

THE TRIPLE BURDEN

WOMEN SELLING THEIR LABOUR IN SOUTH SUDAN

Elizabeth Nyibol Malou



Rift Valley Institute
MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

XCEPT

CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT
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Elizabeth Nyibol Malou is a researcher with the Rift Valley Institute in South Sudan. Thanks also to **Edward Thomas** for his extensive work on the report.

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COVER

Designed by Maggie Dougherty.

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SUMMARY

In rural South Sudan, markets for food, labour and land are expanding, and women's workloads are increasing. In the twentieth century, most rural women had two main labour burdens: they produced food for home consumption on family farms; and at home provided life-giving labour, like child-rearing, emotional support, cooking and cleaning. These two labour burdens were unpaid. But now, they have a third labour burden. They need to produce food to sell at market, and they need to sell their labour for pay or profit to buy things from market, or to pay for essential health and education services, which formerly were either free or unavailable. This study looks at the labour burdens of women working in agricultural, drawing on interviews conducted in Western Bahr al-Ghazal and other areas of Sudan.

When food, labour and land become commodities, rural women's working lives change. Old communal labour systems disappear, and rural life becomes oriented towards producing surplus food for profit, rather than producing enough for household subsistence. This process of 'commodification' has taken place all over the world, and over the past century it has been unfolding in South Sudan. Over the course of Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005) commodification began to affect most people's lives—although it is a process which happens unevenly across the country's many different societies and ecological zones.

Outside South Sudan, scholars and activists have long discussed women's double burden—women often combine 'productive' paid work outside the home with unpaid 'reproductive' work at home. This distinction did not make much sense in societies where few people worked for pay or profit—as was the case in twentieth-century South Sudan. But as women and men have started working for money, the distinction becomes clearer. In an already busy work schedule, they must find time for moneymaking work. Their unpaid work soon becomes devalued. And people with a lot of unpaid work—like women—find their whole contribution to culture and society gets devalued.

These cultural and social changes are being registered in the languages of South Sudan. Different language communities have words to describe collective work-and-beer parties, which allowed farmers to mobilize labour from their neighbours. Now, South Sudan have many words to describe paid work. Most of these words are of Arabic origin. But one of the most common words for paid agricultural labour, *borochot*, comes from English and French. It means 'parachute,' something to catch you when you have an emergency need for money. The word emphasizes the precarity of paid work.

Women's work diaries help outsiders understand how women juggle their increased workloads.

Having a supportive family is a big help. But women who are leading farming households on their own face enormous pressures on their time. One 28-year-old woman took her baby to work three days after giving birth, when she was still bleeding and in pain. Another works long hours to pay school fees for 11 children. One woman with a disability works 12 hour days to provide for her grandchildren, who lost their father in South Sudan's civil war, which began in 2013.

Women's triple burden sometimes sounds unbearable. But for families living on the edge in South Sudan, it might be economically rational. Over the course of the second Sudanese civil war, millions of people were pushed off their lands and began to depend partially on purchased food. During the peacetime which lasted from 2005 to 2013, money spread and dependence on food markets deepened. But South Sudan's civil war pushed households back towards greater dependence on home production. Women are dealing with market pressures and hunger through over-work.

When people start working for pay or profit, the gendered division of labour changed too. For example, fetching wood and making charcoal used to be a woman's job, but now that charcoal sells for money, men do the work. Heavy agricultural tasks that were formerly assigned to men are now given to paid workers who can be either women or men. Work that women once did for free—like cooking for community celebrations—becomes a commodity.

Land also becomes a commodity. In the past, women accessed land through their husbands or fathers. Land systems discriminated against women, and divorced or widowed women with weak connections to a patriarch faced the worst discrimination. Now in some areas, land can be leased. This has given women new ways to access land—but it has marginalized some women who cannot afford to pay for land when they need it. Women who pay for access to land have heavier work burdens—and those who use non-monetary relationships to access commodified land face costly new burdens arising from discriminatory land systems. Land commodification increases women's labour burdens.

Women face gender discrimination when they sell their labour. Most agricultural workers get paid for completing a task—'piece work'—rather than being paid wages by the hour. Piece work rates vary greatly, based on labour supply and demand, task complexity, and other factors. Often the rate for men and women is the same. But because women face restrictions on their time and movement, they enter competitive labour markets at a disadvantage. Their triple burden, and the time poverty it brings, undermines their position.

Women also buy labour. There are many different kinds of farm types and landholders in South Sudan, and many of them are women. Some women hire workers because they have large landholdings and produce for markets. Others hire labour because they are poor: some of the poorest farmers are older widowed women farming alone to produce food for their own consumption. They need to pay people to complete heavy agricultural tasks beyond their capacity.

South Sudan's new rural labour system is changing life for women. It is also changing patterns of violence and discrimination against women. For example, women need to participate in markets, but often, the means of transportation belong to men: women walk to markets, rather than bicycling there, putting more pressure on their time. Taboos about menstruation are being reworked too—menstruating women are sometimes forbidden from working on lucrative crops, for no good reason.

Much of the work for gender equality in South Sudan rightly focuses on the horrific abuses committed against women in the course of armed conflict. But gender discrimination does not begin in wartime: it begins in everyday life. Wartime atrocities undermine women's status and security—but so do systems of production and labour. Sudan's wars and its path to markets have given women a triple burden of labour. Women's work is simultaneously being devalued and intensified as South Sudan moves towards markets.

Action to end gender discrimination needs to begin with working life. Making gender responsive public services available will go a long way in lessening women's triple burden and contribute to a situation where women can more autonomously decide about their movement, labour, time and earnings. This will contribute to women's economic empowerment and in the long run reduce the workload and time burdens heaped on women by cultural ideas about labour division, land ownership and caring responsibilities.

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I look at the changing workloads of women in South Sudan in order to understand their changing place in society. Women's changing labour burdens are shaped by agrarian transitions in the countryside, which in turn are shaped by markets centred in urban areas.

Scholars and activists writing about women and work often refer to the 'double burden' of work that women bear. In many societies, women work outside the home to produce goods or services for pay or profit, and then come home and work—unpaid—to feed and care for family members. Paid labour which produces goods and services for sale in markets is sometimes called 'productive' work, and the unpaid labour of parenting, running a home and emotional support is sometimes called 'reproductive' work. In most societies, women bear a double burden: they combine reproductive and productive work.

In this study, I argue that the concept of double burden does not reflect the experiences of women in South Sudan, because they have a triple burden. First, they still produce food at home, not for sale, but for family consumption. Second, they work unpaid as care-givers within the home. And third, they work for pay or profit outside the home.

In twentieth-century South Sudan, most farmers grew food for household consumption: farming for pay or profit was rare. But over the past few decades, more and more farmers have been selling their labour for money because their need for cash has increased significantly. The transition from unpaid to paid labour, from food produced at home to food bought from markets, is sometimes called commodification—because work and food have become commodities, things that can be bought and sold. The commodification of labour is an important part of rural and urban transitions towards markets, and it has complicated the gender division of labour. Women have much more work to do these days, as a result of complex and understudied changes to systems of production. I focus specifically on the labour burdens women experience within agricultural labour and how these labour burdens increase because agricultural labour is increasingly being commodified.

This study draws on an extensive literature review, interview-based research conducted by a team of researchers from the Catholic University of South Sudan and my personal experiences. The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods, including questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions with farmers, IDPs, traders, transporters, agricultural experts, religious leaders and government officials. Research was conducted in Wau town and the surrounding agricultural areas of Agok, Baggari Jedid, Alel Chok, Marial Baai and Udichi over three phases in July, August and October 2019. We conducted 97 interviews and 9 focus

groups: out of these, 41 interviews and 4 focus groups were held with women farmers, traders and IDPs and one member of the Western Bahr el-Ghazal state parliament. In this study I foreground the life stories of these women and compare these to my personal experiences and the life stories of my mother, aunts and Dinka Agar community members.

A HISTORY OF WOMEN'S WORK IN SOUTH SUDAN

In South Sudan, people used to produce food on household farms and community pastures for their own consumption. Household members did most of the work, and during periods of peak labour demand, such as harvest, agricultural labour was mobilized from families and from wider social networks—not through wages. In the past, what was produced was not sold at a market, but shared or exchanged within the family or the wider social network. Past livelihoods were very diverse, including livestock-keeping, cultivation and wild food gathering, like fishing, hunting and the collection of wild plants. Often these different tasks were assigned to women and men.¹

In the old system, labour was divided by gender. Systems of labour differed from one community to another across South Sudan, but in each community, young men and women and elderly men and women experienced different labour burdens. The tasks may have been distributed unfairly and women experienced many inequalities. Women often undertook more of the agricultural work than men did. Women have not received acknowledgement for their agricultural contributions in community narratives and histories or songs. In addition to their work as food producers, women also had responsibility for domestic work, which meant they had a kind of double burden. They produced food for the family to eat, and they also cared for children and cooked for the family.

Household-based systems of agricultural production were shaped by labour requirements. Clearing fields—which could take up to a year—was often men's work.² Cultivating the land required labour, often provided by women with specific seasonal tasks, like weeding or harvesting or grain storage. Polygynous households were able to clear and cultivate more land, because they could mobilize more labour—most of it female. Labour was the main limitation on expansion of cultivation, but the overall aim of cultivation was household food security, not marketable surplus. But over the course of the twentieth century, producing food for sale became more important. Food became a commodity, and the labour and land required to produce food also became commodities.

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- 1 Cleophas Lado, 'Female Labour Participation in Agricultural Production and the Implications for Nutrition and Health in Rural Africa', *Social Science and Medicine* 34/7 (1992).
 - 2 Conradin Perner, *The Anyuak – Living on Earth in the Sky, volume VII, Spheres of Action*, Basel: Schwabe 2016: 128.

Scholarly literature sheds light on the changing gender division of labour in South Sudan and how that change was linked to the commodification of crops, labour and land. In the late 1940s, Gertrude Culwick wrote one of the first scholarly accounts of the agricultural labour cycle in South Sudan, looking at Zande and Balanda areas of Western Equatoria. Her study shows that households mostly produced for their own consumption using a clear gendered division of labour. But women's labour burdens were already changing. In some 'recently resettled' areas, food crops were being grown for sale, and some unmarried young men were selling their labour.³

In the 1970s and 1980s, after the end of the first Sudanese civil war, several scholars observed the continuity of these 'traditional' household production systems. Dwight Jurey says that in Latuka areas in the 1970s, farmers engaged little with markets. Agricultural tasks were divided between men and women, and communal work parties—not waged workers—were used to deal with seasonal labour shortfalls.⁴ Conradin Perner says that in Anyuak areas of Jonglei, in the 1970s and 1980s, households cultivated or gathered food for their own consumption, not for markets—only tobacco was sold. Household labour was organized around gender roles, with men sometimes helping women with their work in private.⁵ In Bor, Jonglei, in the 1970s and 1980s, Sjoerd Zanen says that the household production system shaped a similar gender division of labour. But in peri-urban areas, societies were gradually orienting production towards markets. This move towards markets was sometimes led by women, selling goods gathered in forests, or sorghum beers: some women exchanged grain for cattle, or sold grain to buy cattle. Women's work was getting harder.⁶

Sometimes, however, the move from household production towards markets was led by men: change was gradual and uneven. Cleophas Lado says that in 1980s Maridi, as household's cash needs increased, men withdrew from household production to seek waged work—to commodify their labour. The commodification of men's labour was increasing pressure on women, who had to work harder in order to maintain the productivity of 'traditional' household agriculture.⁷ Although women in Maridi were not commodifying their own labour, their labour burdens grew: according to Lado, they were working harder on household farms to make up for the loss of male labour, when men went off to look for wages.

Sudan's second civil war, which lasted from 1983 to 2005, dramatically changed production systems and the gendered division of labour. Luka Biong Deng studied livelihoods in Abyei and

3 G.M. Culwick, *A Dietary Survey Among the Zande of the South-Western Sudan*, Khartoum: Agricultural Publications Committee, Ministry of Agriculture, 1950: 34, 55, 67.

4 Dwight A. Jurey, 'Agriculture among the Lopit Latuka in Eastern Equatoria, Sudan', Ithaca NY: Department of Agricultural Economics, New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 1981.

5 Perner, *The Anyuak*, 60-71, 123-128.

6 Sjoerd T.M. Zanen, 'Before all memories are lost: From subsistence to market during the 1970s/80s, historical, economic and cultural changes in Bor District, South Sudan', 2021: 20-32, available at https://issuu.com/sjoerdzanen/docs/almost_lost_memories-final_14_april.

7 Lado, 'Female Labour Participation', 800.

Gogrial, Warrap state. There, many farmers grew grain for markets serving the borderlands between present-day Sudan and South Sudan. But although grain had become a commodity, labour practices were still structured around households and kinship networks. The pre-war labour division system, which according to Deng was ‘strictly and traditionally apportioned by sex’ was adapted to deal with terrifying levels of insecurity, with men taking over tasks, such as harvesting and grain storage, previously assigned to women. In Abyei, grain stores were moved underground to hide them from government-backed militias. In order to move the harvest underground on time—there was a narrow window of time before harvest and arrival of pro-government militias—men and women began to work together, or men took over women’s jobs, often working collectively in mutual labour assistance clubs. But at the same time, many women and children—who were targeted by government militias—moved to northern Sudan, where they were detached from their land and sold their labour.⁸

Joseph Diing Majok’s work on labour migration from Bahr al-Ghazal shows that displacement and labour migration played a key role in commodifying the labour of women and men. Displaced people returning to Northern Bahr al-Ghazal after peace came in 2005 often found it difficult to access land, and had to sell their labour—bringing with them the labour practices of northern Sudan.⁹

Literature on gender, labour and commodification in South Sudan is relatively sparse, and it suggests that labour commodification is an uneven process. People adapt old systems of unpaid, mutual community labour in response to external threats—or they may sell their labour in response to those threats. Sometimes women commodify their labour before men do—but when men withdraw from the household farm to take part in the wage economy, the women working on household farms often have to take on increased work.

Today households are still producing food from their own herds, farms and forests, but they also sell some of their production, and they also sell some of their labour. People need money to buy food from markets and gain access to other goods, such as sugar and salt and clothes, and services, such as healthcare or education. Many households depend on cash earned from piece work for their daily survival and the outbreak of conflict in 2016 has deepened this dependency on piece work as displaced people lose access to their land and social support networks, and move towards casual labour. Many rural men and women earn money by engaging in agricultural wage labour as well as managing household agricultural production. This is a double agricultural work burden.

As markets spread, labour, food and land all acquire a monetary value, and are bought and sold. My work focuses on the commodification of agricultural labour—and its impact on women’s

8 Luka Biong Deng, ‘Livelihood diversification and civil war: Dinka communities in Sudan’s civil war’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 4/3 (2010), 389–393.

9 Joseph Diing Majok, ‘War, Migration and Work – Agricultural labour and cross-border migration from Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan,’ Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, 2022.

time. The commodification of labour complicated patterns of gender division of labour and this has put additional burdens on both male and female producers. This paper focuses on the burdens borne by women farmers.

THE DOUBLE-BURDEN BECOMES A TRIPLE-BURDEN

Many scholars writing about women and work refer to women's double burden, because most women have two jobs. Outside the home, they produce goods and services for pay or profit, and then they go home to look after their families. Doing both kinds of work is sometimes referred to as 'the double burden' or 'the double shift.' The double burden has been a concern of feminist activists and gender theorists since before the nineteenth century and before.¹⁰

My current research suggests that the concept of double burden does not reflect the experiences of women in South Sudan. In the past, all of their work was unpaid—they produced food and other goods for household consumption, and they provided care for household members. But now, many women also work for pay. Most of the participants in this study sell their labour in order to raise money for household needs, do unpaid work on their family farm, and also look after their families. So now they have three jobs instead of two: a triple burden, rather than a double burden. The triple burden is the term I use in this paper to describe the workload and time burdens women experience as they combine unpaid domestic labour with unpaid household production and with economic activities outside of the home. Women who sell their labour have more work to do.

Scholars and activists sometimes use the terms 'productive labour' and 'reproductive labour' to describe the two aspects of the double burden. Reproductive work does not just mean giving birth. It includes all the life-giving work that is needed to keep society going. This includes child caring responsibilities, like giving birth to children, breastfeeding, and home-making activities like cooking and cleaning. It also means emotional care and support: for example, women also are tasked with taking care of the sick and dying.

Productive work usually refers to work that produces goods and services for pay or profit. The distinction between these two kinds of work arose in market systems, where people sell their labour for money. When people began selling labour for money, reproductive labour began to be portrayed as a natural process, which gives emotional rather than monetary rewards. Productive labour began to be contrasted to reproductive labour, because it produces goods and services which can be sold for profit. By creating this difference between paid productive

10 Alexandra Kollontai, *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, trans. Alix Holt, Westport, CN: Lawrence Hill, 1977: 145; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, Boston, MA: Small, Maynard & Company, 1898: 13.

work and unpaid reproductive work, market systems were able to put the costs of reproduction on to individual households—and this is one reason why, compared to other systems, market systems produce more goods and services for profit.

In South Sudan's old system, the costs of reproduction were shared socially. Households produced enough to keep society going, rather than aiming for big surpluses and big profits. Responsibility for household production was shared with men. In the old system, neither women nor men were paid to produce these goods and services, and families shared the products among themselves, or exchanged the products, usually through social networks. South Sudanese women produced many goods and services, such as taking care of animals, collecting wild fruits, keeping a food garden and brewing alcohol. At the community level, women provided the food and labour for celebrations, like marriage and naming ceremonies, funerals and harvest rituals, but also for example for inter-clan and inter-community peace meetings.

Many scholars and activists have written about the way that the sale or commodification of labour creates a distinction between productive and reproductive labour, because productive labour is paid and reproductive labour is unpaid. Once productive labour becomes a commodity, women get additional burdens, and their status changes. Unpaid 'reproductive' work devalues women's labour, and as a result, when women work for pay, they often get lower wages than men: this is a way of keeping labour costs down, and dividing male and female workers against each other. Because women are often paid less than men for 'productive' work, and also get paid nothing for their 'reproductive' work, the system forces them into dependence on men who work for money.¹¹ The double burden increases the profits of employers, reduces the amount of work that men do and lowers the status of women, and for all these reasons, the double burden requires complicated social or cultural justifications or 'gender ideologies.'¹²

For many scholars, labour commodification is something which happened in the distant past. Scholars looking at African women's experience are able to trace way that sale of labour affects women's labour burdens in the present.¹³ The experience of the women who participated in this study is important because they are living through that process. They are caring for their families and households, selling their labour—and at the same time, trying to maintain household production.

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- 11 Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1993: 106; Smitri Rao and A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, 'Feminist Political Economy', in *The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Economics*, eds. Günseli Berik and Ebru Kongar, Abingdon: Routledge, 2021: 35.
 - 12 Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*, trans. Hilary Creek, New York NY: Autonomedia 1995: 9.
 - 13 Bridget O'Laughlin, 'Gender justice, land and the agrarian question in Southern Africa', in *Peasants and Globalization: Political economy, rural transformation and the agrarian question*, eds. A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi and Cristóbal Kay, 2009: 204; Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation*, New York: Autonomedia, 2004.

NEW LANGUAGE FOR NEW KINDS OF WORK

In South Sudan, we observe that women's productive activities can be divided into activities which are marginal to the money system and those which fall within the money system. The first refers to women's contribution to household production for household consumption; the gathering of forest goods for household consumption; and the contribution women make within their social networks to agriculture through work parties. The activities which fall within the money system include household production for markets; the gathering of forest goods for sale; and piece work and other paid agricultural work.

These different forms of labour have their own terminology. In South Sudanese Arabic, communal labour provided in return for beer or food is called *nafir*. Most communities have their own words for mutual aid too. For example, in Dinka, it is called *kutkut*, which literally means 'bringing people together.' The word is used to describe communal agricultural work. But it has a meaning broader than the work alone: it also describes the slaughter and cooking of a cow or goat for the food that people eat in exchange for their work, and the alcohol brewed that people drink to motivate them as they cultivate together.

In some places, the cost of providing alcohol or food means that communal labour systems are mainly for rich people. In other areas, poverty pushes farmers to mutual aid systems—providing labour in return for labour, with no food or beer provided.¹⁴ In other places, communal work systems are being replaced with money payments or money wages, paid in return for completing set agricultural tasks (piece work) or completing set hours of labour.

Research participants in Wau discussed different words used to describe these new paid-for labour systems. Some words come from Sudanese Arabic: *yawmiya* (daily wage), *muktawiya* (piece work), *mugawila* (contract work) or *tulba* (on-demand work). Other words come from Juba Arabic, like *badi dor*, which means 'after your turn,' and may be an older term for agricultural or non-agricultural piece work. *Jongo* is a term which is widely used across Sudan to describe landless agricultural workers, which may be related to the word *jangei*, a slur for Dinka people that is linked to the slavery era. Most research participants associated *jongo* with longer

14 Edward Thomas, 'Moving Towards Markets: Cash, Commodification and Conflict in South Sudan', Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute 2019: 87; Debora Kleyn, Steffen Rottcher, Buzz Sharpe, Cecilia Adalla, Edith Khaemba, Nathan Odira, Torbjorg Jensen, SRRA, 'Ikotos Annual Needs Assessment: Reporting period: 19th to 23rd September, 1997', Unpublished World Food Programme report.

contracts, even monthly payments.

But the most common word for piece work is *borochot*, or parachute. ‘It’s a kind of emergency landing,’ said one research participant, emphasizing the precarity of *borochot*. A common *borochot* task is weeding or other activity on a 10 by 10 metres plot. People in Wau use the Arabic *ashara-ashara* (ten-ten) to describe this.

WOMEN'S TIME-USE AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Women's work diaries give a good insight into how women combine reproductive and productive tasks inside and outside of the home and how they on average spend more time working than men. New divisions of labour may be experienced unevenly: commodification is transforming women's time burdens, but not all women have the same time burdens, and family composition influences how care responsibilities and household tasks are divided.

Family composition has a bearing on all aspects of family life and how the family is being run on an everyday basis. It impacts what families eat, how children are raised and the money income which is available to settle school and medical bills as well as buy clothes, food and household items. Members of the extended family network may lay claim on women's agricultural labour in direct or indirect ways, and both outside and within the money system—demanding ownership over their harvest or wages. Family composition may reduce some of the burden of women. Absent children may support their mothers with remittances from urban areas inside South Sudan or abroad.

During our interviews in and around Wau, we met women who lived with their husbands and children and women who lived within the extended family of their husbands and with their children and share family responsibilities. We also met many women who lived separate from their husbands or who had become widowed and held sole responsibilities for their children. Another category of women are those women who as a result of war and displacement have become separated from their family networks and live without their relatives or children.

Some women farm with their husbands—and some of them described a relatively equitable division of labour over the course of an arduous working day. One 29-year-old woman said that she had moved from Aweil, in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal, to Udichi, near Wau. Her household had sixteen members, but she and her husband were the only people cultivating. In July—during the pre-harvest lean period—she reported that she worked on the farm from 8am to 12pm, then prepared lunch, fetched water, went to market, cooked, and cleaned from 12pm to 7pm. Her 47-year-old husband, she said, worked on the farm from 8am to 7pm. She said that other family members did not cultivate, and that she occasionally worked on commercial farms during lean periods, to pay for food or medical bills.¹⁵

15 Interview with 29-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

Not all husband-and-wife farmers share the work so equitably. One 77-year-old former soldier reported that he spent 14 hours on cultivation in the course of a week. But his 47-year-old wife had much longer working hours, and she also sometimes did *borochot* on commercial farms.¹⁶

Women-headed households have much bigger labour burdens. One 35-year-old single mother with five children aged between 3 months and 15 years said that she did 56 hours of cultivation in a week.¹⁷ A 24-year-old single mother with three children under four said that she worked alone on her farm for 42 hours a week. She sells some of her produce and consumes some at home. She also does *borochot* on farms, and after the December harvest, she prepares and sells Christmas biscuits and charcoal. She said that she borrowed money from merchants and pays back in money or food.¹⁸

Some women farming alone reported extreme pressures on their time. One 28-year-old woman farming in Udichi said that her husband spends most of his time in Wau, and did not provide for the family—nor did the rest of her family. She had just given birth to her third child at the time of her interview. To buy food for her other two young children, she returned to *borochot* only days after she delivered, in defiance of traditional practice, which keeps mothers at home after birth. She was bleeding and in pain as she weeded a farm planted with groundnuts, and she placed her newborn on an open bamboo structure built by children tasked to protect the farm from birds.¹⁹

One 48-year-old single mother of eleven children returned to her home area of Agok with her children after decades of being displaced in Khartoum, and her father gave her some land to farm. She was running her large family home, cultivating her household farm, working on a cooperative farm, and doing irregular task work on large household farms and commercial farms. During the dry season, she cuts and dries grass and sells it door-to-door and at markets in Wau alongside a little surplus harvest from her household farm. She uses the money earned to pay school fees, medical bills and buy sugar, salt and soap.²⁰

Many women farmers reported heavy childcare duties. One 41-year-old woman in Agok, a widow with eleven children, who had been born and raised in Khartoum and did not know how to farm. She was the family's sole breadwinner and farmed on a household farm, as well as cutting, drying and selling grass. She was not able to undertake *borochot* in and around Agok because she was breastfeeding: 'I am only spending four to five hours on cultivation because I am breastfeeding. If the child was not there, I would work [from early in the morning] until

16 Interview with 77-year-old man working in farming, July 2019.

17 Interview with 35-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

18 Interview with 24-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

19 Interview with 28-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

20 Interview with 48-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

2pm.²¹

Disability intensifies pressures on women's time. One 50-year-old woman who is not able to move around on foot, and uses her knees and hands instead, reported long working days. Her situation was complicated by displacement: she fled to Wau from her home area of Baggari when it became a frontline in 2016. Her two sons, who used to provide for her, were killed in the fighting, and she cares for their children. She was doing *borochot* work, but she faces difficulties travelling to different farms to sell her labour. She works 12-hour days and she said: 'I release my stress on the farm and whenever I dig I will always feel relief.'²²

21 Interview with 41-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

22 Interview with 50-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

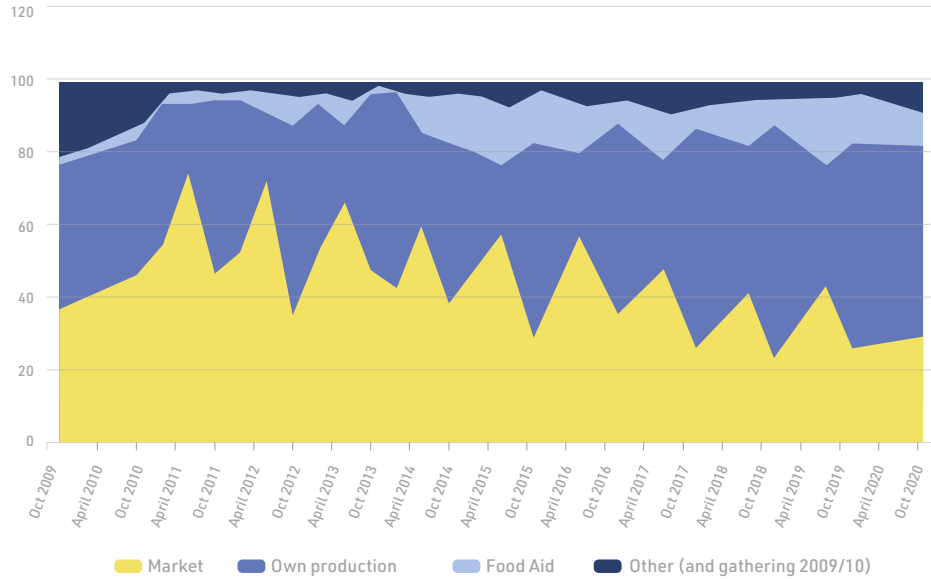
THE ECONOMIC RATIONALITY OF WOMEN'S OVER-WORK

Maintaining household production, while keeping the household going and selling labour, has become a necessary part of existence in South Sudan. Food security surveys reveal some of the pressures on women, because they show how much food households purchase, and how much they grow. In the past, nearly all basic foods came from home production, but over the course of Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005), households became increasingly dependent on purchased food—although household production provided the most food.²³ During the peace period which began in 2005, many more people had access to money and markets gradually became more important sources of food (see Figure 1). This change happened unevenly: areas in conflict, flood zones with historical grain deficits, and areas with large displaced populations switched to markets more quickly. By 2009, surveys indicated that the market had become the most important food source across the country, even in the months after harvests. Most households now needed money to buy food, and they were adjusting to the demand for paid labour. But they maintained household food production too.

Maintaining household production while selling labour and looking after families made women overworked. But it helped households cope with the way that money was changing everyday life. After the South Sudanese civil war began in 2013, food security data indicates that households began to rely more on household production, probably because households could no longer afford to buy food.

23 Thomas, 'Moving Towards Markets', 49-65; WFP, 'Sudan: Southern Sudan Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA). Data collected in May 2006.' Rome: World Food Programme, Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Branch, 2007: 25.

Figure 1: South Sudan: Relative importance of markets, own production, food assistance and other sources of basic foods consumed by households between 2009 and 2020.²⁴



Women’s triple burden has become a way for South Sudanese women to deal with market pressures and food insecurity through over-work. South Sudan is going through a profound agrarian transition which is orienting everyday life towards markets. In the process, women’s double burden has become a triple burden: women are responsible for domestic work and household agricultural production and they are also responsible for engaging in paid agricultural work.

24 FAO/WFP, ‘Special Report: FAO/WFP Mission to the Republic of South Sudan, 13 May 2021’, Rome: FAO/WFP 2021: 54. Note on table: before 2015, the data refers to ‘sources of sorghum’ and after 2015, the data refers to ‘sources of different roots and cereals.’ In some years, percentages assigned to different sources do not add up to 100, and where this has happened, ‘Other (and gathering 2009/10)’ has been adjusted.

PAID WORK IS CHANGING THE GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR

For many women, *borochot* is the new, third burden of labour. It has changed the gendered division of labour too. Women working for pay outside the homestead have begun to take up roles that were historically done by men. Men working for pay outside the home have also begun to do work which was historically done by women, such as weeding or wood and wild food collection. This kind of work used to be the domain of women—but now it is being undertaken for pay or profit, men sometimes compete for the work.

South Sudan's gendered division of labour was historically regulated by cultural beliefs and taboos against men performing reproductive work, especially around cooking, cleaning and child care. These taboos regulate labour divisions which are considered to have been passed down across the generations and unchanging. With the growing influence of money in people's lives, new pressures are placed on the extended family networks and this has impacted how families are structured, how relatives relate to each other and who does what.

Competition for pay or profit changes the division of labour and can set women at a disadvantage. Because women have many domestic and caring responsibilities, they cannot spend as many hours as men on *borochot*, and because men need money just as badly as women do, they take on jobs formerly assigned to women. Conflict and displacement has further sharpened gendered division of labour: social norms change, people lose access to land, families separate, men become involved in the military and fighting, and people lose their social networks, they are 'desocialized.' These processes have increased women's labour burdens.

Once women begin to sell their labour outside the home, other activities become overshadowed by the logic of money. In all communities in South Sudan women are prime carers of children, the elderly and the ill. Women do most of the domestic tasks, the work that happens in and around the house. Among different South Sudanese communities, families are organized around a husband and his wife or wives and their children. These nuclear units do not exist separate from each other and attach themselves to wider extensive family networks made up of the parents of the spouses and their brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, cousins and in-laws. Within these extended family networks, people share land, shelter, livestock and harvest and relatives have clearly defined expectations of and obligations towards each other. These are most clearly expressed during marriage, birth and death: when livestock, grain, seeds and agricultural implements are exchanged. Some of these relationship-forming rituals have become commodified and today money is exchanged. For example, in the old system, women

brewed alcohol for cultural celebrations and for rituals. In the new system, women brew alcohol to survive in the money system and they brew alcohol for community celebrations.

Friends and other social relations oftentimes also take up familial roles and titles and non-relatives become connected to these extended family networks through obligations similar to those among people who share actual blood relations. Within the extended family, women build support networks among themselves: mothers support their daughters, sisters support each other, aunts support their cousins, and wives support co-wives. Some of these relations are sanctioned by kinship rules. Within these networks women share resources, care responsibilities and emotional and spiritual support. These relations are sometimes being commodified as well. Women combine the roles of home-maker and money-maker. Much of the money earned by women is invested back into home-making: the purchasing of food, for medical bills and sometimes to hire land and labour to grow food for the family. Today, more women are working outside of the home and this is affecting domestic care responsibilities. At the same time, care responsibilities are being commodified, as women carry out caring tasks in other people's homes for payment. Many husbands perceive this negatively: men believe that a 'good woman' does the house work herself and many men feel uncomfortable about their wives doing reproductive work for another family and not investing the same time in their own household.

GENDER, LAND AND THE TRIPLE BURDEN

This section discusses how gender rights to land are linked to women's triple burden. Women customarily have secondary rights to land, although this can vary between communities and between older and younger women. South Sudan's move towards markets is changing the way that labour is valued—and also the way that land is valued. According to South Sudan's land law, rural land is mostly held by communities: it is not easy to sell it, but new leasehold arrangements are emerging in areas of land competition. As land acquires monetary value, and people compete for it, women find it harder to get access to land. Sometimes, they have to take on additional work burdens in order to lease land.

According to the customs of most South Sudanese societies, women access land through their male relatives, their fathers, husbands, brothers and uncles. Widowed women rely on the support of their late husband's family, their male children or the male members of their birth family to access land. Single women and single mothers rely on the support of their male relatives to access land. Generally, women cannot make permanent claims to own land—neither the agricultural lands of their birth family, nor the family they marry into.

Over the past decade and a half, land has acquired new value and is increasingly measured in terms of money. Land is hired out to external users and produce is no longer only consumed by the household and their extended families, but sold for money in markets. New land regimes driven by capitalist interest present women with new possibilities and challenges.

Women who do not enjoy the support of their family and social networks to access land or support their livelihood activities need money to access agricultural land for farming, either for their household consumption or for market sale. These women often do *borochot* to earn the money needed to lease land. In and around Wau, few women with monetary wealth have begun to lease land to circumvent patriarchal land tenure systems.

Sometimes, the commodification of land gives women new avenues to access land—allowing women with money leasehold rights. But for many women, their secondary rights under customary law make access to land harder. Disputes over marriage, inheritance and land tenure are commonly judged according to customary law. Customary laws are generally not equitable and restrict women's access to land, property and other valuable assets.

Women's land rights are in flux. For example, my own family is female-dominated, and my late

father distributed the family land evenly among my mother and sisters. Before his death, he made his wishes for me and my female relatives to own the land known to the chiefs of my clan. But my father's decision is not respected by my paternal uncles, who, since my father's death, have challenged our land rights and have wanted to dictate how the land is used, who cultivates the land, what is grown on it and how the harvest is shared out within our family and social networks.

Processes like commodification happen unevenly: different ecological zones and different societies respond to new signals from markets in different ways. Interviews with women in Equatoria and Lakes state confirmed that women's relationship to land was changing everywhere. One woman from Central Equatoria said that 'strong women who have knowledge about their rights are getting access to land through the lawyers.' But divorced and displaced women—two groups who fit uneasily into customary law—faced many challenges in accessing land.²⁵ Another from Rumbek (a predominantly Dinka area) said that land values were entering into bridewealth negotiations: bridewealth was customarily an exchange of cattle.

My daughter you know Dinka custom. No women is allowed to own land without male children or women with undefined marriages don't have rights of owning or even accessing land for farming, leave alone ownership. The main reason for the Dinka people is because we are married with huge number of cattle, goats, chickens and valuable things. Including land, which can be used as a bridewealth too. Like a plot of land can be converted into a number of cows. One good plot can be considered to have the value of 10 cows. So men cannot allow their wives to own land ... But nowadays women are gaining ground. The way I see young educated girls and women reclaiming lost lands and using their salary as well to buy land with their own names, which never happened in my generation. Even if your father gave you a share, your uncles start interfering with you by calling you a foreigner after your father's death. Now all these things you are asking me are not new. We suffered my daughter, we own nothing in this community but we have contributed 85 per cent of what you are seeing is done by women but they men made it invisible.²⁶

In the Wau area, many women research participants emphasized the importance of leasing arrangements in changing relationships with land. As land acquires monetary value, communities move away from using land for cultivation, and lease out family land instead. Many families lease out land to foreign and South Sudanese farmers who grow commercially on these lands. These leases are renewed annually and during our interviews in the agricultural areas surrounding Wau, many farmers reliant on leased land complained about inflation of land leases and intense competition.

Marial Baai is a fertile area near Wau (not the same as Marial Baai in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal).

25 Interview with 43-year-old woman working in farming, June 2021.

26 Interview with 58-year-old woman working in farming, September 2021.

E., a 45-year-old woman farmer described how she accessed land there. She was born in Warrap and moved to Marial Baai as a small child, and lives there now with five young children and her mother. When her family arrived in the 1980s, a local chief gave her family land, which they used to rebuild their lives. She married, but her husband died in 1997, and after her husband's death, she was inherited by her husband's cousin brother. E. is a Dinka woman, and Dinka customs keep widows as part of the household production systems of their deceased husband's families through a system of wife inheritance. She continued farming with the support of her mother, exchanging crops for livestock until she was able to afford the bridewealth for her son.

I am so proud of my mum and myself for the effort we made to arrange marriage for my son using some of our yearly harvest. We sell our harvest to get money to buy goats and then exchange goats or a large quantity of the harvest for one big cow which we keep until we managed to buy 19 cows. We arranged marriage for my son who is 27 years old, in 2014.²⁷

E. assumed the land to be hers but in the early 2010s, the chief and one of his family members who owned the land requested her to leave or pay rent to access the land she had worked freely for nearly two decades. She had to sell her labour in order to earn the money she needed to rent land to farm on.²⁸

The commodification of land affects women in different ways. Leasing land imposed cost and time burdens on E., which were linked to her position as an incomer and a widow inherited by an in-law. But markets gave her a new kind of access to land, conditional on money payment.

Other women in Marial Baai explained how they had to navigate custom and markets to survive. A 39-year-old woman in Marial Baai explained that she was leasing 5 feddans of land 'because we are returnees from Khartoum and do not have enough land of my own.'²⁹ She said that she leased 2 feddans to grow ground-nuts, and that leases were priced to reflect the market value of crops they were suited to—sorghum and ground-nut lands were priced differently.³⁰

A focus group of men displaced to Wau as a result of fighting described how the conflict was changing the way that land was valued. They came from an area called Brinji, and one said that there 'it is hard to find land for leasing, people cultivate their parents' land.' Another said 'People used to come and ask for land to cultivate and I gave them the land for free.'

Quantifying or measuring land is usually a precondition for commodifying it, and focus group members said that they did not quantify land areas in Brinji village. 'The term feddan is used by

27 Interview with 44-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

28 Interview with 44-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

29 A feddan is 0.42 hectares and an acre is 0.4 hectares.

30 Interview with 39-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

the government but we do not know this name *feddan* in the village but only in town. Previously, people knew their land through [physical landmarks such as] the mango tree, and sometimes people put big pieces of wood in the four corners of the land. This is how people know their land. But now in town the term *feddan* is used.³¹

War and displacement have further complicated women's access to land. Displaced women and war widows face difficulties in making claims to family land when they return after extended periods of displacement. Women living in the Wau displacement camps are even more vulnerable in accessing land for cultivation. Over the past half decade, movement in and around Wau has been restricted by safety concerns and agricultural land in the outskirts of Wau is too expensive to lease. Many displaced women today do piece work on other people's farms instead of working their own smallholdings with labour from their family networks.

Changing land rates offer women new possibilities and new challenges. But these changing rights do not necessarily reduce women's triple burden. Women can in some areas use cash to secure leaseholds, but they often end up doing more *borochot* jobs to raise land rent. But women accessing land through non-monetary means face new financial or social costs which arise from discriminatory land systems.

31 Focus group with younger and older women living in displacement, August 2019.

WAGE DIFFERENTIALS AND LABOUR DISCRIMINATION

Until recently, women were assigned culturally to do unpaid work in the house, and also assigned culturally to do unpaid agricultural activities on family or community farms. Girls farmed on their father's land. Married women farmed on their husband's land. The value of their labour was not quantified by money, or included in national accounts.

Some people argue that the old production systems balanced authority between men and women more, because the absence of money meant that men could not use money for social control. But men have other ways of dominating decisions on a family, community and national level. Despite the fact that women have always made significant contributions to agricultural labour and constitute the majority of agriculture workers, agricultural work is labelled and perceived as men's work. Within patriarchal South Sudan, women's agricultural work does not belong to them, but is perceived to be owned by their husbands, fathers or uncles. These cultural perceptions of women's work undermine and undervalue the actual contribution women make to subsistence livelihoods. On the family level, the agricultural work done by the different family members is counted collectively and individual contributions are not considered.

Today, many women work on other people's farms for money, often as part of the *borochot* or piece-work system. The transition from household labour to paid labour has not always helped to equalize women's relationships with men. This study looked in detail at the situation of women selling and buying paid labour in the Wau area, as well as interviewing women from Rumbek. They discussed whether paid labour affected women's situation.

It was not easy to establish whether women were paid lower piece work rates than men, because there is a great variation in rates. Many non-gender factors affect pay rates. These factors include:

- **Labour supply:** When there is a high availability of casual labourers, piece rates come down as people lose their bargaining power. This is especially true in areas where there is a high concentration of displaced people, who have lost access to land and social support networks and are pushed into casual labour.
- **Labour demand:** There is a high degree of seasonality in the demand for agricultural labour.
- **Task differences:** Different agricultural tasks, like clearance, planting, weeding and harvest, have different rates.

- **Crop types:** Farms growing market crops like watermelon and okra have different labour demands.
- **Farm type:** Payment rates are often lower on household farms than they are on commercial farms. A key finding of the research was that there is a great diversity of farm types in and around Wau. The research team initially divided farms into three broad categories: household farms (which produce for home consumption), commercial farms (which produce for market sale) and ‘intermediate’ farms, which produce for both markets and home consumption. That turned out to be a simplification: many factors define different farm types. These factors include farm size; land tenure; farm labour systems; farm production volume; share of farm production consumed at home and sold at market; share of seeds kept or sold at market; the use of commercial seeds and inputs; farming technologies; and farm location (proximity to residential areas and security situation).

Few research participants said that women were paid less than men for the same work. Where gender pay differentials exist, they arise out of a complex of reasons which are related to women’s triple burden. Because women’s caring responsibilities impose extra demands on their time, they are less flexible workers than men are. One woman in Rumbek who sometimes employs women explained:

Women get different pay from men because of time poverty ... [they] go to the farm with a lot of challenges left in the house, and even their children can come with them. [They] start narrating what is going in the house, and these things aren’t important for the employers because the most important thing is that you have to finish the work without any giving any excuses to leave. As you know the care responsibility that women hold in all the houses for older people, children and other households holds us back from being regular laborers ... Men also look at us like a burden ... some people would even ask whether you can really finish the work or tell you that they won’t pay you until the work is all done.³²

One interviewee, a 50-year-old man with a large farm in Alel Chok, said that he only hired men as workers on his farms because he believed that women workers distract men and create tension with their husbands. That was an unusual response.³³ A woman interviewee, in contrast, said that her sister, who has a small market garden, prefers women workers ‘because she understands them more than men.’³⁴

Our research does not support claims that women’s labour pay rates are lower than those of men, but we found that women experience *borochot* differently from men because their

32 Interview with 58-year-old woman working in farming, September 2021.

33 Focus group with younger and older women living in displacement, August 2019.

34 Interview with 43-year-old woman working in farming, June 2021.

time and movement is restricted by the male members of their families or by their domestic responsibilities, and they can therefore not travel long distances to work on commercial farms. The commodification of agricultural labour creates gendered competition for paid work. Women lose the competition because of the triple burden and the time poverty it brings.

WOMEN AS EMPLOYERS AND PIECE WORKERS

Farm types are an important part of wage differentials. The diversity of farm types in South Sudan is an indication of the uneven way in which markets are reshaping agriculture. For example, some of the poorest farmers—older, widowed women farming alone, or the wives of absent soldiers—hire labour to undertake heavy agricultural tasks, rather than mobilizing communal labour through social networks. Even farms which are seen as ‘traditional’ because they do not sell products to markets, are becoming ‘commercial’ because they buy labour.

For example, one 55-year-old widowed woman who was farming two feddans in Agok said she depended entirely on cultivation for her income, and her two surviving sons were studying in Wau, and not assisting her in farming. She was growing ground-nuts, watermelon, beans and okra on a two-feddan farm, selling some of her ground-nut harvest in the Agok market to cover her sons’ educational costs. She never worked on other people’s farms for money—but she sometimes hires workers to help her on her farm.³⁵

People who need labour—like older widows, soldier’s wives, or mothers with young or school-going children—need to obtain money to hire paid workers. A 27-year-old woman had a farm of 4.5 feddans cultivating ground-nuts, sorghum, okra and sesame in Alel-Chok. She had four children and was married to a soldier who was deployed away from his home area and did not participate in cultivation. She grows food for family consumption and also sells some of her production. She hires out her labour on commercial farms at 500 SSP per 10x10. She hires labour on her household farm at the same price.³⁶

One woman interviewed had a large farm. She was the 39-year-old wife of a senior military officer, who leased eight feddans of farmland near Wau to grow sorghum, ground-nuts and hibiscus. She was using the harvest to feed her family—three boys, all at school—and to sell to markets. She was investing over 40 hours a week on her farm, and did not hire out her labour. She was time-pressed but wealthy enough to lease land and hire agricultural workers to help with weeding.

Some women farmers could not afford to hire labour at all. A 30-year-old mother of five children

35 Interview with 55-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

36 Interview with 27-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

settled in Udichi for the past 15 years was growing sorghum and groundnuts on a household farm, mainly for home consumption—she had in the past sold part of her harvest at market to settle debts. She also had a small pot-making business, and was selling her labour to commercial farms to pay for school fees, clothes and medication. She prefers working on commercial farms over household farms as the pay is better.³⁷

37 Interview with 30-year-old woman working in farming, July 2019.

CULTURAL VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE NEW LABOUR SYSTEM

Women's triple burden means that they often lose out in the competition for paid work. But they face other forms of discrimination and cultural violence in the workplace and at home. These forms of discrimination often predate the arrival of paid agricultural labour in their communities—and paid labour is affecting the way that discrimination and cultural violence function.

Gendered mobility restrictions affect women's ability to engage in paid work: women trying to sell their labour on farms need to be able to travel to work and to compete with other workers. However, the movement of women and girls is often restricted by husbands or male relatives. These restrictions have their roots in South Sudan's patriarchal system. Markets sometimes remove gendered boundaries of agricultural work—for example, once charcoal became commodified, men got involved in charcoal collection, traditionally a woman's activity. But in other respects, the gender discrimination has survived the move towards markets, and new areas of discrimination are emerging. For example, women's mobility today is now restricted by their lack of access to transportation. Bicycle sellers in Wau said that women were less likely to buy bicycles than men are.³⁸ Nearly all research participants said that women take produce to market on foot, and that men own and use the motorcycles and bicycles which transports much of the produce of small farms to market.

Patriarchal controls over women's mobility is linked to controls over women's time and labour too. This control predates South Sudan's twentieth-century move towards markets. Under the *nafir* system, husbands generally decided where their wives would dedicate their labour and often expected them to work on the household plots of their husbands' relatives and friends. Many people believe that money belongs to the husband. Historically, married women generally could not independently own cows or money.

The commodification of women's labour has in some cases given women more control over what they produce. One woman in Central Equatoria state said: 'Women keep the money they have earned from paid agricultural labour and also decide on what they want to buy with the

38 Interview with bicycle sellers, Wau, July 2021.

money they have earned from their work. Women who are abandoned by their husbands can freely use the cash they earned from any paid labour'.³⁹ But some husbands control the money that women earn.⁴⁰ One woman in Rumbek who employs other women as farm workers said that one woman came to do some weeding on her farm, and her husband then came to pick up her payment. 'Later on, she came asking me [for her payment] and I told her that her husband picked up the money and told me that you told him to buy shoes with it. Really it was a disaster for me. I paid her the money again and advised her to be cool about what had happened.'⁴¹

Traditional ideas about women's status can put extra pressure on women to do more work, and more paid work. Some of these are linked to marriage customs. Dinka marriage customs, for example, allow for families to produce children for deceased or childless men or women. These customs are aimed at ensuring the continuity of lineage and inheritance, to which many other rights, such as land and community belonging, are linked. The customs reflect the patriarchal nature of Dinka culture, because many of the rights of the children produced by such marriage customs are vested in men. This in turn reflects an underlying traditional production system, where wives lead small farming households within a polygynous, male-headed family engaged in a mix of homestead cultivation and mobile pastoralism. They also allow widows and childless women to keep a (second-rank) place in this mixed livelihood system. But when the system broke down under the pressure of war and displacements, these marriage customs began to be reworked.

The rights of deceased men are often fulfilled by women's labour. Widows feel duty-bound to produce children for dead husbands, or to amass a bridewealth for a dead son. This puts extra pressures on their time. Widows have to undertake all the pressures of taking care of their children of dead husbands, who are believed to be watching them in heaven, and believed to sue neglectful wives when they reach heaven. But gendered understandings of property put even more pressure on women. When they are widowed, women's property is passed to her husband's family. His family can decide to take back everything, including productive assets like land and cattle—putting even bigger time burdens on widows and pushing them towards competitive paid labour; and women experience discrimination when they work within the money system.

South Sudan's decades of conflict have taken hundreds of thousands of men out of agricultural production and turned them into soldiers. Soldier-husbands put new pressures on women's time too. One woman in Central Equatoria State said:

Women who are married to military personnel have suffered so much. The majority of women married to soldiers work double, since the husband is away and is not

39 Interview with 43-year-old woman working in farming, June 2021.

40 Valérie Bérenger and Audrey Verdier-Chouchane, 'Child Labour and Schooling in South Sudan and Sudan: Is There a Gender Preference?' *African Development Review* 28/S2 (2016), 178.

41 Interview with 58-year-old woman working in farming, September 2021.

contributing his labour to the household farm as the head of the family. They do double work at home plus work on commercial farms to meet basic needs. For example, my young sister is married to a soldier and to tell you the truth she has been cultivating and doing some small business on her own, to pay for school fees and other household needs. Her husband has been deployed in Pibor since the war of 2013.⁴²

South Sudanese women's new triple burden interacts with existing forms of gender discrimination. Cultural norms are used to organize the gender division of labour. This often expresses itself in forms of cultural violence. Labour commodification, which gives women a third labour burden, has changed the way that cultural violence is used.

Let me give you one example of a woman with a disability who works as a *borochot* worker near Wau. Because of her disability she is paid less than other people or other workers. But it is worse than that. She is not allowed to farm the most valuable and the most expensive crops: water melon. Her employers invoke menstrual taboos to exclude her. South Sudan has cultural taboos around menstruation. But the link between menstruation and working on cash crops is a new invention. It is used to keep women's wages down.

During our research, we found that there exists a local belief in Agok, one of the commercial centres of agricultural in the Wau region, that menstruating women are capable of spoiling watermelon crops by crossing through fields in which they are grown. It is believed that menstrual blood pollutes the watermelon; that it stops the growth of the watermelon; and that the seeds, flowers and fruits will die. Historically, Darfurian farmers and traders who introduced the watermelon crop to Agok and they continue to run most of the watermelon farms. People explained that this social belief is relatively new, but is connected to longer-existing ideas about blood pollution and cultural beliefs of menstruating women as harmful. In my previous paper titled 'Migrating with Seeds,' I speak about how before the arrival of clothes, menstruating girls and women were kept away from homesteads and were prohibited from interacting with people of the opposite sex, cook, fetch water and do other household chores out of pollution fears.⁴³

These social beliefs limit young women from getting *borochot* jobs on commercial watermelon farms, but it also excludes women from independently growing a highly profitable cash crop. South Sudan's new rural labour system is changing life for women. It is also changing patterns of violence and discrimination against women.

42 Interview with 43-year-old woman working in farming, June 2021.

43 Elizabeth Nyibol, 'Migrating with Seeds: Women, agricultural knowledge and displacement in South Sudan', Rift Valley Institute, April 2020.

CONCLUSION

Since the spread of markets came, time has become money. Economic precarity pushes men and women to hire out their labour outside of their family farms. Women experience different time burdens than men and reproductive responsibilities push women to spend more time in the domestic sphere and less time on money-generating activities. Women piece workers are facing discrimination and there are gendered payment differentials. Women who work outside of the house are experiencing cultural restrictions which are based in patriarchal ideas about labour division in the productive and reproductive spheres. Women face barriers in independently owning and accessing land. Women are navigating these cultural restrictions and labour discrimination to feed their families.

Much of the work for gender equality in South Sudan focuses on the horrific abuses committed against women in the course of armed conflict. It is right that these abuses are investigated and addressed. But gender discrimination does not begin in wartime: it begins in everyday life. Wartime atrocities undermine women's status and security—but so do systems of production and labour. South Sudan's wars have made women's burdens heavier. Men are busy with military work since the time of Sudan's civil war and the war and conflict with South Sudan has left women with a triple burden. This study has shown that women's work is simultaneously being devalued and intensified as South Sudan moves towards markets. Action to end gender discrimination needs to begin with working life.

Making gender responsive public services available will go a long way in lessening women's triple burden and contribute to a situation where women can more autonomously decide about their movement, labour, time and earnings. This will contribute to women's economic empowerment and in the long run reduce the workload and time burdens heaped on women by cultural ideas about labour division, land ownership and caring responsibilities.

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