Fact sheet: Sudan - Women, agriculture and rural development

Population: 27 million
Growth rate: 2.8%
Fertility rate: 6.2
IMR: 99/1000 births
GNP/head: US$ 675

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Importance of agriculture to the economy

Agricultural production is the mainstay of the economy. In 1991, it accounted for 40.2% of the GDP and employed 57.8% of the labour force. About 80% of the population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. It is estimated that the livestock sector accounts for 33% of national income, rainfed traditional agriculture for 25%, irrigated agriculture for 25%, rainfed mechanized agriculture for 12% and forestry and fisheries for 5%. Crop production consists primarily of food grain, sorghum, millet, wheat, sesame, groundnuts and cotton. The livestock population consists of about 21 million cattle, 20 million sheep, 14 million goats and 2.6 million camels. Livestock production is carried out mainly through nomadic pastoralism using traditional practices. Self-sufficiency in food production and food security are important elements in the economic strategy of the country.

Sectoral Contributions to GDP and Employment, 1991/92

Source: Europa World Yearbook, 1994
Role of woman in agriculture

Women represent 49% of the farmers in the irrigated sector and 57% in the rainfed traditional sector. Women in the rainfed sector are primarily subsistence farmers but they also work as seasonal wage labourers in the rainfed mechanized sector, and as hired or unpaid family labourers in the irrigated sector. Although women play a crucial role in agriculture, contributing to both the GDP and to household food security, their contribution to agriculture and the overall economic development process continues to be undervalued.

**Division of Labour by Gender.** Women carry out a major portion of agricultural activities and bear almost the entire burden of household work, including water and fuelwood collection and food processing and preparation. According to a Ministry of Agriculture baseline survey of the rainfed traditional sector in 1989, both men and women participate in land clearance and in the preparation, harvesting, transporting and marketing of crops, while women carry out most of the planting, weeding and food processing. In the livestock sector, men have the primary responsibility for cattle and sheep raising, while women participate in milking and processing milk products. Both men and women are involved in raising goats and poultry. In fisheries, women participate in processing and marketing. In the agro-forestry sector, women participate in all aspects of the work and have the major responsibility for seedling preparation and weeding. Men and women are sometimes responsible for different types of trees.

**Gender Relations in Decision-making in Farming Activities.** Data from a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) of irrigated areas indicates that at the household level, women are responsible for a wide range of decision making in farming activities, even when the husband is present.

**Sharing of power and decision-making**

**Members and Officers of Agricultural/Rural Organizations.** Gender-disaggregated data is not available on membership and office bearers in farmers cooperatives and rural credit associations or unions. Women comprise less than 2% of the office bearers in informal farmers associations, although data on the number of women members is not available. In Agricultural Graduates Cooperatives, women comprise less than 15% of the membership and hold approximately 8% of the leadership positions.

**Women in Decision-making Positions in Ministries and Government Bodies.** The number of women at the policy-making level in technical ministries is negligible. In the Ministry of Agriculture, there is only one woman, located in the Women in Agricultural Development Administration (WADA), and holds an administrative role. In the Livestock administration, there is one woman at a higher level, the chair of the Food Technology Centre.
Mechanism to promote the advancement of woman

National Machinery. Sudan does not have a national machinery for the advancement of women. However, a number of WID units have been established in technical ministries.

WID Units or Focal Points in Technical Ministries.

· The Women in Agricultural Development Administration (WADA), was established in 1989 in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources.
However, it does not enjoy a high status and receives only 0.47% of the annual budget of the Ministry.

· The Women in Development Coordinating Unit (WIDCU) was established in 1990 in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment. WIDCU enjoys a high status and receives 5.1% of the Ministry's annual budget.

· The Women in Development Unit of the Ministry of Social Planning was established in 1975. The Unit enjoys a high status in the Ministry and receives 23% of its annual budget.

A number of WID Units have also been established in the different technical departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Forestry Administration, the Soil Conservation and Environment Administration, the Agricultural Extension Administration, and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. The Development Studies and Research Centre of Khartoum University has a WID Unit responsible for research, women's studies, data collection and documentation, and gender-planning courses.

**Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).** There are 92 NGOs working in the area of agriculture, implementing the following types and numbers of projects targeted to women: food production and food processing, 23; livestock, 21; social services, 48. There is no data available on the percentage of total projects or budgets directed to women.

**Woman's right**

Sudan has not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Constitution of Sudan guarantees equal rights to men and women in access to education, employment, ownership of assets, wages, elections, and access to productive resources.

Legislation includes the Agricultural Bank of Sudan Act which gives equal access to credit, irrespective of gender, providing the client has the prerequisite collateral. Legislation of 1991/92 stipulates that 40% of credit should be destined for small farmers. Equal access to land is provided for in legislation of 1970 and 1984. Despite legal literacy and awareness building efforts, there is a need to create greater awareness of women's legal rights.

**Dimensions and determinants of rural poverty**

**Changes in the structure of production** towards large-scale farming has displaced subsistence farmers and nomads from their land and transformed them into wage labourers, thereby depriving a large number of families of their main source of livelihood.
Deforestation is increasing due to the continuous clearing of land for crops and cutting of wood for energy, resulting from the introduction of large scale farming and the displacement of farmers.

The growing number of female-headed households (about 25 to 35% depending upon region), due to male migration to large-scale mechanized agricultural schemes and the emerging urban industrial sector, suffer labour shortages and greater poverty.

A general lack of access to agricultural resources and services is particularly acute in the case of women. Women in the traditional sector have access only to low-paying, low status, seasonal work.

The negative effects of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs) are affecting the poor sectors of the population, especially women subsistence farmers. According to a 1990 World Bank report, approximately 40% of the population of Northern Sudan are classified as poor, and 50% suffer from malnutrition.

Access to agricultural resources and services

Land. Although women have equal access to land use, very few have land ownership rights, and thus lack the collateral needed for credit and for membership in cooperatives and access to extension and production technology.

The majority of subsistence farmers operate under the system of customary land tenure, which assures equal usufruct rights to both men and women. While government-owned land is rented or leased to farmers irrespective of gender, few women have the economic resource base required to access this land. Privately-owned lands are usually registered in the name of the head of household, and in those cases in which women do own land they usually transfer the title to male members of the household, due to custom and tradition.

Livestock. The livestock sector plays an important role in Sudan. While data on livestock ownership is not available, men are responsible for managing cattle and sheep, while women and men share responsibility for goats and poultry.

Forestry. A PRA indicates that women and men are responsible for different types of trees and that while both men and women share the tasks involved in forestry, women handle seedling preparation.

Water. Although women are responsible for water supply to their families, data is unavailable on their access to this resource. Fewer women than men work in the irrigated agricultural sector.

Credit. Women, who are primarily subsistence farmers with land use rights, are unable to access major credit, due to their lack of collateral and their limited productive capacity. In recent years a number of credit schemes have been directed to small farmers and/or women. In 1993, women constituted approximately 70% of the membership of 50
agricultural cooperatives set up by the Agricultural Bank of Sudan to provide seasonal credit for crop production. Other development projects also provide loans to small farmers for inputs and technology. While women have received a large percentage of the loans for crop production, their share of loans in the livestock and fishery sector is low. In 1993, women comprised only 4.5% of the members of dairy production societies and 5.9% of members of poultry production societies, established for credit purposes, and received only about 10% of the loans.

**Extension services and agricultural training.** Agricultural extension services are oriented to cash crop production in the modern sector. Extension messages are targeted to male farmers and women are expected to receive information second-hand. About 22% of extension agents are women.

Gender-disaggregated data is not available on enrollment in agricultural training institutes. However, in 1990 female gross enrollment in secondary education was 20% and in tertiary education, 2.3%. At the highest levels, only a small number of men and women are enrolled in agricultural and veterinary science degree programmes. In 1993, 2 of the 7 enrolled in the agricultural PhD programme were women, and 19 of the 57 M.Sc candidates were women. In veterinary medicine, 20 of the 48 M.Sc candidates were women, while there were no women at the PhD level.

**Selected programmes in support of women in agriculture, forestry and fisheries**

**Policy Planning and Research**

- The Three - Year Women Development Programme 1993-1996 aims to: upgrade the capacity of women to fill policy, planning and higher decision-making positions; develop a gender-sensitivity training programme for development planners and policy-makers at technical levels; and encourage coordination and institutional linkages among the various agencies and organizations in integrating WID into their programmes.

- The Development Research and Studies Centre gives a course in gender development planning.

- In 1990 a workshop on strategies and policies for women in agriculture and rural development was held for all agricultural institutes and women's organization policy-makers and planners.

- In 1993 a workshop on strategies and policies for the advancement of women in development was held for all WID institutions and policy makers to evaluate the achievement of WID Units as well as development policies and programmes targeting women.
Legal and Policy Reform

The Three-Year Women Development Programme (1993-1996) aims to establish legislation to improve women's access to land, irrigation, credit, technology, and extension services and credit.

Access to Agricultural Resources and Services
A growing number of projects funded by national and international donors, both government and NGO, are directed toward women, particularly in the areas of agricultural, livestock and poultry production; rural industries and handicrafts; and social services. The most successful have been in improved food production and training. Income generation projects frequently do not provide income that keeps pace with inflation.

The Three-Year Women Development Programme 1993-1996 aims to: simplify credit procedures and eliminate the collateral requirement to improve women's access to credit, allocate 15% of funds of large agricultural development projects to women beneficiaries; and encourage NGOs and women's groups to fund and implement WID programmes.

Areas to be strengthened

Policy Planning and Research.

· A national Women in Development Bureau should be established under the council of ministers.

· Women's focal points and WID units should be given more decision-making power.

· A series of gender sensitivity training courses should be provided for development policy makers and planners.

· Support should be given to agricultural research institutions, colleges and organizations to include women's studies and research should be oriented to women and agriculture.

· A gender-sensitive data base urgently needs to be developed.

Legal and Policy Reform.

· Special institutional measures are required to ensure the implementation of laws guaranteeing women's rights.

· Legal literacy and awareness efforts need to be increased.

· Legislation is needed to ensure women's access to the market.

Access to Agricultural Resources and Services

· Extension services should be decentralized and made available to women. More women extensionists should be trained.
· Labour-saving technologies should be disseminated to women at both farm and household levels.

· Training in accounting, farm management and marketing should be provided.

· Information and awareness building efforts are needed to inform women about available programmes and services.

· Day care centres should be established in rural areas where women are involved in production.

· Gender-sensitivity training needs to be increased.


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