

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT ISSUES IN ZAMBIA**Jane Banda – Prof. h.c. Dr. JózsefKáposzta – Adrienn Nagy - Dr. Henrietta Nagy**

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Abstract

Gender equality as well as female empowerment is essential development objective, ultimate for the realization of human rights and key to effective and sustainable development outcomes. A society cannot develop successfully without providing equitable opportunities, resources, and life prospects for both males and females so that they can shape their own lives and contribute to their families and communities. Gender equality is a precondition for advancing development and reducing poverty. When women are empowered, they contribute to the health and productivity of communities and the whole families, and they develop prospects for the next generation. Indication shows that in countries where gender equality is greater in terms of both opportunities and benefits, there is both higher economic growth and better quality of life.

The research for this study involved a structured questionnaire designed to explore some gender issues in Zambia, the gendered roles in the economy, participation in decision-making and obstacles that they face as well as their life experiences and personal life choices and aspirations etc. Our aim was to find out how much the businesses in different sectors tend to employ women, appoint them in management positions and what services are available to help the employment of women.

Keywords: gender issues, empowerment, equality, employment**Introduction**

Women empowerment and gender inequality addressment are vital to meeting the challenge of improving food, nutrition security, and enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty. Development programs are more significant and sustainable if both women and men are able to participate in rural institutions and express their own needs and priorities in decision-making forums. Despite increasing evidence that women's improved capabilities and welfare are strongly linked to poverty reduction improvements, such as reducing infant mortality and child malnutrition, gender inequalities continue to be tremendously large in the developing world. At present, with few exceptions, rural women far worse than rural men, and urban women and men, against every Millennium Development Goal indicator for which data are available. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates, yields from women's farms would increase by 20-30 % and total agricultural output by 2.5-4.0 % in developing countries if both men and women had equal access to productive inputs. As a result, this would reduce the number of hungry people globally by 12-17 %, or 100 million to 150 million people.

Empowering rural women and girls is an essential part of the solution to some of today's most serious global challenges like food security, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Gender equality and empowerment of women are now recognized as lying at the heart of achieving all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – not just MDG3 on

gender equality. Given women's roles as managers and users of natural resources and the part they play in agricultural production, gender equality and women's empowerment are also central to biodiversity conservation and environmental sustainability, and thus climate change mitigation and adaptation. Gender equality is a topic that governments and international organization have been advocating for many years now and it is a goal that has been accepted by them. It is enshrined in international agreements and obligations. There are various ongoing discussions about what equality means (and does not mean) in practice and how to achieve it. Gender is about fairness and equity and includes many political, social and cultural dimensions, it is not just about economic empowerment. It is a key factor in self-reported well-being and happiness across the world and life satisfaction increases over time as gender equality increases (Veenhoven, 2011 and 2012). Nevertheless, there is concern that the double burden of paid and unpaid work makes it more difficult for women to achieve a similar degree both in "satisfaction at home" and "satisfaction at work" (Stevenson and Wolfers, 2009).

Gender inequality means not only foregoing the significant contributions that women make to the economy, but also wasting years of investment in educating girls and young women. Making the most of the talent pool ensures that men and women have an equal chance to contribute both at home and in the workplace, thereby enhancing their well-being and that of society. There are global patterns to inequality between women and men and several issues need to be addressed in effort to promote gender equality for instance: women tend to suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners more often than men; women's political participation and their representation in decision-making structures lag behind men's; women and men have different economic opportunities; women are over-represented among the poor; and women and girls make up the majority of people trafficked and involved in the sex trade. Due to the fundamental differences and inequalities between women and men, gender has become a big issue. Even though these differences and inequalities may manifest themselves in different ways in specific countries or sectors there are some broad patterns that point to questions that should always be considered.

The case of Zambia

The objective of this study was to evaluate gender inequalities among men and women in Zambia. To find out if companies prefer to employ women or men, if there is any kind of gender discrimination in the work places when it comes to women, if in these working places they consider women to be a productive resource just like men or not, to find out what kind of role women play in these working places or society, to find out if women face any kind of constraints, to find out if there is any gender gap.

Women in Zambia as well as the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa constitute the majority of the people living in rural areas. They provide more than 70% of all agricultural labor required especially in food production done mainly at subsistence level (WLSA, 2001). Further studies have shown that more than 60% of the active population in Sub-Saharan Africa depends on land for livelihood (ECA, 2003). Likewise in Zambia, the majority of agricultural household based in rural areas including women depends on land for their livelihood. According to the Agricultural Analytical report (CSO, 2003,p8) there are 1.084,673 agricultural households in rural Zambia in total. Out of these 19.2% are female-headed household. Overall 80.8% of the rural agricultural households are male-headed. In Zambia, women are responsible for 49% of family labor allocated to crop production, while men supply 39% and children 12%. The traditional view that women specialize in food crop

production and men in cash crop production is not necessarily true. Women's commitment of labor to cash crops—hybrid maize, sunflowers, and cotton, is not insignificant. Women contribute 44% of total family labor to hybrid maize and 338% to cotton and sunflowers (Kumar, Shubh K. 1994).

According to findings by the Central Statistical Office (CSO, 2003b) results have indicated that women being the most vulnerable members of communities are the hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS pandemic as they usually are the ones carrying the burden of care and they have to cope with the loss of agricultural labor due to long sickness or death of the spouse. The loss of the husband/parent- the breadwinner means in some instances that women would have to subsequently lose control, access and ownership of the family land that was jointly cultivated. The land use implications of HIV/AIDS pandemic in affected households include less access to labor, capital to invest in agriculture and productivity due to strained financial and human resources (Kamusiime et. al., 2004, pp11-12). These are direct effect of time spent in caring for the sick, ill health, and death. With veneration to land rights the same authors spotted that HIV/AIDS has an impact on the terms and conditions under which individuals and households access, own, use and transact land. Death resulting from HIV/AIDS alters land rights especially for women and children who are predisposition to lose land and tenure security. Even though women constitute 51% of the Zambian population, they are underrepresented in many areas of socio-economic activities. In Zambia women have lower levels of education, limited access and control over production resources, face a high maternal mortality rate than other countries, and are most affected by HIV/AIDS and poverty. Zambian women are on average poorer than men with 63% of the male-headed households compared to 70% of the female-headed households being poor. In education, there are gender imbalances.

There is a higher dropout rate for girls from grade 5, when girls are 12-14 years old despite the gender parity at primary level. Though improving in the health sector, the maternal mortality ratio remains high at a rate of 591 deaths per 100,000 live births. Women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS is a consequence of cultural practices such as sexual cleansing and polygamy. The dual legal system, of statutory and customary law, also contributes to these inequities and to a high incidence of gender-based violence. As a result, Zambia ranks 150th of 169 countries on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index, revealing large discrepancies in conditions for women and men.

Empirical evidence from Zambia suggests that gender inequalities can slow down economic growth and poverty reduction (GTZ 2008). According to the World Bank Strategic Country Gender Assessment for Zambia, women provide 70% of the country's agricultural labor (World Bank 2004). Women are often disproportionately excluded from resource access, decision-making processes, and are less privileged beneficiaries of public service, such as extension services. Women farmers more often than men produce agricultural products to meet household consumption needs, which limits their ability to generate an income from agricultural production and marketing.

Land issues

Land is a critical resource to men's and women's participation in agriculture and national development. In Zambia, women play a major role in food production where they provide about 70% of the workforce in production and processing and make up more than 60% of the small-scale farmers. Despite their vital contribution to agriculture and food production

women are inhibited by their marginalization in owning, accessing, and controlling land unlike men. Indications are that most traditions, practices, policies, and laws relating to land in Zambia are either silent on women's disadvantaged status or are gender biased against women. In addition, most practices in Zambian communities and cultural norms that are based on either matrilineal or patrilineal systems rarely support the view that women should access, control, and own land in their own right. A matrilineal system confers land/property through the female line of descent and a patrilineal system entails inheriting land/property through a male figurehead.

Without any access to, ownership and control of land, the social, economic, political and tenure security of women is compromised, leading to, for instance, lack of access to reliable source of livelihood, food, credit, extension, security as well as on being excluded from decision making processes at national, community and household levels. Ownership of land in this perspective refers to a situation where women effectively participate in decision making pertaining to land use and marketing while control of land basically means that a woman is able to decide on how the proceeds from the sale of agricultural produce would be used.

In Zambia there are two land tenures that currently exist: the tribal or customary and leasehold tenure. In the customary or tribal land tenure system, especially in the headpersons and chief/chieftainess, access to land is determined by the traditional authorities who allocate families and individuals with portions of vacant land as long as there are no prior rights to the particular portion of land. These indigenous means of allocating land may vary from one ethnic group to another. The leasehold tenure system is based on English law that was inherited at independence and has provision for an individual to own land privately with Title Deeds and such land may be sold, rented, mortgaged and transferred. Both of these land tenure systems tend to marginalize women (WLSA, 2001).

Furthermore, despite being a party to international instruments relating to women's rights to land such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 1997 SADC declaration on Gender, Zambia is still far from meeting its obligation to promote these land rights. As such, there is need for adequate information to help Government implement its commitment to these instruments. Therefore, women involvement in agriculture is important and women must be given the same equal rights like men, because ignoring gender so significantly undermines welfare of families, the larger economy and agricultural productivity, it is acute that gender mainstreaming becomes central to planning and resource allocation. Unequal access to decision-making power, social prestige and formal employment, can lead to social exclusion and vulnerabilities, remarkably in rural areas. Advocates for women and feminist researchers emphasize that the preservation of family farming, agriculture, and diverse rural culture in particular depends on the empowerment and participation of women (Hoff 1992, p.79). Women are versatile, resourceful and possess a range of special aptitudes and skills that can be developed and used in formal economy.

Based on the abovementioned, it can be seen that in the dominant sector in the economy of Zambia, there are several rules/laws in effect which contribute to the inequalities between men and women. In our research we intended to find out whether there is a similar situation in other sectors as well and how serious are the gender issues in general.

Material and method

This study used two kinds of data: secondary material research through literature review of all relevant documents and primary data was collected by use of questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was sent out to 20 different companies in Zambia. The data was collected in the month of February and March 2015. This study does not wholly reveal the status of Zambian companies because only 20 companies were interviewed. It is not the purpose of this work to generalize the data presented. The rate of response was 100%. It is important to mention that out of the 20 respondents, 7 were male, representing 35%. We believe that if most or all the respondents had been women, the answers would have been different.

Results and discussion

From the results gathered 70% of the businesses are involved in service. 10% is involved in agriculture; another 10% is involved in industry. And public administration has 10%. However we cannot draw a conclusion that this is the way the situation is in the whole country because these results are just from 20 different companies. The situation at national level is quite different because most companies are involved in agriculture and the sector continues to be the backbone of the economy of Zambia as it contributes to the growth of the economy and exports and provides employment to 70% of the labour force in the country. The other most important sector of the country is industry i.e. copper mining is another major economic activity of Zambia contributing about 65% of export earnings.

Out of the companies which took part, 75% of them have been operating for more than 5 years, 10% has been operating between 3-5 years, 5% fall between 1-3 years and another 5% between 6-1 year. From the result we can see that many companies have experience because they have been running their business for more than 5 years.

Out of the 20 companies, 40% have employees between 5-20 persons, 10% have employees between 20-40, and another 40% have employees above 40 persons. There is equality between small and medium size companies as we can see 40% of the companies are small companies having only 5-20 employees and another 40% are medium-size companies with employees above 40.

The rate of gender between male and female among the companies which took place varies. Most companies have more males than females. 20% of the companies have gender rate of 60% male and 40% females, another 20% have the rate of 50% male and 50% female. 10% of these companies have the rate of 80% males and 20% females. And only 10% of the companies showed the results that the rate of female is higher compared to the males and these can be divided into two. 5% showed the rate of 45% males and 55% females and another 5% has 46% males and 54% females. There are two extreme examples between companies with more males than females and the one with more female than males. The companies with more males than females is involved in the industry sector which is common in most cases because most of the industrial work needs man power as a result it is more of a man's job than female and that explains why it has more men than women. The other extreme had more women than men, it is involved in the service sector which is also common because most women like to work in service.

70% of the people working in these companies have an average age above 30 years. 20% fall

in the age group above 40years and 10% in the age group above 20years. From the result we can state that most companies do not employ young generation because the average age of most companies is middle age, which is 30years. This is typical in Zambia because the unemployment rate is high among the youth in which the unemployment rate is compound high number of youth currently estimated at over 300,000 entering the labor marketing year (2010 education bulletin). According to the Labour Force Survey conducted in 2005 over half of all the economically active youth (15-24year olds) 59% was unemployed. Unemployment is not a problem of lack of skills in Zambia but of an absolute lack of jobs.

Data show that 85% of the companies prefer to give permanent contract to their employees, 10% prefer temporary contracts for their employees and the other 5% did not respond to this question. The results may be due to the fact that most companies prefer stable operation as a result they prefer permanent contracts to seasonal contracts for their employees. From the results gathered, 60% of the companies do not employ seasonal workers and 15% of the companies employ seasonal workers and when they do it is mostly men because they work on farms. They also employ seasonal workers when they have a shortage of manpower and when the staffs are on leave.

The range of women in management position varies among the companies, which participated. 40% of the companies have the rate of women in management ranging between 21-40%, 20% of the companies have the range between 41-60%, 15% of them have the range between 0-20% and only 5% have the rate of women in management above 61%. From the result we can state that the rate of management is equal between men and women because for every 2 companies the manager is a women, however, we can not draw a conclusion that this is the situation in the entire country because the results are just from the 20 companies not the whole nation and at national level except for a few private enterprises in Zambia most workplace organizational structures are still highly bureaucratic, hierarchical and dominated by men.

From the companies which took part in the survey, 55% of the companies have women working in management position, 25% have women in the administrative positions, 5% has women in sales position, 5% has women in financial positions and another 5% has women in other positions.

The companies have different views about women when it comes to rating them based on the following (in case the total percentage is under 100%, it means that there were companies that did not mark any of the categories – strong, medium, weak):

- Hardworking: 65% of the companies rated women as very hardworking and only 30% rated women as medium when it comes to hard working.
- Punctuality: 70% of the companies rated women medium when it comes to punctuality while 25% of the companies' rates women as being very punctual.
- Committed: 65% of the companies believe women are very committed to their work, 20% of the companies rated women medium and another 5% believe women are not committed to their work.
- Flexibility: 35% of the companies believe women are very flexible, while 50% of the companies rated the women flexibility as medium and the other 10% think the flexibility of women is weak.
- Communication: 50% of the companies think women are very good in terms of communication, 35% rated women medium when it comes to communication at work while the other 10% rated women weak when it comes to communication.

- Loyalty: 80% of the companies think women are very loyal, 15% of the companies rated the women loyalty as medium.
- Reliability: 60% of the companies think women are very reliable when it comes to work and the other 35% of the companies rated women as medium when it comes to reliability.

It is good that the companies think of women as hardworking, loyal, reliable and committed this gives women an advantage for them to be employed. However, when it comes to punctuality and flexibility, most companies believe that they are not relevant for women because women may go on maternity leave, marry and quit the job after a few years. Unpunctuality of women may be due to the fact that women have to do some household duties and childcare before going for work unlike men who just wake up and get ready for their work.

Out of the responding businesses, 40% of the companies intent to increase the number of female workers by doing the following

- ✓ By encouraging more women to apply for jobs through advertising.
- ✓ By promoting and appointing them in management and administrative positions.
- ✓ Through employment by central government
- ✓ There is a move towards equal appointment for both men and women as Zambia has been predominantly a man's world.

80% of the companies feel that their workplace has a gender inclusive culture while only 15% of the companies think their workplace has no gender inclusive culture. 65% of the companies which took part their carries where not influenced by the encouragement of others to pursue education in a more stereotypical female oriented profession while 25% it was. 75% of them have never lost a job opportunity due to their gender while 20% have lost a job opportunity because of their gender.

70% of the companies think men and women are treated equally while 25% think they are not. Finally it a good sign that some companies have put in place some strategies to increase female workers, which means that in future the gender gap will be narrow if not eliminated. This is also will reduce gender discrimination against both men and women when it comes to employment.

Conclusions

A society cannot develop successfully without providing equitable opportunities, resources, and life prospects for both males and females so that they can shape their own lives and contribute to their families and communities. Gender equality is a topic that governments and international organization have been advocating for many years now and it is a goal that has been accepted by them. The objective of this study was to evaluate gender inequalities among men and women in Zambia. To find out if companies prefer to employ women or men, if there is any kind of gender discrimination in the workplaces when it comes to women, whether in these working places they consider women to be a productive resource just like men or not, to find out what kind of role women play in these working places or society, to find out if women face any kind of constraints, to find out if there is any gender gap. The study was based on 20 companies surveyed in Zambia during the month of February and March 2015.

As analyzing the results of the survey, we might be surprised because the picture – based on the responses of the businesses – is quite different from the general Zambian situation. As it

is discussed in the introduction part, gender issues are really important in Zambia, since women do not have the same rights as men. However, in our survey we should conclude that even businesses existing for more than 5 years, are open and have willingness to employ women even in management positions. Results indicated that most companies have positive perception towards female workers and they believe that women are hardworking; loyal, reliable and committed this gives women an advantage for them to be employed. Our paper reflects some kind of duality in the economy of Zambia, since – especially in agriculture – men are more preferred and have better opportunities (as the literature shows), while in the case of responding businesses (which were mainly from the service sector) women are usually employed, they are offered management positions and companies have long-term strategies regarding the education and development of women.

Recommendations

As cited in the literature review, that economic and social development can only be attained when there is equal participation of both men and women in the development process. The most influential evidence on the importance of women to economic development has come from research used to support the World Bank's 'Gender Mainstreaming Strategy' launched in 2001 (Dollar and Gatti 1999; Klasen 1999). This research highlighted that societies that discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies that treat males and females more equally, and that social gender disparities produce economically inefficient outcomes (World Bank, 2001a). For example, it is shown that if African countries had closed the gender gap in schooling between 1960 and 1992 as quickly as East Asia did, this would have produced close to a doubling of per capita income growth in the region (WBGDG, 2003).

In order to reduce the gender gap between men and women in Zambia we recommend the government and other stakeholders to promote equity between men and women in access to and ownership of productive resource and assets. Increase credit access and availability to women farmers and put in place mechanisms to ensure that they are aware of the terms. The government needs to revisit the conditions attached to the land reform to make ownership and access by women possible. The government should put in existence a written equal opportunity policy for men and women, flexible working arrangement in all work places. We believe that good practices (as can be extracted from the research results) should be promoted and spread from the service sector to agriculture and industry as well.

We recommend the government to put in place a wide range of subsidized childcare services such as nurseries, preschools or registered minders because provision of quality formal childcare policies is an essential step towards equal opportunities in employment for both men and women and it is vital for child development and well-being. This may help parents find a better balance between work and family life. It is recommended that gender issues be taken seriously and discussed openly by women and men in all works of life and promoting teamwork involving both men and women as equal partners.

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