



**UNIVERSITY OF HOHENHEIM**

**STUTT GART, GERMANY**

**WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY-  
A CASE STUDY FROM AGONA DISTRICT OF THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA**

**BY**

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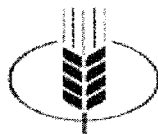
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## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Summary

From the study, women heads of households were observed to be much older in age, have less formal education, and have large household size, with more dependents than their men household heads. Moreover, majority of these women heads are either widowed or divorced and their households contain more grandchildren and people above 65 years old. As the head they, most of the members in the women headed households have less formal education compared to the men headed households. These have implication on household food security as these demographic parameters, among other things, determine the extent of household food availability and access.

In the case of food security status, 11.4 % of the women headed households surveyed were observed to be relatively food secure, 74.3 % were relatively food insecure without hunger, while 14.3 % were observed to be relatively food insecure with hunger. On the men side however, 13.3 % were observed to be relatively food secure, 71.1 % food insecure without hunger and 15.6 % were food insecure with hunger. In general, women headed households show relatively a much higher diversity in diets than men headed households.

On coping strategies to food insecurity, both household heads used similar strategies common to the study area, with little variation. However, in the extreme cases, few women heads were observed to go the extent of skipping whole days without eating, engaging in wage labour, selling household's durable items and resorting to begging which the men heads would not do.

Household income indicates household's purchasing power and to some extent, household economic access to food. On the average, income for women headed households were significantly lower than that of their men counterpart households. While incomes from cash crops, notably cocoa, food crops and wife's income-generating activities constituted a major sources of money for the men headed households, incomes from the off-farm activities, food crops, remittances and that of the other household members constituted a major sources of income for the women headed households.

The same scenario is reflected in the household liquidity. Men headed households have much cash inflow and cash surplus than the women headed households. The major sources of cash inflow on the men side come from cash crops sales, their off-farm activities, their wife's off-farm activities and food crops sales while on the women side, monies from their off-farm activities, remittances, cash crops sales and other household members were important sources of cash inflow. On the cash outflow, the major sources on the both side of the divide, were monies for the family upkeep (locally termed as *Chop money*) and monies used as wages for hiring farm labour.

On the household expenditure, expenditure on food constituted a single highest expenditure on both sides, accounting for 52 % in the men households and 41 % in the women households respectively. The major expenditure on food on both households were on non-staple food (such as fish and meat) accounting for 30 % in men side and 22 % on the women side respectively. While expenditure on energy and food were significantly much higher on the women households, they were significantly much lower in the men households. Expenditure on clothing, education and health on the other hand, were significantly much higher in the men headed households; they were significantly much lower in the women headed households.

On the average, total household expenditure was significantly much higher in women headed household and exceeded the total household income while the total household expenditure was much lower and was slightly below the total household income in the men households.

It is worth noting that, the land resource possess by women heads, and the proportions put under cultivation of both food and cash crops were significantly much smaller compared to that possess by their men heads counterpart. This limit their women's ability to more food and cash crops to increase their productivity and earn substantial income. The major land use-right was by tenancy or share holding (locally referred to as the *abusa system*).

Access to both formal and informal credits was, in general, very poor for both groups of household heads (37 % for men and 17 % for women respectively), with the men heads having the greater access to both formal and informal credits. The major use of the credits on both side was for farming activity.

The main role of both household heads was that of bread winner for the households, and making major but essential decisions for the family. However, these their role are constrained by ageing household heads, financial constraints, lack of access to enough farmland, coupled with high cost of labour and unattractive prices for farm, produce.

It could be observed from the foregoing discussion that rural women find themselves in certain unique conditions that put them at the disadvantage and which are also beyond their control, than their men counterpart in terms of socio-cultural issues, and access to productive resources, which hinder their progress and productivity. Hence, making them vulnerable and their households more food insecure.

## **5.2 Women's Contribution to Household Food Security**

Women's contributions to household food security in the surveyed families, among other things included:

### **1. Sustainable food production**

The women heads in the surveyed families were subsistence farmers with the single objective of producing food for their households, since household food security is determined largely by their ability to produce and/or purchase enough food to meet their minimum daily requirements. The food crops grown by those women farmers were maize, cassava, plantain, beans, vegetables, tomatoes, among others. These women thus contribute greatly to household food security.

### **2. Cash crops production**

The majority of the women heads surveyed were actively involved in cash crops production, notably cocoa, oil palm, coconut, and sugar-cane among others (see appendix 1e). Incomes from generated from the sales of these crops were used to provide food and other essential things for the households. From literature, cash income earned by women is positively and significantly associated with household calorie consumption (von Braum, et al, 1991).

### **3. Income generation from off-farm activities**

The majority of the women heads and the spouse of the men heads were involved in a number of income generation activities, notably petty trading, food processing, food vending, among others (see appendix 1f). According to Quisumbing, et al, 1995, a household access to food depends greatly on its real income, and not only the level of income but who earns that income. Moreover, a number of studies have proved the positive effect that women's incomes have on household food security and nutrition.

#### 4. Domestic production

The domestic production, according to Quisumbing, et al, 1995, include meal preparation, fuel wood collection, fetching food from the farm, fetching water from streams or bore-holes, and washing of dishes among others. These household activities, which are considered women responsibility in the surveyed families, are key components of good household food and nutrition security.

#### 5. Care provision

The provision of care namely, paying adequate time and attention to meeting the physical, mental, mental and social needs of growing children and other household members is a crucial input into good nutrition (Quisumbing, et el, 1995). Women were the primary care providers in the surveyed households. Care contributes to household food and nutrition security through feeding practices, health and good sanitation practices among others.

#### 6. Decision-making relating to food and nutrition issues

Among the households surveyed, majority of the women heads take decisions relating food and nutrition alone, while majority of the men heads discuss those issues with their wives since women were the principal persons responsible for preparing meals for the entire households (see figures 13 and 12). In doing so, they take measures that are necessary to ensure household access to food, hence contributing to household food and nutrition security.

In conclusion, rural women find themselves in certain unique conditions that put them at the disadvantage than their men counterpart. Despite the disparity in productive resource access that existed between women and men heads of households in the study area, women continue to contribute immensely to the food security of their households through sustainable food production, income generation in the area of cash crops production, off-farm activity, domestic production, care provision and decision making relating to food and nutrition issues. Addressing women's constraints and the factors that discriminate against them, would

therefore improve their productivity and ability to secure sustainable food security for their households.

### **5.3 Limitations of the study**

The following were the shortfalls of this research:

1. The study could not capture how much of what the household consume comes from their own production and how much comes from the market. This was due to non-existing data and household heads inability to accurately measure how much they consume.
2. The study could not also quantify how much calories of food that household consume to actually, determine the household food and nutrition requirements. As it has been explained above, this was due to non-existing data and the time and skills limitations of the researcher.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. As it was observed in the study, these rural women's contribution to household food security could be improved if they are provided with some form of credits or soft loans for their farming and off-farm activities. This would reduce the problem off financial constraints and would enhance their ability to increase productivity through the food crops and cash crops production as well as generate much income from their off-farm activities.
2. The women organising themselves into groups and associations for potentially profitable activities would improve their access to credits and other productive resource for their farming and off-farming activities. Thus, enhancing their ability to generate food security for their households.

3. Food aid program to rural households, especially during the period that they experience food shortages (from March to July), would improve their access to food

4. The research should be carried further in other parts of the country to assess rural women contribution to household food security and the constraints they face.