



منظمة المرأة العربية
ARAB WOMEN ORGANIZATION

Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector in the Arab Region

Desk Review

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with an aim of supporting the empowerment of rural women in the
Arab region through capacity development at the community and
policy levels.



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SUMMARY



Arab rural women are a significant social, economic and political force to be reckoned. They constitute the key vehicle and the pathway towards achieving future aspirations through their will and courage throughout the ages.

The status of rural women in any society constitutes one of the salient indicators essential for its progress and civilization. Thereby, they are entitled to aspire for the attainment of their future expectations and aspirations that fall within gender equality through effective social awareness of their roles, tasks, rights and duties. Thus, leveraging their limitless potential for advancement could be made through the embrace of legal and institutional protection that holds the key to their empowerment. This will, in turn, create an empowering environment and further bestow respect upon her personhood as an independent entity. The status of rural women is obvious under the scores of daunting hardships and crises that substantially affect them while being a pressing challenge facing their aspirations.

In the light of the afore-mentioned reasons, organizations, ministries and institutions have underscored the paramount importance of rural women's issues and problems while holding them at the top of their agendas. This lends credence to the sizable role that rural women fill hence, taking pride in the contribution they partake. Although rural women carry out a variety of tasks, they remain at the periphery belonging to the most marginalized groups subject to a mass of hardships and hurdles. Therefore, reaching out to them through the viable enhancement of their status worldwide and particularly in the Arab World, is therefore instrumental.

When rural women fully participate in the agricultural development process through the promotion of gender equality in the agricultural sector, such would be taken as an evident pathway towards their empowerment. Gender equality will substantially contribute to livelihoods sustainability, extreme poverty reduction, food security, decent work, as well as leveraging reduction of all aspects of social and economic vulnerabilities. In this vein, gender equality will redress such vulnerabilities and unlock opportunities towards the achievement many of 2030 SDGs.

For the exerted efforts, aimed at achieving sustainable agricultural development to be widely effective, it thus requires developing rural women skills and providing them with the needed tools and competences through a process of qualification and habilitation that would enable them to unlock opportunities for access to a decent job. Pro women habilitation initiatives will, in turn, better serve rural women and provide means to improve their own living standards along with their households'. It is therefore essential to take actions towards the advancement of rural women conditions in various areas as an effective a way towards their socio-economic stability. Success shall be premised upon the formulation of protection measures on the ground of the principle of justice and equity. Adopting gender- responsive policies serving to recognize, and address gender equality should be geared to protect rural women in the agricultural sector and driven to tear off gender inequities.

The study seeks to address the following question: "What are the challenges to the empowerment of rural women in agriculture?" for the purpose of attaining gender equality in the agricultural sector towards achieving SDG2-Zero Hunger.



The study expounded some axes that would determine the status quo of the challenges to the empowerment of rural women to attain gender equality in the agricultural sector thereby, achieving food security. These axes include the status, facts and figures of the agricultural sector in the Arab world, human resources in the agricultural sector from a gender perspective, thereupon giving account of agricultural land tenure. Also included are the share of male and female workers in the agricultural sector and the socio-economic features of Arab rural women within the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs. Indeed, the present study addressed Arab rural women and poverty, food security, and the empowerment of Arab rural women in the agricultural sector. Challenges to the empowerment have been rounded up in the present study along with setting forth an analytical view of Sustainable development goal 2 indicators (Zero Hunger). As a way forward, the study has further expounded the status of Arab women featuring health, education and gender equality, to eventually bring up an action plan to achieve the empowerment of rural women and gender equality in the agricultural sector.

For the methodology of the study, **the approach relied** on international and national reports, data and research material through conducting desk research of relevant published literature reviews. The methodology has been adopted along with access to available data drawn from the websites of international organizations whose interest lies on rural development and food security through mainstreaming gender equality in the agricultural sector. Included are websites of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank, ESCWA, Arab Women Organization, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), UNICEF and others.

A set of facts, falling solely within the challenges to the empowerment of rural women, have been established. They are herein displayed:

- **Limited Access to Agricultural Information for Female Agricultural Laborers:**

It is therefore necessary to capitalize information and communication technology for rural women to avail ICTs. This would -be channeled through a gender-based vision anchored in the implementation of electronic agriculture (E-agriculture) mechanisms. Equipping rural women with mobile phones and engaging them in relevant specialized agricultural two-way communication networks is worth considering. E-agriculture refers to the society of information and communication related to the development of agriculture for sustainable development and food security, through the transfer of information via modern communication technologies. Since information and knowledge are the pillars for generating development, overcoming obstacles, and availing new opportunities imposed by social, economic and technological changes occurring in society. The transfer of such a backlog and renewable repository of information is fundamental through the means of communication constituting the core of rural development endeavours.



- **Difficulty in Access to Inputs and Basic Productive Services, to Technology, and Limited Access to Market Information.**

Profiling women's ownership of a mobile phone globally, (GENDER AND ICTS: 2018: 7) report substantiates that fewer women than men own mobile phones. Data disclose that 1.2 out of 2.9 billion women own a cell phone in low- and middle-income countries at a rate of 41%, relative to a ratio of 1.4 out of 3.0 billion men owning a cell phone in low- and middle-income countries amounting to a rate of 46%. In Sub Saharan Africa, the report further reveals that 300 million women do not own a mobile phone. Regarding global internet usage rate, men's share averaged 50.9% compared to women (44.9%) the report stated. Likewise, men's share in Africa stood at 24.9% against 18.6% for women. The proportion is quite similar across the Arab countries where men mobile holders amounted to 47.7% while women averaged 39.4%.

- **Limited Access to Funding:**

The (National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women, 2017:32) report indicates that the proportion of women-managed small enterprises stands to 23%, while around 45% of the microcredit loans are directed to women. Microfinancing is an area whereby gender disparities persist as available data feature the average loan value obtained by females is far less than the average loan value allocated to males in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

- **Low levels of Education among Rural Women:**

Whereby prevalence of vicious circle of poverty seems to engulf women. (Arab Women Organization, 2015) Statistics point to a literacy rate among Arab youth amounting to 90% across the Arab region albeit around one fifth of adults are illiterate. The total head count of female youth literacy rate averaged 88%, whereas a ratio of food insecurity amounted to 13%: a proportion higher relative to men, the report disclosed. Such a dire status is further convoluted by the factors of education and poverty as the cost of a healthy diet exceeds global poverty line (\$ 1.90 per person per day to cover the cost): a cost perceived quite considerably far beyond the poor capacities. The cost of nutritious foods for healthy diets exceeded global poverty line (set at \$1.90 per capita per day): a cost higher for the people living at the poverty threshold and experiencing nutrient deficiency. In South Africa and Asia, costly and unaffordable healthy diets are associated with 57% of inhabitants or more who experience unaffordability of the cost of healthy diets all time the (State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2020:205) report reveals.

- **Prevalence of Malnutrition-related Diseases among Rural Women** is more striking where predominance of farming and limited incomes persists. Incidence of malnutrition is statistically true in the (FAO: 2018:47) report revealing that the poverty ratio in rural Egypt averaged 32.3% in 2010, whereas it amounted to 16.8% in rural Jordan, and registering 4.8% in rural Algeria. The report further indicates the proportion of people experiencing undernourishment over the period 2015-2017 which reached 1.9% in Algeria, 4.6% in Egypt, 4.0% in Iran while ranking higher in Iraq at a ratio of 10.3%.



- **Food Discrimination among Rural Women:**

In many Arab societies and at the household level, women have reduced or opted to content with insufficient food intakes. Men and children are served first and only then can women sit down to eat. Thereby, they solely cope with leftovers intake that leads to undernutrition and ill-health. (Women and Arab Food Security, 2010). In consistency with the above-mentioned data women tend to reduce the low living standards by adopting extreme food-coping strategies. They accordingly reduce their intake of food amounts or consume low dietary /food intake that harm their bodies and curtail ill-health. Or else they limit diversity of diets (associated with higher staggering risks, especially for pregnant women and lactating mothers who cannot consume a variety of food intake of micronutrients). The poor dietary intake lacking micronutrients could adversely impact their health and impair their nutritional status, thereby deteriorating the health conditions of their children. Viewing insecurity, this thus entails migrating in distressing conditions or selling their own assets, or further collecting wild food or undertaking unsafe jobs to raise their income (Improving the Status of Women and Girls in Rural Areas Report, 2011: 7). Likewise, the (Gender Equality in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: 2018: 10) report shows females suffering from prevalence of undernourishment (PoU) in Egypt throughout (2014-2015) registered 26.1% compared to 21.24% for men. The female undernourishment ratio is much higher in Jordan standing at 31.2% relative to men (24.9%). In Morocco, however, the ratio among females averaged 25.4% compared to males (26.7%).

- **Economic Insecurity:**

Women of the Arab region grapple with a low level of engagement in the economy. The global average is 50.0% female labour force participation, but Arab women participate in much lower levels, roughly 25.0 % with the lowest proportion worldwide. The regional rates in the Arab countries covered in (Gender Gap in Land Right;2018) report point to the highest proportion of female unemployment in any region. The gender gap is substantially pronounced with a ratio of 38% of women are engaged in unstable labour. Female youth unemployment reached the highest ever ratio equating to 39.3% in 2017. Equally, low female labour force participation is concomitant with women's exclusion from security systems and social insurance /protection schemes. Women are disadvantaged in this regard as they do not enjoy access to retirement pension entitlements as they are denied coverage within labour laws in some countries. (The Arab Sustainable Development Report. 2020:79 (ASDR, 2020).

- **Invisibility of Disaggregated Data on Gender Needs:**

(The Arab Sustainable Development Report. 2020:79 (ASDR, 2020) points to the scarcity of statistical information as a barrier to measuring gender inequity



regarding SDGs(2): Food security is measured by target (2.2) indicators on nutritional needs associated with ending all forms of malnutrition, addressing the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women; concomitant with target (2.3) on access to land, productive resources, knowledge and finance (secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, and financial services). Non-availability of gender-sensitive statistical information disables policy makers in conducting health impact assessment of nutritional gaps on pregnant women. Insufficient data is a serious gender-blind issue and is a compelling form of gender discrimination.

- **Difficulty in Access to the Rights to Land Ownership and Land Tenure Safety:**

Land rights are often disproportionately ascribed by gender. Concern expressed against this context is illustrated in the (the Gender Gap in Land Right;2018) in consistency with the (The Arab Sustainable Development Report. 2020:74) which both indicate gender inadequate access to secure rights over land. Globally, less than 15 percent of all landholders are women relative to men (85%). The largest gender inequalities in access to land are most visible in the MENA region, where only around 7 percent of all landholders are women. Substantial inequity persists though women are actively engaged in agricultural activities, albeit, disproportionately in some countries whereby the proportion of women stands to 60% of the total number of people engaged in such activities in Sudan and Morocco and amounts to 54% in Mauritania.

- **Gender Gaps in Agricultural Land Tenure:**

The Arab Sustainable Development Report. (ASDR), 2020:30), the (Arab Women's Organization, 2015: 3) and (The Improvement of the Situation of Women and Girls in Rural Areas, 2011:7) signal that rural women are an essential component in the translation of agricultural products into household food and nutritional security. Even so, stark gender disparities are unfolded in the area of land tenure across the Arab countries. Available statistics on Women agricultural landholders in some Arab countries reveal that women landowners are less likely than men to seize a legal document proving land ownership which is quite assertive of constraints to women's access to agricultural land rights titles. The FAO Gender and Land Rights Database (GLRD) further substantiates the salient gender disparity in secure agricultural land tenure. This is true in Algeria whereby the proportion of women landholders amounted to 4% relative to men (95.9%), averaging 5.2% compared to men (94.8%) in Egypt. In Jordan female land tenure rate stood at 3.0% relative to men (97.0%). The same proportion is reported in Lebanon (3% against 97.0 for men). In Morocco, Women landholders are reported to constitute a rate 4.4% relative to men (95.6%). In Tunisia, the female secure land tenure rate is slightly higher standing at 6.4% relative to male land holders (93.6%). This is reported in the context of SDG Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) Target 2.3 which clearly provides for doubling: "the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities by 2030."



- **Profiling the Gender Wage-Gap**, it is worth mentioning that it is strikingly pronounced in agricultural work of equal value.

This could be interpreted within the prism of the so-called (gender discrimination), whereby women are likely less paid than males for the same work albeit, enduring poor working conditions. Women grapple with the ripple effects of social roles and values divided or distributed on prevalent social-based grounds rather than on due consideration of merit or competences basis. This arises the gender-based argument claiming that men deserve higher pay than women just because of their gender. The (Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: 2010: 5) Report reveals that women's employment in the agricultural sector in the Middle East reached 39.6%, whilst the share of men stood at 34% in 2000. As to women engaging in entrepreneurship in any other sector, the ratio of women entrepreneurs amounts to 38.6% compared to 24.6% for men. Likewise, women's earnings equated a rate of 1.0%, for women, men's earnings averaged 9 times as much as women with 9.4%: a figure once again assertive of the wage gap. Women still suffer from such a wide pay disparity be it in the public or private sector. For instance, the wage gap rate in Egypt is around 22%, whilst Morocco and Tunisia are among countries to better address such an issue as they managed to bridge the gender pay gap. As for entrepreneurship, 19% of men hold their own businesses in the Arab countries, compared to only 9% of women with an entrepreneurial capacity (Women and the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab Region, 2016: 22).

- **Time Poverty:**

one of the most common manifestations of gender inequality. Women bear the three-fold brunt of reproductive, productive and social responsibilities which entrap them in a vicious circle of poverty, hunger and ill-health. Women are reported to disproportionately perform most of the unpaid care work to sustain their households, including cooking, cleaning, bearing and rearing, caring for the elderly and the sick and collecting water and firewood to cook the meal for their household. Such household chores take up a long time and often restrict women's opportunities to engage in income-generating activities. Globally, women spend 4.5 hours per day on average carrying out unpaid work, hence making up twice as much time as spent by men. Closing such a gender gap by 2025, would help increase global GDP by an estimated ratio amounting to 23%. (Equality in the New Global Plan, 2018: 2).

- **The Traditional Cultural Aspect**

Is taking a toll on women's role and responsibilities in agricultural development. This acts as a barrier obstructing women and girls from ownership and access to cultivated land and the right to inheritance through land title and tenure. Women do not enjoy freedom of decision-making over their lives. It is therefore crucial to put forward a specific program addressing social norms and traditional mechanisms impeding women's empowerment.



- **Limited Access to Extension Services:**

Rural extension services constitute the initial supply line for agricultural research findings and the nexus between such services and farm laborers' needs in this respect. This could form the basis to meet their needs and interests in the area of research enabling them access to inputs needed for results-oriented performance. Central Extension Departments are divided into horticulture department, the marketing and animal extension department, the department of agricultural councils, the extension units, and the department of rural development. Reaching out to farmers is undertaken through extension seminars held in different centres, and training through audio-visual extension methods. Programs towards improving rural women performance in the field of rural industries is further implemented through practical clarification of tasks and training in training centers and across field days besides conducting land sampling and identification of the problem in selecting the most appropriate crops to help yields improvement. Extension services span into a monthly-based program for livestock vaccination thus, enabling farmers to acquire relevant knowledge and skills of substantive application of technical recommendations and their motives. This is geared across multi-faceted stages from land preparation (Land Prep) for cultivation up to crop harvesting. The (Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, 2009: 96) reveals that the lack of female extension officers, the ill-equipment of current extension agents, and the existence of social and economic restrictions that limit the interaction of rural women to benefit from extension services, albeit remain a barrier to access to extension services.

- **The Absence of Gender-responsive Water Management:**

It is quite worth mentioning that women's requirements and perspectives are overlooked and ineffectively reflected in water management interventions. Therefore, legal frameworks as legislation and policies were very often not inclusive of a gender-responsive approach which reflects women's exclusion as these policies and legislation were not considerate with women's multiple uses of water (i.e. for irrigation, home gardening, livestock, personal and domestic use) and do not take into account women's experience, knowledge, needs and expectations of these water users' management of water supply which tend to be overlooked. Women remain underrepresented when it comes to decision-making about water use, allocation and governance, though they play a key role in developing sustainable practices and in building food security systems. Many women hold a unique perspective and knowledge of such a farming task. For instance, women farmers may have different needs in terms of irrigation technology. They may also be custodians of knowledge, such as knowledge of rainwater harvesting practices. Women should therefore be considered as partners in addressing some water and food security challenges that the world is facing amidst climate change, population growth and the rising demand for water. (HLPF 2015).

The participation of Women is pronounced in terms of beneficiaries and end users, not as decision-makers given their status as stakeholders in water management both quantitatively and qualitatively. Women bear the brunt of water affordability for final use which requires a long



time and strenuous efforts which impede them from undertaking other productive activities that would generate incomes for themselves. The (ESCWA, 2019: 35) substantiated that water correlates with women's agency, therefore integrating women and engaging them in water management policies hinges on breaking down socio-economic and institutional impediments.

- **Rural Women Carry out Strenuous Physical Labor in Land Cultivation:**

To address such a challenge, the move towards introducing modern agricultural mechanization is thus necessary despite the tiny share of land tenure safety for rural women. Services channeled through agricultural cooperatives, Agricultural Development banks and Farm Credit Banks through low value machinery leasing are crucial. Change in the traditional roles of such institutions will be of great assistance to rural women.

- **Hardships endured by Women in terms of Marketing their Agricultural Yields**

Are quite visible. This is due to social strictures on rural women's mobility, their limited access to roads and transportation along with other marketing-related hurdles. The Ministries of Agriculture shall adopt modern concepts in the labor system: the electronic marketing, besides opening export outlets for rural women through the ministries' properly reactivated electronic networks. This would necessitate the establishment of new and sophisticated networks responsive and adapted to rural women needs.

- **The Phenomenon of "Feminization of Agriculture":**

Such a phenomenon could be interpreted from two distinct views on how these transformations are affecting women's workloads and agency and the scale of their effectiveness. On the one hand, such changes can unlock new opportunities for women to engage in paid employment and commercial agriculture. These opportunities increase women's incomes and allow for their visibility and voice in their households and communities. On the other hand, women may carry additional burdens of labour and responsibility without the agency and resources to take full advantage of new opportunities. While both views acknowledge that these processes affect women and men differently, it the change of gender patterns and their effects on both men and women in agricultural labor remains unclear patterns in terms of work and agency. While the global evidence confirms that in many places women's labour force participation in the agriculture sector is increasing, it is often concentrated in seasonal, casual, or unpaid work. In fact, women are often less paid and endure poorer working conditions compared with men doing similar jobs. It is thus necessary to put in place mechanisms which ensure equality in wages, contracts and transactions in the agricultural sector. It is also crucial to apply occupational protection and safety mechanisms, even if the agricultural sector is not limited geo-



graphically and deals ever-changing environmental conditions. Indeed, agricultural laborers are human elements worthy of occupational safety and protection.

- The fact that **rural women have much fewer chances than men in terms of land ownership** not only leaves women's farms with de-facto less productivity, but also often excludes them from engaging in farmers' organizations, in workers' unions, hence contributing to community networks and forums that foster productivity and promote growth. This induces economic security which, in turn, leads to empowerment and allows for better nutrition, education and health for the children and all family members. The power resulting from empowerment does not mean **power-over**, but rather **power-to**, i.e., the ensuing constructive force which works to bring about new actions without any party controlling another. It is a power which is giving to others, not only to itself. Such a farming approach could thereby contribute to attaining some of the set targets of SDG2 (Zero Hunger) SDGs 1 (No Poverty), SDGs 3 (Good Health), SDGs 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Feminization of Poverty:** Global statistics indicate that women are the poorest with estimates amounting to 70 percent (70%) out of the world's 1.2 billion poorest people. Unequal power relations excluding women from participation in decision-making schemes remain the structural causes of social and political instability that breed poverty and spawn deprivation. (Turning Promises into Action, 2018: 5). In the Arab region, the headcount poverty ratio, living below international poverty line, defined at \$ 1.90 per day; amounts to 16% in Arab Least Developed Countries. Hence, it is imperative to multiply and diversify sources of income for the rural population by establishing innovated mechanisms for economic empowerment of rural women towards eliminating the phenomenon of "feminization of poverty".

- **Prevalence of Severe Food Insecurity is slightly higher among women globally.** In fact, the rate of food insecurity stands at 8.0 for women, relative to 7.5, for men. Profiling such a prevalence in Africa, the 2018 report on The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World discloses that the ratio averaged 24.3 for women, compared to 23.9 for men. This substantiates the necessity of availability of gender-based quantitative and qualitative data at the level of family members as essential to identify family dynamics and map out an explanation of food discrimination and its variables within the household.

- **The Empowerment of Rural Women in Agriculture: or Agricultural Empowerment.** As a developmental concern, the agricultural empowerment lies in building rural women's capacities and aims at ensuring their ability to fully partake in the agricultural development process. Indeed, gender equality in the agricultural sector is a determinant in reducing extreme poverty and hunger. Besides, it can relatively help fulfil food security. Achieving equality will therefore entail agricultural development. Pro women Incentives of agricultural development constitute a pathway towards the empowerment of women in agriculture to combat hunger and achieve food security. The World Bank data show that the agricultural labour force in the Arab world stands at 18.2% for men relative to women 29% (World Development Indicators: World Bank,



2020), substantiating that the agricultural labour force is mostly rurally feminized which thereby confirms the need to develop women capabilities by securing equitable access to opportunities and availing through training on updated technologies in the agricultural sector using the E-agriculture mechanisms.

In view of the aforementioned points, it is proposed to establish several pathways and mechanisms involving several different fields that would mainstream gender equity in the agricultural sector and empower rural women. Such fields are herein propounded:

The Legal and Legislative Sphere

- Raising awareness of rural women about their economic and social rights, inter alia, their right to agricultural lands ownership/ right to agricultural land inheritance, and enforcement of some laws supportive of rural women agricultural laborers. Included in such mechanisms are involving rural women under the overall umbrella of social protection laws, mainly the Labour Law has excluded agricultural male and female workers alike.

- **Policy Reform:** It refers to all the policies proposed to be amended or initiated towards creating an environment appropriate to achieve the goals of agricultural development, with women's full participation across all stages. A formal legally binding status vested with a statutory nature shall be for each prescribed policy shall be laid down and binding upon such policy target groups who shall be committed to respect, comply with legally binding obligations of the implementation measures. This official legislative reference may range from issuing ministerial decrees to issuing laws and legislations.

The Agricultural Sphere

- Endeavouring to upgrade women's performance in agricultural labour, by providing them with the necessary technical information through the establishment of specialized training and extension courses. Rural women can acquaint themselves with launching initiatives of new concepts such as E-agriculture. Means of communication are critical in enabling rural women equitable access to information.

- Implementing a land property mechanism for rural women through the assistance of some organizations and institutions supportive of the empowerment of rural women in the agricultural sector. Guaranteeing women's equal inheritance rights, land property and other productive resources is a substantial incentive towards dispensing with the focus on small enterprises, i.e., food industries, embroidery and handicrafts. Such would support the realization of a broader women's



scope for a deeper rural developmental concept that brings about radical changes leading to the achievement of gender equality in terms of agricultural land property. In fact, land ownership constitutes a long-term economic safety net which has far-reaching agricultural, social and environmental consequences.

- Granting women equal access to natural resources (water) and various productive resources such as seeds and fertilizers in support of their access for these resources, which remains a challenging task due to their lack of agricultural land tenure safety as a fundamental relevant condition for obtaining support.
- Considering the gender aware perspective, training female agricultural extension staff is critical as the presence of women extensionists delivering services on agricultural extension teams enables agricultural extension teams to reach rural women thus gaining eligibility to ensuring easy access to information, thus removing the cultural barrier to women's access to information.
- Assisting rural women and training them towards marketing their agricultural production while initiating the concept and culture of Electronic marketing.
- Motivating and training women on small and medium-sized productive enterprises set-up and management, inter alia, food industries, to diversify their income base.
- In response to environmental deterioration, moving towards environmental guidance with the aim of protecting the environment from pollution as well as preserving and sustaining natural resources.
- Raising women's environmental awareness by integrating environmental concepts into extension programs- such as the concepts of preservation and sustainability of natural resources- and using the traditional knowledge of rural women in safeguarding plant and animal genetic resources.
- Working to integrate rural women in development projects aimed at combating desertification, establishing the green belt and preserving biological diversity.

The Social Sphere

- Implementing gender equality mechanisms in agricultural rights and services within prescribed agricultural policies to achieve food security, at all stages.
- Reducing reliance on subsidies and social safety nets to combat poverty and achieve food security and resorting instead to a radical change in the gender power relations in the agricultural sector. This prevents the waste and depletion of natural resources-being a public property- and violence against women in order to increase their financial capacity and social strength by raising their productivity. Early marriage of girls and child labour should be prohibited and nutritional discrimination between girls and boys should further



be prevented. Sexual violence against women- reflected in forced pregnancy for a male child, their inability to access family planning methods or sexual and reproductive health follow-up, should be fought. Girls should also be prevented from education dropouts.

- Poverty is a social disease whose effects are tangible economically. Poverty continues to be inherited across generations. In fact, capacities and skills poverty is far more common among women. Therefore, attention must be paid to developing both rural women and men's skills, training them and raising their capacity in accordance with equality standards, so that eliminating intellectual poverty should be prioritized.
- Elevating the social status of female workers in the agricultural sector- where they are perceived as inferior- by concretising the efforts made for their sake and crystallizing them through the scientific meetings and media.

The Institutional Sphere

- **Institutional reform:** it includes institutional reform procedures and efforts, whether the target institutions are government agencies or private sector institutions or civil society organizations. It is urgent to bring about significant adjustments in such institutions or in their competencies or operational capabilities. This is a prerequisite for meeting the needs of rural women in terms of material and financial inputs, in order to create some sort of balanced power relations in the family and work.

The Decision-Making Sphere

- Training women in leadership skills and reinforcing their role in villages.
- Increasing women's participation in and involvement in agricultural cooperatives and in women's cooperatives, through enhancing their participation in related agricultural unions and associations and providing them with effective services.
- Training men on the need to support women engaging them on women's empowerment and ensure they have voices and agency on issues of agricultural work.

The Economic Sphere

- Training women on how to avail social capital and translate it into a financial capital.
- Training women Self-Help Groups and disseminating the culture of teamwork and women's associations.
- Benefiting from civil society associations, organizations and institutions specialized in men and women capacity building towards benefiting from the available



natural resources (the One Village, One product Initiative), thereby reducing waste and minimizing loss.

The Statistical Sphere

- Obtaining highly accurate quantitative and qualitative sex and age -segregated reliable data at the household level which would induce mapping a picture for the family dynamics and power relations. Consistent with a gender sensitive perspective this would help understand social discrimination and different household power relations at large.
- Establishing a special female agricultural labourer Employment Monitoring Unit to identify obstacles. Such a unit would serve as a form of a conclusion of exerted efforts of women and following -up on all relevant emerging relevant social and economic problems.



PREFACE

- Achieving food security and poverty reduction have become critical issues in many countries of the Arab region. This is particularly due to the increased population growth, agricultural resources degradation, limited water resources, and lack of other determinants for increased agricultural production, as well as limited good resource management and continuity. It is quite worth mentioning that these impediments pose a host of challenges to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- This has sharpened international focus on the importance of investing in agriculture to achieve food security and laid the emphasis that Zero-Hunger goal cannot be achieved in the absence of gender equality. Rural women play a substantial role and have a the most significant impact as to food security Still, they are the most affected by food insecurity amidst its most problematic complication, i.e., poverty. Therefore, the lack of investment in women and girls' capacities will accordingly impede them and hampers community development as well as it will halt poverty reduction efforts. Limited investment will also weaken both economic and agricultural development, thus leading to the failure in food security availability and affordability through the enhancement of sustainable agriculture. Therefore, the promotion of investment accounts for the most effective way to increase productivity and stimulate rural development.
- It is worth noting that even if the SDG goal is directed towards food security, the ultimate objective lies in the realization of gender equality in opportunities and resources, as well as the elimination of food discrimination for men and women alike in all areas, towards the promotion of gender equality.

1. Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector

1.1. The Agricultural Sector in the Arab World: Facts and Figures

- Agricultural development is an integral component of sustainable development of peoples and nations. It is the constant pursuit to develop human life while taking into consideration the capacities of the ecosystem ambit that sustains life. Agricultural development faces set of hurdles that hinder the achievement of absolute food security.
- Agricultural activities play a critical role in the economies of most Arab countries in terms of employment and production opportunities. The surface area of arable land in the Arab region stands to around 233.24 million hectares, that is 17.37% of the total geographical area of the Arab region in 2018. Only 74.12 million hectares (ha) are cultivated, with a percentage of (31.78%) of the total arable area. The percentage of Sudan's contribution to the total arable land area in the Arab region averages 31.51%, followed by Algeria, Somalia and Saudi Arabia with 18.93%, 18.92% and 7.44%, respectively (The Arab Food Security Situation report, 2018).



- The cultivated area in the Arab region is characterized by slight increase rising from 72.86 million hectares in 2017 to 74.12 million hectares in 2018. Sudan comparatively involves 40.35% of the total cultivated area in the Arab region, followed by Morocco with 12.39%, Algeria 11.63%, Syria 7.73%, Tunisia 6.20%, and Egypt 5.35%.
- Estimates of the cereal production in the Arab region stood at 51.88 million tons in 2018, thus representing 1.75% of the global grain production estimated at 2965.92 million tons for the same year. Besides, the proportion of cereal consumption amounted to 42.8% of the total available food commodities for the year 2018. self-sufficiency rate of cereals averaged 37.8%.
- Regionally, five Arab countries (Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, and Iraq) have had a recorded contribution standing 87.28% of the total cereal production in the Arab region in 2018. Worth noting, Egypt alone contributed with 41.18% of the total cereal production in the Arab region, followed by Morocco with 19.41%.
- Capturing the amount of waste and loss of basic food commodities in the Arab region in 2018, it amounted to 99.85 million tons, which constitutes an average of 31.2% of the total food commodities available for consumption. (The Arab Food Security Situation report, 2018) substantiates an estimated value of approximately \$50.6 billion.
- These given statistics, figures and economic arrangements are the outcome of human resources and natural resources. Human resources comprise agricultural employment and rural people; while natural resources make up agricultural land and water which represent the natural primary obstacles to agricultural development. Indeed, the outcomes of such resources contributed to production in the agricultural sector and was responsible for it. They will hereunder be reviewed from the gender equality perspective:

1.2. Human Resources in the Agricultural Sector

1.2.1. Rural Population

- The population of the Arab region has witnessed a rise thus climbing from 412.8 million people in 2017 to 422.7 million in 2018, with an annual growth rate standing at 1.92% over 2015-2018.
- Capturing the same period mentioned above, the share of the rural population growth trends in the Arab region was estimated at around 4.73%, compared to a global ratio 0.3%. Growth was due to the rise in the rate of population growth in rural areas. These demographic rural transformations are a major concern constituting the most significant challenge to the Arab region's development efforts involving the enhancement of agricultural productivity and job opportunities availability aiming at poverty reduction and improvement of food security rates as it is indicated in the herein Table No. 1.



For the Arab region, highlighting the importance of rural areas and the rural population in general, and particularly rural women, is inextricably determined by the following reasons:

- The rural areas account for a major source of food. Even though the region imports 18% of its food, the high food prices and global market prices volatility makes local agriculture far more important strategically in the countries of the region which continue to exhibit potential are food production.
- In general, poverty is a rural phenomenon affecting some social groups more adversely and visibly than others, such as Female Headed Household (FHHs), landless workers, and agricultural labourers.
- Rural- Urban migration is due to the high unemployment rates in rural areas, and to the rise in unemployment rates among the newcomers to urban areas, notably among the youth.
- Evidence contained in the (Report of the Economic and Social Commission, 2011: 1) states the exacerbation of instability prevalence due to failure to meet the population needs, especially in creating adequate job opportunities for the youth (Report of the Economic and Social Commission, 2011: 1).
- Rural women are the safety valve and the mainstay of the agricultural sector as they constitute a substantial proportion of the agricultural labour force. In terms of sustaining food production in light of several phenomena related to the social and economic conditions of rural Arab women, namely the out-migration of men, the feminization of poverty, the feminization of agriculture, and the reluctance of educated youth to engage in the agriculture labour. This will certainly adversely have a direct bearing on achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- One of the most suitable spaces to clearly scrutinize gender inequality in the agricultural sector lies in the rural areas, whereby problem of inheritance poses a host of challenges to women along with hardships in access to agricultural information, difficulty in marketing their produce, increase in physical exertion, and unpaid field labour. Such challenges are very often coupled with features of social ills, inter alia, social violence and health violence manifested in: forced pregnancy for a male heir, female excision (FGM), child marriage, limited pre-natal monitoring and lack of sexual and reproductive health follow-up.
- From this standpoint, the rural areas have become an adequate enabling environment whereby the empowerment and disempowerment should be monitored. (Mervet Sedky, 2019).



Table (1) Rural Population in the Arab Region

Country	2014	2015	2016
Jordan	1161.00	3171.11	3259.72
Emirates	1392.00	1385.00	1385.00
Bahrain	184.99	153.00	154.00
Tunisia	3708.00	3725.00	3741.00
Algeria	9792.00	10357.80	10413.00
Comoros	469.30	480.45	491.68
Djibouti	202.00	204.00	291.46
Saudi Arabia	5015.00	5044.00	5070.00
Sudan	24724.26	22285.52	22960.09
Syria	9398.00	9428.00	9551.00
Somalia	6583.00	6724.00	6864.00
Iraq	10921.00	11109.00	11386.40
Oman	710.00	760.00	806.60
Palestine	1108.00	1126.00	1143.00
Qatar	19.00	18.00	16.00
Kuwait	58.00	59.00	60.00
Lebanon	576.00	748.93	613.00
Libya	1353.00	1355.00	1359.00
Egypt	47473.00	48168.00	48835.00
Morocco	13498.00	13516.00	13456.00
Mauritania	1870.98	1891.07	1652.00
Yemen	16472.00	16698.00	16921.00
Total	156688.53	158406.88	160428.94

Source: The Arab Agricultural Statistics Yearbook, Section One, Volume 38, 2019.

1.2.2. Agricultural Employment

There has been a declining underemployment in total agricultural labor at the level of the Arab region compared to its counterparts worldwide. This slowdown has entailed a rise in the unemployment rate due to the rising population growth and subdued employment opportunities. Attention is drawn to the slowing trend in the growth rate in agricultural employment in the Arab region which is significantly higher than the decrease in the growth rate in full employment. The downward trend is quite noticeable relative to worldwide status whereby the proportion



of growth in agricultural employment witnessed a decline against the increase achieved in total employment. Though most agricultural operations in the Arab region rely heavily on human labor, agricultural activity remains by far the last resort for the rural population who would likely be the most affected by lack of employment prospects.

Table (2) Agricultural Labour Force in the Arab World

Country	2014	2015	2016
Jordan	191.40	242.67	249.96
Emirates	154.00	155.13	155.16
Bahrain	12.67	7.36	7.40
Tunisia	1463.50	1593.60	1481.80
Algeria	2550.60	4959.80	2545.00
Comoros	74.22	76.53	78.78
Djibouti	287.00	293.89	300.29
Saudi Arabia	468.07	495.40	512.17
Sudan	3371.49	3713.10	3825.49
Syria	1352.00	1297.63	1287.62
Somalia	2794.00	2870.01	2964.82
Iraq	1583.00	1623.20	1664.42
Oman	338.18	344.71	349.99
Palestine	95.00	83.68	72.00
Qatar	23.12	24.01	25.51
Kuwait	320.98	335.24	340.58
Lebanon	26.00	27.29	28.31
Libya	54.00	54.16	54.87
Egypt	6694.00	6403.00	6486.26
Morocco	4119.00	4000.68	4032.94
Mauritania	170.64	176.32	181.82
Yemen	2215.00	2216.00	2307.11
Total	28357.87	30993.40	28952.31

Source: Arab Agricultural Statistics Yearbook. Title 1. Vol. 38, 2019. Arab Organization for Agricultural Development. League of Arab States.



Table (3) Aggregate Share of Agricultural Labour Force in the Arab World

Total Agricultural Labour Force					Growth Rate %	Aggregate Full employment labour Force				Growth Rate %
Year	2015	2016	2017	2018		2015	2016	2017	2018	
The Arab World	31.9	28.9	28.8	28.6	2.58	125.4	124.0	124.2	123.8	0.32
Globally	872.0	866	866	865	0.19	3203	3240	3274	3297	0.73

Source: The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the Arab World. 2018: p.3

1.2.3. Agricultural Employment Rate in the Arab World “by Gender”

Agriculture remains one of the most significant key sectors of employment and income generation in most countries of the Arab region. According to the World Bank’s 2019 data, the proportion of employment in the agricultural sector in the Arab world by gender reached 29.0% of agricultural women laborers, a ratio higher than the average of men who make up 18.2% as per the schedule below:

Table (4) Percentage of Agricultural Labourers in the Arab World “by Gender”

The Arab World	2017	2018	2019
Men	18.8%	18.4%	18.2%
Women	29.6%	29.4%	29.0%

World Development Indicators, 2020, Employment in Agriculture, World Bank, Data Bank

As for the Arab countries, statistics indicate that the share of the labor force in the agricultural sector stands at roughly 40% in Morocco, while ranging between 20 and 30% in Egypt and Yemen. Besides, in many countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco, agriculture holds contributions in terms of substantial source of export earnings and rising shares of Export revenues/earnings value most often allocated by these countries for import basic foodstuffs. (Arab Horizon 2030: Prospects for Enhancing Food Security in the Arab Region.2017:29). Data substantiate that women constitute the safety valve and the backbone of the agricultural sector serving as a major source of food security. World Bank data reveal to employment in the agricultural sector by gender in the Arab countries, as illustrated in Table (5); hence the share of women involved in agricultural labor in Morocco averages 54%, compared to 29% for men. Equally, their involvement in Egypt amounts to 35% compared to 21% for men. Likewise, women outnumber men in Somalia by a proportion of 87% relative to 82% for men.

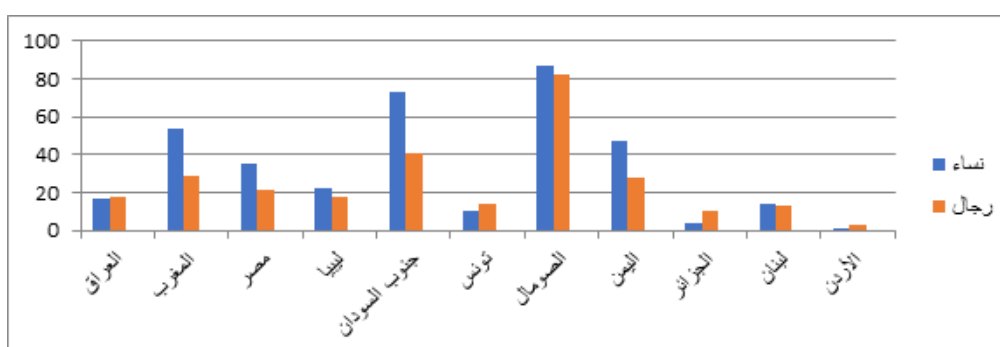


Table (5) Share of Employment in Agriculture (% of Male and Female Labourers in the Arab Countries “by Gender”)

Country	Employment in Agriculture Female (% of female employment)	Employment in Agriculture Male (% of male employment)
Iraq	17	18
Morocco	54	29
Egypt	35	21
Libya	22	18
South Sudan	73	41
Tunisia	10	14
Somalia	87	82
Yemen	47	28
Algeria	4	11
Lebanon	14	13
Jordan	1	3

Source: World Development Indicators,2020 (WDI). Employment in Agriculture (Male/Female)
World Bank. Data Bank. <https://databank.albankaldawli.org/source/gender-statistics#>

Figure (1) Employment in Agriculture: Distribution of Male and Female Workers



World Bank Data, Bank Data.

1.2.4. Agricultural Land Tenure “by Gender”

Despite women’s essential contributions in agriculture, their rights to land tenure are often not secured in many countries regionally. Women encounter obstacles to land access and ownership and secluded from other resources and production inputs; which impedes agricultural productivity and food security in the region. (Arab Horizon 2030, 2017: 23) Report reveals that the overall share of women land holders in Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia is generally low not exceeding 7% of all landholders.



Statistics on the share of female agricultural landowners in some of the Arab Countries explain the difficulty facing women's access to land tenure titles. This posits itself against the status of women who make up the largest section of the rural population active in agriculture thus disfavoring their contribution to most agricultural activities. The FAO Gender and Land Rights Database points to the pronounced gender inequalities in agricultural and tenure safety. In Algeria, for instance, the proportion of women landowners amounts to 4.1% relative to men whose share is 95.9%. In Egypt the ratio averages 5.2% for women against a male's proportion of 94.8%. The share remains low in Jordan as women own 3.0% compared with men (97.0). the same proportion in Lebanon 3.0% against 97.0% for men. In Morocco, women's share amounts to 4.4% relative to men (95.6%) whereas in Tunisia the ration of women landholders stands at 6.4% in contrast to men (93.6%) (FAO Gender and Land Rights Database Website). Land tenure is a significant part of social, political and economic structures and is multidimensional bringing into play social, technical, economic, institutional, legal and political aspects that are often ignored or unrecognized. The above-mentioned statistics underscore the significance of the target category undertaking pivotal roles, tasks, and responsibilities. Nonetheless, women fare worse than men as they are stranded in obstacles and hardships that puts them at the top of the pyramid of the groups at high risks of food insecurity and untenable conditions of poverty in the Arab world.

Table (6) Agricultural Land Tenure “by Gender”

Country	Year	Women	Men
Algeria	2001	4.1%	95.9%
Egypt	1999	5.2%	94.8%
Jordan	1997	3.0%	97.0%
Lebanon	1998	7.1%	92.6%
Morocco	1996	4.4%	95.6%
Tunisia	2005	6.4%	93.6%

Source: FAO, Gender and Land Rights Database (GLRD)

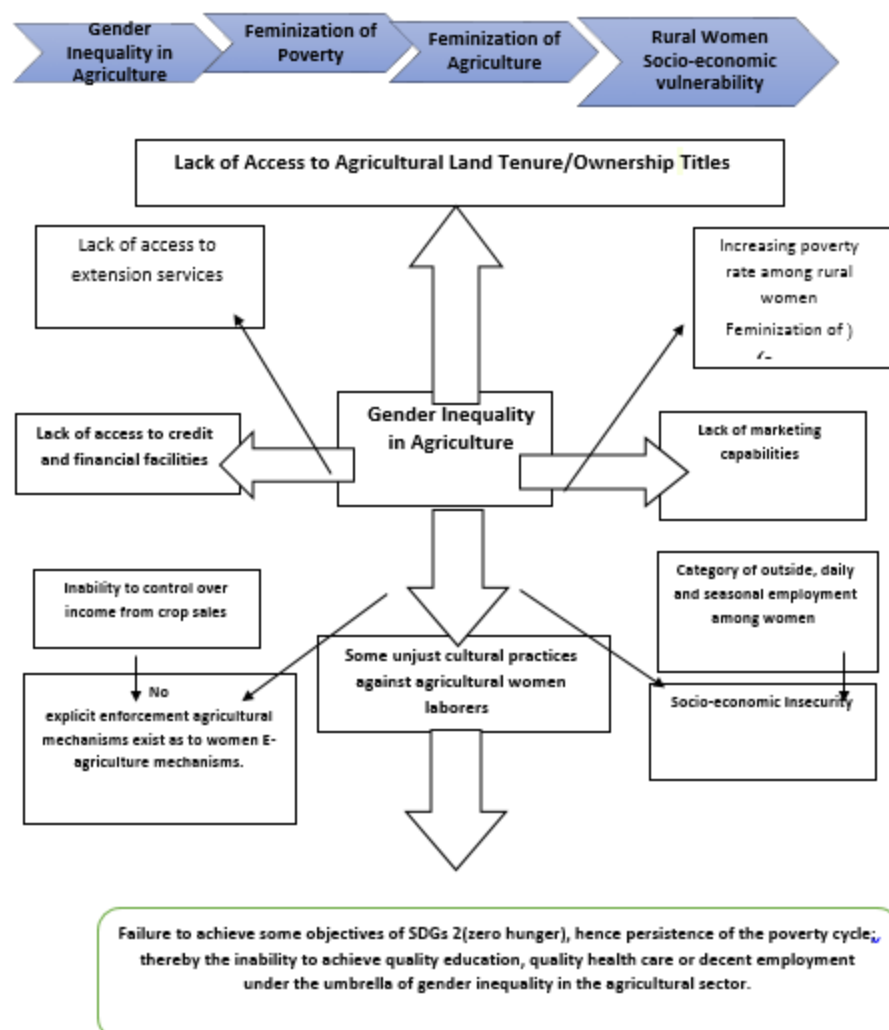
2. Aspects of Gender Inequality in the Agricultural Sector

As per findings drawn from these available data and statistics, evidence substantiates that gender inequality in the agricultural is quite visible as it is illustrated in the following table whereby lack of access to land tenure is pronounced which involves women's inability to access extension services and productive resources such as inputs' support along with their incapacity to control over income generated from their labour.

Moreover, the lack of a clear gender-based vision anchored in the implementation of electronic agriculture (E-agriculture) mechanisms and way to take best advantage would result in marketing difficulties, in no equitable access to marketing information and further induces compulsory unemployment. Seasonal and daily paid employment acts as a key challenge inhibiting agricultural women laborers inasmuch as they remain disadvantaged and experience wage inequity relative to men along with their endurance of several Occupational hazards.



As for unjust culturally rooted norms against agricultural women laborers, a gender-blind awareness about their status is quite pronounced. Common perceived roles of women and girls is by no means favouring their labour the agricultural sector. While some norms recognize and value women paid or unpaid labor in agriculture, some other norms hold no brief for their right to land property and are quite assertive that women are not illegible for inheritance rights. Women still grapple with a more bias -constrained situation that entails their entrapment in a vicious circle of poverty, economic insecurity leading to their social insecurity and their families. This is particularly visible in female-headed households. The (National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women, 2017:32) reveals that the share in female-headed households below the poverty line in Egypt registered 26.3% for the year 2015 which is targeted to be reduced to 9% by 2030. Poverty features are reflected in inability to access to minimum essential physical needs including food, clothing, clean running water, education and health whereupon consisting of static condition of a group of individuals or categories evolving into a dynamic condition reflected in socio-economic vulnerability of rural women engaged in agricultural employment. (Arab Women Organization, 2015 : 6).





After setting forth a previous sound vision through human resources related figures and statistics in the agricultural sector, we conclude that the human resource operates through natural resources: land and water, as well as other resources with traditional production methods and practices. Such methods will hereunder be presented.

3. Arab Agricultural Development Constraints

Agricultural Development indicators point to the low technologies in Arab agriculture at the level of Mechanical, chemical or biological technologies with prevalence of traditional systems whether in plant or animal production. The indicators further unveil limited expansion in agricultural lands with rising culturable wasteland (land left uncultivated). Besides, the Arab region is reported to be one of the most arid regions in the world and experience dire lack of water resources whereby the falling average per capita water per day is quite pronounced amidst water resources scarcity and constancy. Development obstacles are divided as follows:

3.1. Institutional Constraints

Small and medium-sized agricultural land tenure covers more than three-quarters of agricultural land invested in the Arab world. The development of such a pattern of agricultural land tenure hinges on the agricultural institutions' contributions to further efficient provision of necessary support to farmers. Equally, the shortage of human technical expertise has significantly impaired the developmental impact of such institutions thereby causing its downturn. However, evidence aptly evince that progress is underway as to farmers and civil society organizations 'engagement. This was true particularly in the areas of services, and the improvement of project irrigation management and maintenance.

3.2. Natural Constraints

The availability of water across the Arab region has been a crucial concern as water resources are distinguished by scarcity which poses a serious water challenge inhibiting the attainment of developmental programs and promotion of the status of Arab food security. With 9% of the world's area, the Arab World's share in freshwater resources availability remains critically low amounting to no more than 2% of the world's average of water resources. Considered as the most arid regions in the world the Arab region's share per capita is below the water poverty line level defined at 1,000 cubic metres of fresh waters a year. Shortages in per capita freshwater resources is most pronounced in some Arab countries that experience water stress and grapple with a share under the threshold of 500 cubic meters per capita per year to meet agricultural and non-agricultural water demands.

Water resources are one of the prime determinants of agricultural development in the Arab World. Whereby the average per capita per year in renewable water resources is below 500 cubic metres. This is particularly obvious in in Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Libya, Palestine, Algeria, Oman, Djibouti and Tunisia where the share ranges between 400.8 and 400.2 cubic metres. Whereas, the average per capita per year ranges between 589.4 and 997.1 in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Sudan and Somalia. The water average per capita per year has yet risen to 1000 in Comoros, Iraq, and Mauritania. (The State of Arab Food Security Report, 2018:6).



3.3. Land Resources

The geographical area of the Arab region amounted to about 1,343 million hectares (Mha) in 2018 whereby arable land area makes up around 233.24 million hectares of the total area or 17.37%. Yet, cultivated area takes up only roughly 74.12 Mha, at a rate of 31.78% of the total arable land area. Of the arable land area in the Arab world, Sudan's contribution accounts for 31.51%, followed by Algeria, Somalia and Saudi Arabia with a proportion of 18.93%, 18.92% and 7.44%, respectively (Agriculture statistics yearbook, 2019).

3.4. Technical Constraints

Across the Arab countries, agriculture is characterized by the primacy of traditional technical farming systems utilized in fisheries and aquaculture exploitation methods, in post-harvest operations techniques for many agricultural crops, and in the development of appropriate of new varieties of plants adjusted in the context of climate changes. Traditional crop production practices are also common in the use natural forests wealth, along with the difficulty of access to inputs and basic productive services, to technology, and limited access to market information. Profiling women's ownership of a mobile phone globally, (GENDER AND ICTS: 2018: 7) report substantiates that fewer women than men own mobile phones. Data indicate that 1.2 out of 2.9 billion women own a cell phone in low- and middle-income countries at a rate of 41%, compared to a rate of 1.4 out of 3.0 billion men owning a cell phone in low- and middle-income countries amounting to a rate of 46%. In Sub Saharan Africa, the report further reveals, 300 million women do not own a mobile phone. Regarding global internet usage rate, men's share averaged 50.9% compared to women (44.9%). Likewise, men's share in Africa stood at 24.9% against 18.6% for women. The proportion is quite similar across the Arab countries where men mobile holders amounted to 47.7% while women averaged 39.4%. Which results in marketing difficulties obstructing avenues of success.

In the context of the high number of impediments and challenges, agriculture remains the fundamental determinant in ensuring food security. This sector constitutes, for several Arab countries, one of the most substantial activities in national economy with women's growing share. Agriculture has witnessed a shift which is most visibly reflected in its changing character better described as Feminization of agriculture.

4. The Feminization of Agriculture: between Reality & Challenges in the Arab World

Capturing such a feminization character, a question arises as such. Does feminization of agriculture constitute a real gain for rural women or is it rather a proven evidence of social conditions deterioration leaving rural women even more enmeshed in a form of gender inequality in agriculture.



The (FAO State of Food and Agriculture:1998) report indicated, upon historical analysis of the phenomenon, that the feminization of agriculture in the MENA region was less visible than in other regions in spite of the rising poor female-Headed small Households in rural areas driven by the temporary and permanent male rural-urban migration. This was translated in the share of Female Headed Households to 16% or less in Egypt, Morocco, Cyprus, Tunisia, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran whereas a higher share of female-Headed Households rose above 20% in Sudan, Pakistan. Hence, women's contributions in agriculture in the Near East is very often neglected since they undertake most unpaid work within the male-headed family farms. (National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, 2017: 31) available data indicate that in 2016 the number of Female-Headed Households below poverty line has increased overtime amounting to approximately 26% in Egypt. Likewise, (The State of Food and Agriculture: 2011) on women in agriculture stated that the share of women in the Middle East and North Africa, (MENA) increased overtime to nearly 40%, and more than 20% for men. Share of women engaged in unpaid family farming was above 20% in 2007. (FAO: 2011).



Source: The Researcher

Data drawn from databank.albankaldawli.org/source/world provide an employment rate in the agricultural sector in the Arab World by gender reaching 29% in 2019 relative to men (18.2%).

In the same vein, (Global Food Policy Report.2020; 41) interprets the phenomenon of "Feminization of agriculture" from two distinct views on how these transformations are affecting women's workloads and agency as well as the scale of their effectiveness. On the one hand, such changes can unlock new opportunities for women to engage in paid employment and commercial agriculture. These opportunities increase women's incomes and allow for their visibility and voice in their households and communities.

On the other hand, women may carry additional burdens of labour and responsibility without the agency and resources to take full advantage of new opportunities. While both views acknowledge that these processes affect women and men differently, it remains unclear how gendered patterns of agricultural labour are changing and what the net impacts of these changes are on women and men in terms of work and agency. While the global evidence confirms that in many places women's labour force participation in the agriculture sector is increasing, it is often concentrated in seasonal, casual, or unpaid work. Women are often paid less and face poorer working conditions compared with men doing similar jobs.

Women's growing activities on farms and greenhouses might be positive as such activities yield income gains and improvement of livelihoods. Nonetheless, the so-called (Feminization of agriculture) might be contested as it does not necessarily imply women's empowerment. One of the main drivers shifting labour pattern in agriculture include men's out-migration in pursuit



of job opportunities and rural-to-urban migration among youth which imposes a high cost for rural women left behind. A similar driver includes educated youth disaffection from engagement in agricultural activities as they hold no interest in engagement. Additionally, the feminization of agriculture partially correlates with more job opportunities in agricultural fields for men unlocked in agri-industry and services which generate a higher return than agriculture.

Moreover, the feminization of agriculture does not mean the empowerment of rural women given the lack of agricultural land ownership and inability to access to modern extension information. In reference to (Mervet Sedky, 2014:11), constraints are due some gender- gender -related customs and traditions such as restricted mobility that inhibits rural women from gaining access to free mobility to attend training sessions and have little or no exposure to agricultural information from its source. Women also strive with inability to ensure the enjoyment of work; as they are trapped in the far multiple burdensome household chores in and around the field such as caring for child-care, husband and the elderly; along outside workloads in farming and animal husbandry. Women further grapple with an imbalance that curtails produce marketing difficulties.

Observed data from FAO are consistent with the above-mentioned findings as they show the limited access of women to agricultural extension services amounting to only 5%. Considering the gender of extension agents, only 15% of the world's extension staff are females.

Such a status is again consistent with the (Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report, 2017:21) which unveils that the proportion of poverty entrapment (whether the poor or the extreme poor) is notably higher in rural areas than in urban ones, hence faring worse in the case households where the male-headed households are illiterate relative to educated heads of family. In the event of a household where the head has no education incidence of acute poverty is unfolded. Yet, it is within the female-headed households that the incidence of poverty is slightly less than male Headed Households, albeit slightly higher in terms of extreme poverty (acute/ more serious extreme poverty) whereby concerns unfold in the cluster countries of Comoros, Mauritania, Sudan, and Yemen. In countries most poverty and extreme poverty-stricken as Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt, male-Headed Households are more likely to experience extreme poverty. The levels of extreme poverty and moderate poverty seem to be lower in Morocco and Iraq.

With respect to the plight of rural women and endurance of gender inequality in the agricultural sector, findings concluded in (Mervet Sedky, 2018:1) reveal that 91% of informants, included within the studied sample, are exposed to lower levels of adequacy of pay to sustenance requirements. As to the number of undertaken working hours, findings indicate that a share of 63% of women engaged in daily paid work



are tilling in the field more than 8 hours a day whereby 81% of the respondents experienced verbal violence inflicted upon them by the employer. Likewise, as to the Occupational Hazards, 93% of rural women are reported to be mired in biological hazards associated with handling animals, poisoning caused by snakes venom and scorpionism in the field, or soil-borne diseases, such as some fungi, water-borne diseases and gastric diseases along with hazards of organic dust such as wheat, straw, barley, and beans dusts causing different types of allergies, such as Allergic Rhinitis, asthma and eczema. Rural women bear the brunt of compulsory unemployment as 41% of the respondents experienced laid-off by the employer. Such was aligned with their strife with the gender wage gap as findings indicate that 91% of the respondents confirmed their exposure to gender wage gap being disadvantaged compared to men despite performing the same work in the field. This can be interpreted in view the so-called (gender discrimination) proving the ground for favouring men a higher wage just because of their gender.

Although agricultural activities are coated with daunting hardships, rural women remain concentrated on farming thus relying more heavily on the agricultural sector as their first employer since they have no knowledge on any profession other than farming. This is coined as skill poverty stemming from their low education level limiting their access to off-farm employment which requires several skills denied to many poor rural populations. Rural women also happen to contend with low levels of education which quite assertive in the (Rural Development Report, 2016 : 25,67) that revealed the paramount importance of education that curtails rural women skill development and capacity building as a useful stepping-stone qualifying them to make gains in farm and non-farm employment.

The findings from (Mervat Sedky, 2018: 1) provide insights into one of the factors of rural women engagement in working in agriculture lies in the husband's unwillingness to undertake a paid job in agricultural production. This movement of men out of agriculture curtailed an increase in women's share of workforce. This is also due to men's desire of internal migration to other rural provinces in search of jobs in construction activities. Such could be interpreted in the context of hurdles and the intensification of women's work burden and responsibilities as Female Heads of Households along with the burden of domestic chores. This pattern is further intertwined with the so-called "feminization of agriculture". Drawing on Sedke's findings one could note the consistency with the (International Labour Office, 2008: 18) report that attributes the feminization of agricultural work men's disaffection for farming and their tendency for Non-farm employment prospects to leave rural areas and engage in non-agricultural activities.

5. Socio-economic profile of Rural Women in view of Sustainable Development Goals 2030

5.1. Arab Rural women and Poverty Level

Grounded on world's poverty line as defined by people living on \$1.90 a day, there has been a growing rate in the poorest globally. The headcount poverty ratio, according to the \$1.90 per day poverty line, increased from 4% in 2013 up to 6.7% in 2015.



Across the Arab Region, available data contained in the (Arab Sustainable Development Report, 2020) indicate that the proportion of the poor, using national poverty lines indicators, averaged 5.5% in Algeria, 14.4% in Jordan, around 27% in Lebanon and Egypt, 46.5% in Sudan and 48.6% in Yemen before the outbreak of the conflict.



Source: The Researcher

The plight of poverty is compounded in societies where expanding population growth takes over the slow pace of economic growth. Approaches to address the challenges of rising ratios of poverty along with attempts to reduce such a serious phenomenon and its repercussions vary accordingly. The Human Development Report, 2014: 4) points to more than 2.2 billion people suffering from multi-dimensional poverty or are on the brink of falling back into poverty. The report shows that that a ratio of 80% of the world's population have no access to a comprehensive social protection, and more than 1.5 billion workers are engaged in the informal sector or in some types of precarious work. Besides, around 12% of the world's population (as much as 842 million people) suffer from chronic hunger (Human Development Report 2014: 4).

Building upon such statistics, World Bank, 2020 reveals a headcount of more than 800 million people living at poverty ratio at \$1.25 a day and a further 1.3 billion people are enmeshed in multidimensional poverty. The Arab region is home to 4% of a population are poverty-hit at a poverty ratio of at \$1.25 a day,

Equally, according to data included in the (Arab Sustainable Development Report, 2020: 14) (ASDR 2020) the proportion of the population below the international poverty line of \$1.90 in Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs), is nearly 16 per cent (60%), while a high incidence of extreme poverty still persists regionwide with a proportion higher than the world average and all averages in all other developing regions except for sub-Saharan Africa.

Given such data and figures the following question arises: Do Arab rural women suffer from poverty?

The (Arab Development Summit, 2019, 17) substantiated that global statistical data indicate that women are poorer relative to men making up 70 percent out of the world's 1.2 billion poorest people. Unequal power relations excluding women from participation in decision-making schemes remain the structural causes of social and political instability that breed poverty and spawn deprivation.



Source: The Researcher



In the Arab region, the headcount poverty ratio, living below the poverty line, amounts to 41% thus making up 130 million poor. Tunisia ranks the highest in rural-urban poverty gap with 4.9%, followed by Morocco, Egypt, and Yemen with a proportion of 3.0%, 2.9%, 1.9% respectively (The Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals, 2010: 8).

Poverty and its Impacts on Arab Rural Women

1. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. Two fundamental dimensions could be approached: income poverty defined as limited resources required to meet needs and secure a minimum level of socially adequate living standard. The second dimension consists in capacity approach of poverty defined as the inability and a lack of resources of individuals that allows them to fulfil their capacities and partake in the developmental process. According to capacity approach, and by virtue of their gender, rural women are denied "opportunities and choices most basic to their development" and are most severely hit by such a poverty type.
2. The (Feminization of Poverty, 2015) indicates that women's autonomous income, if any, is far less than men's income whether poverty is identified through the available monetary income approach or measured through the lack in skill development /capacities approach. Hence human poverty is predominantly feminized according to the three dimensions of Human Development Index identified as multidimensional poverty. In that sense, the phenomenon of feminization of poverty; which implies limited opportunities for women relative to men, and unequal access to education, work and asset ownership; is a widespread phenomenon exponentially on the rise. The concept of feminization of poverty involves a gendered experience whereby women are more affected and more sensitive to the economic variables of income decrease and living standard, while striving to grapple with limited capacity to meet the basic needs for themselves and their families, thus widening the inequalities in life quality as indicated in the (Feminization of Poverty Report , 2015). The report further suggests poor women limited access to vital resources such as land tenure safety and inheritance. Denied equitable access to education services, women are enmeshed in unpaid or precarious work. Persistent discrimination against girls deepen disparities in educational achievement in the fabric of several regions. As children, they therefore undertake housework burdens at an early age which makes them vulnerable to school dropouts and engagement in agricultural activities. Such is further exacerbated by being thwarted by to poverty negative impacts as prey to girls' child marriage and socio-economic precarity.
3. Poverty and rural Female Heads of Households: Female household headship is substantially intertwined with poverty as the correlation between the phenomenon of poverty and women's issues, that might feature both as impacting and being impacted; is quite visible inasmuch as poverty is fundamental in interpreting many women related aspects. Evidence regarding the poverty status of female headed households, the (Arab Women's Organization, 2015) quite rightly substantiates stereotypical gender attitudes towards



the poverty of Female headed households (feminization of household headship) is in turn, remarkably interlocked with the feminization of poverty. As suggested by the (Arab Women's Organization, 2015), evidence shows that while both men and women are apparently affected by poverty, women are broadly worse this evidence suggests the existence of a higher risk of poverty off whereby female headed households are more typically prone to poverty impacts and are adversely more poverty-stricken.

In view of the foregoing, poverty is arguably a complex phenomenon arising from several factors: social, cultural, economic, political and legal. Poverty is de facto one of the most severe social ills in terms of its adverse impacts and negative repercussions on socio-economic conditions. It is worth mentioning poverty adversely spins off several problems. Such problems involve unemployment spread, poor health and education levels, rising rate in child labour, and other social problems spawned from the household's head's irresponsibility whereupon entailing the emergence of Female Head of household.

Literature reflected in academic studies and reports approaching the feminization of poverty and rural women vulnerability range is herein presented:

- Female-headed households are more prone to poverty risks than male-headed households due to women's limited access to highly paid jobs, non-ownership of instruments and assets. It then assumes that women solely assume the responsibility of household chores which raise concerns about subjecting them to time constraints and time poverty shackles obstructing them from getting involved in education and training, hence persistently walking down in the poverty spiral. (ILO, 2012:31).
- Drawing on the Arab Republic of Egypt official statistics, data suggest that the feminization of poverty has become a de-facto phenomenon. Findings of the study built upon the 2008 Human Development Report; brought out the wider gender disparities in education as to the following indicators in school enrolment: 1) basic education enrolment rate, 2) preparatory school enrolment rate, 3) secondary enrolment rate, 4) Tertiary education enrolment rate, and 5) labour force participation rate of females in the scientific and technical profession (aged fifteen years and older). Findings also yield insight into the involvement of these indicators with 64% in the value of the Human Development Index downturn. (Muharram et al., 2012: 1199).
- The feminization of poverty implies women's sensitivity to economic variables. When assessing related policies to combat poverty among women, hurdles as to integrating gender concerns in poverty reduction interventions were identified. Visibly, policies disproportionately address or ignore gen-



der perspectives in developing poverty-related policies. This is quite pronounced in some discriminatory legislation and laws that exacerbate women's disempowerment and leave them on the edge of participation in the decision-making process. Widespread female illiteracy is a more pressing variable. (Elleithy, 2001:52).

- Continuum of gender gap in job security, wages and education contributes to the feminization of poverty. The higher the poverty rate is, the more women are likely to engage in un-paid occupation within the household or with a poorly paid wage if self-employed. Equally, poverty spans across female heads of households bearing the brunt of sustaining their families amidst limited sources and resources. Women are therefore reported to be poorer and more vulnerable than their male peers. (Barbari, 2009: 119).
- Exclusion of many social categories from social protection schemes whereby vulnerable households are less likely covered. It therefore assumes that most poor women heads of households endure marginalization and exclusion from state social welfare plans. (Eldabaa, 2012:400) suggested that a ratio of 95.7% of the total sample of informants revealed that the economic allocation they receive could not cover the basic needs of food and water. Such a concern was underscored by the (Arab Sustainable Development Report, 2020: 14) (ASDR 2020) which substantiated the persistent exclusion of a high proportion of women from social security coverage schemes due to women's restricted participation in the formal labor force throughout the region: this condition has ripple effects making women the most prone to risks and deprivation. Figures from the (Ministry of National Solidarity, 2019: 1) disclose that financial support is allocated to 1.785.000 women at a monthly cost of 820.000.000 Egyptian pounds (EGP) along with an average monthly assistance amounting to 455 EGP. Besides, the proportion of heads of household beneficiaries of a financial support stands at an overall 213.000 divorced, widow a or abandoned women. Capturing the number of women pension holders and beneficiaries, it reached 5.5 million women out of an overall number of 9 million pension holders at a monthly cost of 3.4 billion (EGP) and an average monthly assistance comprising 621 Egyptian pounds (Ministry of Solidarity, 2019:1)
- In (Sedky, 2016: 2) Sedky stated that 41% of the respondents identified poverty as reproducing girls. Figures again substantiate intertwine between poverty and insecurity as 22.6% of respondents admit girls' early marriage as a resort to gain financial security. Such is reflective of the persistence of inheritance of the concept of women poverty. As to the lack of awareness and interest in children's education, a low ratio (11%) identified poverty as inability to ensure children's access to education. Engendering illiteracy, responses received from illiterate women constitute 46%, a seemingly higher proportion assertive of illiteracy as the backbone of feminization of poverty. Sedky further stated 58% of the respondents experienced barriers to access to inheritance, which constitutes the key chain link of respondents' economic insecurity. Thus, gender sensitive interventions shall seek male engagement in women's rights awareness seminars as they constitute part of policy makers in relevant matters.



- This is consistent with the interpretation of (Feminization of Poverty, 2015) which indicated that poor women are less likely to gain chance of adequate access to education services along with limited access to health care and nutritional needs. Girls grapple with persistent discrimination in access to education throughout many regions due to customs, early marriage, and forced pregnancy. Besides, the overburden of household chores at an early age subjects them to time constraints impacting their school performance which induces their dropouts. Girls are reported to be preys to the ripple effects of poverty. They happen to be excluded from education that secure decent work whereupon the rise of income allows them to escape the scourges of the cycle of poverty.

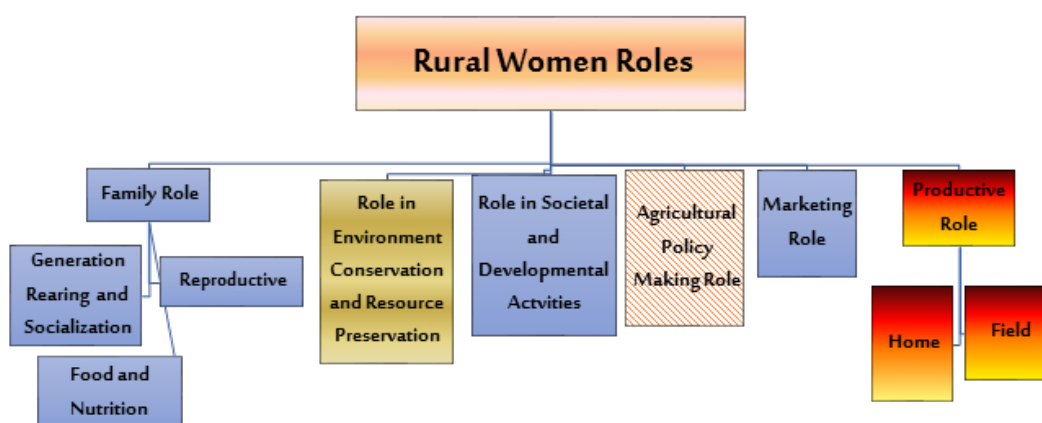
5.2. Arab Rural Women and Food Security

Arab Rural Women Roles

Rural Arab women are food producers. They are actively involved in most agricultural activities, as well as many home-based and outside productive activities. Besides farming, they substantially engage in the implementation of small-scale productive activities and projects, along with marketing some produce and the sharing in many agricultural decisions making power relevant to farming activities and significantly impacting agriculture and Production.

In the family sphere, rural women play a substantial role, within the family, in the area of socialization of children, mainly contributing to shaping the value systems for future generations. Women inculcate work -related the values, equality, production, family building, and community service, along with their critical role in feeding the family, sustaining livelihoods, managing household affairs, and managing its economies.

Equally, Rural women have a great influence on the environment. They play a key role in Environmental conservation and sustaining natural resources given the close linkage between the daily activities they undertake and their direct correlation with the natural environment resources. Such is hereunder illustrated in the figure.



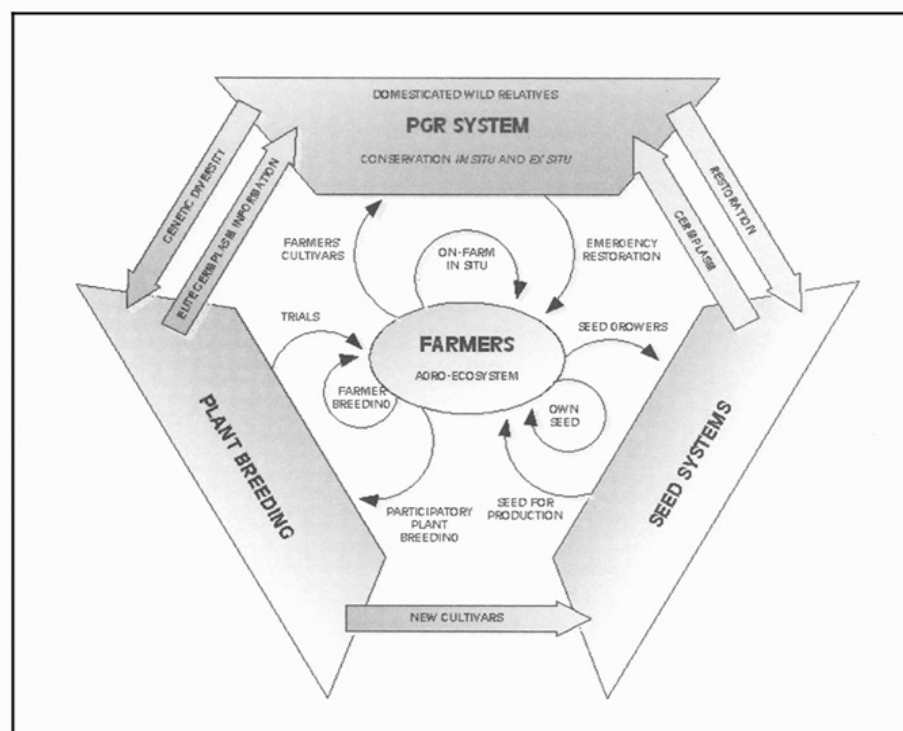


Custodians of plant genetic resources (PGR), Arab rural women are at the core of food security. They keep up giving and hold distinguished roles, notably in the area of conserving and sustainably preserving and managing plant genetic resources and agrobiodiversity for food Which constitutes the safety valve to food security.

Women make up most of the agricultural labor force which highlights their daily interaction with agricultural and water natural resources in the context of their key role as farm laborers responsible for their household sustenance through growing subsistence crops. Rural women are versed with farming practices, hold in-depth knowledge of local plants types and master techniques of cultivation, irrigation and preservation. Impoverished rural women often rely on natural resources, representing common property, to ensure access to firewood, crop fodder and subsistence foods. In many countries, the overuse of natural resources, poses a severe threat to rural livelihoods and food security. (www.fao.org/gender/gender) and (Rizq, Abdul Wahab, 2015).

It is to the credit of rural women that conservation of agrobiodiversity and plant species are ensured along with identification of the types of native flora, as well as women's endeavors in conservation and plant -seed multiplication and sustaining of germplasm of plant species.

Plant genetic resources are a source for a plant living organism, which may constitute a whole or part with an economic value. Such is used in agriculture and food production. Relevant resources are divided into plant genetic resources for field crops, horticultural crops, and medicinal and aromatic plants. The preservation of these resources largely implies the maintenance of natural resources and their preservation from the risk of waste. Farmers are the mainstay of the genetic integrity and conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources/breeds for Agriculture. (Guide to Legislation on Preservation and Conservation of Genetic Resources, 2010:3). Interrelationships between the conservation of crop genetic resources and their sustainable use in plant breeding and as seed and propagating material; is illustrated in the figure hereunder:



Source: The role of biotechnology in exploring and protecting agricultural genetic resources, FAO, ROME, 2006 (Editors: John Ruane and Andrea Sonnino)

Genetic resources do not only include Plant or animal genetic resources or that scarce, minute organism. It rather constitutes integrated loops internally impregnating that genetic origin which comprises traditional knowledge, acquired local practices that had accumulated throughout the years and passed on through multiple generations to become any society distinctive hallmark in all its living body of knowledge and expertise. (Mervet Sedky, 2017).

The Status of Arab Food Security

“Food security is achieved when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to food, which is safe and consumed in sufficient quantity and quality to meet their dietary needs and food preference, for an active and healthy life”.

Figures drawn from (The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2018: 9,) cite that wasting alarmingly exacts a terrible toll on the lives of children worldwide; signaling that over 50 million children under 5 years of age suffer from wasting with nearly 151 million children under 5 (22%) remain stunted in 2017; despite a decline by 25% compared to 2012. This was mainly due to the progress achieved in Asia. Still, more than 38 million children under 5 strive with obesity. The report further shows the awfully rising incidence of anemia among women and adult obesity as over one 1 in 8 adults worldwide is obese, and 1 in 3 women of reproductive age are affected by anemia.



Across the Arab countries, the ratio of inhabitants affected by malnutrition were the highest in Yemen amounting to 34.4% and the lowest in Kuwait standing at less than 2.5%. A high prevalence of stunting and wasting in children below 5 years of age is quite visible. Overweight and adult obesity are on the rise with prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age.

- Regarding the 2017 infant exclusive breastfeeding index (EBF) less than 6 months, the ratio averaged 54.8% in Sudan, EBF prevalence data shows 32.8% in the Sultanate of Oman, 39.5% in Egypt, 41.4% in Mauritania and 9.7% in Yemen.

As to child stunting and wasting, and anaemia in women of reproductive age data indicate that:

- In the 2017 wasting prevalence Index among children under 5 years of age Indicator, Sudan ranks the highest with a ratio of 16.3% while Oman averaged 7.5%, Kuwait 3.1%, Egypt 9.5%, Mauritania 14.8% and Yemen 16.3%.
- Considering Under five stunting Index for 2017, the burden hovers in Sudan which scored 38.2%, Oman 14.1%, Kuwait 4.9%, Egypt 22.3%, Mauritania 27.9%. Stunting scores the highest in Yemen with 46.5%.
- Profiling children under five who are overweight, Sudan scored 3.0%, Oman 4.4%, Kuwait 6%, Egypt 15.7%, Mauritania 1.3%, and amounting to 2% in Yemen.
- As to the countries' profiles across the Arab region, food insecurity average index for the years 2015/2017, as a percentage of the total population; Algeria, Bahrain and Egypt scored 8.9% (FAO: 2018: 3)

Gender disparities on Food Security Indicators

- Data drawn from the (State of Food Security and Nutrition, 2018:9) report on experience-based food security scales; indicate that the severity of food insecurity hits more than 140 countries across Asia and Africa. As such, severe Food Insecurity Experience Scale reveals prevalence is slightly higher among women than men globally with a ratio of 8.0% relative to men (7.5%). In Africa, The FIES hits 24.3% of women compared to 23.9% for men.
- Prevalence of anaemia in women of reproductive age is strikingly visible in (The state of Arab Food Security Report, 2018: 48) findings which substantiate that Yemen ranks the highest. Ratios stood to 30.7% in Sudan, 33.6% in Syria, 44.4% in Somalia, 27.5% in Iraq, 38.2 in Oman, 27.7% in Qatar, 23.8% in Kuwait, 31.2% in Lebanon, 32.5% in Libya, 28.5% in Egypt, 36.9% in Morocco, and 96.6% in Yemen.
- As to Under five stunting Index across some provinces, it shows that stunting is more likely to affect girls than boys revealing that girls are more vulnerable to manifestations of health inequalities from an early age.
- Capturing the proportion of food insecurity affected women, (Gender Equality Policy Report, 2020: 7) highlights that women are more likely to be food insecure than men. Deprived of an adequate access to nutritious food, women strive with macro and micronutri-



ent deficiency (iron: a serious challenge for pregnant ones). Deficiency thus has serious implications increasing the risk of new-borns low birthweight and overlapping with other children's worrisome health problems. Consistent with these findings, 15 million girls under 18 of often poor households were also reported to be married which induces devastating effects on their education, health, and growth.

- Capturing the obesity index, the (Arab Society: A Compendium of Social Statistics, 2017: 25) report provides high prevalence among women in the Arab region. In this respect, Kuwait ranks the highest with 37% yet Sudan ranks the lowest with 7%. Sudan, Mauritania and Yemen are countries where the proportion of obesity averages stood below 20%. In Egypt, however, 40% of women are obese relative to men (22%), by far the highest gap in the region. Yet, Lebanon registered the narrowest gender gap by 8%.

Closing the gender gap in agriculture would ensure that greater resources and inputs needed to be placed in the hands of women along with empowering them through fostering their voice within the family --a proven strategy for improving health, nutrition and education outcomes for children. The (State of Food and Agriculture report, 2011) substantiates that women are key actors in agricultural production in developing countries, in especially low-income countries (LICs), whereby agriculture accounts for 32% of GDP growth, with nearly 70% of the poor live and work in rural areas. Women in these areas are the main producers of most locally consumed food. They are therefore among the essential elements in achieving household food security in rural areas, the report further stated.

Empowering rural women in agriculture is a significant instrument towards the achievement of fundamental goals i.e. the fight against poverty, Food security and improved nutrition, and foster sustainable development.



Source: The Researcher

6. Empowerment of Arab Rural Women in the Agricultural Sector

The concept of Empowerment:

Empowerment is based on the Triple-Roles of women: reproductive work, productive work and societal or community managing work. Empowerment is a developmental concern: a development built on men and women's equal participation across all activities; not a poor women assistance driven development. Empowerment lies in building women's capacities to free themselves from the triple burden thus, enabling to make decisions through economic resources property and make elements of economic power easily accessible.



The United Nations Development Fund for Women points to the manifold efforts to incorporate women into development programs and projects through a variety of women in development (WID) fivefold approaches hereunder stated:

1. **Women and Welfare approach:** This approach aims to provide women with the essentials for life such as education, housing, health, nutrition, and all that is needed to meet life requirements which in turn promote well-being. The women and welfare approach also addresses the limitations reflected in women's lack of access to their requirements attributed to social practices and customs that favor maximizing men's share within the family and in society broadly with regard to nutrition, education and income: constraints which further disempowers women and contribute to their vulnerability in those facets.
2. **Equity and justice approach:** Due emphasis was laid on gender equality and social justice. For this approach to be effective, raising women's opportunities to gain benefit through economic, social and political opportunities, in parity with men, is critical towards justice and equality in the development process.
3. **Efficiency approach:** It brought to the forefront the elevation of the status of women through production initiating skill and modern technology-training processes. Grounded on the argument of argument for justice and efficiency, attention is drawn on a pursuit to contribute to the development, promotion and enhancement of production. Thereby making development more efficient through economic participation and social justice for women.
4. **Anti-Poverty approach:** The focus is laid on the idea that women's poverty is attributed to the limitations in production, along with their disempowerment in access to income rather than the result of their power. This approach hence pursues poor women capacity enhancement towards production seeking to meet their practical needs translated into small income-generating projects. There is also a whole series of so-called rural industries based on crafts and occupations that country people undertake, whether in their homes or in a public sphere, that unites them in their village. Rural people utilize rural raw materials/inputs to produce farm products that could profit local consumers' needs and leads to revitalization of the rural areas where most of the population lives.
5. **Empowerment approach:** it constitutes of the most recent approaches adopted to integrate women into the development process. Perceived as the most common approach given its priority concern with the triple roles ascribed to women: the reproductive role, the productive and the community management role. Such an approach is grounded on the recognition of the crucial role undertaken by women as the main actor and key component of development, while endeavoring to eliminate the gender-based discriminatory manifestations through sparking the change in terms of gender relations and intra-household and social power relationship.

In the aggregate, this approach seeks to empower women economically, socially, politically and agriculturally along with a gender parity in participating in decisions over personal or collective



life by means of education culture, labor and employment through overcoming the social and economic conditions that constitute the space periphery of rural women social and economic vulnerability. In this context, (Food and Agriculture Report, 2011, p. 3) highlighted that agricultural empowerment of rural women will then be addressed. Agricultural empowerment is a key intervention as the agricultural sector continues to under-perform for several of reasons manifested in women's lack of productive resources and opportunities, and in view of impediments in terms of gaining access to productive resources, access to markets and service facilities. Hence, agricultural empowerment is therefore a key to overcoming obstacles and seize opportunities.



Arab Rural Women Empowerment in Agriculture:

Agricultural empowerment seeks rural women full-fledged capacity in full and equitable participation in the agricultural development process. In this sense, promoting gender equality in the agricultural sector is thus required if we are to reduce extreme poverty and hunger, and achieve relative food security.

The weaknesses and challenges underpinning impediment to gender equality in society constitute a thwarting factor to sustainable development. Gender responsive policies can certainly help closing the disparity. Without addressing such hurdles through standards and policy changes as well breaking down social norms that hold back women's empowerment; progress would neither be equitable nor sustainable.

Agricultural empowerment is achieved when gender gap is reduced by ensuring women's capacity in choice/decision making on agricultural production is reinforced. Strengthening Rural women ability to gain agricultural land titles or land tenure safety is central to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Women will further be able to hold control over their produce income and capable



of freeing themselves from time stress along with farming activities. Likewise, they will be capable of enjoying free space to speak out their views and insights, have their voices heard, and engage in social and trade union organizations as an agricultural laborer rather than an unpaid worker. (International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) 2012:4) (Mervet Sedky,2015).

A Rural Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) was developed by International Food Policy Research Institute, (IFPRI) in the end of 2012-2013 in an attempt to assess the state of women's empowerment and reduce gender gap on inputs and agricultural production.(www.ifpri.org).

The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) Extents and Indicators

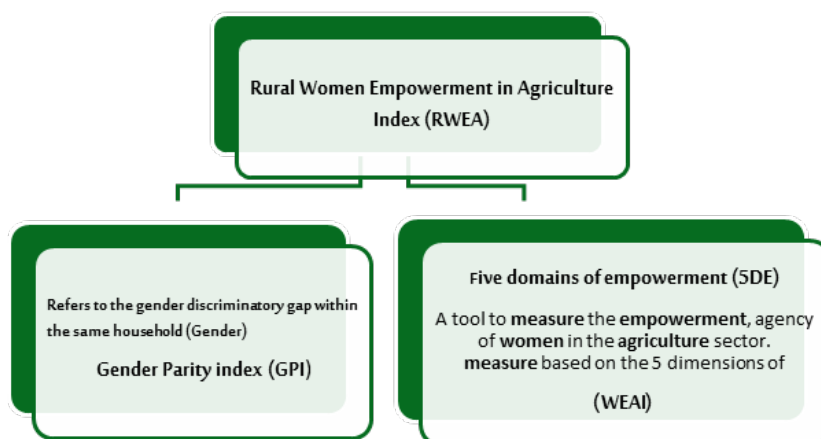
Indexing women's empowerment, the (WEAI) measures the roles and extent of women's engagement in the agriculture sector in five domains (5DE):

- **Resources:** This dimension concerns assets ownership, inputs to buy, or sales and decision-making power over productive resources, transfer of assets credit.
- **Production:** This dimension concerns decisions over agricultural production, (decisions about agricultural production)
- **Income:** This dimension concerns sole or joint control over the use of income and expenditures: control over use of income,
- **Leadership in the community:** This dimension concerns leadership in the community, here measured by membership in economic or social groups and comfort in public speaking and voicing their views and ideas.
- **Time use:** This dimension concerns the allocation of time to productive and domestic tasks in terms of time stress and satisfaction with the available time for leisure activities. (Alkire et al ,2013: 38)

Sub-indexes of WEAI

The WEAI is composed of two sub-indexes:

The WEAI comprises a 5-domain sub-index (5DE) which measures the five domains of empowerment in agriculture (5DE). The second sub-index is gender parity sub-index and measures gender parity in empowerment within the same household (GPI). "The GPI is a relative inequality measure that reflects the inequality in 5DE profiles between the primary adult male and female in each household". It indicates the percentage of women who have achieved parity with respect to their male counterparts. It is an aggregate index based on individual-level data on men and women within the same households identifying the connections among areas of disempowerment. the GPI measures how empowered women are relative to men in the same household. Such gender-aware measure is fundamental to understanding the gender disempowerment gap and identify ways to overcome the disparity so that women equitably gain access to available resources and opportunities.



7. Socio-economic Outcomes of Rural Women Empowerment in Agriculture

Rural women empowerment in agriculture entails many socio-economic outcomes in terms of contribution to eradicate poverty, food security and access to decent employment, and channel their income into quality education and health. Such benefits will be herein expounded:

(Arab Women Organization, 2015), (The State of Food and Agriculture Report, 2011), (Mervat Sedke, 2019), (Women's Economic Empowerment Report, 2012: 13), (Rural Development Report 2016: 49) and (The Arab Report for Sustainable Development, 2019), (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2012) have agreed that rural women empowerment in agriculture deliver many social and economic gains involving the following avenues:

- **Contribution to the achievement of some targets of SDG1-No Poverty:** rural women empowerment in agriculture will entail increase in agricultural productivity which yields income increase and thereby rise in livelihoods.
- **Contribution to food security:** Empowerment in agriculture yields rural women access to agricultural land, reallocating them resources and information all of which revolving around raising land productivity as one of the food security agenda. Productivity increase, rural women access and control over productive resources and assets leads to their engagement in income-boosting economic activities, are empowering elements that help them reap economic gains by taking best advantage through diversification of income base. Ceteris paribus, women could increase their farm yields towards attainment of food purchase power target.
- **Achievement of quality education:** Rural women empowerment will certainly yield to higher income returns and potential for expenditures management and promotion of their children's educational outcomes instead of relying on them as income sources for family sustenance. Economic returns to empowering women in



agriculture is further associated with more girls' school enrolment and thereby a pathway of women integration in the decision-making process.

- **Rural women empowerment and good health:**

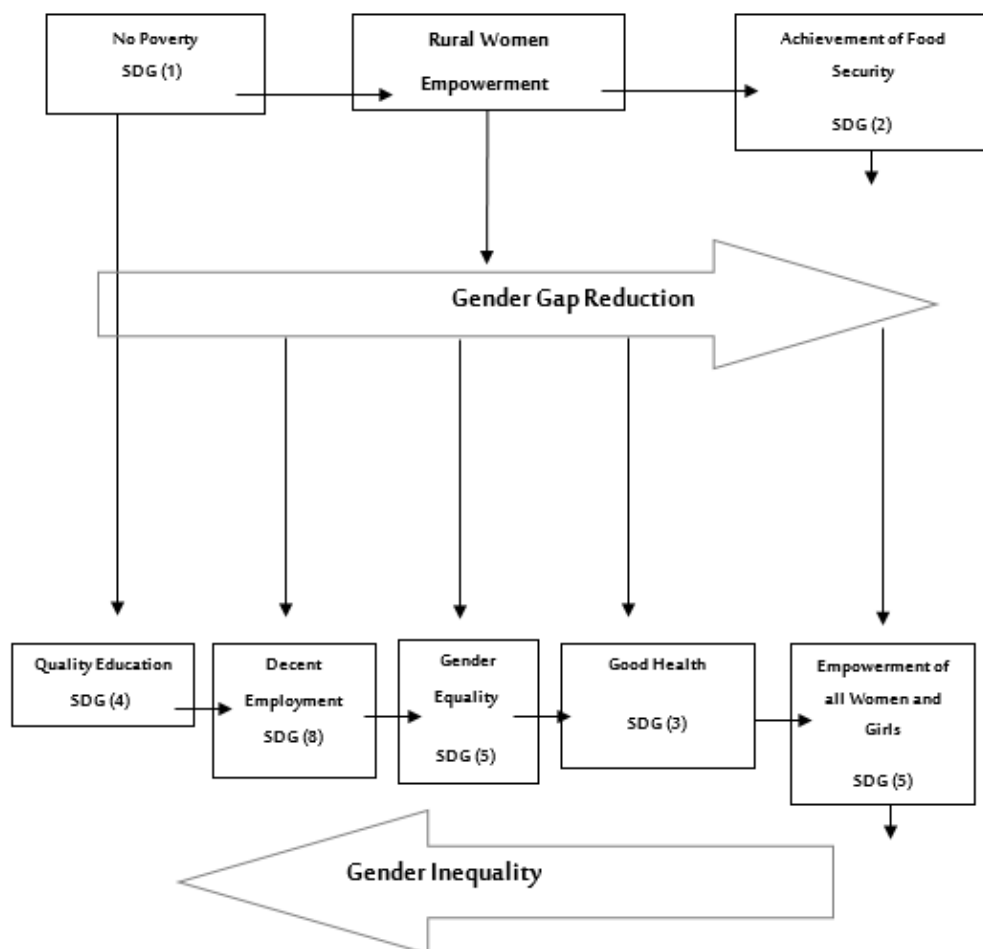
Income increase through rural women empowerment helps them and their children and family gain access to health services. Closing gender gap in agriculture will empower women to avail access to and control over more productive resources, strengthen their voices and agency within the household: a proven strategy in improved children's nutrition and food security, and wellness.

- **Promotion of gender equality:**

Facilitated access to and control over productive resources and assets is a key factor benefitting rural women in terms of their engagement in economic activities and availing themselves of such opportunities through the diversification of their income base. This will make women resourceful agents and constitutes one of the vital mechanisms to ensure eradication of gender disparity.

- **Rural women and decent employment:**

Promoting gender equality and rural women empowerment through decent work hinges on their access to training and skill development through capacity development initiatives on reading and writing skills and professional training. Decent work constitutes a crucial development pathway which would unlock opportunities for women's involvement in productivity increase and involvement in the community development.



8. Challenges to Rural Women Empowerment in Agriculture as a Key to Achieve Food Security

Women are visible actors within the farming landscape. They play a significant role in all different segments of agricultural food value chains. As managers of household food, rural women are largely responsible for food security and nutrition. Besides, their role in land and water resource management within the household and local community is considerably substantial. They notwithstanding still endure manifold constraints.

Within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals and achievement of SDG (2) Zero Hunger; women face many impediments and challenges despite their diverse roles in all processes of food security involving: Included are the three ingredients evidenced in **food availability** at all times of adequate world food supplies of sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary energy requirements and food preferences for an active and healthy life; **food accessibility** and food purchasing capacity or **food affordability**. The capacity of increasing the purchasing power and affordability of healthy diets by rural women populations suggests the availability of money to purchase food. Hence, money



is available through a constant income or a source of production whereby food is exchanged. Despite the substantial roles of women in achieving food security at the relative and absolute levels, they face more challenges.

- **Difficulty in Access to Inputs and Basic Productive Services, to Technology, and Limited Access to Market Information.**

Profiling women's ownership of a mobile phone globally, (GENDER AND ICTS: 2018: 7) report substantiates that fewer women than men own mobile phones. Data indicate that 1.2 out of 2.9 billion women own a cell phone in low- and middle-income countries at a rate of 41%, compared to a rate of 1.4 out of 3.0 billion men owning a cell phone in low- and middle-income countries amounting to a rate of 46%. In Sub Saharan Africa, the report further reveals, 300 million women do not own a mobile phone. Regarding global internet usage rate, men's share averaged 50.9% compared to women (44.9%). Likewise, men's share in Africa stood at 24.9% against 18.6% for women. The proportion is quite similar across the Arab countries where the share of men mobile holders amounted to 47.7% while women averaged 39.4%.

- **Limited access to Funding;**

The (National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women, 2017:32) report indicates that the proportion of women-managed small enterprises stands to 23%, while around 45% of the microcredit loans are directed to women. Microfinancing is an area whereby gender disparities persist as data feature the average loan value obtained by females is far less than the average loan value allocated to males in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

- **Low levels of education among rural Women:** Whereby prevalence of poverty vicious circles is inextricably bound with illiteracy. (Arab Women Organization, 2015) Statistics points to a literacy rate among Arab youth amounted to 90% across the Arab region albeit around one fifth (5th) of adults are illiterate. The total head count of female youth literacy rate averaged 88% whereas a ratio of food insecurity amounts to 13%: a proportion higher relative to men. Such a dire status is further convoluted by the factors of education and poverty as the cost of a healthy diet exceeds global poverty line (\$ 1.90 per person per day to cover the cost): a cost seen quite considerably far beyond the poor capacity. The cost of nutritious foods for healthy diets exceeded global poverty line (set at \$1.90 per capita per day): a cost higher for the people living at the poverty threshold and experiencing nutrient deficiency. In South Africa and Asia, costly and unaffordable healthy diets are associated with 57% of inhabitants or more who experience unaffordability of the cost of healthy diets all time the (State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2020:205) report reveals.

- **Prevalence of malnutrition-related diseases among rural women** is more striking where predominance of farming and limited incomes persists. Incidence of malnutrition is statistically true in the (FAO: 2018:47) report revealing that the poverty ratio in rural Egypt averaged 32.3% in 2010, whereas it amounted to 16.8% in rural Jordan, while registering 4.8% in rural Algeria.



The report further indicates the proportion of the people experiencing undernourishment over 2015-2017 reached 1.9% in Algeria, 4.6% in Egypt, 4.0% in Iran while ranking higher in Iraq with a ratio of 10.3%.

- **Food Discrimination among Rural Women:**

In many Arab societies and at the household level, women have reduced or are content with insufficient food intakes. Men and children are served first and only then can women sit down to eat. Thereby, they solely cope with leftovers intake that leads to undernutrition and ill-health. (Women and Arab Food Security, 2010). In consistency with the above-mentioned data women tend to reduce the low living standards by adopting extreme food-coping strategies. They accordingly reduce their intake of food amounts or consume low dietary /food intake that arm their bodies and curtail ill-health. Or else they limit diversity of diets (associated with higher staggering risks, especially for pregnant women and lactating mothers who cannot consume a variety of foods intake of micronutrients). The poor dietary intake lacking micronutrients could negatively impact their health and impair their nutritional status, thereby deteriorating the health conditions of their children. Viewing insecurity, this thus entails migrating in distressing conditions or selling their own assets, or further collecting wild food or undertaking unsafe jobs to raise their income (Improving the Status of Women and Girls in Rural Areas Report, 2011: 7). Likewise, the (Gender Equality in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: 2018: 10) report shows females suffering from undernourishment in Egypt throughout (2014-2015) registered 26.1% compared to 21.24% for men. The female undernourishment ratio is much higher in Jordan standing at 31.2% relative to men (24.9%). In Morocco, however, the ratio among females averaged 25.4% compared to males (26.7%).

- **Economic Insecurity:** Women of the Arab region grapple with a low level of engagement in the economy. The global average is 50.0% female labour force participation, but Arab women participate at much lower levels, roughly 25.0 % with the lowest proportion worldwide. The regional rates in the Arab countries covered in (Gender Gap in Land Right;201) report point to the highest proportion of female unemployment in any region. The gender gap in labour force participation is wider in the Arab region than in any other world region as 38% of women are engaged in unstable labour. Female unemployment reached the highest ever ratio equating to 39.3% in 2017. Equally, low female labour force participation is concomitant with women's exclusion from security systems and social insurance /protection schemes. Women are disadvantaged in this regard as they do not enjoy access to retirement pension entitlements as they are denied coverage within labour laws in some countries. (The Arab Sustainable Development Report. 2020:79 (ASDR, 2020).



- **Invisibility of gender needs- disaggregated data.** (The Arab Sustainable Development Report. 2020:79 (ASDR, 2020) points to the scarcity of statistical information is a barrier to measuring gender inequity in SDGs (2): Food security measured by target (2.2) indicators on nutritional needs for girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers (end all forms of malnutrition address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women. And the target (2.3) relative to access to land, productive resources, knowledge and finance (secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services). The non-availability of gender-sensitive statistical information disables policy makers in conducting health impact assessment of nutritional gaps on pregnant women. insufficient data is serious gender-blind issue and reflecting gender discrimination.
- **Difficulty in access to the rights to land ownership and land tenure:** land rights are often disproportionately ascribed by gender. This is illustrated in the (the gender gap in land right;2018) in consistency with the (The Arab Sustainable Development Report. 2020:74 (ASDR, 2020) which both indicate gender inadequate access to secure rights over land. Globally, less than 15 percent of all landholders are women relative to men (85%). The largest gender inequalities in access to land are most visible in the MENA region, where only around 7 percent (7%) of all landholders are women. Substantial inequity persists though women are actively engaged in agricultural activities, albeit, disproportionately in some countries whereby a proportion of women constitutes 60% of the total number of people engaged such activities in Sudan and Morocco, and 54% in Mauritania.
- **Gender Gaps in Agricultural Land Tenure,** (The Arab Sustainable Development Report. 2020:30 (ASDR, 2020), (Arab Women's Organization, 2015: 3) and (The Improvement of the Situation of Women and Girls in Rural Areas, 2011:7) signal that rural women are an essential component in the translation of agricultural products into household food and nutritional security. Even so, stark gender disparities are unfolded in the area of land tenure across the Arab countries. Available statistics on Women agricultural landholders in some Arab countries reveal women landowners are less likely than men to seize a legal document proving land ownership pointing out to hardship in women's access to agricultural land rights titles. The FAO Gender and Land Rights Database (GLRD) further substantiates the salient gender disparity in secure agricultural land tenure. This is true in Algeria whereby the proportion of women landholders amounted to 4% relative to men (95.9%), averaging 5.2% compared to men (94.8%) in Egypt. In Jordan female land tenure rate stood at 3.0% relative to men (97.0%). The same proportion is reported in Lebanon (3% against 97.0 for men). In Morocco, Women landholders are reported to constitute a rate 4.4% relative to men (95.6%). In Tunisia, the female secure land tenure rate is slightly higher standing at 6.4% relative to male land holders (93.6%). This is reported in the context of SDG Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) Target 2.3 which clearly provides for doubling: 'the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities by 2030.



- **Time Poverty:** One of the most common manifestations of gender inequality. Women bear the three-fold brunt of reproductive, productive and social responsibilities which entrap them in a vicious circle of poverty, hunger and ill-health. The burden of unpaid care work is disproportionately taken by women to sustain their households, including cooking, cleaning, raising children, caring for the elderly and the sick, and collecting water and firewood to cook the meal for their household. Such household chores take up a long time and often limit women's opportunities to engage in income-generating activities. Globally, women spend 4.5 hours per day on average doing unpaid work making up twice as much time as spent by men. Closing such a gender gap by 2025 would help increase global GDP by an estimated ratio amounting to 23%. (Equality in the New Global Plan, 2018: 2).
- **The Traditional Cultural Aspect** is taking a toll on women's role and responsibilities in agricultural development. This acts as a barrier obstructing women and girls from ownership and access to cultivated land and the right to inheritance through land title and tenure. Women do not enjoy freedom of decision-making over their lives. It is therefore crucial to put forward a specific program addressing customs and traditional mechanisms impeding women's empowerment.
- **The Difficulty of Agricultural Women Laborers' Access to Agricultural Information:** It is therefore necessary to capitalize information and communication technology via the use of E-agriculture through mobile phone and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Women's use of mobiles and specialized agricultural two-way communication networks is worth considering. E-agriculture is a standalone mechanism encompassing the information and communication society applied to agricultural development for sustainability and food security. Such could be effective through information transfer via modern ICTs and smart agriculture. Agricultural information and knowledge are a lynchpin for generating development and a tool of intervention breaking off barriers and taking best advantage of opportunities imposed by social, economic and technological changes in society. Therefore, there should be a transfer of such an accumulated and renewable amount of information through the media as they lie at the very heart of rural development.
- **Rural Women face Limited Access to Extension Services:** Rural extension services constitute the initial supply line for agricultural research findings and the nexus between such services and farm laborers' needs in this respect. This could form the basis to meet their needs and interests in the area of research enabling them access to inputs needed for results-oriented performance. Central Extension Departments are divided into horticulture department, the marketing and animal extension department, the department of agricultural councils, the extension units, and the department of rural development. Reaching out to farmers is undertaken through extension seminars held in different centres, and training through audio-



visual extension methods. Programs towards improving rural women performance in the field of rural industries is further implemented through practical clarification of tasks and training in training centers and across field days besides conducting land sampling and identification of the problem in selecting the most appropriate crops to help yields improvement. Extension services span into a monthly-based program for livestock vaccination thus, enabling farmers to acquire relevant knowledge and skills of substantive application of technical recommendations and their motives. This is geared across multi-faceted stages from land preparation (Land Prep) for cultivation up to crop harvesting. The (Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, 2009: 96) reveals that the lack of female extension officers, the ill-equipment of current extension agents, and the existence of social and economic restrictions that limit the interaction of rural women to benefit from extension services, albeit remain a barrier to access to extension services.

- **The Absence of Gender-Responsive Water Management:** It is quite worth mentioning that women's requirements and perspectives are overlooked and ineffectively reflected in water management interventions. Therefore, legal frameworks as legislation and policies were very often not inclusive of gender-responsive approach which reflects women's exclusion as these policies and legislation were not considerate with women's multiple uses of water (for example for irrigation, home gardening, livestock, personal and domestic use) and do not take into account women's experience, knowledge, needs and expectations of these water users' management of water supply which tend to be overlooked. Women remain underrepresented when it comes to decision-making about water use, allocation and governance, though they play a key role in developing sustainable practices and in building food security systems. Many women hold a unique perspective and knowledge of such a farming task. For instance, women farmers may have different needs in terms of irrigation technology, and they may be carriers and custodians of knowledge, such as knowledge of rainwater harvesting practices Women should therefore be Hence, considered as partners in addressing some water and food security challenges that the world is facing amidst climate change, population growth and the rising demand for water. (HLPE 2015).

- The participation of Women is pronounced in terms of beneficiaries and end users, not as decision-makers given their status as stakeholders in water management both quantitatively and qualitatively. Women bear the brunt of water affordability for final use which requires a long time and strenuous efforts which impede them from undertaking other productive activities that would generate incomes for themselves. The (ESCWA, 2019: 35) substantiated that water correlates with women's agency, therefore integrating women and engaging them in water management policies hinges on breaking down socio-economic and institutional impediments.

- **Rural Women carry out Strenuous Physical Work in relation to Land Cultivation.** To address such a challenge, the move towards introducing modern agricultural mechanization is thus necessary despite the tiny land tenure safety for rural women. Services channeled through agricultural cooperatives, Agricultural Development banks and Farm Credit Banks through machinery leasing of low value are crucial. Change in the traditional roles of such institutions will be of great assistance to rural women.

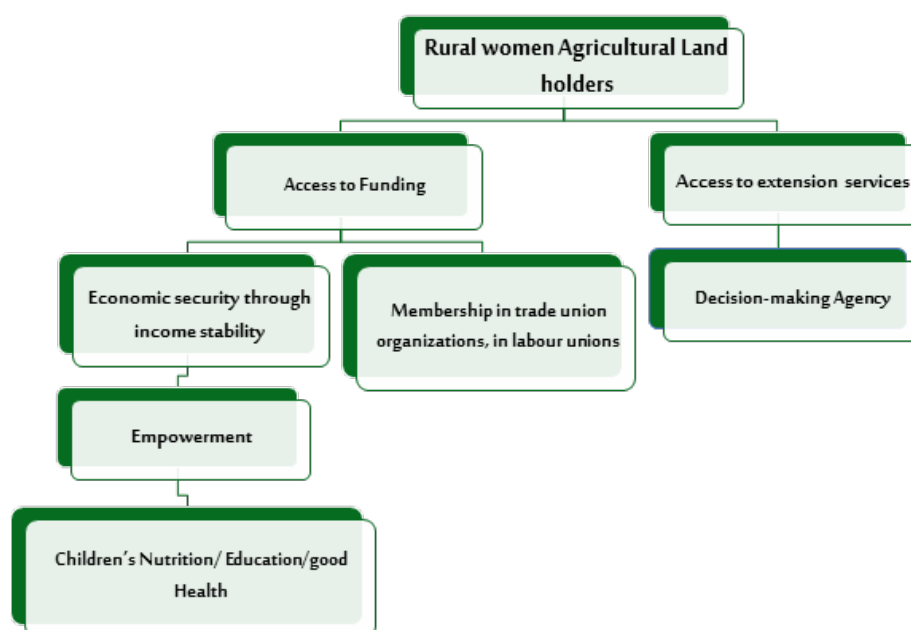


- **Hardship endured by Women in terms of Marketing their Agricultural Yields** is quite visible. This is due to social strictures on rural women's mobility, their limited access to roads and transportation along with other marketing-related hurdles. The Ministries of Agriculture shall adopt modern concepts in the labor system: the electronic marketing, besides opening export outlets for rural women through the ministries' properly reactivated electronic networks. This would necessitate the establishment of new and sophisticated networks responsive to rural women needs.

The foregoing data and facts raise a question on the significant importance of agricultural Land tenure for rural women empowerment and reducing inequalities in agriculture?

Tenure safety unlocks access to agricultural extension services, and credit and subsidies while allowing them agency in decision-making. The fact that rural women have much less opportunity than men in terms of land ownership not only leaves women's farms with de-facto less productivity, but also often excludes women from engaging in farmers 'organizations, in workers' unions, and hence contributing to community networks and forums that foster productivity and promoting growth. This induces economic security that leads to empowerment and allows for better nutrition, education and health for the children within the family. Such farming approach could thereby contribute to attaining some of the set targets of SDG2 (Zero Hunger) SDGs 1 (No Poverty), SDGs 3 (Good Health), SDGs 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable DevelopmentGoals.

The Significance of Agricultural Land Tenure for Rural Women





9. An Analytical Perspective of the Proposed Indicators in the Framework of SDG2 (Food Security)

Indicators for gender equality and empowerment of women monitoring within the framework of SDG2 (End Hunger) will hereunder be expounded in an endeavor to identify areas of weaknesses and strengths for the purpose of using them as future opportunities. Goals and targets are considered for this purpose. Goals will be first covered then indicators through which statistical picture of a measurement mode will be projected. Strengths and weaknesses of each target will be advanced through analysis of respective indicators. (Arab Women's Organization, 2015).



SDG2: Target (2.1): By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

SDG2:Target (2.2): By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons, by 2025.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>-A clear purpose and a clear working view for action towards that target.</p> <p>--Clear identification of target groups (pregnant and lactating women adolescent girls/ and older persons).</p> <p>--National Dialogues to develop visions and address challenges.</p>	<p>- Spatial instability entailing lack of accessible food to some population Groups.</p> <p>- Non-availability of gender- related data and information on Arab rural women in terms of food production, consumption and food accessibility scale.</p> <p>- Weakness in Follow- up and Evaluation methods.</p> <p>-Differential of geographic areas as to impact on food production.</p> <p>-Caloric intake and dietary energy consumption do not solely constitute an integrated valid measurement designed to provide a relevant reliable indicator of healthy, sufficient food profile. Therefore, nutritional variety shall be measured on how food security is assessed.</p> <p>- Impediment of nutritional cultures inherent in some countries and difficulties to overcome or remove hurdles.</p> <p>-Prevalence of gender disparities and discrimination within the same household in rural areas as to food accessibility. Limited gender segregated related dataandinformation impedes mapping/measurement.</p> <p>- Prevalence of anaemia: Half a billion women are affected by anaemia worldwide. It is estimated that half of all anaemia cases are due to iron deficiency. Anaemia in women of reproductive age is an indicator of micronutrient deficiency, but deficiencies in one or more of the micronutrients are commonplace and widespread in some areas due to dietary intake and poverty. So how should it be addressed?</p>



SDG2: Target (2.3): By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment, by 2030.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Global documentation of women's roles at different food security phases by means of statistics to achieve such a goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Underestimation of rural women productive labor (prevalence of disparity of female labourers in family plots and agricultural statistics whereby women's participation is perceived in Their engagement with the scope of unpaid labour. – Absence of the concept of E-agriculture for rural women in Arab countries. E-agriculture is an impetus to multiplication of agricultural productivity. – Absence of the concept of Electronic marketing for rural women in Arab countries. – Cultural norms and traditions impeding women's land rights and inheritance of agricultural land. – The crop yield gap Index: It is an indicator used as a benchmark to assess productivity /yield gaps. Whereby this uncertainty is effectively controlled and likely reduce gap. This must be concurrent with indicators consider natural resource management efficiency to ensure sustainability.

SDG2: Target (2.4): By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

SDG2: Target (2.5): By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The existence of several international treaties and agreements on the conserve agricultural biodiversity on conserving the genetic diversity of seeds, preserving genetic resources and farmers' rights. - The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992). - The WIPO convention: (The Convention establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization) - International convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV, 1961). - The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of awareness of traditional knowledge of genetic resources. - Persistent degradation of genetic resources in the context of exclusion of volunteer work roles. - Absence of environmental awareness about climate change. - Limited female extension experts. - Underutilization of research outputs. - Failure to identify climate adaptation capacity both in living standards and in terms of farming. - Failure to empower environment and risk governance for agriculture, food and nutrition: Prevention, preparedness and reduction of negative impacts in some countries. - The indicator falls short on measuring the effectiveness of extension system in terms of outreach and provision of updated information and knowledge.

10. Socio-economic Impacts of Gender Equality in Agriculture Sector

The correlation between rural development and the core of gender equality-based empowerment is quite visible in women as agents of production and acritical source of food security, Likewise, reduction of gender gap in agriculture will positively contribute to lifting out 100 million people out of poverty, thus leading to reduction of extreme poverty whereby savings increase rate will amount to 35%. Looking throughout the land ownership and land tenure safety to ensure food safety (Arab Women Organization, 2015) substantiated that land ownership is another fundamental empowering component in reducing women's likelihood of domestic violence by one eighth. Gender equality-based empowerment warrant more attention in





policy planning thus, enlightening women's path to reach the threshold of economic safety leading to social stability. Another key aspect of beneficial empowerment outcome lies in placing women's health at the core of the is very empowerment agenda will benefit their children whereby educational outputs will visible in increasing girls' school enrolment by 10%. In so doing, attainment of gender-related goals will entail an enabling environment helping women walking down the path of their integration in decision making.

10.1. Arab Rural Women and Good Health

Women in the Arab region face tremendous health challenges. Ensuring a healthy life and achieving the well-being of all is one of the most important elements forging a pathway to sustainable development. Therefore, the world has taken enormous steps in order to increase life expectancy, reduce the incidence of some deadly public diseases associated with child and maternal mortality. Substantial progress has also been made in increasing access to clean water and sanitation, reducing the incidence of malaria, tuberculosis and polio, as well as reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Somalia ranks the highest in maternal mortality rate in the Arab world with 732 deaths per 100,000 births, Mauritania, with 602 cases per 100,000 livebirths, followed by Yemen with 385, Comoros with 335 cases per 100,000 births, then Sudan, with 311 deaths, Djibouti with 229 cases per 100,000 births, and Djibouti with 229 cases per 100,000 births. Nonetheless, in 2015, Kuwait and the UAE recorded the lowest maternal mortality rates with 4 cases and 6 cases per 100.000 livebirths respectively. The decline in maternal mortality rate in Kuwait and UAE is reflective of health progress, proper maternal health care and increased awareness.

In 2011, with regard to the birth rate among adolescent girls whose ages range from 10 to 14, and those whose ages range from 15 to 19 for every 1000 women in this age group, available statistics drawn in (Women and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab Region, 2017: 30) indicate that the highest rate is recorded in the Comoros with 70 births per 1000 women, followed by Yemen with 67 births per 1000 women in 2012, while Kuwait constituted the lowest rate in 2014 thus reaching 778 births per 1000 women.

Regarding female genital mutilation, (FGM) the prevalence of the practice of total removal of the female external genitalia is still a common practice with high levels in a swath of Arab countries. With data on prevalence, it is estimated that 98% of girls and women between the ages of 15 and 49 years have been cut in Somalia. The practice also affects girls and women in Egypt who underwent female genital mutilation at a rate of with 87%. The FGM practice is also prevalent in Djibouti, Sudan, Iraq, Mauritania, and Yemen (Arab Sustainable Development Report, 2020: 74).



10.2. Arab Rural Women and Quality Education

Endeavoring to provide inclusive and good education for all confirms that education is one of the most powerful and proven means for achieving sustainable development. SDG goal 4 aims at: “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, hence allowing all girls and boys to complete primary and secondary education. It is worth mentioning that the Arab region has gained good progress in terms of school enrollment whereby gender gaps were closed on the level of primary education with a female enrollment ratio averaging 94% relative to male enrollment and 97% in secondary education. Besides, overall girls’ enrollment rate tertiary education across the Arab countries stood at 28.2%, in 2013, a ratio higher than the boys’ rate (26.8%). In 2014, the highest rates of enrollment in higher education were recorded in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with 59.9%, followed by Bahrain with 56.5% (Women, Work and Economy, 2013: 10). Furthermore, the Arab Report for Sustainable Development (2020: 60) substantiates that the literacy rate among youth in the Arab region stood at 90%, albeit, around one-fifth of adults are illiterate. Literacy rate among young females ranks 88%.

10.3. Arab Rural Women and Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of decision-making for women and men, equal capacity to enjoy human rights, equal access to and control over resources and benefits, as well as equal opportunities at work and in every other aspect of livelihood. Gender equality is deemed to be a sensible measure. One study in the Gender Equality in Agriculture (2009:6) report indicates that underlying drivers of unsustainability and gender inequality are deeply interlocked and that agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa could increase by 20% if women enjoyed equitable access to land tenure safety, seeds and fertilizers. A World Bank report pointed to the evidence of the synergies between gender equality and economic sustainability. It concluded that achieving gender equality and capabilities a central requirement to sustain livelihoods and that reducing gender inequality and bridging the gap between men and women will in turn entail lower mortality rates among infants and children, induce better nutrition, and foster higher economic productivity, and faster growth.

10.4. Gender Equality: Documents and Provisions

Upon reviewing the gender sensitive equality treaties that brought women’ rights into the focus and spelled out the meaning of equality: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we realize that most Arab governments either ratified or were signatories albeit Egypt entered reservations to Article (16) on ”the issue of marriage and family relations, asserting the equal rights and



obligations of women and men with regard to choice of spouse, parenthood, personal rights and command over property on women's equality" underscoring the obligation of equality within the family under all systems. Egypt's reservations were grounded on all matters related to marriage and family relations during marriage and upon its dissolution without prejudice to the rights guaranteed by Islamic law to the wife in relation to the rights of the husband in a way that achieves a fair balance. Algeria's entered reservations to Article (2) and Article (15), and was thereof, to adhere to the Convention provided it complies with Algerian women's personal status and the Family Code. Iraq entered reservations to Article 16 and Paragraphs (1) and (2) of Article (9) to ensure that they comply with the provisions of Islamic Sharia (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, 2010).

Included in the 'Women's Convention' are the components of gender-sensitive governance binging states party to the aforementioned convention (CEDAW), which promotes equality of women's voice, and agency towards reaching the decision-making process through equal participation in the political process and the civil service, in line with 'The incorporation of the principle of equality of men and women into the state legal system, and the establishment of tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination.'

In 2013, gender equality mainstreamed across FAO's efforts into technical work was pronounced in Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) began co-operating with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Program (WFP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. This FAO, WFP, IFAD and UN Women initiative sought the provision of technical assistance in drafting the General Recommendation No.34 of the Committee on Women's Rights. (Meeting Our Goals Report, 2017: 15)

When addressing rural women within those international human rights treaties and conventions that advance gender equality, we note that article (14) of CEDAW stipulates the participation of rural women in poverty reduction and achievement of food and nutrition security. It stipulates that States parties for obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of rural women in terms of their capacity of access to productive resources and participation in decision making processes.

11. A Strategic Analysis of Opportunities and Challenges to the Empowerment of Rural Women in Agriculture

A Strength and weakness strategic analysis will herein be expounded with ways to use them towards overcoming challenges and obstacles faced by rural women in agriculture along with making use of available opportunities. Whereupon drawing up mechanisms supporting the empowerment of women and thereby reducing gender inequality.



- Taking best advantage of rural women innate knowledge in farming while fine-tuning them by capitalizing updated technologies through capacity development. Moving towards introduction of new concepts in farming in terms of E-agriculture and is an empowering element to harness them overcome obstacles to micro land tenure.
- Using the real willingness of rural women to improve their living standards through new income resources in the agricultural sector. The introduction of agri-food industry from field crops will have a fruitful effect on sustainable farming. Equally, raising their awareness about electronic marketing through training and skills development is critical in the rise in their social status as significantly more important than economic status. Such will contribute to breaking off the handicap of pejorative attitude against rural women engagement in agricultural occupation and at the same time unlock opportunities to a diversified income source at the same time.
- Included in constraints on lending is the difficulty in securing credit: The availability of credit guarantees, or collateral constitutes one of the most important conditions for granting credit loans such as real estate or agricultural land titles held as collateral. Therefore, to alleviate constraints, it is imperative to assist some organization that advance the empowerment of rural women such as FAO, the Arab Women organization, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, and others that seek to ensure effective rural development.
- Implementation of social protection mechanisms to involve female agricultural laborers thus, including them within the umbrella of labour law. Reports reveal labour protection issues arising from the lack of labour law insurance for female agricultural workers who tend not to avail benefits of labour standards and are excluded from the umbrella of labour laws.



Taking Advantage of Strengths to Overcome Challenges towards the Empowerment of Rural Women in Agriculture

Strengths	How could Strengths be used to overcome threats? in ST Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural women laborers comprise a high proportion of the agricultural labour force in the Arab World and worldwide. • Rural women innate knowledge in farming, hereditary occupation thereby mastered by rural women. • The agricultural sector is the main the dominant sector in rural women employment and their primary source of income. • Rural women sound willingness to improve their living standards. • Considering Feminization of agriculture as a strength. 	
ST Strategy	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefiting from the large numbers of rural women working in the agricultural sector through capacity building and training on the new agricultural tools, and as agriculture is a biological industry; therefore, the idea of utilizing organic products in the agriculture sector must be introduced by leveraging the innate experience of rural women in agriculture, refining them with what is new through the development of their capacities, and introducing new concepts of agriculture (e-agriculture) and (collective harvesting) in order to overcome the difficulties of micro-holdings. • building on the desire of rural women to improve their living standards through developing new sources of income in the agricultural sector to introduce food industries from field products, and make them aware of how to market them electronically through training and skills development, leading to a rise in the social status of rural women before economic status, eliminating the challenge of the inferior view of the farming profession of rural women, while at the same time varying sources of income for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural women Micro land tenure. • No agricultural land tenure titles for women. • The pejorative attitude against rural women engagement in agricultural occupation. • No diversification of income resources for rural women and reliance solely on farming. • Plurality of agricultural work burdens endured by rural women without giving them any agency: decision-making capacity, crop management.... and others.



Weakness Reduction through Taking Advantage of Opportunities

Weaknesses	<p>How could Weakness be reduced through taking advantage of Opportunities?</p> <p>in WO (Strategy)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural women low level of education. • Rural women low level of health. • Physical exertion in working in fields. • Longer working hours. • Inability of access to agricultural information/ sharing of practical knowledge around food production and technology. • Some ingrained social and cultural norms. • Inability of entry and success in marketing spheres. • Low-paid women's employment in agriculture. • Compulsory unemployment of agricultural female workers. • Lack of access to inheritance rights. • Inability to accession to agricultural trade unions in their capacity as women engaged in agricultural occupation. • Male dominance over the stage of produce sale. 	
WO Strategy	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefiting from the global sustained attention to driving achievement of Sustainable Development Goals as rural women have proven to be the key to achieving many targets across the 2030 SDGs goals. To be effective, this must be embedded across regulatory legal systems, and upheld in both labour laws and legal practices, including measures of implementing mechanisms by measuring the material value of women workers, determining an equal daily paid wage in the agricultural sector, and fixing a specific number of working hours. Such shall be set through the application of social protection mechanisms within the umbrella of the labor law, as reports substantiated that benefits from labor law protection and safety do not accrue to rural women agricultural laborers. • More attention to be laid on gearing labor laws and social protection schemes. Agriculture constitutes one of the three most hazardous occupations together with mining and construction. Despite the hazardous nature of the agricultural sector, agricultural laborers were excluded from Occupational and Health Conventions (OSH). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International concern in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG Goal (5) associated and cross-cutting with many other goals. • The fact that several organizations as FAO, the Arab Women Organization, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, and the Ministries of Agriculture and Social Security, engaged in the advancement of rural women empowerment in the agricultural sector.



- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benefiting from the activities and support of organizations that seek to empower rural women by offering them avenues of entries into Electronic marketing or holding marketing exhibitions for them.• Rural empowerment of women enables them to control over their products to gain strides towards gender equality and break down male dominance over their lives and decision making. Engaging men in women empowerment programs is critical as men are a source of action and reaction towards women in terms of their control over inheritance and economic resources /assets. This thus assumes that men should be integrated into community awareness programs on the roles and responsibilities of rural women. | |
|---|--|

Source: The Researcher



12. Strategic Action Plan for the Empowerment of Rural Women in Agriculture

(Outcomes-Inputs-Challenges-Implementing Entity- Plan -Timeframe setting)

General Summary of Objective	Goal Measurement Index	Means of verification of goal achievement	Challenges
<p>General Objective</p> <p>Achievement of gender Equality in agriculture is an impetus to improvement of living standards and the advancement of economic and social status of rural women towards the achievement of 2030 SDGs.</p>	<p>Rise in socio-economic value of indicators reflected in income increase, cut down on of poverty among target women, rise in health indicators, enhanced accessibility of education of Female Headed Household children, rise in women's property of assets and fall in the proportion of undernourishment among women and children.</p>	<p>Sex disaggregated data through conducting surveys and reports.</p>	<p>- Change in traditions and entrenched social norms.</p> <p>-Illiteracy.</p> <p>-Limited skills.</p> <p>-Marketing obstacles.</p> <p>-Difficulty in access to inheritance.</p>
<p>Outcomes</p> <p>Outcome 1: The empowerment of women in the agricultural sector allows for food security and eradicates hunger.</p> <p>Outcome 2: Try to overcome the effects of the feminization of poverty on women and their households.</p> <p>Outcome 3: contribution to achieve some of the SDGs 2030, SDG 3, SDG 4, and SDG 5.</p>	<p>1. Rise in empowerment in the agricultural sector indicators through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to agricultural land tenure titles • Access to updated extension information • Engagement in organizations and Unions. • Control over their own produce. <p>2. Rise in the value of food and nutrition security indicators as well as reduced indicators of poverty effects on women.</p>	<p>Statistics</p>	



Activities	Inputs
<p>1. Polarization of Support to the Empowerment of Rural Women and Gender Equality.</p> <p>Implementation Mechanisms:</p> <p>1.1. Integrating gender equality policies in agriculture related policies in all clauses drawing attention to the significant productive contribution of rural women as equal partners and vehicles towards sustainable development.</p> <p>1.2. Societal awareness raising about returns of gender equality in agriculture and the empowerment of rural women via print publication, leaflets, media and professional symposia.</p> <p>Increased opportunities for joint initiatives undertaken by agriculture and women related organizations and ministries in support of activities on gender equality and the empowerment of rural women.</p> <p>2. Enhancement of women's Access to land Tenure Safety:</p> <p>Implementation Mechanisms:</p> <p>2.1 Legal support and policy reform.</p> <p>2.2 Awareness campaigns aimed women's rights advocacy.</p> <p>2.3 Raising the level of economic empowerment of rural women through opportunities of financing supportive of access to agricultural land tenure safety.</p> <p>2.4 Equitable access of girls and women to all work and training channels and avenues which will, in turn, entail a diversified income, skill upgrading through institutional harmony between ministries and organizations towards the achievement of SDGs.</p> <p>3. Provide Decent working conditions for rural women in the agricultural sector:</p> <p>Implementation Mechanisms:</p> <p>3.1 Expand social protection scope to include rural women employment in agriculture by coverage under the overall umbrella of health insurance and health protection coverage for agricultural laborer.</p> <p>3.2 Expeditious adoption of a legal framework rural women inclusion within the categories protected by the Labor Code. Rural women are reported to have been excluded from labor legislation advantages.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schedule dates and venues for seminars and to disseminate the culture of empowerment and gender equality. 2. Trainers among lecturers <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A legal framework involving rural women workers and coverage under the overall umbrella of legal protection. 2. The establishment of a monitoring Unit on problems experienced by rural women workers whose mandate constitutes of follow-up of such a category needs and hardships along with contribution in the implementation of social protection mechanisms.



It then concludes there exists an urgent willingness to implement social protection mechanisms on the improvement of women social status as well as elevating the human aspect of rural women workers in terms of:

- Establishing a minimum wage, pursuant to labor standards. Fixing working hours under hour law and provision of decent rural unemployment and accident pensions for paid work female agricultural workers.
- Monitoring and addressing problems of rural women employment in agricultural production towards opportunities for an oversight role in the protection of agricultural women laborers rights.

4. Access to Information Technologies:

Implementation Mechanisms:

4.1 Ensure activities on capacity building of rural women primarily designed to for rehabilitation.

4.2 Equitable access and equal availing of training.

4.3 Ensure a gender justice- responsive technology.

Implementing Entities of Activities (2020 up to 2025)

	Implementing Entity	For the implementation of policies, mechanisms and activities towards the achievement of empowerment and gender equality
1.	Political Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain support to Arab rural women through incorporating under the overall umbrella of social protection mechanisms towards an equal status along with elevating the human aspect of rural women workers. • A legislative framework necessary to operationalize rural women's access to inheritance of agricultural land. • A legal framework to ensure their coverage under the overall umbrella of labor law, thereby elevating female agricultural laborers social status prior to economic status. • Enactment of legislation to ensure the empowerment of rural women.



2.	Food and Agriculture Organization + Arab Women Organization+ Ministry of Communication+ Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminating a culture of gender equality in agriculture among rural population and decision-makers as pathway to achieve tangible food security in practice. • Assistance of Electronic marketing action. • Equitable access to agricultural production inputs, training and marketing information. • Facilitated access to agricultural information through engagement in digital extension. • Equitable Building the marketing capacities and skills of both women and men. • Ensure targeting of rural women effective training needs are considered. Providing skill development training effectively is key to upskilling and eradication of skill poverty. • Help women and equip them with knowledge of their rights is a significant step to improve access to productive, material and natural resources. • Greater community awareness raising about gender equality and its inextricably close interconnection with food security and agricultural rural development. • Focus on gender mainstreaming and sex segregated data. Conduct analysis of the situation of rural women in policies and published research.
3.	Ministry of Communication+ Ministry of Agriculture+ Arab Women Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a gender related data basis to bring into light the contribution of women working in the agricultural sector. • Engagement in technology take-up of/upgrading by training women how to avail agricultural electronic tools. • Establishment of a Monitoring Unit for rural women agricultural laborers problems. • Provision of a gender -justice technology in the agricultural sector not solely within the framework of equity. • Monitoring and addressing obstacles faced by rural women agricultural laborers towards the design of an oversight role to ensure agricultural women laborers rights.
4.	Ministry of Environment +Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating rural women in implementing mechanisms of the strategy on environmental resources sustainability given rural women direct handling of natural resources and established knowledge for sustenance of the rural environment. • Equitable access to training on agricultural upgraded information and technology with availing skill development in terms of good treatment towards the conservation and sustenance of natural resources.



Recommendations

In light of the aforementioned points, it is proposed to establish several pathways and mechanisms involving several different fields that would mainstream gender equity in the agricultural sector and empower rural women. Such fields are here-in propounded:

The Legal and Legislative Sphere

- Raising awareness of rural women about their economic and social rights, inter alia, their right to agricultural lands ownership/ right to agricultural land inheritance, and enforcement of some laws supportive of rural women agricultural laborers. Included in such mechanisms are involving rural women under the overall umbrella of social protection laws, mainly the Labour Law has excluded agricultural male and female workers alike.
- **Policy reform:** It refers to all the policies proposed to be amended or initiated towards creating an environment appropriate to achieve the goals of agricultural development, with women's full participation across all stages. A formal legally binding status vested with a statutory nature shall be for each prescribed policy shall be laid down and binding upon such policy target groups who shall be committed to respect, comply with legally binding obligations of the implementation measures. This official legislative reference may range from issuing ministerial decrees to issuing laws and legislations.

The Agricultural Sphere

- Endeavouring to upgrade women's performance in agricultural labour, by providing them with the necessary technical information through the establishment of specialized training and extension courses. Rural women can acquaint themselves with launching initiatives of new concepts such as E-agriculture. Means of communication are critical in enabling rural women equitable access to information.
- Implementing a land property mechanism for rural women through the assistance of some organizations and institutions supportive of the empowerment of rural women in the agricultural sector. Guaranteeing women's equal inheritance rights, land property and other productive resources is a substantial incentive towards dispensing with the focus on small enterprises, i.e., food industries, embroidery and handicrafts. Such would support the realization of a broader women's scope for a deeper rural developmental concept that brings about radical changes leading to the achievement of gender equality in terms of agricultural land property. In fact, land ownership constitutes a long-term economic safety net which has far-reaching agricultural, social and environmental consequences.



- Granting women equal access to natural resources (water) and various productive resources such as seeds and fertilizers in support of their access for these resources, which remains a challenging task due to their lack of agricultural land tenure safety as a fundamental relevant condition for obtaining support.
- Considering the gender aware perspective, training female agricultural extension staff is critical as the presence of women extensionists delivering services on agricultural extension teams enables agricultural extension teams to reach rural women thus gaining eligibility to ensuring easy access to information, thus removing the cultural barrier to women's access to information.
- Assisting rural women and training them towards marketing their agricultural production while initiating the concept and culture of Electronic marketing.
- Motivating and training women on small and medium-sized productive enterprises set-up and management, inter alia, food industries, to diversify their income base.
- In response to environmental deterioration, moving towards environmental guidance with the aim of protecting the environment from pollution as well as preserving and sustaining natural resources.
- Raising women's environmental awareness by integrating environmental concepts into extension programs- such as the concepts of preservation and sustainability of natural resources- and using the traditional knowledge of rural women in safeguarding plant and animal genetic resources.
- Working to integrate rural women in development projects aimed at combating desertification, establishing the green belt and preserving biological diversity.

The Social Sphere

- Implementing gender equality mechanisms in agricultural rights and services within prescribed agricultural policies to achieve food security, at all stages.
- Reducing reliance on subsidies and social safety nets to combat poverty and achieve food security and resorting instead to a radical change in the gender power relations in the agricultural sector. This prevents the waste and depletion of natural resources-being a public property- and violence against women in order to increase their financial capacity and social strength by raising their productivity. Early marriage of girls and child labour should be prohibited and nutritional discrimination between girls and boys should further be prevented. Sexual violence against women- reflected in forced pregnancy for a male child, their inability to access family planning methods or sexual and reproductive health follow-up, should be fought. Girls should also be prevented from education dropouts.
- Poverty is a social disease whose effects are tangible economically. Poverty continues to be inherited across generations. In fact, capacities and skills poverty is far more common



among women. Therefore, attention must be paid to developing both rural women and men's skills, training them and raising their capacity in accordance with equality standards, so that eliminating intellectual poverty should be prioritized.

- Elevating the social status of female workers in the agricultural sector- where they are perceived as inferior- by concretising the efforts made for their sake and crystallizing them through the scientific meetings and media.

The Institutional Sphere

- **Institutional reform:** it includes institutional reform procedures and efforts, whether the target institutions are government agencies or private sector institutions or civil society organizations. It is urgent to bring about significant adjustments in such institutions or in their competencies or operational capabilities. This is a prerequisite for meeting the needs of rural women in terms of material and financial inputs, in order to create some sort of balanced power relations in the family and work.

The Decision-Making sphere

- Training women in leadership skills and reinforcing their role in villages.
- Increasing women's participation in and involvement in agricultural cooperatives and in women's cooperatives, through enhancing their participation in related agricultural unions and associations and providing them with effective services.
- Training men on the need to support women and engaging them on women's empowerment and ensure they have voices and agency on issues of agricultural work.

The Economic Sphere

- Training women on how to avail social capital and translate it into a financial capital.
- Training women Self-Help Groups and disseminating the culture of teamwork and women's associations.
- Benefiting from civil society associations, organizations and institutions specialized in men and women capacity building towards benefiting from the available natural resources (the One Village, One product Initiative), thereby reducing waste and minimizing loss.



The Statistical Sphere

- Obtaining highly accurate quantitative and qualitative sex and age -segregated reliable data at the household level which would induce mapping a picture for the family dynamics and power relations. Consistent with a gender sensitive perspective this would help understand social discrimination and different household power relations at large.
- Establishing a special female agricultural labourer Employment Monitoring Unit to identify obstacles. Such a unit would serve as a form of a conclusion of exerted efforts of women and following -up on all relevant emerging relevant social and economic problems.



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