

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN
YAM CULTIVATION IN SANG, GHANA**

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YAM CULTIVATION IN SANG, GHANA**

BY

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JULY, 2015



DECLARATIONS

I wish to indicate that this project thesis is original as a result of my own research efforts and that it has not been presented for the award of any degree. I wish to further state that apart from references from other academic materials and other sources which have been duly acknowledged in this project, the work is solely mine. I therefore declare that this project is original and the brain child of mine.

Signature



Date: July, 2015

Name: Lafia Jochala Joseph

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this project thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of project thesis laid down by the University for Development Studies

Supervisor's signature



Date: July, 2015

Name: Dr. Walata Yakub Salifu



DEDICATION

To my lovely wife and son through whose efforts, prayers and sacrifices have helped me to finish this project thesis and to all who are working to ensure that women contribute their significant quota to the development of mother Ghana.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my profound appreciation to God Almighty for His unfailing grace throughout this program.

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To the people of Sang and all others who helped me during the research work, I say your efforts shall abundantly be rewarded by God.

To my wife and son, am exceedingly grateful to you and my entire family.



ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the main stay of Ghana and women form a core group of people in that sector. According to Duncan (2004), about 55% of Ghana's total population is engaged in agriculture and about 70% of women in Ghana are into food production. Despite the leading role of women in agricultural sector, they are limited in a number of ways which hinder their progress. These limitations are borne from the fact that they are women, because their counterpart men do not suffer the same challenges. What that therefore means is that apart from the general challenges that both women and men face in agriculture, women uniquely face some challenges because they are women. However, the implications of their limitedness in agricultural activities even though have direct consequences on them, they transcend to other members of the society such as men, children and in fact their families, communities and Ghana as a whole

This study based on the intersection between a people's culture and their engagement in economic activities exploring the non-engagement of women in yam cultivation in Sang, one of the agricultural activities in the northern region of Ghana.

This research seeks to examine using Sang community as an exemplar to finding out the core reasons that prevent women from engaging in yam production.

The researcher specifically employed the phenomenological approach of a qualitative design as the means of exploring participants' experiences of engaging in yam cultivation in Sang, a main cash crop in northern region.

Some of the factors from the research militating against women in to yam cultivation include; gender division of crop cultivation in Sang, gender division on roles on the farm and land acquisition and yam cultivation in Sang.



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CHAPTER ONE

SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

IN YAM CULTIVATION IN SANG

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Yam is both an economic and food consumption crop in Ghana. It serves as a food crop as people prepare a variety of meals from it. The most preferred forms of meals prepared with yam in Ghana are pounded yam (*fufu*), boiled yam slices (*busa*), and fried yam (*koliko*) (Dramani, 2013). Yam is as well an economic crop as most farmers cultivate it to sell, especially in northern region and other parts of Ghana as it is the major cash crop cultivated by men. Mignouna et al (2014) assert that yam has become a global economic crop as it serves as food to most people in Africa and abroad as several millions of people depend on it for their livelihood in Africa. However, they raised an issue of inadequate attention to boost the production of yam by both governments and other stakeholders in yam producing countries to which Ghana is part (Mignouna et al, 2014). According to Millennium Development Authority (2010), Ghana is a leading yam exporter in the world; this has been evidenced in its ability to export 20,841 metric tons of yams in 2008. The current global demand for yam proves that, yam has the ability to contribute significantly to food security and empowerment of people engaged in its production, through distribution to consumption in the world (Mignouna et al, 2014; Millennium Development Authority, 2010).

Mignouna et al (2014) argued that the glaring neglect of the yam economy by stakeholders is generally obvious and specifically women's non-engagement in yam farming is worrying and their findings cannot qualify for gender analysis. The researcher argues in his thesis that, as a



main economic activity for the people of the northern region, women's engagement in the production of yam would have increased the economic and social well-being of the family. However, women are not currently involved and there have been limited researches on non-participation of women in yam farming. This research seeks to examine using Sang community as an exemplar to finding out the core reasons that prevent women from engaging in yam production. Sang community was purposefully selected as the researcher was part of a team of graduate students who did an economic assessment of the community in 2014 and realized that both men and women could engage in any cash crop farming except yam.

In order to achieve the above goal, the researcher has organized the study into five sections. First section focused on the background which looks as the socio-cultural binaries between men and women and how that determines the role society expects each to perform with literature review and objectives of the study. The second section focuses on methodology underpinned the study. The next section looks at results and observations of the study. The challenges identified or problems noticed were presented next. Finally, solutions and suggestions to the challenges or problems were proffered with a social engineering to be implemented to bring about a change in the lives of the people.

1.1 Background to the Study

A way of life of a group of people is shaped by their socio-cultural values. Thus what people value and how they live are the processes and products of their culture. Culture therefore is a major determinant of how people relate and engage with individuals and institutions within and outside of their societies. This is supported by Anquandah (2006) as he asserts that culture is a lifestyle lived by a group of people. Emphasis must be put on the fact that culture



is man-made, it is social not natural and it emerges as humans strive to live by interacting with nature (Anquandah, 2006; Schoefthaler, 2006). In this case, culture is uniquely peculiar to a group of people. Despite this uniqueness of a people's culture, it is not immune to influence from other factors such as religion, education, and even other people's culture as they intersect in shaping relationships and identities.

Due to the importance a group of people attaches to their culture, there is always the need to uphold and sustain it. Owusu (2012) notes that in order to sustain cultural values, norms and traditions, society engages in socialization; which is passing on their cherished norms, traditions and values to children starting from the family as the first avenue of socialization. Other avenues include the society, peers, religion, and the media, among others. These institutions hold and sustain culture through socialization as they play multiple and interrelated roles in ensuring that people behave in ways expected of them by their societies.

From the foregoing, one realizes that culture plays an important role in a people's life and as a result, there is the need for scholars and researchers alike to pay attention to cultural issues and proffer their hard evidence to practitioners to propel development in rural areas. It could be said that development in rural areas has not received much attention in appreciating people's culture as most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies have frameworks or models within which people are compelled to think and act if only they want to develop. This view has been supplemented by Schoefthaler (2006) as he asserts that the role of culture has been relegated to the background as a major factor influencing change in our societies. As this happens, the recurrent effects are that there are always development failures and challenges in most rural settings. This is because; the frameworks that imported may contradict the socially constructed way of life in such settings and they may not gain the support of the locals.



It will suffice to say that culture as a term envelops several other elements of a society. That is to say that a people's culture contains their political, social, religious, economic identities and how they inter-relate with one another to inform their lives. For instance, it is of common knowledge that in patriarchal societies, it is men who wield most of the political powers. As a result, men are able to determine or dictate the binary relationships that should exist between them and women regarding economic, social, and moral activities among others. There is therefore a trickle-down effect on other sectors of the society due to the political power wielded by men at the family and societal levels. Thus, culture determines the nature of relationships, roles, and expected behaviour of both men and women at the individual, family and societal levels.

The major point that is apparent from the discussions so far indicates that there is a relationship between culture and gender identities and relationships within and outside of any society. For instance, Schalkwyk (2000) asserts that in much a similar way to race or ethnicity, culture plays a role in determining who is female or male and what they can/cannot do. Owusu (2012) and Schalkwyk (2000) concurred in asserting that the binary difference between men and women is evident in the gender division of labour as every society considers certain jobs to "women's work" and "men's work" within and outside of households. This study based on the intersection between a people's culture and their engagement in economic activities exploring the non-engagement of women in yam cultivation in Sang, one of the agricultural activities in the northern region of Ghana.



1.2 Literature Review

Extant literature on farming activities in Africa suggests that women and men have different opportunities pertaining to what they can/cannot engage in. For instance, Guyer in 1980 indicated that African farming systems are faced with many challenges and constraints whose management is found in the broader and complex economic and social organizations. These challenges and constraints as I seek to argue are in one way or the other the products and processes of societal organisations in Africa. However, it cannot be relegated to the background if there is a need to change some of the systems to favour both sexes, then there is equally a compelling need to understand the intricacies of the social organizations (socio-cultural dynamics) that created the problems in the first place. This has not been given spot light by Guyer's study in Southern Cameroon (1980). What is significant to understand about Guyer's findings are that he focused on the point that "the position of women farmers in both indigenous social organization and national economies is different from men's, they work under different constraints in their farming and have different opportunities for alternative employment" (p.341). He further adds that as men and women engage in different farming activities, they are offered different opportunities in terms of what resources they can access, utilize and thus different impact on their farming activities and lives generally.

Although the gender division of labour in farming activities across Africa can be generally similar, there are few variations in terms of the ethnic groups, geographic location, marriage arrangements, land ownership, access and usage. For instance, studies from southern Ghana among the Fantes and the Ewes show that farming activities were mediated on marriage relationships and thus those who were single suffered some ill consequences (Hill, 1978; Burkh, 1979; Haswell, 1975). Hill (1978) reveals that in a typical Fante village, farm ownership and activities on the farms were jointly done by a couple and not individuals. Regardless of the joint ownership of farms by a couple, the roles each played on the same



farm differed. This has been supplemented by the works of Burkh (1979), Haswell (1975) and Guyer (1980) in different African countries. However what has not been critically examined especially in the findings of these authors are that even though wives had roles to play in the supposedly jointly owned farms, those farms could actually be owned by their husbands which they needed to work as women were seen as labourers of their husbands in much the same way as their children. And thus, their working on the farms (performing female roles) could not make them co-owners of the farms, unless they both had equal access to the proceeds of the farms which has not been established by literature among the Fantes and Ewes of Ghana. However, Guyer's (1980) study in Southern Cameroon could be suggestive in supporting my argument above, as he indicated that even though wives and husbands farm collectively on the yam farm with different roles, only wives worked on groundnuts farms. This suggests that the groundnut farms could actually be what were of the wives'. He further adds that men were those who had possession of the yams especially those of commercial values and exchange purposes and gave some to the women for cooking purposes. The apparent questions that are glaring are that can women go and fetch some of the yams to sell for money for their personal use without the consent of the husband? Or does a husband need the consent of his wife to sell some of the yams for money for his personal usage? If in the first question a woman cannot freely do that and in the second question a man does not need the consent of the wives, then I argue that, that yam farm belonged to the husband and not collectively owned.

Another issue of concern regarding women engagement in farming activities is the issue of land access and usage. In some parts of Ghana especially in patriarchal societies, all land holding titles are vested in the hands of the men (Sarpong, 2006). Thus, a woman's access to and usage of a particular land depends largely on the husbands or families access as well



(Sarpong, 2006). However, in matrilineal societies such as among the Akans in Ghana, both men and women have right to ownership of land and its usage on their own right, regardless, women's right are limited as they do not inherit the land as lineage members of their husbands (Sarpong 2006). In that wise, the portion of land that may be given may be small for larger cocoa production purposes. The above notwithstanding, it has been documented that among the cocoa growing areas, women own cocoa farms which they either inherited from their families or were given to them by their husbands and they could depend on it for the rest of their lives (WIEGO, 2015).

There is however a variant view to the ability of women to own cocoa farms in cocoa growing areas. This view argues that even though women can own cocoa farms, they are less as compared to men and thus have made some scholars to view cocoa as a male crop (Barrientos, 2013, ODI, 2014). A point has also been established in literature that it is not only the size of cocoa farms that matter for consideration, but that in addition, the roles women play in cocoa farming have been feminized and thus have not been recognized and appreciated (Barrientos, 2013). Thus as argued by Oxfam and Barrientos, they are paid less in the activities with the chunk of the profits going into the hands of men. Specifically, Oxfam's study in Ivory Coast indicated that "while women play essential roles in farming cocoa,... their work traditionally has been underappreciated, at best, completely ignored, at worst, and often underpaid" (p.1). What it means is that with the limitation of women to do some activities on the cocoa farms due to their culture, women who owned cocoa farms needed to hire the labour of men and thus, the chunk of their income goes to paying for the cost of that labour (Oxfam, n.d).

From the forgoing, one realizes that there are no much literature on gender and yam farming in Africa and for that matter Ghana, thereby creating a gender gap in yam production in



Africa and Ghana to be specific. Again, the literature of Guyer (1980) on women's role in yam farming in Cameroon is old and different dynamics might have affected yam production in modern Africa and hence there is the need for this new research to make up that gap. Attention was focused on cocoa farming because; it is also related cash crop that has a few women into its cultivation in Ghana and Africa as a whole. Over all, the call for this research is necessitated by the findings of Mignouna et al (2014:7) who indicated that "women are underrepresented as heads of yam producing households; the ratio of women to men as heads of households is 1:25 in the randomly selected sample of 75 yam-producing households in Nigeria and Ghana. This leaves a low degree of freedom that does not permit objective assessment of yam production performance by men and women." This calls for research to examine why there is no existence or few women into yam cultivation in Nigeria and Ghana.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Agriculture is the main stay of Ghana and women form a core group of people in that sector. According to Duncan (2004), about 55% of Ghana's total population is engaged in agriculture and about 70% of women in Ghana are into food production. Despite the leading role of women in agricultural sector, they are limited in a number of ways which hinder their progress. These limitations are borne from the fact that they are women, because their counterpart men do not suffer the same challenges. What that therefore means is that apart from the general challenges that both women and men face in agriculture, women uniquely face some challenges because they are women. However, the implications of their limitedness in agricultural activities even though have direct consequences on them, they transcend to other members of the society such as men, children and in fact their families, communities and Ghana as a whole. It therefore means that if Ghana needs to be better off, women's



efforts in agriculture need to be cushioned and supported and in like manner, if their conditions are better off, it will have the same trickle down effects on their families, communities and Ghana as a whole.

Of critical to understand the intricacies of these challenges women face is to examine their sources. It is argued by scholars that women who engaged in agriculture are mostly found in food crops rather than cash crops across Ghana (Duncan, 2004). But how did this happen, Duncan finds that this is rooted in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history of agricultural activities in Ghana. Before colonialism, both men and women were engaged in subsistence farming to feed the family, then during colonial period, there was the introduction of cash crops and men had moved away from the subsistence food production to cash crops such as cocoa while women remain in food production only and lastly after independence, some women have ventured into what has become known as men's activity (cash crops) farming (WIEGO, 2015; Duncan, 2004; Barrientos, 2013). This has however not been easy as several challenges have come their way.

In southern Ghana, there have been studies that sort to deal with women's challenges in engaging in cash crop production such as cocoa, a major cash crop in the middle part of Ghana (WIEGO, 2015; Duncan, 2004; Barrientos, 2013). There have however, been limited studies in the northern Ghana on the engagement of women in the main cash crop production which is yam. This research therefore stems from an earlier exploration of people's engagement in agricultural activities in the northern Ghana using Sang as an example in 2014 of which I was a team member. The team found that "there is no gender discrimination in crop cultivation at Sang except yam that women are not into its cultivation". In fact, an acquaintance with Sang community one realizes that women are busily engaged in selling of raw, roasted and fried yam along the streets. A study by Mignouna et al (2014) also revealed that few or no women were in to yam production in Nigeria and Ghana. The question that has



remained unanswered, which this study seeks to answer is that why it is that woman in Sang community do not engage in yam cultivation? The study will focus on their socio-cultural and organization of economic activities in Sang.

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the gaps identified in literature, that there no women into yam farming across Africa, this study seeks to fill that gap by piloting a study in Sang a farm farming community in northern region of Ghana to examine the reasons for the non-engagement of women in yam farming. The main objective of this research project is intended to assist in generating in-depth knowledge on the reasons why women do not engage in yam cultivation in Sang.

Specifically,

- To examine gender division of crop cultivation and the reasons for such divisions
- To understand gender roles on the farming activities and the reasons for such roles
- To provide knowledge to assist in the development of policy and programmes that will encourage women into the cultivation of yam.

It is hoped that the data and knowledge generated will lead to the development of a comprehensive community awareness campaign and public education on the need for women's engagement in yam cultivation



CHAPTER TWO

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Area

Sang is the district Capital of the Mion district created in 2012. It was created out from the Yendi District of the northern Region of Ghana. It is located on the Tamale-Yendi road, 81Km away from Tamale and 18 km from Yendi. It is divided into two electoral areas; Bayawaya and Nayilifong. The District shares boundaries with 2 municipalities and 6 districts; to the East Yendi Municipality, to the South, Nanumba North and East Gonja, to the West, Tamale Metropolitan and Savelugu Municipality and to the North, Gushegu and Karaga. However, Sang can further be described as a nucleated and linear settlement because houses are built close together along the main road on both sides (Mion District Assembly).

According to oral narration, the inhabitants of sang were returning from war and decided to stop over for want of water at “*Sang kurugu*”. The name Sang is derived from the traditional word “*Saŋ*” which means valley. We are told the leader asked his younger brothers to go down the valley to find out whether there was water. They found water and decided to settle there, but later moved up the valley to their present location (Field research, 2014).

A survey conducted by the team with a cross section of the community reveals that the people of Sang have varied economic activities. These could be categorized into Agricultural and Non-agricultural activities. About 90% of the working class is into farming while the remaining is into non-agricultural activities. Men and women are equally engaged in agricultural activities. Meanwhile, women are more engaged in processing and petty trading activities as men are more in the services subsector. The choice of Sang as a study area is purposive as the researcher had been part of the team at Sang who earlier identified that there



is gender discrimination in yam cultivation as women are not allowed into its cultivation. As someone who is interested in the empowerment of women and the development of rural areas, I sought to find out why women are not allowed into yam cultivation, a main cash crop in northern region.

2.2 Research Design

The aim of this research was to explore qualitatively the socio-cultural barriers to women's participation in yam cultivation in Sang, a community in Northern Region. The researcher employed qualitative method in the conduct of this research because of its appreciation as a window through which researchers see and comment on significant socio-cultural issues (Maxwell, 2005).

The researcher specifically employed the phenomenological approach of a qualitative design as the means of exploring participants' experiences of engaging in yam cultivation in Sang, a main cash crop in northern region. Phenomenological approach was the preferred choice due to its sensitivity to socio-cultural issues which created binary relationship between men and women in every aspect of life in Sang. This approach was useful for this study because it provided complex descriptions of how people experience a given phenomenon such as the farming of yam in Sang as individuals, groups and as a community in general (Cresswell, 2007).

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2.3 Target Population

The target population for this study included women and men of 18 years and above, community leaders, officials from the ministry of Agriculture, Social Welfare Department, NGOs in agricultural production and self-Initiative groups that engaged in agricultural activities in Sang. Specifically, purposive sampling technique was used to sample the research participants that took part in this study. The researcher acknowledged the bias nature of purposive sampling but employed it because; it enabled the researcher recruit participants who had knowledge on the link between socio-cultural beliefs and agricultural activities in Sang. This is confirmed by Berg (2001:32) who opines that through purposive sampling researchers “use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population”. In all 13 interviews were conducted with 5 women groups, 3 men groups, a chief, magazia, an Assemblyman, an official from the district Mofa office and another from the department of social welfare. The population was diverse to enable the researcher gather adequate information that helped in understanding the reasons why women were not allowed to engage in yam cultivation in Sang. Two focus groups were also organized (one each for men and women comprising 7 participants each) and one community forum.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher employed primary data collection methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and community forum. The use of these multiple data collection methods assisted in enhancing the trustworthiness and the adequacy of the data collected. Semi-structured interview guides were used as a main tool for the collection of data. The semi-structured interview guides were constructed by the researcher. The questions



sought to ascertain participants' knowledge on socio-cultural barriers to women's participation in yam cultivation, other crops they were allowed to cultivate and how that affected their quality of life and general wellbeing of Sang community, the relationship between women and men as a result of their non-engagement in yam farming and finally some emerging challenges if women were allowed to cultivate yam. Prior to the collecting of data, the researcher sought the consent of the participants to participate and their permission to audio-taped the discussions and interviews. The participants gave their consent and the time that was suitable for them. For in-depth interviews, the researcher interviewed them during evening when they had returned from farms and were resting. The key informant interviews took place in their day time as they were mostly government and NGOs officials who agreed to have the interviews in their offices. The focus group discussions and community forum was held on Fridays in the mornings. Individual interviews lasted between 45 minutes – one hour while the Focus Group Discussions and the community forum lasted between an hour and thirty minutes. The instruments were developed in English but dagbanli (language of the community) was used to interview individuals and conduct of community forum. This was easy as the researcher spoke the dagbanli. English was however used to interview government and NGO officials as that was a choice they made. The researcher conducted all interviews but was assisted with three students in the rural development program who recorded and took field notes.

Of significant at each of the data collection processes and methods was observation. The researcher through non-participant observations, observed body gestures and other non-verbal communications of research participants. This gave insight and helped in better understanding of such a complex issue as socio-cultural barriers to women's non-engagement



in yam farming in Sang. These multiple records of interviews were to help in the safety of the data as they could be corroborated and supplement one another.

2.5 Data Analysis

All recorded audios were stored in different media for safe keeping and analysis. After field visits each day, the audios were downloaded from the recorder to the laptop. The researcher also emailed them into his email. This was done to have the data safe. After the fieldwork processes, the researcher listened keenly to each interviews and transcribed it word for word. The transcripts were compared with the notes which were taken during interviews.

In terms of analysis, the researcher read the transcripts several times to get familiarize with the data. He edited the typographical errors. Through the multiple reading of the transcript, the researcher was able to identify some recurrent themes and sub themes which were organized into major headings and subheadings as seen in the presentation section. The researcher then discussed the findings and juxtaposed them with already existing literature.



CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

This section presents the results and observations of the study. As a qualitative study, data set was analyzed and the results thematically presented. The discussions will be intertwined with the observation I made in the field.

3.1 Gender Division of Crop Cultivation in Sang

It was observed from the field that the people in Sang engaged in different economic activities. Both men and women engaged in agricultural and non-agricultural activities for their survival. It was also realized from both interviews and observations that even though both men and women engaged in agricultural and non-agricultural activities, women were more into multi activities than men. For instance, there were many women who had farms and the same time had table top businesses, cooked intermittently for sale, and had sold yams on market days as well as after farm work. However, agriculture was the main economic activity in Sang as about 90% of its inhabitants were into farming and trading of farm products (Field research, 2014).

As typical of every patriarchal society, Sang had women and men engaged in different crop production. It was revealed that women engaged in the cultivation of cereal crops such as maize, groundnuts, Bambara beans, and soup preparing crops such as pepper, okra and vegetables. On the other hand, men were into root crops such as yam cultivation, cassava as well as cereals such as groundnuts, maize, guinea corn, millet among others. It was also realized that men could engaged in both root and cereal cultivation where as women could



not especially the most prestigious cash crop, the yam. Below are some of the reasons for the gender division of crop cultivation in Sang as were revealed from the field.

In this community, women are only supposed to cultivate food consumption crops. That is crops that are supposed to be used to feed the family. They should only sell out if there is surplus after feeding the family. (A woman, Participant)

Women are supposed to be helpers to their husbands, brothers and male children on their farming activities. Even though a particular farm could be for the man, there are roles that are meant for women and for men on the same farm. So if you have your sister, aunty, mother or wife, they need to come to your farm and perform those women roles. You as a man may only struggle to do all of the roles on your own when there is no female directly to help. Even in certain instances, you can call a communal labour of women to help you on your farm if you do not have a woman.

It is common knowledge that yam cultivation is a preserve of men in Sang. I cannot give the history of how that came about but right from my grandparents' generation through my parents and our generation, we do not see women into yam cultivation.

We as men have a lot of responsibilities. We need to cultivate crops that will bring us money and food to feed the family and meet other family demands.



A woman also narrated that;

Even though the yam farm belonged to the man and we do assist by performing our ascribed roles, we also plant vegetables and other crops such as pepper, okra, Neri, among others. We harvest and keep those crops to ourselves. We are more into soup crops while our husbands are into food and cash crops cultivation. The reasons are due to the role we need to perform in the society and in the family.

Inferences drawn from the above quotes, show that there are different reasons for the engagement of men and women into economic activities. Women are seen as helpers of their husbands and male relations on farming activities. Thus, they could only engage in farming crops that were not major crops of men. This is because, should they do, and there be a conflict as whose farm to go when it comes to the preparation season of the major crop. For instance, yam cultivation is an activity which is all year round with different activities, what that meant is that, women will always have a role to perform on their male relations yam farms at every time. Should they have their own farms these roles will conflict?

Again, as can be seen in the first quote, women are supposed to be subsistent farmers, which is to grow crops on small scale to supplement feeding of the family. They could only sell some to buy other ingredients that they do not grow and produce by themselves such as salt, fish, Maggi cubes, among others. As revealed by one informant: *if not until recently, women's needs were provided by their husbands, their clothes, accommodation and feeding, he queried what did they need to engage in cash crops for?* This presupposes that it was the role of a man to provide for the family and the ability of a man to perform these made him stand among his equals as a man. Even in some instances as one of the participants note: *women who had money gave to their husbands to spend or to use the same money to buy*



things for them. Thus, there was no need for men and women to compete in terms of wealth accumulation because, their purposes in the family were distinct and each knew where they belonged.

3.2 Gender Division of Roles on the Farm

Gender has always been a binary line that divides the world into two. As argued: by age 2 or 3, children get to know that they belonged to two different sections of society and begin to live their lives to the expectations of society. Sang was not different from this norm, a social creation that has come to stay and looks as if it were natural. The distinction however must be made regarding the fact that sex and gender are not the same. While sex is a biological and natural division, gender is created based on the sex of a human being which differs from society to society. The division of roles in Sang was not only in the normative as women are to do domestic chores and men to farming chores, women doubled in supporting their male relations on their farms and therefore the roles each played were distinct. In this section, I proffer the roles of women on the farms as well as men and why such differentiation.

The roles of women in yam cultivation are very clear. Just as any other farming activity, men take the lead to the farm at dawn while our women bring us water and food later in the day. Specifically on yam farming, they are supposed to burn trees on the yam farm, carry the yam sects from old site to the new yam site, place yam sects on the mounts, and assist in mulching of the yam after planting. Women also assist in weeding but it is not their major role, male children and the husbands are supposed to do that, but women can help if the need arises. During harvesting season, the man only digs the yams and women carry them to the hut, home or market place to be sold.



It's the role of the man to acquire the land, clear it, raise yam mounts, plant, and weed and do the harvesting. This is common knowledge in this community and we all know it. Even children are very much aware of these roles and begin to mimic by also preparing mini farms and asking their female siblings to help like our wives do on our farms.

In analysing the quotes above, one realizes that both men and women were very much aware of their roles on the yam farm. It is a form of socialization as one of the participants noted that even children were aware of the different roles each performed. What that means is that, the notion of yam cultivation being the preserve of men is a cultural construction which has been passed down from older generation through socialization due to their roles in society. In Sang community, men were in-charge of taking care of the family, thus providing food, accommodation, health needs and clothing. With this system they are required to engage in activities that will enable them shoulder these responsibilities. Women are only seen as helpers and thus do not need to compete with their husbands in the performance of such roles. Women however did not challenge this position, they accepted it. They however felt that, even though they did not directly own the yam farm, they had access to also growing their soup crops such as vegetables. As one of the key informant hinted; *a husband could prevent the wife from planting these vegetables on the yam farm if she failed to perform her role on the farm.* There have been instances where women defied the instructions of their husbands not to plant their crops, the crops were uprooted and destroyed.

A man also hinted that:

It was not possible for a woman to engage in yam farming because, they are supposed to be helpers to the man and that is why a man had to go marry her and bring her to come and live



with him in his house. If I bring a woman as a wife who will come and be like a man by wanting to do what men do, then she should just stay at her parents' home and be the man she wants to be.

Aside cultural factors that hindered women into yam cultivation, there were others factors. These factors therefore are intertwined and complex in hindering the role of women in yam cultivation in Sang. Some participants saw the inability of women not to engage in yam cultivation as natural creation by God based on their physique. Women lacked the physical strength to raise yam mounts as some of the participants opined.

You know there are some things that are for men only. Men clear the land and raise yam mounts. Women cannot do that. They do not have the physical strength to raise yam mounts. We do as a result of our physical build up. I think it is God's design and as a result our strength and physique determine what we can and cannot do.

This has also been supported by a woman informant who asserted that;

We are not strong physically to raise yam mounts. We will have to struggle to do that. Men can do that better, so I will prefer men are into what they are good at doing while we also into what we are good and capable of doing. Not owning yam farm does not mean we are not helpful in society. There are certain things we do that men cannot also do...what do you say about that?

The above woman does not believe that women should venture into yam farming. She does admit that physique and strength played a role in what they could and could not do. One of such is the cultivation of yams. But interestingly, she feels that it was alright that way considering the roles they also performed that men could not perform.



When I queried her further on what they can do that men cannot do, she revealed that, the major reason why they cannot engage in yam cultivation is that they had a lot of activities to attend to.

Every day, we are the first to wake up and the last to sleep. We need to perform the household chores, boil water for our husbands to bath before going to farm, bath the children, sweep the yard, cook for the children, and fetch water for the entire household. After this morning activity, we follow with water to the farms for our husbands. On the farm we play our ascribed roles again, fetch fire wood and come home to cook. Considering the workload of yam farm, I just think it is too much to add to our already heavy workload. We cannot.

3.3 Land Acquisition and Yam cultivation in Sang

One key requirement in the cultivation of yam like any other crop is the acquisition of land. It was revealed in Sang that women did not have direct access to land for their farming activities. They either had a land passed to them for their use by their husbands or male children. Taking cognizance of this fact imply that, as the yam cultivation needs a virgin land or a land that has been allowed to fallow and regained its fertility, it will be difficult if not impossible for women to be able to cultivate yam.

In Sang, we can only have access to land that has been used by our husbands or male children. We cannot acquire land on our own.

It is difficult for a woman to acquire land. I give what I have worked on for some years to her to farm. And you know here land virgin or fallowed land needs to be



cultivated with yams first. It is proper that way, if you want to have a good harvest. So with this idea in mind, I think that is why women cannot have virgin lands/fallowed land to cultivate.

The question however remains, why men should be those to acquire the land and hand it to their female relatives after they have used it. If the reason above will suffice that, it is because women do not engage in yam farming and lands are acquired by men first is to hold, will women be allowed to access land on their own if they are allowed to farm yam?



CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED/PROBLEMS NOTICED

This study was not without challenges. The challenges were into two broad types. The first had to do with the research process and the limitations of the findings. The second challenges had to do with the specific issues that currently serve as constraints to women's engagement in yam cultivation in Sang.

4.1 Methodological Limitations

This study was limited in terms of the methodology employed. The researcher underpinned the study with qualitative methodology. This focused on small sample size and a single community in the northern region. The views therefore expressed were those of the research participants and did not represent the general view of people on women's non-engagement in yam farming in northern region. The findings therefore cannot be generalized beyond Sang community. However, the interest of the researcher was not to generalize the findings but to understand the dynamics of yam farming in Sang by drawing on the lived experiences of women and other stakeholders in the community. With this snapshot, there could be a larger study to understand the dynamics of yam farming in northern region as a whole.

Another limitation that might have affected the outcome of this research was due to the translation from the local language dagbanli (the language of the research participants) to English. Even though, the researcher is not a native speaker of the dagbanli language, he expresses himself and could communicate effectively; he sought help in translation of certain words and phrases. The main issue was the fact that, some words did not have exact translation in English. This might have affected the findings of this study.



4.2 Challenges of the Study

The researcher identified some challenges that affected women's participation in yam cultivation in Sang. These challenges are presented in this section.

Firstly, the culture and role expectations of the people of Sang served as a major hindrance to women's engagement in yam cultivation. It was the case that, women were expected to be helpers to their male relations or husbands. It was therefore expected that all they did was a subsidiary to the major roles of the men. As a result, men were those expected to provide for the family in terms of accommodation, feeding, clothing among others. This propelled men to be involved in the major cash crop such as yam to be able to get enough money to shoulder these responsibilities. It was the duty of the women to help their husbands achieve this and not to also have their own yam farms. If they did, there will be a conflict as to whose farm the women are to go.

Secondly, the cultivation of yam was considered as activity that is labour intensive. It involved a lot of physical energy and time to be able to farm yam. As revealed in the findings, women were not seen to have the physical energy and time to be able to engage in yam farming in Sang.

Thirdly, yam farming was also considered to be capital intensive. It is being revealed that a lot of the work is done by employing the services of other people to work on the farm. For instance, one needs money to buy yam sects, pay for the clearing of the land, raising of yam mounds, among many other activities. It was observed that, it will be difficult for women to be able to raise these moneys to embark on yam cultivation in Sang.

Fourthly, women lacked access to yam cultivation lands. The point must be made that, virgin lands or fallowed lands were used for yam cultivation. Women could not have access to these



types of lands. They depended on what was already used by their male relatives for yam and was handed to them to grow other crops. This served as a major constrain to women's engagement in yam farming in Sang.

Lastly, it was realized that women were already overburdened with so many roles and adding yam cultivation would be an extra burden.



CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SOLUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above enumerated challenges, the researcher presents the following as ways of overcoming the challenges.

In the wake of changes in recent developments in modern times, it is recommended that the people of Sang re-evaluate their culture and the roles each member of the family played. This is made to the effect that, culture is dynamic and ever-changing, and thus, those days women were only to assist their husbands and not to acquire their personal wealth seems problematic now. The increase in the financial status of a woman is a further step to boost the welfare of the entire family.

With regard to the labour intensiveness of yam farming, it is recommended that women could also employ the services of employed labour and not necessarily physically doing all the work by them. Most of the men into yam farming in Sang employed the services of labourers. This reduces the amount of physical strength a yam farmer puts into his/her yam farm. This eventually reduces the other problem of yam farming being capital intensive.

In respect of the issue of yam farming being capital intensive, it is recommended that the government, banks and NGOs that are into women empowerment give interest free loans to women who are interested in yam farming. This will reduce the financial burden and help cushion them in their interest in yam farming.

Again, men should be educated to assist their wives with household chores. This will reduce the burden of women.



Finally, there is the need for the people of Sang to be educated to allow women to be able to access land for yam farming directly than relying on already used lands from their husbands and male relations. That will enable them to also have access to land that yam can be cultivated.

5.1. Implementation of the Social Engineering

The implementation of the social engineering also forms a key component of this project work in that it seeks to help the students come out with projects that can be implemented practically to make concrete the suggestions and solutions from the research. The design of the social engineering also seeks to assist interested partners to implement in order to remove the barriers militating against women participation in yam cultivation in Sang in the Northern region and Ghana at large.

The objective of the social engineering is the creation of technical, political and strategic conditions for sustainable women's yam cultivation to increase yields and reduce poverty.

The ultimate goal of the project is to design a three year investment plan in the Mion district of the Northern region of Ghana.

The social engineering process in this program seeks to design investment projects in selected communities such as Sang, Mion, Sambo and Kulpini using a participatory approach. In the four communities of the Mion district of the Northern region of Ghana, the study will adopt the following steps in achieving the target of including women in the yam cultivation.

1. Building contacts with stakeholders at the regional, district and community levels by giving

preliminary information on the program and explaining intended steps towards



designing the expected investment project in the four communities of the Mion district.

2. Carrying out a diagnostic analysis in selected communities. Such diagnosis should include both social and engineering materials to best represent the local conditions.
3. Undertaking planning sessions in order to select pertinent activities for sustainable land management and best adaptation of local communities to women inclusion in yam cultivation.

The activities chosen are at the core of ensuring that women have adequate support in to the cultivation of the cash crop and these activities are the ones depriving them from going in to the cultivation such as ensuring that the women have access to fertile lands, yam inputs and all other facilities that would aid them like their male counterparts in to yam cultivation.

The cost evaluation of the project includes the principle of cost sharing of responsibilities by all stakeholders. This may help to enforce sustainability in actions being developed.

The total cost of the investment is GHC 558,000 comprising 434,400 for the funding agency and the communities 123,600.

A light project coordinating unit is suggested in order to allow for a smooth functioning of the intervention. A total of three staff will be needed comprising;

- A coordinator
- A field officer
- An accountant

It is suggested that the project coordinating unit be located at the district capital Sang.



Table 1 Sample of desired Profiles required for Implementation

POSITION	QUALIFICATIONS	EXPERIENCE	OTHER
Coordinator	Master of science in Agriculture or Rural Development required	Three(3) years' experience in rural development	A previous experience in development work will be appreciated
Accountant	Bachelor degree required	Three(3) years' experience in rural development project	An experience in management of justifiable funds will be appreciated
Field officer	Bachelor degree required	Three(3) years' experience in rural development project	-

Finally, a communication program is needed for a successful implementation of the project. Such a program should be built upon the interrelations between communities involved. Thus, exchange visits will be organized to learn from each other and to re-enforce local capacity building. This will inform, sensitize and mobilize stakeholders for sustainable women participation in yam cultivation.

The expected results include;

1. Disseminating and capitalizing knowledge and best practices on sustainable yam cultivation.
2. To minimize the socio- cultural practices limiting women access to land.
3. To produce and manage knowledge and technologies to strengthened stakeholders



capacity on yam cultivation.

This is aimed at improving the governance of natural resources in the communities.

The project coordinating unit will be in charge of the monitoring and evaluation process, thus quarterly, annually and end of project report will be made available.

The decentralized institutions such as the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and the Community development office are the closest field partners in the implementation with the field officer playing a facilitation role. They make sure stakeholders are informed and mobilized and the program is smoothly executed and monitored.

One of the guiding principles of women participation in yam cultivation is the leadership of the districts in the implementation process. The project coordinating unit and its staff will be hosted by the district and work closely with the decentralized institutions such as the community development office and the ministry of food and agriculture. They are preferably designated to implement the planned activities.



5.1.1 Communication financial evaluation

Table 2 Budget for communication of project implementation

Specific activity	Number	Unit	Unit price	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Project kick off meeting							8,000
Participants allowance	30 People	Man or day	20	600			600
Participants transportation	20 people	Km	5	100			100
Snack	30	persons	30	900			900
Reportage(Radio and TV)	FF	FF	1000	1000			1000
Sensitizing communities on benefits of the project							4000
Spreading to the Radio	36	unit	100	1200	1200	1200	3600
Tape recording	01	FF	400	400			400
Notice	1000	unit	3	3000			3000
Grand Total							21,600



Table 3 Sang Community Budget estimates

Item	Quantity	Unit price	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Community share	Funding agency
Yam sects	3000*3years* 5 people	100 per 100 yam sects	15,00 0	15,00 0	15,00 0		45000
Ploughing and harrowing	2 acres* 3 years *5 people	100 per acre	1,000	1,000	1,000		3000
Raising of yam mounds	3000*5 people * 3 years	160 per 100 mound s	24000	24000	24000	24000	48000
Planting	Communal labour for 10 days * 3 years	100 per day	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000	
Weeding	3000*5 people *3 years	160 per 1000 mound s	2400	2400	2400	2400	4800
Harvesting	Communal labour for 5 days for 3 years	100 per day	500	500	500	1500	
MOFA intervention	4 times*3 years for 5 people	40 per day	800	800	800		2400
Total						30,900	103,200



Table 4 Mion Community budget estimates

Item	Quantity	Unit price	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Community share	Funding agency
Yam sects	3000*3years* 5 people	100 per 100 sects	15,00 0	15,00 0	15,00 0		45,000
Ploughing and harrowing	2 acres* 3 years *5 people	100 per acre	1,000	1,000	1,000		3,000
Raising of yam mounds	3000*5 people * 3 years	160 per 100 mound s	24000	24000	24000	24000	48000
Planting	Communal labour for 10 days * 3 years	100 per day	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000	
Weeding	3000*5 people *3 years	160 per 1000 mound s	2400	2400	2400	2400	4800
Harvesting	Communal labour for 5 days for 3 years	100 per day	500	500	500	1500	
MOFA intervention	4 times*3 years for 5 people	40 per day	800	800	800		2400
Total						30,900	103,200



Table 5 Sambo Community budget estimates

Item	Quantity	Unit price	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Community share	Funding agency
Yam sects	3000*3years* 5 people	100 per 100 sects	15,000	15,000	15,000		45,000
Ploughing and harrowing	2 acres* 3 years *5 people	100 per acre	1,000	1,000	1,000		3,000
Raising of yam mounds	3000*5 people * 3 years	160 per 100 mound s	24000	24000	24000	24000	48000
Planting	Communal labour for 10 days * 3 years	100 per day	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000	
Weeding	3000*5 people *3 years	160 per 1000 mound s	2400	2400	2400	2400	4800
Harvesting	Communal labour for 5 days for 3 years	100 per day	500	500	500	1500	
MOFA intervention	4 times*3 years for 5 people	40 per day	800	800	800		2400
Total						30,900	103,200



Table 6 Kulkpini Community budget estimates

Item	Quantity	Unit price	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Community share	Funding agency
Yam sects	3000*3years* 5 people	100 per 100 sets	15,000	15,000	15,000		45,000
Ploughing and harrowing	2 acres* 3 years *5 people	100 per acre	1,000	1,000	1,000		3,000
Raising of yam mounds	3000*5 people * 3 years	160 per 100 mounds	24000	24000	24000	24000	48000
Planting	Communal labour for 10 days * 3 years	100 per day	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000	
Weeding	3000*5 people *3 years	160 per 1000 mounds	2400	2400	2400	2400	4800
Harvesting	Communal labour for 5 days for 3 years	100 per day	500	500	500	1500	
MOFA intervention	4 times*3 years for 5 people	40 per day	800	800	800		2400
Total						30,900	103,200



5.2 Conclusion

The implementation of the social engineering by Government, NGOs and other partners who are interested in women empowerment will go a long way to minimise if not eliminate the factors such as gender division of crop cultivation, gender division of roles on the farm, land acquisition among several other factors limiting women engagement in cash crop cultivation especially yam in the northern region and for that matter Ghana.

This will allow the women to contribute significantly towards increasing food security and to assist in the total development of mother Ghana.



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