

Policies against Hunger Conference

Berlin, Germany

November 20-23, 2011

By Kabiito Denis

Caritas kasanaensis, Uganda

What problems do women face as far as access to land and water is concerned? What can be done?

Introduction

Women in agriculture spend as much as eight to eleven hours a day in productive and reproductive work. They spend from one to six hours daily for domestic work, which includes activities like preparing farm tools and food for labourers, fetching water , gardening, foraging, wood gathering, raising poultry and livestock, and other livelihood activities.

Most of the worlds 1.2 bilion poor people, two thirds of whom are women, live in water scarce countries and do not have access to safe and reliable supplies of water for productive and domestic uses.

the bulk of these rural poor people are dependant on agriculture for their livelihoods and live in sub-saharan Africa and south Asia, the regions which are also home to most of the worlds water poor,(IFAD 2011)

One third of the world's population is currently experiencing some kind of physical or economic water scarcity. A growing competition for water from different sectors, including industries, agriculture, power generation, domestic, use and the environment, is making it difficult for poor people to access this scarce resource for productive, consumptive and social uses.

Therefore inequity in access to water resources is increasing because of the competition for limited resources and this particularly affects poor rural people, especially women.

Securing water for both productive and domestic uses is critical in achieving food security and improved rural livelihoods in most parts of the world, but particularly in arid and semi-arid areas.

However despite the role that women play in reducing food insecurity through their knowledge of crop production, local biodiversity skills, soils and use of local water resources, they are often excluded from decision –making processes since they are denied access of these two resources.

b)Problems women face:

Un favourable land tenure systems.

The land tenure system and traditional norms and customs in most societies often bar women from

owning land. They are often deprived of even inheriting their ancestors land. They are taken as property. Women have been so marginalised that despite their hard work, their access to and control over productive resources, particularly land remain limited.

Eviction

Women especially marginalised ones (widows; single mothers; divorced etc) are prone to eviction from land. This is also evident in arrears where land is designated for large investments.

Participation in decision making forums

Women find it difficult to participate in decision making processes or fora because they lack control over productive resources. This suggests that social hierarchies, since they are defined primarily by property ownership, distance women further and therefore affect decision making processes on production concerns.

Marginalised and cheated

Many women workers on farms are vulnerable to being cheated and often are paid lower wages than their male counterparts on farms.

Denied access to market proceeds

Many women do all the production work on farms; look for seeds, plough the land, plant and maintain the farm but that is all, men come in at later stage. They market all the produce since they have the legal ownership of the farm.

Limited access to resources and services-
Lack of access or legal property ownership prohibits many women from accessing resources and services. They have limited access to seeds, training and extension services, no access to production capital, social security and even access to credit facilities.

Wastage of time and exposure to health hazards.

It is mostly women who look for water that is used both for production and domestic uses. As women and girls walk for hours to search for water and access to land for farming, it exposes them to the threats of violence and to health hazards. This is coupled with taking time away that might be used for more productive activities.

C) importance of access to land and water by women
Water and land are often linked. Securing access to land among poor farmers particularly women can lead to secure water rights.

It can lead to access to other resources such as financial services and investments in farms, offering the potential to improve livelihoods and reduce water shortage.

It should further be noted that, women use water for agriculture, domestic tasks, health and sanitation while men's water use priorities mainly revolve around agriculture or livestock thus the need for equitable access to the resources.

D. how can it be prevented? What should be done?

Culture transformations.

Women should have equal access to education such that women are empowered to take lead.

Equal access to resources by women irrespective of their marital status

Policy changes

In all legislations women should be treated equally as men. They should have equal rites

Economics and business

All programmes in developing countries should emphasise the inclusion of women in all their activities.

There is a lot to be done to change the attitude towards women as being inferior but to include them in all decision making processes and policy formation.

This will take time but it's worthwhile to do it, as women are key in improving food security.