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**WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY  
IN ORIIRE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OYO STATE,  
NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

*Women's activities in Oriire Local Government Area, Oyo state were studied to determine their contributions to household security. The study used interview schedule to collect information from a total of 120 women, randomly selected from each of the 6 communities chosen out of 10. Data were analysed using frequency counts, chi-square and Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. Women studied were described as typically middle aged- mainly over 40 years of age (36.7%), married (92%), and have had one or more form of education or the other (80%). Majority of the women are responsible for children's school snack (83.5%), medical bills (76.7), clothes (73.3), school books (70.8%) and uniforms (53.3%). Also they make farm produce available for household use (76.6%), feed the household (75.8%) and cook their meals (71.7%). Major concerns expressed by these women are inadequate capital base (47%), amenities (30.2%) and agricultural inputs (11.4%). Significant relationships exist between women's educational level and their contributions towards household food security ( $X^2 = 20.7, p = 0.029$ ). Also the women's income generating activities correlated positively with their contributions to household food security ( $r = 0.274, p = 0.05$ ). It is therefore pertinent to establish agricultural credit and training schemes that will improve these women's income generating capacities, knowledge base, and leadership skills to enable them make better choices in their production process as these will further enhance the food status of their households.*

**Introduction**

Current trend indicates that women are assuming roles other than conventional ones. Ensuring that food is available to household members at all times is one of such roles. Yet much of their contributions to ensuring that household are food secured ends up



unnoticed and in most cases difficult to quantify and evaluate (Abdurahaman, 1991). Women in their attempt to make food available in their households, engage in various tasks and livelihood activities, such as crop framing, livestock rearing, selling of gathered forest products, snack, processed and cooked foods. Mabogunje (1989) observed that many of these activities are seasonal and are perceived as petty because of their small scale nature, low capital base and technology level.

The true roles of these women in household food security is not fully recognized and understood. In the traditional African setting, women's roles are widely described to include rearing and caring for children (Ajayi, 1986), which are major component of household welfare. There is a need of substantive research to investigate food security activities of women who constitute over 50% of the rural population in Nigeria (National Population Commission, 1991). Furthermore, information about women's food security and related activities are sometimes scanty, often taken for granted, improperly documented and thus need to be updated.

The study, thus investigated activities women undertake to ensure that their households are food secured in Oriire Local Government Area in Oyo state. Food security is important to key players such as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), government parastatal, women and other interest groups that are involved in planning development programmes for women. By investigating the household food security activities of women, who constitute the bulk of the rural population in Nigeria, this study identifies their specific contributions and information necessary for short and long term intervention programmes intended to help women.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Women in the traditional Nigerian society have multiple roles which range from productive, domiciliary, and political activities (Alele-Williams, 1990) to farming, cooking fetching firewood and water, coupled with their roles as wives. Others are workers outside the home to supplement family's income (Onuoha, 1995).

Sustainable food production is a key factor for food security. This is an area where women participate actively as farmers, farm workers and natural resources managers. Paris and Pingali (1994) reported that women account for more than half of the labour used to

produce food consumed in developing countries and three-quarter in sub-Saharan Africa. Aggregate data suggests that African women perform 90% of the work for processing food crops and provide other household requirements, such as water, fuel wood, 80% of the work for storage, and transportation of produce from farm to village, 90% of the work for hoeing and weeding and 60% of work of harvesting and marketing farm produce (Quisumbing, 1994). Hoddinoth (1999) reported that decisions concerning household food security are indeed largely influenced by women. In the areas of agriculture and expenditure of households, women influence decisions and particularly have control of those relating to daily aspects of the family, children, harvesting and processing of food crops.

Moser (1993), typically described women as homemakers whose work are reproductive and productive as well as secondary income earners. She stated further that in rural areas, this takes the form of agricultural work, while in the urban areas they work in the informal sector enterprise located in their houses or neighbourhood. In Nigeria, women produce most of the food crops consumed in the country, and constitute a high proportion of the agricultural workforce (Anali, 1989). This view was corroborated by Olawokunbi (1994), who observed that in rural households general division of labour and responsibilities leave much work to be done by women, in addition to being expected to look after children and cooking on a daily basis; they still provide substantial proportion of the basic food for the family and thus frequently working for most part of the day to fulfil their domestic duties.

Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 1998), identifies three central pillars of food security: food availability, adequate food production and economic access to available food and nutritional security. Women are noted to play significant roles and dominate activities in supplying all of these ingredients necessary to achieve food security in developing countries in the face of enormous social, cultural and economic constraints. Issues surrounding food security are central to understanding one fundamental component of the well-being of the population and identifying geographic or other social groups with special needs. These promises to reduce food insecurity and hunger through public private programmes, and assist programme planners and policy makers assess the effectiveness of programmes to achieving intended food security objectives.



Various studies have indicated that women are central to nutrition security which is subsumed in food security issues within households. FAO (1998), reported that making household nutrition secured, through the combination food, decision making and other resources is almost the exclusive domain of women's ability to manage these resources, especially for the vulnerable members of the households such as children. The same report, noted that sufficient evidence abound supporting the argument that women's employment particularly for low income households may be good, not only for women's own welfare, but also for the rest of the household members. It thus concluded that evidently there is an inverse relationship between women's income and household food security nutrition. While women typically spend a high proportion of their income on food and healthcare for children and goods for household consumption, men in contrast retain discretionary control over the bulk of their income for personal expenditure. Also, a study conducted by Quisumbing (1994) on the roles of women in households, revealed that women relative to men tend to spend their income disproportionately on food for the family. In the same study, it was observed that women's income is more strongly associated with improvement in children's health and nutritional status than men's income. Similarly, O'Connell (1994) noted that women generally devote a far greater proportion of their income to children's basic needs and interest, while men's contribution vary widely. Moser (1993), observed that although gender divisions of income allocation vary widely within households, women universally allocate income to day-to-day food, clothing and domestic goods.

Women encounter challenges in their attempts to earn extra money to make their household food secure. These challenges include lack of access to farm land, capital and credit, opportunities to learn new skills, affordable new technology, market outlets and low prices for their products (Abdulrahman, 1991; Gittinger, *et al*, 1991). Too often, their income generating activities are described as petty (Mabogunje, 1989).

Women's roles are shaped by traditional and cultural beliefs in the rural communities, although variations exist with locations. It is increasingly acknowledged that women's roles are changing and they are taking on new roles and responsibilities. This study was conducted on the assumption that women contribute to household

food security and welfare. It was guided by the following objectives.

### Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine women's contributions to household food security in Oriire LGA, Oyo state. The specific objectives of the study were as follow:

1. To determine women's profile in the study area.
2. To identify women's food security activities and challenges encountered
3. To determine the relationship between women's profile, income generating activities and their contributions to household food security.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in Oriire LGA, Oyo Area state, Nigeria with Olurunda, Tewure, Ikoyi, Ajanapa, Adafila, and Omidoyin being randomly selected from 10 communities. A total of 120 women, 20 from each community were randomly selected, while interview schedule was used to collect information based on the objectives of the study. The dependent variables of the study were the contributions of women towards household food security. The index was made up of 5 sections related to women's contributions as items assigned scores. The 5 sections were food, education, shelter, health and clothing and were rated on a 4 point scale as very often (4), often (3), rarely (2), and never (1). The role index had a maximum score of 84 and a minimum score of 21. The independent variables were the women's profile and included items such as age, educational level, family structure, and income generating activities. The data was subjected to computer analysis using statistical software packages.

### Findings

**Table 1: Profile of women in Oriire LGA**

Variables	categories	Frequency (%)	N = 120
<b>Age</b>	< 30	14 (11.7)*	31-39
	40-49	44 (36.7)	50-59
	60 & above		11 (9.1)
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married		111 (92.5)
	Widowed		6 (5.0)
	Divorced		2 (1.7)
	Single		1 (0.8)

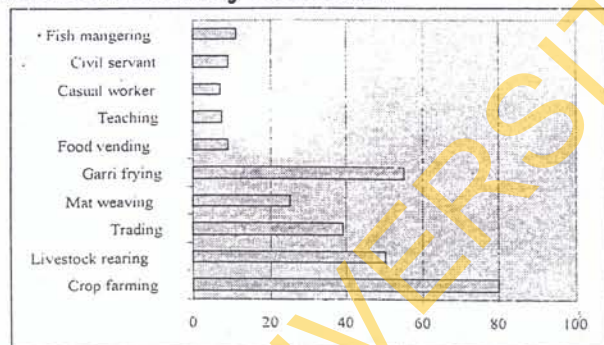


<b>Educational Level</b>	No formal education	23 (19.2)
	Adult Literacy	- (Nil)
	Primary school	56 (46.7)
	Secondary school	30 (25.0)
	Tertiary	4 (3.3)
<b>Family Structure</b>	only wife	78 (70.2)
	Two wives	27 (24.3)
	Three wives	6 (5.5)
<b>Position among wives</b>	First wife	91 (82.0)
	Second wife	19 (17.1)
	Third wife	1 (0.9)

\*Figures in parenthesis are percentages of row totals.

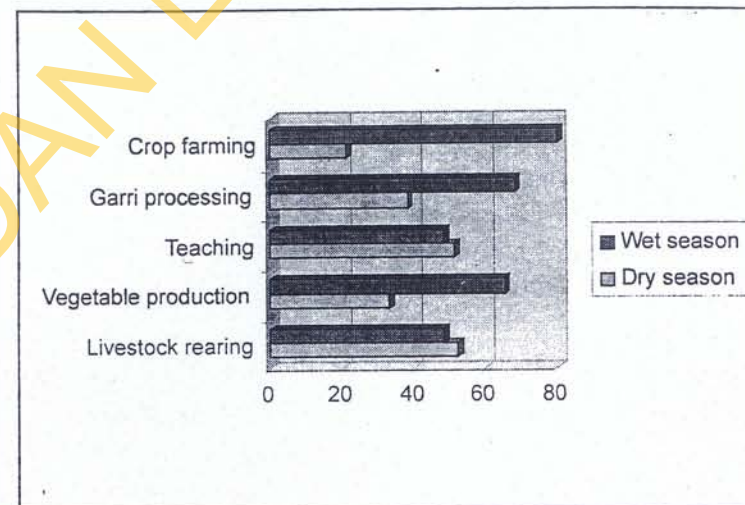
Results on Table 1 above shows that women vary greatly in age, as 36% are 40 years and above, indicating that they are middle aged, energetic and are still in their productive stage. Many (92.5 %) are married. The marriage institution is highly valued in the African community and at the age of 25 years, most rural women in Nigeria are married (Ekong, 1998). Monogamous marriage is prevalent in the study area as 70.2% are only wives. About 29.9% percent of the sampled women are in polygamous marriages. These results are indicative of the wide variations of family structure in Nigeria which is consistent with reports of Daneji (1998) from a previous study. Nearly all (80.8%) of the women have had one form of education or the other. While 46.7% had primary education, 25% had secondary education. These findings implied that a typical woman in the study is fairly young.

#### Women's food security activities



**Figure 1: Distribution of women's food security activities**

Figure 1 indicates the various food security activities women undertake to make their household food secure. They grow crops (76%), process cassava into garri (58%), rear livestock (50%) engage in petty trade (38%), mat weaving (20%), sell fish (13%), have cooked food (9%), work as teachers (8%), and daily paid workers (8%). These findings imply that women in the study engage more in agro and allied activities to make their household food secured.



**Figure 2: Women's seasonal food security activities**

Weather is a major food security variable among survey women as indicated in Figure 2. Findings indicated that the women engage in both on-farm and off-farm activities to make their household food secured. During the wet season, many women engage in the production of crop (88%), garri (68%), vegetable (66%) livestock (52%), and trading (45%). However, during the dry season more women (52%) take up trading while fewer women engage in the



production of livestock (46%), garri (42%), vegetable (34%), and crop (22%). Consequently, these women are engaged in one form of activity all year round to ensure they provide food for their households.

**Women's participation in household food and welfare activities**  
**Table 2. Frequency distribution of respondents' participation in household food and welfare activities.**

Items	Never %	Very often	Often	Rarely	100
1 Contribution to household feeding	75.8	24.2	-	-	100
2 Provision of farm produce to household	76.7	0.8	22.5	100	
3 Cooking for household	88.4	75.5	53.3	0.8	100
4 Purchase of household foodstuff	71.7	24.2	24.2	-	100
5 Contribution to children's school fees	55.5	28.3	12.2	1.7	100
6 Purchase of children's school books	17.5	70.8	11.7	-	100
7 Purchase of children's school uniform	8.3	53.3	36.7	1.7	100
8 Contribution to children's midday meal	83.3	2.5	0.8	3.3	100
9 Contribution to house rent	5.8	3.3	5.0	85.9	100
10 Provision/fetching water for household use	98.3	1.7	-	-	100
11 Purchase of household utensils	67.5	21.7	3.3	7.5	100
12 Contribution to household furniture	3.3	5.0	10.8	80.9	100
13 Contribution to electricity bills	5.0	0.8	3.3	90.9	100
14 Contribution to household electronics	1.7	6.7	8.3	83.3	100
15 Payment of own medical bills	68.4	25.8	5.0	0.8	100
16 Payment of children's medical bills	10.0	76.7	13.3	-	100
17 Purchase of household first aid drugs and materials	11.7	60.8	25.8	1.7	100
18 Use herbal remedy for household members	31.7	24.1	4.1	2.5	100
19 Purchase of own clothes	80.8	19.2	-	0.8	100
20 Purchase of children's clothes	25.0	73.3	1.7	-	100

Results on Table 2 illustrate women's participation in household food security and welfare activities. Specific areas assessed on a four point rating scale included household food, education, shelter, health and clothing. Responses indicated that the women very often make farm produce available for house use (76.7%), contribute to household feeding (75.8%), and cook for the household (71.1%).

Also, they very often pay children's school snack (83.3%), buy book (70.8%), fees (55.8%), and uniforms (53.3%).

Women's contribution to shelter for the household is somewhat supportive and secondary. While many women (98.3%) indicated they fetched water for household use, they however, never contributed to house rent (85.9%), furniture (80.9%), and electronics (83.8%). Household utensils are items these women (67.5%) indicated they often buy and are frequently responsible for their own and children's medical bills (68.4%). These women also bought their own (80.8%) and children's (73.3%) clothes often.

**Challenges women encounter in household food security and welfare activities**

Responses to challenges women encountered centred on access to inputs. Their major concern was lack of capital (47.1%). About one third of the women (30.2%) indicated that inadequate infrastructure was also a limiting factor in their efforts to cater for their household. Less than one-third (11.4%) mentioned crude production methods and inadequate agricultural inputs as challenges constraining their food security and welfare activities.



**Table 3. Test of relationship between women's profile and their contributions to household food security**

Profile variables	df	$\chi^2$	Significance Level	Decision
Age	8	11.84	0.158	Not significant
Marital status	2	0.82	0.662	Not significant
Educational level	10	20.07	0.029	Significant
Position among wives	6	8.46	0.20	Not Significant

**Analysis** was conducted to determine if significant relationship existed on any of the variables of women's profile (age, marital status and position among wives) and their contribution to household food security, using chi-square statistics. Findings indicated relationship between women's educational level and contribution to household food security ( $\chi^2=20.07$ ,  $p=0.029$ ). This result implies that households are likely to be more food secured with improvement in the educational status of women. Literacy is thus an important key to improving household food security.

**Table 4. Test of relationship of women's income-generating activities and contribution to household food security**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p
Income generating activities					
Contributions to household	120	1.20	0.516	0.274	0.05
Food security	120	17.76	2.266		

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test relationship between women's income generating activities and their contribution to household food security. Results showed a positive correlation between women's income generating activities and contributions to household food security ( $r=0.274$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). This result shows that chances of household food security increase as the number of women's income generating activities increase. Studies have indicated linkage between multiple income-generating activities and women's contribution to daily survival of their household members, as their farm produce rarely provide all food requirements, and the need for cash to buy other needs becomes necessary (Zubaida, 1984 and Gittinger, et al, 1991).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Primarily, this study reveals that women in Orire LGA are middle age, energetic and productive. They engage in various livelihood activities such as crop production, garri frying, livestock rearing, petty trading and food vending to ensure household food security. Some of these activities are done seasonally for the purpose of securing food for their households. Majority of the women make significant contributions to household food, children's education, health and clothing for children. Inadequate capital, poor infrastructure, crude production methods and inadequate agricultural inputs hinder their capacities to effectively contribute to household food security. Also, women's income-generating activities correlated positively with their contributions to household food security. Investigating food security of rural households within the context of rural and national development has implications for gender issues in future intervention programmes. Results that emanated from this study may lead to policy formulation and action by government. Findings may influence future programmes focused on the specific needs of women. It is therefore recommended that women in Orire LGA be empowered economically through establishment of agricultural development credit and training schemes to improve their income-generating capacity, knowledge base, leadership skills so that they can make better choices in their production process and enhance the food status of their households.

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