

## GENDER EQUITY IN AGRICULTURE

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### ABSTRACT

Gender rights, a global issue, touching the sensitive brains of thinkers, researchers and scientists of 21<sup>st</sup> century, whereas the role of women in all spheres of life is not comparable with the rights provided to them by the states and the societies as well. Although women participation in agriculture sector is remarkable but in return they are deprived of their basic rights. The present study was designed in Pakistan by selecting a tehsil of below poverty line district Attock. The sample drawn through simple random sampling technique and data were collected with the help of structured pre-tested interview schedule. The data were analyzed through a statistical package SPSS and arranged in tabular form. The results show the maximum participation of rural women in different sub-sectors of agriculture but further analysis reflected clear cut discrimination in land ownership, tenure, access to inputs, trainings, and credit facility. The finding of research study highlighted the immediate attention of Government, policy makers and law and order authorities to have a glance over such discrimination and reframe their rules and regulation, and mode of implementation.

**Key words:** Gender, roles, rights, agriculture

### INTRODUCTION

Gender issues haunted the world's attention in current arenas of life. Gender rights claims fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities. There has been a debate as to whether equality or equity rights should be the goals of empowerment and change (FAO, 1999). It can be further explained as "all people have equal rights and must be treated equally". Under international human rights law, women and men are entitled to equal legal protection of their property rights (HRW, 2005). Like the other aspects of life women have equal rights to own and use of land and its accessories like water, land implement, credit, inputs and market access. People have a right to freedom from hunger, and everyone has a right to have access to adequate food and everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others, and no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his or her property (United Nations, 1948). The Islamic Shariiah recognizes the full property rights of women before and after marriage. In the same context Quran says: Men shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and women shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether there is little or much of it; a stated portion (AL-Qura'n, 4:07) and also at another place, And do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn (AL-Qura'n, 4:32). But it is a harsh reality that in fact this equality does not operate in practice even in the Islamic world. Men and women acquire land in many ways,

through property inheritance, purchases and transfers from the state (e.g., land reform programs, resettlement schemes and antipoverty programs). International social sciences research shows that women have to face more obstacles than men in dealing above-mentioned matters. Whether because of male preference in inheritance practices, male privilege in marriage, gender inequality in the land market or male bias in state land redistribution programs, women are at a disadvantage (Deere and Leon, 2001). Whereas, in the same context Agarwal (1994) showed that in the Asia region, the most comprehensive analysis of gender and land rights in existing social and cultural biases distort the intent of inheritance laws and the inadequacies of government policies that exclude women from or limit their landownership. She indicates that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also ignored women's rights to own land. A major concern is that "the issue of women and land, even today, remains one of marginal, not central concern of development policy in South Asia. Across Asia, rural women's access to common property resources and forests determines their ability to access basic resources that have an impact on household food security as well as on the success of their micro-enterprise ventures (Social Watch, 2004). Women's landownership by itself does not ensure that women can be independent decision-makers and successful cultivators in rural societies, where men are accorded greater social prestige and credited with greater wisdom in the sphere of economic transactions (Farrah, 2000). Despite the importance of land, housing and property to women, women also lack security of tenure. Secure land rights encompass the rights to lease public

land and use community-owned property, and not just the right to own private property (SPDP, 1997). This is largely a result of: gender biased laws which at their best only protect married women and at their worst do not protect women at all; legal systems which are inaccessible to women or which privilege customary law over statutory law; land and house titling systems which grant title to men rather than women or which require payment for land/houses which women cannot afford; and discriminatory lending or credit policies (Sims, 2004). Without rights in, access to or control over land, housing and property women are excluded from household and community decision making processes and therefore their interests and needs are unrepresentative and unfulfilled (UNCHS, 1999). FAO (2002) studies have shown that insecure rights to landownership and use are a crucial, gender-based barrier to enhancing women's agricultural productivity and income especially in African countries (World Bank, 2004).

Women have a significant role in livestock management and crop sector as well along with child care and home management. But their rights are still inconspicuous especially land ownership rights before Government machinery, policy makers, masses and also for them selves. It is a bitter fact to state that neither awareness about gender rights was created nor any strategy was designed in the past for the rural women especially in the perspective of land/property rights. Pakistan is an Islamic country and came into being on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug 1947 for the sake of Islam, the most common and accepted culture over here is Muslim culture. Therefore, the present study was planned to explore whether equal rights for both the gender in agriculture sector prevail in Pakistan are comparable with Islamic laws and basic rights of Human Rights Commission standards or not.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Attock district of Punjab province is in arid zone, which is at the bottom of the poverty line. Fateh Jung tehsil is one of the six tehsils of district Attock. Fateh Jung tehsil consisted of 14 Union Councils (UCs). Two UCs--Jung and Kisana-- were selected through simple random sampling technique. From each selected Union Council, 5 villages were selected randomly and from each village 12 women who were indulged in food production activities randomly selected. The data were collected with the help of pre-tested and validated interview schedule. The data were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS++ 12.0 version). Whereas the data regarding gender rights in land and its resources were interpreted through versus of Holy Book Quran to analyze the Muslim cultural practices versus recommended ones.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data regarding demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, education, occupation of the family head and land holding of the family head are presented in Table- I.

**Table 1 Distribution of the respondents according to their demographic characteristics**

Characters	Category	f	%
Age(years)	15-29	22	18.3
	30-44	66	55.0
	45-59	32	26.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
Education	Illiterate	93	77.5
	Primary (up to 5 grade)	23	19.2
	Middle (up to 8 grade)	1	0.8
	Matric (up to 10 grade)	3	2.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
Secondary occupation of the family head	Private servant	6	5.0
	Labourer	39	32.5
	Govt. servant	11	9.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
Land holding (Acres)	Up to 25	118	98.3
	Above 25	2	1.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
Marital status	Unmarried	21	17.5
	Married	92	76.7
	Widow	4	3.3
	Divorced	3	2.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

The data given in Table 1 show that 55% of rural farm women of the study area belonged to age group of 30-44 years, followed by 26.7% and 18.3% to age groups of 45-59 and 15-29 years respectively. The mean age of the respondents was 37.43 years. In case of education level, majority (77.5%) of the respondents was illiterate, followed by 19.2 and 2.5% of the respondents who were primary (up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade) and matriculate respectively. Only 0.8% of them were middle passed. Regarding family head's occupation all the respondents reported agriculture (crop and livestock sector) as their family heads' occupation. Due to small land holdings they had also some other livelihood strategies like labour, govt. or private service. In case of land holdings of the family it was depicted that an overwhelming majority (98.3%) of the respondents had small land holdings up to 25 acres of land i-e small landholders in arid zone. Only 1.7% of the respondents reported that their families owned 25 or above acres of land i-e large landholders. Regarding marital status, majority (76.5%) of the rural women were married followed by 17.5% who were unmarried. Whereas the present study in Fateh Jung tehsil

indicates that the majority of the respondents were married, middle aged, illiterate, labour as a secondary occupation of the family and had small land holdings. The female respondents were asked to give their response with respect to land rights. The data regarding this aspect are presented in Table 2 as given below.

**Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to gender rights with respect to Land and its accessories**

Factors	Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%
Do you have any land in your name	11	9.2	0	0.0
Do you got inherited land? If no, then	10	8.3	108	90.0
Do You bought yourself	1	0.8	119	99.0
Do your brothers give your part from inheritance	11	9.2	107	89.2
Do your brothers give your part from inheritance, you refused to get it because of social pressure	11	9.2	107	89.2
Can you sale inherited land with your will	3	9.5	108	90.0
Can you cultivate the inherited land	3	9.5	108	90.0
Do you have right and access to tenure of your own land	1	0.8	119	99.0
Do the Govt. policy and bank provide loan facility to rural women	4	3.3	108	90.0
Can you get loan from bank without the permission of your males	10	8.3	106	88.3
Can you irrigate the field with your will	2	1.7	109	90.8
Do you have access to agricultural inputs	3	2.5	108	90.0
Can you purchase/use implements in field with your own consent	3	2.5	108	90.0
Do any representative of Department of Agricultural Extension visit you	3	2.5	108	90.0
Do your husband/brother permits you to get training from male Agricultural Officer	2	1.7	100	83.3

n=120

Table 2 shows that 11 percent of the respondents had land with their own name, got inheritance and the same number has refused due to social pressure, culture and tradition. Whereas only 10 percent of the respondents

had access to land ownership and credit from bank and only 3 percent or less than 3% of the respondents have access to agriculture inputs, land tenure, right to sell and purchase, cultivate, visited by Agriculture Extension services, irrigate, and need permission for training. Women lack ownership of land; they had only the right to use, due to which they cannot take managerial decisions especially in case of absentee males (FAO, 2002). They also had no security for land tenure and FAO (2001) also concluded that despite their role as food producers and providers for family consumption in developing countries, women remain limited to their access to critical resources and services.

Women own not even 2.0% of land of the world, while the proportion of female heads of household continues to grow. Only 10.0% women have access to credit and loan facility. Two third of the one billion of illiterate persons in the world were women and girls, and only 5.0% extension services addressed to women, imparted trainings were mainly on household tasks for women and not on professional agriculture technology. They also had very limited role in decision-making process at the household, village and national level in most cultures. Their needs, interests and constraints were not reflected in policy-making. They also have limited access to benefits of research and innovations. All sectors of society must receive human rights education with a focus on women's rights and on economic, social and cultural rights including women's rights to land and property. Where appropriate, human rights education should also focus on local, national, regional and international legal and other mechanisms to enforce these rights. Whereas on the other side if we look the religious perspective of Pakistan, Islam provide the security of rights for both gender and in case of land ownership rights it provide a particular portion of inheritance to women (Al-Quran, 4:07) and give full power of decision to handle it. Whereas on the other side Allah also states the same status of men and women in His eyes and He never wasted any body's effort either men or women (Al-Quran, 3: 195). In the golden reign of Islam, Islamic state was fully responsible for the protection and security of women rights. Whereas regarding training Islam says to get knowledge from cradle to grave without sex discrimination.

Table 3 depicts that more than 75 percent of the respondents fell under constraints of marketing of agricultural produce, dual nature of work and lack of information sources. However 19.3% and 18.3% of the respondents can sale their produce and cooperate husband in domestic dispute settlement. Whereas 10 percent or less than 10 percent show that negative attitude of input agencies and training department, produce's income control and take independent decision. In the context of above data it was found that women have least marketing contacts due to social barrier.

**Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to constraints faced by them in gender equity**

Constraints	Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%
Can you take any independent decision regarding farm or home management	10	8.4	110	91.6
Do your husband cooperate in domestic dispute settlement	22	18.3	98	81.7
Do you feel fatigued or overburden because of dual nature of job i.e. home management and farming	94	78.3	26	21.6
Do you face lack of information sources in agricultural production techniques and home management	83	69.16	37	30.8
Can you sale your agricultural produce with your own consent?	23	19.3	97	80.7
Do you feel any problem in marketing of agricultural products due to lack of marketing contacts	95	79.3	25	20.6
Can you use the income of agricultural produce with your own consent?	11	9.4	109	90.6
Do the department of agriculture organize agricultural trainings for both genders?	9	7.4	111	92.6
Do the input supply agencies behave equally with both the genders?	14	10	106	90

n=120

It is a custom that product is sold by the male member of the family. Most of them either do not give the money to their women or right to spend according to their will and need due to which women were lack of confidence and contacts to get right price of their sold. It is also traditional and customary that women of the family either they are well or ill, less in number or more have to perform all the tasks including cooking, washing, home management, child care, care of livestock, heads on farm and home. In addition to all these tasks they also had to go to farm to take lunch for their male members of the family. They used to go to farm and perform work like: hoeing, intercultural operations, farm cleaning, fodder cutting, watering and milking (some areas) are done up to the noon. However, in the season of sowing or

harvesting their duty becomes almost double they also perform the tasks like: seed cleaning and storage, harvesting operations, sowing of seeds and cotton picking. So their daily work started from four or five o' clock in the morning and continue up to eight or nine at night without taking any rest. So they really feel overburden due to dual nature of work. On the other side. if we give a birds' eye on the information resources we analyzed that they have no access to television, radio, newspapers or any other source. Regarding Department of Agricultural Extension they have very rare visit to their field areas and they organize no trainings especially for women. So they have to face the lack of information not only in agriculture but also in home management. Whereas rural women have no right of decision making regarding agriculture, land and home management. They are considered as less wise than men, so their participation towards decision-making even in their own personal matter like marriage, education and land ownership is not even done by them. The above data appeal the world's attention that all Governments and policy makers should analyze their policy through gender lens to interpret rural women's right regarding land ownership.

**Conclusion:** Pakistan like the other developing countries has been facing the challenge of gender discrimination in almost all arenas of life. Here, not only the violation of basic human rights prevails but also tradition and culture is preferred over the teachings of Islam whereas Islam is the supreme code of state. Women are considered as a second-class citizen or slave like the olden times. But now it is the need of hour that nations should equip their women with basic human rights and consider their individual position as stated by Islam and also by Human Rights Commission.

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