

Review Article

Determinants of Rural Women's Participation in Agricultural Cooperatives in Burundi: The Case of the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE Rice Cooperatives in the GIHANGA Commune

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Abstract

This article shows the driving factors of rural women's participation in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in the GIHANGA commune. These factors are related to the preservation of traditional culture in Burundi in general and in rural areas in particular, where women are in the majority. To achieve this, the research methodology used is both qualitative (individual interviews and documentary research) and quantitative (questionnaire administered to respondents). The results of this research show that traditional culture has forced rural women to stay at home to care for children and perform various household chores. This situation of isolation leads to a lack of information about the benefits of rice-growing cooperatives and the value they can bring to their members. It is also observed that rural women lack the will to adopt the new rice farming practices in Cooperatives. This situation of lack of will to adopt new behavior has hindered the massive participation of rural women in rice cooperatives. Finally, the article emphasizes that the illiteracy of these rural women and the lack of external technical and financial support are considered other important factors that constituted the barriers to their massive participation in rice cooperatives. To deal with this series of problems, the researcher has discovered strategies that can encourage rural women to participate massively in rice cooperatives, in particular, to become members of rice cooperatives that help their members to make them known and receive external technical and financial support, for example, incentives from the government. For this, the Government must therefore help them by providing multifaceted support including local and foreign technical and financial partners. Similarly, cooperative leaders might seek out various donors for their agricultural cooperative associations.

Introduction

Since the 1970s, rural women have been at the center of attention. We have seen a proliferation of theories, studies, and institutions dedicated to the integration of rural women in development projects in general and in agricultural cooperatives in particular. It was also during these years that the question of rural women's participation in agricultural cooperatives was raised in the context of rural development projects. After the period from 1976 to 1985, the International Women's Year of Governments strongly reflected on the key role of rural women in agricultural cooperatives [1,2]

bringing the world's attention to the capital role of rural women in development, especially through participation in agricultural cooperatives and transforming a potential source to develop the rural economy and increase the growth rate of food production [2,3]. The issue of rural women's participation in agricultural cooperatives is currently being debated, following in the footsteps of Coche [4] who published a large-scale study entitled "Participation of Women in Rural Development in Maritime Guinea". However, Chinese farmers' willingness was low when there was an opportunity to adopt new technologies [5,6] but the number of training sessions in farmers' cooperatives enhances significantly their

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willingness [5-7]. Only men received agricultural loans, were literate, and were members of agricultural cooperatives. In fact, women were less involved in agricultural cooperatives than men. The low representation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives is one of the main issues facing the researcher of this study and is explained by the traditional role of women that is often invoked within agricultural cooperatives. In several cultures, the woman's role is to perform domestic and non-remunerative tasks. Moreover, in 1995, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) made gender equality in agricultural cooperatives one of its priorities by adopting a resolution entitled "Gender Equality in Agricultural Cooperatives" [2]. The International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2002 actively supported the creation of worker cooperatives and recommended that special attention be paid to increasing the participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives [8]. That explanation contradicts the first cooperative principle of the International Cooperative Alliance, which enshrines free and open participation for all. However, the problem of rural women's participation in the activities of agricultural cooperatives arises to varying degrees in underdeveloped countries. Therefore, this issue has been the subject of several studies and research. In Haiti, for example, researchers have found that there is a proliferation of associations of agricultural cooperatives with a low participation rate of rural women. These agricultural cooperatives were created on the initiative of either religious organization of the Catholic or Protestant Church, former civil servants (from the public or private sector), or intellectuals who wanted to intervene to help rural women improve their lives. This is also the idea of BALDÉ A, Omar [9], who points out the need for rural women to participate in the activities of agricultural cooperatives in order to improve living conditions in households. It is through agricultural cooperatives that rural women understand how these cooperatives help the population to meet their basic needs, namely food, health, housing, clothing, education of children, etc. Nowadays, according to the Bulletin of the United Nations System (1999), the manifestation of the will to help rural women is found in their massive participation in agricultural cooperatives, either initiated by governments or by other national partners and international organizations.

Context and justification of the study

Burundi is a country in Central and Eastern Africa. It is historically an agrarian country; its economy is mainly based on subsistence agriculture, which accounts for more than 90% of the total population. Today, it is observed that despite the efforts made by the successive regimes in Burundi to mobilize and sensitize rural women to participate massively in agricultural cooperatives, there is still a long way to go. It should be noted that the State alone cannot raise the awareness of the rural population in general and rural women in particular, nor can it create associations of agricultural cooperatives for them. It is therefore necessary

for the State to be supported by Burundian citizens or foreigners in integrating rural women into agricultural cooperatives in the same way as rural people.

In particular, we note the rice that is developed mainly in the Imbo region, located in the province of Bubanza, in the GIHANGA Commune. This rice cultivation is supervised by a parastatal company called the Regional Society for the Development of Imbo (SRDI). In fact, rice cultivation is the main source of income for the GIHANGA Commune and is consumed by the majority of the Burundian population. This culture gives money to the farmers in general and to the members of the cooperatives in particular, allowing the latter to meet their basic needs and generate income that allows the members to obtain what they need. In this context, we visited 8 associations of rice farming cooperatives in the GIHANGA. Two (2) of these cooperatives (TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE) drew our attention following the number of women which is far less than that of men. This observation was the interest of our critical research on the participation of rural women in the activities of agricultural cooperatives in Burundi. This critical look will allow us to inventory the justifiable determinants that are at the base of the low participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives in Burundi and we will take the opportunity to propose strategies to encourage them to participate massively. This is the idea of Droy I [10], who said that when rural women participate in agricultural cooperatives, they can solve their problems more energetically than they can individually.

The general objective of this article is to analyze the determinants that justify the low participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives of rice TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE in the GIHANGA Commune. It is even from this perspective that Bisilliat [11] suggested that agricultural cooperatives as an association of people with the same socio-economic mission and the same objectives to achieve, become factors of development in rural areas. In order to achieve awareness and sensitization of rural women on the impact of non-participation in the activities of rural cooperatives, our study focuses on determining the main factors that explain this phenomenon of insufficient participation of rural women in development activities through its membership in rural cooperatives. Thus, the research topic focuses on "Justification determinants of the participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives in Burundi: The case of TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in THE GIHANGA commune. The questions we sought to answer in this study are:

- Does the massive participation of rural women in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice agricultural cooperatives in the commune of THE THE GIHANGA remain a major constraint in this rural environment;
- What are the justifying determinants of the low



- participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives of rice TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE, in the THE GIHANGA Commune?
- How does literacy constitute an obstacle preventing the participation of rural women in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice agricultural cooperatives in the GIHANGA Commune?
 - What strategies should be put in place to encourage rural women to participate massively in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice agricultural cooperatives in the GIHANGA Commune?

In other words, the specific objectives will show how literacy is an obstacle that prevents rural women from participating in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in THE GIHANGA Commune. It will also identify strategies to be implemented to encourage rural women to massively participate in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in the GIHANGA Commune. We begin this article by first presenting the introduction, and then the research methodology used to collect and analyze the data. The results will be presented and the discussion will be presented before concluding. The discussion section makes connections between the research findings and the literature review.

Definition of concepts

In order to better understand the general objective of our work, it was defined two central concepts, namely "participation" and "cooperatives".

Participation

According to BALDE A. Omar [9], participation means giving grassroots communities the opportunity to decide on their own development and no longer considering them as executors of development policies designed at the national level. There needs to be an evolution of decision-making power towards grassroots communities. Thus, five types of participation in participatory local development projects [9] are distinguished:

- Participation is based on tradition (age group, profession, family group, religion). This participation is not voluntary. It reinforces traditions;
- Voluntary or conscious participation is a creation of the group by the participants themselves, sometimes with the help of external facilitators. In this case, the group gives itself its own organization (trade union, cooperative, political party, etc.). This participation is voluntary, it satisfies new needs;
- Spontaneous participation is the creation of the group by the participants themselves. This type of participation takes place in a fluid, fluctuating, and

unorganized group. The members are all volunteers and no one has an obvious social function;

- The provoked participation results from the creation of the group by external facilitators in the context of community projects. This type of participation is provoked and elicited. Members adopt behaviors that are considered desirable;
- Compulsory participation results from the creation of the group by animators or authorities. Usually, the members themselves impose mandatory standards of behavior. This participation is obligatory and essential to the functioning of the group.

In the case of our study, we will retain participation that is considered voluntary or conscious. This participation is a creation of the group by the participants themselves, sometimes with recourse to external facilitators. In this case, the group gives itself its own organization (trade union, cooperative, political party, etc.). This participation is voluntary, it satisfies new needs.

Cooperatives

The International Cooperative Alliance states that the cooperative is an independent, non-governmental organization created in 1895 with the aim of uniting, representing, and supporting cooperatives throughout the world. It is a forum for sharing knowledge, and expertise and coordinating action for and about cooperatives, and a global spokesperson for cooperatives. Alliance members are national and international cooperative organizations from all sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture, industry, services, banking, distribution, fishing, health, housing, and insurance. The Alliance has members in more than 100 countries, representing more than one billion people (<https://ica.coop/en-2024>).

On the occasion of the International Year of Cooperatives in 2012, cooperative leaders from around the world gathered in Canada to participate in the first International Summit of Cooperatives. In October 2014, they met there again for the second International Summit of Cooperatives. This important meeting provided co-operative stakeholders with a forum to share their concerns about the current and future challenges facing co-operatives. The International Cooperative Alliance defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of people voluntarily brought together to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a collectively owned and democratically exercised enterprise" (<https://ica.coop/en-2024>).

According to the Law governing cooperative societies in Burundi [12], the essential objectives of cooperative associations are, among others: raising the level of education, training, and know-how in the management of their businesses, trades, or farms, better access to technical,



social, administrative, credit and other services, the promotion of savings for useful, constructive, economic and social purposes, the exercise of all other economic or social activities which meet the needs common members.

According to the United Nations [13], the agricultural cooperative is above all an economic organization democratically controlled by producers who are at the same time owners, suppliers, and beneficiaries (collection and sale cooperative), customers (credit, supply), or more broadly users. In the context of this article, we will use the definition given by the International Cooperative Alliance. For the present study, the 2 associations of cooperatives have the social purpose of collecting and selling the rice of the members as well as all that can improve the cultivation of rice and the necessary agrarian conditions. To this end, they will carry out the following operations in particular: the storage of rice, the negotiation of a wholesale sale, the provision of training or agrarian advice as well as any other activity useful to the achievement of this social object.

The commune of THE THE THE GIHANGA was chosen as the study area, not only because it is the commune with the highest rice production compared to other communes in the country, but also because it has a large number of rice cooperatives. According to Bisilliat [14], the motivations for rural women's participation are mainly economic, aimed at obtaining additional harvests and an autonomous income. She goes on to say that socio-educational benefits are also sought: To benefit from training in agricultural cooperatives, health, nutrition, hygiene, and birth planning.

Agricultural cooperative

An agricultural cooperative is a business:

- Who are the farmers? It is a company created by the farmers, collectively owned and managed by them. It practices democracy - one member, one vote.
- Who promotes agricultural products? A cooperative collects and processes the production of its farmer-cooperators (milk, meat, cereals, fruit and vegetables, grapes, etc.).
- What contributes to the local economy? Located in a rural area, an agricultural cooperative brings life to its territory by creating economic activities and jobs thanks to a sustainable territorial anchorage.

Driving factors

These are elements that determine or decide to do a thing or an action.

Rural women

By "rural women" we mean women from rural areas who not only take care of agricultural tasks but also those specific to their homes and communities.

Association

An association is a group of voluntary people gathered around a common project or sharing activities, but without seeking to make a profit. It can have very diverse goals (agricultural cooperatives, defense of members' or humanitarian interests, promotion of ideas or works).

Research methodology

To begin to trace the problem of the low participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives in Burundi, we base ourselves on the studies carried out in various countries, especially in Africa, on the factors that are at the base of the low participation of rural women. The research methodology used is both qualitative with individual interviews, and documentary research as well as quantitative with a questionnaire administered to respondents. The analysis was made using the tables in order to better understand the different points of view of the members of these 2 cooperatives. For Gauthier [15], documentary research is a method that aims to soak up or become aware of what has been the subject of particular attention before us and to lead to well-established conclusions. According to this author, documentary research is an essential part of all research. For this author, research begins with a review of the documentation, which consists of general works of a theoretical nature, articles, and books that provide the results of surveys and studies on the subject of research and official statistical data. As part of this study, we read general and specialized works, end-of-masters dissertations or in-depth studies, and magazines on the issue of participation of rural women in cooperative association agriculture, especially in developing countries. These different readings were decisive in understanding the level of participation of rural women in agricultural cooperative associations.

The interview, on the other hand, is opposed to the questionnaire within the survey methods. As soon as it is a question of fine qualitative research, the interview, that is to say, the exchange or the conversation, is essential. As its name suggests, the interview supposes reciprocity between the interlocutors and even implies deference from the one who takes the initiative BAZZIVIEL [16]. It indicates that the interview can be used at different stages of a social inquiry. Depending on the circumstances, it will take different forms and require the use of various tools. First, the structured interview (with a survey guide) is an excellent way to obtain information on a field that is not well known, in an exploratory framework. Second, the structured interview (with a questionnaire) is the best pretext that can be applied to a questionnaire. Finally, thirdly, the unstructured interview proves to be useful with privileged informants to build the survey tools, and the problem and, guide us in our subsequent interpretations.



In the case of our research, the 1st and 2nd stages were used. It is then in this context that we went to visit 8 associations of rice agricultural cooperatives in THE GIHANGA. Among these cooperatives, 2 called respectively TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE drew our attention because, among its members, the number of women was far less than that of men. Thus, these 2 cooperatives, TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE, had a total of 154 members. The TWITEZIMBERE cooperative had 81 members including 12 women and 69 men while REKATUJANE had 73 members including 9 women and 64 men. Given the high number of members of 2 cooperatives, the questionnaire was administered respectively to 17 members of the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative and 15 members of the REKATUJANE agricultural cooperative, i.e. 32 members who will answer the questionnaires. We collected information from the managers of these 2 cooperatives. To determine the sample, we referred to the remark of Javeau in 1990 [17] who mentions that statistical theories are not always applied to the letter but that no sample should have less than thirty people. To choose 32 respondents, we wrote (on the pieces of paper, we shuffled them and put them on a table) from number one to 81 for the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative before noon and from number one to 73 for the REKATUJANE rice cooperative afternoon. We then called one by one to choose a single small piece of paper placed on the table until the last number, from one to 81 for the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative and from one to 73 for the REKATUJANE cooperative. In the end, the members who chose from number one to number 17 for the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative and from number one to number 15 for the REKATUJANE cooperative were called, making a total of 32 respondents.

An interview guide and a questionnaire, intended to guarantee favorable conditions from one interview to another and govern the orientation of the discussion, have been drawn up. Said interview and questionnaire guides were based on the research objectives. More specifically, they addressed topics such as the determinants justifying the low participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives, literacy as an obstacle preventing the participation of rural women in agricultural cooperative associations, the strategies to be put in place to encourage rural women to participate massively in associations of agricultural cooperatives, the importance of participating in associations of agricultural cooperatives, information relating to the existence of agricultural rice cooperatives in THE GIHANGA commune. The interviews with the respondents lasted about two hours while answering the questionnaire took about an hour and a half. The questionnaire was administered directly to selected members of 2 cooperatives as primary beneficiaries. We did individual interviews with the managers of these 2 cooperatives to avoid possible influences that could take place at the time of the interview and also to diversify the points of view. The researcher also wanted

to know the points of view of women and men who are not members of any agricultural cooperative association and they were interviewed considering a few themes than those administered to members of the cooperatives mentioned above. It should be noted that in order to diversify the points of view of the respondents, the researcher collected additional information from key informants. That is to say that in this case study, resource persons who work closely with cooperative associations in general and particularly those working with rice cooperative associations in THE GIHANGA commune.

Results presentation

This part presents the data collected in the field. It comprises four sections: the first section deals with the identification of responding members according to their level of education and their gender, the second identifies the determinants justifying the low participation of rural women in associations of TWITEZIMBERE rice agricultural cooperatives and REKATUJANE from the GIHANGA, the third attempts to show how literacy is a barrier to rural women's participation in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE from THE GIHANGA rice farming cooperative associations. In the fourth section, we find the strategies to be put in place to encourage rural women to participate massively in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice agricultural cooperatives in the GIHANGA Commune. As we have always pointed out many times, the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative had 17 respondents including 5 women and 12 men while REKATUJANE had 15 respondents including 2 women and 13 men (Table 1).

The results in the table below show that the majority of members of the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative are men (71%) against female members who are (29%). The majority of members of the REKATUJANE cooperative are men (87%) while women represent (13%). This indicates that men participate massively in development activities, especially in activities related to agricultural cooperatives TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE.

Education level

For the members of the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative, women who have completed the 6th year of primary school represent (20%) while the illiterate are up to (80%). Men who have completed the 6th year of primary represent (25%) while illiterates are up to (75%). For the members of the REKATUJANE cooperative, no woman has finished the 6th year of primary school but all these women are illiterate. Men who have completed the 6th year of primary represent (33%) while illiterates are at the height of (67%). The results presented in the above table indicate that many members are illiterate and very few had the level of 6th grade. On the one hand, this illiteracy would probably have been due to the economic conditions of the parents of the members of these



Table 1: Identification of respondents who are members of these two cooperatives according to level of education and sex.

Sex	Cooperative TWITEZIMBERE				Cooperative REKATUJANE		
	Number of respondents	Education level		%	Number of respondents		%
Female	5	Primary	1	20	2	-	-
		Illiterate	4	80		2	100
Male	12	Primary	3	25	13	4	33
		illiterate	9	75		9	67
Tot.			17			15	

Source: Author survey data, September 2022.

2 cooperatives who were unable to finance the secondary and university studies of their children. On the other hand, it should have been due to their parents who did not neglect the importance of the education of their children since they themselves are illiterate.

Cooperatives creating and status

TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives were created respectively in 2010 and 2012. Some respondents said that they joined 2 years ago; others said that 3 years ago, very few said that he is 7 years old. This can be explained by the fact that the local population did not quickly understand the interest of participating in agricultural cooperatives and how these can help improve their social and economic status (Table 2).

The data given in the table above show that the majority of respondents, members of the TWITEZIMBERE rice cooperatives (52%) and those of REKATUJANE (73%) say that the low participation of women in these two cooperatives is linked to the lack of awareness of rural women in order to change their traditional mentality and participate massively in agricultural cooperatives. This result could explain why rural women are illiterate, it is difficult for them to change their mentality because their parents educated them by telling them that they should never compare themselves to men because there are activities reserved for men and others intended only for women.

But also, the other respondents, members of the TWITEZIMBERE rice cooperative, (37%) and either (27%) from REKATUJANE accept that this low participation of women in these cooperatives is linked to respect for Burundian culture requiring women to remain at home to watch the children and take care of various household chores. This result could be explained by the fact that the Burundian

rural environment still remains conservative of the Burundian culture by closing women at home. Very few (11%) members of the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative indicated that the social and economic status does not allow these rural women to participate in associations of agricultural cooperatives while no member of the TWITEZIMBERE cooperative has validated this proposal.

During our interview with the members of these two cooperatives, some said that the woman is like a domestic animal, she must be trained and educated. It is through this education that man will know if it is operational or not. From there, she could do like or even more than the man. According to the members of these two cooperatives, the woman is like a child who needs to be supervised. Since the time of our ancestors, it's been like that, it's a heritage.

Some interviewed husbands think that in the eyes of the culture, they are the masters of the home and that the wife must always submit to their decisions. In addition, they also believe that the man who does not take responsibility and who is "dominated" by his wife would appear as a weakling in rural society and therefore will be cursed by the whole village.

The aforementioned statements could be interpreted as rural women being victims of their social position which prevents them from participating on the same footing as men in agricultural cooperatives, although they inevitably remain partners in social well-being. But also, their domestic obligations (preparing meals, caring for children, cleaning, washing clothes) mean that they have even less free time.

We obtained additional information from key informants. That is to say, in this case, resource persons who work closely with cooperatives in general and particularly with those related to rice farming in the GIHANGA commune.

Table 2: Proposal of options that could be determinants that could prevent rural women from participating in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in the GIHANGA Commune.

Options offered	TWITEZIMBERE cooperative		REKATUJANE cooperative	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
The social and economic status does not allow these rural women to participate in agricultural cooperative associations	2	11	0	0
The non-awareness of rural women in order to change their traditional mentality in order to participate massively in associations of agricultural cooperatives.	9	52	11	73
Respect for Burundian culture requires women to stay at home to babysit and take care of various household chores.	6	37	4	27
Total number of respondents	17	100	15	100

Source: Author survey data, September 2022.



To conclude, it therefore turns out to be real, on the basis of the answers obtained, that the conception of traditional Burundian culture constitutes an obstacle to the participation of rural women in associations of agricultural cooperatives. At the level of this rural community surveyed, the woman, for the men, can appear considered as a minor from the social point of view. It remains true, on the basis of field data that the low representation of women in rice cooperatives stems from the conception of education (traditional Burundian culture) that individuals have internalized since childhood and which is the basis of their social personality. It, therefore, appears that this conception of individuals towards rural women depends on their social position, which is considered to be "inferior" (Table 3).

The figures in the table above show us that the majority of respondents, members of the TWITEZIMBERE (76%) and (93%) REKATUJANE rice cooperatives, affirm that literacy constitutes an obstacle preventing the participation of rural women in the rice cooperatives. This result would explain why rural women themselves do not emphasize the advantages linked to their participation in rice cooperatives following their literacy bequeathed to them by their parents. But also, (24%) of TWITEZIMBERE and (7%) REKATUJANE do not agree with this proposition. This result would explain that those who did not validate this proposal would be from the new generation who do not know the traditional history of Burundi.

The results obtained above show that the level of education is a determining factor in the participation of rural women in rice cooperatives. However, on the one hand, the participation of rural women in rice cooperatives allows members to bring together individuals who practice the same crops and have common interests. Bringing together people carrying out the same activity promotes mutual aid and solidarity within the rice cooperative. On the other hand, participation in the rice cooperative is a way for members to be known and to receive technical and financial support from outside (Table 4).

The figures in the table above teach us that the majority of respondents who are members of the TWITEZIMBERE (52%) and REKATUJANE (67%) rice cooperatives affirm that the strategy to be put in place to encourage rural women to participate massively in these associations rice cooperatives is that the local administration in collaboration with the leaders of these rice cooperatives should help to change the traditional mentality of these rural women. This result could

be explained by the fact that the local administration and the managers of these rice cooperatives are not interested in sensitizing these rural women so that they participate massively in these cooperatives.

The (7%) of the members of the REKATUJANE rice cooperative indicate that rural women, too, should esteem themselves and become more and more aware of their traditional Burundian cultural situation, while none of the associations of cooperatives TWITEZIMBERE rice accept this proposal. This can be explained by the fact that some members of this association of REKATUJANE rice cooperatives despise the behavior of these women who do not want to change their traditional mentality, who are still in traditional obscurity. For the members of TWITEZIMBERE, who said nothing, this would be explained by the fact that no one knows what happened in Burundi tradition precisely in relation to the education of women. Along the same line, (30%) and (13%) respectively coinciding with answers given by respondents from the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE cooperatives say that the strategy to encourage rural women to participate massively in rice cooperatives is that the local administration, in collaboration with the managers of these agricultural cooperatives, should consider setting up an appropriate information or communication and awareness-raising mechanism. These results are explained by the fact that communication in these two associations of cooperatives does not circulate in both directions, namely vertical and horizontal.

The 18% of members of the TWITEZIMBERE rice cooperative and (13%) of those of REKATUJANE affirm that the strategy to be put in place to encourage women Respondents affirm the Burundian State should encourage, exceptionally, the education of girls in the middle rural by accepting free admission for the first five girls in class from the first year of post-basic school until the end of their university studies. The explanation for this statement would be to encourage women to be motivated by school so that some of them can convince rural women to raise their awareness and change their traditional mentality. Because, in fact, this lack of awareness to change their traditional mentality constitutes a brake, an obstacle to their participation in the rice cooperatives mentioned above.

According to Séguin [18] who supported this idea, he said that to put an end to the existence of a weak participation of rural women in associations of agricultural cooperatives and to promote women to the rank of real partners. This is the objective of the gender and participation approach.

Table 3: Literacy is an obstacle preventing the participation of rural women in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in the GIHANGA Commune.

Appreciation	Cooperative TWITEZIMBERE		Cooperative REKATUJANE	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
True	13	76	14	93
Fake	4	24	1	7
Total	17	100	15	100

Source: Author survey data, September 2022.



Table 4: Proposal of options relating to the strategies to be put in place to encourage rural women to participate massively in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in the GIHANGA Commune.

Options offered	Cooperative TWITEZIMBERE		Cooperative REKATUJANE	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
The local administration in collaboration with the leaders of these agricultural cooperatives should help to change the traditional mentality	9	52	10	67
Rural women should esteem themselves and become more and more aware of their traditional Burundian cultural situation	0	0	1	7
The local administration in collaboration with the leaders of these agricultural cooperatives should consider setting up an appropriate information or communication and awareness mechanism to bring rural women	5	30	2	13
The Burundian State should encourage, exceptionally, the education of girls in rural areas by accepting free admission for the first five girls in class from the first year of post-basic school until the end of their university studies.	3	18	2	13
Total	17	100	15	100

Source: Author survey data, September 2022.

This idea of the gender and participation approach is supported by Bikila [19] who says that any participation in development projects including agricultural cooperatives takes into consideration the existence of the division of societies and human activities between two types of individuals: men and women.

This idea is also supported by the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi [20], which stipulates that "All Burundians are equal in merit and dignity. No Burundian will be excluded from his social, economic or political life of the nation because of his race, his language, his religion, his sex or his ethnic origin"

Discussion of results

The purpose of this section is to discuss the results obtained and to see how they contribute to the achievement of the original objectives, which were, on the one hand, to list the factors underlying the low participation of women in the REKATUJANE and TWITEZIMBERE rice cooperatives in THE THE THE GIHANGA commune and, on the other hand, to propose strategies to encourage their massive participation. In this discussion of findings section, we make connections between the research findings and the literature review. Our concern is to get rural women to massively participate in rice cooperatives. Indeed, given that agricultural cooperatives are based on the values of equality, democratic management, and open door, they appear as a privileged tool for women's participation, an instrument to liberate them from their ignorance and social inferiority (International Cooperative Alliance (1985).

In fact, our interviewees, members of these two rice cooperatives, recognize that despite the massive non-participation of rural women in rice cooperatives, this is the only crop in this commune of The THE GIHANGA that allows them to have in one season a large sum of money that can allow the farmers in general and the members in particular to support themselves. In particular, we can mention the education of the children of school age, the purchase of the desired food, the purchase of equipment for the maintenance of the rice, the clothing of the members of the family, the

contribution to cooperatives, and the purchase of small livestock for breeding. The income from rice also allows them to have access to drinking water, to have a decent house with electricity, for those who live in places where there is electricity. When women participate in agricultural cooperatives, they can help each other, especially with various social activities such as weddings, baptisms of their children, or other religious activities. They also use these cooperatives to make new friends and to have a place where women can express their opinions. Cooperatives allow rural women to gain a collective strength that allows them to overcome certain social barriers set by traditional Burundian norms:

The respondents selected among the members of these two cooperatives affirmed that they manage to send their children to school, except for a few isolated cases of those who, due to the low income of their parents, drop out of school to work as laborers in private houses to earn money, especially during the rice transplanting period.

Thus, the results of our study converge on the fact that women participate incidentally in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in the GIHANGA commune. These results are in line with Baldé's [9] idea when he pointed out that rural women's participation in agricultural cooperative associations is scarce and mostly occurs under the pressure of strong demand.

This author was supported by Séguin [18], who said that in the context of the participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives if their members do not actively participate in the life of these cooperatives, they will quickly die. This idea can be interpreted as the non-participation of rural women in these rice cooperatives is considered the fundamental cause of underdevelopment in their households. Therefore, the participation of everyone is the condition for the survival and development of the grassroots communities and their activities, he insisted.

A member of the TWITEZIMBERE rice cooperative said that "prior permission from husbands is also an obstacle faced by rural women who want to participate in rice



cooperative associations. The explanation for this idea is that some men do not want their wives to spend the whole day at the meetings organized at the level of the rice cooperative associations. They think that their wives might misbehave and prefer that they stay at home to take care of the children and do the household chores. This idea is also found in Rousseau in 1890 [21] when he says: "Women inside, men outside". In the same view Clastres in 1977 [16] affirms: "the arch for men and the basket for women". These ideas could be explained by the fact that we understand that women are poorly represented in rice cooperatives, if they happen to participate, their participation, according to the comments mentioned above, is very random.

In the words of some of the interviewees: "Women always stay at home to prepare food, sing and dance. At the community level, public activities and all decisions concerning the village are the responsibility of the men. In meetings to which women are invited or which require their participation, it is sometimes their husbands who represent them. The woman can appear to the men as a minor from a social point of view, as an irresponsible person who does not "belong" to them. Thus, on the basis of the answers obtained, it is true that the traditional conception of the social position of women constitutes an obstacle to their participation in the associations of agricultural cooperatives. Because of their social position, considered "inferior", women are often victims of segregation at the level of rice cooperatives and bear the brunt of the daily marginalization of men, considered "superior" in the eyes of the culture.

However, the above-mentioned ideas are in contrast to those of one of the leaders of 2 rice cooperative associations (whose level of education is that of the general humanities), who said that "women will have to agree with farmers to participate massively in agricultural cooperative associations, despite the weight of traditional cultures and the power of men, in order to satisfy their needs and change their position".

In the same vein, according to a member of the TWITEZIMBERE rice cooperative, "the massive participation of rural women in agricultural cooperative associations has many advantages. According to the interviewee, being a member of an agricultural cooperative association is one of the ways to help each other. And better, if in the future an activity arises, being a member of a cooperative, we will have more strength to face it". These ideas are in line with those of Coche [4], who emphasized the benefits associated with the participation of rural women in the associations of agricultural cooperatives by saying: "Thanks to the massive participation of rural women in the associations of agricultural cooperatives, they become strong because they can express and defend their opinions without any constraints. Rural women who are not members of an association of agricultural cooperatives are rural women

who are not intelligent and clever, because it is by being in associations of agricultural cooperatives that women can have knowledge and know-how that allows them to flourish".

The above ideas would be explained by the fact that the non-participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives is clearly an obstacle to development as a whole. Therefore, it seems essential for the success of participation that men change their traditional mentalities that put women in a lower position than men. Also, the best way to promote the associations of rice cooperatives is to involve rural women in their massive participation by training them, sensitizing them by valuing their income, and especially by supporting the activities that fall within their competence. It is essential to take into account the participation of both men and women in order to promote a balanced agricultural cooperative. These ideas would be justified to the extent that rural women are considered partners in the socio-economic development of the family, so they must be involved [22].

In addition, the prior authorization of husbands is also an obstacle for rural women who want to participate in rice cooperatives. The lack of money to fulfill the social share, the internalization of social roles according to gender, the lack of experience in associations, and little confidence in their own abilities are factors unfavorable to the participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives. The absence of men from the house throughout the day adds to the burden, which also contributes to the lack of time for rural women to participate in agricultural cooperatives.

It should be noted that the barriers to rural women's participation in rice cooperatives that we were able to identify in our study are not insurmountable. Indeed, as Mathieu [23] pointed out when he said that although rural women work twice as much as African women, they alternate between agricultural and non-agricultural work. The rural women who are already members of these two cooperatives have shown great determination to continue their activities in the agricultural cooperatives, despite the various obstacles to which we have referred in this study. The interpretation of all this is that the participation of rural women in rice cooperatives will bring rural women out of isolation and exchange with others, building a network of mutual aid and solidarity. It should be noted, however, that emancipation is not one of the reasons that push this small number of rural women to participate in rice cooperatives in THE GIHANGA Township. However, the experience of the democratic management of a rice cooperative and the exchanges in the meetings between the women often lead to an awareness of the gender inequalities that prevail in these rice cooperatives.

Conclusion

This article has identified a number of determinants related to the participation of rural women in the



TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in the GIHANGA commune. These factors can be grouped mainly into the following three categories.

First, those related to the preservation of traditional Burundian culture by Burundian society in general and rural women in particular. This traditional culture forced rural women to stay at home all the time to take care of the children and perform various household chores.

Secondly, those related to the lack of awareness, information/communication on the existence and importance of rice agricultural cooperatives and, above all, the interest they can bring to their members by the local administration and the leaders of these two associations of cooperatives. But also the lack of external technical and financial support from the state or other donors.

Thirdly, and finally, factors related to the lack of awareness of rural women themselves to change their traditional mentality and break this myth that our great-grandmothers left us. This lack of awareness is exacerbated by their high level of illiteracy. In fact, their parents are illiterate and do not see the importance of sending their daughters to school because of the traditional culture that says women must always stay at home to take care of the children and the household. In order to comply, they respect the traditional Burundian culture of their parents.

Finally, to face this series of obstacles, the researcher discovered some strategies that could encourage these rural women to massively participate in the TWITEZIMBERE and REKATUJANE rice cooperatives in the GIHANGA commune.

These include the local administration working with the leaders of these two agricultural cooperatives to help change the traditional mentality of some men who believe that women must always stay at home to care for children and do housework. They should also consider setting up an appropriate information, communication, and awareness-raising mechanism to encourage rural women to massively participate in agricultural cooperatives. For example, make the communication of the meetings planned to explain the associations of cooperatives in the different churches of the community.

On the one hand, sensitization meetings should be held in the interest of participating in the rice cooperative, and on the other hand, information should be provided on the functioning of this agricultural cooperative. Rural women should also appreciate and become more aware of their traditional Burundian cultural situation and work to change it through their massive participation in agricultural cooperatives. They should understand that participation in rice cooperatives is a way for members to be known and to receive technical and financial support from outside. Therefore, the state should provide them with multifaceted support without forgetting to find local or foreign development partners.

The government should also take measures to promote the education of girls in rural areas, as an exception. An example mentioned in the survey is the free education of the first five girls in a class, from the first year of post-basic to the end of their university studies.

The survey of our study also revealed that men should change their traditional cultural mentality that requires rural women to stay at home to take care of the children and prepare food for the children and their husbands. At the family level, we found that there are some parents who do not want to encourage their children to continue their studies. Since the parents are illiterate, they do not see the value of school. They have many children, eight or ten children, and the younger children, especially the girls, have to look after the younger ones at home or help the parents with domestic activities.

The originality of this article has made it possible to highlight new information discovered during the research. On the one hand, the researcher was able to identify certain obstacles that are at the root of the low participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives in Burundi. On the other hand, this study has shown some strategies to be implemented in order to overcome these obstacles and encourage rural women to massively participate in agricultural cooperatives.

This study has also provided useful information to managers and members of agricultural cooperatives in Burundi, as well as to policymakers and officials of the National Agency for the Promotion and Regulation of Cooperative Societies in Burundi, in accordance with Law No. 1/12 of June 28, 2017, on Cooperative Societies in Burundi.

Our article does not claim to be an exhaustive study of the enormous difficulties associated with the low participation of rural women in agricultural cooperatives in Burundi. However, we believe that the gaps left by this study could be filled by other studies on various other aspects related to the issue of rural women. If this work could be useful, we hope that it will allow future researchers interested in rural women to know them better, to participate in the reflection on the integration of women in development projects other than agricultural cooperatives, and, above all, to contribute to making the rural women's approach one of the priorities of future programs.

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