

Small stock and women in livestock production in the Teso Farming System region of Uganda¹

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Abstract

A grass-roots study involving 205 households was conducted to assess the production and policy issues affecting women in livestock production in the Teso Farming System (TFS) in the Ugandan districts of Kaberamaido and Katakwi. Information from focus group discussions, key informant interviews and workshops indicated that 44 per cent of the households were female-headed and 56 per cent male-headed, although 17 per cent of married women claimed headship status. Small stock, especially goats and chickens, are owned by women, children and the landless while cattle, of higher economic value, are owned by men. Though women have the same authority as men to dispose of their goats, and more decision making powers over poultry, men dominated on decisions to dispose or sell cattle. Restocking programmes availed women an opportunity to enter the livestock production sector but they face many challenges. Livestock production is culturally male dominated, where men own a disproportionately large number of livestock, especially cattle, while women, who provide the main source of labour for all livestock production activities, as well as being the custodians of food security and family livelihoods, are denigrated to ownership of small stock only, with minimal benefits from livestock production accruing to them. There is gender bias against women leading to conflicts in livestock ownership and decision making, with women providing much of the labour needs yet lacking credit, which have influenced restocking/stocking. Women restock goats and chickens through self-purchase from income obtained from sale of crops and crop products such as beer. Small stock owned by women receive more attention than cattle, but use of indigenous knowledge underpins their management, resulting in low productivity and highlighting lack of knowledge and skills associated with modern management practices. While women felt more constrained by this lack of knowledge, men cited disease and rustling as major constraints. Small stock are, thus, an important livestock resource to women in the system due to their easy acquisition, adaptive characteristics and faster growth and reproductive rates. Women's acquisition of small stock from crop sales, ownership and authority over their sale is an important and viable entry level for them to become owners of cattle. However, gender sensitive policies are needed so that there is a reduction in the continued male dominance over the livestock sector through policy initiatives, and to ensure that research, extension, credit services and other facilities are equally accessible to women and men. Women in the TFS region should be empowered to have equal access and ownership of land and all livestock species, both indigenous and improved, with full back-up of essential services,

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to allow them to move from subsistence to commercial livestock production with access to national, regional and global markets for their livestock and livestock products.

Key words: Gender, goats, chickens, policies, and technologies

Introduction

The Teso Farming System (TFS) region comprises the semi-arid north-eastern districts of Soroti, Katakwi, Kumi, Kaberamaido and parts of Pallisa. The system is agro-pastoral with rural communities heavily dependent for their livelihoods on subsistence mixed annual cropping and livestock production. It is a unique system, principally due to the characteristic predominance of ox-cultivation favoured by the existing gently undulating topography (Awa *et al.*, 1999). The crop-livestock interaction gives an important synergism as animals provide draught power for land tillage and manure for crop production, while crop residues and stovers are consumed by the livestock. However, in the 1980s, rustling drastically reduced livestock numbers in the region, lowering livelihoods to disabling levels. Small stock, especially goats, pigs and chickens, barely survived while cattle were totally lost. With the depleted livestock numbers, restocking was essential and was introduced by government when security was restored. Restocking programmes availed women, who are the key actors and custodians of food security and family livelihoods in the region, an important opportunity to enter the livestock production sector. However, women faced many challenges in the restocking process because livestock production is a culturally male dominated sector, where men own a disproportionately large number of the livestock, especially cattle. Although women provide the main source of labour for all livestock production activities, they own few animals and these are mostly small stock. As a result, only minimal benefits from livestock production accrue to them. In spite of this, small stock keeping and ownership by women is an important socio-economic activity. Women are able to acquire small stock through the sale of crop produce and locally made beer, the cash raised allowing them to make their initial purchases or restock. Small stock rapidly multiply and the sale of 4-5 chickens will buy a goat, the sale or exchange of 5-6 goats will acquire a cow. Goats and chickens can thus lead to wealth accumulation through the acquisition of cattle. Goats and chickens are also highly valued in customary marriages and various socio-cultural functions (Okello and Obwolo, 1984).

This study aims at assessing and documenting production and policy issues affecting women in livestock production in the TFS. The skills, roles, constraints, challenges and opportunities women face in livestock production are documented, as a basis for formulating appropriate recommendations for interventions towards improving the role and productivity of women in the livestock sector. This paper is a synthesis of the production and policy issues as they relate to the role of women in livestock production from small stock.

Materials and methods

A grass-roots needs assessment study was conducted in Kaberamaido and Katakwi Districts during the period of December 2001 to March 2003. Using semi-structured questionnaires, a survey was conducted across 205 households randomly selected from the rural areas. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews and workshops were also conducted. The information collected included household bio-data, production resources, livestock ownership, roles and skills, constraints and challenges in livestock production across gender categories and the role of women in the restocking process.

Data were compiled and analyzed using an SPSS package. Comparisons were made based on differences by sex, age and gender categories using frequency distributions, percentages, and correlations in relation to the roles, skills, challenges and opportunities open to women in livestock production.

Results and discussion

Out of 205 households surveyed, 44 per cent were female-headed while 56 per cent were male-headed, although 17 per cent of married women assumed that they had headship status as their husbands were not providing for household needs as was expected of them.

Gender roles in livestock production and importance of small stock in rural livelihoods

This study has shown that, although men generally dominated in most activities, women participated in all livestock management activities and dominated in tethering, kraal cleaning and watering of animals (Figure 1). An important aspect was that children who were a major source of labour in all livestock management activities, prior to the introduction of universal primary education (UPE), now make a limited contribution. This has led to labour shortages, leading to the hiring of labour with the result of increasing production costs (Figure 1). The hitherto strong relationships known to exist between women, children and small stock, have been lost and shifted the labour burden of managing small stock to women. This finding agrees with the findings of similar studies on women in livestock production in many Saharan countries where women have been largely relegated to the ownership of small stock, tillage of land and provision of labour with minimal benefits accruing to them. In Ethiopia, over 60 per cent of families kept chickens with women being the major owners and managers and controlling the limited cash income from sales (Dessie and Ogle, 2001). On Ghanaian small family farms, women are major tillers of land (Acheampong, 1992). In Nigeria, 77, 73, 25, and 19 per cent of the women were involved in chicken, goat, duck, and sheep production, respectively, and their main activities were pen cleaning (89 per cent) and feeding (83 per cent) (Oji and Ekumankama, 2002).

Indigenous small stock, especially goats and chickens, are much better adapted to local conditions than exotic stock, and require far fewer inputs for survival (Lebbie, 2004). Small stock provide an important resource for women, landless and the resource-poor being, cheaper to acquire, and require little labour, space and feed. Small stock provide a readily available source of protein from meat, eggs and milk (Devendra and Chantalakhana, 2002). While poultry production was found to be an income generating activity, predominantly run by women in Zimbabwe (McAinsh *et. al.*, 2004a), goat production is most popular in Nigeria due to the popularity of the meat (Shoremi and Wodi, 1997). Goats thus play a significant role in the food chain and overall livelihoods of rural households where they are largely the property of women and their children (Lebbie, 2004). Increased restocking/stocking of small stock could act as an important economic and social activity for women and children. Increased consumption of livestock products would improve the nutritional status of women and children, as well as HIV/AIDS sufferers, possibly being a factor in prolonging their lives (Ayele and Peacock, 2003).

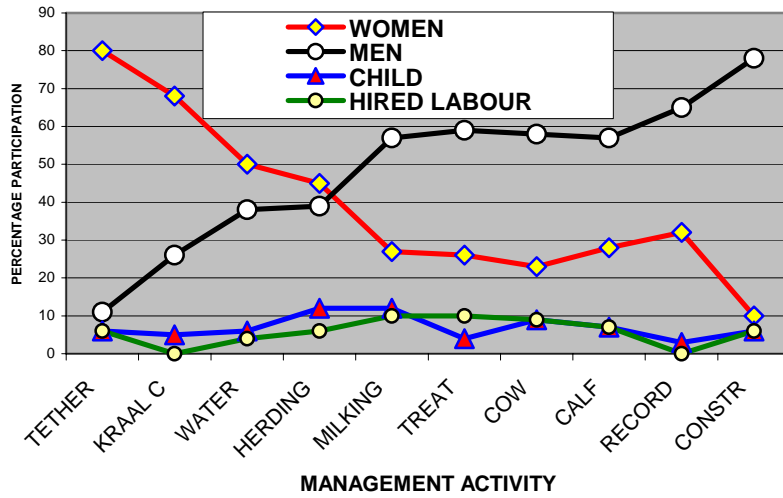


Figure 1 Gender roles in livestock production activities

Ownership, control and access to production resources and benefits from livestock

The study shows gender disparities in livestock ownership, with women owning only 14, 21, 22, and 20 per cent, and men 62, 52, 39 and 48.5 per cent of cattle, goats, poultry and pigs, respectively (Figure 2). Women own fewer cattle but relatively more small stock than men. Children are more associated with small stock while joint ownership of all livestock species is a significant feature. Similar findings have been reported in the Gambia, where women own 67 per cent of goats and 52 per cent of sheep (Jaitner, *et al.*, 2001). Another study also showed that women play an important role as keepers of small stock, sustainers of household food security and in improving health and livelihoods of families, although they faced more difficulties than men in gaining access to resources such as land, credit and other productivity enhancing inputs and services (Sinn *et al.*, 1999).

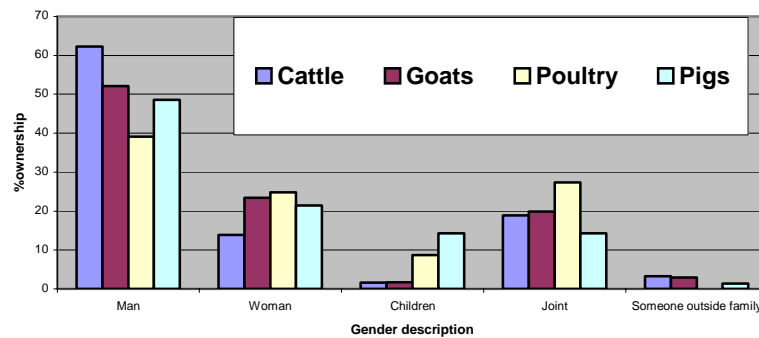


Figure 2 Gender livestock ownership pattern in at household level in the Teso Farming System region

In male headed households, men dominate and control the decision making to dispose of all types of livestock and livestock products, except for goats, chickens, eggs and milk

where a joint decision is made between man and woman (Table 1). In the majority of female-headed households, women play a key role in the disposal of all livestock species and their products. However, in 32 per cent of female-headed households, men still wield much control over disposal of cattle compared to only 3 per cent of women who have the same control among the male-headed households.

In the majority male-headed households, men play a dominant role in controlling the decision over the use of benefits from livestock and livestock products, while in female headed households domination is shared between men and women (Table 2). However, in 23 per cent of the female headed households, males control decision making over the use of benefits from livestock and its products for home consumption, compared to 4 per cent of the male-headed households where women are in control. This indicates that men have a disproportionate control over access to livestock resources and benefits. Joint decisions to dispose of livestock and livestock products are more evident in male headed households than in female-headed households. Children generally play a greater role in decisions to dispose of livestock and livestock products in female-headed households compared to male-headed households. In Tanzania, women were up to 57 per cent of the agricultural labour force, and were involved with looking after cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, rabbits and poultry as well as their domestic responsibilities, but a majority of the benefits from their labour accrued to the men in the household (Tesha, 1999). In summary, women are usually relegated to ownership and control of the relatively low value small stock while being denied ownership, access and control over large stock, land and other production resources and services which are the domain of men.

Table 1 *Control over disposal of livestock and livestock products in female and male-headed households*

Livestock	Male headed households (%)				Female headed households (%)			
	Men	Women	Joint	Children	Men	Women	Joint	Children
Cattle	59	3	38	0	32	50	14	4
Goats	47	9	44	0	15	55	18	12
Poultry	35	14	45	6	9	62	22	7
Pigs	49	9	38	4	6	53	18	23
Milk	46	8	46	0	5	74	16	5
Eggs	33	25	40	2	4	65	20	11
Meat	52	4	43	1	13	61	22	4
Hides/ skins	64	2	33	1	11	66	17	6
Draught power	62	5	33	0	31	46	15	8

Table 2 *Control over use of benefits of livestock and livestock products for consumption in male and female headed households*

	Male Headed households (%)				Female Headed households (%)			
	Men	Women	Joint	Children	Men	Women	Joint	Children
Cattle	52	4	44	0	23	55	23	0
Goats	42	9	48	1	17	52	19	12
Poultry	35	11	51	4	5	65	15	15
Pigs	33	15	45	7	4	59	30	7
Milk	34	14	51	1	6	61	22	11
Eggs	30	23	46	1	6	76	12	6
Meat	54	5	41	0	13	73	7	7
Hides/ skins	50	3	46	1	12	69	13	6
Draught power	54	6	40	0	33	57	0	11

Constraints and challenges to women in livestock production - restocking and diseases

In restocking and stocking for livestock production, challenges due to natural forces, such as disease incidence and prolonged periods of drought, and insecurity, were common to both female and male livestock farmers and tended to affect them similarly (Figure 3). The majority of women reported conflict in ownership and control of benefits from livestock, especially cattle, as the most common challenge. The major constraints to livestock production included poor access to extension services, disease prevalence and lack of improved livestock breeds. The greatest concern of men was the prevalence of animal disease, which reduces animal productivity and increases the cost of animal rearing. In a similar study in Western Kenya, women involved in goat production cited constraints such as taboos on eating goat meat and the traditional dominance of livestock husbandry by men (Noble and Nolan, 1982). Other studies have shown constraints due to disease prevalence (87 per cent), culture (67 per cent), capital (29 per cent) and religious beliefs (27 per cent) (Shoremi and Wodi, 1997). Recommendations on the use of a unified extension service and the intensification of extension activities for delivery of information on livestock production technologies to women have been advocated (Shoremi and Wodi, 1997).

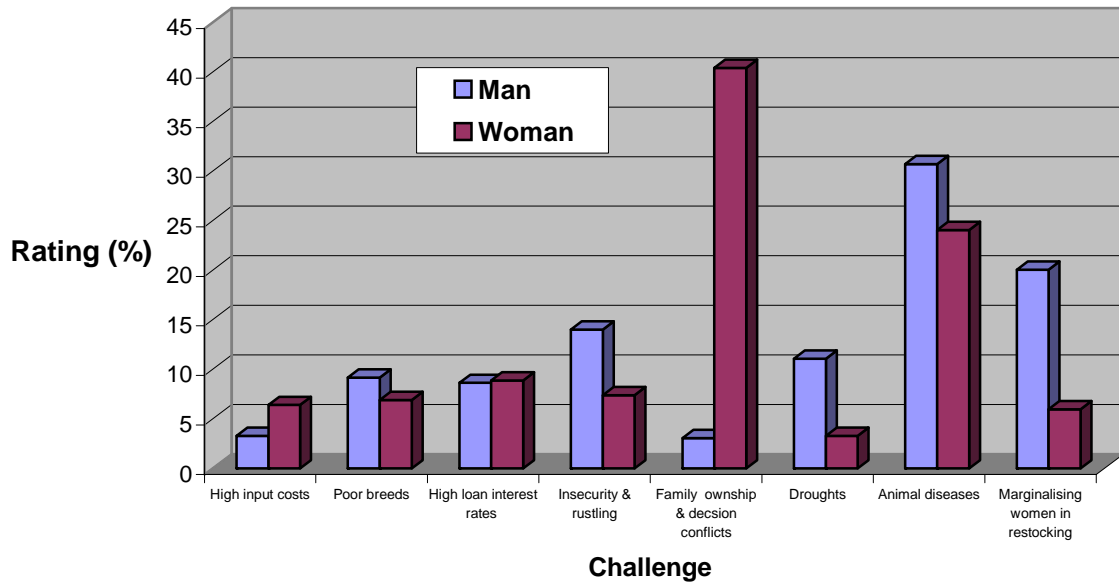


Figure 3 Restocking and stocking challenges as perceived by gender

Research and extension services and credit and market facilities

Women felt more constrained by lack of knowledge and skills in modern livestock production practices and access to improved breeds, and, therefore, resorted to use of indigenous knowledge in their management of livestock, thus undermining potential improvements in livestock productivity. In Nigeria, a survey showed that although women participated extensively in agricultural tasks and livestock rearing, agricultural extension agents did not address delivery of services to women. Home economics extension agents were too few and not competent to teach women agricultural technical skills (Olayiwole, 1984). The TFS region has a good opportunity to access developed technologies for improving the productivity of indigenous cattle, goats and chicken, generated at the Serere Agricultural and Animal Production Research Institute (SAARI) (e.g. NARO, 2000). The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) is operational in the TFS region and is responsible for packaging these technologies, and devising an efficient delivery system to farmers. The role of National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and NAADS is crucial in the implementation of dissemination of livestock technologies to women. Goat rearing is now largely seen as an appropriate intervention in capital scarce situations and contributes significantly to household income (Saadullah, *et al.*, 1997). In several countries, including Indonesia, Sumatra, Bolivia, Kenya and Peru, an increase in the welfare of rural poor families was achieved through their involvement in small stock production, combining provision of appropriate production technologies and improved goats. Training women in goat management and cross-breeding the East African and Anglo-Nubian breeds led to increased animal numbers and performance. Small ruminants have been found to be largely under the control of women, either through production or marketing, thus contributing to in-kind consumption or, as liquid assets, to household welfare (Valdivia, 2001). Formal knowledge about traditional free-range chicken production in tropical countries is increasing, but is still limited, although production has shown it to be a very important income generating activity, predominantly run by women. McAinsh *et al.* (2004b) found

that women owned most chicken flocks and that income generated from chicken production was spent to improve nutrition, health and education of the family.

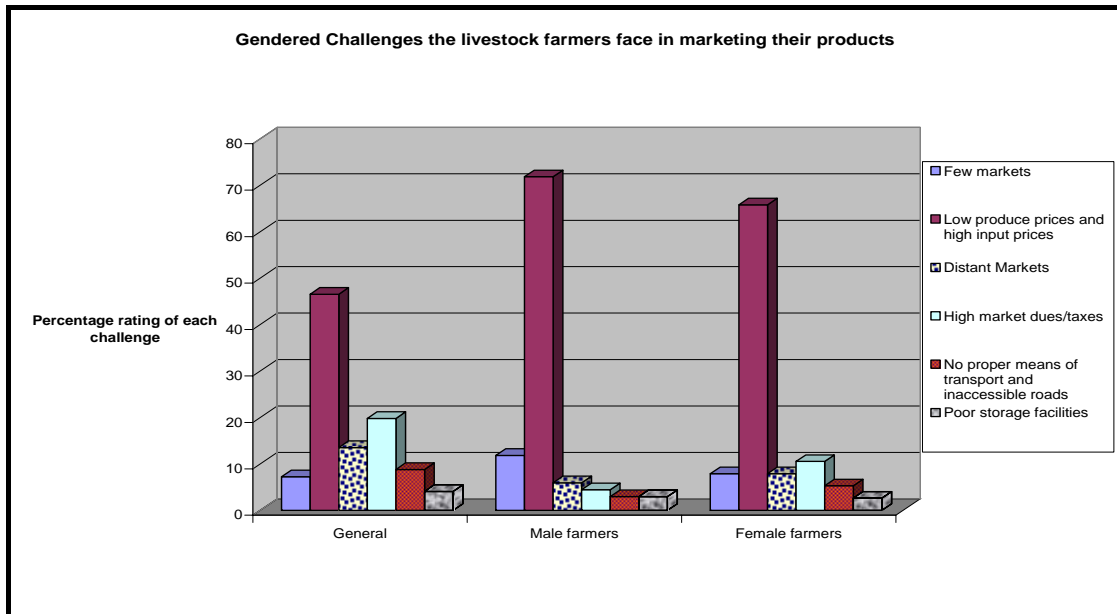


Figure 4 A gender perception of the marketing challenges faced by farmers in the Teso Farming System region

Livestock farmers in the TFS face a number of marketing challenges, the greatest being that of low output and high input prices as perceived by 70 per cent of men and 65 per cent of women (Figure 4). High market dues constituted the second key marketing challenge. Others included few and distant markets, lack of good transport and poor storage facilities (Figure 4). Most of these factors interact and have been observed in case studies where development projects used group or community approaches to disseminate and apply new technologies. Internal processes are crucial in understanding technology transfer where an individual’s ability to access and manage information is crucial. Often meeting a group that has previously been exposed to a technology and sharing their experiences, helps resolve perceived difficulties (de Haan, 2001). Such approaches, in Pakistan, popularized poultry farming as a supplementary source of income for women after they received appropriate training. The women’s training programme led to a reduction in chick mortality, increased poultry meat and egg production and improved marketing, possibly due to existing marketing facilities being better utilised than previously (Bhatti, 1991). An understanding of the specific role of livestock, competition from other farm enterprises and the risks faced by families in rural areas are necessary prerequisites to increasing participation of women in livestock production (Valdivia, 2001).

In general, improving livelihoods requires that the role of livestock is seen as a major part of development, and extension of new technology is essential if the potential of this sector is to be realised (Devendra and Chantalakhana, 2002). Small animals (goats, sheep, chickens, pigs and ducks) are particularly important for nutritional and household security; improvement in production can make a significant contribution to improved human welfare, rural sector growth and in reducing poverty. Towards the achievement of this, more investment is needed in agricultural research and development coupled with application of participatory and interdisciplinary approaches, effective public and private sector partnerships, and commitment to purpose (Devendra and Chantalakhana, 2002).

Conclusion

The status of women in the TFS region indicates that they play a major role in livestock production and participate in all its associated activities. However, men dominate ownership of cattle while women own the low-value small stock, such as goats, pigs and chickens, to which they have reasonable authority over disposal. Because of this, women provide more detailed management to small stock compared to cattle. The lack of cattle ownership and equal access to land and other production resources have made women poor and socio-economically insecure. Small stock, especially goats and chickens, are a major livestock resource for women, children and landless livestock keepers. Small stock are suited to the resource-poor smallholder system due to their high growth and reproductive rates and adaptive characteristics to high ambient temperatures, feed and water scarcity and disease tolerance. However, streamlining is required in the restocking process to enable women to have equal access to production resources, extension, education and other services to gain skills on modern livestock production technologies. Women should be sensitised, and empowered to demand the provision of essential services, such as access to, and use of, improved animal breeds and breeding practices. The opportunities offered by small stock in the provision of protein-rich food and income for resource-poor and vulnerable groups, such as families affected by HIV/AIDS, should be strengthened. Women should be enabled to have access to diverse national, regional and global markets for both livestock and produce. Targeting gender insensitive policies is an important pre-requisite for policy makers and implementers in order for women to effectively contribute to the livestock sector and move from subsistence to market-oriented production. This is achievable by reducing continued male dominance, sensitising development partners, in both the public and private sector, including non-governmental organisations, to be more effective and gender balanced in offering extension, education, other services, credit and savings facilities, at reasonable interest rates, to women involved in livestock production.

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