

**Achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria: A Study of the Contribution of Gbagyi Women Farmers toward Food Security in Kuje Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*Achieving sustainable development goals for food security in Nigeria requires the active participation and contribution of women in productive and sustainable agricultural practices. Women play a crucial role in agriculture, engaging in various activities such as crop production, livestock rearing, fishery, and post-harvesting processing and storage. Despite these contributions, women's roles in food and agricultural production are often undervalued. They face numerous challenges that hinder their full potential and limit their contributions to food security, negatively affecting their productivity and reinforcing their subservient status. This study assessed the contributions of Gbagyi women farmers toward food security in the Kuje Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The Structural Functionalism Theory was employed, and the population included rural women in the study area. Data were collected using a questionnaire and in-depth interviews with a sample size of 300, drawn using multistage cluster sampling techniques. Data were obtained using frequency and percentage. The results revealed that women were primarily involved in crop production (41.5%), with cereals (42.5%) being the major crops produced. Most farmland was acquired through husbands, parents, brothers, or uncles (43%). The primary source of farming finance was personal savings (38.5%), while the major challenge faced was land speculation (31.3%). The study concluded that women play a significant role in achieving food security. It is recommended that Gbagyi women's contributions to agriculture be recognized more fully and that they be given equitable access to land, credit facilities, extension services, improved tools, and membership in cooperatives and other community benefits.*

**Key words:** *Agriculture, food security, Gbagyi, sustainable development, women.*

### **Introduction**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 set a high level of ambition. Targets for SDG 2 include not only ending hunger but also all forms of malnutrition by 2030. The international community has achieved some notable progress, yet many challenges remain. Among these are the persistent high numbers of undernourished people, the chronic deficiency of essential micronutrients, hunger and poverty on food security. To achieve this goal, agriculture is a key factor since it is the only source of food supply globally. Promoting gender equality is recognized globally in contributing to agricultural productivity and food security. Hence, ensuring greater gender equality makes households more food secure (Brot, 2018).

Sustainable production of food is the first pillar of food security. In every region of the developing world, but perhaps most in Africa; millions of women work as farmers, farm workers and natural resource managers. In doing so, they contribute to national agricultural output, maintenance of the environment and family food security. They make these contributions despite unequal access to land, inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizers as well as to information. A growing body of evidence indicates that, if male-female access to inputs were unequal; substantial gains in agricultural output would occur, benefiting both women and men. Women occupy a central place in subsistence agricultural production and are accountable for 80% of agricultural production (FAO, 2011 in Lane, 2022). They are majorly involved in food production, processing, preparation and marketing. In many developing countries, women often face a range of obstacles to achieving their full potential, ranging from constricting cultural practices to biased laws and highly fragmented labor markets. Gender

discrepancies in access to agricultural resources and services adversely influence their productivity and subsequently, the food and nutrition security of their households (Adepoju *et al.*, 2015).

According to Agaptus *et al.* (2019), the crux of Nigeria's agricultural policy is to boost agricultural production such that the country would be food secured and cease to depend on food importation as prelude to achieving food security. However, women's role in Nigeria agriculture tends to be underappreciated, owing to the commonly held view that women are not involved in agricultural production, especially outside the homestead, because of cultural norms that value female seclusion and undervalue female labor. Thus, women have suffered long-term discrimination in the allocation and control of productive resources, despite their essential roles in the maintenance of the family by guaranteeing food security at the household level and in general society. Kanani (2020) avers that, efforts by national government and the international community to achieve their goals for agricultural development, economic growth and food security will be strengthened and accelerated if they build on the contributions that women make and take steps to alleviate these constraints.

Located within the Abuja city region are the Gbagyi whose livelihoods are tied to the land on which they allocate their other resources of labor and capital. Agriculture is regarded as an essential way of life of the indigenous people in Abuja. It was also strongly believed by the people that agriculture was the most honorable productive activity practiced by up to 85 % of the indigenous inhabitants (Ishaya, 2024). According to Abenu *et al.* (2023), most of the crops produced by these farmers are cereals (maize, guinea corn, millet, and rice) and yam. Ishaya (2018) avers that Gbagyi people are feeding the teeming population or immigrants into Abuja with their agricultural produce which are sold across markets thus, boosting food security in the territory. It is against this backdrop that, this study assessed the contributions of Gbagyi women farmers and the challenges they face in the practice of

agricultural activities towards ensuring food security in the FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

### **Food Security Conceptualized**

Food security has been defined in the World Food Summit in 1996 as the situation 'when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'. This definition encompasses four main dimensions of food security, namely physical availability of food, economic and physical access to food, ability of food utilization and stability of the other three dimensions over time (Faiez, 2018).

Adepoju *et al.* (2015) reported that more than 800 million people throughout the world and particularly in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive; do not have enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs. Even though food supplies have increased substantially, constraints on access to food and continuing inadequacy of household and national incomes to purchase food, instability of supply and demand, as well as natural and man-made disasters prevent basic food needs from being fulfilled. The problems of hunger and food insecurity have global dimensions and are likely to persist and even increase dramatically in some regions unless urgent, determined and concerted action is taken, given the anticipated increase in the world's population and the stress on natural resources

Audu *et al.* (2023) observed that Nigeria is an agrarian country. However, food and nutrition insecurity are prevalent in Nigeria despite its favorable agro-ecological endowments. It has a total landmass of 92.4 million hectares, out of which only about 32 million hectares or 34.63 % are under cultivation. Nigeria, therefore, lacks both the capacity and capability to cater for the food and nutrition requirements of its teeming population. As such, food insecurity and the prevalence of under-nutrition in Nigeria are among the worst globally (Fadare *et*

*al.*, 2019). Within the context of the study, food security means, availability, access, affordability and stability of food to individuals and households.

### **Women and Agriculture towards Food Security**

Mutua (2010) observed that all over the world, women's contributions to household food security are enormous. In Asia, women account for more than two thirds of food production and some 45 % in Latin America and the Caribbean. Women farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa produce more than three-quarters of the region's basic food, manage some two-thirds of marketing of farm produce and at least one half the activities required for storing food and raising animals. In addition, they are now cultivating crops and taking on tasks traditionally undertaken by men, and the women are also increasingly making decisions on the daily management of farms and households. With few exceptions, women fulfill these multiple jobs with little or no access to productivity enhancing resources and services such as credits and health care. Ajani (2008) in (Faiez, 2018) revealed that, women contribute significantly to food production, processing and marketing, while men control farm decisions and productive resources. All over the world, agricultural activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, storage and marketing have always involved both men and women. While men play their part, women also play significant part in various agricultural production activities in the areas of food crop farming, food processing and marketing. African Development Bank (2020) reported that, agriculture provides significant opportunities for gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women. Women's presence in the agricultural labor force is significant at 50 % and produces 80 % of Africa's food and there really is no better overlapping opportunity to support women's economic empowerment and to strengthen a critical sector on the continent. However, women's position in this sector today is precarious. They typically receive little to no remuneration because land is typically family-owned and they have limited access to

financing and quality inputs—there is little entitlement for women compared to men. Empowering women in the continent is not only a moral imperative, it is critical for the broader economic success of the continent. Promoting the participation and productivity of women should have a direct impact on improved food security through increased productivity, improved quality of life of the rural communities supported by them through higher household incomes and increasingly sustainable livelihoods through broader participation and access to regional and global value chains.

In the same vein, Kanani, (2020) identified that, women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post-harvest operations, agro/social forestry and fisheries. Furthermore, women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector.

### **Challenges faced by Women in Agriculture**

Gusim (2012) opined that, women contribute tremendously to agricultural output but unfortunately they hardly benefit from agricultural incentives and innovation because of economic suppression, social and traditional practices which undermine the constitutional provisions on the equality of men and women. Alade (2013) opined that, women play an indispensable role in farming and in improving the quality of life in rural areas. However, their contributions often remain concealed due to some social barriers and gender bias. Culture and sub-cultures in Nigeria give preference to the masculine gender as they are usually regarded as the heir or even pillars of the family. Even government programmes often fail to focus on women in agriculture. Despite the contributions of women in the agricultural sector as well as in other developmental processes, their

roles in promoting economic and social change continues to be inadequately recognized and undervalued. This undermines the potential benefits from programmes, especially those related to food production, household income improvements, nutrition, literacy, poverty alleviation and population control.

African Development Bank (2020), reported that women apply less fertilizer per hectare than men, they have less training in agronomic practices and they are responsible for household chores which reduces the time available to farm; lack access to reliable sources of electricity as well as the capital to buy efficient, modern processing equipment; and women commercial processors may produce less due to limited working capital to run their operations. Adepoju *et al.* (2015) observed that, in all regions rural women are consistently disadvantaged in their access to productive assets. There are also pronounced gender gaps in land ownership. Land is the most important asset in any agricultural system, and women formally own a fraction of agricultural land worldwide. Moreover, in many regions rural women are the majority of farm workers as wage workers or land users. In the latter case, the lack of formal ownership hinders investment by preventing women from using land as collateral to access credit markets.

Ashagidigbi *et al.* (2022) revealed that economic, social and political marginalization and lack of participation are key factors driving hunger and violations of the right to food. This is specifically the case for women and girls as gender relations worldwide reflect unequal power relations and firmly fixed norms and hierarchies of values that privileged men and boys. In most societies, people are pushed into gender roles and patterns that restrict their decision-making powers and development. Women are often stereotyped as being weak and dependent which prevents them from developing their potential and skills, while it can be a burden for men to always have to come across as strong, courageous and invulnerable. Deviations from the norm are seen as a threat to the existing (gender) order. Lane (2022) revealed that

women face negative and differential access to affordable and nutritious foods. Social norms often place them in a role where they process and prepare food for their households. They are responsible for ensuring food safety, quality and nutrition. Women are stereotyped into provider and maternal roles that often restrict their decision-making abilities on feeding and providing for themselves and their families. Women's agricultural activities are characterized by low levels of mechanization and use of technology because of limited financial capital at their disposal for investment. This translates directly into lower productivity, lower incomes and fewer means to expand these same agricultural activities. These characteristics cause farming women to fall outside the target groups of many development interventions which tend to support market-oriented, economically profitable and larger-scale agricultural activities.

#### **Theoretical Framework- Functionalist Theory**

The proponents of the structural functionalist theory include Herbert, Spencer, Emile Durkheim and Robert K. Merton. According to the theory, society consists of interdependent parts each of which performs particular functions and helps to maintain the stability of the entire social system which has a tendency to seek equilibrium and balance. Imbalances in the system mean that the system has to adjust to new equilibrium. The theory emphasized on the interdependence of the parts of the society. Women, been an integral part of the society has a role to play in achieving sustainable development and food security. Women like their men counterparts have to be involved in productive agricultural practices to ensure food security in the territory. Therefore, all hands must be on deck towards achieving sustainable development agenda of zero hunger in the societies.

#### **Methodology**

##### **The Study Area**

This study was conducted in Kuje Area Council, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. Kuje Area Council being one of the six

area Councils is made up of about 78 villages and has a landmass of 1,682 square kilometers which represents 22.5% of the total landmass of the entire FCT which is 8000 km<sup>2</sup> (Abenu *et al.* 2023). The study area is bounded on the West by Gwagwalada Area Council, South West by Abaji Area Council and to the Northeast by Abuja Municipal Area Council. The Area Council had a population of about 97,367 people in 2006 (Musa, 2015). There are many indigenous ethnic groups in the area namely, Gbagyi, Bassa, Gade, Koro, Ganagana and Gwandara (Adenle & Ifejika, 2021 cited by Abenu *et al.*, 2023). The population of the area is about 97,367 in 2006 (Musa, 2015). It is found within the Guinea Savanna Ecological Zone. The topography of the area is categorized into two (2) namely, highlands and lowlands. The highlands include ridges, plateau, round-top hills, conical hills and knolls. The lowlands are mostly undulating with both wet and dry valleys. The wet valleys contain rivers, streams, ponds and rivulets which are mostly seasonal. Geologically, there are rock outcrops which are mostly granitic in nature.

### **Methods of Data Collection and Analyses**

Data was collected using a set of questionnaire and in-depth interviews. A multistage sampling technique was used for the study. The first stage was the random selection of three (3) wards. The wards selected are Guabe, Chibiri and Kabi. The second stage involves the random selection of four (4) communities per ward making a total of 12 communities. These communities include Gaube, Ruboci, Kuje-Kwa, Chukuku, Kiyi, Chibiri, Kebi-Mangoro, Kulo, Kwaku, Simami, Shezi and Pegi. The snowballing sampling technique was used to identify the Gbagyi households. This is because; the communities are conglomerate of different ethnic groups. This was done first, by selecting three main streets in the community, and second; Gbagyi households. The final stage was the purposive selection of twenty-five (25) women from each community to fill the questionnaires. Purposive sampling was used to target the woman whose occupation is largely farming. In all, a total of

300 copies of a set of questionnaire were distributed, but 275 copies were retrieved and used for this study. Furthermore, 12 respondents for the in-depth interview were purposively sampled within the wards and interviewed in their homes, offices and palaces. The interview was conducted personally by the researcher while also using tape recorder. The unit of analysis therefore consist of the households while, the unit of response consists of the selected Gbagyi women farmers. Data from the questionnaire was coded and transferred into the statistical packaged for social science (SPSS version 22) and then analyzed using frequency distribution and percentage while in-depth interviews were analyzed within the context of the study objective.

### **Results and Discussion of findings**

#### **Socio-Demographic Data of Respondents**

Table 1 shows that a significant number 109 (39.9 %) of the respondents were within 26-30years of age. This implies that, majority of the women farmers in this area were young women and are in their productive years. Many of the respondents 138 (50.2 %) were married, others were single, widows and divorcee. It further shows that majority, 125 (45.5 %) of the respondents had secondary education, while only 88 (32 %), had no tertiary education. This implies that the respondents were relatively educated. Furthermore, 125 (45.5 %) of the respondents had 6-10 years of farming experience, while 90 (35 %), had 1-5years. Most of the respondents had small land for their personal farm, 128 (46.5 %) has less than hectares (ha) of land, 99 (36 %), had 1-2 ha while 99 (36 %), 28 (10.2 %) and 20 (7.3 %), respectively had 2-4 ha and 5 ha and above for farming. This implies that women assess to land is limited.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Age</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
20-25	71	25.8
26-30	109	39.6
31-40	56	20.4
41 and above	39	14.2

<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Single	71	25.8
Married	138	50.2
Divorced	31	11.3
Widow	35	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religion</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Christianity	170	61.8
Islam	86	31.3
Traditional	19	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Highest Qualification Acquired</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Primary	43	15.6
Secondary	125	45.5
Tertiary	88	32.0
Others	19	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Farm Experience</b>		
1-5yrs	90	32.7
6- 10 years	125	45.5
10yrs and above	60	21.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Farm size (ha)</b>		
Less than 1	128	46.5
1-2ha	99	36
3-4ha	28	10.2
5 ha and above	20	7.3

<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100</b>
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**Source:** Field survey, 2024

Table 2 indicates that an overwhelming majority 114 (41.5 %) of the women engaged in crop cultivation; 57 (20.7 %) engaged in animal husbandry, 50 (18.1) and 28 (10.2 %), engaged in poultry and fishery respectively. A few of them 26 (9.5 %) practice other types of agriculture. This implies that, women are involved in various agricultural practices, thereby contributing to food security. Mixed framing was also discovered in the study area. The data from one of the interviews agreed with the findings above. One of the women said;

We plant a lot of crops alongside our husbands for consumption and for sale. I grew up and saw my parents involved in farming activities especially planting of different crops and rearing of animals like cattle, goat, dog and pig. Almost every Gbagyi households engage themselves in crop production; it is from this crops and animals we get our food for daily consumptions.

**Table 2:** Views of respondents of type of agriculture practiced by Gbagyi women

<b>Types of farming/agriculture engaged by women</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Poultry	50	18.1
Crop cultivation	114	41.5
Animal husbandry like goat, cattle, sheep rearing	57	20.7
Fishery	28	10.2
Others	26	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that, 117 (42.5 %) said the major crops produced by the women farmers is cereals such as maize, guinea corn, rice, cowpea and sorghum. 78 (28.4 %) cultivates legumes, while others cultivate fruits, vegetables as well as root and tuber crops. This is true owing that the major food consumed by the people is largely cereals. Mixed cropping was discovered in the area. One of the farmers interviewed in Gaube affirmed that;

We farm crops like maize, guinea corn, millet and rice because in every Gbagyi households, these are the food we eat mostly. So we produce what we know we can eat and then sale the remaining one so as to get money for children school fees; chemicals and fertilizers for the next farming season. Other crops we farm in large quantities are yam, beans, groundnut, melon and potatoes. If we want to cook, we use okra, tomatoes, pepper, melon and garden egg produced in our farms. Fruits like cashew, guava, mango and orange are found within our households as either shade where we hide or rest during sunny day. When they produce fruits, we eat from it and sell the rest in the markets.

The result indicates that the Gbagyi women are largely involved in food production. The implication is that it contributes to the boasting of food security in the FCT. Guinea corn and millet are used for local breweries such as “burukutu” and “kunu” which are very common alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

**Table 3:** Views of respondents on the types crops cultivate by Gbagyi women

Crops cultivated	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Cereals like guinea corn, maize, millet, sorghum, wheat, rice and cowpea.	117	42.5
Fruits like mango, garden egg, cashew, guava, pawpaw orange etc.	35	12.7
Legumes like beans, bambara nut, groundnut, melon, soya beans	78	28.4
Root and tuber crops like yam, cassava, potatoes, ginger, cocoyam	26	9.5
Vegetables like pepper, tomatoes, cabbage, spinach, okra	19	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2024

Table 4 shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents 120 (43.6 %), acquired land for farming either through their husband, parents, brothers or uncles; 74 (26.9. %) is through lease/rent. Others acquire land through purchase, inheritance and as gift. This implies that women on their own have no direct access to lands and thus, lacks decision making on lands. All the interviews agreed with the findings.

A response from an interview avers that;

Our culture does not permit us to have land nor inherit it. Only the men have automatic access or right of inheritance to land. For example, where I am farming presently was allocated to me by my husband after he has taken the most fertile one. I farm melon, groundnut and bambara nut on the land since it is not that fertile enough to plant crops like maize, yam or guinea corn. It

is just as if he abandoned the land for now. When it becomes fertile again, he might take it back from me.

The implications of these findings on women have been low productivity because they have no full or equal access to lands like their male counterparts. Most of the available lands cultivated by them are the unfertile lands left fallow by their husbands or parents.

**Table 4:** Views of respondents on the mode of land acquisition for farming

Mode of land acquisition	Frequency	Percent
Inheritance	30	10.9
Lease/rent	74	26.9
Husband/parents/brothers/uncles	120	43.6
Purchase	40	14.5
Gift	11	04.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2024

Table 5 revealed significant number 106 (38.5 %) of the respondents acquired capital through their personal savings, 78 (28.4 %) of the respondents get support from their husbands, family or friends; a few 41 (14.9 %) and 9 (3.3 %) of the respondents get theirs through cooperative societies and empowerment from government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This indicates that the women have limited sources of capital to boast productivity and food security in the area since most of the capital is from personal savings and support from husbands, family and friends. All the interviews agreed with the findings. A response from one of the interviewee said;

The money I use in farming is from my personal savings, while part is usually given to me by my loving husband.

Whenever, I sell my produce from the farm, I save part of it for the next farming season. I tried applying for loan but the processes and the requirements involved to get the loan are very difficult.

**Table 5. Views of respondents on women source of capital for agriculture**

Sources of capital for agriculture	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Personal savings	106	38.5
Cooperative Society/association	41	14.9
Bank loan	20	7.3
Husband/family/friends	78	28.4
Borrowed	21	7.6
Empowerment from government/Non-government organizations (NGOs)	09	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2024

In Table 6, majority of the respondents, 89 (32.4 %) identified insufficient fund and poor access to financial services; 86 (31.3 %) said land is confiscated by governments and speculators; 50 (18.1 %) said population, encroachment and destruction of crops by herders are problems faced in terms of farming in the area. Others indicated insufficient farm inputs, distance from farm and inadequate of modern technology. All the qualitative data corroborates with the findings;

Yes, money is a major problem because you know; farming is quite expensive now compared to the past. But again, our farm size is been reduced day by day as government takes over the land from us. The lands that are close to our locations are now converted for residential and commercial purposes, while we now farm

in distance locations. I use to trek like 5-8 kilometers before getting to my farm. Because of distance, we don't go to farm everyday so Fulani-herdsmen will now use the opportunity of our absence in the farms to destroy our crops. This is usually discouraging after investing our resources in farms and experience little or no crop to harvest.

Another woman interviewed has this to say;

The truth is that; I am always challenged by money whenever I think of expanding my farm size. I want to increase my farm size so that I can practice different kinds of farm. Beyond crop cultivation, I wish to rear animals like pig, cattle and poultry, but I don't have the resources required to start-up.

The above findings point that women are devoid of challenges in their agricultural practices and this tends to undermine their efforts towards food security.

**Table 6:** Views of respondents on the challenges faced by Gbagyi women in agriculture towards food security

Challenges encountered by women in agriculture	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Insufficient farm inputs like improved seeds, fertilizer, agro-chemicals etc.	19	6.9
Inadequate of modern technology like farm machineries	11	4
Insufficient fund/poor access to financial services	89	32.4
Population explosion, encroachment, destruction by herders	50	18.1
Confiscation of land by land speculators and government	86	31.3
Distance to farm	20	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2024

### Discussion of findings

The study revealed that, Gbagyi women participate in almost all agricultural activities and cultivates different kinds of crops; thus contributing to food security. This is in tandem with Dankani *et al.* (2023), who found that the role of women in food production and food security is paramount not only in the study area, but Nigeria at large. The involvement of women in agricultural activities in the study area has in no doubt contributed to food availability and food security.

Agriculture goes beyond crop production which was also discovered in this study and as such, women are involved in animal rearing, poultry and fishery aside crop production. These animals and birds provide meat, income, manure and employment to the women thereby promoting socio-economic activities in the area. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), crops, livestock, forestry and

fishery contributed over 21 % of the entire Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in March, 2021. This finding is corroborated by Muktar & Ahundu (2023) who discovered women involvement in urban livestock rearing in Konduga Local Government Area of Borno State.

On land availability for farming by women, as urbanization increases, agricultural land is diminishing in the study area. Agricultural land is being taken over for other purposes such as residential, quarry and constructions especially, roads. This is rendering many women farmers unemployed and forcing them to change their means of livelihood to trade. Similarly, cultural barriers were also found to pose a constraint in land acquisition and agricultural productivity. Land among the Gbagyi people is entrusted in the hands of the male gender. Women have to beg for farmlands from husbands and relations before they could carry out whatever agricultural activities on it. It was further discovered that government compulsory land acquisition and activities of land grabbers/speculators have an impact on Gbagyi women agricultural practices and food security in the territory. Women also have limited access to agricultural land due to cultural factors. If women acquired agricultural land from her husband, at the slightest conflict or divorce, the land would be collected from her. This agreed with Rahman (2008) cited in Ibrahim *et al.* (2023) who discovered that, in Southern Kaduna, due to legal and cultural constraints, only 20% of women can be land holders. Likewise, Dankani (2024) stated that, compulsory land acquisition has impoverished all those affected by it.

Farmers in Nigeria generally have limited access to agricultural loans and due to high level of poverty, agricultural savings are very low. This culminated in limited agricultural land, especially; land tenure system leading to land fragmentation. Hence, agricultural land is always inadequate. To ameliorate this problem, few farmers purchase or hire land for farming. However, due to poverty, most women in the study area are unable to afford the price and the era of giving land for free had gone due to the commercialization of every means of livelihood in

the study area. It should be noted that, large scale agriculture which would ensure large scale food production is capital intensive as all its stages need huge amount of money. It was also found that women have little access to capital and other assets that make agricultural production easy and profitable. Specifically, majority of the women farmers have financial problem and lack financial assistance especially from government, NGOs and microfinance banks. Most of the agricultural finance are from their personal savings and support from husbands and/or parents. This affirmed the submission of Ogunremi *et al.* (2022), which state that agriculture is faced with the problem of finance

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study was conducted to assess the contribution of Gbagyi women towards food security and in turn find out the challenges they encounter in their agricultural practices towards ensuring food security in the study area. The study revealed that, crop production (41.5 %) is the major agricultural activity carried out in the study area. This is done by mostly literate women, while agricultural land is acquired mostly via their husbands/parents/brothers/uncles (43.6 %). Further results showed that, women farmers sourced their capital through personal savings (38.5 %); while confiscation of land by speculators and government (31.3 %) is the major challenge faced. The study concluded that, women played significant role in achieving food security. Therefore, there is the need to encourage female farmers, by making available all that is necessary for successful farming. Cultural barriers that limit women access to land and resources should be abolished so that women could have equitable access to agricultural resources such as land and funds. Gbagyi women participation in agricultural activities should continue to be encouraged in order to boost food production, avoid waste and achieve the much desired food self-sufficiency in the FCT. Credit facilities and input should be made available through farmers' cooperative societies and families. The

existing women's group in the communities should be organized and strengthened to increase women's access to extension services, credit facilities, agricultural inputs and even marketing services. Access to education, extension services, information, land, credit facilities and other relevant agricultural innovations will entice many women to agricultural productions.

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