

Involvement of Rural Women in Local Development and Preservation of Natural Resources- Case of The Rural Municipality Sehoul- Morocco

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Abstract

Issues of equality between women and men are today reforms and key issues for any company. Certainly no one today can deny the crucial role of rural women in development and management of the local thing, which is, among other things, the foundation of sustainable development. Today, rural women need for effective integration, a proximity policy to develop their communities; their participation is a prerequisite for the fight against poverty. The following article deals with the problem of interaction between rural women and natural resources through the use of some tools of gender and development including: the division of labor by gender, type of work, participation levels, conditions and situations, and opportunities for transformation, and participatory approach by conducting surveys and participatory workshops in six soils representatives a rural forest "Sehoul" located in the province of Salé in Morocco. It appears from this study that there is an urgent need to improve the living conditions of women and girls in this town by the implementation of integration projects of women based on five areas: literacy, education, training and support economic, and health coverage. And secondly to decrease the pressure on natural resources

Keywords: Rural community, rural women, natural resources, gender approach, sustainable development

Implication des femmes de milieu rural dans le développement local et la protection des ressources naturelles - Cas de la municipalité rurale de Sehoul – Maroc

Résumé

Les questions d'égalité entre femmes et hommes constituent de nos jours des réformes et enjeux essentiels pour toute société. Certes, nul ne peut nier aujourd'hui le rôle crucial de la femme rurale dans le développement et à la gestion de la chose locale, laquelle constitue, entre autres, le socle du développement durable. Aujourd'hui, les femmes rurales ont besoin de l'intégration effective, une politique de proximité pour développer leur entourage, leur participation est une condition sine qua non pour lutter contre la pauvreté. L'article ci-après traite la problématique d'interaction entre les femmes rurales et les ressources naturelles à travers l'utilisation de quelques outils de l'approche genre et développement à savoir : la division du travail selon le genre, le type de travail, les niveaux de participation, conditions et situations, et les possibilités de transformation, et l'approche participative par la réalisation des enquêtes et des ateliers participatifs dans six terroirs représentant une commune rurale forestière « Sehoul » situé dans la province de Salé au Maroc. Il ressort de cette étude qu'il y a une urgence d'améliorer les conditions de vie de la femme et de la fille dans cette commune par la mise en œuvre des projets d'intégration de la femme basé sur 5 axes: l'alphabétisation, l'éducation, la formation et l'encadrement économique, et la couverture sanitaire. Et d'autre permettant la diminution de la pression exercée sur les ressources naturelles.

Mots clés : Commune rurale, femme rurale, ressources naturelles, approche genre, développement durable

Introduction

Rural women¹ that have been forgotten development programs is a long time the

most vulnerable and poorest of the rural population. What is even more unusual, it could play a role in the fight against poverty and it proved to be an excellent manager. Thus, the rural women, through its know-how and the activities it undertakes at the

¹ According to the census of the Moroccan population in September 2004, the legal population of Morocco reached 29,891,708 inhabitants with an increase of 14.6% over 1994. This population is divided between 16,463,634 and 13,428,074 rural dwellers (44.9%). In this population of women is the number of 15,039,407 (50.7%) and men is

14,640,662 (49.3%). Between urban and rural units are almost the same.

farm and household is a key determinant and local development. The roles of women reflect the allocation of tasks by sex within and outside the household and based on the perception of social roles of men and women in society. However this role assigned to it does not guarantee equality of opportunity and equity in access to resources, services, property, income and control of power. Indeed, rural women are the population group most affected in terms of literacy, schooling, health, poverty, employment and income. Women represent just over fifty percent of the national population, despite improvements in recent years are the most vulnerable because of their positions in society (home, work etc...), Their conditions lives and their relationships with others. This is explained by the rule of men in the exercise of authority and law, when the women have most often use rights that are not generating income, and therefore limit independence and access to wealth. It is in this context, that is part of our work is a contribution to the diagnosis of women's role in local development and preservation of natural resources. He treats the case of the rural town of Sehoul located in the province of Sala- El Jadida adjacent to the city of Rabat Morocco's capital, belonging to the whole central plateau to the northwest of Morocco (map).The rural focus of these study was chosen for several reasons: the existence of many scientific studies, the multiplicity of information on the area and accessibility of this area.

In light of these findings, we ask our basic question we ask our central research question: What is the contribution of women in development and preservation of natural resources in the rural town of Sehoul?

To operationalize our problem, we pose a set of secondary issues that could refine the basic question of this study, and to provide enough essential if our work can make the substrate for possible action:

- What are the activities undertaken by women and men?
- Compared with men, what are the levels of female participation in the various activities of production and reproduction?

- Compared with men, what level of access and control that women have the resources and benefits?
- What are the problems of women in the town of Sehoul?
- What are the opportunities for improvement of living conditions of women in the town of Sehoul?

Methodology

We used for this study some tools of gender and development. This is an approach that takes into account the totality of social relations in a community and more specifically the relationship between women and men. The analysis of these reports allows us to identify the constraints or factors that promote development in a community and thus develop effective strategies to fight against poverty. It is an approach that promotes the values of fairness and equality in society. Among the tools of gender and development approach was used:

- **Tool 1:** the division of labor by gender. And to know the nature and value attributed to the work of women and men;
- **Tool 2:** the type of work. By analyzing the work of women and men (the division of labor by gender) to:
 - Appreciate the hard work in and its actual value;
 - Planning for the consequences of projects and activities on the complex balance of social and economic functions in the study area;
 - Reduce the workload of women;
 - Ensure participation of women in various activities and projects in the area.
- **Tool 3:** levels of participation. By analyzing the types of participation of women and men in different activities, and the nature of the benefits received by each
- **Tool 4:** conditions and situations. This tool is generally aimed at improving the living conditions of populations. From the perspective of gender analysis and development, we distinguish between the status of women in their daily lives and their situation in society.
- **Tool 5:** possibility of transformation. Gender analysis and development research and facilitates, in a pro-active, the realization of this potential. These tools deepen our

analysis of gender relations and help define the issues on which we relied for this study. We also used a few tools of the participatory approach, namely the individual and group semi-structured by conducting surveys and participatory workshops in six soils representative of all sections of the study area. Questions were related to both women and men for various activities of the season. For this we have spent full days in the land, for each season of the year, winter, spring,

summer and fall. The method used for data analysis is content analysis which aims to seek, in oral or written messages, both objective and quantifiable to characterize the role of women. And that helps clarify the phenomena and situations in a simple manner.

The table below shows the distribution of different soils in the rural town of Sehoul which were the subject of our study.

Table 1: Distribution of land subject of the study

Terroirs	Douars	Number of interviews
Oulad Alwane	Lam'Falha	7
Oulad Aziz Aghbal	Oulad malla	8
Azzouziyine	Jbara	6
Oulad Issa	Al ziyaida	7
Jyahna	Jouahna	9
Jouaneb	Mamora	10

Results and Discussion

Prior to characterize the role of women in local development, we first present the area to which they belong to.

I-Population

The rural town of 19,959 inhabitants representing Sehoul has 2931 households. This population is composed of 49% women and 51% men. The average household size is approximately seven people per household. The population of working age (15-60 years)

which has 50% female population holds 27% and 23% male occuppies.

To better illustrate the distribution by sexe, we have introduced the concept of age in the total distribution of the population. We consider four age groups, < 7 years 7 years 15 years 15 years 60 years and > 60 years. For the first class are the small, the second is composed of a range where there are students and some labor, the third class is the labor of choice and the fourth, that of elder (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of land subject of the study

Age	< 7 years	7 -15 years	15 - 60 years	> 60 years	Total
Sexe					
Male	10,6 %	14 %	23 %	3,4 %	51%
Female	8,2 %	11,8%	27 %	2 %	49%
Total	18,8 %	25,8 %	50 %	5,4 %	100 %

Sources: 2010-2011 Survey

The population of this county has an illiteracy rate very high average of 63.9%. By sex, the situation remains serious, if not dramatic for women with a rate of 79.3%. So this is a constraint that must be exceeded by the combined efforts as part of a development policy which aims at developing human resources through education.

II- Occupancy of land and modes of operations

The area of the rural community of Sehoul is 39 400 hectares, its use is integrated into an agro-forestry-pastoral based on three components: cropland, pasture and forest.

Table 3: Distribution of land in the rural study

Rural community	Agricultural area		Forest		Pasture + uncultivated		Total	
	S (ha)	%	S (ha)	%	S (ha)	%	S (ha)	%
Sehoul	22 000	55,84	10 500	26,65	6 900	17,51	39 400	100

Source: Rural community, 2010

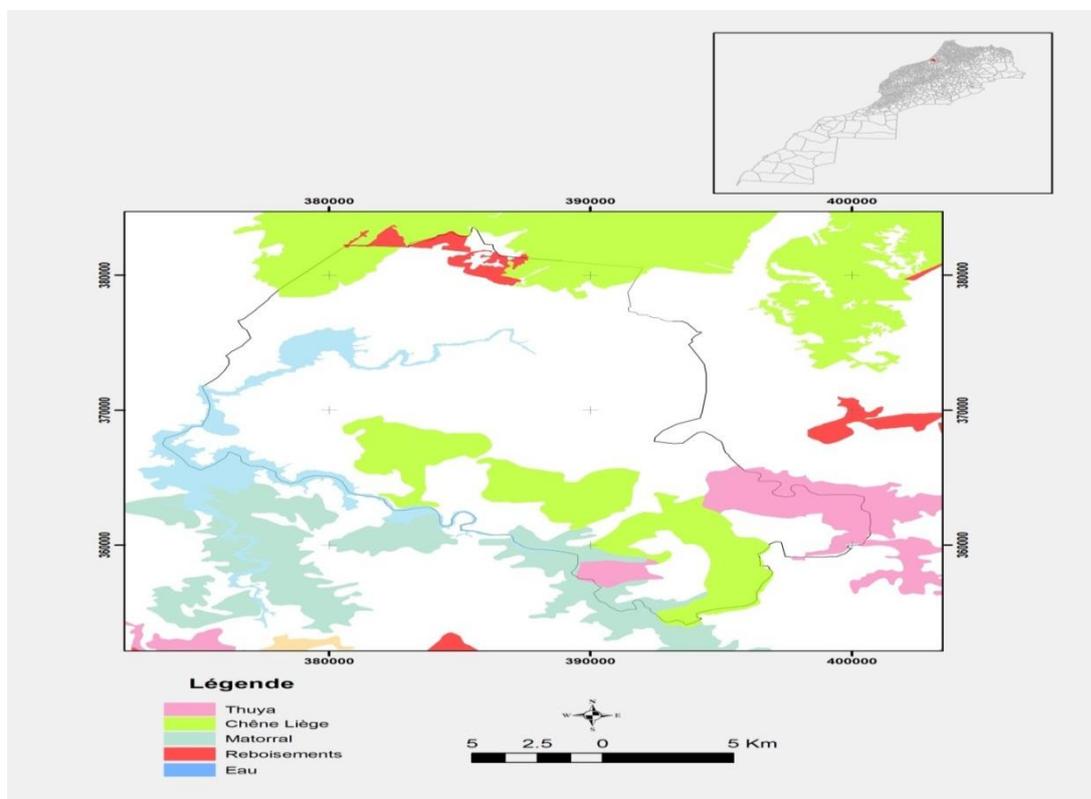
Culture the most practiced at the joint is Sehoul cereals with 72.2% of the agricultural area. The remaining 27.5% is used for plantations, vegetables, forages and legumes or left fallow. The Commune has pastoral tradition. Thus, the majority of operators Sehoul practice extensive farming which, however, suffers from both the scarcity of grass cover fallow, rangeland (12% of the total area of the municipality of Sehoul) and low production of fodder crops stock market (rainfed crops) and stubble. Thing that makes farming very common in this forest-dependent.

Indeed the latter contains a very important forage potential for livestock consisting of

cattle, sheep and goats. The forest is also considered a source of wood energy as the energy consumption of the area is based primarily on a significant demand for fuel.

III-Key Activities by gender

Survey results show that there is a division of labor by gender within and outside the household. And that the activities different from one season to another (Table 3). This allows us to provide more information on the socioeconomic status of women in the study area.



Legend : Thuya (*tetraclinis articulata*), Chêne liège (*Quercus suber*), Matorral (*Matorral*), reboisement (Reforestation), Eau (Water)

Figure 1: Location map and occupation of the rural town of Sehoul (Morocco)

Table 4: the division of labor by age and gender

Age	Sexe	Activities	Season				
			Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn	
7 - 15 years	Male	in school	-Schooling	++++	++++	+++	++++
			-Pasture		+	+++	+
	is not in school	- Pasture	++++	++++		++++	
		- Help-collection timber	++++	++		++	
		- Water Supply			++		
	Female	in school	--Schooling	+++	+++		+++
			- Help-collection timber	+	+	++	++
			- Housework			+	+
is not in school	- Pasture			+	+		
	- Collection of wood-	++++	++++	++	++++		
	- Water Supply	+++	++++	+++	++++		
	- Housework	++	++	++	++		
	- Help-farm work	++	+++	+++	+++		
	- Crafts	++		++			
15 - 60 years	Male	-Agriculture	+++	+++	+++	+++	
		-Breeders	++++	++++	++++	++++	
		-Marketing(Trade)		++	+++		
		-Migration	+++		+++		
	Female	- Domestic work-	++++	++++	++++	++++	
		-Education of children	+++	+++	+++	+++	
		-Collection of wood-	+++	+++	++	+++	
		-Water Supply			+++		
		- Agriculture		+++	+++		
		-Breeders (search for fodder, food, cleaning ...)	++	++	++	++	
-Small-farm							
-Crafts							
> 60 years	Male	-Agriculture			+++	+++	
		-Breeders	+++	+++	+++	+++	
		-Marketing(Trade)			+++		
Female	- Housework	++	++	++	++		
	-Crafts	++	++	++	++		
	-Small-farm		++	++	++		

A-The main male activities

• **Livestock**

Farming is practiced by almost all heads of households. The herd now consists of cattle, sheep and goats. Cattle farming is semi-intensive. The goats and sheep is usually extensive and is based primarily on rangelands, including the forest and stubble summer farms. So it's is a mobile livestock whose livestock is entrusted to the shepherd children (boys), while men are responsible for the marketing of dairy and livestock, and food supply for the latter during periods of scarcity.

• **Agriculture**

Crops grown in the study area are diverse (cereals, legumes, tree crops, fallow, gardening). Survey results show that there is a sexual division of labor outside the household, and the different activities from one season to another. Men alongside women do the plowing, sowing, harvesting, irrigation and threshing grain by animals such as mules and donkeys, but still the commercialization of agricultural production to the responsibility of male.

- **Migration**

Migration is one of the most important aspects of population mobility in the area of Sehoul. The imbalance between the potential of the area and the growing demand of its population which is reflected in the lack of local resources drive men, from the end of the season of tillage and planting (fall), to leave their homes in search of work to generate extra income to meet the needs of their families. The rural exodus of the male has a negative impact on the lives of women. They then have full responsibility for the children (food, care, etc.). And domestic and agricultural activities.

B-The main women's activities

Analysis of the seasonal calendar shows that there is an overload of women's activities throughout the year. In addition to domestic work (breeding activities: cooking, raising children ...), the women filled with other activities that are related to production (livestock, small livestock, agriculture ...).

- **Domestic activities**

It is a role traditionally assigned to women: cooking, education, child care, dishwashing, cleaning, etc... These are the daily activities of young women throughout the year.

- **The water supply**

The soils in this study contain a large number of water sources. This activity is accomplished primarily by school girls during the different seasons of the year. However, given the scarcity of water in summer, young women and even boys can participate.

- **The collection of wood**

It is an activity essential to meet the fuel needs of the household. Indeed, the wood collected is used for heating in cold weather, for baking bread and meals ...etc. The amount of wood collecting and frequency of travel vary by season, household needs and the proximity of the forest. These are virtually the women and girls out of school first that handle this task.



Photo1: Harvesting of wood by rural women

- **The activities of agro-pastoral production**

Small livestock is an income generating activity very important for women.. Thing that justifies his practice by almost all of them. They allow them to cover their medical expenses and participate in meeting the family needs. They are in fact, responsible for the production of chickens, turkeys, rabbits and eggs.

They also participate in the rearing of sheep, cattle and goats. They take care of mowing, watering, feeding livestock, cleaning the stables and milking cows. The contribution of the young women and the girls is very important in crop management. For cereals, which are the main agricultural production, they provide weed control in spring and harvest by hand or with a sickle in the summer. They also participate in the planting and harvesting of legumes (beans, chickpeas and peas).

- **The crafts**

Handicrafts are the most desired (weaving, preparation of wool ...) for all women in the study area. But this type of activity is not provided a source of income for women, since the products are made primarily for the use of their own homes.

These works often have a difficult threat to women's health, and preventing it from enhancing other activities typically female.

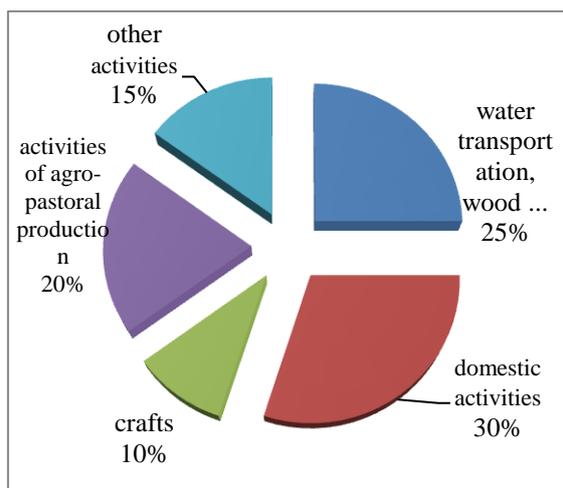


Figure 1: The main activities in female Sehoul

Contribution of women in decision making

According to interviews conducted with women, it was found that they are socially excluded from decision making. Their participation is generally limited to consultation rather than decision making. Women do not care or the purchase or sale of farm produce including products that run with the small animals. So this is an area that is up to the men and the common effort of all family members, including women, are managed by the head of household. Also, the girl and beautiful girl simply to obey both the man for the stepmother. As a woman gives birth, it remains studded, but it advances in age, the more it acquires a certain status, and it also gains the freedom to visit neighbors and family.

Role of women in the process of natural resource conservation

Sehoul, as in many parts of Morocco, has the different vegetation types, namely: the forest, crop areas and others are severely affected. This unfavorable development of vegetation leads to harmful consequences. Women are a permanent family labor and represent the most active fraction in the area, since they are involved in cattle, sheep and goats, they are present in all phases of agricultural work which they are responsible (plowing, sowing, and harvesting) and agricultural processing activities. They also carry most of the housework, water supply

and collection of firewood, medicinal and aromatic plants, mushrooms, etc. That is why they are considered the principal agent in direct contact with natural resources. They are also the first to suffer the consequences of the depletion of their land because they are the poorest category and most vulnerable. This vulnerability refers to the insecurity and all forms of risks they face daily. As a result, and thus the concept of sustainable development, closely related to natural resource concerns that must be carefully managed to avoid compromising the potential of future generations, we can say that women's involvement, as well as the men in the decision process, then appears very useful for the sustainable development of natural resources in the study area.

Requirements and expectations of women of the Commune of Sehoul

Positively, we noted the existence of a group of women who voice almost open to close to Equality sought to men. Through the results of surveys of women and girls in the study area, it is clear that they expect a decision framework in the field of associations, production, and management. It is also clear that the possibilities of improving conditions of women and girls are relatively large and are focused around the following points:

- *Improved living conditions of women and girls by reducing the workload by:*
 - The use of other energy sources by introducing butane for cooking, and solar energy for lighting and television. These actions will also decrease the pressure on the forest which contributes 30% of the energy balance of the population;
 - Improving the availability of drinking water by building more water points within the soils and installation of suction pumps, because the rural town of Sehoul belongs to a region very rich in groundwater;
 - *The enrollment of girls, and the fight against illiteracy in general for large, building to benefit schools.* these actions will achieve coverage of all school lands, knowing that there are only 04 primary schools and 02 colleges do not cover all the land of the commune;

• *Contribution to improving the health of mother and child by:*

- Installation of health services in the vicinity of land for primary health care, and enhance advantage of the space of motherhood for safe deliveries. As such we indicate that currently the town has only two clinics for 19,959 inhabitants and one home birth with a capacity of 06 beds per 5788 women;

- The integration of the feminine element in health education programs through the allocation of female doctors and nurses in health centers and dispensaries, that the traditions of society that women are apprehensive of having to do with male doctors and nurses, and health benefits remain limited to male citizens and young children, while women remain the most disadvantaged by this situation.

• *The creation of multipurpose centers for vocational training, since there are none, to develop the craft skills of the female population, and promote communication and cohesion between the different components of the soil.*

• *The integration of women in economic activities and production by:*

a. The creation of sources of income for women by creating women's cooperatives and associations to enhance and promote activities of crafts and small livestock. Women have thus expressed their need;

b. Strengthening the training of women in managing natural resources and environment;

c. training of women to: chores, learning sewing, hygiene education, and family planning;

d. The integration of women in various development projects and sustainable management of natural resources, by involving them in extension activities of agricultural techniques and methods;

e. Encouraging the active participation of women in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion

A diagnosis of common Sehoul was made on the basis of gender and development method, an essential component of the participatory approach, based on surveys and participatory workshops with groups of women.

It appears that the women have a direct relationship with its environment and impacts on natural resources (collection of firewood, medicinal and aromatic plants, mushrooms, water ... etc..). They assume important responsibilities at the household level, and the farm (cooking, child rearing, care, cattle, sheep and goats, collecting firewood, milking, plowing, sowing, harvesting ...), and with his expertise is a key player in the development of the area. However, it is socially excluded from decision making. His participation is generally limited to consultation rather than decision making. Something that does not guarantee equality of opportunity and equity in access to resources, services, property, income and control of power. Therefore, the females of the town of Sehoul are the most vulnerable category, and the most affected in terms of literacy, schooling, health, poverty, and income. The development objective of the local study area, and the conservation of natural resources cannot achieved without the integration and effective participation of women in sustainable development projects and involvement, as well as rights in the decision process.

Integrate women in development, it is also facilitating their lifestyle by the proposed development activities on improving the living conditions of women and girls, and the integration of women in economic activities and production .Thus, we reached the following recommendations:

1. Need for basic infrastructure in the areas, drinking water, electrification of all the lands of the town, to improve conditions for people in general and women in particular;

2. Need to support the education sector by encouraging the widespread education of rural girls;

3. Assigning teachers at school level to support the literacy program of the Ministry of Social Development, Solidarity and vocational training;

4. Need to support the health sector through strengthening health facilities, rural clinics and maternity centers;

5. Encouragement of associations and networks of women, all ensuring their full participation;

6. Developing an action plan for integration of women based on four areas: literacy, education, training and support economic, next to health coverage;
7. The use of other energy sources to reduce the pressure on the forest for the collection of wood, by the introduction of butane for cooking, and solar energy for lighting.

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