

Assessment of Women's Access to Media Packages and Farm Inputs in Zaria Local Government Area of Kaduna State

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Abstract

The study assessed women's access to media package and farm inputs in Zaria Local Government Area of Kaduna State. Purposive and random techniques were used to select 240 rural women farmers from 13 wards of Zaria LGA and interviewed using interview schedule. Descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage and mean were used to analyse the data. The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents showed that majority (92.4%) were within the active age of 18-57 years and were married (53.1%). Also, 57.1% of them had no access to land for farming; 53.1% had no access to loan, although 72.4% had access to information on credit facilities. Access to agricultural inputs, like fertilizer and agro-chemicals, was not available to 66.8% of them. The study revealed that the low-profiled socio-economic disposition of the women in the study area prevents them from fully utilizing agricultural extension services. It was, therefore, recommended that inputs such as fertilizers, seeds and agro-chemicals should be subsidized for women farmers. Low-profiled resource-poor women should also be encouraged to attend literacy classes, targeted for participation in specialized agricultural trainings and provision of credit facilities for their chosen agricultural enterprises.

Keywords: Agricultural inputs, media packages and women farmer

Introduction

Women are very important actors in the food commodities value chain, being involved in production and post-production activities, including processing, marketing and distribution. Women remain the centrepiece of food security and hold the keys to a sound and healthy economy. But in spite of the major roles in economic development, women have limited access to resources than their male counterparts, particularly in areas of education, land, agricultural extension and credit, which limit their productive and income-generating capacities (Okwoche and Obinne, 2010).

A study sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme revealed that women make up between 60% and 80% of agricultural labour force in Nigeria and produce two-thirds of the food crops (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009). But notwithstanding their contribution towards the agricultural development in

the region, women are not recognised or considered in decision-making processes. Thus, they are typically and sometimes wrongly termed as 'economically inactive' (Berger et al., 2000). Rural women face additional challenges that increase their vulnerability to poverty and may block their access to opportunities such as agricultural financing. Research has showed that female-led agriculture is underperforming because women do not have equal access to resources they need for production (Ngodoo, 2014).

According to Food and Agriculture Organization Reports of (2015), 'if women in rural areas had the same access to land, technology, financial services, education, media packages, and markets as men, agricultural production could be increased and the number of hungry people reduced by 100-150 million. Agricultural extension is a system of services for assisting farmers and other

stakeholders in the agricultural sector through educational procedures, training and technology transfer for improving production efficiency, income-generating opportunities and bettering standards of living. However, it has been noticed that agricultural extension services in Nigeria do not often place much importance on reaching women farmers (Ekechukwu 2016). Consequently, policymakers and administrators typically assume that men are the farmers, while women play only a supportive role as farmers' wives. This imbalance is shown in farmer training centres, which have been established to provide residential training for men on technical subjects. For example, most training centres generally do not provide separate washing and sleeping accommodations for men and women and do not provide facilities for the care of babies or young children; factors which may prevent women from attending the centres. Also, women's daily workloads do not usually allow them to be absent from home for off-home residential training; even attending short courses may cause insuperable problems in arranging substitute care for children or the home (FAO 2015). On many occasions even where attendance of women is quite high as a proportion of the total, they are given instructions mainly in home economics and craft subjects, rather than technical agriculture.

Although institutions like National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS) and Institute for Agricultural Research (IAR) through their Adopted Village programmes are reaching many rural farmers with proven innovations, many women in other parts of Nigeria are still behind. Women suffer from institutional neglect and planners' indifference to their plight, such as inadequate access to extension services and agricultural innovation, compared to men. Certain studies have shown that Nigerian women do not have as much access to agricultural innovations and technologies, compared to male farmers (Ekechukwu, 2016); that very few women are literate due to low enrolment rates;

and that only 5% of rural women have access to telephone as compared to 60% of men (Ogunlela and Mukhtar, 2009).

In certain parts of the world, due to reasons of religion and custom, it takes only women extension staff to reach rural farming women. With regard to extension service delivery, only a few countries, including the Philippines, have women field staff in sufficient numbers and with sufficient resources to be effective agents of change among women farmers. It is often characteristics of government bodies to suppose that home economics services can replace agricultural training and information for women. Home economics and agriculture are both important, but they are not substitutes. Where home economic services have been provided, female home economists work solely with rural women, thus reinforcing the institutionalization of gender bias (Aidoo, 1988). Also, home economic services are far from universal and are poorly resourced, although some have struggled against the odds to provide women with technical information and training and with access to resources.

This study was therefore carried out to investigate women's access to media package and farm inputs and in Zaria Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria, the specific objectives were to: describe the socioeconomic characteristics of women farmers in the study area; assess the level of women's access to farm inputs; and assess level of women's access to agricultural media packages.

Methodology

This study was conducted among rural women in Zaria Local Government Area (LGA), Kaduna State. Zaria is located at altitude of 686 above sea level (11° 11'N, 7° 38'E) in the Northern Guinea savannah of Nigeria. The study area is characterized by mono-modal rainfall pattern, with a mean annual rainfall of 1011±161mm concentrated almost entirely from May/June to September/October. Zaria has a long-term mean temperature of 21.05°C (minimum), 33.47°C (maximum), and

relative humidity of 55.23 % (Oluwasemire and Alabi, 2004). Farming is the major occupation of the rural people.

The study population consisted of all rural women farmers distributed within the selected wards in Zaria Local Government Area. Majority of the women had at least one farm activities around their homes and outside to support their families economically. Interview schedule was used to obtain information from 240 randomly selected women within 6 purposively selected political wards (40 respondents per ward) out of 13 wards in Zaria LGA. The basis for selection of the 6 wards was their being far away from Zaria metropolis. Wards that are neighbouring metropolitan Zaria were not selected for the study because most women in such locations are more exposed to improved social infrastructures than their counterparts in rural villages. Women that were interviewed purposively had at least one farm activities around their homes and/or outside to support their families economically. The selected wards were: Tukur Tukur, Dutsen Abba, Kufena, Kofar Gaya, Anguwan Juma and Gyallesu. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage and distribution mean.

Results

The socioeconomic data of the respondents are presented in table 1. The result revealed that 92.3% of them were within the active age of 18-57 years and majority (53.1%) of them were married. Qur'anic education was the most favoured form of education (45.8%) among the respondents, while 30.6 % of the respondents had farming as their major occupation. Also, the household size of 10-13 recorded the highest response value (32.6%), while 14 and above recorded the least value (16.8%). This implies that the respondents were at their most productive phase of life and had high child-bearing ability.

The data in table 2, on level of access to agricultural inputs and extension activities, show that 58.1% of the respondents had no access to land and farming services; and 65.8% had no access to seed; 72.4% had no access to pesticides. The results further show that majority of the farmers (66.8% and 81.1%, respectively) had no access to fertilizer and bullocks. This implies that respondents were not able to farm sustainably, or be highly productive towards achieving food security due to poor access to farm inputs.

The study also found that cassava processors in Kwara state were found to have high knowledge in credit acquisition procedure. Majority of the Cassava processors in the state were found to be female. Knowledge of value added products processing and maintenance of processing equipment were found to be low. Extension packages for cassava processing should incorporate technologies for value-added cassava products and maintenance culture for equipment.

The data on respondents' access to agricultural media packages are presented in table 3. The data show that majority (80.6%) of them had high access to agricultural information packages through radio programmes. However, 67.9% and 47.9% of women had very low access to agricultural shows/trade fairs and extension bulletins, respectively.

Discussion

The implication of the findings on socioeconomic characteristics of farmers is that they are in their active productive phase of life; hence, as earlier posited by Adeleke et al. (2008), they are constantly in need of resources and opportunities for greater economic productivity. The finding is also in agreement with Bawa et al. (2010) and Adams et al. (2017) that women in agricultural seed systems activities are mainly within the economically productive age of 18-45 years and that such active age encourages increased labour demand in agricultural activities. This finding is also

in agreement with Adereti (2005), who found the mean age of women farmers in Nigeria to be 40 years. Moreover, the result that the women farmers were mostly married (53%) than singles (17.9%) agreed with that of Iyiola-Tunji et al. (2011), who reported similar marital pattern among small ruminant women farmers in northern Nigeria.

Furthermore, in line with the findings that 44% of the women had Qur'anic education and 31% were housewives, without any visible forms of employment, Yahaya (1995) had concluded that women farmers exposed to only one form of education find it difficult to fit into other knowledge contexts, including those of agriculture. He stated that illiteracy diminishes self-confidence, aggravates inferiority complexes, as well as stifles the actualization of one's potentials for development, which is part of the predicament of the bulk of African women farmers. Africa Development Forum (2008) has also maintained that women in Africa experience greater challenges in accessing decent jobs than men. Their share of employment in the formal sector is still low, relative to men; and their pay is, on the average, lower than men's pay for the same work. The difference between female and male employment-to-population ratios was 22.7% (FAO, 2015).

The findings that a majority (57.7%) of women had no access to land for farming activities; 65.8% were not members of any farmers group; and 53% had no access to agricultural loan even though they had access to information on loan facilities were in agreement with those of Mugege (2015), who found that most rural women have no equal and independent rights and control over the use of land and access to credit in sub-Saharan Africa. In many countries in Africa, there is a rigid division of labour by gender in agriculture. This division also include types of crops grown by men and women. Women are also expected to help fathers and husbands in their fields, which increases women's workload (Bafana, 2012).

A study conducted in Bornu State, Nigeria by Ogunbameru et al. (2006) also concluded that the women in that area lacked access to credit facilities, lands and other agricultural inputs which militated against their effective participation in agricultural activities (Mugege, 2015), reported that women's inability to own lands or have farm lands too small to attract attention make it difficult for them to have collateral to present, for obtaining farm credit. Another factor hindering women's active participation in agricultural activities is their limited access to credit and saving schemes. Garba and Gadado (2011) stated that the inability of women in accessing credit facilities leads to their lack of access to technology, income generating projects, land possession and allotment of resources required for development. They recommended setting up of self-help group local banking system by women, non-government organisation and provision of facilities by government as a means of alleviating the numerous socio-economic needs of women and their financial empowerment towards self-reliance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was carried out to investigate women's access to media packages and farm inputs in Zaria Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study concludes that women farmers in the study area had high level of access to agricultural media packages (such as radio and television programmes, posters and extension flyers), but very low access to agricultural inputs. Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, therefore, the following recommendations are made:

1. Specialized agricultural trainings should be organized for rural women farmers on improved agricultural production techniques. Such trainings should be handled by adopted village units of research institutes and other farmer-based and community-based organizations.

2. The Agricultural Transformation Agenda of the Federal Government should encourage women farmers through the provision of farm input subsidy, such as fertilizers, agrochemicals and farm implements.
3. There should be government policy to dedicate farmlands to interested women in every local government area.
4. State and Local Governments should make provision for soft loans to women on agricultural activities; female extension agents should be attached to each local ward to assist women in the utilization of such loans.

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Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>	<i>Mean</i>
<i>Age</i>		
18-25	60 (23.5)	37.03
26-33	44 (19.9)	
34-41	52 (21.4)	
42-49	38 (16.8)	
50-57	26 (10.7)	
58-65	20 (7.6)	
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	45 (17.9)	
Married	128 (53.1)	
Divorced	67 (29.1)	
<i>Educational status</i>		
Qur'anic	110 (45.8)	
Primary	42 (17.5)	
Secondary	46 (19.2)	
Postsecondary	42 (17.5)	
<i>Primary occupation</i>		
Housewife	58(24.5)	
Farming	74 (30.6)	
Civil servant	56 (23.5)	
Handcraft	52 (21.4)	
<i>Household size</i>		
2-5	57(24.0)	9.53
6-9	62(26.5)	
10-13	78(32.6)	
14 and above	43(16.8)	
<i>Household monthly income</i>		
Less than N5,000	85 (35.4)	20,385.69
N5,001- N20,000	55(22.9)	
N20,001- N35,000	44(18.3)	
N35,001- N50,000	33(13.8)	
Above N50,000	23(9.6)	

Table 2: Level of access of women to farm inputs

<i>Farm inputs</i>	<i>Access</i>	
	<i>Yes (%)</i>	<i>No (%)</i>
Land	104 (42.9)	136 (57.1)
Seed	87 (34.2)	153 (65.8)
Tractor	106 (46.9)	134 (53.1)
Pesticide	68 (27.6)	172 (72.4)
Fertilizer	79 (33.2)	161 (66.8)
Bullock	51 (18.9)	189 (81.1)

Table 3: Respondents' level of access to media packages

<i>Agricultural Media Package</i>	<i>Responses</i>			<i>W. mean</i>	<i>Access</i>
	<i>High (%)</i>	<i>Low (%)</i>	<i>Very low (%)</i>		
Radio Programme (n=196)	158 (80.6)	22 (11.2)	16 (8.2)	2.7	Yes
Television (n=196)	46 (23.5)	101 (51.5)	49 (25.0)	2.0	Yes
Agricultural Extension Bulletin (n=196)	28 (14.3)	74 (37.8)	94 (47.9)	1.7	No
Agricultural Extension Guide (n=196)	57 (41.3)	58 (28.6)	81 (29.1)	1.9	No
Poster (n=196)	99 (50.6)	73 (37.2)	24 (12.2)	2.4	Yes
Trade fair/Agricultural shows (n=186)	42 (21.4)	21 (10.7)	123 (67.9)	1.6	No