



A study on drivers on women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources: A case of T/A Kalembo and Chanthunya in Balaka District in Southern Malawi.

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture remains the key sector of Malawi's economy and important for household and national food income and nutrition security. Women make up 70-80 % of the labour force in the agricultural sector and produce about 80 % of the food for the household at the same time they face various challenges in implementing their agricultural related activities (GoM 2015). The agriculture sector operates far below its potential owing to a number of challenges; such as limited access to agricultural productive resources by women. The drivers of this challenge are socially constructed, knowledge and skills related and institutional related. This study aimed to investigate the drivers to women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources in Southern region of Malawi. In particular, the study aimed to identify cultural and social norms associated with access to and control over agricultural productive resources, determine women's access to Agriculture Extension services as a productive resource, determine the effectiveness of programs promoting women's participation in agricultural decision-making process and assess availability and accessibility of agricultural productive inputs. In this case, T/As Kalembo and Chanthunya in Balaka have been used as a case study. The productive resources include (1) land, (2) capital, (3) agricultural inputs, (4) technologies and (5) extension services.

Study results have shown that land ownership in the entire study area is freehold land tenure system where land tenure is through matrilineal inheritance. The lineage system places women as land owners where men come from other villages through marriage hence women having more access to land than men. But men (maternal uncle, locally known

as 'mwini mbumba') control the land. The study has also shown that men also make crucial decision making, financial related, developments and any other at both household and community level. Results have revealed that culture and social norms also affects women's access to and control over productive resources. Adhering culture and norms follows rewards and not adhering follows sanction for breaking the norms. This has escalated cases of gender based violence (GBV) especially physical and economic violence. Women end up beaten by spouse and denied access to finances and other resources as they are perceived as rude and not submissive. The study has further revealed that disasters are one of the drivers that affect women's access to and control over inputs. Women fail to access inputs because of impassable roads caused by disasters and also limited capital. Women have access to small loans through savings and loans groups and microfinance institution, hence cannot afford to purchase inputs due to high cost. The study has also shown that women access extension services but in an informal mode compared to men. This has created knowledge gap.

Key words: drivers, access to, control over, agricultural productive resource, decision making, Womenand culture and social norms.

I. Introduction

Agriculture being the back bone of Malawi's economy it accounts for 30% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and generates over 80% of national export earnings (GoM, 2015). The Government of Malawi recognizes the importance of agriculture in driving economic growth and its contribution to economic and human development



of the country, as highlighted in the MGDS II. Balaka district has a total area of 211,716 ha, of which 188,062 ha is under customary land and is used by smallholder farmers with an average land holding size of 0.6ha plus a few estates operating on commercial basis (BDC, 2017-2022). The food crops in the district include maize, groundnuts, sorghum, roots and tubers plus pulses while cotton is the major cash crop and tobacco being the other cash crop. The farmers in the district keep different classes of livestock and these include cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and different types of poultry (BDC, 2015/16), there are gender disparities related to access and control of livestock species in Malawi the proportion who owns or keep livestock is larger among male headed households as compared to female headed households, 61 percent and 48%, respectively (GoM, 2006/07). In Malawi women play important role in agriculture they constitute 70% of full time farmers, carry out 70% of the agricultural work, and produce 80% of food for home consumption and therefore they ensure nutrition security at household level (GoM, 2015), however, women tend to have lower access to agricultural productive resources than men owing to gender-specific constraints (FAO, 2011). Access to productive resources in agriculture involves several dimensions; Ownership of land, livestock or other agricultural resources; management of agricultural resources; Use of financial services and other inputs for agriculture; Access to education, knowledge and skills related to agriculture; Participation in agricultural labour activities. Studies have shown that women tend to be disadvantaged in regard to all these dimensions (FAO, 2011). For example, in Malawi, fewer women than men own agricultural land, livestock or other agricultural resources and the resources owned by women tend to be of smaller size (GoM, 2006/07). Furthermore, women tend to have less control and decision-making power over productive resources in agriculture than men. Both men and women play a very important role in agriculture, but because there are variations in power regarding access to, and control of resources, there is a gender gap that negatively affects female farmers. This gender gap tends to cause female farmers to be less productive compared to male farmers. The low level of productivity not only leads to smaller crop yields, but also to potential environmental problems such as over-cultivation, soil erosion and land degradation (UN Women, UNDP and WB, 2015). On the other hand, 14% of men seem to have slightly more access to credit compared to women (10.7%) counterparts, some of the known limiting factors to accessing credit at

banks and microfinance institutions remain the issues of collateral and security guarantees. In some instances, women are regarded, and may regard themselves, as helpers not as farmers, thus diminishing the perceived significance of their role as well as their authority and decision-making power in agricultural processes (Fink 1991, 21). Gender relations that undervalue women's roles and contributions sometimes promote the perception that men have the right to make decisions over women's work and their wellbeing in general without considering women's needs, preferences and desires. A clear example is a study in Malawi which demonstrated that women who do not have support from their husbands to access extension services are less likely to do so than women who have their husbands' support (Jafry, Moyo, and Mandaloma 2014). All these gender gaps exist due to combination of different drivers that affect women negatively not just one as most studies indicate, furthermore, most studies have not gone a mile further to analyse the influencing factors for these gender disparities. Harvard analytical theory has been adopted in this social research to analyse the influencing factors to add on to the knowledge gap which most researchers have not touched on.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Inequalities on access to and control over agricultural productive resources limit women's economic, political and social opportunities, but also implying high costs for the agricultural sector, food security and economic growth. Among the factors limiting women's access and control are the collective drivers consist of external drivers which consist of cultural and social norms and social relationships; internal drivers which consist of knowledge and skills and structural drivers which consist of affordability and availability. A combination of these drivers has affected women's access to and control over resources. Balaka is one of the districts where women's lower access to agricultural productive resources and benefits has tremendously had a negative impact towards women's contribution towards food production but also agricultural development. Research based evidence has documented that in Balaka women's access to and control over resources and benefits depend on household headship which is related to culture implying that most decisions are made by men as a head of the household. (NSO, July 2020). Even though some drivers have been identified in the previous studies, the drivers towards women access to and control over agricultural resources in Balaka, TA Chanthunya and Kalembo still remain



unknown. Social and cultural norms discriminate against women and girls in a number of ways (Masson, January 2016). Childcare responsibilities falling primarily on women, preventing them from providing as much labour supervision on their plots compared to male plot managers (Kilic, Lopez and Goldstein, 2013). Since livestock can also be used as collateral finance, especially in informal credit markets which are the main source of credit for most people in Malawi, the fact that women own less livestock means that they are at a disadvantage when it comes to obtaining the much-needed finance for purchasing useful agricultural implements and inputs (Gondwe, 2018). All these studies mentioned each, have identified one influencing factors on women's access and control over the resources to reduce poverty and increase yield production. But to increase yields production and poverty reduction, there is a need to identify and address all drivers that affect women's access to and control over the resources and their influencing factors. Hence the study has identified a combination of all drivers that affect women's access to agricultural productive resources and identify the influencing factors which most studies done by social scientists have failed to research on. The study has explored the drivers to women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources in TA Chanthunya and Kalembo in Balaka districts. The study has include all drivers from different perspectives like Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal. This has been achieved through Harvard analytical framework.

II. Literature Review

Literature examines the secondary data that is available on drivers on women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources. Evidence from different studied have shown that women face challenges in accessing and controlling agricultural productive resources despite contributing major labor force in agriculture.

Cultural and social norms associated with access to and control

A study by Nkhonjera and Chaula (September 2021) revealed that land ownership in the entire study area was freehold land tenure system where land tenure is through matrilineal inheritance where households owned land through inheritance as opposed to buying and self-land acquisition scheme (kuzigulira malo). The lineage system places women as land owners where men come from other villages through marriage. A portion of land is given to female child whenever

they get married whereas men originating from the village go to settle in the villages where they marry. The study also revealed that women are land owners and have access over land use. Even though they had access to land, the head of the lineage/family, locally known as mwini-mbumba, chosen to be a guardian of the matrilineal group of sisters and their children controls over the land as per culture. Social and cultural norms discriminate women and girls in different ways (Masson, January 2016). Harmful traditional practices, including early and forced marriage, courtship rape and female genital mutilation/ cutting together with limited access to and control over sexual and reproductive health, impede on women and girls' overall well-being (Michelis, Opondo et al., 2016).

Women's access to Agriculture Extension services as a productive resource

A study by Rosy. S.Y. (n.d) indicated that problems of distance and transportation are additional barriers women face when accessing extension services and the market. Women's participation was low in public meetings and visits to government offices to seek help, and hence having limited knowledge on insects, pesticides, fertilizers, seeds, and technologies. The study also revealed that social norms created barriers for women to go to markets and compelled them to perform double duties in the household and field. In Malawi, women's access to extension services is at 18% (IFAD, 2011). A study conducted by Younger and Simpson, (May 2013) indicated that the challenge behind the imbalance is the sociocultural gender norms that make it difficult for male agricultural extension agents (AEAs) to interact with female farmers. The study reviewed that AEAs felt it is inappropriate for a male AEA to visit an individual female farmer.

Availability and accessibility of inputs

Poverty in Malawi is especially widespread among female-headed households suggesting that investing in agricultural growth has benefits both for poverty reduction and for gender equality. A study by Kilic, Lopez and Goldstein (2013) indicates that, female-managed plots in Malawi are 25% less productive than plots that are managed by males on average. Female-managed plots are constrained by lower use of inorganic fertilizer, lower use of household adult male labour, lower production of high-value export crops, and restricted access to agricultural tools. The remaining 18% of the gender gap the structure effect is driven by differences in returns to the use of household adult male labour,



and the application of inorganic fertilizer. A knowledge gap along gender lines also account for a relatively less efficient usage of fertilizer by female farmers. A study by Gondwe (2018) indicated that households keep livestock and poultry for various reasons such as source of farm labour, store of wealth, collateral for credit and an essential safety net during times of crisis. Livestock holdings of female farmers are much smaller than those of male farmers. This implied that women face labour constraints in agricultural production than their male counterparts. Since livestock can also be used as collateral finance, especially in informal credit markets which are the main source of credit for most people in Malawi, the fact that women own less livestock means that they are at a disadvantage in obtaining the much needed finance for purchasing useful agricultural implements and inputs. In most developing countries, the proportion of livestock (and poultry) owned by female headed households (48%) is less compared to male headed households (61%). This applies for all major types of livestock, namely cattle, goats, pigs and chicken (NSO, 2010).

Women's participation in agricultural decision-making process

In matrilineal societies, where women own land it was discovered that it is still the man who makes crucial decisions in the household. Decision on crops to grow, agricultural inputs to be used are done by men. There is low participation of women in agricultural decision making (Peterman, Quisumbing, Dick, Dardón, md. Hassan, Kamusiime Malapit, n.d). A study by Chayal, Dhaka, Poonia, Tyagi and Verma (April, 2013) results show that women's involvement in decision making process in agriculture field is quite minimal. Results indicate that marketing of agri-inputs and farm produce, manure/ fertilizer application type and manure/ fertilizer application were the activities where the involvement was very poor. Constraints faced by farm women in their involvement in decision making process were identified as follows; low self-confidence of women in making farm decisions, lack of knowledge about farming, belief that women are subordinate to male counter parts, illiteracy, poor access of farm women to farm information and are the major constraints which obstructed the women to involve in farming decision process (Damisa and Yohanna, 2007 and Enete and Amusa 2010).

A framework developed Longwe (1999) defines women's empowerment as enabling women to take an equal place with men, and to participate equally in the development process in order to

achieve control over the factors of production on an equal basis with men. The framework has the same goal as the Malawi National gender policy (MoG 2015) which aims to reduce gender inequalities and enhance participation of women, men, girls and boys in socio economic development processes. It argues that this system of analysing equality by sectors concentrates on separate areas of social life, rather than on women's equality in the development process. It recognizes different levels of equality; welfare, access, control and participation as well as the level of recognition of women issues.

Conflict theory by Marx and Engel (n.d) applied the idea to the family structure, household indicating that relationship between exploiters and exploited also exist in household in family. The theory differentiates modern and pre-modern societies in roles of men and women roles. In pre-modern societies, there was no big difference between these two gender and because there is no something for exploiting. In modern societies, because women are not paid for their house works, their work began to be seen as unnecessary, and men show themselves as bread winner (Lindsey, 2011). Capitalism is explained in three states that makes male dominance more powerful (Engel, no date). Firstly, capitalism provides power for men by giving them chance in order to have high income and private property. Secondly, women became the consumer part of society, because they do not produce, but get money from their husband and spend for satisfy their need or enjoy. Thirdly, capitalism divides men and women in working way. It puts men to factory and women to house, however, it does not pay for women's workings in the house, but pays for men for his working in factory, so it puts importance to male's job by paying money (Macionis, 2010). Men have more prestige than women who have same job (Weber, no date). The conflict theory claims that, gender is one of the dimensions of social inequality and conflict. Gender inequality provides a profit for men, but damage women. Despite these studies being done by different authors, both did not identify the root cause of these inequality in production and capitalism. Both theories did not indicate the influential factors of the inequality and male dominance power.

Significance of the Study

Women make up 70-80 % of the labour force in the agricultural sector and produce about 80 % of the food for the household at the same time they face various challenges in implementing their agricultural related activities (GoM. 2015). Addressing multiple factors existing in influencing



people's behaviours that limit women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources, can increased farm yields and reducing significant number of people suffering from hunger. The study will identify the drivers that affect women's access to and control over these resources and determine the effectiveness of the programs promoting women's participation in agricultural decision making process. This will assist in designing gender responsive programs in agriculture sector. As much as there is high contribution of women's labour force in agriculture as compared to men, so should the access and control over the agricultural productive resources be high to women. It will also assist in designing programs that will address the gender inequality in agriculture sector hence contributing in achieving sustainable development goal (SDGs) number five by promoting gender equality. The study will also unveil the gender ceilings in agricultural programs and determine the rate of women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources. Most research conducted focused on access to and control over benefits and assets of agricultural production. This study is significant as it will review the gender gap in agriculture sector. This will assist in finding solutions to close the gaps that would generate increased yields on women's farms, raise the total agricultural output, especially in Malawi as a country and Balaka as a district.

III. Scope of the Study

The study has focused on drivers on women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources on a case study of T/A Kalembo and Chanthunya in Balaka district to give a clear picture, as T/A Kalembo is dominated by Yao tribe and T/A Chanthunya is dominated by Ngoni tribe. The resources include; land, agricultural inputs and technology, capital and agricultural extension services. The study did not assess the access to and control over benefits and assets accrued after agricultural harvest. The study has also focused on the challenges women face in accessing the resources.

IV. Objectives of the Study

- To assess drivers to women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources
- To identify cultural and social norms associated with access to and control over agricultural productive resources.

- To determine women's access to Agriculture Extension services as a productive resource
- To determine the effectiveness of programs promoting women's participation in agricultural decision-making process
- To assess availability and accessibility of agricultural productive inputs

V. Research questions

- What are the cultural and social norms associated with access to and control over agricultural productive resources?
- What is the level of women access to Agriculture Extension services as a productive resources?
- What mode do women access these extension services?
- How effective are programs promoting women participation in agricultural decision-making process?
- What is the availability and accessibility levels of agricultural production inputs in the area?

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive and diagnostic research design with a mixed method. It has describe the relationship between the variables; structural, internal and external drivers and women's access and control over agricultural productive resources. The research used combined research methods which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to achieve the objectives. Out of two T/As simple random and stratified sampling has been used to come up with 1280 participants, 80 farming households selected for individual interview (II), 40 participants for focus group discussion (FGD) twenty adult and young women, and twenty adult and young men and 8 people for key informant interviews (KII). Every member of the population had a chance to be selected and the population was divided into strata based on gender and age group. Unstructured questionnaire was used for interviewing the farmers including the extension workers and district officers to probe more information. . A set of Questions were designed to generate the statistical information from the sample to accomplish the research objectives. Observations was also used. Community leaders were randomly selected for key informant interviews. According to this study; the selected households were those that are under the farmer's organizations and those that are not in farmer's organization.



The study relied on primary data through questionnaires and observations, and secondary data through literature review on journal, academic books, research studies done by other researchers and other sources. The study has used Strategic Package of Social Science (SPSS) to analyse data, to generated tabulated reports and charts. The interpretation was based on the accuracy of the data collected. The study findings on driver's on women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources has opened a new avenues of intellectual a venture for more knowledge.

Ethics were taken into consideration such as consent. Each participant could give consent before providing information. Confidentiality was given a priority in conducting the study. The school considered giving introductory letter for easy identification of the researcher.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study findings show a mixed results from both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study was participated by 128 participants in individual interviews, focus group discussion and key informant interviews. The findings are discussed in line with the research objectives.

7.1 Cultural and social norms associated with access to and control over agricultural productive resources.

Culture and social norms have been associated with access to and control over agricultural productive resources in Balaka district. The 60% of study participants disclosed that culture and social norms affect access to and control over agricultural productive resources mean while 40% disagreed. But some were able to reveal the rewards of following culture, sanctions for breaking the cultural and also the circumstances in which culture and social norms can be broken.

Balaka's dominant ethnic group is the Yao. In Balaka, the matrilineal marriage system is common. Despite the fact that the matrilineal system is in place, patriarchy has a significant impact on women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources. As a result, regardless of marriage systems, women are expected to respect men. Results from focus group discussions shows that men are affected with culture and norms when it comes to land if they are married. At household level, a husband has no control over land since it belongs to the wife. The wife owns the land and has access to it, but the maternal uncle locally known as

“Mwini Mbumba” controls the land. He decides how the land should be used and if the land should be sold or not. If the owner of the land want to use the land differently, she consult the maternal uncle first. Culture and social norms have also overburden women with responsibility of taking care of children. The culture illustrate that children belong to the woman. This has escalated gender based violence particularly economic and physical abuse. All income that a woman gains is believed to be spent on household. This has affected women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources since they can no longer afford to purchase agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and other farming machines to produce huge yields.

Despite women having huge responsibility at household level, they are expected to access inputs so they are able to farm and have food at home. In polygamous families, the first wife may have some freedom to make own decisions because the husband spends most of the time at the second wife's home. On the other hand, the second wife is seen as more obedient and has to seek permission all the time as indicated in a focus group discussions in GVH Kalembo². Religion also play a role as it encourage polygamous marriage and regard them as superiors and decision makers. Results from focus group discussions revealed that the key influencers for culture and social norms are husbands as they have ultimate power over women; parents and in-laws because their son is the head of the household; relatives because they sometimes support women or the other way round; church teachings that state that the husband is the head of the family, the clergy also has a significant influence on the norm. The traditional leaders influence the norms as well because they believe it brings order and sanity to the household and the community as a whole. Marriage counselors also play an important role in influencing the norms, such as during husband-wife mediation talks. They advise married women to respect their husbands by seeking their husbands' approval on all decisions, including financial ones. In a sample gender analysis study (catholic relief services, 2013) also found that in marketing farm products “man takes decision, not for discussion. The man decides and if women try to challenge them, they are beaten.” (All-male FGD, Ibseta, Sire)

Focus group discussions and key informant interviews revealed that there are benefits in following up culture and social norms. The majority of respondents revealed that husbands and society both praise women for being obedient and are seen as role models for being submissive. As a result, a positive relationship develops with the husband and



other family members, particularly the parents, which improves household welfare.

There are sanctions for not adhering to norms as indicated by the study participants. Women face divorce as a result of their disobedience. Spouses denies their households of financial support or access to finances, they are referred as rude and not submissive. Paternal relatives and some community members did not respect her because she was disrespectful to her husbands. More disagreements will arise in the marriage, resulting in divorce. Gender-based violence, particularly physical violence, when a spouse discovers that decisions were made without his consent.

7.2 Women's access to Agriculture Extension services

Despite women being overburdened by the triple roles, women access agriculture extension services more than their male counterpart. Out of 75 respondents, it has shown that 65.3% of females accessed extension services in the area on various agricultural related technologies and male access is at 34.7%, however, it has been shown that majority of farmers are accessing the messages despite the disparities in access 75 out of 80 respondents. The messages are in form of irrigation technologies, good agricultural practices (crop production) and livestock production. Culture and social norms also play a role on this. The culture illustrate that since women are caretakers but also children belong to them, they need to be on the forefront with farming activities than men. Extension services are also accessed in different modes as indicated by the respondents, 53.7% indicated to have accessed it through demonstrations, 22.5% through workshop, 11.2% through training, and 12.5% verbally explained by the extension workers. The study also revealed some gender disparities in source of extension messages in the area, most women received the messages through informal means while men accessed through trainings. This has created a knowledge gap between men and women.

The respondents indicated the types of technologies that are accessed by women in the areas including; irrigation technologies accessed at least 40% especially to those living close to rivers, good agricultural practices at 49.4% and livestock related technologies at 3.8% because most women don't have livestock's.

Agriculture extension services is accessed through different modes as indicated by the respondents. This include: 12.7% through verbally explained,

53.2% through demonstrations, 11.9% trainings, 11.4% through workshop.

Results from focus group discussions revealed that men are engaged in other activities and they do not priorities community meetings. They perceive such meeting are meant for women.

Nkhonjera and Chaula, (September,2021) also revealed that due to men's engagement in pierce works and off farm activities which take majority of their day time, their participation in community meetings and activities is limited. This trend gives an opportunity for women to access more information on agriculture, health and other development related programs as 90.4% of the women indicated that they belong to a community group. Farmer groups exists in the study area for people to access inputs. In these groups, both men and women joined to access the inputs as per rule that those to benefit from Agriculture Input Program (AIP) should belong to a farmers organization or club. But other women are into savings and loans groups, religious groups and village development committees and other women self-help groups.

7.3 Effectiveness of programs promoting women's participation in agricultural decision-making process

The study revealed that in the two areas there are organizations promoting women's decision making at household and community level. Out of 46.2%, 40% and 6.25% indicated women empowerment programs and Gender based violence programs respectively. However, majority of the respondents representing 53.75% indicated that there are no any programs in the area. The programs are implemented by government sectors and non-governmental organizations such as community development, Eagles relief, Africa Institute Citizen Corporate, (AICC), Find your feet, COMSIP, Gender, YONECO, police and social welfare.

Focus group discussion and key informant interviews results reveal that different interventions are being implemented in the areas such as livestock production, Capacity building through trainings, distribution of seed money, distribution of crop seeds, farming production, savings and loans groups and case management.

On the other hand, individual interviews revealed that in some group village heads women economic empowerment programs do not exist. The non-governmental organizations don't cover the whole area. They have specific targeted areas, meanwhile, government sectors reach all the areas but the challenge is inadequate resources which make these sectors sound as they don't exist. Focus



group discussions revealed that the existence of these programs have encouraged women to take part in decision making structures and promoted gender equality. Women are taking part in decision making process even though culture and social norms seem to challenge this as the society believes that a woman can't lead because they are not intelligent (as indicated by focus group discussion participant (Adult woman 60 years above)). The discussions revealed that NGOs and government sectors already started challenging the norms. These NGOs conduct trainings on youth, gender equality and women empowerment by targeting couples, traditional leaders and church leaders. They also facilitate dialogue which challenge some of the key behaviours linked to the norm gender equality and women empowerment by targeting couples, traditional leaders and church leaders. They also facilitate dialogue which challenge some of the key behaviours linked to the norm.

Despite the efforts, men still dominate in decision making and their representation in decision making positions in development structures. Balaka district gender in brief report (BDC, 2022) indicated that women are still locked out in decision making. Women mostly participate in decisions to do with childcare, access to safe water, health, food, and education. However, the decision-making trend somehow changes during emergencies. Women take charge in decisions that include relocating and looking for shelter, food security, safe water, health, and education. This is partly the case because men want to benefit from women's vulnerability position as regarded by many organizations and their upper hand on involvement in the humanitarian responses. On the other hand, the youths have limited to no participation in household decision making

7.4 Availability and accessibility of agricultural productive inputs

Respondents gave different views on availability of agricultural productive resources in the area. 73.7% indicated that land is mostly available in the area for agricultural use, 6.25% indicated that capital is available through loans from different institutions like vision fund, savings and loans groups, etc, 12.5% indicated that agricultural inputs while 7.5% indicated that agriculture extension services are available in their areas.

Results from Focus Group Discussions as well as individual interviews revealed that land ownership in the entire study area is freehold land tenure system where land tenure is through matrilineal inheritance. Households own land through inheritance. The lineage system places

women as land owners where men come from other villages through marriage. A portion of land is given to female child whenever they get married whereas men originating from the village go to settle in the villages where they marry. Focus group discussions revealed that the fact that women were land owners they had access over land use.

Results from focus group discussions indicated that even inputs are available at some point, there are challenges to access them due to high prices. For instance, current price for fertilizer is MWK75, 000 per bag of which most vulnerable groups like women can't afford to purchase. Despite fertilizers being subsidized by the government through AIP, women still can't access the fertilizer if their names are not on the list to benefit. But also they can't access it because in some areas since the inputs are not available due to high demand and low supply and delay of inputs due to mobility challenges since its rainy season and most roads become impassable, especially to the hard to reach areas. Women also find it difficult to access inputs because of long distances.

Out of 80 respondents, 77.1% of female respondents indicated to have access to loans through micro finance institutions like Vision fund but also through savings and loans groups. Micro finance institutions deliberately target women with an aim to empower them economically. For instance, vision fund deliberately give access to loans to 75% women from their target. Through focus group discussion, even though women seem to have access to loans, the amount they are get are small amounts e.g. MWK70, 000 per individual that are mostly used at household and support children at school with necessities but they cannot carter for farming activities. Meanwhile men are able to get a good amount to carter their farming activities through private banks. Women are given small amounts because they don't have capacity to pay back huge loans and also they have assets to be used as collateral.

Even though women seem to have access to loans, 46.2% men make decisions on what to purchase even if money is earned by a woman, 20% of women make decisions, and 23.7% are joint decision made by both husband and wife. Lastly, 10% are other decisions that are made by either parents or siblings. Through focus group discussions, it was revealed that women usually make decision concerning health, education and food. Women access loans but men make decisions on how to use the loan. This is because the society believe that men are intelligent and they make good decisions than women. And women are supposed to



be submissive. Failing to adhere to such norms, women face gender based violence particularly, physical and economic violence.

Disasters have affected both men and women in different ways. About 42.5% of females reported to have been affected by past disasters known as Tropical Cyclone ANA in February 2022. The disasters disrupted women's social life and activities. Respondents affected by disasters, they experienced several damages. Out of 55%, 28.7% of respondents houses fell down, 23.7% of the respondents' crops were damaged. 6.2% houses roofs were damaged. Through key informant and focus group discussions, the affected population use different coping mechanisms to deal with the situation.

Out of 44 respondents who indicated to have been affected by previous disasters, 12.5% used available money to maintain houses instead of buying farm inputs, 13.7% indicated to have used available money to buy food instead of farm inputs, 6.2% indicated to have failed attend community meetings for extension services due to time factor, 3.7% indicated to have used available time for piece work to get money to rebuild the house and 16.2% indicated to have experienced delay of inputs due to mobility challenges. This has affected access to and control over productive resources since the finances available to purchase inputs were diverted to other activities and resources as per need.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

| Key issues | Recommendations |
|---|--|
| Culture and social norms affecting women | There is a need to address culture and social norms that affect women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources |
| | Government should build capacity through trainings on gender equality and women empowerment by targeting couples, community leaders and church leaders. |
| | Local councils should facilitate dialogue which challenge some of the key behaviors linked to the norm by targeting couples, community leaders and church leaders. |
| Increase in gender based violence | Local councils should link communities to institutions that deal with Gender Based Violence for easy reporting of GBV cases e.g Gender office, police, social welfare office and NGO dealing with Gender Based Violence |
| | Government should increase knowledge on gender based violence by creating awareness on gender based violence in communities |
| | Government should strengthening community structures in responding to gender based violence (GBV) e.g Community victim support unit, community police forums, child protection committees etc |
| | Local councils should identify male gender champions to promote gender equality in communities through peer to peer education |
| Women access extension services in informal mode (community meetings) | Government should deliberate include women when conducting agriculture trainings to close the knowledge gap. |
| | Government should promote good agriculture practices through demonstrations and farmer field schools |
| Women still locked out in decision making | Economic empowerment programs and other government program e.g. AIP should deliberately target women to increase their access to agricultural productive resources and increase programs impact areas to target more women |
| | Government should ensure women with diverse backgrounds and from different socio-economic strata are given opportunities to meaningfully engage in structures and processes at all levels |
| Limited capital to engage in viable income generating activities and | Link women groups private banks for better amounts of loans |
| | Local councils should facilitate formation of cooperatives among |



| | |
|---|---|
| purchase farm inputs amongst women | women to increase their capital |
| | Implement the pass on programmes on small stock production like goats and chickens targeting women. |
| Women are most vulnerable to disasters | Local councils should promote integrated homestead farming among women |
| | Local councils should promote irrigation were necessary |
| Limited access to improved inputs due to high costs and long distances to markets and disasters | Government should maintain roads affected by disasters to ease access to agricultural inputs to women |
| | Local councils should Establish seed multiplication concept |
| | Government should fast track delivery of agricultural inputs to markets |

IX. Conclusion

The study used both qualitative and quantitative through individual interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The study has revealed drivers on women's access to and control over agricultural productive resources both at household and community level. Women are the most victims to limited access to these resources despite contributing to the major labour force in agriculture. The drivers have not only affect women's access and control over these resources, have also escalated other issues like gender based violence at both household and community level. Addressing the key issues will improve women's production yields and promote gender equality.

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