

# RURAL WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AMID ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN ALGERIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL FIELD STUDY

**Dalila LALAOUNA**

*University of Tlemcen , Algeria*

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the realities of rural women's participation in local development processes in Algeria against the backdrop of rapid economic and social transformations experienced by Algerian society over recent decades. The study aims to analyze the nature of rural women's contributions to productive and social activities, and to identify the structural obstacles impeding their effective integration into local development pathways. A sociological approach was adopted, combining theoretical analysis with field investigation through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and direct observations of a sample of women engaged in agricultural, artisanal, and domestic food-processing activities. Results reveal that rural women constitute a foundational pillar of the local informal economy; however, their contributions continue to face social, economic, and institutional barriers that limit their economic empowerment. The study concludes that sustainable rural development requires the genuine integration of women as primary development actors, necessitating a transition from ad hoc support policies to sustained and structural empowerment strategies.

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## **I. Introduction**

Rural development stands among the most pressing challenges confronting developing societies in the context of accelerating economic and social transformations. The improvement of rural living standards is fundamentally linked to the capacity of rural populations to participate in productive activities and to benefit from local development programs. In Algeria, rural areas have undergone profound transformations since independence, shaped by successive developmental policies, rural exodus, and integration into global economic circuits. Yet these transformations have not consistently resulted in the full incorporation of rural women into the formal economy - despite their constitutive role in sustaining household and local production systems (Bellal, 2013; Gherbi, & Adair, 2016).

Rural women participate daily in seasonal agriculture, livestock rearing, agri-food processing, and artisanal crafts. Yet their contributions are systematically under-recognized - economically and statistically - owing to the dominance of informality and the persistence of traditional social representations that subordinate women's economic roles to domestic reproduction (ILO, 2018; UN, 2020). This invisibilization is not merely a discursive problem; it has tangible consequences for access to credit, institutional support, and political participation in development planning.

The present study is guided by the following central research question: What is the nature of rural women's contribution to local development in Algeria, and what challenges limit their effective participation in the development process? This question is empirically investigated through a field study conducted in rural areas of Tlemcen province, drawing on a sample of 80 rural women engaged in diverse productive activities.

## **II. Theoretical Framework**

Rural development refers to a set of policies and programs aimed at improving living conditions in rural areas through the promotion of agricultural production, basic services, physical infrastructure, and human resource development.

From a sociological perspective, rural development is not merely a technical or economic process but a fundamentally social and political one, involving negotiation between different actors, institutions, and power relations at the local level. The structural dimensions of this complexity - rooted in global imbalances of resources, demographic pressures, and institutional asymmetries - have been systematically examined by Otovescu et al. (2012), whose broader sociological framework of contemporary human challenges provides a productive theoretical entry point for understanding how macro-level forces are refracted through local rural realities. At the micro-social level, Otovescu and Otovescu (2023) further illuminate how rural communities mobilize relational and institutional resources under conditions of vulnerability, revealing that what appears as a technical development problem is, in essence, a negotiated social process. Taken together, these works invite a deeper engagement with the sociology of rural transformation as a field where power, agency, and institutional dynamics converge.

Moreover, Classical modernization theory (Rostow, 1959) conceived rural transformation as a linear progression from traditional to modern social organization. However, this approach has been widely criticized for its ethnocentrism and its failure to account for local specificities and structural inequalities. More recent frameworks - including participatory development theory, feminist political economy, and sustainable livelihoods approaches - emphasize that durable rural development must be inclusive, gender-sensitive, and grounded in the social realities of target communities (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Kabeer, 1999a; Hajad et al., 2025).

Social transformation theories recognize that societies undergo continuous change as a result of economic, political, and cultural shifts, leading to the redistribution of social roles among different population groups (Touraine, 1984). In Algeria, the expansion of public education following independence, the spread of mass media, economic liberalization since the 1990s, and exposure to global cultural flows have collectively altered some traditional gender roles (Addi, 1999). These changes are, however, uneven across spatial, generational, and class lines. In rural areas specifically, conservative cultural structures have slowed the pace of gender role transformation. Studies on the Algerian rural family highlight the persistence of a patriarchal household model in which women's domestic and productive labor is naturalized as part of familial duty rather than recognized as economic activity (Guedjali, 2022; Talahite, 2008 ; Bourdieu, 1998).

Urbanization has not necessarily resolved these structural inequalities; rather, it has sometimes displaced them, with rural women left behind in increasingly feminized villages while male family members migrate to cities (Zitoun, 2020; Belguidoum & Mouaziz, 2010; Lacoste-Dujardin, 1996).

At the same time, feminist sociology cautions against viewing rural women solely as passive victims of patriarchal constraints. A growing body of research demonstrates that Algerian rural women actively negotiate their roles, exercise agency within structurally limited spaces, and develop informal networks of solidarity and economic exchange (Belarbi, 1991). The challenge for sociological analysis is to hold together both the structural constraints and the forms of agency that characterize rural women's situations.

Contemporary development literature affirms that women's economic empowerment contributes decisively to improvements in household and community wellbeing. As Kabeer (1999b) influentially argued, empowerment involves not only access to resources but the capacity to make strategic life choices - a capacity that is enabled by financial independence, social recognition, and institutional support-. Studies across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the MENA region consistently show that when women control income, household investment in children's health and education increases significantly (UNDP, 2021).

In the Algerian context, state-sponsored development programs such as the Agence Nationale de Soutien à l'Emploi des Jeunes (ANSEJ) and the Caisse Nationale d'Assurance Chômage (CNAC) have expanded microfinance access, but their reach to rural women remains limited by structural barriers including administrative complexity, low financial literacy, lack of guarantees, and cultural norms discouraging women's public economic activity (Marzouki, 2010; Salhi, 2010; Lazreg, 1990 ). The empowerment framework thus demands not only the provision of financial instruments but simultaneous attention to social and institutional determinants of women's participation.

A significant share of rural women's productive activity in Algeria - and across the Global South - occurs within the informal economy: unregistered, uncontracted, and statistically invisible (ILO, 2018). Sociologically, the informal economy is not a marginal sector but a structural feature of peripheral capitalisms, performing essential functions of household reproduction and local market supply (Portes & Haller, 2005). The gender

dimension of informality is particularly salient: women are over-represented in informal work precisely because formal labor markets remain structured around masculine norms of full-time, continuous employment (Lautier, 2004).

The invisibility of women's informal economic contributions reinforces a broader symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998) whereby women's labor is naturalized as non-work, their economic decisions are subject to male approval, and their claims to institutional support are structurally weakened. Recognizing and formalizing women's productive activity thus constitutes both a practical development imperative and a demand for social justice.

### **III. Research Methodology**

#### ***1. Research Design and Data Collection***

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach with a field research dimension, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to capture both the statistical dimensions of rural women's participation and the lived social meanings attached to that participation. Data were collected through three complementary instruments:

- ✓ A structured questionnaire was administered to a purposive sample of 80 rural women engaged in agricultural, artisanal, and domestic food-processing activities in Tlemcen Province. The questionnaire covered demographic characteristics, types and intensity of economic activity, income and household impact, access to support programs, and perceived obstacles.

- ✓ Semi-structured interviews were conducted with women who had developed small-scale domestic enterprises, allowing for the exploration of individual trajectories, decision-making processes, and subjective experiences of empowerment and constraint.

A total of 06 semi-structured interviews were conducted across the study communes. Interview participants are identified throughout this article by anonymised codes (Participant A, Participant B, etc.) in order to protect respondent confidentiality while preserving the traceability of qualitative evidence.

✓ Direct field observation of local productive activities, enabling cross-validation of self-reported data and the documentation of the social organization of informal economic practices.

## 2. Study Area

The study was conducted in rural communities of Tlemcen Province (Wilaya of Tlemcen), located in northwestern Algeria. Tlemcen is characterized by a mixed economy combining agricultural activities - including viticulture, arboriculture, and cereal farming - with traditional crafts such as weaving, embroidery, and ceramic production, for which the region is historically renowned. This context makes it a particularly pertinent site for studying rural women's productive diversification and the articulation between formal and informal economic activities.

## IV. Results

### 1. Demographic Profile of the Sample

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study sample (N = 80).

*Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample (N=80)*

Variable	Category	N	%
<b>Age Group</b>	Under 30 years	18	22.5%
	30–45 years	37	46.2%
	Over 45 years	25	31.3%
<b>Educational Level</b>	Illiterate / No schooling	29	36%
	Primary	28	35%
	Middle / Secondary	18	22%
	University	5	7%
<b>Occupational Status</b>	Domestic productive work	41	51%
	Seasonal agricultural work	27	34%
	Micro-enterprise	12	15%

The demographic profile of the sample reveals several sociologically significant patterns. The concentration of respondents in the 30–45 age cohort (46.2%) reflects the centrality of women in their prime productive and reproductive years to the local informal

economy. This age group typically carries the heaviest double burden of domestic and productive labor, combining child-rearing responsibilities with income-generating activities - a structural condition widely documented in rural North African contexts (Belarbi, 1991).

The educational profile is particularly significant: 71% of respondents have either no formal schooling or only primary education. From a human capital perspective, this educational deficit constrains women's access to formal labor markets and limits their capacity to manage administrative and financial processes associated with formalized enterprise (Kabeer, 1999). Sociologically, however, low formal education should not be conflated with low competency or agency. Many women in the sample demonstrated sophisticated practical knowledge of agricultural techniques, product quality standards, and local market dynamics - forms of what Bourdieu (1986) would term practical and social capital - that are systematically undervalued by formal development institutions.

The predominance of domestic productive work (51%) over seasonal agricultural employment (34%) and micro-enterprise (15%) reflects a gendered spatial organization of labor in which women's productive activities are anchored to the domestic sphere, both materially (using household space and equipment) and symbolically (framed as an extension of domestic duty). This spatial confinement simultaneously enables production - by circumventing social norms against women's public economic activity - and limits it, by restricting access to markets, networks, and institutional support.

## 2. *Economic Activities of Rural Women*

**Table 2. Nature of Rural Women's Economic Activities**

<b>Economic Activity</b>	<b>% *</b>
Seasonal agriculture	68%
Livestock and poultry rearing	61%
Agri-food processing and transformation	74%
Artisanal crafts	39%
Small-scale local commerce	18%
* <i>The percentages exceed 100% because the question allowed multiple responses by the respondents .</i>	

The activity data reveal that agri-food transformation - processing agricultural products into marketable foodstuffs such as couscous, dried figs, olive oil, preserves, and dairy derivatives - constitutes the most widespread economic activity among sampled women (74%). This finding is consistent with the broader literature on women's productive roles in Maghrebi rural economies, where agri-food processing represents a historical niche of female expertise transmitted intergenerationally (Lazreg, 2019).

From a sociological standpoint, the high prevalence of agri-food transformation activity reflects not only economic rationality but also a gendered cultural division of knowledge. Women's mastery of processing techniques, recipes, and quality norms constitutes a form of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that has historically been monopolized by female actors within the family economy. The challenge is that this capital, though economically productive, remains largely trapped within informal circuits, preventing women from deriving full economic benefit from their expertise.

The comparatively low rate of participation in small-scale commerce (18%) is equally revealing. Commercial activity in public market spaces - souks - has traditionally been a male-dominated domain in rural Algeria, reflecting the broader gender segregation of public and private space embedded in patriarchal social norms (Addi, 1999). Women who do engage in commerce tend to do so through male intermediaries (fathers, husbands, brothers), which further erodes their economic autonomy and the returns they receive from their productive labor.

### 3. Challenges Confronting Rural Women

**Table 3. Principal Challenges Identified by Rural Women (N=80)**

<b>Type of Challenge</b>	<b>% *</b>
Lack of financing / access to credit	82%
Difficulty marketing products	76%
Social and cultural restrictions	71%
Inadequate vocational training	64%
Complex administrative procedures	59%
<i>* The percentages exceed 100% because the question allowed multiple responses by the respondents .</i>	

The challenge profile presented in Table 3 reveals a multi-layered system of constraint that is simultaneously economic, social, and institutional. The primacy of financial barriers (82%) aligns with findings from broader regional studies demonstrating that rural women's exclusion from formal credit markets is both a cause and a consequence of their economic marginalization ( UNDP, 2021). In Algeria, collateral requirements, complex documentation procedures, and gender biases in credit allocation within formal financial institutions systematically disadvantage women, particularly those in rural areas with lower levels of formal education and social capital in institutional settings.

Marketing difficulties (76%) constitute the second most reported obstacle, reflecting the structural absence of organized supply chains for rural products. The absence of formal marketing networks forces rural women to rely on informal intermediaries - typically male - or to self-market through limited local channels, which significantly reduces profit margins and income stability. This structural gap both reflects and reinforces gender inequalities in the value chain: women produce, but men largely control distribution and pricing.

Social and cultural restrictions (71%) emerge as the third most significant barrier, confirming that economic and institutional obstacles are intertwined with normative structures governing gender behavior. Qualitative interview data collected in this study illustrate the complexity of this dimension: women reported that family disapproval, community surveillance, and the expectation that they prioritize domestic labor over income-generating activities constrained their economic participation in ways that were more difficult to navigate than formal institutional barriers. This finding resonates with the concept of 'practical gender interests' developed by Moser (1993): women may seek to improve their economic position while simultaneously navigating - and partially accommodating - prevailing gender norms, rather than frontally challenging them.

Inadequate vocational training (64%) and complex administrative procedures (59%) complete the picture of a development environment that is structurally ill-adapted to rural women's needs and life conditions. The geographic distance of training centers from rural communities, the scheduling of training sessions during agricultural peak seasons, and the use of formal French-language administrative documentation in a context of

widespread Arabic and Tamazight (Berber) literacy constitute concrete manifestations of institutional indifference to rural women's situated realities.

The qualitative dimension of these structural barriers emerges with particular clarity in the testimonies collected during fieldwork. A 42-year-old participant operating a small agri-food processing workshop - with a secondary-level education - described the institutional invisibility of support mechanisms in the following terms:

*"We never received any clear explanation of support programs or entrepreneurship schemes. We hear things here and there, but nothing concrete ever materialises."* (Participant A, Agri-food Workshop Owner, 42 years, Tlemcen Province)

Her account points to a fundamental disconnect between formal program existence and community-level awareness - a failure not of individual knowledge but of institutional outreach through accessible, local channels. This testimony directly corroborates the quantitative finding that 59% of respondents identified complex administrative procedures as a principal obstacle (Table 3), and anticipates the program access data detailed in section 4.5, where 47% of women attempted to access support programs and failed.

The same participant further identified market access as the decisive constraint on her productive development:

*"The real problem is that there is no one who buys from us, who seeks out our products, who gives our work its real value and a fair price. I cannot develop or improve my situation — we are ordinary people with no control over marketing."* (Participant A, Agri-food Workshop Owner, 42 years, Tlemcen Province)

This formulation captures with precision what aggregate statistics can only approximate: the experience of producing without the capacity to valorise. The structural absence of buyers who recognise quality, combined with the absence of intermediary networks capable of connecting artisanal producers to broader markets, constitutes what Portes and Haller (2005) describe as a defining trap of informal economies — where productive capacity and economic precarity coexist precisely because circuits of value extraction remain outside producers' control.

The gendered dimension of institutional exclusion - operating beyond economic barriers, at the level of recognition and voice - is articulated with exceptional clarity by a second participant, a 50-year-old woman engaged in both agricultural work and artisanal craft production:

*"Because you are a woman, no one listens to you - your voice reaches nowhere. We are just numbers. We only exist to be displayed at seasonal fairs and official celebrations, to decorate the events of the officials. For the rest of the year, we struggle simply to survive."* (Participant B, Farmer and Artisan, 50 years, Tlemcen Province)

This testimony crystallises several intersecting dynamics identified in the theoretical framework. The participant's description of being reduced to "just numbers" and rendered visible only at "official celebrations" speaks directly to Bourdieu's (1998) concept of symbolic violence: rural women are incorporated into institutional narratives of rural development only when that incorporation serves the legitimation needs of official actors, and erased the moment that function is fulfilled. Their productive labour - performed daily, across every season - carries no institutional weight in between.

The phrase "to decorate the events of the officials" is particularly analytically significant. It describes a performative inclusion that functions as exclusion: women are present in the official image of rural development without being integrated into its structures or decisions. This dynamic aligns with Waring's (1988) critique of the selective visibility of women's contributions - acknowledged when convenient, discounted when structurally inconvenient - and reinforces the finding that 71% of respondents identified social and cultural restrictions as a principal barrier to their economic participation (Table 3).

#### *4. Impact of Women's Participation on Household Income*

*Table 4. Effect of Women's Economic Participation on Household Income*

<b>Impact on Household Income</b>	<b>%</b>
Clear improvement in income	63 %
Limited improvement	28 %
No noticeable effect	9 %
Total	<b>100 %</b>

The income impact data are unambiguous: 91% of households report some degree of income improvement attributable to women's economic activity, with 63% reporting a clear improvement. This finding powerfully challenges the persistent institutional representation of rural women as economically passive or as secondary contributors to household welfare. From a development economics perspective, these data align with extensive international evidence demonstrating that women's income earning has multiplier effects on household consumption, children's education, and nutritional outcomes (Kabeer, 1999; UNDP, 2021). In the Algerian rural context, where household income is often irregular and agriculturally dependent, women's diversified productive activities constitute a determinant mechanism of economic risk management.

### *5. Access to State Support Programs*

*Table 5. Rural Women's Access to Government Support Programs*

<b>Access Status</b>	<b>%</b>
Actually benefited from support	22 %
Attempted but did not benefit	47 %
Did not attempt to apply	31 %
Total	<b>100 %</b>

The program access data reveal a fundamental implementation failure: only 22% of women in the sample successfully accessed government support programs, while 47% attempted to do so and failed, and a further 31% did not attempt at all. This three-part distribution is sociologically diagnostic. The large proportion of women who attempted but failed to access support (47%) speaks to the mismatch between formal program design and women's actual institutional capacities and social constraints. The 31% who did not attempt application at all reflects a combination of discouragement through observed failure ('if my neighbor tried and failed, why would I bother?'), lack of information about program availability, and internalized normative constraints on women's engagement with public institutions.

This pattern of informational exclusion was confirmed directly in qualitative interviews: as Participant A (42, workshop owner) stated, the absence of clear, accessible communication about available programs was experienced not as a policy gap but as a

form of institutional indifference - a finding that reinforces the structural character of the implementation failure documented here.

These findings confirm the structural inaccessibility of development programs to rural women and call for a fundamental rethinking of program delivery mechanisms - toward community-based, gender-sensitive implementation models that meet women where they are, rather than requiring them to navigate administrative systems designed without them in mind.

## **V. Discussion**

### *1. Rural Women as Unrecognized Economic Actors: A Theoretical Synthesis*

The empirical results of this study converge on a central theoretical finding: rural women in Algeria function as essential economic actors whose contributions are systematically invisible within formal institutional frameworks. This invisibility operates at multiple levels. Statistically, women's informal productive activities are largely uncounted in national accounts, generating what Waring (1988) famously described as the 'invisible economy' of women's work. Institutionally, the structural design of credit, training, and administrative systems fails to account for women's situated realities. Symbolically, prevailing representations of productive work as inherently masculine naturalize women's economic exclusion as a cultural norm rather than recognizing it as a socially produced injustice.

The Bourdieusian concept of symbolic violence is particularly productive for interpreting these dynamics (Bourdieu, 1998). The devaluation of women's economic activity is not primarily a product of explicit discrimination but of the taken-for-granted structures of the social field - the unquestioned assumptions about what constitutes 'real work,' who is a legitimate economic actor, and what kinds of knowledge and skills count as development-relevant. Rural women themselves often internalize aspects of these representations, describing their productive activities as 'helping out' or 'just household work' rather than as economic contribution - a discursive gesture that simultaneously reflects and reproduces their marginalization.

## *2. The Informal Economy as a Gendered Structure*

The study confirms that rural women's economic activity is predominantly located in the informal economy, a finding that must be understood not as an individual choice but as a structural outcome. Informality, as Lautier (2004) has argued in the global south context, is not a transitional phase on the path to modernization but a durable feature of peripheral capitalist economies - a domain that simultaneously absorbs surplus labor, supplements household income, and provides flexible production for local markets.

The gendered character of informality in rural Algeria is shaped by two intersecting dynamics. First, women's exclusion from formal labor markets - through discrimination, credential deficits, geographic distance from employment centers, and normative barriers - pushes women's productive activity into informal channels. Second, the domestic sphere itself functions as an informal productive space, enabling women to combine productive and reproductive labor in ways that are socially tolerated but economically undervalued. The challenge for development policy is therefore not simply to formalize women's activities but to address the structural conditions - legal, financial, educational, and normative - that confine women to informality in the first place.

## *3. Social Transformations and the Limits of Change*

The study's qualitative data suggest that social transformations in rural Algeria are producing genuine, if uneven, shifts in gender relations. Younger women in the sample expressed greater awareness of their economic rights, greater willingness to seek institutional support, and greater aspiration toward formal enterprise. This generational shift resonates with sociological research on changing gender norms in Algerian society more broadly (Addi, 1999), and may be attributed to the combined effects of educational expansion, media exposure, and the economic necessity generated by male unemployment and rural economic precarity.

However, the study also confirms that social change in rural contexts is partial, contested, and reversible. Women who sought to expand their economic activities beyond domestically defined boundaries reported encounters with familial resistance, community gossip, and normative sanctions. The persistence of what Kandiyoti (1988) called the

'patriarchal bargain' - women's tacit acceptance of constraints in exchange for security and social legitimacy - remains a significant feature of rural gender dynamics. Development interventions that fail to account for this social complexity - treating women's empowerment as a simple matter of providing access to credit or training - are likely to achieve limited results.

#### ***4. State Policy and the Implementation Gap***

Algeria has developed a range of national programs targeting rural development, women's employment, and micro-enterprise support, including ANSEJ, CNAC, ANGEM (Agence Nationale de Gestion du Microcrédit), and the National Rural Renewal Program (PNDR) (Bouri, Chennouf & Mahmoudi, 2012). The data from this study, however, reveal a profound implementation gap: the majority of rural women in the sample either failed to access these programs or did not attempt to do so. This gap reflects several interconnected failures: the design of programs around male-typical enterprise profiles; administrative complexity that disadvantages the less formally educated; the geographic concentration of program offices in urban centers; and insufficient community-level sensitization and accompaniment.

These findings align with a broader critique of Algerian development policy as characterized by a 'top-down' model that prioritizes formal institutional actors over community-level realities (Nedjar, 2025). The transition from state-centric to participatory development models - models that involve women in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of programs affecting their lives - is not merely a technical reform but a political and sociological challenge, requiring the redistribution of institutional power and the recognition of new forms of local knowledge and agency.

### **VI. Policy Recommendations**

Drawing on the empirical findings and theoretical analysis, the study proposes the following evidence-based policy recommendations:

First, the establishment of women's productive cooperatives at the local level would enable the aggregation of individual household-based production into collectively

marketed units, addressing both the scale limitations of informal production and the social barriers to individual women's public economic activity. Cooperative models adapted to rural Algerian contexts have demonstrated success in countries that are contextually similar to Algeria and should be piloted in Algerian rural areas with appropriate institutional support.

Second, the reform of microfinance access mechanisms, and the expansion of mobile financial services to rural areas, is essential to address the primary barrier of financing. These reforms should be accompanied by financial literacy programs designed specifically for rural women, delivered in local dialects, and hosted in community spaces accessible to women.

Third, the development of digital marketing platforms for rural products - building on emerging e-commerce trends in Algeria - would enable women to market their products beyond the local souk without requiring physical mobility that may be constrained by social norms. Investment in rural digital infrastructure and training in digital marketing is therefore a gendered development priority.

Fourth, the integration of gender-sensitive indicators into rural development program evaluation frameworks - measuring not only enterprise creation but women's decision-making autonomy, access to information, and participation in local governance - would enable better tracking of empowerment outcomes and more targeted program adjustment.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that rural women in Algeria constitute indispensable, yet institutionally unrecognized, actors in local development processes. Their contributions to household income, agri-food production, artisanal craft, and local economic life are empirically significant and socially consequential - yet they remain largely invisible to formal development institutions and national statistical systems. The barriers to rural women's economic participation are multi-dimensional, encompassing financial exclusion, marketing deficits, cultural and social constraints, inadequate vocational training, and administrative opacity, and they interact in ways that reinforce each other.

The sociological analysis developed in this study highlights several important theoretical contributions. Rural women's economic invisibility is not an incidental or reversible condition but a structurally reproduced outcome of the intersection between patriarchal gender norms, peripheral capitalism, (Benería, Berik, & Floro, 2015) and an institutional development framework that has historically been designed around male economic profiles. Addressing this invisibility requires not merely technical reforms - though these are necessary - but a deeper transformation of the social representations, institutional cultures, and power relations that govern rural development in Algeria.

The transition from contingent support policies to genuinely empowering, participatory, and gender-transformative rural development strategies represents the essential path toward inclusive and sustainable rural development in Algeria. Such a transition demands sustained political will, institutional innovation, and - above all - the recognition that rural women are not beneficiaries to be helped but agents to be empowered.

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#### **Author Contact Information**

**E-mail:** dalila.lalaouna@univ-tlemcen.dz

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