

Rural women living conditions and opportunities

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I- Introduction

As per the 2017 national census, there are 26.4 million females living in rural areas in Egypt, representing 57.5% of females in Egypt. Census results show that 54.5% of rural women live in lower Egypt, 44.6% live in upper Egypt and 0.9% live in frontier governorates. Around 52% of those women are in the reproductive age (15-49 years) and 62% are in the productive age (15-64 years).

Rural women play an important role in achieving sustainable development as they are key agents in economic, environmental and social changes in developed and developing countries, accordingly, the united nations declared the 15th of October to be the international day for rural women in 2008. Rural women have essential role in food security as they are active in crop production, livestock care, and provision of food, water and fuel for their families and engage in off-farm activities in addition to their role in house care for children and old people.

Quality of life, education and training, economic opportunities, financial inclusion opportunities, and familiarity with technology affect the capabilities of rural women to act as change agents and lead the development in their local communities. This paper aims at exploring the status of the above mentioned factors among rural women.

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II- Methodology

Baseera conducted a survey on rural women's living conditions and opportunities during the period from November 7th to November 29th, 2018. The data were collected from a random sample of 1,054 respondents aged 15+. Respondents were accessed through their landlines and mobile phones. The data were weighted to represent population distribution by region, and education level. All estimates in this paper are subject to a less than 3%- margin of error.

III- Main Results

III-1- Rural women's quality of life

Most of the rural women live in a house that is owned by their household members, as 55% of the houses are totally owned by the HH members and 21% of the houses are partially owned by the HH members. Almost all the rural women are living in an apartment (45%) or a separate building (51%).

Around 45% of the rural women have improved toilet with flush in their residence, 4% have improved toilet without flush, 5% have non-improved toilet with flush and 45% have non-improved toilet without flush. The toilets of only 39% of the women are piped to sewer system.



Around 38% of the women live near to a sluice or drainage, two-fifth of them reported that this sluice/drainage cause problems including insects, accumulation of garbage, and bad smells.

Around 40% reported garbage accumulation near their place of residence while 59% said that there is no garbage accumulated near their place of residence.

All the streets in the villages where 45% of the respondents live were lit up, while some streets were lit in the villages where 48% of the respondents live, and 7% of the respondents live in villages where the streets are not lit.

Microbuses are the main means of transportation for 63% of rural women when they need to go to the city followed by Toktok with 16% and goods transportation cars with 10%. Only 3% use taxi and the same percentage use buses. One third reported having troubles with the transportation means they use. High prices is the most frequent problem mentioned by them with 38% followed by the lack of transportation means with 37% and the crowded with 28%.

Overall, 42% of rural women have the desire to migrate to an urban area, while 56% don't and 2% couldn't decide. Those who have the desire to migrate to an urban area where asked about the



reason behind this desire. Around 14% mentioned the availability of health care in the cities, 14% mentioned the cleanness of the streets followed by availability of markets and shops with 12%, availability of transportation means with 7%, availability of schools with 6% and higher quality education with 6%.

III-2 Education and training opportunities

Around 26% of the rural women didn't go to school, 39% have less than intermediate education, 28% have intermediate or upper intermediate education and 6% have university or higher education. Those who dropped-out before completing their university education was asked about the reasons for not completing their education. Marriage was the reason mentioned by 33% of the women followed by financial reasons with 27%, don't want to go to continue education with 11% and customs and traditions with 9%.

Most of the respondents (84%) think that girls in their villages have better opportunities for education than the opportunities they had when they were young. Around 5% of the respondents mentioned that their villages don't have any schools for girls while 93% have primary schools, 88% have preparatory schools and 47% have secondary schools for girls in their villages.



Only 3% of the respondents got training on a handicraft and 5% got a training to get a job or to be promoted in their workplace. These results reflect the need to increase the training opportunities for rural women.

III-3 Economic participation opportunities

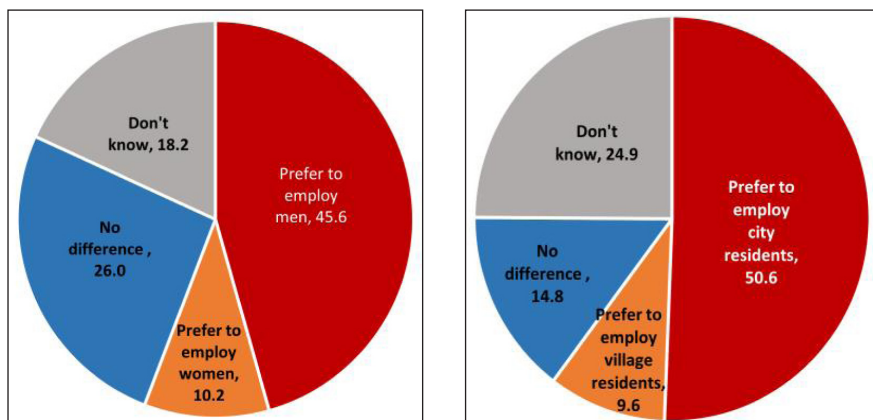
Around 13% of rural women in the age group (15-64) are currently working, 13% are unemployed and search for a job and 74% are out the labour force.

A high percentage of women in rural areas feel that there is discrimination against them in job opportunities as 46% of them believe that employers prefer to employ men versus 10% who believe that employers prefer to employ women. The percentage of those who believe that employers prefer to employ men increases from 42% in Lower Egypt to 51% in upper Egypt.

In the same context, 46% believe that employers prefer to promote men versus 11% who believe that employers prefer to employ women. Moreover, 51% believe that employers prefer to employ urban residents while only 10% believe that employers prefer to employ rural residents.



Figure (1): Rural women's perceptions about employers' preferences



Around 3% of the respondents have their own economic enterprise, around 29% are working in raising and selling poultry and agriculture products, 19% in handicrafts and sewing clothes and 8% in food production.

In addition to those who have their own economic enterprise, 6% had previously their own enterprises, 2% had an idea for a small enterprise and started establishment procedures, 33% had an idea for a small enterprise but they didn't implement them and 57% never thought to establish an enterprise. Those who had an idea for a small enterprise but they didn't implement them were asked about the reason and 80%



of them mentioned that they didn't have the required investment.

Only 4% of those who have their own enterprise or those who had an idea for a small enterprise tried to get a loan from a bank or an NGO.

Twenty percent of the rural women mentioned that their households own agriculture land. One third of them help their HH members in these agriculture land and 20% have modern and electrical equipment which indicates that rural women need more channels to get modern and electrical equipment to improve land productivity.

Around 6% of the women confirmed that the decision to ban the circulation of live poultry affected them.

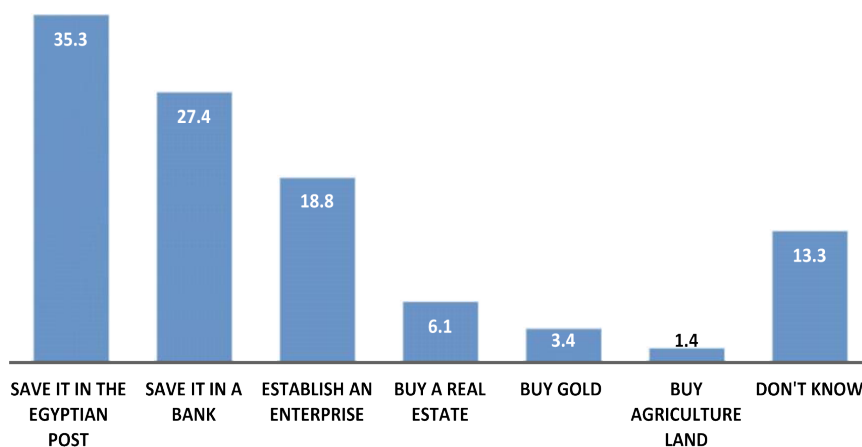
III-4 Financial inclusion opportunities

Around 20% of the women said that they have a bank branch in their villages with no significance difference between Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt. The same prevalence rate was observed when asked about ATM. This low prevalence of banks in the villages is corresponded by a high prevalence of post offices with 68% of the women reported having a post office in their villages.



When they were asked about what they would do if they have money and want to save them, 35% said that they would save it in the Egyptian post while 27% said that they would save it in a bank, 18% said that they would establish an enterprise, 3% said they would buy gold and 1% said that they would buy agriculture land. Worth mentioning that the financial inclusion rate among rural women reached 21% in 2017¹.

Figure (2): If you have money and want to save it, what would you do?



¹ *The survey on financial inclusion among Egyptians, Baseera center and GIZ, January 2017.*



III-5 Familiarity with technology

Around 81% of rural women have a mobile phone and 26% of those who have mobile phone have a smart phone. The percentage of those who have smart phone reaches 40% among youths less than 30 years compared to 12% among those who ages 50+. Two thirds of those who have smart phone uses WhatsApp which accounts for 14% of all rural women.

Among all rural women, 30% know how to use a computer. This percentage reaches 50% among youths less than 30 years compared to 7% among those who ages 50+. Moreover, 20% have a Facebook account and the percentage increase to reach 35% among youths less than 30 years compared to 5% among those who ages 50+.

IV- Policy implications and recommendations

Only 13% of rural women are currently working and a same percentage looking for a job. Diversification of work areas may help increasing women employment rate. The following areas of work may be suitable for women:



- Expanding existing organic clusters depending on village profile and comparative advantage including value chain integration especially in the agriculture sector.
- Value chain integration
- Handicrafts projects may open opportunities for women work provided that they are given adequate training on these handicrafts and have ways to market their production. ENID initiative provides a success model for training and employing women in handicrafts and marketing their production. Scaling up such initiatives will help accelerating women participation in handicrafts work opportunities.
- Renewable energy proved to be a suitable area for women work. solar plan of Benben in Aswan provides a good model for employing women in renewable energy sector.
- Information and communication technology sector provides several work opportunities for women and many countries it allowed women who can't work outside home to work from home.



A high percentage of rural women live in an unhealthy environment as there is sluce or drainage near to their houses, they suffer from garbage accumulation and are not connected to sewer system. Moreover, most of the rural women don't have improved toilet with flush. In addition, lightning villages streets is limited. These living conditions may negatively affect the health and safety not only of women but also of children which will negatively affect their economic productivity. This makes improving these living conditions a priority to improve rural women quality of life.

- Finding innovative solutions that are healthier and safer for sanitation and garbage disposal.
- Utilizing solar energy in street lighting at night.
- Widening the role of the NGOs in supervising the streets cleaning and garbage removing process.

Most of the rural women don't have a secondary school for girls in their villages which limits rural girls' chances to complete their secondary education which in turn limits their chances to participate in labour force and find a suitable job. Moreover, the opportunities of training and capacity building for rural women are also rare which



negatively affect their capability to find a job. This suggests the following:

- Provide more innovative solutions for education especially secondary education depending on distance learning to avoid drop-out of rural girls who live in villages that don't have secondary schools.
- Widening the role of the NGOs in providing training for rural women to qualify them with the labour market requirements.

A significant percentage of women in rural areas feel that there is discrimination against them in job opportunities. Most of the women who tried to establish a new enterprise and failed to do so attributed that to the lack of capital which could be solved through banking services. In addition, more than one quarter of the rural women prefer to save their extra money in banks. However, the opportunities of providing rural women with banking services are limited as a result of the limited presence of banks in the villages. This suggests the following:

- Change the values of the society regarding employing women especially rural women.
- Encourage banks to open more branches in villages to cover the needs of rural women.



- Increase the loans the loans that are allocated to micro and small enterprises in rural areas and train the women on how to invest these loans.
- Raise women's awareness about the different funding sources and how to be qualified to get funding from these sources. Again, local NGOs could play an essential role in this regard.

The majority of rural women have mobile phones and more than one-fifth of them have smart phones. The high percentage of those who have mobile phones and the increasing percentage of those who have smart phones raise the importance of developing financial and digital products to cater rural women's needs and create economic opportunities for them.