

Chapter 18

Engaging Men in Women's Economic Empowerment in Butiama District, Mara Region, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The chapter addresses women's income poverty using men as active participants in empowering women economically. Butiama district was used as a study area, using 120 women and their husbands who were beneficiaries of the programme dealing with loan provision. As an outcome of the study, men had little participation in women's economic activities, hence, women's economic empowerment was at medium level. Unlike men, women's income was used for fulfilling basic needs of the family, therefore, had little impact on their economic empowerment. By conclusion, men as decision makers have high impact on women's economic empowerment. It is recommended that, awareness creation among men would enhance their participation in empowering women. Improvement of women's access to and control over production resources would improve their income. It is recommended that lobbying and advocacy approaches should be applied to enable women's control over the production resources.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It is estimated that women account for two thirds of the 1.4 billion people currently living in extreme poverty and they make up 60% of the 572 million poor people in the world (DFID, 2000). In Sub-Saharan Africa women are more likely to live in poverty than men in 22 out of the 25 countries (Folbre, 2012). The high proportion of women living in poverty highlights the importance of focusing on women's

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economic empowerment (WEE) (Garry, 2009). Similarly, the situation of women in Tanzania does not differ much from other women in Africa and in the world at large (Morse, 1991). Unlike women in the male headed households, poverty level is higher in the female headed household as take care of the twin burden of mother and father by providing the family's daily needs for survival while husbands are working in cities or searching for greener pastures far from home (Vuuren, 2000; Kuzilwa, 2005). About 60% of the women live in absolute poverty in Tanzania (URT, 2000). Lack of access to credit and other financial services is one of the causes for women's high poverty levels. Moreover, lack of knowledge and skills resulting from low level of education has been reported as one of the reasons for women's failure to make viable choices for their lives (Kabeer, 2009; URT, 2005). Women's poverty in Tanzania as in other African countries, is partly, caused by gender inequality between men and women as a result of unequal distribution of income and control over resources (including property, assets and financial capital (OECD, 2008).

Generally, women's economic empowerment (WEE) is believed to be the solution towards elimination of poverty among women. The term women's economic empowerment is derived from the word empowerment. According to Batliwala (1994) and Gary (2009), empowerment is the process by which the powerless (marginalized) gain greater control over their life circumstances. It includes the control over resources (physical, human, and intellectual, financial) and over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). This means that empowerment entails a process of change by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices (women) acquire such ability (Malhotra *et al.*, 2002). Similarly, women's economic empowerment is the process of increasing women's real power over economic decisions that influence their lives and priorities in society (Kabeer, 2009). Economic empowerment approaches and intervention usually focus on income-generating activities, which allow women to independently acquire their income (Eyben, 2008). Income-generating activities encompass a wide range of areas, such as small business promotion, cooperatives, and job creation schemes (Kabeer, 2005).

Many researchers are working towards economic empowerment of women as crucial element for both realization of women's rights and to achieve broader development goals such as economic growth and poverty reduction (ICRW, 2011). Empirically research data indicates that women's economic empowerment is not just a work, earning income, or even, ownership, unless it involves control over production resources (Duflo, 2012) such as land, livestock, forest leading to: (1) gain more equality and control over their own lives while also (2) contributing: (a) directly to their children's human capital (nutrition, health and education) and thereby indirectly to their nation's income growth; (b) directly to the wealth and well-being of their nations, and (c) indirectly to their country's national income growth through their own – and their educated children's' lower fertility (Blumberg, 2005).

The government of Tanzania in collaboration with donor agencies has for a long time been working to implement financial rural programs with the goal of empowering women. Some of these efforts include Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs). Despite remarkable achievement of these initiatives women continue to live under control of men (Kato *et al.*, 2012). According to TGNP (2005), the overall equality in economic power in Tanzania decreased by 10% in the year 1995 and 2000. This was attributed by the decrease in access to resource by 50% among women (TGNP, 2005). It has been reported that men might have a specific role in relation to women's economic empowerment as they are the gatekeepers for production resources necessary for economic advancement, hence leading to gender equality. It is anticipated that once men are willing to open the gates for major reforms gender equality will be achieved (Cornell, 2005).

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