

# The Economic Reality of Rural Women and their Developmental Role in the Area of Qardaha District - Lattakia Governorate

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**Abstract:** This research aims to identify rural women's financial situation and identify their role in society and development. A questionnaire form was prepared, and data were analyzed statistically using the SPSS statistical program to achieve the research objectives. It was found that 39% of the women in the study area worked in the agricultural sector and preferred to work outside their homes. Ein El Arous region represented the most acceptable area for women to work outside their house. The financial benefit was the main incentive for women to work outside (76% in Ein Al Arous and 60% in the Bshalamah area). It was recommended that women be granted certain privileges when they participate in development plans and be encouraged to claim their inheritance to obtain their property. In contrast, the need to change the rural social view of women working outside should be emphasized.

**Keywords:** Rural women, Sustainable development, Economic reality.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

The issue of women's participation in development has attracted many scholars and researchers. It is one of the vitally important and highly complex topics due to many different views and opinions. Recent social and economic studies confirm that among the indicators of society's progress is women's contribution to social and economic activity. In our time, women's participation in development efforts has become a right supported by many international decisions, agreements, and conventions. Of course, as much as the state is concerned with women's participation in development processes as producers and citizens, achieving a balance between these roles is determined by their strength and advancement [3].

To ensure the inclusion of women in the development process, it is necessary to create an appropriate environment for women's participation in building their capacities and exert great efforts towards this goal [10]. At the same time, there are some obstacles represented by policies that neglect the role of women in many economic aspects, social obstacles that prevent women from expanding their trends in learning, work, and participation, and obstacles related to organizations and legislation, which show bias towards women and do not protect their active participation [11].

The economic situation and family financial organization are among the most important goals that must be moved forward to achieve them, as women play a fundamental role in supporting society in general, and their families in particular, in order to achieve food security, increase income, improve the standard of living, and pay attention to the general welfare of the family, through their contribution to agriculture and rural business, and support to the local and global economy, and therefore it is important to study the role of women as an effective element in the pursuit of achieving development goals. (8) One study concluded that well-being levels or indicators indicate that the well-being of women increases (on average) with the development process, measured in relative or absolute terms, compared to men [12].

The participation of women in the development process is a basic and necessary pillar no less than men's participation. Their economic empowerment is the basis and an initiative for their social empowerment. One of the most important strategies for sustainable rural women's development plans and programs was built in the world in general and in Syria.

It must be pointed out that there is a lack of academic studies on the economic reality of rural women in Latakia Governorate, especially since the percentage of rural women has increased dramatically after the Syrian crisis, to form the majority of the Syrian countryside.

War circumstances that the country is going through had the greatest impact on the deterioration of Syria's economic situation through the decline in the standard of living due to the destruction of social infrastructure and basic productivity.

Therefore, the research problem can be identified in the lack of clarity of women's role in development programs directed to the countryside and how economic indicators affect this role.

The importance of the research and its objectives:

The scientific importance of research is evident in work to collect and frame the scientific material related to rural women's economic reality. Thus, they develop proposals and perceptions that help develop the developmental and economic role of rural women in the study area.

Based on the above, the main objective of this research is to uncover the conditions of rural women and to identify



their role in society and the role they play in the development process through:

1. A study of some economic characteristics of rural women in Latakia Governorate (Qardaha region).
2. We are learning about the role of rural women in the study area in economic activity.
3. We are studying the most important constraints, problems, and challenges that hinder rural women's participation in the study area in the productive process.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

- A. The theoretical study:** at this point, scientific and literary references related to the topic of the research were relied upon, and trusted websites were visited to view the latest research in this field.
- B. The field study:** The experimental approach focused on studying women as a variable within an integrated system, which is society and development. To reach the results expected from the research, careful observation of coexistence and the interview with the research community had to be used to know the economic situation of rural women through case studies and the extent of their contribution to society's development. Accurate results were reported using different statistical methods.
- C. The statistical methods used:** After retrieving the distributed questionnaires, the answers that

were downloaded were unpacked and then processed using the SPSS program, depending on the type of data to be analyzed and the purpose of the analysis. As for the statistical methods that were used, they are descriptive statistical methods (frequencies, percentages).

- D. The research community and its sample:** The research community is represented in the Qardaha region, which represents one of the largest rural areas on the Syrian coast, where four study areas were chosen, namely, Ain Al-Arous, Al-Qardaha, Bikrama, and Bishlama, given that these villages are the largest in the study community. As for the study sample, the questionnaire was distributed to an intentional sample representing the research community to obtain information about rural women's economic reality and their role in achieving development. Because of the community's homogeneity in the areas above, a sample of 100 women (25 women in each region was taken according to the intentional random sampling method). The questionnaires were collected and distributed to the respondents in the research area, and their data were classed and analyzed.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Nature of work:

Table No. (1) Shows that 26% of rural women in the study area work in governmental establishments, in the administrative field, and 74% work in the private sector.

**Table (1): The distribution of the sample members in the study area according to the nature of work**

Work Nature	Percentage (%)	Type of work in the private sector	Percentage (%)
Governmental sector	26	Agricultural	39
Private sector	74	Industrial	20
		Professions	11
		Other	4
Total	100	Total	74

Source: Research Sample, 2016.

As for work in the private sector, the study sample was distributed according to the nature of the work as shown in Table (1) to 39% work in the agricultural sector in farming and raising animals, about 20% work in the industrial field such as food production, and 11% work in professions such as crafts of sewing, embroidery among others, as for the remaining percentage, which is about 4%, they practice other work, such as trade ... and others, and this confirms that rural women are truly the backbone of the rural economy, as they are workers and producers, and help

with family income. This result is consistent with the study [7].

### B. Possession of agricultural land:

When asking rural women in the study area whether they own agricultural land or "not," it was found that about two-thirds of them do not have agriculture owned of their own. Table (2) illustrates this.

**Table (2). The sample individuals were distributed in the study area according to the ownership of the agricultural land**

Possession of agricultural land	Duplicates
available	35
Not available	65
Total	100

Source: Research Sample, 2016.

From Table (2), it can be seen that 35% of the research sample own agricultural lands, and 65% do not own agricultural lands, meaning that this category of rural women depends on various crafts, industrial and commercial activities.

Table (3) shows the type of agricultural lands of rural women in the study area.

**Table (3). The type of agricultural lands owned by rural women in the study area**

Type of agricultural owned lands	Percentage (%)
owned	39
rented	61
Total	100

Source: Research Sample, 2016.

Table (3) shows that about 39% of agricultural lands are owned property. In comparison, 61% of agricultural lands are rented, and the sample members may work in more than one agricultural land, whether it is owned property or rented. These percentages reflect the involvement of women in different economic and multi-effected relations.

**C. Women's participation in waged work:**

In recent years, the deteriorating economic situation has prompted rural women to go out to work outside the house. However, there is some reservation about this issue, as most of the target audience expressed a desire in working women

to help the family economically, provided that this work is within the governmental framework (a governmental job). On the other hand, analyzing field survey data showed that most of the women confirmed that the environment around them did not accept them to go out for paid work outside their houses in normal circumstances. Still, the rural family's deteriorating situation forced many of them to accept going out of their houses to work for a financial wage that would help them overcome the bad living situation. Table No. (4) Shows the extent of rural women's participation in waged work.

**Table (4): The extent of rural women's participation in the study area in paid work.**

The extent of participation Region	Yes		No		Total	
	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%
Ain Al-Arous	19	76	6	24	25	100
Qardaha	15	60	10	40	25	100
Bakrama	15	60	10	40	25	100
Bishlama	10	40	15	60	25	100

Source: Research Sample, 2016.

It is noticed from Table (4) that Ain Al-Arous was the most studied area accepting women leaving their dwellings to work, with a percentage of 76% of the total sample surveyed. At the same time, Bishlama was the least studied area in acceptance of the idea of women leaving their homes to work, by 40%. This discrepancy in the extent of acceptance of women leaving for wage work between the studied areas can be explained by several factors, including the cultural and educational level of the region, the economic situation there, the existence of social liberation in the area, the presence of the Asian man's tendency to the head of the

family, the distance of the region from the city, and many other various factors that differ from a person to another.

**D. The opinions of the studied region about the work of women**

There are many opinions in the rural community about women's work. Some strongly encourage it, based on their understanding that a woman's work is to take care of her family by arranging and cleaning the house and making food. Others expand the scope of his thoughts to reach the level of women's participation in agricultural, vocational, and pastoral work next to the man, shown in Table (5).

**Table (5): Local community opinions from the consideration of the studied sample on women's work**

Report Region	Women work acceptably in the local community				Housework and raising children WORK				Helping the head of the family in his work			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%
Ain Al-Arous	13	52	12	48	25	100	0	0	0	0	25	100
Qardaha	0	0	25	100	0	0	25	100	25	100	0	0
Bakrama	3	12	22	88	23	92	2	8	25	100	0	0
Bishlama	1	4	24	96	0	0	25	100	25	100	0	0

Source: Research Sample, 2016.

Based on Table (5), it is quite evident that women's work is not acceptable in the local community (under normal conditions), especially in the Qardaha area (100%). In comparison, the Ain al-Arous area was the least studied area rejecting women's work (48%). As for the concept of women's work, it was noticed that the Ain al-Arous area considered that her domestic work represents the woman's work and that this work does not help the head of the family in managing the affairs of the rural family. The Qardaha area considered that women's work is not represented in only domestic fields or raising children because these are normal

for a woman's work. It is natural for her to do, and the concept of work for them is waged work that brings about material gain, and this work is what helps the head of the family secure the needs of his family. Whereas, the residents of the Bakrama area agreed with the opinions of the residents of the Ain al-Arous area regarding the consideration of women's work as domestic work.

#### E. Family production

Table (6) shows the type of household products according to each studied area.

**Table (6). The extent of household production in the study area.**

Report Region	Type of production				Discharge production				Consumables Handmade Production			
	agricultural		animal		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%	Number of families	%
Ain Al-Arous	13	52	4	16	17	68	0	0	0	0	25	0
Qardaha	4	16	25	100	25	100	0	0	25	100	0	0
Bakrama	19	76	13	52	25	100	0	0	25	100	0	0
Bishlama	5	20	25	100	25	100	0	0	25	100	0	0

Source: Research Sample, 2016.

It is noted from Table (6) that all rural families are productive, and the production varies from one family to another. There is animal production resulting from cows, sheep, goats, chickens, and rabbits, as well as plant production resulting from fresh vegetables and fruits and dried fruits, and the production of consumption materials such as honey, olive oil, butter, and milk of all kinds among others, and the same family may do more than one job at a time.

#### F. Comparing the results of the Economic indicators :

This stage is considered the most important stage in the development process because it is closely related. The work of women has been studied in detail by [1], [13], and [5], linking work with religion, presenting the justifications for women's work, and the position of those who oppose it. As for the results of this research, it contradicted the results of that research because leaving the house of rural women for waged work is not desirable (in a normal state) in the research community as, despite the social change that has occurred, the traditional spirit remains controlling it,

however; the contribution of rural women to production proves the opposite.

Most of the previous research, and even the current research, concluded that rural women contribute to production, whether manually or professionally, through consumption materials such as bread, olive oil, honey, butter, milk, yogurt, vegetables, and dry fruits such as raisins, as well as raising animals such as chickens, rabbits, cows, sheep, goats, and turkeys, and used or decoration materials. Despite all the crafts and industries that women master, society does not invest them but rather allows them to perish and die out with their owners because it does not provide them with the appropriate climate and adequate appreciation for creativity and production. Hence, it can be said that the development programs that the state prescribes are poor in terms of women's participation or terms of supervision, and this does not negate the role of rural women in development that is not apparent through education, production, and work. Still, it remains a role that has no echo and needs to be valued to participate in development programs to leave an unparalleled special footprint.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. All rural women in the study area preferred to work outside the house.
2. Ain Al-Arous was the study area with most acceptances of women leaving for work (76%), while Bishlama was the least acceptance area (40%).
3. The research results showed that about a quarter of the targeted women (26%) in the study areas work in governmental establishments, while (39%) of them work in the agricultural sector.
4. More than half of those targeted do not have agricultural lands, and 39% of those who have agricultural lands are the ones who own them.
5. The aspect of belief in the future was one of the most important aspects through which a woman expresses

her insight to work, followed by developing skills, and then self-confidence.

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