Women Professionals in The Agricultural Sector: Kenya Case Study

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Winrock International
Institute for Agricultural Development

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Foreword

Women farmers in Africa are responsible for producing as much as 70% of the agricultural output that feeds African families (World Bank, 1989). Yet, over the years, agricultural policies, programs, and research efforts have operated with little acknowledgment of women's roles, and women have participated marginally in the research and policy-making processes. Only about 3.4% of professional agricultural positions in 46 sub-Saharan African countries were held by women according to a 1984 FAO survey.

The African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment Program (AWLAE) is addressing this lack of professional women in the policy and research arenas. Working with African collaborators, AWLAE is serving as a catalyst to reverse years of agricultural and environmental decline across Africa by training professional women and supporting their efforts to reach women farmers.

AWLAE's strategy involves three components: preparing women leaders, building an enabling environment, and institutionalizing the program through national or regional strategies and structures. Trained women without jobs cannot have an impact; employed professional women without the possibility of advancement can have little influence; and trained individuals without benefit of long-term support and structures cannot prepare new generations of women to carry on the work. AWLAE's synergistic model addresses these concerns.

As we began to consider how we might develop a program to train and support women professionals in agriculture and the environment, we discovered that information was lacking. Ninety-five percent of the literature on women and agriculture focuses on women farmers and not on women professionals who could provide needed research and extension. Reliable data has not been available on the number of women in agricultural professions or training in Africa.

So AWLAE commissioned this study to be presented at a roundtable discussion held at Nairobi, Kenya, August 26 to 30, 1990. Data was collected at the national level about the numbers of professional women working in agriculture and the environment and the participation of women in agricultural training programs.

AWLAE focuses on training professional women leaders and expanding their influence. However, the needs of female students must be addressed at all levels, from primary school through postgraduate education. We hope that, by publishing and disseminating this report, we will encourage other development organizations to begin to prepare women for leadership during their early education.

Programs targeted to women are necessary to increase the number of professional women working in agriculture and the environment. A common theme among development workers is that few African women are qualified for training at the
graduate level. We do not agree. The AWLAE program operates on the premise that many women are qualified for and interested in pursuing careers in agriculture and natural resources; however, they have lacked the means for advanced education, and traditional networks have bypassed them.

The tradition that only men have served as agricultural policy-makers has constrained women's access to these positions by creating institutional and attitudinal barriers. The women who have managed to work their way through the system to hold professional positions in agriculture have been so few that they have not been able to make women's voices heard. A critical mass of women who are sensitive to the needs of women farmers will have to enter these arenas to speak out and redirect policy to focus on the needs of women farmers.

Because careers focused on the environment are just beginning to develop in Africa, no traditions have been established. Thus, it will be easier for women to enter these career paths than to enter other agricultural professions that are perceived as reserved for men. Because female farmers use much of the natural resources in Africa, women working on environmental issues may become a bridge between farmers, especially female farmers, and policy-makers.

Women's leadership will be a crucial issue in the next decade. This leadership must be encouraged and sustained as African countries face economic and political challenges. We hope that the information in this paper will help to add to the foundation of data needed to develop programs for women leaders in agriculture and to support national policy-makers who can begin to address these issues.

-- Elise Fiber Smith
Director
African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment Program
Women Professionals in the Agricultural Sector:
Kenya Case Study

In Kenya, women provide more than 70% of all the agricultural labor and produce more than 80% of the country's food. Although women provide most of the labor for agricultural production, few women hold leadership positions in the agricultural sector (CBS, 1985; Bahemuka, 1990). In spite of legal and constitutional guarantees of equal opportunities, women are disadvantaged in their access to educational and employment opportunities. The result is that women do not occupy influential positions (Krystall, 1976).

Over the past 25 years, Kenya has made significant advances in agricultural development. The agricultural sector grew each year except 1974, 1979, and 1984, which were drought years. However, this growth has not benefited all farmers; small-scale farmers and women farmers, most notably, have been excluded.

If small-scale and women farmers are to achieve their productive potential and receive the full benefits of their work, they must have advocates at the policy-making, managerial, and technical levels of Kenya's agricultural system. To be most effective, these leaders must come from the ranks that they represent; that is, women leaders can best represent the needs and views of women farmers. This paper examines hindrances to women's development as agricultural professionals in Kenya: women's access to education and training, the current employment situation for women, and the major constraints to women's leadership in agriculture.

Women's Access to Education and Training

Most forms of training in Kenya, including agricultural training, are tied to the system of formal education. The admission requirements of all of the training institutes, including colleges and universities, are based on academic achievement in secondary schools.

When missionaries introduced formal education into Kenya, few parents were eager to send their sons to school and even fewer were willing to send their daughters. The traditional barriers that prevented parents from sending their daughters to missionary schools continue to explain the relatively low female enrollment rate at all levels of the educational system. In addition, early marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and heavy domestic work loads make it difficult for girls to attend school, resulting in lower enrollments at both lower and higher levels of education (CBS, 1990).

Consequently, male students have significantly outnumbered female students in the formal educational system. Although the situation for female students improved after
Kenya attained independence and launched a campaign to balance school enrollment for both sexes, the education system continues to include a higher proportion of men.

Mrs. E. Muchal, the livestock production officer for Embu District – the first woman to hold this position – observed in an interview that this imbalance could be attributed to limited training opportunities for women as well as long-held beliefs that girls need less education and training than boys. However, she said she thinks this imbalance is decreasing.

In 1979, about half of Kenya's people had never attended school, and 56% of the nonattenders were women. About 46% of primary school students were girls; only 35% of secondary school students were girls. While male students outnumbered female students, women and girls constituted 50.4% of Kenya's population (CBS, 1979).

By 1989, about 49% of primary school students were girls. This statistic supports an observation by Noor Mohamed and Opondo (1988), who said, "Since independence, Kenya has almost attained parity in primary school enrollment between boys and girls."

The data on enrollment in secondary schools presents a less optimistic picture. The disparity in secondary school enrollment between the two sexes becomes more significant as the level of education increases (see table 1). More males than females are enrolled at all levels. In 1988, female students were 41% of the students in form 1 but only 32% of the students in form 6. Of the students who entered secondary school in 1986, 42% were girls. By the time these students reached form 4 in 1989, only 39% were girls, which indicates a higher dropout rate for girls than for boys. The data supports the contention that "generally, the higher the level of education, the lower the female enrollment" (Tinker, 1976, p. 28).

Table 1. Percentages of men and women enrolled in secondary school, Kenya.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1989 data is provisional.
The relative literacy rates of men and women reflect Kenya's history of favoring the education of men. In 1968, 69% of all men over the age of 15 were literate, while only 49% of all women over the age of 15 were literate.

These imbalances in primary and secondary education are perpetuated in training institutes and universities. Women have been particularly poorly represented in agricultural training. As part of this study, detailed information on women's training in agriculture was collected from:

- Embu Institute of Agriculture, which is one of three institutes of agriculture that train technical assistants at the certificate level. (It is expected that results would be similar at the other two institutes, which are Bukura Animal Health and Industry Training Institute at Nairobi and the Animal Health and Industry Training Institute at Ndombwa.) Embu was chosen for study because it is the oldest of the three and has the longest history of training women.

- Egerton University, which offers two agricultural training programs - a 3-year diploma course and a 3-year degree course. The diploma course is now being phased out; no students were admitted to the course for the 1990-91 academic year.

- The Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Nairobi, which awards B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in agricultural disciplines.

- The Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), a parastatal that engages in agricultural research. In addition to providing employment for agricultural professionals, KARI has begun to provide some training for its staff. This additional training could play an important role in increasing the qualifications of women agricultural researchers.

Embu Institute of Agriculture

Embu Institute was founded in 1947 to train junior-level officers in agriculture. In the beginning, practical training in agriculture was emphasized, and anyone who was literate and interested in agriculture could be admitted. However, by the late 1960s, admission to the institute was limited to those who had passed the exam taken after 7 years of primary school and 4 years of secondary school.

Though the institute never had an explicit policy excluding women, the first women were not admitted until 1968. This may have been because agricultural extension work was viewed as a man's job and, therefore, women were discouraged from joining the institute. Currently, however, about 30% of the trainees in the institute are women.

The institute trains junior technical assistants (TAs) in agriculture who are issued certificates after 2 years of training. Various courses in agriculture are offered to all
students through the seven departments within the institute – animal science, crop science, engineering, basic science, home science, farm management, and extension and agricultural education.

All students who join the institute have the same requirements. Men and women take the same courses, including theoretical work in agricultural engineering and home economics. However, while only men take practicals in agricultural engineering, only women take practicals in home economics. Plans are under way to make the practicals in both of these subjects open to both men and women.

Formal education is the key criterion for selecting students to attend Embu Institute. Every year, the Directorate of Personnel Management (a department under the Office of the President, which is charged with training and monitoring manpower needs in the country) announces the dates and venues of interviews and basic admission requirements. Interviews are usually conducted in various district headquarters by senior civil servants. As in other government selection procedures, the district quota system is strictly followed. The institute itself has limited control over the selection procedure.

The three agricultural training institutes have minimum entry requirements. The Kenyan education system recently changed; students now spend 6 years in primary school, 4 years in secondary school, and 4 years at a college or university. Students take exams when they complete secondary school. The exams are graded from A to E. To enter the agricultural training institutes, students must obtain at least a C in one of the biological sciences, a D+ in the physical sciences, a D+ in English or Kiswahili, and a D+ in mathematics.

In addition to those who are selected for the 2-year course, the institute also admits about 100 employees of the Ministry of Agriculture for 1 year of training. These employees – known as upgraders – are junior technical assistants who have worked for the ministry for many years. Upgraders take leave from the ministry to go to the institute for the refresher course.

The number of both men and women who join the institute every year is limited by the facilities available in the college. Currently, the institute can accommodate about 300 men and 120 women. This implies that women constitute about 30% of the student population. The women’s facilities are being utilized to their maximum capacity: Additional women cannot be admitted until the facilities for women are expanded. During recruitment, many women compete for the limited spaces; it appears that women are as eager as men to train at the institute.

Women perform at least as well as men in the institute, according to an institute administrator. Within the institute, women are often said to be better performers than men: The lowest grade is given more often to a man than to a woman.
Upon successfully completing the course at Embu Institute, students receive a certificate in agriculture. Most of them are employed by the Ministry of Agriculture as TAs. The TAs who have been trained as extension officers in agriculture are posted in various districts by the ministry. They are recognized as frontline extension workers. They are the people who are in touch with the farmers, and they are expected to link the farmers with the ministry.

To enable the TAs to perform their duties, the institute provides training in extension work. The institute’s Department of Extension and Agricultural Education offers several courses that equip the TAs with important skills in key areas, including rural sociology, culture, society, community participation, community action, communication, leadership, and social change.

Egerton University

Egerton College was founded in 1939 to train European farmers. In 1952, it became an agricultural college, and in 1955 it became a 3-year diploma-granting college. After Kenya attained independence in 1963, the college became the central training institution for Kenya’s agriculturalists and for the agricultural extension service (Anderson, 1978).

The bias against women in the formal education system has been reflected at Egerton. The college trained only male students until 1969 when a Department of Agriculture and Home Economics was created to cater to female students. In 1972, 21 women graduated from the college. In 1973, other courses of study were opened to women.

The proportion of women students in Egerton College rose from 13.7% in 1975 to 15.2% in 1976 and 20% in 1977. In 1981, women were 16% of the students. By 1983, the proportion of female students had risen to 25% of the total.

The number of applications to each course of study indicates its popularity. The most popular course for men in 1983 was food science and technology, which had 260 applicants. It was followed by agriculture with 245 applicants, farm power and machinery with 195, animal health with 153, soil and water engineering with 137, and farm management with 130. The most popular course for women was home economics, which had 109 applicants. No men applied to the home economics course. Other popular courses for women were food science and technology with 95 applicants, agriculture with 65, and education with 41.

Out of 2,207 applications for admission received by May 1983, 554 applicants were selected – an overall acceptance rate of 25.1%. Of the 503 women who applied, 157 were accepted – an acceptance rate for women of 31.2%. The corresponding percentage for male applicants was smaller: Of the 1,704 male applicants, 397 were accepted – an acceptance rate of 23.3%. It is quite clear that, in 1983, the admission policy for Egerton favored women.
These statistics suggest that the gender imbalance in the college cannot be explained by the selection procedure but must reflect the bias against women in the educational system that was introduced during the colonial days and is still present. This point is supported by the National Development Plan 1989/93 (Republic of Kenya, 1989), which attributes the low numbers of educated females to the residual influence of the colonial period. Although many women would like to attend these training institutes, they do not have the academic qualifications necessary for admission.

Faculty of Agriculture, University of Nairobi

The University of Nairobi offers B.Sc. degrees in agriculture, food science and technology, range management, and forestry. As is true for other agricultural training colleges and institutes, its student population does not have balanced proportions of men and women. In 1973, when the first group of 40 students graduated with B.Sc. degrees in agriculture, only 2 were women.

Between 1973 and 1975, male B.Sc. graduates in agriculture constituted 95% of the total for each year. By 1976, of the 175 graduates that the college had trained, only 15 were female - 9% of the total. Although the proportion of women receiving B.Sc. degrees in agriculture has improved remarkably since 1977 (by 1989 women received 27% of the agricultural degrees awarded), the percentage of women students is still small. By 1990, of the total 1,243 B.Sc. graduates of the college, only 280 (23%) were women.

The trend is the same even if all of the degrees given by the Faculty of Agriculture are considered. In general, the proportion of female graduates in all the courses for any given year ranges from 19% (for 1983) to 27% (for 1987). Between 1983 and 1989, of the 951 graduates that the college had trained in agriculture, only 222 (23%) were women.

The low proportion of women trained in agriculture at the university level reflects the low proportions of female students in the lower levels of the educational system.

Kenya Agricultural Research Institute

Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) was established in 1977. Its research stations deal with certain agricultural problems in different parts of the country.

Most members of KARI's staff hold B.Sc. degrees from the University of Nairobi. By 1987, the institute's administration realized that these staff members were inadequately trained to carry out the necessary research. So the institute has started a training program through which B.Sc. degree holders can obtain M.Sc. degrees in their fields of interest and the few M.Sc. holders can pursue doctorates. In addition to this formal training program, KARI researchers attend local and international seminars to broaden their knowledge.
The institute tries to provide equal opportunities to men and women. However, it has found that motherhood has, at times, interfered with women's training. As most of the training is done abroad, some women are unable to participate because of their family commitments. To give more women access to professional training, the institute is now trying to start a program, primarily for women, in the local universities.

Employment in the Agricultural Sector

Although the Central Bureau of Statistics has generated valuable labor statistics over the years, information is limited on women's employment. Most Kenyan graduates, especially university graduates, are employed by the government. The Public Service Commission recruits and posts people to public-sector positions. Most graduates in agriculture expect to obtain jobs in the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry of Livestock Development; however, recent graduates are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain these positions. Some graduates make their way into the private sector and are employed as advisors by small-scale industrialists.

Women in agricultural wage employment

The information generated by the Central Bureau of Statistics on wage employment demonstrates the changing roles for women. In 1976, more than 85% of women worked on their own farms and did not hold paid positions. An additional 10% were reported to be unemployed, which included those who were in school. Only 1.3% were employed as agricultural laborers.

In 1985, of the people who had wage employment in agriculture and forestry, 15% of the regular employees and 27% of the casual laborers were women (see table 2). The greatest number of female regular employees worked on coffee and tea plantations. Women's employment in the forestry sector has always been low. In 1985, 7.5% of regular forestry workers were women and 92.5% were men.

Women as technical assistants

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, women who go through the diploma and certificate programs are usually employed in administration or extension. The certificate holders are frontline extension workers and are supervised by administrative technical officers and technical assistants. Mrs. Muchai, the livestock production officer for Embu District, said in the interview mentioned earlier that TAs who are certificate holders are important leaders in agriculture. They accept their positions as frontline agricultural officers, while diploma and degree holders tend to feel that they deserve administrative and managerial positions rather than extension positions.
Table 2. Wage employment in agriculture and forestry, Kenya, 1985.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employer</th>
<th>Regular workers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Casual workers</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural services</td>
<td>14,558</td>
<td>3,070</td>
<td>1,507</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burning charcoal</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee plantation</td>
<td>18,924</td>
<td>7,515</td>
<td>14,313</td>
<td>6,403</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>47,155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>18,165</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19,978</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunting and trapping game</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logging</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>325</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed farming</td>
<td>12,677</td>
<td>2,326</td>
<td>8,940</td>
<td>2,641</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26,583</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ocean and coastal fishing</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other agricultural activity</td>
<td>8,136</td>
<td>1,518</td>
<td>2,297</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13,474</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing co-op of small farms</td>
<td>2,166</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>1,103</td>
<td>555</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranch</td>
<td>11,618</td>
<td>1,096</td>
<td>2,516</td>
<td>901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16,163</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sisal plantation</td>
<td>9,464</td>
<td>3,018</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13,539</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugar plantation</td>
<td>14,461</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>4,253</td>
<td>316</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19,565</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tea plantation</td>
<td>46,164</td>
<td>5,977</td>
<td>4,808</td>
<td>1,616</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58,565</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>156,996</td>
<td>26,975</td>
<td>41,021</td>
<td>15,224</td>
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<td></td>
<td>239,878</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Regular workers are permanently employed and receive monthly salaries. Casual workers are paid wages daily or weekly; they usually are hired to complete a specific task.

The following problems reduce the effectiveness of TAs, especially female TAs, while they are in the field:

- **Distance.** TAs may be required to cover large areas. Those who do not have means of transportation must spend much of their time walking. After 2 years of service, a TA can receive credit through the Ministry of Agriculture to purchase a motorbike or a bicycle. However, since women do not customarily use motorbikes or bicycles, women extension workers do not take advantage of the credit offered to buy a vehicle and usually have trouble adequately covering their territories.

- **Housing conditions.** TAs who are not posted in their home villages complain that adequate housing is not available. Often only small rooms in shopping centers are available for rent. Since these rooms do not have food-storage or cooking facilities or running water, TAs must spend much of their time obtaining food and water at the expense of spending time on their professional work.

- **Communication.** Though students receive training in a range of skills at Embu Institute, their communication skills sometimes need improvement. Communication is hindered, for example, when the TA serving an area cannot speak the local language. Mrs. Muchai suggested that graduates have adequate communication knowledge but lack confidence; however, she said the graduates gain confidence over time.
Farmers perceive TAs as local leaders due to their expert knowledge of agricultural activities. Indeed, a TA who attends the local chief's banza (community meeting) would normally be introduced to the people and local leaders. This exemplifies the centrality of TAs in the local leadership structure where they are perceived as important change agents. However, despite their training in leadership and power issues, the success of TAs as leaders depends on their

- competence in communicating ideas
- personal integrity
- commitment to the job

Embu Institute claims that it provides adequate training in leadership. The wide range of courses taught in the institute's Department of Agriculture Extension and Education supports this claim. Mrs. Muchai argued that both men and women need thorough training in managerial and administrative skills. She observed that the level of training in these areas is still low and extra training is necessary; for example, she said she finds that her job as district officer demands advanced managerial skills.

It appears that women TAs are as competent as men TAs; however, women TAs experience more transportation problems in the field. According to the people interviewed in this study, women extension officers are not discriminated against by farmers as long as they have the right information. In an interview, a member of one women's group said she would like to see more women in extension: "As mothers, we feel proud to see what our daughters can do." On the other hand, a government official remarked, "People's expectations of women officers are high. A woman has to do that extra bit to be as good as a man."

One problem that female agricultural employees face, according to Ms. Jacinta Njogu, the district agricultural officer of Nyandarua District, is lack of family support. A woman who is married and has children tends to experience family problems when she is transferred from one location to another. Unless her family supports her, a female agricultural employee will have difficulty advancing along her chosen career path. Kenyans tend to believe that women face relatively more challenges in performing their official roles and, thus, women are less effective than men.

After working in the field for 2 years, a TA may be considered for further training. Competition for admission to diploma courses is stiff; only a few applicants are selected. Because opportunities for further training are few, many TAs lose motivation to improve their technical skills.

Women in agribusiness

Five women who are involved in agribusiness were interviewed about constraints to women's leadership in the sector. Two of the women were former Ministry of Agriculture agriculture/community development assistants. They had resigned to start their own businesses. These two women were informal leaders who provided
Information to local village women and served as examples of what women can do. They were both involved in horticulture and raising poultry and dairy animals. One of them also had started processing vegetables.

The other three women interviewed were large-scale agricultural operators. They each produced food for their industries and managed both the production and processing. Each had university education—two had Bachelor of Arts degrees and one had a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics. Although they seemed to be doing well, they said they felt that competition was great and marketing their products was difficult due to Kenya's economic problems.

The primary problem that these women faced was their inability to obtain loans independently. The credit system requires that a borrower have collateral. For a woman, this usually means bringing her husband into the business so that land—which is almost always registered in the man's name—can serve as collateral. This prevents women from making major business decisions on their own.

Women in policy-making positions

At higher levels, female administrators and specialists are accepted as equals by their male colleagues, but they have to work harder than men to get to these positions. Even though the current government strategy is to focus on the district rather than the national level, most policy is still formulated at the highest levels. It is important to train women to hold these high-level policy-making positions.

Constraints to Women's Leadership in Agriculture

Although in primary school the ratio of male students to female students is almost 1:1, the ratio progressively tilts in favor of male students at each higher level. Few women enter institutions of higher learning that train agricultural specialists, so few women enjoy leadership positions in agriculture-related areas.

Women face many constraints to becoming leaders in agriculture. Some of these constraints come from Kenyan society's expectations of women.

Traditional values

Traditionally, women's roles were restricted to those around the home. Public roles were men's domain. Although women have tried to break from this norm, the custom has not significantly changed. Many women are reluctant to seek more public roles. General feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, and shyness discourage women from assuming leadership positions. A further constraint is that women leaders often have been perceived as "rebels" and "deviants" who have broken from the normative family authority structures.
**Access to land rights and credit**

A leader should have the potential to demonstrate what needs to be done. To farm successfully in Kenya, land and financial resources are necessary. Although Kenya is characterized by ethnic diversity, patrilineal-descent kinship patterns are almost universal, and few women have the right to own land. A Kenyan woman obtains land rights by virtue of her relationships to men—husband, father, brother, nephew, or cousin. One cannot receive credit without owning land because credit institutions require collateral in the form of immovable capital. Consequently, the registration and privatization of land has adversely affected women: Because women do not have access to land titles, they do not have access to credit.

**Decision-making**

In a patrilineal society such as Kenya, the household authority structure is such that the major family decisions are made either exclusively by men or by women in consultation with men (see Fleuret and Bahemuka, 1987). Furthermore, in some parts of Kenya women are equated with children or are seen as an extension of household property. They are not recognized as individuals who have the capacity, will, and desire to make independent, rational decisions. This error in perception further undermines the leadership qualities in women.

**Time allocation**

As Fleuret and Bahemuka reported (1987), women have much longer work days than men, and their time for rest and leisure is limited. Studies suggest that the average Kenyan woman works 11 hours a day (Haugrud, 1984; Fleuret and Bahemuka, 1987). Even after a day of paid work, women are expected to look after children, cook, clean, and perform other household chores. Women are overburdened, and this may adversely affect their performance as leaders. Leaders need time to relax, share ideas with others, or read a book and polish their ideas. Too often, women simply have no time for relaxation.

**Access to employment opportunities**

While Kenya's constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities to both men and women, some discrepancies are noticeable. Indeed, women still occupy fewer and less-prestigious positions than men (Fleuret and Bahemuka, 1987).

Women's access to employment is a fairly recent phenomenon. During the colonial period, most of the hired laborers were men. Thus, once Kenya became independent, men were firmly entrenched in paid positions. In addition, the colonial educational and training system favored men. Women were trained only in courses that taught them to provide supportive services to their husbands; that is, most institutional training for women was in home economics. This bias in training programs continued until the late 1960s.
Some of the factors limiting women's access to key positions stem from employers' misgivings. Most employers, especially in the private sector, view prospective female employees as liabilities rather than assets because they believe

- Women will miss work whenever their children are ill.
- Women cannot easily be transferred.
- Young women must take frequent, prolonged maternity leaves.
- Women agricultural employees cannot ride motorbikes or bicycles, so their effectiveness is limited.

Female graduates may perform poorly in the early stages of their careers because they are at the peak of their reproductive years. While they are pregnant and caring for infants, their productivity on the job is reduced. However, after their child-bearing years, most women agricultural officers stabilize in their careers and often perform better than men.

Because of employers' biases, women are being denied access to formal leadership positions in Kenya. Mrs. Muchai said the government policy on promotions is clear: They are based entirely on merit. But while she said there was no discrimination in promotions, she added, "One cannot rule it out altogether." Mrs. Muchai said women's chances of promotion are equal to men's in the lower positions in the hierarchy; but beyond the district level, promotion of women is limited.

Conclusions

By examining the sociocultural, legal, and economic factors inhibiting women's access to formal education and specialized training, this case study provides information on the status and potential of women leaders in agriculture.

This paper contains evidence that, while women and men have equal educational opportunities at the primary level, women's chances become structurally fewer as they ascend the academic ladder, as do their training opportunities. Thus, their numbers dwindle, their impact is limited, and they never reach the policy-making level. Undeniably, a number of women have become successful entrepreneurs, managers, and policy-makers in agriculturally related ventures both in the public and private sectors; but the avenues for achievement that are available to women must be expanded.

Africa needs to foster a more enabling environment — one that promotes women's access to educational opportunities and to training in leadership skills. Only then will Africa be able to reverse current trends and become self-sufficient in food production or even a gross exporter of food.
References


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