth interviews as methods of data collection. The study revealed that women in agriculture are empowered and are able to positively empower other women. Women in the study were able to use their agricultural labour to contribute positively to their household income. The findings of the study also revealed that women in the two projects perceive their own projects to be much bigger and better in terms of their performance than those of their male counterparts, which in itself is an empowering factor. Lastly, the study revealed that the agriculture can be perceived as a pathway to women empowerment, recognition and visibility in their local communities. The study therefore recommends that women should consistently receive support from relevant stakeholder to ensure sustainable development and empowerment.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment; Agricultural Labour; Women Farming; Limpopo Province*

Introduction

Globally, agricultural production is largely undertaken by women. Nevertheless, there are numerous challenges that come with being a female farmer. The burden of agricultural productivity is further exasperated by the tendency of male to migrate urban areas in pursuit of employment. This leaves

women with the enormous task of being responsible for 90 percent of food processing activities, water and firewood collection. A research titled “Employment Trends in Agriculture in South Africa” revealed that the majority of farm and non-farming informal sector workers were women (Statistics South Africa, 2000: 19). Results also demonstrated that the agricultural commercial sector is dominated by men, implying that more women than men engage in subsistence farming with less profit (Census, 2010). In the province of Limpopo, the quantitative information revealed that 79% of farm owners are male while women owners are sitting at 21% (Census of Commercial Agriculture, 2017). Since South Africa is one of the world's poorest nations, agriculture is the most prevalent industry. the agricultural industry accounts for 70% of the South African economy (Census of Commercial Agriculture,2017). The sector plays a vital role in South Africa as a result of the employment opportunities it provides and the resulting connections between agriculture and the rest of the community.

In this regard, agriculture, particularly as it relates to women's participation, must be taken more seriously because it would be a more effective tool for reducing poverty and women empowerment at the household level, even in countries where other sectors such as mining and industry contribute significantly to macroeconomic performance (Ngumbi,2019). This argument is supported by Loubser (2020), who argues that woman’s income in agriculture has much greater impact on the family than a man’s income. Women can continue to play a very important role in agriculture when financial and educational support is provided on a regular basis.

Theoretical framework

Gender and Development (GAD) was developed by feminists and women-focused NGO’s during the 1980’s. The goal was to improve women’s rights and to increase gender equity (Ritzer, 2000: 1854). Furthermore, addressing women’s needs was seen as integral to challenging women’s subordination in households and in respective societies (Goetz & Gupta, 1996). Engels (1981) for example, stated that gender equity can be achieved through ensuring that “women are brought back into public industry” (Engels, 1981: 96). By bringing women in public industry, they “would not have to face the burden of wage work and unpaid household work because household work would be provided as public service” (Engels, 1981: 96). The theory is founded upon Socialist Feminism which identified “the social construction of production and reproduction as the basis of women’s oppression and focused its attention on the social relations of gender” (Miller & Razavi, 1995; Tasli, 2007). This focus questioned the validity of roles that have been ascribed to both women and men in their different societies. Since women are more likely to lack power and opportunity than men, GAD addresses power relations between men and women by recognizing the multiple connections between women’s economic roles outside of the home and those inside the family (Ritzer, 2000: 1854). This approach is considered essential to understanding how the reproductive roles of women in the households affect the ways in which women are able to function in the workplaces. Additionally, GAD is more holistic in its approach because it also considers issues such as race, class, culture and ethnicities as well as societal structure. By so doing the approach takes into account the totality of women and thereby rejects the dichotomy between public and private spheres that have been used to devalue women’s work (Goetz & Gupta, 1996). More so, the approach is essential to understanding the ways in which men and women relate to each other in their respective workplaces.

Factors Affecting Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture

Socio-Cultural Factors

The society to which one belongs plays a significant role in how the individual perceives herself or himself. Members of a society co-exist and cooperate by conforming to the cultural norms of their society (Schalkwyk, 1996). In other words, their ability to participate in the social interactions of the

society is reliant on their compliance to prescribed rules (norms) for socializing with others. As such, it is out of the learned ways of behaving that power relations are formed which find their expression in the access and allocation of community and societal resources. In this section of the chapter socio-cultural factors are highlighted in order to show the effects of norms, values and cultural ideologies on the ways women perceive themselves and their participation in agricultural development.

According to Schalkwyk (1996) “culture shapes the way in which things are done and our understanding of why this should be so”. Similarly, values and beliefs which are culturally derived serve as norms that determines when certain behaviours are appropriate and when they are not which allow for a wide range of situational and individual difference (Schalkwyk., 1996). Thus culturally derived values, beliefs and norms can also operate as important constraints to social change and social transformation especially for women (Wasti & Cortina, 2002, Ngumbi, 2019 & Loubser, 2020).

Gender is thus related to culture because gender roles and definitions are culturally defined. As Wasti *et al.* (2002: 1) puts it, “the behaviours, the expectations of attributes as well as the relations between men and women are shaped by culture”. In the agricultural sector, farming – a practice predominantly carried out by women – is considered part of the domain of man or males. These cultural attitudes or notions might be due to the fact that most land is owned by men (Radel, 2011). They are then reproduced through acts of gender performance (Butler, 1988). Men continue to perform their culturally derived ‘masculine’ duties which require them to perform the hard labour and own the means of production. While on the other hand, women, continue to perform ‘light’ duties such as nursing the elderly and taking care of the entire household.

In addition, masculinities, femininities and other gender relations are important aspects of culture because they shape the ways to which daily life between men and women is lived in the family, the wider community and the workplace (Brown, 1995 & Okali, 2011). The degree and extent to which women and men come to have knowledge and understanding about themselves is in many ways shaped by the socio-cultural norms and values of the societies in which they belong. Their ability to know who they are and what they do in their respective societies is governed by their socio-cultural norms and values. These socio-cultural norms also ascribe men and women to different levels of power, duties, responsibility and ability to become active members in their communities and the broader society (Brown, 1995 & Okali, 2011).

In other words, culture also plays a role in dictating or shaping the amount of power that one has in a particular societal structure. The status of men and women within their societies also informs the types of roles or duties that men and women play in their respective societies (Quisumbing, 2003). For example, in a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe, men have significantly more power than women. Men in Zimbabwe are thus more likely to hold wealthier and more powerful positions than women.

These notions have been brought about by the influence of the historical ideologies of patriarchy and colonialism in Africa which have led to the perpetuation of inequalities existing between men and women especially in economic terms (Brown & Haddad, 1995). The patriarchal system empowered men in designing cultural expectations that required the male to possess wealth and own resources so he could be the ‘breadwinner’ within the new context. Also, these cultural ideologies suggested that women are subordinate to men because women could only be taken care of by their husbands. This systematic exclusion of women prevented them from becoming active participants in the economy or decision making processes of the societies they lived in (Mohanty, 1940; Moser, 1993). However, with the gradual shifts that are taking place in many societies, ideas around what it means to be male or female are also being challenged and changed.

Patterns of gender relations between men and women also vary among societies. For instance, women in more traditional societies particularly in rural areas experience greater expectations to conform

to cultural ideologies of patriarchy that lessen their personal freedom and limit their access resources. Furthermore, they are largely denied involvement in decision-making processes that influence their societies and lives (Jackson, 2005; Brown, 1994). Gender relations are thus “like any other form of relations... are structured by ideologies and belief practices, property and resource access and ownership, legal codes and so on” (Imam 1994: 40). The interactions between men and women are therefore largely governed by cultural norms that standardize material possessions into a ranking order that places men higher than women.

Women and Status in Society

Status, is defined as a classification or a position which significantly determinants of how people are defined and treated (Macionis and Plummer, 2008: 150). Max Weber identified status as among the more prominent social structures that inform the organization of social interaction (Macionis & Plummer, 2008). For example, women acquire statuses in her society from being employed, married, single or divorced which impact on how others treat, relate and even define them. In this manner, gender roles are socially reproduced through processes in which women are expected to maintain the same cultural or social status throughout their entire lives making it difficult for them to achieve a different status to the ones they possess. And since workplaces and other social institutions have not been modified in meaningful ways to accommodate and account for the new statuses of women, their range of acceptable behaviour is severely restricted (Breen & Rottman, 1995).

Status is therefore essential to understanding social stratification and persistent inequalities between men and women. Max Weber (1949) identified two types of status namely, *achieved* statuses and *ascribed* statuses. Achieved statuses are acquired through effort and merit while ascribed statuses are imposed at birth, requiring individuals to carry out certain roles in order to maintain them (Weber, 1949). For example, from birth and onwards, a girl is raised into the traditional role of a woman which involves cooking, cleaning, fetching of water and other related activities. She is expected to perform those roles in order to be considered a woman. In contrast, a boy is raised into the role of a man which might involve herding cattle in pastoral and agrarian societies, pursuing and acquiring wealth, and heading his household in order to pass on his legacy to his sons. According to Weber, such ideology subjects’ women to caste-like circumstances that deny them the same rewards that men for their efforts (Macionis & Plummer, 2008).

Bargaining Power and Resource Allocations

In the process of bargaining a series of implicit or explicit negotiations and exchanges rests on resources. The influencer is in a bad position if she or he has nothing to offer in return for compliance (Sweetman, 2001: 60). For example, a woman without land or land rights is placed in a bad position to bargain for what is produced on that land. Furthermore, the produce of that land will be perceived as belonging to her husband.

The material conditions of property ownership are further compounded by socio-cultural norms and ideologies which together sustain the subordination of women in the household. If women have little or no bargaining power, they are systematically placed in a position of vulnerability and voiceless-ness. A member’s bargaining power is defined by “the strengths of one’s fall-back position which are the outside options which determine how well-off he/she would be if cooperation failed” (Folbre, 1995; Kabeer 1994; Oxfam, 1995). As such, a woman’s level of power in the bargaining process is determined by the extent to which she has command over valuable resources (Quisumbing, 2003: 19). Equal distribution of resources will thus enable fairer representation in the household, and subsequently in public spheres where decisions about development are made.

An economically empowered woman not only contributes in the household but also acquires stronger fall-back position. On the contrary a woman located in a patriarchal society with no employment, and who works on her husband's land may remain in the same social position of subordination and oppression without much reward for her labour (Sen, 1990). For example, studies have shown that "men are most likely to be supportive of women riding bicycles if there is a direct benefit related to them doing so" (Earth Summit, 2002). If women can take goods to the market faster (Peters, 1999: 19 & Porter, 1999), then transport resources are allocated to them. Therefore, the improvement of the person's fall-back position would lead to an improvement in the deal the person gets within the households.

A study by Brown (1994) "showed that in order to understand people's access to resources, it is necessary to analyse a multiplicity of functional groupings". First, one needs to understand the bargaining processes within them. Secondly, the resources flows associated with particular social relationships. Thirdly, the way production and reproduction are embedded in the wider social and political relations. Lastly, the effects that these three factors have on individual opportunities (Young, 1990; Brown, 1994). The study also showed that women are not only tied up with daily activities of caring for children and domestic services but are constrained in the access to essential and strategic resources. Findings also reflected that certain social structures which are often rooted in traditional societies prevent women from having equal access to land, labour, credit, education, and extension services (Brown, 1994 & Date-Bah, 1997).

Moreover, the level, type and the extent of women's participation in economic production is also weakened by the lack of access to essential and strategic resources. One cannot ignore the impact that extra-household policy and politics has had on the intra-household resource allocation. For example, improvements in the prices of agricultural products benefit the owners of land. If land owners always happen to be men, they will have greater bargaining power. Social systems and organizations still operate on the basis of who the head of the household is and the amount of bargaining power he has in decision-making processes in traditional societies. Consequently, this type of thinking leads to the ill treatment, subordination and oppression of women by their husbands.

Patriarchy, Institutional Sexism and Agriculture

The important feature of farming as an occupation is that few women farm in their own right. The patrilineal line of inheritance which involves the passing of land from father to son means that women rarely inherit land (Shortall, 1992). Their typical entry into land acquisition for farming is through marriage. Shortall (2001: 65) argues that, "feminist research has proved that traditional definitions of farm work focus on the work of the owner and manager and normally the work of women on the farms goes unnamed and unrecognized". Thus women's whole relationship to farming is shaped by their route of entry and position within the farm family (Shortall, 2001).

The misrecognition and underrepresentation of women in farming are also largely influenced by cultural and economic discourses in the society in which a woman belongs. A study by Radel (2001) on *becoming farmers* discusses how female farmer's recognition is influenced by "strongly gendered construction of farmer identity". According to Radel (2001), men in Latin America are socially constructed as farmers, whereas women are constructed as helpers and housewives. Such constructs devalue woman's bodies and abilities in relation to those of their male counterparts. Women's bodies are seen as disabled for farming in relation to their male (Saugeres, 2002). Consequently, when and if women show that they are able to run farms by themselves and do work which is usually defined as masculine, they are presented as only being able to do so because they have male assistance (Saugeres, 2002; Radel, 2011).

Gendered Divisions of Labour

In line with arguments against patriarchy and sexism, Pini (2005) observes “that discursive representation of the bodies of women and men in a farm context maintains and legitimates farm women to a subordinate position to male farmers.” In South Africa farming practices are comparable to those of Latin America where farming is seen as an essentially masculine domain in which socially constructed masculine attributes such as physical strength and technical knowledge are valued (Liepins 1996; Pini, 2005). Liepins (1996; 1998), in her work on women and farming where saw agricultural media as a discourse, identified that the ways in which media shapes the construction of farming as needing masculine strength, control and action. Liepins (1996; 1998) argues that within these discourses men and masculinities are honoured while women and femininities are marginalized, thereby enforcing perceptions that men are natural farmers while women are not.

The discourses and notions linking men and farming have offered men a wide range of material opportunities including an increased ability to access agricultural training, obtain credit to farm, and achieve positions of agricultural leadership for land. While on the other hand these very discourses have brought harm to the image of female farmers across the globe. Taylor (2003: 25) sees these trends as politics of recognition in which “identity is shaped by the recognition or the misrecognition of others”. He states further that “people can suffer real damage and real distortion if the people or society around them mirrors back to them a confining, demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor, 2003). According to his arguments, non-recognition inflicts harm, and that it is a form of oppression and imprisonment of someone into a false and distorted state of being.

Drawing from Taylor’s (2003) argument, it can be said that issues facing women in agricultural production are largely the result of the social construction of gender identity which automatically place women in an inferior position to men. Patriarchal ideologies thus inflict women because they perpetuate the abuse and ill treatment of women by their husbands as well as their male community members. Socio-cultural norms also forming part of societal structure and social behaviour can thus be seen as limitations and constraints to women acquiring equality and resources to better themselves in their respective societies as well as their place in agricultural production.

A continuous process of monitoring and evaluation of female-led agricultural projects and their transport allocations within rural areas should be adopted to assist the progress of women in development. Proper documentation of women’s achievements and participation, and the education of members of the public especially men could assist bring about successful and sustainable developments.

Methods of Data Collection

The study used a qualitative feminist methodology in order to understand the gendered power dimensions involved in the accessing of transport resources and the role women play in agricultural development. Projects were identified on the basis of their performance. Another important component to the sample was gender, in this case the study was only focused on women-led projects. The Department of Agriculture assisted the researcher in the identification of these projects. The projects are both located in rural villages within the Capricorn district, Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality. A total of two participants were engaged in in-depth interviews which were conducted with project leaders, one from Lahlapapadi Goat project and one from Kwadikwaneng Nursery. A focus group discussion eight fourteen participants from both projects, Lahlapapadi Goat Project (seven) and Kwadikwaneng Nursery (seven) participated in the focus group discussion. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for the development of theme. Lastly, a qualitative thematic analysis was carried out to analyse the data collected from the participants.

Description of the sample

Age	Marital statuses	Educational level	Employment status	Number of years in farming
39	Married	Standard 1	Unemployed	5
45	Married	None	Unemployed	10
40	Married	None	Unemployed	10
41	Married	None	Unemployed	10
37	Married	Matric	Unemployed	5
35	Single	Matric	Unemployed	3
40	Widowed	None	Unemployed	10
42	Widowed	Standard 1	Unemployed	10
36	Married	None	Unemployed	2
41	Widdowed	Standard 1	Unemployed	7

Results and discussion

Women's Role in Agriculture and its Implications on Households and Communities

In many instances women have been faced with the challenge of being invisible and misrecognized in the development agenda. The cause of this being that women are often accused of being passive in development and decision making processes. The GAD theory posits that the invisibility of women in development in general is a result of colonization and social cultural practices that consider men's labour as more important to economic development. These cultural practices restrict and subject women to their reproductive roles which emphasize that women are mothers and housekeepers. Furthermore, these ideas serve the taking for granted of women's contributions while undermining efforts for their empowerment. Below are the views of some of the participants:

"when we started our intentions were that we want to create jobs that will not only benefit us but everyone in the community, also that we will be able to contribute in the households...our children are hungry." (Participant 7, woman, Lahlapapadi goat project).

Similarly, another participant from Kwadikwaneng stated:

"...and also to help the community, so we can help them during times of events we can give the community; in this way even the traditional authorities can see that we are serious, isn't you know that there are often meetings that are held by tribal authorities, so in this cases we give them the goats at least in this way they see that we are doing something" (Participant 1, woman, Kwadikwaneng nursery project).

The views above show that women have an interest in the development of their lives, communities and households just as it is asserted by the various proponents of feminism. Their statements contradict with the stereotypes that argue that women unlike men are passive in agricultural development. Women from these projects started their projects with a vision and goal to help their community members during times of need and communal events. This shows that women can be deemed as significant contributors in the development of their communities and that they possess the potential to transform their communities. Moreover, to these women, agricultural development is most important because they see it as a way towards job creation and poverty reduction in their households, through their direct involvement. Another participant stated the following:

"...in this way even the traditional authorities can see that we are serious" (Participant 4 from Lahlapapadi goat project)

This response shows that these women also want to be noticed and taken seriously. Furthermore, want to be seen as equal stakeholders to the contributions they make through their farming capacities. Traditional authorities in rural villages are deemed as important to members residing in rural communities as they form part of policy making and implementation. Therefore, being seen and recognised by the traditional authorities in their respective communities could lead to potential growth and expansion of their projects and those other women wishing to start farming projects. Furthermore, being wanting to be seen as serious could be perceived as another form of seeking validation, so as to not be excluded in decision making processes in farming. Moreover, recognition and visibility are important to them because it is seen as way of growth and development in their own lives and the lives of their families. Being visible and recognized may serve as empowering to these women.

If women's recognition is a central aspect of growth, then this calls for the consideration of women's contributions as well as equal treatment in the workplace. Similarly, the duties they perform as mothers and housekeepers should in no way be underestimated even as it has been seen in the arguments of much of literature used in this study (Quisumbing et al., 1995). GAD's approach which calls for policy and institutional changes in issues pertaining to women in development could therefore help to empower women through the acknowledgement of their labour. Moreover, if taken seriously, women can contribute significantly to the economy of the country.

Women as majority contributors in the agricultural sector see it as a source of employment. This is mainly due to the fact that women in rural areas do not have skills and resources for employment in other sectors. Historically, women's dependency on the agricultural sector was a result of men migration into urban places for employment. Presently, women in rural areas continue to battle rural unemployment and poverty in the presence of their husbands. Participant responses about how they as women had to wake up in the morning and go to work because of the project reveals that farming is the primary source of employment for women in rural areas. Other respondents also gave the following similar responses:

"We work only some of the days in our homes but we spend most of our time working on the project"
(Participant 10, Lahlapapadi goat project)

"No we work here only" (Participant 8, Kwadikwaneng nursery)

Moreover, results showed that women in the study are primarily involved in agricultural production. To these women, farming is seen as a form of employment because it is a means of generating income and fighting poverty in their households. Outside of farming women in these projects are not involved in any other type of employment that generates income. This shows that women fight poverty through agricultural means possibly due to the lack of opportunity into other forms of employment. Another factor to consider is that women in rural areas are often excluded from better work spaces and opportunity that could serve to improve their employment status.

Women's Perception of Themselves as Farmers

Results in this study suggest a different view from the ones that suggest that women are oppressed and exploited more than their male counterparts. Results showed that, women in this study see themselves as equal to their male counterparts in terms of their contribution and the development of their projects. More so, women from these projects, refer to themselves as farmers, without emphasizing that they are female as literature or feminists would. This is interesting because it suggests that women see no difference between themselves and male farmers. They see themselves as contributing the same labour as their male counterparts, and perhaps with more competence than them. These findings suggest that women in these projects are equal to their male counterparts, therefore, equality in terms of contribution has somewhat been achieved.

Furthermore, from the interviews it is seen that women in these projects did not feel that their male counterparts received more assistance than they did in their projects. Hence, the problem of gender inequality might not be related to male biasness or ignorance of female projects, but with the departments themselves. This was after the researcher had asked participants from both projects if they saw any differences between their projects and those of their male counterparts. The participants responded as follows; *“Compared, to other male farmers, our project is bigger”* (Participant 5, woman, Lahlapapadi community)

“In comparison, to male projects I think this one is way better than those of men because they often come here and ask for advice about the work we are doing”

Women’s perceptions of themselves in relation to their male counterparts reveal that women are aware of the different cultural roles existing between themselves and their male counterparts. Nevertheless, women still see themselves as in no way different to their male counterparts as far as labour is concerned. This may also suggest that women receive the same if not better support services and resources for their projects as other male farmers. If that is the case then there is equal opportunity for both men and women in agriculture as far as participants in this study are concerned. Perhaps the feminist calls for equality are being considered as more room is made for women to take part in development to the extent that it is becoming increasing common in rural communities.

“You see even some of these men that we are working with cannot fertilize or fumigate the crops. Whereas I just take it that it as my job, it is not even hard anymore” (Participant 6, woman, Kwadikwaneng Nursery community).

Women in the Kwadikwaneng nursery, identify themselves as better capacitated as compared to their compared to their male counterparts, which reflects that women are empowering themselves with knowledge to keep the produce growing. This can also suggest that women are empowered and that the men in the projects allow women to grow by giving them room to further develop themselves. Subsequently, it could be argued that men are less interested in agricultural activities than women in these projects. Using the GAD approach as a frame of analysis it is evident that development practitioners and implementers in the department of agriculture in the district is in some sense beginning to understand the use of grassroots development methods as well as the need for improving women’s capacities in agriculture. The views of the women in this study show that they have knowledge as stakeholders with a say in the developmental path of their communities. Women’s involvement in the decision-making process and practices of development shows that they are not silent beneficiaries who lack interest in development initiatives. This is evident in the perceptions they hold of themselves as farmers who are able to perform equally if not better than their male counterparts.

Barriers to Women’s Empowerment and Recognition in Agriculture

Access to Market

Literature on women in agriculture has shown that the availability of markets in agriculture is an important incentive for farmers (Mashiri & Mahapa, 2010). This is mainly because the availability or the lack thereof of markets determines farmer’s economic development. Without an economic market where female farmers can sell their produce, their economic situation may remain the same with lower levels of poverty reduction in their families and communities. This could also lead to the inability to maintain food security while undermining their households’ nutritional security. In short, without markets women involved in agricultural production find it extremely difficult to generate income.

Local Markets

On local markets, a respondent had the following to share:

“...one other thing is that a goat might not be as valuable so they expect us to sell it at a lower price. For them, a goat is of no importance, so they sell for lower prices. We might choose to sell for R600.00 and then someone sells for R400.00, then we end up fighting because it then causes us to reduce our prices. So the customer ends up having to take one that is better priced.” (Participant, Lahlapapadi goat project, In-depth interviews)

Other women in this study said that the availability of markets was not a huge burden; their only concern was the distance to those markets and the consumer needs. The respondents said they often went for long periods without selling due to small markets as well as competition from other farmers in their local community. They felt that their competitors were often not concerned about profit; hence they threatened the business viability of those who were selling their produce for profit. As such, respondents said they had to travel further away from their community to sell their products at better prices. They however need transportation to those markets where prices were better than in their own communities. Below is a response from a participant Lahlapapadi regarding this aspect of accessing markets:

“Well yes, we really have a problem when it comes to selling. We really don’t have a market, we were hoping that agriculture will help us find a market. But unfortunately we couldn’t, maybe because we do not necessarily have a lot of livestock so, they can’t find us a market or people who can come and buy from us” (Participant 4, Lahlapapadi goat project)

This response shows that not much change has taken place in the development of agricultural markets. Female farmers are still experiencing a challenge in locating and finding markets where their produce can be sold. Moreover, the lack of markets may also be part of the reasons why women are unrecognized for their labour to the extent of remaining invisible. Putting agriculture on the development map for rural women could play a large role in ensuring that women’s values and needs are considered thus leading to a real transformation through knowledge distribution and empowerment. Evidently, socio-cultural factors are not the only reasons why women’s labour is unrecognized. The lack of markets also contributes the lack of visibility of women’s labour as hampers their effective contribution to the economic development of the country.

Public Markets

“Usually, we sell our foods to the food bank, and boxer, and in this cases we can sell in bigger numbers and make meaningful money from this selling” (Participant 6, Kwadikwaneng Nursery)

“Belfast is the only place where we feel that the goats get bought, because we are looking at the prices” (Participant 5, Lahlapapadi goat project)

According to these findings from both women-led projects public markets are preferred more than local markets. In spite of their distance from the village, public markets are preferred over local markets because participants feel that they make more money if and when they sell at public markets. At public markets, participants can call for higher prices because there is a larger market than there is in their own communities. Furthermore, public markets often have a lot of people seeking to perform traditional ceremonies such as initiations, funerals and ancestral worship. Farmers set their prices according to the prices of other farmers who often sell at a higher price than in local markets. Additionally, by traveling to markets further away, respondents reduced competition and disputes amongst themselves and other community members. Prices in public markets only declined during bad seasons which affected their ability to generate income.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the misrecognition of women's agricultural labour and its effects on women in the Limpopo province South Africa. In the researcher's discussions it became evident that contrary to the views of some feminist research, women are gradually being incorporated into public policy development as far as agricultural development is concerned. This is not to say that there are no challenges in this process. Misrepresentation which leads to misrecognition continues to riddle that process as well as socio-cultural factors embedded in societal and economic institutions. Women themselves are actively participating in development in order to empower members of their own societies through job creations, poverty eradication and community development regardless of the barriers they face as farmers. This is particular seen in how women from the two projects demonstrate a hunger for growth and expansion. Furthermore, it is reflected in the descriptions of their projects as larger than those of their male counterparts. The study concludes empowerment is an important tool to helping women break free from cultural norms and restrictions that limit their ability to reason and function in their communities. Empowerment is also important in developing decision-making abilities and the boosting of women's confidence. The study therefore recommends that women should consistently receive support from relevant stakeholder to ensure sustainable development and empowerment.

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