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Women's Agricultural Production in Guinea-Bissau as a Means of Strengthening Their Identity

Women in Guinea-Bissau – literature review

Guinea-Bissau is a small state in West Africa, located between Senegal and Guinea-Conakry. With a population of about 1.8 – 2 million (50.4% female), it is characterized by a low level of education, poor sanitary conditions, and an unreliable judicial system. Its endogenous resources are cashew whose raw nuts represent 96% of total exports in 2020, the sale of fishing licenses, timber cutting and permits to extract heavy minerals from beach sands. Phosphates, bauxite, and oil exist but without exploitation. It is estimated that agricultural production (mostly small producers) for the domestic market of rice, fruits, vegetables, cattle, pig and poultry farming and artisanal fishing in rivers and seas is sufficient to feed the population. The food security problems indicated by the April 2022 study of the World Food Programme are the result of the weakness of distribution channels and the poor quality of means of communication, especially roads from producing areas (especially in the south to the Tombali and Quinara regions) to cities. The country has not developed any industrial structure, despite attempts, just after independence with car assembly plants, condensed milk, foam mattresses, peanut shelling, etc., and the fabric of companies is supported by formal and informal trade fragile in the face of competition especially from Senegal and Guinea Conakry. Even civil construction is dominated by companies from other countries (Portugal, France, and Senegal).

The indicators in the following table reflect also a very deep institutional fragility resulting from the country's exposure to drug trafficking between Latin America and Europe and to the political influence of the armed forces.

Table 1. Guinea-Bissau indicators

Indicator	Value	Comments
HDI 2019	177	187 countries; Source: UNDP
Life expectancy at birth	58 years	61 in Senegal; 65 in The Gambia; Source CIA WF
Years of schooling per capita	2,3	Source: MICS6 UNICEF
GDP per capita (current prices)	698 \$ USD	Source: World Bank 2022
Poverty rate	National 47.7% Bafatá 61.2% Oio 63.8% Bissau 21.3%	Source: Harmonized Survey on Living Condition of the Household 2018–2019, INE, Bissau

The political regime is semi-presidentialism authoritarian with a National Assembly and a President of the Republic both directly elected by universal vote. Conflicts between the president, the government and the military are frequent. The latter, who have a motivation to intervene in the politics of the country that comes to them from the war of liberation against colonialism, and from a difficult transition of the PAIGC from liberation movement to an unique party governing between 1974 and 1994, were the main authors of three coups d'état (1980, 2003, 2012), a murder of an elected president (Nino Vieira 2009), a civil war (1998/1999) and at least three failed coup attempts (1986, 2010 and 2022). The result is institutional instability that disrupted the pace of development. The population relies more on these own strengths and those of family, friends, and neighbours (a familiar identity of proximity) than on public institutions with a reparable level of resilience (Quétel et al. 2021). But despite this, the idea that the political system can evolve positively continues to be present, as shown by the very high voting rate in legislative and presidential elections. (Lopes 1987, Sangreman et al. 2019, Mendes 2019, UNIOGBIS 2018, Bernard et al. 2022).

The parties on June 4, 2023, elections considered gender equality in its political platforms, but in a different way from each other. If we take a sample of seven programs among the twenty-two parties and coalitions approved by the National Electoral Commission: PAI-Terra Ranka, MADEM-G15, PRS, PUN, COLIDE, PLGB et APU. There was only one party (PRS) which attaches particular importance to proposals aimed directly at women. The other parties limit themselves to considering women (and young people together) in most points of their political programmes. Nevertheless, we believe that we can see that all parties support greater gender equality and proposals that target women's economic activity, where "bideiras" (street women vendors) and vegetable producers are mentioned with intentions to support associations and microcredit processes. However, even if the intention to combat inequality between men and women is common and it is

not a strange theme for the parties, the proposals they present cannot be considered innovative either.

The results of the June 2023 elections gave the absolute majority to a “PAI-Terra Ranka” colligation of which the party that led the war against colonialism, PAIGC, has the majority. But women's representation in the National People's Congress is one of the smallest in the country's history. The lack of regulation of the law of parity by the previous legislature left the initiative to political parties where the idea of male predominance continues to be present.

New or old gender authoritarianism

An authoritarian regime emerges from societies where the configuration of social groups has elements of authoritarianism that vary and that dispute existing resources through control over the state. Interestingly, it is this competition in regimes that have evolved from authoritarian that can give rise to hybrid regimes. That is, when the single party in power loses strength in society and there is no single dominant social group, the regime is neither a democracy nor an autarky, but rather a mixture of the two, with a higher level of competition for resources. The countries that were Portuguese colonies in Africa evolved after independence from one-party regimes, with many totalitarian characteristics, to democratic regimes (Cape Verde), to authoritarian regimes (Angola) or to hybrid regimes (Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe).

The research we know of has not advanced in the direction of considering gender relations from this theoretical perspective, when the type of authoritarianism existing between men and women is old and transversal to social groups. But if we look at gender relations in Guinea-Bissau from this theoretical construct, we can find elements of analysis to consider that male authority confronts female power with historical advantage, but far from an absolute authoritarianism even in areas where the Muslim religion is dominant. The role of women in the liberation struggle from colonialism accompanied by the theorization made by Amílcar Cabral, with concrete measures such as the organization of grassroots structures throughout the country during the struggle with mandatory participation of women, gave rise to a discourse of equality that was never questioned. Even the retreat of this process after independence, with men dominating the competition for resources and seeking to relegate women closer to their traditional social role, was only partially achieved, as can be seen in the emergence of women's organizations from the villages (tabancas) to the intellectual elite of the capital Bissau. It is thus a dynamic process that corrects inequalities, although at a pace far below the expectations drawn by the leader of the struggle for independence Amílcar Cabral when he conceived the idea of the creation of the “new man and woman” in the future independent State of Guinea-Bissau (Cabral s.a.).

The most important element in this process is economic power. Women who manage to earn their own income constitute a social group that confronts the authoritarianism of men with fewer contradictions and in a more lasting way, and may, for example, if they become widows escape the obligation to go to live with a close relative of the dead husband. The more income they have, the better they can exercise that independence. This research focuses on one of the businesses that generates income for women and places them in this social group, contributing to this process and covering a significant number of women throughout the country.

Women in Guinea-Bissau

About 60% of women live in rural areas and 40% in urban and peri-urban areas. According to the law of the land (Article 1674 of the Civil Code), the family structure is based on a patriarchal model, in which the husband is the head of the family and represents the woman in public life. This power is extended to economic activities, as illustrated by article 1686 of the Civil Code, which prevents women from engaging in commercial activities without her husband's consent; if the husband does not exist or is absent, from his brother or maternal uncle. To a large extent, these customary norms contradict the articles of the Constitution on equality between men and women (art. 24 and 25) and the various international documents approved by the National Popular Assembly like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 16), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (art. 17), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination – CEDAW and the CEDEF Optional Protocol. These customary norms greatly influence family structures in inheritances, in the ownership of children in the event of divorce or death of the husband, in the acquisition of property, in the marriage of widows (or the "care" of the deceased husband's brother) and others. The gender equality and equity policy, with a strategy defined in a macro-Plan (Nacional Policy for Gender Equality and Equity), is only very slowly coming out of the paper.

The maternal mortality rate in Guinea-Bissau is the 7th highest in the world. The risk of death at childbirth is about twice that of neighbouring Senegal and Gambia.

According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS/UNICEF), primary school completion rates in 2014 show that 43%, or nearly half of girls enrolled in primary school, dropped out before completing their school. Some of the reasons cited were that girls are pressured to leave school early due to early marriage (33%), pregnancy (20%), lack of money (17%) and responsibilities at home (4%). The provisional results of MICS 2018/19 are no better with a primary school completion rate of 25% for girls and 29% for boys.

And if we look at women from the point of view of Human Rights, we can mark the reality in Guinea-Bissau with a few sentences: "Data collection faces

opposition from men, but also from the silence of women themselves who, to protect themselves, do not easily speak out about the issue of abuse of rights" (Laranjeiro 2019: 293; our translation). And the process triggered by the liberation struggle when "the view of women's lives has changed: the space for action has expanded from the private, from the domestic to the public, thus opening the way to the great adventure of building citizenship for Guinean women" (Semedo & Barros 2013; our translation). "The exercise of women's rights has only evolved with the militant action of many associations, including microcredit groups, military women and the slow and irregular extension of State's presence throughout the country" (Sangreman et al. 2020: 127).

Another factor that must be remembered is the gap that exists not only in access to decision-making positions but also in the lack of recognition of women's ability to make decisions. In other words, the inequalities between men and women in all dimensions of society reflect the presence of patriarchal authoritarianism, especially if we consider the omission of gender equality in decision-making positions. Although more than 50 percent of the Bissau-Guinean population is composed of women, who also lead most households and the informal economy, their representation in positions of power is scarce. In the current parliament, elected on 4 June 2023, there are only 11 women out of a total of 102 deputies, compared to 13 in 2019, which is a step backward, especially considering that in August 2018 legislation was passed requiring a minimum quota of 36% representation of women to be respected in elections or appointments to the National People's Assembly and Local Governments (UNIOGBIS 2018).

Furthermore, this reality has not at all reflected Amílcar Cabral's vision, in which women played an important role in society. Fifty years after independence, which was celebrated on 24 September 2023, women rights activists such as Binto Naque or Maimuna Sila point out that women in Guinea-Bissau feel their rights are increasingly being undermined due to a lack of sensitive political leadership, culminating in a clear decline in the recognition of women (Cassamá 2023). In this context, achieving equality in other areas of women's daily lives, be they domestic workers, informal laborers, horticulturalists, or others, becomes an even greater challenge. This inequality in power has an impact on the daily lives of Bissau-Guinean women. Even women horticulturalists, who are an example of autonomy and independence from men, are still subject to the unequal opportunities, interests, and greed of men.

An important feature of gender roles in the Bissau-Guinean economy is the high percentage of women engaged in economic activity. The Light Poverty Assessment Survey, (World Bank 2021), shows that among household members, about 80 per cent of women were economically active (79 per cent in Bissau and 81 per cent in regions outside Bissau). The activity of horticultural women has always existed more family-oriented or also in the market where it was possible. Today this activity has the same problems as the rest of the country's agriculture: water for irrigation, security, utensils, investment credit. To these problems have little added the low level

of literacy of women that causes them difficulties in obtaining bank credit or help from International Cooperation or even for the organization of its affairs. In general, men provide cash crops, a more significant source of income, and cereals (especially bags of rice) which are the basis of food. Women in the field grow horticultural crops that generate income and supplement the family diet. An important feature of gender relations is the management of the income obtained, which tradition indicates must be managed autonomously by the women who earn it. This means that this activity gives women an autonomy that only the sellers of fish or other products can compare. And noted that none of the other trades produce what they sell (except for the sale of ready-to-eat food).

In 1992, the Association of Women of Economic Activity (AMAE) was born, the first organization of women of economic activity established in Bissau, whose main objective is the promotion and enhancement of agricultural and handicraft products, through savings and solidarity. The continued increase in economic activities in the informal sector and the need for a financial support mechanism would lead to the establishment in 2002 of a non-bank financial institution called “Bambaram”, whose purpose is to raise the savings of small entrepreneurs in the informal sector for the provision of credit and the economic and social education of its members. This cooperative was born thanks to the initiative of women belonging to AMAE and four other associations in the informal sector.

Literature review

Research in the colonial era did not question the role of gender in the division of labour, but rather the agricultural characteristics of production and ethnic specialization that could be recorded (see <https://memoria-africa.ua.pt/> where works from the colonial era are digitized). It was with independence in 1973/1974 that Bissau became one of those West African cities that Ms. Boserup (2007) classifies as “semi-masculine”, where women are omnipresent in the streets and markets, as sellers and buyers. The vegetable market concept that we will follow consists of the set of spaces suitable for selling, municipal markets, the area of movement of people where vendors create the market, *lumos* (periodic markets), road berms, street sidewalks, balconies of dwellings and proximity to production fields. From the 80s studies begin to be made on the position of women towards the land and the work of cultivating and selling the products. Women fish sellers attract a lot of attention from researchers, but especially from the work of Rosemary Galli and Ursula Funk the division of labour by gender, the question of land ownership, access to crop fields through their family relationships, as wives or sisters and the production/sale/profit rights of horticultural products are also the subject of research (Hochet 1981, Bull 1987, Galli & Funk 1992–1994). Regarding the social division of labour by sex in the informal sector, there is a tendency

to separate the market for vegetables, fish, ice cream, fruit, and ready-to-eat foods, which is dominated mainly by women, and the market for clothing, music, building materials and household appliances. meat, freight transport, mechanical workshops and the male-dominated foreign exchange market. However, due to the heterogeneity of activities, the boundary between the two “groups” is quite flexible, being possible to find men selling fish and women selling mechanical parts. In the markets it is estimated that 7 women are present against the presence of 1 man (Gomes 2008). A very interesting study was carried out by P. Moustier (1993) on horticultural production, production, and sales conditions, based on market interviews. The same for Maria Manuela Domingues (2000). These studies analyse sellers, customers, the relationship between sellers and producers, the risk of theft, conflicts with the authorities because of points of sale on formal markets, fees on sellers, “abota” (small group credits) or other forms of association of sellers and purchasing strategies to resell in Senegal. The studies S. Cleunismar (2021: 43 and following) and S.T. Camará (2010) give us a good idea of the importance for the gender relationship of the production of market gardening or horticultural women when highlight that the woman with the income from this activity manages to have a stronger and independent position in the household.

Research design

Objectives

The data in this study focuses on the production and marketing of vegetables by women without forgetting the role of men in the process, and aims to explain five questions under the stated objective:

1. What are the economic channels that exist for marketing, namely “the role of men and women in the market and the typology of the market, including men and women”.
2. What is the economic behaviour/strategy of women in these channels according to autonomy in all decisions relating to price, sale, marketing locations, use of sales income and “the strategies that women develop for better access to the market”.
3. What limits to the exercise of activity and the use of profits for women?
4. What are the lessons that can be deduced from this research for the process of the evolution of women's social identity in Guinea-Bissau? The strategy of the research developed can be described as quantitative with some qualitative elements. It cannot be claimed to be a case study because the data collected is not sufficient for an analysis of the off-site context that would allow for a deeper understanding of the identity of these women. A sample was defined from the base of about 1000 persons working in the fields indicated by SWISSAID and a questionnaire (see attachment) designed to be determined

by SPSS was applied personally by experienced interviewers. This instrument included “open-ended” questions and spaces for observations that were allowed to the investigators to have indications to collect all observations and suggestions made throughout the time of the interviews.

This method makes it possible to collect qualitative data important for reading quantitative information in an atmosphere where respondents feel comfortable rambling about their economic activity as an identity component. Also, as all investigators are Guinean the effect of saying what the funder or consultant expects to hear, is greatly diminished.

It is obvious that inference of the results is only valid for the basis of the sample.

Data collection method

The data were collected by interviewers (men and women) of the National Association of Investigators of Guinea-Bissau with experience of several such works either in the capital Bissau or in the regions of Oio and Bafatá since 2014. The data were collected on paper form in individual interviews specific to the survey. All data and observations were recorded on an Excel matrix and transferred to SPSS for quantitative and to Word for qualitative data. For the sample to have statistical validity, the choice of horticultural women/men to be interviewed was random.

Sampling and sample definition

Since the universe of horticulturists is 1063, a sample within the statistical range of $N = [150;160]$ surveys are considered sufficient and possible to be carried out. If we use a table (e.g. Arkin & Raymond 1963 or Bryman et al. 2021) with a confidence level of 95%, we will have, for a margin of error between [5%;10%], with a universe of 1000 units, a desirable number of surveys in the interval [286; 91]. In our case the statistical units are homogeneous – they are horticulturists, all with the same activity and the same production and marketing processes, The object of study – the market of these horticulturists – is well defined and delimited. So, it is not considered necessary to collect more surveys lengthening working time and costs. The difference between the strategic behaviour of men and women will be significant if the former has a presence in terms of number of members or occupation of positions on decisions. Stratification of results can be done by field of work or zone or region.

Table 2. Sample definition

Zone	Villages	Total	Respondents
Contuboel/Bafata	Sare Bese	52	10
	Bricama	78	12
Bissorã/Oio	Lende 1	76	12
	Lende 2	35	6
	Dame Sor ou Fot Sau	36	6
	Dame Gnaba ou San-Wodi	50	7
	Dame Ter ou Bimida	45	10
Biombo			
Ponta Rocha	Ponta Rocha	148	20
Bissau			
Granja Pessube 2	Bissau	362	50
Manel de iagu	Bairro ajuda	102	15
Tchada	Bairro Tchada	79	12
Total		1063	160

The limitations and difficulties of the study

One of the limitations of this study (for the objective of knowing to improve the activity) is its own object of analysis: an unprofitable business model, not allowing savings that justifies a banking formalization of the activity for investment, despite the necessary working hours. But, according to the qualitative data collected, it is an activity that allows a significant income for families not too large – this is the reason to find a relatively high percentage of widows. And allows to eat at low cost from the self-consumption of a part of the products if the quantity produced is sufficient – the question “how many times you ate last week per day” had many answers “3 and more” than to other surveys on different samples do not hold true at all. The low savings mean that production is constantly dependent on external aid for investment in more sophisticated equipment such as water pumps, well water treatments and field fencing. Its social importance is to allow independence to women due to the tradition that the money earned is not under the authority of the men of the family, even that it is the head of the family. But this dynamic of gender relations leads to the existence of a climate of secrecy where women talk little about achievements and successes.

It is also a business model that allows the presence of poorer people without formal qualifications, with bad houses, without light at night, except candles and battery-powered lamps or small solar panels (known as “Chinese lamps”), since they do not even know how to read, write or sign their name.

Profile of women market horticulturists

Marital status

If we consider divorced and widowed women together, 31.9% of women are at risk of becoming dependent in a society like the one in Guinea-Bissau. For the producers, the living conditions (cover and soil), energy, cook's water, and the number of times per meal day, give the classification of "poor" or "less poor" relatively balanced (except in the Lendem-1 field). And widows and divorcees are better off because of the number of times they eat per day.

As is referring to the previous point, the fragility of this subgroup is rather social, resulting from the unequal relationship between the sexes which hardly accepts that a woman lives without a husband or male relative. Other surveys on women in Guinea-Bissau (Baldé & Cavaco 2023) give a higher percentage of this situation in urban areas where social pressure is lower.

The men who cultivate do so as "heirs" of the women who were producers but have died. By qualitative data, it is common that most stay until they find a woman of the family who can take care of it. It was decided to keep the results of surveys of men in the tables.

Level of education

The average age of the interviewees is 43 years with a minimum of 17 and a maximum of 71, almost a third of the respondents have never attended school and there are even two women who say they do not know how to sign their name as a reason for not having a bank account. The subgroup of divorced widows has 41.2% of women without any level of education and 19.6% with frequency only of the first level (basic).

But of the total only 49% attended a literacy campaign. And if we systematically find from the qualitative results that the training is desired by the respondents, the truth is that so far only a little more than half (54%) of all horticulturists have had some training in horticulture. This lack of general and specific authorizations for the activity, is a serious limit to a possible evolution especially in targeted marketing to more demanding customers.

Marketing agroecological vegetables

As we have already written, the activity of planting and selling horticultural products is an activity of women in Guinea-Bissau who are traditionally entitled to use the income as they decide.

Respondents give the business of growing and selling a higher percentage of its time than any other possible daily occupation. This is the only occupation where

the answers tell us that takes “5 or more hours a day” in more than 70% of cases. And if we take the sum between this level and the “plus at least 2 to 4 hours” we have 85% of time for production and sale.

The structure of income uses tells us that children, the house, and with herself, are the expenses present in 84–96% of cases, followed by the supplement to pay the teacher for the education of the children of 53% of respondents.

It can be considered that the insecurity manifested by the responses on theft of products (58% say they are victims) and on violence (37% yes) in the production fields is also partially a consequence of the presence in these premises of single women. Thefts especially is a dimension of problem to be solved by the government or by the municipality in Bissau.

Market potential and market types

The marketing model is clear to respondents. They divide between products to consume and to sell (usually half, a third or a quarter). Most sell in markets 73% and more than 18% sell in markets and production fields. Note that surveys give us a list of 23 larger and smaller markets where horticulturists market the products.

Contracts as providers of institutions could be a different type of market. But only one of the producers currently has an agreement or contract to sell to a hotel. Another had an agreement with a kindergarten last year that no longer exists. And qualitative data tells us that not even half a dozen think these kinds of customers are accessible. But it is also referred to the “fixed customers” to whom the products are brought to their homes or who always buy from the same saleswoman. It is a market with a possible potential to exploit.

Prefer to sell directly (63%) but also sell to intermediate sellers either on the production fields or at markets. The justification is that to intermediaries the selling price is lower but ensures that there are no products that are lost because they are not sold because the conditions of conservation do not exist in the fields of production.

The increase in sales to production fields, especially in Bissau, is an ambition of women market horticulturists who consider the lack of structures to sell as the main limitation for this process.

Women's ability to negotiate

The ability of horticulturists to negotiate with women sellers is real because if they can go and sell directly to the markets, they do not need to give a share of the profits to the intermediate. Many women market horticulturists have family members who sell at markets, but most also sell to intermediaries with the justification of not having the ability to keep unsold products cold so that it is in good condition

the following days. But the rivalry exists is refer to observations, but the complaints are rather about the fiscal.

To negotiate market conditions, outlet structures, fees, etc., with the CMB (whose president is appointed by the government and not elected) or directly with the government, their capacity is low because the social and political importance of the activity they devote to themselves is low. They can only do this through associations, through street demonstrations and through influence with the media. The unity between them, according to the interviews' observations, does not seem very solid, and the creation of "political weight" is a process that takes time. For example, through alliances with AMAE, women's civil society organizations such as MIGUILAN and women's organizations from the largest political parties represented in the ANP, thinking of *lobbying actions*. All this having little money to organize this process. And, as the president of La Granja's main organization insisted, "we are producers". In other words, the social and economic identity of women market horticulturists is above all to produce and then sell. In addition, they find it difficult to organize themselves and have unity for other processes. Moreover, it is indicative of this difficulty that the Associations of Oio and Bafatá have men as presidents. Note that neither the religion nor the ethnicity of the producers seems to us to be significant as variables, even if the mancanha ethnicity are the majority in the sample as other studies have noticed in connection with the historical evolution of the presence of this ethnic group in the city of Bissau. Religion/belief generally follows data from the regions of the last census. The producers call on all the entities they think can help them. At the head are NGOs (29%) followed by the government (17%) and Cooperation (18%). The reason for the preference for NGOs is referred to the government not "considering" them, by the proximity of NGOs to its problems and because "NGOs have more money" than the government or the municipality of Bissau. Associations and NGOs are mixed in the qualitative responses and several respondents say that they know that the Association of the field of production is helped from outside but do not know by whom. The most referees are SWISSAID, FAO and the Ianda Guiné project of the European Union. The latter, Ianda Guiné Hortas, is an important reference, they work in Cacheu and Oio and has built in 2022 two centres for the conservation and marketing of products to producer cooperatives. It should be noted that it is men who preside over these two associations.

The role of men in the production and sale of vegetables

As for the participation of men in activity by the answers to the question "if there are only women or if there are also men" which gives 43% affirmative for the presence of men, one might at first glance think that power over affairs was divided. But if we look at the qualitative data, we see that men help to build and maintain the fence

of the fields, ensure safety in the face of the high frequency of thefts; helps clean the field and water wells and do heavier work like digging construction sites to plant. They also help to water when there is no motor pump or when it works badly.

Nowhere is it said that decisions on selling prices have their participation and the fate of profits does not go to the husband of married producers (only 12% say they give part of the money earned to the husband). Even the function of "counsellors" that is indicated in Contuboel and Biombo is characterized as "participate in meetings with aid organizations and for the organization of the field, but it is the women who make the decisions on their affairs". In the fields of Contuboel – Bafatá it is to refer that men also participate in decision-making meetings on business. Moreover, one of the most referenced activities for men in the fields is the question of ensuring safety either in relation to the animals that eat the plants (taking care of the fence) or by the "control of the field" (security).

The challenges of commercialization

The formation of prices to sell, does not seem to obey a common strategy of associations or even of a smaller group: only the hypothesis "by his own head" had most affirmative answers (57%). And among others, the low importance of costs (95% no) and indications of the partner association of the field (85% no) tell us to such an extent this part of marketing is intuitive and individual.

The transportation of products to markets is a marketing problem noted by all respondents because it is generally paid independently of the sales result of the products transported. Transportation by taxi (29%) or wheelbarrow (28%) or combinations of both is a cost that producers are only able to avoid using transport on the head (18%) that they combine with the taxi (14%). This is a question referred to by a good part of the suggestions to improve business or as a main difficulty.

The role of policies and mechanisms put in place by the authorities

What is being asked of the government or even the municipality of Bissau is to regulate and improve the markets as sales premises in the first place. In second build new "places to sell". Moreover, the opinion on the relationship between the government and the affairs of women producers is very negative with 71% of the answers saying that the authorities have done nothing to help them and 52% saying that the increase in market taxes was a preliminary ruling. Even repairs to markets are referred to by only 18% as positive.

And when asked what they think the government could do to help them, suggestions focus on lowering taxes (74%), providing equipment (91%), seeds (86%), providing training (85%) and facilitating the transport of products (72%).

The government is also asked especially by the producers of Bissorã to raise taxes for the import of products from neighbouring countries of onions as a form of protection against competition from Senegal from the marketing of its own products.

Beyond these suggestions the qualitative data give us with fewer references other suggestions such as: building water regulation systems in the fields especially with tanks and water pumps, finding ways to preserve unsold products and facilitating bank credit.

The strategy to be developed for better market access

Only one person said that he was not a member of the field association. The others, the majority of 63%, are also part of self-help groups even if they do not have the formalization of “abota” or credit group. We can also consider that the strategy of having family people working with respondents is part of this kind of behaviour because 76% of producers responded positively. Qualitative data tells us that there are several cases of women working in the fields and having a younger member of the family to go and sell at the market.

From the structure of the uses of profits it can also be seen that the intention to improve the business as a strategy is not very present once only 19% of respondents use the results obtained to “improve the activity”. The justification can be found in the majority answer for not having a bank account: profits are not sufficient to save against existing expenses. And the short term is superimposed on the long term in the decisions to be made.

If we classify organic products as those where there are only natural products in the production process, we can say that most producers operate with these conditions. The exception is a part of the products to combat crop pests. To deal with this scourge, the reference to chemicals that “are put in the irrigation water” is mixed with other means such as acacia leaves, a plant called “nenebadadje”, white soap, tobacco, etc.

For the fertilization of the land there is unanimity for the use of animal products (especially cow and chicken waste) and garbage burn ashes or sand from wetlands (Granja field). We can say that the production is close to being agrobiologically, but this is not taken into account in decisions on prices, production or the choice of places to market.

Conclusions

Key lessons learned:

1. Role of the Government, Municipality, or other authorities

The role of the government and the Municipality could be positive on different aspects: the supply of equipment, consumables, lower taxes, works and construction of sales infrastructures (even without the typical conditions of a market), security, better organization of markets, etc.

The social status of women market horticulturists is low, and this is reflected in the poor relationship with municipality.

Officials who charge taxes regardless of the products sold and humiliate women at markets.

2. The economic strategy of women producers

The business model is based on a simple economic circuit of marketing to all possible points of sale: larger and smaller markets, production fields, streets, front houses, etc.

The calculation of the marketing price from the costs of production is not explicit but intuitive “from one’s own head”.

Fertilization and pest control is done based on the lowest possible cost and may include chemicals.

This strategy includes a process of organization in associations and smaller self-help groups, but the advantages are more on production, training, relations with external organizations such as donors, government, Municipality than on marketing.

3. The limits to the activity are internal and external

Interns are especially the low level of education of the producers, especially the most vulnerable such as widows and divorcees.

This low level gives a position in the Associations (especially in rural areas) to men that do not have in the decision-making process of the entire economic circuit.

As a result, a possible evolution to sell to more demanding customers is more difficult to put into practice if it is not perceived as immediately lucrative.

External limits stem from laws or customary laws that discriminate women in terms of land ownership (see Silva 2021), low level of added value of production and inability to accumulate in the face of family expenses.

The external limits to commercialization are the poor conditions of transport, markets and, in general, the low purchasing power of the population.

The social limits of these women’s economic activity have more to do with the low level of education. That is, to develop the activity they need to establish relations with organizations in foreign countries, speak and read Portuguese well at least (and, hopefully, English, or French). Ability to present projects, report, and report in writing. They end up being men who appear mainly outside Bissau (Bafatá, Oio, Cacheu) as the main interlocutors of these organizations and, therefore, with power over the resources that allow the development of the activity and its social role.

4. The challenges to be solved to improve commercialization focus on:
 - a. Transport of products to places (markets or road) to sell, more serious in Oio but very present in all regions and more limiting for producers who plan to go to the largest markets of the city of Bissau.
 - b. Better organization of existing markets or often it is difficult to find a place to have the products to sell, disputed with the non-producing sellers.
- Lack of premises prepared (markets or not) to sell with defined places, water, and cleaning of space.

Inability to preserve products that are not sold because there is no fridge equipment in the production fields.

Lack of strategy to meet the challenges of selling organic products in the face of the lack of customers or the low purchasing capacity of customers that forces them to lower prices. And probably because the “cluster” of customers sensitive to the benefits of organic products is still too small.

Sell to institutional customers (hotels, restaurants, or canteens) that buy the same products from supermarkets or selling intermediaries. Women producers don't seem to have a “marketing” mindset.

Women horticulturists have a positive attitude towards her work that gives them an independence of decision on the money earned that most activities do not allow because of gender authoritarianism in families. It is a good basis for projects to improve the entire marketing circuit that we are aware that these women do not have the economic conditions to face risks of business bankruptcy and intuitively do not take these risks.

Women are far from using the economic power that activity gives them. We remain with the idea that in the private space of family living conditions these women have an identity marked by this access to a source of money as an activity that frees family dependence for the women who practice it. This activity adds positive elements to the social identity of Guinean women. Not only because of greater financial autonomy, but also because it gives them a very clear place or social role: they are producers of essential goods. It is perhaps the activity that contributes the most (with sellers bideiras, although they sell but do not produce) to the evolution of their collective and family identity consciousness.

Overall conclusion

The analysis of its historical condition shows that despite progress in the field of legislation and positive developments in girls' education, in reducing cases of harmful practices for the health of girls and women, among other ills, gender disparities remain marked in our society. This is mainly due to the weight of socio-economic and cultural factors and the situation of family discrimination that continue to be part of the daily lives of Guinean women (Baldé 2023).

The practice of horticulture with the earnings to be possessed by women reaches the centre of this analysis: it influences the economic factor through the activity of production and sales, influences cultural factors because it is the woman who makes the key decisions for the activity and not the man and fights against family authoritarianism discrimination because the woman assumes responsibilities in the family and in her home that otherwise could not assume. Therefore, she tends to have a voice with more weight in family decisions. Such a development contributes to the formation of a different identity of women in the sense of greater autonomy and well-being with themselves (personal identity) as well as in the management of the family (family identity or proximity).

Do not think that this process is linear and without contradictions. As the business becomes more profitable (or for example if it receives funds from Cooperation Aid partners), the greed of family men will always tend to look for ways to appropriate the gains. One of the forms that emerges from these surveys is the attribution of the presidency of associations to men or the functions of adviser that the Bafatá and Bissorã/Oio camps claim to exist, but which does not appear in Bissau/Biombo where women are more educated. We do not know to what extent women's power is the same in these areas. But the interviews gave no indication of being different with the justification that men are there to negotiate with donors/partners, fill out papers or talk at meetings with strangers. Another way is to burden women on household or child expenses so that they cannot save or spend income on themselves.

We believe that this research also points to a structural change in the social identity of women horticultural producers as they acquire decision-making power over resources that depend on their own will. The relationship between this emancipatory activity of women and the authoritarian ups and downs of the search for a political regime, in a society where authoritarianism begins as an element of family identity, could be the subject of more targeted research. Nevertheless, this research contributes to the hypothesis that the construction of an authoritarian regime, if on the one hand it corresponds to the basic structures of family society, on the other hand it will always have difficulty consolidating itself because the movements in favour of gender equality originated in the struggle for independence and have not diminished (as far as we can see). In other words, the liberation struggle was not only against the Portuguese colonial regime, but also against the primary authoritarianism in social structures, weakening this characteristic of Guinean social identity and reinforcing the likelihood of success in the evolution of women towards a more egalitarian society.

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Attachment

Questionnaire

The questions were written in Portuguese and the interviewers' training included understanding and translating each sentence into Creole. About 20–30 years ago, ethnic languages had to be used in questionnaires. Today the respondents in the interviews make a point of speaking Creole, and the importance of knowing in which language the interview was conducted has disappeared.

The questions asked were as follows:

Personal questions:

Region; Field of cultivation; Nearest market; Name; Relationship to head of household; Age; Religion/beliefs; Marital status (Single, Married, Divorced, Widowed); Are you a member of any other associations (If yes, name the association); What is the highest level of education you have attended? If you've never been to school, have you done any literacy training; Have you done any training in horticulture; Do you have an emigrant family (if so, how does this family help); Ethnicity; Do you have other people in your family who work with you in the garden or in the sales area (if so, who are they);

House floor (Earth. Cement. Part earth. Other).

Dwelling roof (Straw. Zinc. Fiber cement. Other).

Lighting (Candle. Oil. Solar panel. Mains or generator).

Cooking water (Well. River or stream. Piped. Other);

Last week, how many meals did you eat a day (1, 2, 3 or more)?

Social category according to the enquirer (Poor. Less poor)

What is the role of government:

1. In the last year what do you think the government has done to help improve your business (Done construction. Nothing. Other. Don't know)
2. In the last year, what do you think the government has done that has harmed your business (Increased fees/taxes on markets. Nothing. Other. Don't know)
3. What do you think the government could do to help you (Lower taxes. Provide training in organic horticulture. Provide equipment for cultivation. Give seeds. Support a low-price transport pass for women vendors. Other)

Free observations.

What economic circuits exist:

What products do you grow yourself (Rice. Onions. Tomatoes. Baguitché. Candja. Djagatu. Kale. Lettuce. Chilli pepper. Cucumber. Peppers. Carrots. Squash. Aubergine. Succulent. Beans. Cabbage. Others)

1. Are the products you grow for your own consumption or for sale?
2. If it's for both, how do you divide it up (Half. A third. A quarter. As)
3. Where do you sell (Market. Street. In front of the house. In the field. Hotels, shops, restaurants)
4. If you sell in markets, name the markets.
5. Is it always women who grow and sell or do you have men involved in the business (Only women. Some men)
6. If you have any men, tell us what they do.
7. If you belong to an association that has a woman president, tell us if there are also men on the board.
8. When a pest appears, what do you use?
9. What do you use to make the land more fertile?

What is the economic behavior of women:

1. What is your main activity?
2. Do you have another activity? If yes, which one?
3. Do you have a bank account (Yes. No. In your name. In your name with other saleswomen. Jointly with a relative.
4. If you don't have an account, say why.
5. Do you sell to other intermediaries (for resale) (Yes. No. Sometimes).
6. Do you sell more to intermediaries or directly?

7. How do you calculate the price of your products? By talking to other sellers in the same market. By talking to the association. Based on my costs. By asking other sellers what the price is in other markets. Depending on whether there are more or fewer people buying).
8. How you transport your products to the places where you sell.
9. This month you have a verbal or written contract to sell products to a company, hotel, restaurant, shop, canteen or other institution. If so, say who you have a contract with.
10. The Association has external support. If yes, name the funder.

What limitations on the exercise of the activity:

1. What do you use the money you earn from selling the products you grow? Expenses for children at school, food, clothing, etc. Household expenses. Gives to husband. Pay the teacher's salary. Expenses for yourself. Other).
2. Do you have problems with burglars stealing your produce?
3. You have problems with animals eating your plants.
4. You have problems with violence against yourself when you go to the fields.
5. What entity or organization do you think could do something to improve your business (None. Government. Cooperation. NGO. Bissau Municipal Council. I don't know).
6. What do you think they could do

Suggestions for improving your business (open question)

Your time, how do you use it:

1. In the two days before the survey, how many hours did you spend: Looking after the children. Cooking. Buying food/drink. Fetching/buying water. Looking after the family's clothes. Buying things for the house. Looking after the garden and selling it. Looking after yourself. Looking after/husband. Doing nothing. Watch TV/listen to the radio. Talking to neighbors and friends. (scale: 0 hours, 1 hour, more or less 2 to 4 hours, 5 or more hours)
2. If you could choose to do only what you like, what would you do all day today?
3. What is the biggest difficulty in commercializing/selling your products?

Summary

This article was developed from the study done for the Swiss Cooperation in Guinea-Bissau on women horticulturists. The data were obtained by surveys and interviews in the regions of Bissau, Biombo, Bafatá and Oio, with the producers (which also include a limited number of male producers) of leguminous agricultural products, in a sample of 160/1063 people chosen at random. To better understand the results, it must be said that this business model is not very profitable, but it is an activity that gives a greater independence of women in relation to men in the family space, combating the existing male authoritarianism, since decisions about the use of profits belong to the women producers. It also has a potential

environment of action for the affirmation of the social (and not just family) identity of women that should not be despised although, as far as we can see, this is expressed for now only in the organization of associations of producers. The data matrix and the qualitative observations file are the property of SWISSAID, but the tables obtained from it can be provided to researchers who request them.

Keywords

Guinea-Bissau, horticulturists, women, informal agriculture, family, authoritarianism

Streszczenie

Rolnictwo kobiet w Gwinei Bissau jako sposób na wzmocnienie ich tożsamości

Niniejszy artykuł powstał na podstawie badania przeprowadzonego dla Swiss Cooperation w Gwinei Bissau na temat kobiet-ogrodniczek. Dane uzyskano za pomocą ankiet i wywiadów przeprowadzonych w regionach Bissau, Biombo, Bafatá i Oio z producentami (w tym ograniczoną liczbą mężczyzn-producentów) roślin strączkowych, w próbie 160/1063 osób wybranych losowo. Aby lepiej zrozumieć wyniki, należy stwierdzić, że ten model biznesowy nie jest zbyt dochodowy, ale jest to działalność, która zapewnia kobietom większą niezależność od mężczyzn w przestrzeni rodzinnej, zwalczając istniejący męski autorytaryzm, ponieważ decyzje dotyczące wykorzystania zysków należą do kobiet-producentek. Stwarza on również potencjalne środowisko działań na rzecz afirmacji społecznej (a nie tylko rodzinnej) tożsamości kobiet, której nie należy lekceważyć, chociaż, jak dotąd, wyraża się to jedynie w organizacji stowarzyszeń producentów. Macierz danych i plik obserwacji jakościowych są własnością SWISSAID, ale tabele z nich uzyskane mogą być udostępniane badaczom na ich prośbę.

Słowa kluczowe

Gwinea Bissau, ogrodnicy, kobiety, rolnictwo nieformalne, rodzina, autorytaryzm