



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

GENDER AND AGRICULTURE

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FOR

**WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In order to implement the agreements made at various fora on Gender and Development, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) initiated the development of the Agricultural Gender Policy Framework in 2003 to address the needs of different groups, men, women and youth so that they can actively participate in agriculture to contribute to food security, employment creation and ultimately, to increase the contribution of the agricultural sector to the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which has been declining from 40% in 1966 to 2.6% in 2000. This decline has pressured the Ministry of Agriculture to review most of its policies to see what improvements are needed to increase participation in the agricultural sector. Despite this decline in productivity, the role of the agricultural sector in household and national food security, employment creation, reduction of poverty, and other opportunities remain of critical importance. The government realizes the potential of the sector in ensuring sustainability of the household and national livelihood factors among its female, youth and male citizens, hence the increased sector budget to cater for the newly introduced schemes like Young Farmers Fund, the Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development, and Arable Lands Development Programme (ALDEP) III.

2.0 KEY ISSUES IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

A study was conducted in May – July 2006 and the following critical areas were identified:

2.1 Access, Ownership and Control of Agricultural Resources

Access, ownership and control of land and other valuable agricultural resources and inputs like cattle, water resources, credit/finance, information, markets, technology and other support services is in most cases a major premise of men. The 1993 Agricultural Census data indicates that 36% of farm holders are females. (but how do they hold land if they don't own it?) (MoA, 1997). This has mainly been attributed to the inheritance rights where the preferred heirs were sons of the family.

The law also used to discriminate against women where women were regarded as 'minors' and therefore were not entitled to possession of property including land and other valuable resources like cattle. A male guardian under the traditional organization of labor in Botswana had to own, farm cattle and make major decisions on major and valuable agricultural activities while women were treated as passive participants. Women were made to forfeit their property rights to their male partners who had the marital powers and were regarded as heads of households so that they administer the property of the household.

The law has since been amended to remove the marital powers and allow women to own immovable property under the Deeds Registry Amendment Act of 1996. Although some major pieces of legislation have been amended to remove a lot of discrimination against women, the challenge now is changing the attitudes and perceptions of communities as it will take a long time to adjust and accept these changes which challenge the status quo.

Since most women do not own land and other resources like cattle and boreholes, it is difficult for them to obtain them through outright purchase as they lack capital and also do not have security to provide as collateral with the banks and other financial lending institutions to access credit and other support services. A lot of government schemes such as National Master Plan for Arable Agriculture and Dairy Development (NAMPAADD), Financial Assistance Policy, ALDEP I and II etc required that applicants have ownership of land. This discriminates against most women. For government to make some developments on a piece of land they need assurance that the developments are for the applicant. Therefore the applicant has to be the land owner. Such developments include borehole drilling, equipping and reticulation which are fundamental in agricultural production in Botswana as there is massive water shortage. Most of the technology that is used as inputs into the agricultural production is not appropriate and affordable to women and it would also be very difficult for them to reach out to the information on what, how, when and where to get assistance in terms of need.

Most of these problems have however been curbed in recent law reforms which give women the power to make decisions and access land, credit and other productive resources on their own. A lot of policies, programmes and projects are also being reviewed and strengthened to ensure equal participation of both women and men. For example the recently developed schemes like ALDEP III require that female beneficiaries make a down payment of 20% whilst their male counterparts pay 30% of the total loan. There is also a provision, e.g. in the Young Farmer's Fund, for applicants to lease land in cases where they do not own land.

A lot of information dissemination, education and publicity are undertaken by all stakeholders in the agricultural extension, key ministries/departments/organizations, the political organ and the media at large. The National Gender Machinery, the Women's Affairs Department and NGOs and development partners/organisations have also engaged on a continuous dialogue with Botswana and key stakeholders to disseminate information on the revised laws and policies and in training, capacity building and empowerment of women, men and youth so that they are aware of their rights including inheritance.

2.2 Gender differences in roles and activities

Women in Botswana like in most countries are engaged in the formal employment but are also heavily involved in the informal and the traditional care work which is unpaid; these include performing domestic and community based activities, home based care for HIV & AIDS affected and infected patients. These activities add to the heavy workload that women perform in the agricultural sector. In Botswana, this is a major role especially with the HIV/AIDS scourge. Females are therefore left to care for the sick while their male counterparts advance in production. The care economy is not paid for yet it requires maximum attention. Once these females have someone to care for, they cannot be involved in any other activity that generates income. They are therefore suppressed in subsistence agriculture and ultimately are trapped in the cycle of poverty and hence "feminization of poverty".

This role of care work has also led to females engaging in small scale production which is near their homesteads and requires minimum traveling. This kind of practice does not encourage growth in the agric sector as females who form the key force in the agricultural labor are relegated to subsistence farming such as backyard gardening, poultry, beekeeping and small stock keeping at a small scale. Those who devote their attention to agricultural production however have more opportunities of advancement including even traveling to attend agricultural training courses offered by the Ministry of Agriculture and other related organizations and can also take advantage of the agricultural schemes and programmes.

2.3 Women's empowerment and equal access to decision-making.

Gender disparity is another issue of concern within the decision making positions of the Ministry of Agriculture. This is historical and cultural as the country's only existing College of Agriculture used to train males in the majority as the belief was that agriculture was for men. As time goes by it becomes very clear that the agric sector is dominated by males. In May 2006, MoA staff comprised of 2001 (27%) females and 5478 (73%) males. In this disparity, there were only 11% of women in decision making levels of MoA as compared to 89% male.

The first top positions in MoA (E2-F1) are occupied by 11 males and only 2 females and they are high paying with other fringe benefits. These gender disparities are most visible in spheres that are usually referred to as 'the male domains', which is the Animal Health and Production sector where, at the time of the study, there was not even a single female in the decision making positions. The agricultural extension is also male dominated and as mentioned above the reasons are the same regarding the training background.

This is also visible in the farming communities where farming associations are mostly dominated by males and organizations like the Cattle Owners Associations are by all means the male domain. For a long time now ranching has earned a lot of people decision making positions as it is an area of high returns and social respect. However women only own 18% of the national cattle herd in Botswana (MoA 2000). The majority of women

who own cattle tend to be those that are married. At farming level, females do not make any major decisions or even respond to any agricultural surveys in the absence of their male counterpart, who is the decision maker. The expectation of Agricultural Extension is also that a male should answer and make decisions.

2.4 Security in Agricultural Production Areas

Recently, the issues of security in agricultural lands and cattle posts has been of serious concern to the nation with a large rural populace which thrives on agriculture and related activities. This comes from the fact that sound agricultural activities like cattle rearing and farming are done in cattle posts and lands areas which are detached from service centers and in some cases very remote areas that have limited infrastructure such as telecommunications, roads, police services, electricity, etc. These areas are also very far from developments and the households are sparsely distributed, and they are therefore, dangerous areas for females to live in. Of late there has been an increase in the gender based violence cases including rape, murder and sexual harassment on females in farm lands and this alienates females from practicing in ranching and other agricultural activities.

3.0 PROGRESS MADE

3.1 Agricultural Sector Gender Policy Framework

Botswana has ratified and acceded to a lot of international and regional protocols and declarations with regard to gender equality and equity. Some of these affect agriculture directly such as the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration on Agriculture, Food Security in SADC Region, Millennium Development Goals and Food and Agriculture Declaration; just to name a few. Nationally, the country has developed a Long Term Vision 2016, the Agricultural Policy, Rural Development Strategy including the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the National Gender Policy Framework which clearly spells out the contribution of agriculture in the livelihoods of people.

The National Gender Policy Framework compels all sectors to develop their own Sectoral Gender Policy Frameworks to address gender issues in their respective areas. The Ministry of Agriculture initiated the development of the Agricultural Sector Gender

Policy Framework in 2003 to address the needs of different groups, men, women and youth so that they could effectively participate in agriculture. The overall goal of the Framework is to promote gender equality and equity in all agricultural development processes to ensure employment creation, reduction of poverty, and achievement of household and national food security. This Framework was approved at Ministerial Level in July 2007 as a guiding document for all processes and procedures in the Agricultural Sector.

3.2 Gender Awareness Capacity Building

There is need to increase women's participation in agricultural production and in decision making and management levels of the sector at all levels. Most agricultural personnel have received gender sensitization and awareness as well as basic Gender Training, including the extension so that they can appreciate the need for gender balance within the organization.

In order to build the political will, the Senior Management of the Sector which includes Managers and Chief Executive Officers of the Agricultural Parastatal Organizations as well as Departmental Directors, Permanent Secretary and the Deputies have undergone Gender Awareness and basic Training. This has been a great achievement as there is now political will emanating from an understanding and appreciation of gender issues and their impact in agricultural production and participation. The farming community also received this training when they were being consulted during the formulation of this Framework. We are receiving positive results from those who have been trained, the myths about gender equality and equity are being cleared and men and women are being encouraged to work as partners towards a common goal. This kind of training will be run as a continuous programme to also cover the planning personnel.

3.3 Women and Youth Participation in Agriculture

As mentioned above, the Agricultural schemes have been made gender sensitive and youth friendly such that women and youth are encouraged to participate in Agricultural

Production and in decision making as well as development planning at all levels. These schemes also expose them to commercialization and other trade issues which can assist them to take agriculture as a viable and profit making venture. These facilities include funding from the Women's Affairs Department which has a budget to promote female managed businesses with clear objectives towards women's empowerment. Since 2006, more than 10 agricultural projects have been funded especially in the male dominated area of livestock production.

The department also organizes the National Women's Exposition which is an annual event to expose local female businesses to local and international markets. Female farmers are encouraged and assisted by the Ministry to participate in this event. This has turned out to be a commendable effort as most of these farmers have sustained their businesses after securing steady markets especially in piggery, poultry and in goat meat production. Some women have also been assisted to engage in off farm production through agro processing.

There was also a realization that there was generally lack of youth participation in agriculture and to encourage them, the government in conjunction with a credit facility CEDA launched a specific programme called Young Farmers Fund in April 2006, to enable the youth to get credit to establish agricultural businesses in Botswana. Since the youth have a problem of accessing land, they were allowed to lease land so that they can do their businesses at low premium rates and a long grace period.

3.4 Gender Management System and Institutional Mechanism

Currently Gender Management System in the Ministry is underdeveloped. There is a Gender Focal Person for the Ministry and a Ministerial inter departmental committee which comprises of Departmental and Parastatal Gender Focal Points. The Ministry is exploring the possibilities of establishing a coordinating structure as recommended by the Policy Framework. At the moment, the monitoring of the implementation of the Policy Framework is done by the Monitoring and Evaluation Section of the Ministry with assistance from the Gender Committee. The committee is chaired by the Director of

Ministry Management and Co-chaired by the Director of Agricultural Planning and Statistics which houses the coordination of Gender Mainstreaming in the Ministry.

Recently all agricultural extension regions have been assisted to establish Regional Gender Committees which have representatives from all departments and parastatal organizations available in the respective region. The purpose of these committees is to assist in cascading the Gender Mainstreaming concept and to facilitate information flow from the headquarters to the regional/district offices and to the farming communities and vice versa. Unfortunately though, Gender Focal Points have other duties to perform other than gender and this adds a heavy burden on them as Gender is still a relatively new issue in Agriculture and demands a lot of attention and effort. It has been established beyond doubt that there is need for institutionalizing gender so that it becomes an environmental feature in every agricultural activity. The management is however in the progress of developing a structure that will facilitate the proper implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and also address gender issues efficiently and effectively.

3.5 Gender Budget

The political will has been built such that the Ministry Management has fully adopted the concept of Gender Mainstreaming and has availed funds for the formulation of the Sector Gender Policy Framework. This budget is limited but will be extended to the implementation of the Gender Framework and other activities. The Division of Agricultural Planning and Statistics continues to mobilize funding and technical support from other donor and development partners like Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNDP/ United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the National Women's Machinery. However, there are a lot of key planned initiatives which cannot be executed because there are always financial constraints.

3.6 Networking

There is need to adopt a multi-dimensional approach in addressing gender and development as well as women's empowerment issues. This has worked miraculously for

the Ministry of Agriculture where a lot of support was demonstrated through the technical and financial support provided by for example Commonwealth Secretariat, UNDP, FAO, TGNP – Tanzania, and many other local and international organizations. The Ministry has also developed strong links with the local University, the Gender and Energy Network of Botswana (GENBO) and the National Women’s Machinery which continues to provide information on other sources of networking and partnerships that the Ministry can explore further. The Ministry will continue to nurture relationships with key Ministries and department as well as organizations and the other regional establishments and institutions.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Gender is a relatively new concept in the Agricultural sector like in many sectors in the country, but there are positive signs that gender equality will ultimately be achieved. This optimism is based on the positive champions and political will that prevail in the sector. It has not been an easy route but with perseverance, hard work, lobbying and resilience, the agricultural sector will embrace gender equity as its strategy towards increased agricultural participation and production.

Having learnt from the previous studies and field experiences and observation of the organization and set up of the agricultural sector, the issues of gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment cannot be over emphasized. Funds permitting, the Ministry intends to benchmark with other neighboring countries to get exposure and the best practices on this process. Since the Ministry is still in a critical stage of formulation in the gender mainstreaming process, it would remain open to any form of assistance from any organization or country in moving this agenda forward.