

# Gender Issues in Tree Growing in Bondo and Siaya Sub-Counties, Siaya County

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**Abstract** – Gender roles are socially constructed, dynamic, learned, and complex and they differ within and between cultures. Gender demarcates responsibilities between men and women in: social and economic activities, access to resources, services and decision making authority. Conditions of women differ from one society to another but generally, women experience subordination from men. Women are involved in many activities like washing of clothes, cooking, rearing of children and taking care of farms among other roles and may prevent them from engaging in growing of trees as opposed to men. The main objective of this study was to determine if tree growing in Siaya County is influenced by gender issues. A cross-sectional survey research design was used involving 280 respondents drawn from 20 chief's barazas in Bondo and Siaya sub-counties. They included; 120 household heads, 40 key informants, 4 women groups and Luo council of elders. Qualitative data generated was analysed using SPSS resulting in tables, and percentages. A 24hours gender daily calendar was drawn to confirm the various workloads of men and women. The study concludes that gender (various roles assigned to different sexes) has no influence on tree growing. Women should be capacity built to include aspect of tree growing amongst other chores they undertake on daily basis.

**Keywords** – Gender, Influence, Tree Growing, Women.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Gender culturally is ascribed system of social, economic, political and historic relations where inequalities are generated, developed, and reproduced. Cultural aspects are thus of critical importance for the understanding and devising of any appropriate interventions for rural development [1]. In summary, gender roles are: socially constructed, dynamic, learned, and complex. They differ within and between influenced-By cultures age, ethnicity, religion, education, and socio-economic status. Gender demarcates responsibilities between men and women in: social and economic activities, access to resources, services and decision making authority [2]. According to Gender Concept Theory (Feminist Theory) it explains the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse. It aims at the understanding of gender inequality. It also examines social roles, experiences, interests, and promotion of women's rights and focuses mainly on two scenarios: condition of women in the society and, women experiences subordination from men [3]. [4] echoes the sentiment when he says that women are "an untapped resource that provides an economic contribution to development", and that "development processes would proceed much better if women were fully incorporated.

A study conducted by [5] on challenges facing women in small scale agriculture, a homestead food production programme at the Mbashe local municipality, Eastern Cape, found that one of the challenges facing women's development in the project is that, the project ignored the implementation of the gender equity policy which advocates equal distribution of household responsibilities between men and women. Women in this project still believed that traditional roles such as care-giving, are for women only and they should not be shared with their men folk. She argues that African culture and tradition overburdened married women (in particular) with multiple household tasks and allocated fewer tasks to their husbands. This decreased women's time dedicated to the community project. The majority of women in the study area also reported that they did not have time to juggle both household responsibilities

Women generally start their daily activities earlier than men. Ironically, the very women also end up retiring to their beds after men [6]. Women are involved in many activities like washing of clothes, cooking, rearing of children and taking care of farms among other roles and prevent them from engaging in planting of trees as opposed to men [7]. A study by [8] in Tanzania observes that women are unaware that they work more than men but they are unable to change the situation. The women's work day was longer and involving more work than men's work day because of women's household responsibilities. The gender norms regarding the division of labor seem to revolve around the needs of men. The rules fluctuate to benefit the men depending on the particular situation [9]. Work done by [10] and also [11] in Kakamega district conclude that due to many household chores, women have little time to participate in agro-forestry. Additionally, constraints on women's time often limit opportunities for their participation in public meetings [12]

According to [13] certain tree species may have culturally defined gender specific and ownership restrictions. It is alleged that if a woman plants a tree, she will become barren and her husband will die [14]. Women provide the bulk of the agricultural labor force in many countries [15]. In Kenya, women provide 80% of the agricultural labor force [16]. [17], states that the males make most of the household decisions regarding technology adoption. [18], recommend that extension services should address disparity against women in their strengthened efforts to pass over quantitative information about the benefits of fodder trees. [19] contends that gender-specific constraints are made up of those societal norms and practices that apply to women or men by virtue of their gender. In as much as men are generally assigned a key bread winner role, they are also expected to have

greater obligation to participate in social work. Women's access to paid work, on the other hand is likely to be influenced by their socially ascribed responsibilities for caring for family members and the extent to which they are expected to combine this with productive or paid work. The gender division of labor in production and reproduction will neglect other aspects of the social constructions of masculinity and femininity that prevail in different context of restrictions in women's work.

[20] Contend that in the Agikuyu community of Nyeri district that women were not allowed to plant trees but nurtured those which germinated from the wild seedlings. [21] in a study in Machakos district found a significant gender difference in adoption and contributed this to the fact that women were more committed to farm work than their counter parts and hence could easily put into practice what they have learnt. On gender issues, the relationship between gender and the adoption of changed practices is also unclear. There is certainly evidence that women are a driving force for natural resource management [22]. The introduction of gender adds another dimension to the analysis of the multi-dimensional niches in the rural landscape defined by space, time, specific plants, products and uses. Gender is a complicating factor due to the unequal power relationships between men and women in most societies. These power relationships, however, are subject to change [23]. At the root of gender inequality is often the power of others to limit a woman's capacity to exercise the rights she chooses. Local laws and norms affecting women's rights generally prevail over statutory dictates and guarantees, although the former tend to be grounded in traditional patriarchal values while the latter

increasingly reflect international standards of human rights and gender equality [24]. This study has endeavoured to demonstrate whether gender influences tree growing in the study area. The specific objective of the study was to determine if gender is an issue in tree growing.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Description of Study Area

Siaya County lies between latitude  $0^{\circ} 26^1$  to  $0^{\circ} 28^1$  north and longitude  $33^{\circ} 58^1$  east and  $34^{\circ} 33^1$  west with total surface area of the county is  $1520 \text{ km}^2$ . It has six sub-counties namely; Ugunja, Yala, Ugenya, Siaya, Bondo and Rarieda. The county borders Busia county to the north, Kakamega county to the north eastern, Vihiga county to the east, Kisumu county to the south east, with Lake Victoria to the south and west. The study location was Bondo and Siaya sub-counties. Bondo sub-county was divided into eleven locations found in three administrative divisions namely; Nyangoma, Usigu and Maranda with land surface area of  $593 \text{ km}^2$  [25] while Siaya sub-county was divided into ten locations contained in three administrative divisions namely; Karemo, Boro and Township with land surface area of  $605.8 \text{ km}^2$ . Altitudinally, the sub-counties ranges from 1140 m.asl to 1200m.asl with equatorial type of climate. Fertility of soils here range from moderate to low resulting in most soils being unable to produce without the use of either organic, inorganic, or in most cases both types of fertilizers. Most of the areas have underlying murram with poor moisture retention [26].

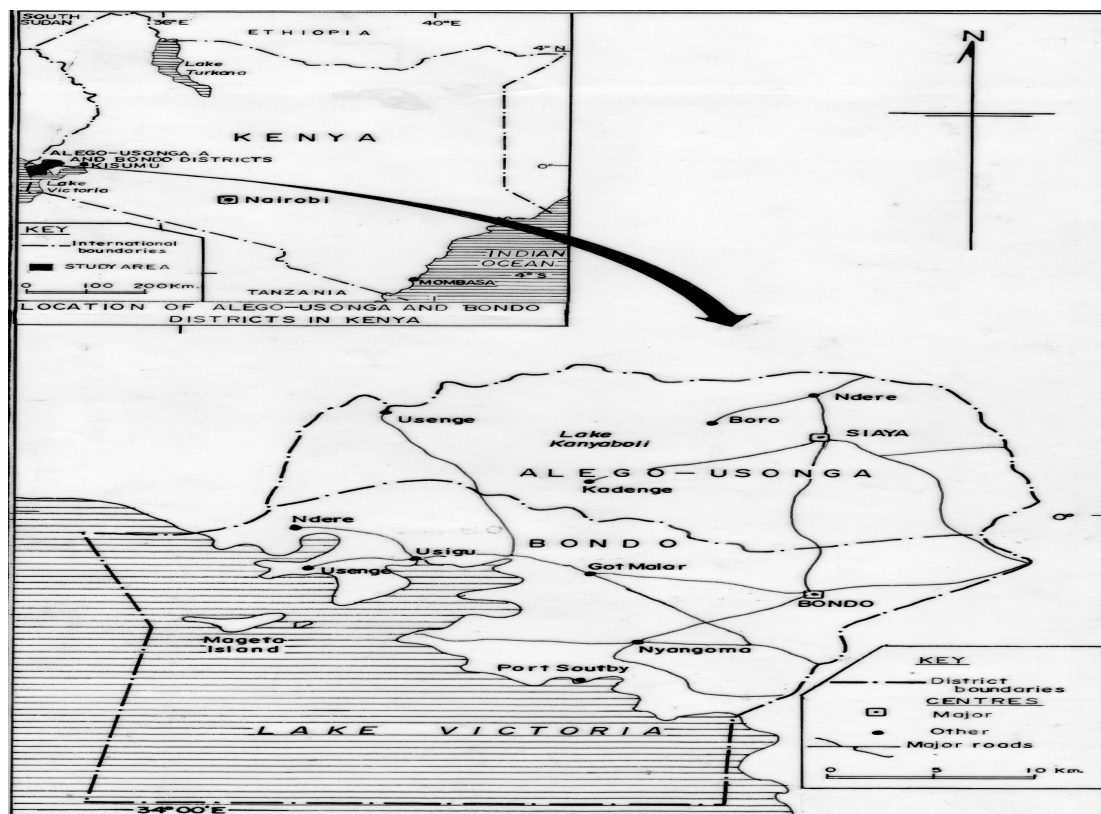


Fig.1. Map of Bondo and Siaya Sub-Counties, Source: Bondo / Siaya Districts Development Plan 2010

The study employed a sociological survey design which allows collection of information from a population with the purpose of making inference about the targeted group in a more objective way [27]. Secondary data was obtained from Government reports, non-governmental reports, Journals, and Internet. Primary data was collected from 120 household heads, 40 key informants, 4 women groups and Luo council of elders. Simple random sampling procedure was used in choosing a sample of 280 respondents. [28] recommend a minimum of 100 subjects for descriptive studies.

## II. DATA ANALYSIS

Data from open-ended questions were coded with respect to three levels i.e. (a) Key informants (b) women group and (c) Luo Council of Elders and thematic areas. Qualitative analysis was done resulting in table showing 24hrs gender daily calendar and triangulation of responses from key informants, women groups and Luo council of elders.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The response from respondents on gender is as shown in Figure 2. Every society assigns activities to various sexes.

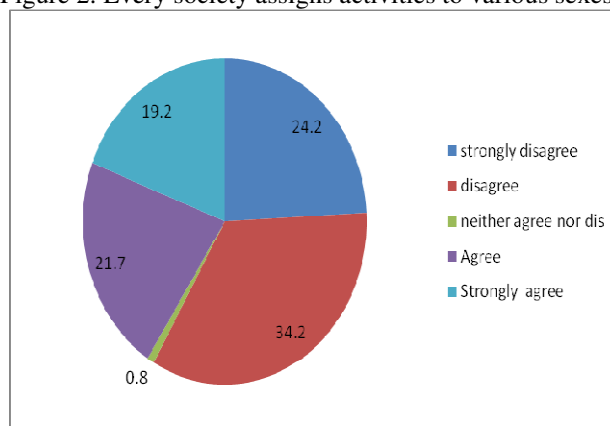


Fig.2. Response of household heads on gender  
 Source: Author's survey, 2012

Table 1: 24 Hours gender daily calendar for women and men in tree growing

Women		Men	
Time	Activity	Time	Activity
5.00am	- prayer - clean house - milk cows - wakes up school going children	5.00am	-only during ploughing
6.00am	- Prepare tea/porridge	6.00am	-milking
7.00am	- fetch water from river, lake - wash clothes and utensils - going to shamba/businesses	7.00am	-goes to shamba
9.00am	- tying animals - back to shamba	9.00am	- goes back home - takes breakfast
12.00noon	- fetching firewood - lunch preparation	10.00am	-herding of animals
2.00pm	- untying the animals and giving them water - briefly looking after the animals		
4.00pm	- tying the animals again - going to market. - washing children	4.00pm	- listen to news - tying of animals - going to barazas/casual walk in nearby centers
5.00pm	- going back home		
6.00pm	- untying the animals and taking them home - preparation of boma fire - milking	6.00pm	- untying animals and taking them home - milking
7.00pm	- preparation of supper - ironing clothes - taking supper	7.00pm	- taking supper
8.00pm	- assisting children with homework - making bed for husband	8.00pm	- retires to bed
9.00pm	- making bed for children		
10.00pm	- going to bath		
11.00pm	- retiring to bed		

Source: Author's survey, 2012

The aspect of gender was to address specific objective number three. The following responses were recorded from household heads: 54.4% of household heads disagreed or strongly disagreed with this, 39.9% agreed while 0.8% was undecided. It means that gender might not be a very significant factor influencing participation of women in tree growing. Discussions with key informants, women groups and Luo council of elders also concurred that also concluded that gender is not an issue because amongst their daily activities, women get time to do vegetable growing and can use the same period to grow trees. It is important to note that gender is constructed with in a given society. The study concludes that gender (roles/responsibilities) is not associated in any way with tree growing. The finding concurs with [2] that gender issues are culture specific and vary from one community to another.

The gender daily calendar is important in appreciating the daily workloads of different gender groups. It is key in identifying appropriate entry points for any activity focusing on a particular group. It is also important in that if one plans to meet a particular segment of the community, then the time when they are mostly available can easily be detected using this tool. Table 1 below shows the levels of daily involvement.

This scenario which was presented by women during discussions agrees with findings of [6] that women generally start their daily activities earlier than men. Ironically, the very women also end up retiring to their beds after men, women are involved in many activities like washing of clothes, cooking, rearing of children and taking care of farms among other roles and prevent them from engaging in planting of trees as opposed to men according and [8] who documents in Tanzania that women are unaware that they work more than men but they are unable to change the situation. The women's work day was longer and involving more work than men's work day because of women's household responsibilities

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender is not a socio-cultural factor influencing participation of women in tree growing because women have times off from their busy schedule when they can engage in tree growing activities especially those tree species that culture does not discriminate their participation

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