

A Study on the Food Crop Economy Among the Tarok Women in Langtang South Area of Plateau State Nigeria, 1948-1991

By

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Abstract: *Over the years, women have been subjected to all kinds of deprivation in many spheres, but more worrisome is the plight they face particularly in agricultural production. In Plateau state, women have engaged in the food crop economy, but their activities have received little attention for reasons based on gender bias, and the customary belief system which sees a woman as only useful in reproduction and household chores. Thus, this paper examined the Tarok women in the food crop economy of the Lantang South area of Plateau State, from 1948-1991. The Historical methodology was used in carrying out the research. The research revealed that the Tarok women in the Lantang South area did not only occupy a significant place in the food crop economy but have taken the leading role due to factors related to the tin mining operations in Jos. It therefore suggested that women should not only be considered in policies related to the agricultural sub-sector but be part of such process if the issue of rural poverty and food (in)security is to be taken seriously.*

Keywords: *women, food crop, land access, labour systems, agricultural practices*

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays an important role in most non-industrial economies, as a major contributor to export earnings, and as a source of employment and livelihood, Sofa Team and Cheryl Doss (2011, 51). This is so because most of the agricultural populations are rural farmers who are mostly women- a statistic provided by the Sofa Team (51-53). Women are estimated to constitute about 1.6 billion around the world, a figure which represents more than a quarter of the total world population, Heinrichs, Sara (nd). They equally account for about 43% of the world's agricultural labour force, which rises to 70% in some countries, and represent 80% of food producers, 100% of those who process basic food

stuff and they undertake from 60% to 90% of the marketing, Fabiyi EF (2017, 677). Four of ten agricultural workers in the world are reported to be women, Adams OR (2017; 102). Going by that estimate, rural women farmers occupy a vital role in food production and food security, but official figures often underestimate the value of women's work and their overall contribution to national wealth.

In sub-Saharan Africa, agricultural production lies in the hands of rural farmers, Yemisi I. Ogunlela, and Aisha A. Mukhtar (2009; 19). A large majority of the farmers operate at the subsistence, smallholder level, with intensive agriculture being uncommon. A characterization

of the agricultural production system in such countries, Nigeria inclusive, is that a large fraction of the agricultural output is in the hands of these smallholder farmers whose average holding is about 1.0-3.0 hectares. Though they suffer limitations in terms of access to modern improved technologies and good investment in capital, inputs, and labour, but household food and nutrition security relies heavily on rural food production and this contributes

substantially to poverty alleviation. In all of these, the rural woman plays a pivotal role and she is crucial to the overall success of efforts directed at agricultural development, because they account for more than one-third of the workforce in Africa, Fabiyi et al (676). Table I, below show distribution of women participation in agricultural production in Africa.

Table I: Showing distribution of women involvement in agriculture in Africa

S/N	ACTIVITY	% INVOLVEMENT
1.	African workers	70
2.	Food producers	80
3.	Basic foodstuff processing	10
4.	Rural Marketing	60-90
5.	% in workforce in West Africa	80

Source: Adenuga A. O, and Rayi-Mustapha, N O" The Role of Women in Promoting Agricultural Productivity and Developing skills for improved Quality of life in Rural Areas" IOSR Journal of Engineering 3.8(2013): 52

In Nigeria, women supply most of the needed labour in agricultural activities and this is the most important factor of production to farmers, as it is needed at the stages of agricultural production. Even women in seclusion (Purdah) generate substantial income through food crop processing; this is usually generally achieved through collective work. The spirit of cooperatives has been cultivated and expressed among women in different ways. Thus, women in Nigeria are said to represent 60-80% of agricultural food crop production, and account for more than 60% of the agricultural production in the traditional setting, Fabiyi et al (677). Women farmers in Nigeria, especially in rural areas have always worked hard, and their labour is responsible for the survival of millions of families, Adenuga and Rayi-Mustapha (2013;52). They are the invisible farmers and form the backbone of agricultural development, yet their families form the majority of the world's eight hundred million chronically hungry people.

Though in some quarters women are still being considered as second fiddle in economic and resource importance, Damisa et al (2007; 412), but indeed, emerging arguments suggest that women involvement in agriculture in Nigeria has not only attracted greater attention in recent years, but that they form an integral part of the African farming structure Sofa Team (28). The survival and sustenance of agriculture and rural development in Nigeria, as well as in many sub-Saharan African x countries, rest squarely on rural women. This research work aligned with the argument that women play a significant role in agricultural production around most developing countries, and Nigeria in Particular.

However, the roles and status of women's participation in agricultural production varies considerably in terms of region, religion, ethnicity, and social class, Oyemike Victor Benson et al (2019; 4). The condition for women's participation in agriculture in one region differs from another. For example, on the plateau, the migration of men to the tin mines, left women with no option but to take over and dominate agricultural production. This is different in the oil-rich Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, where oil was a factor. Also, some religious practices like the Purdah limit women's participation in agriculture particularly among Muslims, but this is not the same with Christian women. This goes on to ethnic and class variation. Therefore, making a generalized statement on women's participation in agricultural production around the globe can be problematic-it has to be specific. Thus, region, religion, and the period in considering subject like this are relevant.

This research, therefore, examined food crops economy among the Tarok women in Lantang South area of Plateau State. Issues such as the main agricultural productive resources, food crop being produced over time, changes in the food crop economy, factors for the changes, marketing and exchange of the products thereof, as well as constraints faced by the women formed key areas of the discussion here. Though the scope of this work cut across colonial and the post-colonial periods, but themes in the pre-colonial period are discussed so as to appreciate the changes in the post-colonial activities of the Lantang South women in agricultural production especially in the food crops economy.

Aim and objectives

Against the customary belief that women are only good in the kitchen, household chores and reproduction, this research examined the food crops economy among the Tarok women of Lantang South area of Plateau State. Specific objectives include:

- i. To examine the Tarok women access to agricultural productive resources
- ii. To interrogate the trends in the food crops economy among the Tarok women
- iii. And to discuss the constraints face by the Tarok women in the food crops economy

Methodology

The historical methodology was used for the research. This entails using various methods to achieve the said objectives. Firstly, the method of data collection engaged was both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources involve the use of oral interviews, and Archival material which are relevant in the reconstruction of the past of Africa, David L Imbua (2021; 2). The oral interviews provided information on the activities of the Tarok women in the food crop economy in the recent past and present, while the Archival sources enriched the work with information during the colonial period. The secondary sources consisted of published and unpublished materials including: books, manuscripts, articles, thesis, and seminar/conference papers. The two sources: primary and secondary, served as compliment. This paper also benefited from the multi-disciplinary approach where research carried out in disciplines other than history Samuel O. Aghalino (2021; 1), was use to provide a wider perspective on the subject matter. Structured along relevant lines of themes for in-depth analysis, the analytical method Sati U, Fwatshak (2006; 73), was used for presentation which allowed for critical examination of data/facts available for the study.

Women access to agricultural productive resources among the Tarok: the system of landownership and its access in pre-colonial times

The system of Land ownership and access to land in Lantang is complicated. Court cases have the issue of land ownership as one of the dominant. This is so because of the method of land acquisition in the past, associated with numerous clans and sub-clans existing side by side, Wilson V Famwang (1980; 66-69). In pre-colonial times, Tarok people mostly settled in the hills for the purpose of defense, due to inter-ethnic wars. Therefore, different hills were identified with the occupying clans. The population was sizeable such that ownership, and control over land was not an issue. But an increase in population forced the people down the hill in search of farmland since the hills could not accommodate

them anymore. In this way families or clans could have farms close together. Anyone who first cultivates a land becomes the owner of the land automatically. This form of shifting and ownership of land resulted in one person, family or clan owning more than one farmland far away from each other, because they keep shifting from one farmland to another allowing the other to regain fertility.

Therefore, one common means of having access to land was through leasing. Land was given temporarily to another person who wants to use the land for agricultural purposes, by the original owner, and the lease period could be long or brief depending on when the original owner decides to use his land. This practice was based on mutual understanding among the people in the past. But later this trust came under threat, such that land leased out, was being claimed by the tenant from the original owner which has always formed part of the basis of conflict.

Land ownership and its access in colonial and Post-Colonial periods

As noted earlier, the practices of leasing out land was betrayed, resulting in conflict most often. Therefore, instead of leasing, land was now either sold or hired, Wilson V Famwang (67-69). Though ownership of land in the pre-colonial days also involved purchase, but it was very limited. It was more of a colonial and post-colonial development up to the 1990s. Sometimes a tenant base on leasing would have interest in the farmland, and would like to buy from the original owner. The sale of land in this way involved several witnesses, especially relatives from both parties, and those who share boundaries with the land under purchase. Thus, lands were clearly demarcated.

Another practice of land ownership in this period was based on hiring. This also came about due to the betrayal of the leasing system in the past. Farmlands were now being given or acquired by hiring so as to avoid conflict. Land came to be rented out yearly for a fee agreeable to both parties. Apart from hiring, Land inheritance was another access to land ownership. But the practice of land inheritance came along with gender bias, affecting women's agricultural productivity which is discussed later.

Labour systems

One of the dominant systems of labour especially in pre-colonial times was family labour, Nimlan R. Menmak (2012). Although a man was the head of the household in the patrilineal system, older women in the absence of older men, had control of the labour of younger family members. During the farming season in pre-colonial Tarok society, there was the division of labour based on

gender. On one hand, the men did the most strenuous work like clearing of farmland, and making of ridges while women performed the less strenuous tasks such as planting, weeding, hoeing, transporting grains home from the farm after harvest, cooking of food, fetching water from streams or rivers, gathering of firewood, processing and storing of grains and soup ingredients among others.

Women in Langtang South of Plateau State were also part of a collective labour group known as “*achip*” to compliment the other sources of labour, John N Shagaya (2005; 184). This type of labour comprised women in the same village and it was on a rotational basis. The leader of the group was referred to as *Ponzhilram* and she ensured the smooth running of the group. The labour groups are also responsible for allocating farm plots to members and also decided when they would eat and stop working for the day. The person hosting the group was responsible for food and local beer (*nche*) or gruel for the group. This type of labour was efficient because it was fast and fun.

It was in the post-colonial period that hired labour came to fore, outside the cooperative arrangements, Teldir Stella Dangfa (2017). Hired hands are paid for their labour either daily, weekly, monthly depending on the agreement. They are involved in clearing of the farmlands, making ridges, planting, weeding and harvesting. This system is now very efficient and based on research; it has reasonably increased the amount and yield of the crops for women and increased their independence though it is quite expensive.

Sources of agricultural financing

The women farmers have three sources of capital for agricultural production: Government, private sectors, and the Women Farmers Organization. Government and private organization offer intervention for agricultural production via different programmes eg Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP), Fadama Programmes, and the most recent one known as the Anchors Borrowers Programmes. But women farmers’ access to these interventions is always hampered by the question of gender. There is always unequal consideration in the allocation of agricultural productive resources. This constitutes a big challenge for women farmers’ in the agricultural production.

Women farmers also resort to their cooperatives for agricultural purposes, Olatinwo LK (nd). Farmers cooperatives are association of farmers who voluntarily come together to achieve a common goal. Members contribute equitably to the capital and personal requirement of their cooperative and accept a fair share of the risks and benefits of their undertakings. The most important obligation of women farmer cooperative societies is savings. Women farmers are expected to save a specify amount of money base on arrangement convenient for individual members of the society. The

savings is used as credit for lending to needy members and the principal and interest are calculated to be repaid back either install mentally or otherwise. This arrangement allows member to have access to credit during production. However, even this cooperative faces challenges.

Tarok women and trends in the food crop economy: Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods.

Primarily the crops grown in pre-colonial times were vegetables, guinea corn, and millet, John N S (186-209). Vegetables which were dominantly cultivated by women most times serve the purpose of household needs, and covers for the gap between end of harvest, and the period of new cultivation which falls between August and November. Millet and guinea corn on the other hand, was held high traditionally. They both have a great ritual importance, and extensively use for making of local beer, and was also useful as a hunger breaker, John N S (186). All of the three roles played were inter-twined. The local beer also known as (*nche*), played a very important role in the Tarok socio-traditional life. Beer was largely consumed and use during rituals, festivals, and at a meeting of elders. It also served as an incentive for cooperative labour.

Colonial Period (1909)

Beginning from 1909 up to the 1920’s – a period marking the colonial expeditions and domination of the Tarok people, there was a gradual change in crops cultivated by the Tarok people. Vegetables, guinea corn, and millet came to be replaced with cotton, groundnuts, beniseed, yam etc. Factors for these changes were said to be threefold if not four:

One of such factors was the introduction of tax by the colonial authorities, Freemantle JM (1909; 225-226). It was believed by the British authorities that taxation or payment of tax represented loyalty to the colonial authority. Therefore, when the Tarok people were conquered by the British, taxation was imposed on the conquered areas, so as to also generate revenue for the running of the colonial government. Tarok were not used to paying tribute or tax, but were eventually forced to pay. Since they had no money to pay tax, and payment was done in pounds and Tarok land was not an export crop producing areas, the people had to earn money to pay tax by selling their labour on public works particularly on the minefields in Jos or by selling foodstuffs at the minefields, NAK (1909). In this way the women were increasingly drowned into cash economy in terms of production and marketing. The Tables below represents tax paid by Tarok people at different levels.

Table: Tax paid by Plain Tarok during the periods as indicated

S/No	Year	Population	Tax Paid
1	1921-1922	18,333	E1,156:12
2	1932-1933		E1,517:80
3	1933-1934	24,576	E1,865:00

Source: John N Shagaya (2005)370

Table: Tax paid by Hill Tarok during the period as indicated

S/no	Year	Population	Tax Paid
1	1930	3,952	E286:16.0
2	1932-1933		E269:11.0
3	1933-1934	5,478	E151:00.0
4	1938	6,246	E302:18.0

Source: John N Shagaya (2005) 371

Therefore, to earn currency was by growing cash crops, whose market was coordinated by various European companies, NAK (1920). Prominent among them was the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA), whose function was to promote the production of cotton. This was how cotton came to be produced in the colonial period. There were also local traders, who bought cotton for the indigenous cloth industry at higher prices compared to the BCGA, thereby encouraging the production of cotton. Prices on commodity attract it cultivation. One of such crops that attracted attention in this regard was groundnut, which came to receive good price, hence it induced the people to pay more attention to it cultivation. Beniseed was another popular cash crop during the colonial rule. Though the growth of these crops was being encouraged, it was generally meted with little success because of the generally low prices associated with it, NAK, (1919).

Now prior to the coming of the great depression in 1929, Tarok farmers had paid their tax money partly through selling of foodstuffs or taking foodstuff to the plateau minefields for sale, NAK (1929). But the situation changed with the Great depression in 1929. The Great Depression brought about massive layoffs and unemployment on the minefields. Thus, it was reported that in the last quarter of 1930, the mining population reduced, thereby affecting the market for food stuffs. But new opportunities opened for earning money to pay tax during the Second World War, because of the growing need of executing the war, huge labour was now needed at the minefields, and also in the armed forces.

Agricultural Practices Upto 1990s

One of the agricultural practices by the Tarok was Terracing, John (18). This was also called "bench terracing" by agriculturalist. It was the practice where the

people built stone walls to hold up the soils, since in pre-colonial days they were mostly settled on hill top for the purpose of defense. Terracing served as a measure against soil erosion. However, this practice gave way to bush fallowing during colonial period. By this time a considerable number of the Tarok population, if not all, moved to the foot of the hills where they now practice bush fallowing. It was part of the practice that a piece of land was cultivated for a number of years, and then be allowed for an equally number of years to regain it fertility before being put to use again. The period of fallow may involve five to seven years, and sometimes twelve years if the soil was poor in nutrient.

Distance and close farms systems were also practiced. Close farms, equally known as (Nimbwang), was mostly close to the house, and also varies in seize depending on the size of the family, John (18). The Nimbwang were mostly cultivated by the women, who were being assisted by children of the household. The farms were often under use, and it fertility was maintained by application of local manure from domestic livestock such as goats, and wood ash. The crops grown on these farms involved mostly vegetables, okro, pumpkins etc. the purpose of these farms were to stand in the gab against hunger when old stucks of crops were exhausted, and new ones were not yet ready to be harvested. Such period was between October and November.

The Distant farms on the other hand, also known as Anyim were far away from the compound. In these farms, farmers usually stay on the farms for some days when there was much work to be done like planting, and keeping off birds and monkeys from destroying the seed. A round hot was normally erected for that purpose. Distant farms were quite large and were considered to be the main farms where men take charge in tilling the ground, and combine together with women in planting and harvesting. The dominant crops cultivated on these farms were guinea corn or Ikur in Tarok, and bulrush millet.

Marketing systems

Agricultural marketing is one activities that is been taken place since pre-colonial, colonial and post -colonial periods, and these had its own toll on agricultural activities in the area. In pre-colonial times it was mainly trade based on barter; it took a different turn during the colonial period, metamorphosing into full blown capitalist expropriation of the farmers via price appropriation.

Forms of trade and exchange among the Tarok upto 1920s.

There was hardly any form of organize trade among the people or between them and their neighbors, Shagaya (370). Tarok people had no formal trade, and that was why in 1912 the only markets were at Wase and Garkawa. There were however, said to be trade relations between the people and Wase, Teldir Stella Dangfa (2017). Though the trade was short-lived, and did not develop into any form of organized trade due to conflict between Lantang and Wase. What appear to be happening were local exchanges on a barter basis between families and among the communities due to insecurity at the time. Therefore, the most common form of trade was the known barter. In this regard, trade took the form of exchange of human services for material things. For instance, a woman can offer to work on a farm land in exchange for either guinea corn or millet. In the same way, a woman can offer to work on a blacksmith farm in exchange for some number of farm implements e.g. hoe, cutlasses, etc. which she would need in working on her farmland. In this way, human services were exchange for cash items.

During the early colonial period, a number of markets either expanded or sprang up Shagaya (375). The most important market in the area was probably the Wase market, which was a daily market, that the Tarok women were said to be actively part of it in 1904. There was also a daily market at Garkawa where traders from Ibi, Awe, Wase and Bauchi traded. PilGani was a weekly market which took place every Wednesday. Another strategic market was the Kufyen weekly market which holds every Sundays. The market was said to have benefited from being on Jos-Ibi road which was the major route for traffic destined for the Plateau minefield. This road was open for the first time during the rainy season of 1930, Tahwor Christiana Dormak (2017). Thus, by 1927, Kufyen and PilGani markets became important market centers from which grains were taken to the mining camps on the Jos Plateau. Therefore, in the colonial period, there was trading activities in the local market, to the Plateau minefields. This trade mainly deals with foodstuffs with women taking the Centre stage.

Constraints faced by women in the food crop economy among the Tarok in the Lantang South area.

Women form a significant proportion of the economically active population in rural Nigeria, Bilkisu, Ibrahim, and Ayuba (2016; 27) like those of the langtang south area, but they are being confronted by a number of challenges. In general terms, women access to needed farm resources such as land, lack of awareness caused by low literacy, lack of sufficient and substantive collateral and inadequate knowledge of training in the use of improved innovations, inadequate information about the improved technologies, and inadequate contact with extension agents have been identified and established as areas of major concern to women farmers. But of specific importance, and peculiar to women in Langtang south, are issues of land and security traceable since the pre-colonial period.

Patriarchal system of Land ownership, and the alienation of women among the Tarok

The customarily system of land ownership in Tarok land is patriarchal, Wilson V Famwang(1980; 66-69). The right to own a land belongs to men. When a man who is head of a family dies, the male son of the man inherits his farmland. And when he does not have a male child, his brother, step brother, or son of his brother, or step brother inherits his land. In essence, women are being cut out in the customarily system of land ownership. Women tenure over land is tight down to her family or husband when she is married. And when the husband dies, the brother of her husband inherits the land except she has a male child.

According to Tarok customs, the sons of a man inherit his farmland after his demise. But in a case when he has no male children, his stepbrother, and or the sons of his brothers and stepbrother inherit his farmlands. This landed property includes the economic trees. Farmlands, in essence belong to the patrilineal circle. Land among the Tarok was seen as a great preserve of a very large family. The living held it in trust for the unborn. It could not be sold but could be leased out to some other persons in need. However, the person with the lease was never expected to harvest the economic trees on such plots. The original owner did as evidence that he owned the land. It is assumed that a farmland is always inherited from the father or grandfather. Hence, the relatives of the mother have no right over it, even if a ransom has not been paid in respect of the man, NanlokAjiya (2017). Where a man is not ransomed by his father, the relatives of his mother have every right to inherit all his properties including his wives and children except farmlands and economic trees. But where a man has been ransomed all, his belongings will be shared among his children, step

brothers and his own grown up male children. His wives and female children have no share in his properties. His wives can benefit only when they get married to his brothers, stepbrothers and in some cases his elderly male children, Wilson V. Famwang (1978; 67). Though, this was not a very common practice.

Modern day practices

With the bias in the area of land ownership in favour of men, women have now resorted to land purchase for the purpose of agricultural production. Those women, who have no male child at the death of their husband, now buy and own land from those willing to sell Christiana Tahwar (2017). Furthermore, some widows now also hold land in trust for their children. Land among the Tarok was seen as a great preserve of a very large family. The living held it in trust for the death and unborn. It could not be sold but could be leased out to some other persons in need, Dirland Lar (2017). However, the inability to own land and other agricultural productive assets due to existing socio-cultural norms has created a significant negative impact on women in agricultural production. The practice of sharing farmlands with their husbands though helpful has been challenging because women do not get to be involved in the decision making concerning the affairs of such farms, especially the produce thereof, Nanko Joseph (2017). Decision on farm produce and the labour therein, is usually taken by the head of every family who is usually a male; John (184). This lack of right to land prevents women from exercising or improving their expertise in crop production because of security of tenure.

Lack of Adequate Information, and disempowerment of the women

Inadequate information about improved technologies is also a serious limitation to the women in agricultural production. Women do not have adequate access to agricultural information and innovations as required. For instance,

The **Plateau Agricultural Development Programme** started as a pilot project in 1977 before it was deployed state wide in 1987, (www.plateaustate.gov.ng). Similar to the set of interventions carried out by ASTC the PAD programme is mandated to offer training for farmers, provide extension services and promote best agricultural practices. Overall the scope and quality of extension and advisory services offered is inadequate. Currently the programme employs 96 extension officers that should cater 6 Local Government Areas. Knowing that there are about 260,000 farm families in the six LGAs the ratio extension agent (EA) to Farm family (FF) equals about 1 to 2700. This is very low when compared to 1:1,200 for

Indonesia, 1:1,000 for Tanzania or China where there is one extension worker per 280 farm families.

Worse still, the women farmers receive insignificant assistance and information from PADP extension agents, Ifenkwe (293-295). There were gender-related deficiencies within the existing extension programme. The programme was created to integrate women into development process with specific reference to agriculture since the participation of women farmers in planning and policy-making as well as the beneficiaries is important. But the ADP and PADP were pro-male and gender-insensitive towards women farmers. This arises from the fact that agricultural extension services in Nigeria had traditionally been focused on men and their farm production needs, while neglecting the female half of the production force.

Conflict

The earliest cause for conflict in Lantang south especially in Tarok land was land based John (184). This is traceable to the system of land ownership in the past. In pre-colonial times, inter-tribal wars were common, and because of that the Tarok people occupied different hills for defence purposes. Examples of such hills were the Ce Hills, Timwat Hills, Zini Hills, etc. But when population grew, thereby putting pressure on the hills in terms of agricultural production, the hills could not bear the numbers anymore. Thus, there was mass exodus to the plains in search of farmlands. Anyone who first occupied a piece of land becomes his/her own automatically. This form of acquisition caused a lot of the people especially from the same family or clan to cleave in the same area, but they keep shifting from one land to another, allowing the former to regain fertility. This form of shifting caused a lot of mixed up such that different clan came to have farmlands in the same area. At these periods lands were leased out of mutual understanding and thrust among the people. But later this trust came under betrayal, resulting to conflict. When lands were earlier leased out, there were no cases of betrayal such that the original owner could come reclaim his land anytime. This practiced was later abused, whereby the lands were now being claimed by tenants. This has led to conflict, ending in court cases. However, conflict in the region has now taken a different dimension, with other factors being accountable Abubakar S. Mohammed (nd; 1-7). One of such factors was ethno-religious. Plateau State of Nigeria has been characterizing with ethno-religious conflict, since the outbreak of the first major one on 7th September, 2001 when over 2000 lives were lost and property worth millions of naira were destroyed in the Capital city of Jos and other Local Government Areas. The Conflicts kept recurring sporadically in different parts of the State especially the Southern Senatorial District comprising of Langtang North, Langtang South, Shendam and Wase Local Government Areas among others. Another factor

associated as a cause of conflict on the Plateau is Land/Boundary, National Orientation Agency (2002; 3). This shows that land is becoming a very scarce factor of production either due to population pressure, land alienation or concentration of land in a few hands, Dunmoye, R. Ayo (2003; 17).

This conflict has had damaging consequences on the economy of the state at large, with the loss of means of livelihood in the forms of farmland, livestock, markets, houses and means of transportation. The effect of these conflicts on agricultural production is devastating. Agricultural activities are abandoned in some instances, and communities that make substantial income from the sales of agricultural produce now have to depend on relief supplies. Thus, this draws attention to a study on agricultural production in the pre and post conflicts period.

Transportation of agricultural product became also a challenge. Large number goods trailers were destroyed during the numerous conflicts in the State. Some parts of the State sometimes become impassable. This means long detours have to be made to reach nearby destinations. This has a negative impact in the cost of moving goods and services because cost of transport escalates in such circumstances. The majority of those who bear the brunt are mostly the poor especially rural women who engage in the commercialization of agricultural produce.

CONCLUSION

This research was carried out basically against the premise that women only play a passive role in the food crop economy in Nigeria. This prevailing view was supported mainly on two grounds: firstly, is the gender bias which sees a woman as a weaker vessel, and so could not actively take part in productive activity. Secondly is the customary belief system which sees the woman as useful only in house chores. For these reasons, the role of a woman in productive activities usually receives little attention.

However, evidence emerging from the activities of the Tarok women in the food crop economy in Lantang South area suggest otherwise. It was observed that the Tarok women are not only a key component of the food crop economy, but have taken the leading role in the food crop economy over the years. This was revealed in the changing role over the years, as represented in the changes in the food crop produced depending on the circumstances and also the marketing of the product thereof. These activities date back to the pre-colonial periods up to date.

Based on the above outcomes therefore, women need to be taken seriously in matters relating to agricultural economy especially in food crop production and marketing. They constitute a major percentage of the labour force, placing them at an advantage in addressing the question of food insecurity, poverty and

unemployment that have ravaged the country. State and non-state actors need to make women a key component of its discourse on agriculture for any meaningful and positive changes in the sector.

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