

Review on Policy Issues and Gender in Agricultural Value Chain in Ethiopia

BETELA BEYENE *

College of Agriculture, Wolaita Sodo University, PO box 138, Wolaita, Ethiopia

TAKELE HONJA*

College of Agriculture, Wolaita Sodo University, PO box 138, Wolaita, Ethiopia

Abstract

Gender particularly women are engaged in different agricultural value chain and play the most important roles in agricultural sectors. However, their roles are invisible in developing countries particularly Ethiopia. Empowering women through property rights also had an overall effect on poverty reduction and malnutrition, illustrating the link between the achievement of MDG 1 and women's access to assets. However, despite these recent initiatives, a mixture of economic constraints, cultural norms and practices continue to limit women's contribution to household food security and, to a lesser extent, inhibit the commercialization of the sector. Gender inequality is one of the features of Ethiopian society. In almost all aspects of life, women are at a disadvantage. Particularly, in rural areas, cultural, economic and physiological factors place huge barriers across sexes. This review paper was aiming to identify the role of gender and opportunities and challenge of women agricultural value chain in Ethiopia. Now a day, Ethiopian policy created the opportunities for the women by increasing women's access to and control over assets, increasing women's access to skills and knowledge, strengthening women's decision-making role and increasing women's participation in market-oriented agricultural Production. Contrarily, different challenges were encountered with women in agricultural value chain in Ethiopia. These are limited impact orientation and weak implementation linkages; limited vision of women's potential exacerbated by cultural barriers, religious influences and a male-dominated society; limited numbers of women and women in leadership positions at community level; limited access by women to formal information and knowledge, and their lack of resources.

Keywords: Value chain, Gender, Empowering, MDGs and Policy issues

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Gender can be defined as a set of characteristics, roles, and behavior patterns that distinguish women from men socially and culturally and relations of power between them (Women Information Centre, 2005). These characteristics, roles, behavior patterns and power relations are dynamic; they vary over time and between different cultural groups because of the constant shifting and variation of cultural and subjective meanings of gender (Hirut, 2004). In sub-Saharan Africa, women account for up to 80 per cent of the food produced, processed, stored and marketed (FAO 2007). Yet, despite their important role in agricultural production and marketing, women's engagement in agricultural livelihoods does not always translate into increased income for women or improved decision-making capacity (Elson, 1999)

Gender inequality is one of the features of Ethiopian society. In almost all aspects of life, women are at a disadvantage. Particularly, in rural areas, cultural, economic and physiological factors place huge barriers across sexes. Studies conducted so far show that (Bigsten *et al*; 2002) poverty within women-headed households is quite substantial. A recent government-led initiative to counteract women's financial vulnerability through land certification in Ethiopia has helped to improve significantly their economic and social status. Results show that when women have control over their property and have access to a sustainable livelihood they feel more secure, equal and can be productive members of the household and of the community. Empowering women through property rights also had an overall effect on poverty reduction and malnutrition, illustrating the link between the achievement of MDG 1 and women's access to assets.

However, despite these recent initiatives, a mixture of economic constraints, cultural norms and practices continue to limit women's contribution to household food security and, to a lesser extent, inhibit the commercialization of the sector. Gender roles and relationships influence the division of work, the use of resources, and the sharing of the benefits of production between women and men. In particular, the introduction of new technologies and practices, underpinned by improved service provision, often disregards the gendered-consequences of market-oriented growth and many benefits bypass women.

Concern about the ability of the world's ecosystems to continue supporting human life on earth is resulting in a renewed attentiveness to agriculture. In 2008 three major publications reported on the need to focus policy attention on food and farming. One finding of all three reports, supported by decades of research, is that developing gender-centered policies will ensure higher production and productivity in agriculture, and generates

a large number of social benefits. With respect to value chains in particular, the fundamental premise is that paying attention to gender issues can increase production and productivity, speed up the adoption of innovations, raise household incomes, and ensure significant improvements to child health, nutrition and educational levels, thus contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Investing in women farmers, assisting them to move into off-farm income generation, and increasing their effective participation in value chain organizations, enhance the potential of value chain development to become an agent of sustainable social change. Therefore, this paper aims with the objectives to identify the role of gender in agricultural value chain and to identify the opportunities and challenges of the role of gender in agricultural value chain thereby to find out the intervention areas for stakeholders.

2. LITRATURE REVIEW

2.1 Achievements of Gender Policy in Ethiopia

The Government of Ethiopia has undertaken major steps to improve the status of women, and to integrate them more fully into the development process. A massively scaled up effort is being undertaken as part of the PASDEP to release the untapped potential of Ethiopian women. Direct interventions include:

- (i) Adapting economic programs to be more responsive to the women clients, including a wide range of programs designed to boost productivity; including agricultural extension. Safeguarding rights such as access to land, credit, and other productive resources are central to the strategy, as is protecting women from the multiple forms of other deprivations, such as longer working days, and violence and discrimination against women which are still widespread in the country. Specific steps in the last two years have included a program to register the names of both spouses for land certification, revision of the Penal Code to outlaw Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and adoption of specific laws against gender-based violence.

2.2 The Role of Gender in Agriculture

2.2.1 Perspective from Ethiopia

Rural women in Ethiopia represent a tremendous productive resource in the agricultural sector. Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all regions of the country. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes.

2.2.2 Regional analysis on the role of gender in agriculture

Women comprise just over 40 percent of the agricultural labor force in the developing world, a figure that has risen slightly since 1980 and ranges from about 20 percent in the Americas to almost 50 percent in Africa. Even considering these data as lower bounds for the participation of women in the agricultural labor force, they do not support estimates above 60 percent except for a few countries. A decade later, a number of country statements in a report from the Food and Agriculture Organization reported that women constitute between 70 and 90 percent of the agricultural labor force in many sub-Saharan African countries (FAO, 1984).

Women make up almost 50 percent of the agricultural labor force in sub-Saharan Africa, an increase from about 45 percent in 1980. The averages in Africa range from just over 40 percent in Southern Africa to just over 50 percent in Eastern Africa. These sub-regional averages have remained fairly stable since 1980, with the exception of Northern Africa, where the female share appears to have risen from 30 percent to almost 45 percent. The sub-regional data for Africa conceal wide differences between countries both in the share of female labor in agriculture and the trend.

2.2.3 Gender and food security

The claim is often heard that women produce 60 to 80 percent of food in most developing countries and half of the world's food supply (Momsen, 1991; Mehra and Rojas, 2008). Sometimes the statement is qualified in various ways, specifying that it refers to local food production or a particular geographic region, and it is often phrased poetically: "... in developing countries, between 60 and 80 percent of food crops grow from seeds that are planted by a woman's hand..." (Gupta, 2009). Since women are often responsible for household food production, there may be little scope for increasing the amount of labor time which they can put into production for crops sold into value chains without a decrease in the amount of time spent on food production. In cases where women are relatively more involved in subsistence production and men are more involved with cash crops, or if women lose their access rights to land as it is converted from traditional to modern cash crops, household food security and nutrition may decline despite a rise in income. Food production can be defined in many different ways: primary crop production, food crop production, crop and livestock production, food processing and preparation, etc. It can be measured by weight, value, caloric content, etc. Each definition and metric gives a

different picture of the contribution of women. Furthermore, food production requires a combination of different capital assets, including labor, land and finance, as well as intermediate goods and services, such as animal and mechanical power, seeds, fertilizer and water. A simple comparison is often made between the amount of time men and women work in agricultural production, yet in order to understand the contribution women make to food production it is necessary to consider a more complete range of inputs.

2.3 Gender and Agricultural Value Chain

Women are clearly an important part of the agricultural labor force, but agriculture and agricultural value chains are equally important to women as a source of employment. Commercial value chains for high-value products such as fresh fruit, vegetables, flowers and livestock products are growing rapidly to supply urban supermarkets and export markets. The growth of modern value chains and the broader structural transformation of the agricultural sector in many developing countries have major implications for women's employment (Maertens and Swinnen, 2009).

2.3.1 Regional analysis in gender and agricultural value chain

Women dominate employment in many of the high-value agricultural commodity chains in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. New jobs in export-oriented agro-industries may not employ men and women on equal terms, however they often provide better opportunities for women than exist within the confines of traditional agriculture and can also be instruments of change with significant implications for women and rural development (Maertens and Swinnen, 2009; Deere, 2005).

2.3.2 Opportunities to promote gender in value chain

- Increasing women's access to and control over assets
- Increasing women's access to skills and knowledge
- Strengthening women's decision-making role
- Increasing women's participation in market-oriented agricultural Production.

2.3.3 Challenges to promote gender in agricultural value chain

A number of challenges remain to achieving successful gender mainstreaming in agricultural value chain. These include

- ✓ limited impact orientation and weak implementation linkages;
- ✓ limited vision of women's potential exacerbated by cultural barriers,
- ✓ religious influences and a male-dominated society;
- ✓ limited numbers of women and women in leadership positions at community level;
- ✓ limited access by women to formal information and knowledge, and their lack of resources;

2.4 MDGs, Gender and Agricultural value chain in Ethiopia

In 2008 three major publications reported on the need to focus policy attention on food and farming. One finding of all three reports, supported by decades of research, is that developing gender-centered policies will ensure higher production and productivity in agriculture, and generates a large number of social benefits. With respect to value chains in particular, the fundamental premise is that paying attention to gender issues can increase production and productivity, speed up the adoption of innovations, raise household incomes, and ensure significant improvements to child health, nutrition and educational levels, thus contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Investing in women farmers, assisting them to move into off-farm income generation, and increasing their effective participation in value chain organizations, enhance the potential of value chain development to become an agent of sustainable social change. But the agricultural sector in many developing countries is underperforming, in part because women, who represent a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, laborers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere, face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources.

3. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender roles and relationships influence the division of work, the use of resources, and the sharing of the benefits of production between women and men. In particular, the introduction of new technologies and practices, underpinned by improved service provision, often disregards the gendered-consequences of market-oriented growth and many benefits bypass women. Not only do these circumstances have implications for issues of equality but also may be detrimental to the long-term sustainability of development initiatives. Development actors wishing to promote women in value chains need to select value chains that have strong market development potential and are able to achieve women's economic empowerment and leadership.

Generally, men are the key players in crop and livestock production, and are also the principal beneficiaries in terms of control over the income generated through the sale of produce. In contrast, there are very few enterprises in which women dominate both the workloads and the control of the benefits, although there are several enterprises in which women and men share both the workloads and the benefits. However, it is almost

impossible to draw general conclusions about the division of labor and the share of the benefits between women and men because there are significant inter- and intra-regional variations, as well as variations reflecting the wealth of the household. While designing development interventions for supporting market-oriented agricultural development, it is important to take account of gender differences in terms of accessing technologies and services. It is also relevant to provide access improved varieties.

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Figure 1: Participation of women in various types of cooperatives in Amhara Region.

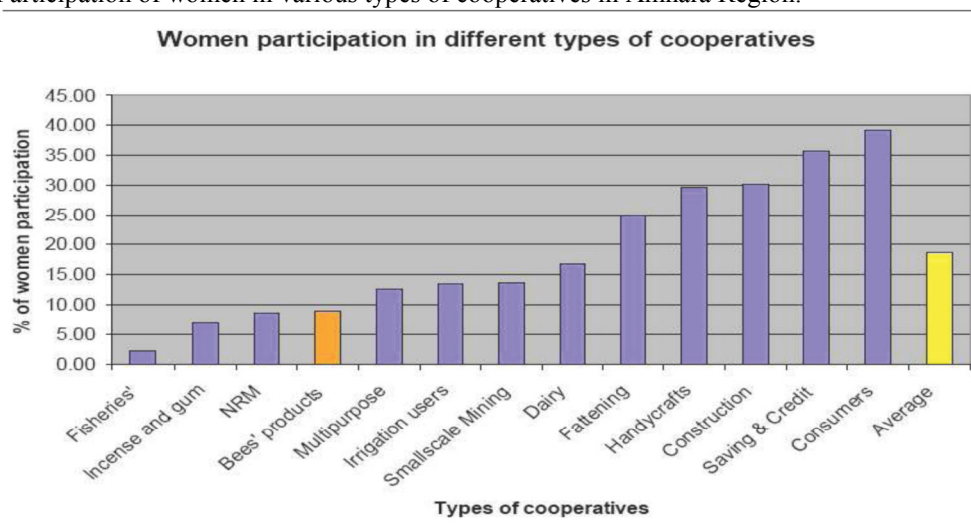


Figure 1: Participation of women in various types of cooperatives in Amhara.

(Source: Gender analysis in Amhara Region: a perspective of women in Agriculture, Oxfam GB Ethiopia, March 2008)