

**PERSPECTIVES FOR COOPERATIVES IN
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Gender structures in Zambian

Cooperatives: Fisenge, Chinchi Wababili, Magoye and
Monze Dairy Cooperatives

ABSTRACT

Cooperatives have been seen as a means of increasing the productivity of the poor, increasing their income, and providing them with more economic and political power. The aim of this paper is to discuss the gender structures in the cooperatives. I will specifically look at four (4) cooperatives from the Copperbelt (Fisenge and Chinchwa Babili) and Southern Province (Magoye and Monze dairy Cooperatives) respectively. In Zambia, like other parts of the world men and women have been encouraged to participate in agricultural and dairy cooperatives, although gender issues have been ignored in the wider cooperative policy.

The paper is directed to highlight gender issues, the effects of policy change on men and women's participation, the limits of integration, inadequate policy and the implications for lack of gender mainstreaming in the cooperatives in Zambia.

Women and men have different needs and priorities in the cooperatives because of the division of labor and power structures, both within the family and within society.

Cooperative structures need to change in a way that deals with inequalities within and between families and with reproductive issues.

The participation of women in formally registered mixed cooperatives remains low as compared to men. Socio-economic and cultural conditioning over the ages, account for their low confidence levels and lack of leadership skills, linked with the obvious lack of opportunities for education, training or exposure, communication and networking. According to ILO it is revealed that while national laws are generally 'gender neutral', there remain other constraints linked to other related laws including customary law, which restrict women from participating independently or accessing positions of leadership and decision making.

INTRODUCTION

The national context for gender mainstreaming in Zambia has been influenced by global initiatives. For example, the UN Economic and Social Council (1946) set out measures for promoting women's economic, social and political rights. This was followed by the declaration of a Women's Decade (1975-1985); and the adoption by the United Nations of the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW, 1979), the first international instrument to define discrimination against women. In 1985, the UN World Conference, held in Nairobi, Kenya, articulated forward-looking strategies which reaffirmed the promotion of equality of opportunity between men and women. At the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), gender mainstreaming was agreed upon as a strategy for achievement of gender equality, and the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (1995) stressed safe motherhood, and the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

The National Gender Policy (NGP) is executed by Cabinet Office through Gender in Development Division (GIDD), and reflects the national vision stated in part as

'attainment of gender equality and equity'. The policy advocates for increased participation of women in the market economy, as well as the promotion of shared roles by men and women and responsibilities through influencing change in patterns of socialization and the gender division of labour. However, to date the NGP has not been widely circulated and publicized, or understood even within line ministries. Many ministries have not incorporated gender into their sectoral policies. The *Programme of Action* for implementing the NGP through capacity building for mainstreaming gender issues was prepared by GIDD in 2004, but has not yet been implemented (Akamandisa & Munachonga: 2010).

National Agricultural Policy (2004)

Executed by MACO, the objectives of the National Agricultural Policy are to: improve household and national food security, promote better use of natural resources, generate income and employment, and increase export earnings in order to contribute to the balance of payments. It incorporates an affirmative action strategy for improving the economic status of women who predominate as small-scale farmers. However, in actual implementation, the strategy is weakened by low levels of gender knowledge and practical skills among staff at both Headquarters and at field level. This is worsened by the lack of technical backstopping from the national machinery - GIDD, due to understaffing and inadequate funding. (Farnworth & Munachonga: 2010). Moreover, the economic empowerment of women is undermined by the dual land tenure system under which rural women farmers lack rights of ownership and control over land on which they work, as well as women's lack of finances to acquire title to land and to develop land within 18 months as stipulated under the Land Act of 1995. Most of the means by which women can access land held under customary tenure system (such as marriage, inheritance from parents, from the headman, borrowing, etc.) do not guarantee permanent use rights. (Akamandisa & Munachonga: 2010)

Sixth National Development Plan (2011-2015)

The Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) is the government's key development manifesto for the period. It espouses how government will enhance development to its citizens and it is vital in demonstrating how government is committed to gender issues. The SNDP considers gender issues as a mainstreaming issue across all sectors including the dairy sub sector. Some strategies contained in the SNDP will therefore be important in realizing the idea of mainstreaming gender. These include;

- 1) Domestic appropriate and relevant provisions contained in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- 2) Promote the review and harmonization of customary and statutory land ownership laws, procedures and administrative practices
- 3) Facilitate the review of all pertinent legislation to enhance women and girls rights

- 4) Facilitate capacity building in entrepreneurship, survival and life skills among women
- 5) Enhance women and girls training in leadership skills.

According to the East Africa Dairy Development News (2011), women play a key role in agriculture, providing up to 70% of the labour in agricultural production and playing important roles in marketing, processing and ensuring household nutrition.

Furthermore, the evaluation study by Land O' Lakes (2009) reveals that at least 30% of the women are targeted in its programmes while 70% come from group members who prove active participation in development activities and further prove high adoption rates for technical services, have access to land and water, be located within 2 hours from time of milking to delivery at a proposed site for the milk collection center, and show willingness to participate in the dairy development program and the conditions established. Therefore, as a result of continuous efforts and increasing activities on gender integration, some cooperatives in Zambia have included women. This means that there is need to focus on capacity building of cooperatives for leadership development of women and men so that there is gender integration or mainstreaming at all levels of the cooperatives in Zambia.

GENDER STRUCTURES IN THE COOPERATIVES

Though women members in many cooperatives in Zambia have significantly grown in number, they continue to be inadequately represented in cooperative leadership.

Unfortunately, even today gender bias and discrimination persist in most parts of the country, which systematically disadvantage women and cause their unsatisfactory representation and participation in cooperative leadership. Determining factors include:

1. Low status due to persistent gender discrimination and gender stereotyping, where women are generally viewed to be unfit for leadership, and subsequent lack of support for women's entry to leadership structures;
2. Limited opportunity to engage full time in activities outside the home due to unequal burden of care work that falls upon them;
3. Lack of resources due to their economic dependence on their husbands or other male household heads; and
4. Low self esteem and inadequate leadership skills and experience as a result of the above factors

Evidently there are serious constraints which militate against the promotion of an effective role for women in development in societies that are bound by age-old traditions and beliefs. Patriarchal modes and practices motivated by cultures and/or interpretations of religious sanctions and illiteracy hinder women's freedom to opt for various choices to assert greater mobility in social interactions. Resulting from these situations, women's contribution in the cooperatives and other sectors in the economy remain concealed and unaccounted for in monitoring economic performance measurement. Consequently, they are generally invisible in plans and programmes of

the cooperatives. They are, in fact, discriminated against by stereotypes which restrict them to a reproductive role, and denied access to resources which could eventually enhance their social and economic contribution to the society.

In terms of the ratio of membership of women in the dairy cooperatives, the percentage is rather low, but they have a strong influence on them – through the heads of the households e.g. in Magoye and Monze Cooperatives. Certain obvious barriers restrict their direct and formal entry in the dairy cooperatives. Only very few women serve on the Boards of Directors. Their simple and clear perception is that the administrative and decision-making domain rests with the men and women do not wish to overburden themselves with financial responsibilities in case something goes wrong with the cooperative. They, of course contribute significantly in farm operations. However, the women are very active in organizing their activities around the life and style of farm household members.

The Dairy cooperatives on the Copperbelt and Southern Provinces operate under the management of a Cooperative Board of Directors. In Chинчи Wababili and Fisenge the women hold all the positions; while in Southern Province (Mogoye and Monze Cooperatives) men have dominated.

Because of local traditions about livestock ownership, most women in Southern Province are more restricted in their zones of operation, but are also more appreciated by female-headed households (and women in male headed households) for training on care of household cattle and procedures. Household women are probably the best placed to do the best job in this, and being trained for this purpose would also give them higher status and provide better accountability for dairy incomes within households.

Fisenge Dairy Cooperative Union

Fisenge Dairy Cattle Project is located in the once viable mining district of Luanshya, on the Copperbelt Province. The province receives high rainfall and has a lot of dambos and perennial streams that can support any farming enterprise. However, the peri-urban and rural areas surrounding Luanshya town in Fisenge area are characterized by low household food security, low incomes and wide spread malnutrition due to high unemployment levels. The high poverty levels, translated into low capital and financial resources limit the opportunities for investment and perpetuate the problems the majority of the population in Fisenge face.

Fisenge Dairy Cooperative Union has about three hundred fifty (350) to four hundred (400) members and the majority is women. The board of the Fisenge Dairy Cooperative Union comprise of 6 females and 3 males. These include; a female chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer, secretary and two of the committee members. The remaining three committee members are males.

Chinchi Wababili

Chinchi Wababili is located in Ndola and the project in dairy farming started in 2003 with the support from Heifer International. There are forty women who belong to the cooperative and over the years they have included their spouses who are helping and supporting the women in the dairy farming activities in the cooperative and at farm level. The cooperative has about forty (40) women in and it's mostly composed of women and the men work in the cooperative as partners. These are the husbands to the women in the cooperative and there are about four (4).

The structure of the cooperative is such that it has ten elected members who form the management committee. These elective and filled positions are those of a female chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, vice secretary, treasurer and five executive committee members. The Committee is therefore composed only of female members. The cooperative has its own assets which are primarily a bank account, chickens and three dairy cows. The women control the resources of the cooperative since they are the majority. They have the by-laws and the constitution which govern their operations as a cooperative.

The women in the cooperative participate in dairy farming activities e.g. health management of the cows. Both men and women participate in some activities which include building of the farm structures, taking the animals for grazing and preparing the fodder. However, there are certain tasks that require the men to perform, such as building of the farm structures at the homestead. The other roles that women perform are that of hosting visitors at the cooperative and milking cows.

Magoye Dairy Cooperative

Magoye small scale farmers' cooperative comprises over 500 members. Of these 30% are females comprising mostly widows and 70% are males; and 25% are youths.

The organizational structure is such that the cooperative is managed by a Board of Directors which currently comprises of 4 males and 2 females. The role of the Board of Directors is simply to implement policies that have been made by the members. The cooperative also has 12 employees. Of these, 10 are males and 2 are females.

Gender roles

The females in the Magoye Cooperative clean the utensils and feed the animals. The other gender roles are performed by both males and females and these include:

- i. Weighing the milk
- ii. Testing the milk
- iii. Recording the litres of milk supplied by the farmers
- iv. Cleaning the milk tanks.

In Magoye, the geographic isolation of communities or areas and the unavailability of efficient and effective limit women's access to many key resources, business support programmes and market opportunities. These factors negatively impact the capacities of women members in the cooperative to market their products, network with other organizations and use available capacity building tools. Such spacial fragmentation makes it difficult to devise and implement efficient market integration and economic development strategies.

Monze Cooperative

Monze Dairy farming cooperative has two hundred and ninety-three (293) farmers. Of these, forty-one (41) are females and two hundred and fifty-two (252) are males. To transport the milk from their farms, the farmers use bicycles which can be a challenge for most women due to the long distances. The farmers use hands to milk the cows. They make their own feed and cut the grass using chaffs, cuttlers and pangas. Before the Dairy farming cooperative was introduced, both men and women were consulted and have remained partners although men have dominated the operations of the cooperative.

Membership to the cooperative is free to anyone in the area who is a milk producer. The structure of the cooperative management and board is composed of a male chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer, secretary and one board member. The only females on the board are two ordinary board members

At management/operational level, there are 10 employees. Of these 3 are women and the rest are men as follows:

- Cooperative manager – Male
- Assistant Manager – Female
- Salesperson – Female
- Milk receiver - male
- Two cleaners – Male and female
- Two drivers – Males
- Two security guards – Males

In terms of division of responsibilities, the roles at the Cooperative are done by both males and females such as milk receiving from the farmers, selling of drugs, feed, and transportation of milk to the processors and crop purchasing under Food Reserve Agency. The Manager and the Assistant Manager attend the management meetings held monthly as well as Board meetings. As for assets, the cooperative has a building, land, three (3) cooler tanks, two motor bicycles, one vehicle, a hammer mill, an electricity generator, furniture for the offices, two fridges and two trucks (which are not in a working condition). The assets are under the control of the manager and the board members.

Access to Assets by Men and Women

Both males and females belonging to the cooperative are able to use the assets. The cooperative has conditions on how the farmers can use the assets to avoid abuse. The by-laws of the cooperative also guide how the cooperative operates.

Gender Roles

Both males and females are responsible in activities related to dairy farming. Both males and females have equal control to the resources.

Gender sensitive methods of project implementation

Monze Cooperative does not separate the activities from males and females as they have seen that women are also capable of working at the Cooperative. The number of women involved at the producer level however is low and proposals have been made around promoting gender awareness and improving enforcement of the existing laws. It would also be necessary to encourage and teach the farmers about the benefits of Dairy farming.

Findings

- Despite the concentration of women memberships in mixed and women-only cooperatives in certain dairy cooperatives, men still dominate the majority of cooperative sectors as a whole. Women have especially limited membership in services.
- However, data on gender has not been properly analysed nor has the capacity building of staff been consistent in the cooperatives, thus reducing the effectiveness of the programmes. The majority of the staff have little knowledge on gender (which is generally taken to mean involving women).
- Men are more willing to share decision-making with their wives though they generally still consider themselves household heads. Shared decision-making has resulted in a more rational use of resources.
- In some areas women have gained independent access to land, though this remains small scale at present. Women are purchasing particular assets in their own right, for example the women in Chinchi Wa Babili had purchased their own bicycles and had started to buy their and animals. Despite these gains, there remain several outstanding issues. In the majority of cases women's increased access to resources still relies on their ability to maintain their relationship to the male head of household and to wider kinship networks. The issue of access to, and control over, land is particularly acute for women in customary land tenure systems in the case of separation or death of the husband. Even on resettlement

schemes, which are theoretically “gender-neutral”, women find it harder than men to obtain “Letters of Offer”. Usually these are allocated to men who are considered de facto heads of household by the state. Furthermore, it is very hard for both women and men to turn these into title deeds due to the complexity and costs of the procedures involved.

Recommendations

- New economic sub-sectors and non-traditional cooperative ventures need to be encouraged. Women-only cooperatives have not yet moved beyond traditional sectors, nor are they being formed on the basis of common needs. New cooperative niches for women need to be identified first in sectors that have traditionally absorbed a large numbers of women such as agriculture, and then new opportunities in sectors where there is growth potential, such as restaurants, commerce and services.
- Support should be provided for the formation of women-only cooperatives in identified sectors, in close collaboration with organizations that support microenterprises and cooperative development. Cooperative staff should also be trained on principles of cooperative work, enterprise development, management basics, entrepreneurial skills and cooperative development tools
- The extension workers play an important role in advising and guiding cooperatives through registration and beyond. They are key to ensuring that the founding members of cooperatives possess the knowledge, information, and skills needed. Yet, the capacity of these extension workers in enterprise development and promoting gender equality is limited, diminishing the effectiveness of the guidance and support they provide to cooperatives.
- There is a need to advocate for gender mainstreaming in policies on entrepreneurship and cooperative development. Advocacy campaigns are needed to reform existing laws and advocate for the adoption of policies that promote gender equality. Of equal importance is the need to better lobby legislators and governments to adopt policies that improve the access of women cooperatives to credit, provide incentives and tax-breaks for cooperative start-ups, and encourage public procurement of cooperative products and services. These campaigns need to be undertaken through the concerted efforts of civil society and women’s organizations as well as relevant international institutions active in the areas of women’s economic empowerment, governance reform, and rural development.

- Review, revision and reformation of cooperative legislation and government policies which facilitate and encourage women to become members of cooperatives and participate in decision-making processes. Cooperative institutions and their federations may take the lead on their own to institute programmes for the participation of women in cooperatives. Voluntary initiatives by cooperatives themselves do not necessarily to be qualified by government approvals. Cooperatives should lobby with their governments to replace or suitably amend the restrictive laws.
- Adopting a household approach in all interventions at household level in order to cater for the needs and priorities of all active adults and youth in the household.
- Training and promoting activities in a manner that do not discriminate against women, men and youth.
- Adopting affirmative action on selected training and interventions that target women only.
- Striving to achieve a minimum of 30 % women's participation in all programme interventions, and ensuring that, as a strategy, activities with less than 30 % of women do not take place.
- Promoting gender equity in resource allocation.
- Further research is required into other methods of strengthening female access to, and control over, productive and household resources to enable them to live securely in the case of separation or death of the male partner.

Conclusion

From the discussion it is clear that in Magoye and Monze dairy cooperatives the system of gender-based social power has caused unequal opportunities and oppressive power relations for female members in the cooperatives. The gender disparity is mainly attributed to women's limited access to and control over the physical and financial resources needed for obtaining membership, as well as women's general preference to join women-only cooperatives over mixed cooperatives.

Numerous cultural, socio-economic and organizational challenges impede effective mainstreaming of gender equality in the Zambian cooperatives. Women have low levels of educational attainment, minimal income levels, and limited access and control over savings and assets. The fact that laws, in particular legislation on inheritance, are not protective of the rights of women to own land and in some areas prohibit women's inheritance of land make it extremely difficult to independently sustain agricultural economic enterprises. Even in women-only cooperatives, women generally lack the financial and physical resources to contribute to the growth of their cooperatives in the long run.

Women's situation is worsened by patriarchal norms and rigid gender stereotypes regarding their role which hinders their full participation in cooperatives. When social traditions do not constrain their participation, women may still be discouraged from participating actively as members or leaders within the cooperative. In fact, women's cooperative Board members are mostly inactive or relegated to positions such as Board Secretary or Treasurer, as they are considered "culturally acceptable for women" but not conducive to decision making. Such problems are compounded by the fact that women's additional productive tasks do not lead to a lessening or sharing of tasks in the household with the male counterparts. Therefore, women continue to perform their roles in child rearing, family care and household maintenance – all in addition to their new roles in the informal or formal sector economy. As a result, they may participate in cooperatives but are given fewer opportunities than men to fully engage and be represented in cooperative activities due to time constraints and numerous daily obligations in the household.

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