

Exploring the Inclusivity and Gender Disparities in Accessing Critical Agriculture Resources in Rural Areas. Drawing Lessons From the Government of Zimbabwe's Land Reform Policies

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Abstract

In order to determine how much rural women in Zimbabwe are aware of their rights, the essay compares their status to that of rural males in certain fields. According to research, the majority of women in the nation are not allowed to participate in national development efforts because of societal beliefs, gender-based violence (GBV), bias against women, gender inequality, and low economic position. According to research, women could boost yields between 20 to 30%, reducing poverty and improving food security, if they had equal control and access over productive assets as males. According to an analysis of poverty trends, women have historically and continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty in Zimbabwe. It is commonly known that the Zimbabwean Constitution is steadfastly committed to inclusiveness and gender equality. The Constitution's dedication to tackling gender inequality is upheld through the affirmative action clauses. Equal civil rights currently apply to both men and women. One of the objectives for the government, all institutions, and governmental organizations is gender parity. Men and women have a fundamental right to be treated equally, which includes the right to equal chances in the political, financial, cultural, and social arenas, as stated in the Bill of Rights found in Chapter 4 of the new Constitution.

Keywords: inclusivity, gender disparities, critical agriculture, equal treatment, and inequality redressal

1. Introduction

According to the Zimbabwean government, gender equality is essential for long-term growth, food security, and poverty reduction. The adoption of successful measures for female empowerment as well as gender equality has been dragged considerably by the lack of available to the public statistics concerning women in agriculture (Kefasi and Prisca 2015). In 1980, the landlocked nation of Zimbabwe, which is located in southern Africa, declared its independence from Britain. More than 70% of the people, the most of whom live in rural areas, rely primarily on agriculture, which generates 15% to 20% of Zimbabwe's economic output (GDP) (GoZ-ZUNDAF, 2011-2015).

13.06 million people live in Zimbabwe, with 52 percent women and 48 percent men. In Zimbabwe, men are in charge of 35% of homes while women are in charge of 65%. In Zimbabwe, 97% of women and 98% of men have a high school diploma or equivalent. In Zimbabwe, around 86% of women rely on agriculture for both their income and food production (Gorge, 2017). In rural Zimbabwe, the majority of smallholder farmers are women. Under the rules of the Rural District Council Act of 1988 as well as the Communal Lands Act (1982), which fall under the supervision of local government officials and traditional leaders, all married male occupants of a community are allowed to access arable plots. The study is divided into two main sections: the background, theoretical literature review, theoretical framework, and research methodology section, which used a documentary review for secondary data and key informant interviews as a primary data gathering tool. The results, suggestions, and conclusion are revealed in part two.

1.1 Background

The lack of sex-disaggregated information as well as gender-sensitive indicators keeps women at the periphery of many industries, despite the increasing call for governments around the world to embrace laws that guarantee inclusivity as well as address gender differences when it comes to vital rural and agricultural resources, such as land and farming technologies. Statistics demonstrate the importance of Zimbabwean women farmers to the country's food supply as economic growth. It is also evident that women find it more difficult than men to engage in programs for rural and agricultural development. The cultural norms, patriarchal structures, and traditions in Zimbabwe have a major effect on the gender dynamics which determine women's status in that country.

1.2 Problem Statement

Social, cultural, legal, political, and economic discrimination against women has existed for a very long time (Louise & Jose, 2020). According to Post et al. (2021), the majority of patriarchal societies provide men a disproportionate amount of privileges and power, giving women a lower level of economic and political clout than men. Even in contemporary societies, men and women still interact in a generalized way. No matter their age or degree of education, women are viewed as inferior to men, according to Atsedo and Tolutope (2022).

Whereas current research shows that women are equally qualified and talented as men to hold important positions in society, gender inequality based on custom, social customs, and bias

has resulted to gender inequality in most countries (Post et al.,2021). In the majority of Zimbabwe's rural areas, women continue to encounter a "glass ceiling" while attempting to access crucial agricultural resources, claim Nancy & Christine (2018). Women's participation in the labor force is challenging given that they are subject to a variety of coded as well as unpublished social conventions in a patriarchal, male-dominated society that has historically hindered women from starting their own businesses, according to Gerald & Ralma (2022). Men's engagement in Zimbabwe's political, financial, and social spheres is undisputed.

1.3 Literature Review

Many studies have shown that the majority of the disadvantaged are women. According to the WEF's Global Gender Gap Report 2022, gender parity may not be attained for another 132 years. In 2022, the gender gap decreased globally by 68.1%. To reach full parity at the current growth rate, 132 years are needed. Over the estimate for 2021, this is a modest four-year gain. (136 years to reach parity) For instance, Ejazi, A., and Sara estimate that about 70% of women worldwide are poor (2012). Sub-Saharan Africa achieved the sixth-highest regional score as well as reduced its gender disparity by 67.9% in 2022, in accordance with the Global Gender Gap Report (2022).

Despite having made over fifty percent of the world's population, discrimination against women persists in many areas of life. The power disparity linked with gender, age, as well as ethnic identity regularly and disproportionately impedes some groups' attempts to leave poverty, according to IFAD (2019). Due to the gendered social framework, challenges for rural women also exist in many other areas. In order for rural women to assert their rights, they must be empowered. In addition, empowered rural women are better able to affect change in their communities, which emphasizes the significance of gender empowerment programs. However according to Mushumbisi and Jan (2018), women have historically been disenfranchised and under the rule of men, making the empowerment of women a global concern.

Research have demonstrated that access to inputs, services, rural organizations, productive infrastructure, and technologies is often more restricted for rural women than for rural men (IFAD, 2019). Due to the patriarchal structure still in place in the African community, rural women likewise have no say in decision-making. According to Geoge (2017), the decrease in the nation's socio-economic and political system and the strongly ingrained patriarchal system have prevented women's empowerment in patriarchal countries from progressing as much as it might have. On the other hand, Chettiyappan et al. (2019) pointed out that patriarchal as well as liberal discourses, on both the national and global levels, have overlooked the issue of gender social relationships as well as frequently reduced it to a division of labor based on sexuality and intra-family conflicts. In rural areas, the patriarchal structure is more rigid. For every MDG measure for which statistics are available, rural women do significantly far worse rural men, urban women, as well as males, according to IFAD (2012). The exceptions to this generality are few. Given this, governments must give rural women major consideration when creating initiatives for female empowerment, like Zimbabwe's.

Gender equality benefits the entire family and increases the programs' relevance, effectiveness, and durability (IFAD, 2012). At the local, regional, and global levels of government, a wide variety of groups have backed the empowerment of rural women. In accordance with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (2011), empowering rural women is the key to addressing some of today's most serious problems, including food security, reducing poverty, and sustainable development. To address gender-related concerns, the Zimbabwean government have developed a number of initiatives and regulations. The majority of the fundamental conventions intended to achieve gender fairness across sectors have been approved by the nation. The purpose of the National Gender Policy is to translate and implement a variety of international, regional, and national requirements (National Gender Policy, 2013-2017).

1.4 Theories on Women Financial Inclusion

1.4.1 Public Service Theory of Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion is a public obligation that the government owes to its citizens, as well as the citizens expect the government to promote financial inclusion for its citizens, according to Peterson (2020), the public service theory of financial inclusion. According to this theory, all citizens should have the opportunity for financial inclusion through governmental institutions, including those who are financially excluded. According to this perspective, the aim of financial intermediation inclusion of everyone in the official financial system as well as access to its products and services—can only be considerably advanced by the government.

There are advantages to the public service theory. First, according to the argument, financial inclusion may be accomplished when it is the government's obligation. Second, the government is in charge of the social and economic institutions of the nation, which it can employ to further its goals for financial inclusion. For instance, the government may build public banks in the most remote regions of the country to serve the population's excluded groups. Last but not least, when the government fully embraces responsibility for promoting financial inclusion through public institutions, public confidence increases. The public is confident that when the government fully accepts responsibility for financial inclusion, all initiatives and programs will be successful to everyone's advantage. The following problems exist with the public service theory. One of them is that it downplays the part that business plays in advancing financial inclusion. Second, it is predicated on the use of taxes to finance financial inclusion. It's possible that significant financial inclusion initiatives can't be paid for by taxes. The public service theory, which contends that the State is accountable for achieving financial inclusion throughout its public institutions, has as a drawback that the State may utilize political power as a tool of social control. The state can continue to give cooperative people access to critical financial services while circumstances are good, but it can also stop doing so if enough people decide to rebel against the state (Peterson 2020).

1.5 Research Objectives

In order to comprehend the extent to which rural women might realize their rights as well as potential in those areas where land reform policies can solve the difficulty, this essay

compares the status of rural women in Zimbabwe to that of rural men in agriculture and rural development. The data gathered from this exercise will be used to support national planning and programming, including redesigning the policy and developing non-exclusionary interventions at the national level, including project formulation, policy creation, as well as technical advice in line with national development priorities and the mandate as well as strategic framework of the Zimbabwean government. The evaluation's findings will also make it easier for the civil society to present the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) with current, unbiased information regarding the circumstances of rural women in the nation and gender disparities in access to vital agricultural resources.

1.6 Methodological Framework

As part of the exercise, which also involved selecting stakeholders for consultation and identifying stakeholders for consultation, interviews with FAO staff, members of civil society, UN representatives. The research was done by MAMID, MWGCD, as well as implementing partners who specialize in women, rural development, and agriculture. Stakeholder interviews were required to fill up the knowledge gaps that the literature analysis had left.

The methodology involved gathering both secondary and primary data.

Secondary data: The previous research from CPFs, nation reports, strategy frameworks, laws, policies, academic works, statistical evidence, UN documents, CEDAW reports, as well as other pertinent organizations and government documentation had to be gathered and properly evaluated.

Primary data: During interviews with national stakeholders, technical professionals from the FAO, UN personnel, and MAMID representatives from several departments, data was gathered to supplement the desk review.

1.7 Results

1.7.1 Agriculture and Rural Sector

Zimbabwe has an agricultural economy, and agriculture will continue to be the main source of income there for the foreseeable future. Agriculture provides a primary source of income for more than 70% of the populace, most of whom reside in communal areas and make up 15–20% of Zimbabwe's GDP (GoZ-ZUNDAF, 2011-2015). Zimbabwe's economy shrank for almost ten years (1999–2009), during which time it drastically deindustrialized, allowing agriculture to play a key part in the country's economic recovery (MAMID, 2013). The nation has traditionally endured severe macroeconomic instability marked by economic crises (hyperinflation, high rates of unemployment, as well as poverty), as well as low agricultural production as a consequence of a shortage of agricultural inputs, valuable assets, and appropriate farm management skills. The patterns of food production have evolved to more basic subsistence agricultural methods, which are characterised by increased food insecurity, as a result of these restrictions. Since agriculture is the main means of subsistence in rural regions, the crisis has also had a significant impact on rural livelihoods. Zimbabwe's agricultural sector is based on at least 15 different agricultural products, including groundnuts,

tobacco, cotton, sugar, horticulture (both food and non-food), and tiny grains like sorghum, finger millet, and pearl millet. Cattle, dairy, fish, pigs, goats, sheep, and poultry are the primary sources of food security in the animal production industry.

Data show that under Zimbabwe's recently finished land reform program, women made up 18% of A14 farmers as well as 12% of A25 farmers, respectively, falling far short of the gender parity target of 50%. For both men and women, agriculture is the primary source of income. The general lack of access to the production tools (labor, capital, land, mechanization, as well as irrigation infrastructure) is one issue that prevents women in Zimbabwe from fully participating in the highly capitalized agricultural sector (MAMID, 2013). Women are frequently found at the bottom of the pay range for household work in developing nations, putting in 16 to 18 hours per day while spending at least 49% of their time to take on agricultural and domestic duties. They frequently have little to no influence on decisions and resources, which makes problems worse (FAO SOFA, 2018).

1.7.2 Woman's Inclusion in Food and Nutrition Security

Zimbabwe produced 1 451 629 MT of maize and 53 000 MT of wheat during the growing season of 2010–2011, falling short of the country's annual requirements of 1 800 000 MT of maize as well as 450 000 MT of wheat (Goz & Zimstat, 2012). Food imports have previously been required of the nation. The prevalence of chronic malnutrition has increased, notably in women (7 percent thin) and children under five (10 percent underweight), as a result of pervasive poverty and ongoing food and nutrition instability (GoZ, 2010). According to the Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS) 2010-2011, 26% of women in rural Zimbabwe and 41% of women in urban Zimbabwe are obese.

The bulk of Zimbabwe's small - scale farmers are rural women. According to the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (ZIMVAC) 2012 Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report, the poor smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe confront difficulties since they cannot get food and other necessities. Over the course of a consumption year, the most vulnerable households experience an average deficit of USD 132, which is typically filled by either reducing their consumption of basic foods and other necessities or turning to harmful activities like gold panning, transactional sex (for households with female heads of household as well as female children in charge), unrestricted firewood harvesting and sale, or accepting donations from outside sources. A increasing food insecurity crisis was anticipated to climax in December 2012 to March 2013, with an estimated 1 667 518 individuals needing food assistance, based on the Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report (ZIMVAC, 2012).

Rural women work 16 to 18 hours a day, devoting at least 49% of their time to farming and only 25% to household duties. Most women work as unpaid caregivers (MAMID, 2013). The practice of "bee farming," also known as apiculture, is one aspect of forestry farming that promotes agricultural diversification and food security, even though more research is necessary to fully comprehend this intervention. The supposition that "if women had the same access to productive resources as males, they may raise yields on their farms by 20-30 percent" is achieved if food crop output increases as a result of empowering women who are responsible for feeding the family. This might increase global agricultural output by 2.5–4%,

helping to eliminate hunger by 12–17%. FAO SOFA 2018

The national data lack sex-disaggregated information on food crops, despite the GoZ's mission to ensure food and nutrition security for all, including access to adequate, a variety of, as well as nutritious food by all people at all times. There is easy access to crop analysis data by years and industries, but not by gender (MAMID, 2018). GoZ recognizes the important role that women play in agriculture, as stated in the Food and Nutrition Security Policy, and works to put supportive strategies in place to make sure that these roles are improved without putting an adverse strain on the women's other roles as childcare providers, food processors, as well as traders of food. GoZ asserts that encouraging more women to participate in agricultural endeavors without negatively affecting their other employment is one method to achieve this (GoZ, 2012).

1.7.3 Gender and Rural Labor

In the formal agriculture sector, women outnumber males as workers. In rural areas, where they account for almost 70% of the female population, they produce the majority of Zimbabwe's subsistence foods and perform 70% of the home and family labor (ZimStat, 2014).

A total of 3 573 893 individuals work in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, with 54.6 percent of them being women and 45.4 percent being men. Since most of them work as unpaid family caregivers, there are a lot of women in the workforce. In Zimbabwe, the rate of unpaid contributing family workers is 60.6% for women and 39.4% for men (FAO SOFA, 2018). According to ZDHS 2010–11 data, just 37% of women and 62% of males were formally employed. In addition, women endure structural unemployment at a rate of 70% as opposed to 56% for males, and their actual income is three times lower than that of men. To determine the true situation of rural women due to their job, this data is not broken down among urban or rural women. Zimbabwe appreciates the benefits of economic growth initiatives that put women first (Womenomics). As a result, the GoZ has prioritized the economic empowerment of women in order to achieve long-term economic progress. In the Medium Term Plan (MTP), the government makes a specific commitment to increase the participation of women (GoZ, 2019).

1.7.4 Women's Inclusion and Land

In Zimbabwe, 86 percent of women rely on agriculture for both their own and their family' subsistence. Local government officials as well as traditional leaders of a community have the authority to award arable plots to married men who live in the community under the provisions of the Rural District Council Act of 1988 as well as the Communal Lands Act of 1982. The freehold tenure that allowed both private and business possession, as well as the use of the property as collateral and an investment in its asset value, separated apart the large-scale commercial sector. Initiated around the turn of the century, the land reform program aimed to, among other things, lessen women's limited access to land. The conventional thinking holds that women should possess 20% of all large-scale farmed land, or A2 farming land (GoZ&ZDHS, 2018). The A1 village projects gave women the

opportunity to individually apply for agricultural land. According to conventional wisdom, women may now access land without the help of their husbands, dads, or other male relatives. As a result, women are now better able to manage land for agricultural purposes. Notwithstanding all these statutory adjustments, there were still a number of factors that restricted women's access to land. There is evidence that just 10% of the 96% of agricultural land in Zimbabwe purchased during the land reform initiative was given to women, coming short of the required quota (Utete Report, 2002). The following are a few things that prevented women from having access to land:

- (i) Because customary law stipulates that a woman can only receive village land through a patrilineal line, cultural traditions continued to prevent women from having access to land (father, brother, uncle). Even now, the traditional authorities are hesitant to give women land outside of this cultural context.
- (ii) In most cases, Zimbabwe's biggest obstacle to gender equality is still a lack of policy implementation.
- (iii) There aren't many women on the land allocation committee who might have helped advance the cause of women's land allocation.
- (iv) Few female chiefs discriminated against women in land allocation, probably as a result of their ignorance of the new policy's intent to expedite land allocation.
- (v) Due to ingrained patriarchal customs, married women encounter difficulties owning their land in their own right. The custom/culture is to grant land rights to the family's male head of household (husband). Married women have access to land through their husbands since they are seen as members of the man's family. As a result, married women are discriminated against when it comes to owning land. The right for women to possess land or other property is not protected under the present constitution.

Though this is a missed opportunity, it is still possible to change the situation and give women the confidence to approach traditional chiefs in a spirit of empowerment and request the land that is rightfully theirs. This can be done by educating women farmers and traditional chiefs about gender issues and policy in addition to developing standard guidelines for chiefs. Then, women who are in charge of households will have access to land.

1.7.5 Gender and Crop Production

Maize, small grains (sorghum and millet), including edible oil crops including sunflower, groundnuts, and soy beans are the principal food security crops farmed in Zimbabwe. Because women are frequently in charge of meeting the families' nutritional needs, food crops have a considerable impact on gender relations in the home. In Zimbabwe, males decide which crops will be cultivated and sold, and women are in charge of ensuring food security for the home (MAMID, 2013). Despite the GoZ's awareness of women's role to food production, there is no evidence on the gender dynamics of agricultural output. Gender-specific data on the food value chain are not accessible at the national level. Even while their output in rapoko, which most men are glad to produce because to its traditional

and cultural relevance, was significantly lower than men's, women often have a higher yield in high-density food crops.

1.7.6 Gender and Livestock

According to MAMID's 2009 [unpublished figures], Zimbabwe's agricultural GDP is largely comprised of livestock (GoZ & FAO, 2013). Animal protein, draught power, manure, and money are all provided by livestock. The smallholder farmers own over 80% of the cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys, which they use for a variety of purposes, including storing wealth, providing draught power, milk, and manure for crops. Due to tradition and historical events, men remain in charge of livestock ownership and production in Zimbabwe, making decisions about how to care for, use, as well as dispose of the animals. In Nkayi and Lupane, a recent study on the gender analysis of livestock found that ownership is gendered: 63 percent of women own chickens, compared to 13 percent of males, and 45 percent of men own cows.

In terms of making choices, possession of more valuable animals, and management of livestock production, men predominate over women. When there are fewer cattle, women are more likely to possess them. The fact that only 2% of men and 0% of women own sheep and 29% of men and 9% of women own pigs shows that these animals are not particularly favored by either gender. Compared to 6% of women, just 19% of men own donkeys. This implies that gender is significant in the production of animals and must be taken into account along with other aspects. For gender equality in livestock development projects in Zimbabwe to be effectively mainstreamed, data on livestock owners (disaggregated by sex) must be readily available.

1.7.7 Livestock Management and Marketing by Gender

Zimbabwe's ownership and management of cattle are influenced by gender dynamics. Women own and control smaller livestock, such as chickens, while men decide how to employ veterinary technology related to large livestock and devote more man-hours to its production than do women and children (Kefasi and Prisca 2015). The majority of livestock is sold in rural regions to cover immediate household needs, including the cost of food and medical expenses. The men and women of the household frequently come to an understanding over the location, timing, and usage of goat and cattle sales. Nonetheless, given their limited mobility, women must make the bulk of the same decisions when it comes to the sale of chicken and other forms of revenue like rearing animals and cultivating crops.

1.7.8 Women and Fisheries

Zimbabwe lacks any natural lakes and is a landlocked nation. Zimbabwe has a small production from its fisheries despite having multiple dams. The main sites for commercial fishing are the Manyame and Mazvikadei dams, large lakes such Lake Kariba, Lake Chivero, Lake Mutirikwi, and Lake Kariba. For subsistence, fish can be found in tiny dams, rivers, and ponds. In Zimbabwe, men predominate in the fishing industry. While men fish from lakes and dams, women help with processing and marketing. There is a lot of space for value-added business in the fishing sector, one of the most important renewable resources that nations have for food and nutrition security, livelihoods, and economic growth. This is according to

sustainable resource management plans (FAO, 2015). The overall strategy for fisheries and aquaculture works to maintain biological diversity while ensuring the sustainable use of the fishing resource, despite the lack of a defined overall policy statement for fisheries.

Fishermen in Zimbabwe typically employ four different sorts of fishing techniques. These include cage culture, angling (hook and line), gillnet fishing, and fishing with a Kapenta rig. Gender roles, obligations, expectations, and limitations are present in each of these approaches. Only a small percentage of women who possessed fishing gear participated in gillnet fishing, according to a study of their position and circumstances in Lake Kariba fishery. Gillnet fishing does not use gender-friendly fishing equipment or technology. Casting nets while paddling in the water is part of the fishing equipment. The work is too physically taxing and hefty for women. In Zimbabwe, women who use gillnets control the equipment and permits, but they hire men to fish for them. Because of this setup, male employee fishermen frequently defraud women.

Despite the fact that there is an abundance of Kapenta fishing in the Zambezi, women only hold 5% of the 65 Kapenta firms, constituting a relatively small percentage of this economy. Once obtained, a Kapenta fishing license is valid for life and cannot be changed. Female fishermen in Kapenta are extremely concerned about their safety along the river as well as lake (FAO & Shinga, 2012). In fishing family businesses, the women handle a number of unpaid responsibilities, such as managing the crew and the finances, while the men are in charge of the fishing. Women typically undertake the drying, salting, as well as cleaning of the drying racks as well as surroundings. Women work in fish processing, packing, and fillet cutting in some financially supported fishing businesses.

Due to financial constraints on buying fishing gear, cultural restrictions on women bathing, swimming, or fishing in lakes, gender stereotypes that view women as weaker vessels, women's fear of entering lakes, and security risks related to lake fishing, the participation of women in the sector is restricted. While men fish from lakes and dams, women help with the processing and marketing of the catch. In Zimbabwe, women like hook-and-line fishing, but because their fishing lines are shorter than men's, they have less opportunities. Most women like to fish in rivers because it can be unsafe to fish in lakes. Each fisher must acquire a USD 5 per person daily permit in order to fish. During the 1980s, the GoZ has backed a small number of fishing cooperatives, but the majority of their members are men. As men focus on fishing in challenging conditions, women continue to be assigned the customary chores of arranging fishing expeditions by buying supplies for the crew and diesel, keeping records, and drying post-harvest.

Fish marketing is a significant source of revenue in rural areas. Some women buy things from fishermen as early as 5:00 in the morning in regions with big dams like Chivero and Darwendale in Mashonaland West as well as Osborne Dam in Manicaland. The following day, the fishermen would have traveled back to their homes after spending the night fishing and discarding their catch. A widow named Gracia from Binga in Matabeleland North pitched the fishing initiative "Tulibonene Banakazi (Women let us fend for ourselves) Fresh Fish Marketing" during the 2013 Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF). In the Binga

District's Siachilaba Ward, a campaign is being carried out for the emancipation of women. Gracia presented the initiatives of Action Aid International (AAI) at the ZITF booth. By the time the event was ended, Gracia had gotten orders worth more than \$1,000. The organization, which purchases and sells fish from fishermen on the Zambezi River, is led by Gracia. North of the Kariba Dam as well as the Zambezi River is Matabeleland, which is home to a significant number of women-only fishing cooperatives. In this place, women are so powerful that, if necessary, they can defend one another in groups. Despite the fact that overall there are more women than men working in the fish marketing industry, they move a lot less goods. Women who sell fish frequently buy it from fishermen and then offer it to onlookers. They might also buy the fish from the fishermen as well as sun-dry it before selling it to neighborhood customers. Seafood that is both fresh and frozen is also offered.

1.7.9 Women and Forestry

In general, forests and trees help to food security by producing food, generating income, and protecting the soils as well as water resources needed for agriculture. Women's involvement in forestry development and management is viewed as desirable, not because it would promote equity or equality but rather because it would benefit forestry farming, which heavily relies on women. Together with labor, they play a significant role in the chain of production involved in forest farming (tree planting, nursery development, and management, including woodlot management). Since the vast majority of forestry activities occur in the unofficial sector of the economy, they are not included in national accounting. According to a recent research in the Chimanimani District of Zimbabwe, where forestry corporations had given local men and women access to two hectares of mature and young trees, forestry farming was becoming more and more common in the A1 and A2 settlements (MAMID, 2013).

According to the study, both men and women managed the forests, although males were primarily in charge of harvesting, processing the timber (which required hard work), and making sales arrangements while women were in charge of caring for new trees. The majority of the timber harvested is sold to different local businesses, while some is also supplied to nearby Mozambique. Since most farmers, both men and women, lacked tractors necessary for harvesting the timber, they were forced to rely on hired labor. It is possible that rural Zimbabwean women would not make the most of the plantation yield since they have less access to technology than men (MAMID, 2013).

In Zimbabwe, the summer months are characterized by a high frequency of sales of forest goods at bus stops and along highways. Girls, boys, and women prevail in this market. Among the forest products are the year-round availability of wild honey, seasonal wild mushrooms of many varieties, and seasonal wild fruits (mazhanje, tsubvu, masawo, and ngi'). The GoZ recently began the National Forestry Policy Formulation Process with assistance from the FAO to offer proper guidance for the sector's development. This process will give the sector the ability to create a roadmap for the development of forestry in the country, most likely from a gender viewpoint (MAMID, 2013). Despite the fact that the government recognizes the contribution of women to forestry farming, there are no national-level data and data on the gender relations in the forestry sector.

1.7.10 Women and Rural Financing

Even in industries where they are more prevalent, such as the unorganized economy, small and micro businesses, and agricultural output, women still receive less financial assistance. The Small Business Development Corporation (SEDCO) has been lending money to micro, small, and medium-sized businesses for the past 22 years. But, over time, 14% fewer women than men have received this aid (MAMID, 2013). This is because women rarely offer collateral security, and because SEDCO sells defaulters' property when loan payments aren't made on time. Women who don't want to part with their hard-earned things have a challenge because of this.

More than 44% of the money for a loan program for farmers that the Central Bank of Zimbabwe established in 2016 to boost output in small- to medium-sized firms came from women. It is unclear from the statistics how many of these women who requested loans genuinely lived in rural areas, where agriculture is a key source of income. In 2018, fewer women than males asked for short-term loans, according to Zimstat. Among the 121 927 agricultural households that did, 8% of the heads of home were women and 4% were men (ZimStat, 2018).

1.7.11 Gender and Technology

According to the 2013 Agricultural Sector Gender Assessment, which was carried out in Zimbabwe's five districts, insufficient agricultural technology and limited access to agricultural machinery and equipment are the main causes of low agricultural productivity, particularly in the smallholder sector. These operations include tillage, weeding, harvesting, transportation, as well as post-harvest processing (MAMID, 2013). Just 1.7% of the 407 female farmers and 3.7% of the 1,093 male farmers who were interviewed for the study reported owning a tractor, which is a glaring sign that most farmers rely on labor-intensive approaches for land preparation.

Axes, handpicks, handhoes, and watering cans were found to be the hand tools used on a typical communal farm the most frequently by the survey's participants. Since they don't account for the sexual division of labor in agricultural productivity, agricultural technical advancements frequently neglect women's responsibilities as important actors in crop production, processing, preservation, and selling of agricultural output. By lengthening the time required for weeding or processing, innovations intended to save men labor may increase the workload for women.

1.7.12 Irrigation Technology

Irrigation improvement is one of the main elements in enhancing Zimbabwe's long-term security in terms of nutrition and food, according to ZIMVAC (2014). Water collection is a crucial component of agricultural development, and irrigation development is a key worry due to the country's protracted drought, which is being brought on by climate change. In fact, women make up the majority of smallholder farmers who practice rain-fed agriculture and reside in rural areas, where 70% of the population depends on agriculture. The complexity of Zimbabwe's irrigation systems makes it difficult to acknowledge the role that gender plays in

irrigation development (MAWID, 2013). When discussing the dynamics of gender in irrigation systems with one of the female irrigation managers, a wide range of topics were brought up.

The majority of rural women are prohibited from taking part in local government processes that involve planning for development, which also includes national development processes. Their poor economic situation and cultural standards are the key culprits. This contributes to the explanation of why the proportion of women serving in urban and rural councils dropped from 19% in 2008 to 16% in the general elections of 2013. When rural women join as women alone in farmer organizations like commodities groups (generally organized by ZFU), agricultural extension groups, as well as irrigation schemes groups, they have the chance to show their leadership as well as participation in development processes (usually organized by MAMID). Women are more likely than males to arrange agricultural shows at the district, ward, or village levels. Women and rural development planning

1.8 Discussion

Gender equality and equity are strongly emphasized in Zimbabwe's National Gender Policy (2013-2017), which envisions a society in which men and women coexist in harmony and benefit as equal partners in the nation's growth. In Zimbabwe, 86% of women depend on agriculture to support their families and earn a living. The bulk of Zimbabwe's smallholder farmers are rural women. According to the rules of the Rural District Council Act of 1988 as well as the Communal Lands Act, all married male citizens of a community have access to arable plots that are managed by local government officials and traditional leaders (1982).

Zimbabwe's agricultural and rural sectors were given the opportunity to identify gender dynamics and issues through the country gender assessment; the results would be used by the FAO to provide data for the development of the FAO Country Programme Framework (CPF), reporting on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as reporting on and contributing to the programming on the CEDAW in Zimbabwe's United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF). The main strategic plan for the nation was the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development (ZimAsset) 2013-2018. By promoting women's involvement in politics as well as economic decision-making, the declaration seeks to advance gender equality and equity. Yet, it didn't solve the problems faced by rural women.

The formation of numerous agricultural policies, including the forestry policies that the FAO started in November 2014 as well as the agriculture and global warming policies, both of which are still in the draft stage, is currently taking place. Both the women (who were supposed to claim 20% of the land) as well as those involved in land allocation (the Ministry of Lands as well as traditional chiefs and councilors) needed to fully understand what the policy meant for women in order for them to access their full 20% of the land instead of the 15% they were allocated. In Zimbabwe, men possess a disproportionate quantity of land, and regardless of gender, whoever owns a farm has a title to the water.

According to research, there are 3 573 893 individuals working in agriculture, fishery, and

forestry in Zimbabwe, with 54.6 percent of them being women and 45.4 percent of them being men. As most of them work as unpaid family caregivers, there are a lot of women in the workforce. In Zimbabwe, men outnumber women in terms of decision-making, control over livestock production, and ownership of more valuable animals, although women are more likely to possess less valuable livestock, such as chicken. The dynamics of the fishing industry are also gendered. Women are essential to the processing and marketing of fish, despite the fact that men still dominate the sector. Rural women work 16 to 18 hours a day, devoting at least 49% of their time to farming and around 25% of their time to household duties. Both men and women participate in the production and sale of crops and horticulture; however, women and girls work more in grading and packaging. Both men and women are employed in the forestry farming sector, however women are mostly in charge of managing and growing nurseries. Zimbabwe currently lacks knowledge on gender-specific aspects of climate change, its effects, including adaptation techniques.

In Zimbabwe, women's adoption of new technology typically hinges on how simple and user-friendly it is to use. Although 90% of all rural farmers already using conservation agriculture (CA) technology were women, contrary to what is typical with irrigation technology, the head of Agricultural Extension Training reported. A program to assist women farmers with post-harvest technology issues, such as packaging, storage, as well as marketing, was launched by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development (MWGCD) after it was determined that the main challenge facing the hardworking rural women farmers was post-harvest management, which includes food processing, packaging, and marketing.

The welfare of the poor, orphans, as well as vulnerable children has suffered as a result of Zimbabwe's implementation of relatively successful public assistance programs over the years, such as the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), which have been impacted by limited fiscal space and the liquidity crunch in the economy (OVC). Even in industries where females excel, such as the unorganized sector, micro and small businesses, including agricultural production, where they outnumber men as workers, women nevertheless receive less financial aid (loans and credit). Zimbabwe has advanced the cause of gender equality by one step since the foundation of MWGCD, the country's gender machinery.

1.9 Conclusion

This investigation shows that there are gender discrepancies among women in agriculture in terms of market access, resource access, knowledge access, and career opportunities. Zimbabwean women farmers are crucial to the country's food production and economic development. Hence, accountability in achieving gender equality and empowerment is crucial for the growth of the country and the development of its agricultural industry. The persistence of gender gaps, which are brought about by the misalignment of policy and implementation and the dearth of data that can be segmented for gender analysis, hinders the advancement and empowerment of women. The nation's gender machinery, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development (MWGCD), was established to advance the objective of gender equality.

It is important to underline that GoZ has pursued and it will continue to pursue a number of measures to support farmers and women. These initiatives consist of boosting their shock resistance, ensuring their financial inclusion through creative loan programs that don't require members to put up collateral, supporting with the institutional growth of their cooperatives, and increasing their productive capacity. One of the most effective foundations built to boost rural women's empowerment is MWGCD. In order to achieve its long-term economic development and poverty reduction objectives, the Ministry has made women's economic empowerment a critical component of its overall strategy. Today, completing MDG III and ensuring economic growth are the GoZ's top priorities. Appointing gender focal points in all government ministries and parastatals and creating general guidelines on mainstreaming gender as a tool for all gender focal points and government employees were two significant projects that MWGCD successfully executed to improve its gender management system.

Zimbabwe's current national gender strategy, which runs from 2013 to 2017, addresses rural women's specific needs rather than specifically targeting them. The National Gender Policy prioritizes gender equity and equality, and it also intends to improve gender responsiveness to policies for coping with and mitigating climate change. Many agricultural policies, including one on climate change, are currently being developed. The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, in force since 2013, assesses the consequences of men and women having uneven access to, control over, and ownership of natural resources on women's ability to adapt to climate change. As a result, it offers a solid platform for utilizing green climate money to increase support for the empowerment of rural women.

With 86 percent of women relying on the land for their livelihood, agriculture remains the main source of income in Zimbabwe for both men and women. Land distribution difficulties are greatly influenced by the patriarchal structure, cultural values, and tradition. The lack of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators is one of the issues keeping women out of the mainstream despite the National Gender Policy's mandate to promote gender equality as a development strategy to lower poverty rates among men and women. This is because policies aren't always based on a solid analysis of the evidence illustrating the gender gaps in access to resources, services, and markets.

2. Recommendations

In order to achieve its objective of achieving food security in agriculture and rural development, the GoZ must adopt gender equality measures. In order to inform programming, the GoZ should carry out national gender assessment studies on the crop, forestry farming, horticulture, and the value chain, including post-harvest management. For rural women to have a source of income and to improve their quality of life, GoZ must promote and encourage bee farming. Keeping bees is a climate-smart practice. As they gain experience in gender-sensitive extension techniques for crop production and post-harvest management, field agricultural extension agents need support. They also need access to the supplies, money, and tools needed to help women and farmers. It is critical to support MWGCD and MAMID in teaching both male and female farmers and Chiefs about gender issues and land distribution, in addition to establishing measures for enhancing women's access to and tenure

rights in accordance with their quota allotment. You can donate to MAMID, the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement, and other CSOs that work to empower women via access to and ownership of land, including the Women Coalition of Zimbabwe, Land Alliance, and WLZ. The national Gender Machinery needs to support women for rural women leadership, local governance, economic empowerment, and land ownership through partnerships with MAMID, MWGCD, and organizations that focus on gender equality and women's empowerment, such as all those who make up the Agriculture Cluster (as described by ZimAsset), for example - ZFU Gender Wing, WLZ, Self Help Development Foundation, Jekesa Pfungwa, Kunzwana, and Women's Coalition.

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