

**RURAL WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL AND  
NON- AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES: A CASE STUDY OF  
MANSHIET DAHSHOUR VILLAGE, EL – BADRASHEN DISTRICT,  
GIZA GOVERNORATE, EGYPT.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Egyptian rural women play critical, diverse roles in agricultural and non- agricultural activities in the rural economy as unpaid family workers, own- account farmers, and plantations.

The multiple role of women in agriculture, allied occupations and household activities are generally, underestimated and undervalued. By and large, they have remained as invisible hands .

The present study was undertaken to determine the nature and extent of participation of rural women in various agricultural and non- agricultural activities, and their contribution in generating household income.

A sample size of 100 farm households of Manshiet Dahshour village were selected randomly, and the housewives of the households, who worked outside along with their household work, were the respondents of this study. Data were collected through structured interview questionnaire during September an October 2016. The obtained data were analyzed by using tabular and statistical techniques. The findings showed that most of the respondents constitute economically active age group who were mostly illiterate.

Contribution of women to total family income in low, medium and high income household categories were 34.5 , 25.0 and 13.9 per cent respectively. It was evident that, female participation of low and medium income households is markedly higher in non- agricultural activities than the high income households. Women were involved in various agricultural and non- agricultural activities and largely took part in " rearing poultry", " harvesting crops ", " post – harvest operations", "milking and milk processing", " petty trading ", " labor selling " and " sewing " (dress marketing).

The values of correlation coefficient indicated that only household size is positively and significantly associated with women respondent participation in agricultural and non- agricultural activities.

**Key words:** Women, Farm activities, Non- farm activities, Participation.

**INTRODUCTION:**

In many developing countries, agriculture is not the only source of employment and income for rural households, but non- farm activities also have special importance.

In the rural area, the majority of households are involved in farm activities but many of them get their income from non- farm activities. (World Bank, 2008)

Although the development of rural economy will still be largely determine by the development of the rural agricultural sector, however, the development of the non- agricultural sector, particularly small- scale industries is equally of crucial importance in leading the economy towards a more effective and significantly integrated rural development (Redzuan and Aref, 2011). At the same time, various non- farm activities are playing an important role in providing employment opportunities and incomes to the labor force belonging to both farming and non- farming households.

The livelihood security and well being of rural households improve with blending of non- farm economic activities with farm activities and such diversification of rural livelihood positively impacts the farm efficiency.

Women are involved in all the different types of agricultural and non-agricultural activities in rural Egypt, yet their efforts often receive very little or no attention in the literature.

Women's participations in economic activity brings benefits at both micro and macro levels. At the macro level there is a positive correlation between female labour force participation rates and economic growth, but at the micro level the participation of women in the labour force beneficial for the welfare of the family income, health, and children's education etc. (Jesus, A., 2009).

Women are more likely than men to invest a large proportion of their household income in the education of their children and to meet the nutritional needs of their households.

According to the ILO, women's work, both paid and unpaid, may be the single most important poverty- reducing factor in developing economies (Heintz, 2006) and (Aguirre et al, 2012).

A recent study covering southern Mediterranean countries, including Egypt, finds that an increase of 5% in female labor force participation rates leads to a cumulative 1.3% increase in GDP above the reference scenario (From 2015 to 2030). (Tsani et al, 2012).

According to Egyptian rural culture, the role of men is clearly identified as the main breadwinners, while women are economically dependent on men (Barsoum et al., 2009).

Despite the remarkable increase in women's educational attainment in Egypt (Elbadawy, 2014), participation in the labor market remains relatively

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low. Rural Egypt also remains a traditional society, with a gendered allocation of time within the household: men specialize in market work, while most (if not all) of the family responsibilities remain female tasks.

The major occupation of most women living in the village is farming. They serve as principal agricultural workers and producers of foods for feeding their families. They are more involved in farming activities such as crop production and animal husbandry. Whereas the non- farm activities includes all other activities like animal production, dairy products, sewing, knitting, embroidering, carpet making... etc.

Although women make a major contribution to agriculture production and allied activities, this contribution is underreported in all developing regions because women's work is often unrecognized or is considered part of "housework".

Rural women's labour in rural production becomes invisible in the unpaid category.

Traditionally, the goods produced and the services performed by women in the family context have not been monetized, that is largely because: (1) the family operated as an economic unit, in which there was a division and sharing of labor among men, women, and children for the common good; and (2) this tradition is based on an agrarian way of life.

Women remains largely unpaid for their domestic services; their household labor remains invisible in national economies. Women bear the burden of the farming duties, household tasks, off- farm income generating activities while also maintaining responsibility over family nutrition, food security and child care (Abbasi, 2005).

In Egyptian rural society, all women educated and uneducated alike generally remain involved in their domestic duties: women are the part and parcel of family life. They are involved in every corner of household work.

Women and men carry out different agricultural tasks. In many contexts, men are responsible and perform the heaviest tasks in agriculture such as land clearing, while women do most for physically lighter chores in and around the homestead, such as weeding and hoeing, crop transportation and food processing. Women also work in the field alongside men, and contribute to the care of livestock an rearing poultry and provide supplementary household resources through income – generating activities.

There are many other activities done mostly by women that are quasi-economic in nature which are not valued in national income accounting. Example are food processing and preparation of meals for the family members, care of the child, old and sick members of the household; and tutoring of children. If the household had hired workers for doing these gobs, it would involve some expenditure. We call these activities as domestic activities (<https://lup.lub.iu.se/search/ws/files/5869745/2061263>).

Rural women work long hours, often under difficult circumstances and without adequate access to appropriate technologies and infrastructure, such as roads, water, and sanitation systems. These difficulties increase their responsibilities and workloads and constrain their contributions to agriculture.

Women cope with their heavy workloads and time burdens by using help from children. This usually puts pressure on girls to take on some of the housework and childcare, often by compromising their own education.

Women from the poorest households sometimes work outside the home as paid laborers for their family's survival. Even though the economic contribution of rural women is substantial, it is largely unacknowledged (<http://scholar.Google.com.eg/scholar?9=improving+livelihoods+o>.)

According to estimates of the FAO, two thirds of the female labor force in developing economies are engaged in agricultural activities (FAO, 2006).

According to CAPMAS, Egypt's official statistical agency, the labour force participation rate reached 48% in 2014 for the working age population (15- 64). However, that rate is dominated by men who have a high rate of 73%, while women only participate at a rate of 23%.

In recent years, empirical researches have tried to document the nature and extent of rural women's involvement in agricultural and non- agricultural activities, to eliminate the distressed condition of rural women and bring them to the main stream of development for achieving a sustainable livelihood. Owing to this necessity, the present study aims to investigate the following specific objectives:

- 1- To measure the main socio-economic characteristics of the rural women in the study area.
- 2- To estimate contribution of rural women to total household income.
- 3- Assessing gender involvement in agricultural and non- agricultural activities, and their contribution in household income.
- 4- To determine and describe the nature and extent of participation of rural women in agricultural and non- agricultural activities.
- 5- To determine the factors influencing women's participation in various activities.

### **Methodology:**

#### **a. Population and Sample:**

The study was conducted at Manshiet Dahshour village affiliated to Dahshour local unit, El- Badrashen District, Giza, Governorate.

This village was selected due to the participation of women in this village in various economic activities inside and outside their home which is associated with their poor economic condition.

Manshiet Dahshour is a traditional village, where most of inhabitants work in agriculture. The village has a market for selling and buying vegetable

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and fruits. Manshiet Dahshour village is the largest village in Dahshour local unit, which has Sakkara at north, Dahshour village at its south, El marazeek village at its east, the Zoser pyramid and the west desert at its west, finally it is 32 KM far from Cairo.

The estimate agricultural land of Manshiet Dahshour village is around 250 Faddans, The soil is very characterized by high production of Palm trees. The village is divided into four main areas: i) east of the village, ii) Elbarhoumia mosque, iii) Abo Abd elrahman area, iv) Abo hamouda and El ezzba area.

The village includes 4 satellites : i) El Arban (arab masoud), ii) El harayeb (arab el saharah) ,iii) Arab rageeb, iv) Arab barakat Elabadlah.

In 2009, the estimate population of the village reached 19800: include 10400 females, 9400 males which indicate estimate of 4312 families.

Among the farm households of the village 100 households were selected randomly.

Thus The housewives of these households, who worked outside along with their household work, were the respondents of this study. Data on various socio- economic characteristics and study variables were collected through direct interview with the structured and pre- tested interview questionnaire during September and October 2016.

After completion of the field survey, the data obtained from the respondents were edited, coded, compiled, tabulated and analyzed according to the objectives of the study.

Basic statistics such as mean, stander deviation and rank were used in describing the variables of the study.

“Pearson’s correlation test ” was used to analyze factors influencing women's participation in various economic activities.

### **b- Tools and Techniques:**

#### **1- Measurement of Dependent Variable:**

To assess the level of participation of rural women in agricultural and non- agricultural economic activities, the participation index was used (Sailaja and Reddy, 2003).

The participation index is a three point continuum namely “Regularly ”, “Occasionally “and ” Not at all “or” Never done by women” which was assigned scores of 2, 1 and 0, respectively.

For the purpose of ranking of different activities performed by rural women the frequency of responses from each of the three point continuum of a specific activity under major activity was tabulated and multiplied by concerned score. Then, they were added together to get the total score for each specific activity for the purpose of their ranking.

Overall participation was calculated by summing up all the activities done by the women either regularly or occasionally by giving a value of 2 for

regularly and 1 for occasionally. So the dependent variable is the extent of overall participation in various activities.

Generally, the participation Index (PI) for each economic activity was calculated by using the following formula:

$$PI = \sum W_i X_i$$

$$= W_1 X_1 + W_2 X_2 + W_3 X_3$$

**Where,**

**PI** = participation index of each agricultural and non- agricultural economic activity

**X<sub>1</sub>** = activity done by women regularly

**X<sub>2</sub>** = activity done by women occasionally

**X<sub>3</sub>** = activity never done by women

**W<sub>i</sub>** = weight (the scores given for different levels of participation in economic activity: 2 for regularly participation, 1 for occasionally participation, 0 in case of never participation).

**2- Measurement of the Independent Variables:**

The independent variables of this study which influenced the rural women's participation in agricultural and non- agricultural activities are: age, level of education, land holding, household size, and total household annual income from different agricultural and non- agricultural activities. The measurement of the five independent variables are as follows:

- Age of a respondent is measured in terms of actual years on the basis of her statement.
- Level of education is measured by the number of years of schooling.
- Land holding in agriculture is defined as any area of land, regardless of its size, used totally or partially for plant, animal or fish production.

Therefore, all lands managed by one member of the household of the respondent, regardless of location, are considered as one farm.

- Household size of a respondent is measured by the total number of members of the household including the respondent herself, spouse, children and other permanent dependent who lived together as family unit.
- household annual income of the respondents was measured in Egyptian pounds on the basis of total yearly earning from agricultural and non-agricultural sources of her family.

The following equation was used to calculate household annual income:

$$Y = \sum_{i=1}^n A_i + \sum_{i=1}^n B_i$$

**Y**= household annual income (LÉ)

**A<sub>i</sub>**= household annual total income (male+ female) from <sup>i=1</sup><sub>i</sub><sup>th</sup> farm activities,

**B<sub>i</sub>** = household annual total income (male+ female) from <sup>i=1</sup><sub>i</sub><sup>th</sup> non-farm activities, i= 1, 2, 3.....n

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The household annual income of the study sample were categorized into three equal categories: low, medium, and high according to the level of household income as follows:

- 1- Low income households (14000- 26000 LE)
- 2- Medium income households (26001- 38000 LE)
- 3- High income households (38001- 50000 LE)

### **3- Hypotheses:**

To test the fifth objective of the study, concerning factors influencing women's participation in various economic activities, five hypotheses were framed:

H<sub>0</sub>: there is no significant relationship between socio-economic characteristics (age, level of education, land holding, household size and household annual income) of the women respondents and their level of participation (involvement) in the agricultural and non- agricultural activities.

### **Results and Discussion:**

#### **Socio- economic characteristic of the respondents:**

The Socio- economic characteristic of the respondents for various variables are presented in table (1).

**Table (1): Socio- economic characteristics of the respondents.**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Observed score</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Age (years)	20- 60	41.4	7.23
Level of education (years of schooling)	0- 16	4.3	3.12
Land holding (Kerat)	0- 72	13.5	25.21
Household size (numbers)	1- 10	5.8	1.63
Household annual income (000 LE)	14- 50	33000	18.42

#### **Age:**

The mean age of the women respondents was 41.4 years with the standard deviation (SD) of 7.23, indicating that rural women of the present study belong to the economically active and productive age group.

#### **Educational Levels:**

The educational level of the respondents is very much low i. e., the average schooling years spent by women respondents in basic level of formal education was 4.3 years only.

Thus, the majority of the women's respondent in the study sample do not able to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and values which equip and develop them to become versatile to the changing patterns of modernity.

#### **Land holding size:**

The size of respondent "household land holding "in agriculture was very small, with an average size 13.5 kerat per household. Land holding usually determine the form of land use and the holder's decision making in the field of production and subsequently of distribution of the agricultural income.

The main cause of decreasing the land holding size of women in the study sample in the village were:

- 1- Overpopulation with a relatively constant area of the agricultural land denotes an increasing demand for land given a relatively constant land supply.
- 2- The system of inheritance leads to a continuous sequential partition of land legacy among heirs.

**Household size:**

The average household size is 5- 8 members per household, while the average in Egypt in 2014 was 4.2 per household (EDHS, 2015), it means that the average household size in the study sample is greater than the average of Egypt.

**Household annual income:**

The average household annual income was about 33 thousands Egyptian pounds, while the average household annual income in Egyptian urban areas in 2010- 2011 was about LE 30,205, compared to LE 21,370 for families living in the countryside (EDHS, 2015)

**Contribution of rural women to total household income:**

The extent to which women respondents can contribute to support the livelihood of her household depends much on the level of income earned per month, daily, weekly or per annum.

Since the capacity to generate income is intimately associated with ones, or several economic activity, it is therefore a truism to state that the size of the income would largely influence the household income size. Usually, this income levels have been a major indicator to measure poverty at the individual or household levels and their ability to meet their basic needs.

The average annual family income of low, medium and high income households in the study sample stood at 19920 LE, 31989 LE and 43897 LE respectively. Women of these three categories contributed 6872 LE, 7997 LE and 6145 LE which were 34.5, 25.0 and 13.9 per cent of total household income respectively (Table 2).

**Table (2): Contribution of rural women in the study sample to total household income in low, medium and high income household.**

Categories of household annual income	Average annual household income (LE)	Earning of women (LE/ year)	Per cent of women,s contribution to total income
Low income	19920	6872	34.5
Medium income	31989	7997	25.0
High income	43897	6145	13.9

**Assessing Gender Involvement in Agricultural and Non- agricultural Activities, and Their Contribution in Household Income:**

Table (3) revealed that women participation in non- farm activities was higher in low income households (81.25 per cent) that in medium income

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(56.37 per cent) and high income households 42.23 per cent). On the other hand, male participation in farm activities was higher in high income households (57.77 per cent) compared to low and medium income household. From the finding, it can be inferred that the rural women in low income category fighting back with non- farm activities for the improvement of their livelihoods.

**Table (3): Farm and non- farm activities of three categories of households.**

Categories of household annual income	Farm activities		Non - Farm activities	
	% of men	% of women	% of men	% of women
Low income household	30.78	18.75	69.22	81.25
Medium income household	24.63	43.63	75.37	56.37
High income household	51.71	57.77	48.29	42.23

**Nature and Extent of participation of Rural Women Respondents in Agricultural and Non- Agricultural Activities:**

The nature and extent of women's involvement in agricultural and non-agricultural activities vary greatly from region- to- region and even within a region, it varies widely among different farming system and socio- economic status group of families.

Rural women of the study sample were taking part in various agricultural and non- agricultural activities. The participation of respondents according to their participation in various agricultural and non- agricultural activities has been shown in tables (4) and (5) along with participation indices and rank order.

Rural women in the study sample were largely involved in rearing poultry, harvesting, post- harvest operations (like storage and selling of agricultural commodities), milking and milk processing, and cleaning of animal sheds because each of this activity ranked for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> position, respectively.

Out of 100 respondents (study sample), 98 involved in rearing poultry activities, 92 in sowing activities, 91 in milking and milk processing activities, 90 in cleaning of animals sheds, 89 in feeding and caring livestock activities.

No women were involved in fertilizer application regularly. Only 3 and 7 respondent were involved in crop production activities and harvesting occasionally respectively. A large part of respondents were never taking part in fertilizer application and crop protection activities (88 out of 100).

**Table (4): Extent of rural women participation in various agricultural activities of the study sample.**

Agricultural activities	Extent of participation			Participation indices *	Rank order
	Regularly	Occasionally	Never		
1- Land preparation	2	15	83	19	12
2- Manure application	3	45	52	51	9
3- Sowing	22	70	8	114	8
4- Fertilizer application	0	12	88	12	13
5- Weeding	68	10	22	146	7
6- Applying irrigation	1	30	69	32	10
7- Crop protection activities	9	3	88	21	11
8- Harvesting	81	7	12	169	2
9- Post- harvest operations	76	9	15	161	3
10- Cleaning of animals sheds	62	28	10	152	5
11- Feeding and caring of livestock	60	29	11	149	6
12- Rearing poultry	73	25	2	171	1
13- Milking and milk processing	68	23	9	159	4

\* Participation indices = Regularly  $\times_2$  + Occasionally  $\times_1$  + Never  $\times_0$

The non- agricultural activities which were done by the rural women included: petty trading, labour selling, sewing (dress making), embroidery work, and handicrafts (artisanal palm products). The table (5) reveals that the participation of rural women in respect of “petty trading” was the highest, and “labor selling” was the second highest, and “sewing (dress making)” was the third highest. Participation in “embroidery work ” had the lowest participation index.

Out of 100 respondents, 13 were involved regularly in “petty trading” in comparison with 11 in “labour selling” and 2 in “dress making” respectively. Artisanal palm products was another important activity done by the poor women occasionally. According to Owusu and Lund (2005), women are dominance in petty trading results from their desire to provide clothes for their children and to generate supplementary income in order to help cater for the household.

**Table (5): Extent of rural women participation in various non-agricultural activities.**

Activities	Extent of participation			Participation indices	Rank order
	Regularly	Occasionally	Never		
1- Petty trading	13	84	3	110	1
2- Labour selling	11	23	66	45	2
3- Sewing (dress marking)	2	12	86	16	3
4- Embroidery work	0	9	91	9	5
5- Handicrafts (Artisanal palm products)	0	12	88	12	4

\* The universal household activities like food preparation, looking after family members, cleaning the house and child care were not included, because all of the respondents of this study were involved regularly in these activities.

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**Factors Influencing Women's Participation in Various Economic Activities:**

The relationship between women respondents' participation on farming and non farming activities and the variables that influence their participation is presented in table (6). The results of the " Pearson's correlation test showed the determinates affecting rural women's participation in various activities.

**Table (6): Relationship between Socio- economic Variables with women respondents' participation in agricultural and non-agricultural activities.**

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Correlation Coefficient ("r" values)</b>
1- Age (years)	- 0.012 **
2- Level of education (years of schooling)	0.005**
3- Land holding (kirat)	0.168**
4- Household size (numbers)	0.218*
5- Household annual income (000 LE)	0.052**

\* Significant at 0.05 level

\*\* Non Significant

Out of the total five variables only household size is positively and significantly associated with women respondents' participation in agricultural and non- agricultural activities. It means that women's participation in agricultural and non-agricultural activities increases with the increase in numbers of members of household. In other words, the larger the size of the household the higher the extent of participation of women in outside activities. This association might be related with the involvement of the children in farming activities might give time for women to participate outside home activities. Rural women participation is also positively, but non- Significantly correlated with level of education and land holding; and negatively, but non- Significantly with age of the respondents and total household annual income.

According to the above results, all the above mentioned hypotheses were accepted expect that concerned the household size at the level of Significance 0.05.

**CONCLUSION:**

The level of income of a household depends on the availability of employment opportunities for the adult members of that household. Since suitable jobs and agricultural lands are scarce in a country like Egypt, the creation of self- employment opportunities becomes the most important objective of households to enhance income, and thus, to enhance the chance to cover the basic necessities.

Most women are motivated by factors particularly for the sake of their children's needs and that of the aged parents to contribute financially to the wellbeing of their households. Mothers usually have some intrinsic value for

their children, hence, cannot help to see them go naked or hungry even if the husband did not provide. It is therefore, not surprising that most of the women in the study area adopted several supplementary income generation strategies as a means that would help them cater for the needs of their children and adged parents in the household.

Others also contribute to the household income to support their husbands and to ensure a harmonious co- existence in the household whilst avoiding the impression that they are lazy which could lead to marital breakdown.

The analysis shows that women ply an important role in farm activities especially in rearing poultry, harvesting, post- harvest operations, and milking and milk processing. Economic pressure is forcing them to break away their traditional roles of housewives into non- farm labourers. The non- agricultural activities which were done by the rural women included: "petty trading ", "labour selling ", "sewing ", "handicrafts " and " embroidery work " .

The finding of the present study revels that contribution of female labour in different activities as well as in total family income was substantial. This was particularly true for the low income households.

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مشاركة المرأة الريفية فى الأنشطة الزراعية والغير زراعية: دراسة حالة فى قرية منشية دهشور، مركز البدرشين، محافظة الجيزة، مصر.

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قسم المجتمع الريفي والإرشاد الزراعي، كلية الزراعة، جامعة عين شمس، جمهورية مصر العربية.

المرأة المصرية الريفية تلعب دور هام ومحورى فى الدخل الريفي من خلال المشاركة فى الأنشطة الريفية وغير الريفية وذلك من خلال عملها الاسرى الغير مدفوع، المساعدة فى الاعمال الزراعية.

عامة ما يتم تقليل من اهمية الادوار المتعددة للمرأة فى النشاط الزراعي، الاعمال المرتبطة بالزراعة والمهام المنزلية و ذلك لاعتبارها ايدى عاملة غير مرئية.

تستهدف الدراسة الحالية على تحديد طبيعة ومدى مشاركة المرأة الريفية فى الأنشطة الزراعية وغير زراعية ، ومشاركتها فى زيادة الدخل على مستوى الاسرة.

تم سحب عينة عشوائية مكونة من ١٠٠ اسرة ريفية من قرية منية دهشور، تم تجميع البيانات الميدانية من ربات المنزل اللاتي يعملن داخل وخارج المنزل. البيانات تم تجميعها من خلال استمارة استبيان فى خلال شهرى سبتمبر و اكتوبر ٢٠١٦. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام اساليب الاحصاء الوصفي واختبار (ت). ولقد اظهرت البيانات ان غالبية المشاركين فى أنشطة لزيادة الدخل من الفئة التعليمية الامية. مشاركة المرأة فى اجمالى الدخل الاسرى الضعيف، المتوسط والمرتفع كانت على النحو التالي: ٣٤.٥، ٢٥، ١٣.٥% بالترتيب. من الواضح ان مشاركة المرأة فى الدخل الاسرى كانت اعلى فى فئة الدخل الضعيفة والمتوسطة فى الأنشطة الغير زراعية عن الفئة المرتفعة. المرأة كانت لها مشاركة واضحة فى أنشطة زراعية وغير زراعية متعددة خاصة تربية الدواجن، حصاد المحاصيل، عمليات ما بعد الحصاد، الخياطة.

معامل ارتباط القيم اظهر ان من ٥ متغيرات فان حجم الاسرة له تأثير معنوى وايجابى، وهو مرتبط باستجابات المرأة الريفية من المشاركات فى الأنشطة الزراعية وغير الزراعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المرأة، المشاركة، الأنشطة الزراعية، الأنشطة الغير زراعية.