

Smallholder Horticulture

in
ZIMBABWE



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SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES AFFECTING WOMEN HORTICULTURALISTS IN MACHEKE RESETTLEMENT SCHEME AND MUDZI AND MUTOKO DISTRICTS

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ABSTRACT

Horticulture is a viable and economically important activity for women in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. Attempts by government or funding agencies to develop it further as an income generating activity for rural women need, however, to take into account some key socio-cultural factors which are exemplified in the results of surveys in Macheke resettlement scheme and Mudzi and Mutoko districts. These showed:-

Married women have no land allocated for their own use, the land having become "family property" controlled by the men who decide which crops to grow. Even when the women farmers are de-facto heads of households and responsible for the actual crop production it is usual for the men to take charge of the marketing and of the money obtained from this.

Women farmers who are de-jure heads of households and do their own marketing appear to make more effective use of the income from horticulture in terms of acquisition of cows, goats and scotchcarts, and payment of school fees.

The extended family system, often said to provide support and a supply of labour to rural farmers does not seem to do this. The households usually consist mainly of dependent children who leave the rural areas when they are old enough to work.

INTRODUCTION

Socio-cultural background

Development planners have correctly identified women as possible targets and channels of effective development because they are the ones who spend most of their time attending to the socio-cultural and socio-economic needs of their families particularly the provision of food. However, development planners have failed in as far as they have not recognised that women work first and foremost for their families before they can be asked to put their efforts to the general needs of the community. It is my belief that we cannot fully understand the community if we do not first understand the community's individuals and the relationships within the individual households, including the mechanisms used by male and female members of the household to acquire the family's needs. For the purposes of this presentation, a household refers to a family unit consisting of a mother, her children and any member of the extended family who might be staying with that family, and eating food prepared from the same kitchen.

The husband/father is also part of the household but in some cases he may be working in the city, or he may have more than one wife, hence the emphasis on the mother/woman in whose kitchen the food is prepared.

In traditional Zimbabwean society men always protected and provided for their women and children. The women provided general moral and psychological support, sourced food and prepared it. That relationship gave the men power over the women and boosted the men's confidence.

The household was the foundation of a man's status. His position in the extended family and the community depended on how strong or weak that foundation was. Socialisation began in the household, the household was the training ground for men and women's roles in the public domain.

The woman was very powerful in the private domain. Her power influenced decisions in the public domain. The power increased with age, as the woman acquired wealth through her daughter's marriage, and as she gained experiences in the affairs of the homestead and the extended family. She appeared subservient in the public domain but influenced decisions for the public domain from her position in the private domain (May, 1983: 19,20).

An older woman, usually a widow, enjoyed more power and presided over the affairs of her sons and daughters-in-law. She had access to the land which had been allocated to her by her husband over which she had control as how it would be used (Gaidzanwa, 1988). Today, women have no land allocated to them for their own use, land has become "family property" controlled by the men.

One recognises that there were conflicts and inequalities in pre-colonial communities for there is none that does not have any. However, the situation was different, men lived with their families, there was no "permanent" migration to the cities for paid labour. The position of women changed after colonisation and the introduction of paid labour for both sexes.

Women's involvement in the money economy brings with it issues that influence families' socio-cultural values. The dual roles of women as mothers and wives and as income-earners, places a different set of constraints on household relationships.

The introduction of wage labour brought with it a different set of relationships within the household. Wage labour distorted the sexual division of labour, increased the woman's workload and placed a different set of constraints on the woman who became the de facto head of household and producer.

When activities that were traditionally done by women became market-oriented, men tended to grab the opportunity and the activity either became a job or wage employment or it might even develop into a small-scale industry. Activities that have evolved like this include cooking, grinding, and horticulture. In the hotel industry, one finds that in the majority of cases, the chefs are usually men; most grinding mills and milling systems are now run and owned by men. Women traditionally grew vegetables and had developed preservation and seed selection techniques but when vegetables became cash crops and the technology improved, the activity became a preserve for men.

In Zimbabwe, there are some horticultural crops that were considered women's crops such as "nyimo", groundnuts, sweet potatoes, and many others. Women have

vegetables. But with the introduction of the cash economy, the men who remained in the rural areas became involved and perfected the art. By this time the agricultural implements had been replaced by more advanced technology such as irrigation equipment, the plough, hybrid seeds, and pesticides.

Horticultural Activities in Mudzi, Mutoko and Macheke Resettlement Scheme

Mudzi and Mutoko districts are situated in Mashonaland East, Mudzi spreading to the Mozambique border post of Nyamapanda. Mutoko is adjacent to Mudzi. The communities studied were quite close to the main road which links Harare with the border post, Mozambique and Malawi, the women farmers use trans-border trucks to ferry their produce.

According to the Agriculture and Rural Development Authority, ARDA, the project area is characterized by dryland grain production and winter vegetable production in the vleis. "Most of the horticultural farmers take horticulture as an off-season activity despite the fact that horticultural crops are high value cash crops giving better gross margins compared to maize". The average smallholder farmer in both horticulture and grain production makes an annual net income of about Z\$4 000 of which Z\$3 000 is from horticulture.

The climate is sub-tropical with cool dry winters and hot rainy summers. Vegetable growing can be done throughout the year because of the favourable climate. There is a dry season of up to seven months but with temperatures ideal for horticultural production. The rainy season provides adequate rains to cultivate certain vegetable crops (Agricultural and Food GmbH International Consulting & Co. 1990).

The mean rainfall ranges from a high of 1 100 mm in Mutoko to approximately 650 mm at the Mozambique border in Mudzi.

SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDIES OF INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES BY INDIVIDUAL WOMEN.

The present study of income-generating activities (IGA's), carried out by individual women farmers growing vegetables in Mudzi and Mutoko districts and tobacco and horticultural crops in the Macheke Resettlement Scheme, was started in 1992.

I asked the women questions related to family size, education levels and residence of the husband; land allocation and access to credit facilities. This line of investigation was meant to enable me to know how these factors influenced the women's production levels and the incomes generated.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Results of the surveys for the mainly vegetable farmers are given in Table 1 and Table 2. Results for those who were primarily tobacco farmers are given in Table 3.

General points

It is noteworthy that only three out of the twelve vegetable farmers had no formal education and that most of the others had enough years of schooling to have basic literacy and numeracy. The absence of husbands working in Harare (3 out of 9) is

Table 1: Vegetable farmers in Village 1 of the Macheke Resettlement Scheme

Name	Age	Marital status	Education*	No. of children	Crops	Who sells crops?	Use of money
Mrs DB	28	Married	Grade 7	Four in school, grades 5, 3	rape, baby marrow tomatoes, beans cabbages, has chicken project	Husband	3 horse power engine which cost \$750
Mrs TJ	40	Married	Std. 2	Eleven, 5 live with her including 3 in primary school	rape, tomatoes and baby marrows	Husband	Household utensils intended to buy a kitchen unit
Mrs TM	39	Married: husband has 3 wives	Std. 6	Four in primary school	rape, tomatoes and baby marrows	Sometimes she does but mostly it is her husband	Three quarter bed, pots and children's clothes
Mrs CF	45	Married: husband has 2 wives	Std. 3	Five in primary and 1 in secondary school	rape, tomatoes and onions	Husband	Uniforms for her children, blankets and kitchen utensils
Mrs JZ	Not known, she has grand children	Widow	Std. 3	Three, none lived with her	tomatoes, leafy greens and onions	Herself	2 cows, wardrobe in 1991, seeds and chemicals in 1992
Mrs TG	Not known	Married: husband has other wives	None	Three, none lived with her. She was staying with her son on his plot	rape and tomatoes	Son, but respondent has been to Mbare Musika and decided she would do the selling herself	3 pots, 2 serving dishes and blankets

Up to 1967, a child did 2 years at "sub-standard" level, sat an exam to qualify for standard 1. So a person who completed Std 2, did four years of school. The more recent Grade qualification refers to the number of years of primary education. Anyone with more than Standard 2 should be literate and have basic arithmetic.

Table 2: Vegetable farmers in Mudzi and Mutoko Districts

Name	Age	Marital status	Education	No. of children	Crops	Who sells crops?	Use of money
Mrs X	28	Married but husband works/lives in Harare	Grade 2	Four, two are in school in Harare	cucumbers, squash, onions, tomatoes	Herself	scotchcart, bread-bin pots, blankets, children's clothes
Mrs Y	35	Married but husband works/lives in Harare	Std. 2	Five, all in primary school and they live with her	rape, tomatoes, cucumbers	Herself	one goat, plates, blankets clothes and paid school fees for her children
Mrs Z	42	Married but husband works/lives in Harare	Std. 3	Six, two were married, one worked in Harare, three were in secondary school	rape, tomatoes, cucumbers	Herself	contributed to building of the family house in Harare and paid school fees
Mrs M	47	Married, husband has mental health problems	Std. 3	Five, none live with her, one is working 2 are in primary school and 2 in secondary school	tomatoes, cucumbers	Herself	a cow, a goats, pots teapot, bricks for her house, school fees for 4 children
Mrs T	Does not know	Widow	None	Ten (4 in school, and live with her, 3 girls married, 3 work in Harare)	tomatoes, onions	Her son	kitchen utensils school fees
Mrs H	Does not know	Widow	None	Eight (including 2 single mothers who stay with her, 3 work)	tomatoes, cucumbers sugarcane	Herself	school fees, scotchcart, cow

Table 3: Women Tobacco Farmers in Macheke Resettlement Scheme

Name	Age	Marital status	Education	No. of children	Crops	Who sells crops?	Use of money
Mrs CT	67	Widow	Sub B	seven, one lived with her	tobacco, maize sweet potatoes, groundnuts poultry project	Herself	a radio, built a house and a flue-curing tobacco barn
Mrs MN	65	Widow	None	nine, three lived with her	tobacco, maize, groundnuts, poultry project	Herself	scotch-cart, heifer
Mrs CM	68	Widow	Pursuing adult education, had passed Grade 5 was in Grade 6	eight, none lived with her	tobacco, maize groundnuts, sweet potatoes poultry project	Herself	built a house and a flue-curing tobacco barn, bought a scotch-cart
Mrs MR	66	Widow	Std. 6	eight, two lived with her	tobacco, maize groundnuts sweet potatoes, poultry project	Herself	plough, wheelbarrow, built a house
Mrs BD	52	Divorcee	None	eight, one lived with her	tobacco, maize, vegetables, sweet potatoes, groundnuts	Herself	4 cattle but three died, bought a Z\$6 000 five-point-five horsepower engine for her vegetable project
Mrs TM	34	Married husband was a soldier in the army	Grade 7	two, not yet in school	tobacco, maize vegetables, groundnuts	Herself	scotch-cart, three cattle

marrow which is a relatively new crop grown for urban markets i.e. is not an "old" subsistence crop with the surplus sold. Of the tobacco farmers four of whom also grew sweet potatoes and two other vegetables, three were educated to Grade 5/Standard 6 or above.

Use of income from horticulture

The married women on the Macheke resettlement scheme (Table 1) worked together with their husbands and did not have any portion of land which they could use for their own production. In general the husbands sold the produce and the wives did not know how much they earned from each harvest or the price of their produce on the market. They did not regard their own labour as a cost and did not keep any records to facilitate calculation of profit. The best estimate of the profit which they made is shown under the headings "use of Money" and with one exception (where a 3 horsepower engine had been bought) there was little to show for the proceeds of the sale, as was the case with the widow among the Mutoko/Mudzi farmers whose son sold the produce for her (Table 2).

I thus found like other researchers before, (Chimedza 1990), that men who sold the family horticultural produce controlled the income earned from horticulture and that in most cases they do not account for the money.

The women who marketed their produce themselves, either married women whose husbands lived/worked in Harare or widows, seemed to have been more successful.

Of the twelve women interviewed in Mutoko and Mudzi six were de-jure heads of household and were responsible for the production, planning and marketing of their produce. Of these six all except one, had acquired something substantial from their activity. For example, besides paying for school fees or contributing to school uniforms, buying kitchen utensils, supplementing the family food requirements, which all 12 respondents said they did, the five de-jure heads of households had also acquired items such as scotchcarts, wheelbarrows, fencing and some if not all their irrigation equipment and furniture i.e. beds and wardrobes. Four of the women had put up buildings (mainly brick houses) at their homesteads, three had bought cattle. Even where women were de-jure heads of households there were cases of very aggressive and oppressive action by male family members including a son who took over marketing and control of the money made from horticulture when his father died.

These findings are consistent with Maia Chenux-Repond (1989) who researched into the economic and social situation of widowed and divorced women in a Model A resettlement scheme. She found that after four years in the scheme, 23 women had acquired a total of 53 head of cattle, an average of about three head per women. They had also bought 44 items of ox-drawn farm machinery, including 13 ploughs, six cultivators, seven harrows, four planters, 13 scotchcarts and one water cart.

The income of the women tobacco farmers (Table 3) all of whom sold their own tobacco, had similarly been used to invest in productive assets. This is interesting because growing tobacco profitably requires the same sort of skills as commercial horticulture: a very high proportion of commercial export horticulturists being tobacco farmers who have diversified into horticulture.

Household support systems

A belief that is generally held is that in African traditions the individual benefits from

individuals within families. My investigations found very little to support these views. It is possible that with the dominant role of the money market, traditional norms and the extended family are being eroded.

All the income-generating activities under study were carried out by women who were living in family settings, even the widows, divorcees and single women.

One of the explanations for large families among rural, and particularly, African communities, was access to cheap labour. It was also said that one's level of education determined that individual's family size, or number of children. Most of the women under study did not get much help from their children. In some cases the children had married and had moved away, some were working and others were going to school. The school going children, however, often assisted with household chores, and not specifically with the activity under study.

Most of the women looked after their own young ones or their grandchildren. Sometimes they left younger children in the care of older ones. There had been considerable migration to urban areas by both male and female children. The rural-urban migration was concentrated in the 18 to 23 years age group, mainly because they were the group that had just finished school with no prospects of a job. The populations in the areas of study were fairly young, and most were nuclear. Most of the women were in the child-bearing and rearing ages (see tables) and obviously had to devote much effort to bringing up their children.

CONCLUSIONS

Horticultural production is an important activity for rural women. Those women who are de-jure heads of households and market their own produce have tangible evidence of the benefits in the form of cattle, goats, and scotchcarts as well as in the payment of school fees and purchase of household utensils. Those women farmers whose produce is marketed by their husbands have less to show for their work. The preponderance of children in the households and the lack of other family labour suggests that provision of day-care facilities for children and the hiring of labour might be needed if production is to be expanded to meet market opportunities.

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