

Women are the majority of the world's food producers

When you train a woman, you train a nation. This is clearly shown in the area of agricultural development in Africa, where women have always played the important role of providing home grown food for the family. Skills of planting, picking, storage and marketing of agricultural produce have been passed onto the daughters by their mothers.

In Owambo, 80% of the farming is done by women. Most of the farming here, is for the immediate needs of the family although some women take a small portion of their produce to the open air markets and exchange it for other goods.

50% of the people attending the Rössing Agricultural Development Courses in the north, are women. Because of the demands and responsibilities placed on women who have to manage the homestead as well as tend the field, there has been little opportunity for women to pay attention to their own education.

Most of the women in the north are unable to read or write and do not speak English or Afrikaans.

It is clear that, if agricultural training and support programmes are to be introduced in this area, they will have to accommodate the fact that most farmers in the north are unable to leave their homestead to go on training courses.

Skills in being able to speak regional languages and an understanding of the daily routine and responsibilities of these women farmers should also be essential if agricultural development programmes are going to have any effect.



Early rise, hard work

"She rises before dawn and walks to the fields. In the busy season she spends some nine hours hoeing, planting, weeding or harvesting.

"She brings food and fuel home, walks long distances for water, carrying a pot which may weigh 20 kilograms or more, grinds and pounds grain, cleans the house, cooks while nursing her infant, washes the dishes and the clothes, minds the children, and generally cares for the household.

"She processes and stores food and market excess produce, often walking long distances with heavy loads over difficult terrain.

"She must also attend to the family's social obligations such as weddings and funerals. She may have to provide fully for herself and her children.

"During much of the year, she may labour for 15 hours each day and she works this way until the day she delivers her baby, frequently resuming work within a day or two after delivery." - *Extract from Isis; Women in development, p61.*

The Lie of the Land

SISTERS

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own
story
Please!

