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Assessing the Effectiveness of Women Empowerment Through Comprehensive Urban Development Programs: A Case Study of Women in Poultry Business in Chingola

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Abstract

Women's empowerment contributes significantly to the social welfare of the communities in addition to profiting from them. Due to this, several communities have said in recent years that one of their main objectives is to promote Women's empowerment. By using a case study of the Chingola, its precise objectives were to ascertain how stakeholders and workers saw Women's empowerment, to ascertain how much this obligation contributed to community development, and to ascertain the relationship between this responsibility and social welfare. To gather, process, analyze, and present data for the study, a quantitative design was adopted. The study used a sample size of 50 participants who were chosen using random and purposive selection techniques.

Findings indicate that 5 (5%) of the participants attained certificate level of education, 15 (15%) of the participants attained Diploma level of education, 70 (70%) of the participants attained Undergraduate degree level of education and 10 (10%) attained Master's level of education. Also, Data gathered from respondents shows that 7(7%) of the participants were aged between 21-30 years, 60 (60%) were aged between 31-40 years, 30 (30%) were aged between 41-50 years and 3 (3%) of the respondents were 51 years and above. This information is also shown on the bar

graph below. From the data gathered, 60% of respondents said poor funding is a factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District, 20% of the respondents said government policy is the factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District, 10% of the respondents said timing is the factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District, 8% of the respondents said feasibility of the project is the factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District while 2% of respondents said location is the factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District.

This study recommends that the government should improve the funding levels and procedures for the WEP. In fact, the WEP is befitting better funding because the majority of the women are poor and vulnerable. The Department of Community Development should re-look at the procedures and systems that surround the management of women groups. This is more so because it has been established that these procedures and systems.

Lastly, there is need for massive investment in this area so that the Department of Community Development should seriously embark on periodic needs assessment in order that the real needs of the community are identified and addressed.

Keywords: Community Development, Women's Empowerment, Social Welfare, Comprehensive Urban Development Programs, Poultry Business

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The livestock sub-sector in Zambia is an important component of agriculture, contributing 42% of the agricultural sector's gross domestic product (GDP), which is equivalent to 3.2% of the national GDP, and 50% of employment in the rural areas (Bwalya and Kalinda, 2014) ^[9]. The Government of the Republic of Zambia identified the livestock sub-sector as one of the key drivers of economic growth through enhancing livestock production and productivity, and prioritization of livestock research and development, as stated in the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) and the National Livestock Development Policy (MoFNP, 2022; MFL, 2020) ^[18, 19].

Empowerment has been defined broadly as “gaining power and control over decisions and resources that determine the quality of one’s life” (Narayan 2002, 10) [21]. Broiler production can be very important in curbing poverty, improving livelihoods and reducing unemployment and thus improving the living standards of the farmers involved generally. In the 2007/ 2008 agricultural season, 66.6 % of the small scale farmers throughout the country raised chickens CSO (2008) [11] signaling the importance of broiler production as a viable enterprise for income generation. Dancer and Hossain's research on the commercialization of African agriculture highlights the intricate relationship between social differences and women's empowerment (Dancer & Hossain, 2018) [15]. This research is instrumental in understanding the multifaceted nature of empowerment in African societies, where agriculture plays a central role in the economy and social fabric.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of women's empowerment in promoting inclusive development, women in the poultry industry in Zambia continue to face various challenges that hinder their ability to fully participate in and benefit from economic opportunities. While empowerment programs aimed at women entrepreneurs exist, the effectiveness of these programs in enhancing women's socio-economic status, decision-making roles, and overall empowerment within the poultry sector remains unclear. Furthermore, the specific impact of economic empowerment initiatives, such as skills development and access to resources, on women poultry farmers' production levels, profitability, and control over income continues to be a challenge to many women in Zambia today. A study compared the profitability of broilers and layers to help farmers and new market entrants make informed investment decisions as opposed to mere enthusiastic decisions (PAZ, 2017) [22]. Bruno *et al* (2001) [7] in a study on profitability index and capital turnover in broiler production, indicated that the major constraint in broiler production was the high cost of production, both studies concentrated on a few established farms that had high bird population and significantly ignored exogenous factors that can affect the profitability such factors as level of management, marketing methods, marketing challenges and bird mortality. There is a need to identify the key challenges faced by women in running successful poultry businesses and gather recommendations from women entrepreneurs on how to strengthen empowerment programs to better support their needs and aspirations. Hence the need to assess the effectiveness of women’s empowerment through comprehensive urban development programs. However, insufficient data on various factors such as the aforementioned exogenous variables, pricing mechanisms and labor costs make it difficult for most scale farmers to identify exactly what factors will affect their returns. This study will take a unique approach in that we will analyze the broiler production among small scale farmers. We will explore those factors that can affect profitability starting from the inception of production up to dispatch at the market therefore encompassing both the socio-economic and institutional factors.

1.3 General Objective

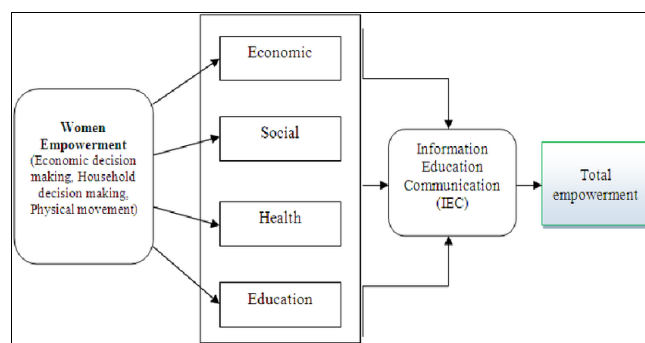
The main objective of the study is to Assess the

effectiveness of Women’s Empowerment through Comprehensive Urban Development Programs.

Specific objectives

1. To establish effectiveness of women’s empowerment programs initiatives to improve the living conditions of Chingola households.
2. To determine the relationship between women empowerment and improved livelihoods.
3. Identify challenges faced by women in poultry businesses.

1.4 Conceptual Framework



Gender and Development (GAD) theory provides the foundational understanding of how gender inequalities intersect with development processes (Kabeer, 1994). It highlights the importance of addressing gender disparities and promoting gender equity to achieve sustainable development outcomes (Moser, 1993) [20]. Within this framework, the study will examine how empowerment programs in the poultry industry contribute to advancing gender equality in Chingola. The capability approach, developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, emphasizes the importance of expanding individuals' capabilities to lead lives they value (Sen, 1999) [23]. In the context of this study, the capability approach will be used to assess the extent to which empowerment programs enhance women poultry farmers' capabilities, such as acquiring new skills, accessing resources, and making meaningful choices about their lives and businesses.

It is important to postulate what is expected to occur during the interaction of these variables as noted by Miles (1994) that researchers ought to have an idea of the possible outcomes of the interaction of key variables despite the outcomes not being accurate. Low levels of experience on broiler enterprise is most likely to reduce returns in that it would be difficult for one with little experience on broiler production to identify major factors that can be controlled to improve profitability. We expect the type of market outlets used by farmers to be important in explaining variations in gross margin because different outlets fetch different prices.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study holds significant importance as it aims to provide empirical insights into the impact of empowerment programs on women poultry farmers in Chingola, Zambia. By assessing differences in socio-economic status, decision-making roles, and economic empowerment between program participants and non-participants, the research will inform policymakers, NGOs, and development practitioners on tailored interventions to promote gender equality and women's rights in the poultry industry. The findings will

contribute to informed policy and programming, leading to improved livelihoods, economic growth, and community resilience. Moreover, by amplifying the voices of women poultry farmers and incorporating their recommendations into program design, the study seeks to empower women, enhance their agency, and foster sustainable development in Chingola.

1.6 Operation definition of key terms

Effectiveness: refers to the degree to which something is successful in producing desired results. It is about achieving intended outcomes or goals efficiently. Effectiveness often involves assessing both the quality and quantity of outcomes achieved related to the resources and efforts expended.

Women: the term encompasses more than just biological aspects. Women represent a diverse group of individuals with unique identities, experiences, and contributions to society across various cultural, social, and historical contexts.

Empowerment: the process of enabling individuals or groups to gain control over their lives, make decisions, and achieve their goals in a self-determined way. It involves giving people the tools, resources, and opportunities they need to realize their full potential and participate actively in society.

Comprehensive: refers to something that is through, inclusive, and covers all aspects or components of the particular subject or issue.

Urban: refers to areas associated with cities or towns, typically characterized by high population density, infrastructure development, and various economic and social activities.

Development: the process of growth, advancement, or improvement over time.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Women's empowerment programs initiatives to improve the livelihoods

The Beijing Declaration (UN 1995) that emerged from the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women included a focus on the advancement and empowerment of women, highlighting the need to challenge patriarchal and intersecting structures that subordinate women in society and create gender inequalities. While gender inequalities related to rights, resources and responsibilities in the agricultural sector have been well documented (see (FAO, 2011) and other articles in this special issue), less well documented are gaps in empowerment and agency between men and women, owing to the lack of individual-level data and the lack of consensus on how to define and measure these concepts. In particular, a lack of conceptual clarity around the term "empowerment" as mobilized in the international development agenda, along with the subversion of the term in neoliberal political agendas, has diluted the concept that social activists brought to the table in Beijing (Batliwala 2007; Cornwall and Rivas 2015^[14]; Nazneen *et al.*, 2019).

While this captures part of agency, it does not fully depict the concept of agency, defined as "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them" (Kabeer 1999, 438). Kabeer (1999) explains that while decision-making is often used to measure agency, it can also take other forms that are unobservable (and thus difficult to measure), such as negotiation, manipulation, subversion, and resistance, and is

closely related to the idea of "power within" (Rowlands 1997).

Even the current use of participation in decision-making to measure agency has its drawbacks. Typically, women report their own participation (or ability to participate) in household decision-making processes. It is also often framed in terms of autonomous decisions that women make alone versus joint decisions made with spouses and/or others, with the highest level of women's empowerment often thought to be sole decision making, and the lowest when she is not involved in decision making at all (Bernard *et al.*, 2020^[4]; Peterman *et al.*, 2021; Seymour and Peterman 2018).

In Uganda, Acosta *et al.* (2019)^[11] found that joint decision-making can range from being informed (either before or after a decision has been taken) to participating in conversations about the decision.

Increases in the availability of sex-disaggregated and intrahousehold data have improved assessment of the extent of gender equality in resources and achievements, but measuring agency is more difficult. Some measurement approaches capture changes in empowerment as a process, and others as an outcome (Carr 2003^[10]; van Eerdewijk *et al.*, 2017). Assessments should capture "different dimensions and sites of empowerment in a more holistic way, one that aims to understand the relational dynamics of power and positive change at a variety of levels, in different spaces and over time" (Cornwall 2016, 345)^[13].

2.2 Relationship between empowerment and improving livelihoods

Control over income is a critical dimension of women's economic empowerment and autonomy. Research has shown that women who have control over their earnings are better able to invest in their own and their children's education, healthcare, and well-being (Johnson & Andersen, 2015; Doss *et al.*, 2013). For example, Johnson and Andersen (2015) found that women's control over income in rural Tanzania was associated with higher expenditures on children's education and improved nutritional outcomes. Similarly, Doss *et al.* (2018) demonstrated the positive impact of women's access to mobile money services on their control over household finances and decision-making autonomy in Kenya.

Access to capital is a fundamental requirement for starting and expanding businesses, yet women entrepreneurs often face significant barriers in accessing financial resources (Coleman, 2018)^[12]. Studies have consistently shown that women are less likely than men to have access to formal financial services such as bank loans, credit lines, and venture capital (Bruhn & McKenzie, 2014^[6]; Klinger & Schündeln, 2011). Efforts to address this challenge include microfinance programs, business grants, and financial literacy training tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs (Bruhn & McKenzie, 2014^[6]; Klinger & Schündeln, 2011).

Women entrepreneurs, particularly those in agriculture and small-scale industries, may lack access to training and information on best practices, market trends, and technological innovations (Bobonis *et al.*, 2017)^[5]. Interventions aimed at addressing this challenge include skills development programs, extension services, and mentorship initiatives that provide women entrepreneurs with training and support to improve their production

techniques and business acumen (Bobonis *et al.*, 2017)^[5]. These barriers may include traditional gender roles, stereotypes, discriminatory laws, and cultural beliefs that prioritize male authority and limit women's autonomy (Kabeer, 2015; Alsop *et al.*, 2016)^[2].

Poor infrastructure, including inadequate transportation, energy, and telecommunications systems, can pose significant challenges for women entrepreneurs, particularly those in rural and remote areas (World Bank, 2017). Limited access to reliable transportation and electricity can increase production costs, reduce market access, and impede business growth (World Bank, 2017). Efforts to address poor infrastructure may include investments in basic infrastructure development, improvements in transportation and energy networks, and initiatives to expand internet access and digital connectivity (World Bank, 2017).

Weak networks refer to limited social capital and professional connections that may hinder women entrepreneurs' access to markets, financing, and business opportunities (Burt, 2014)^[8]. Women, particularly those from marginalized groups, may have smaller social networks and fewer opportunities to build relationships with key stakeholders such as suppliers, customers, investors, and business mentors (Burt, 2014)^[8]. This lack of social capital can limit access to critical resources and information, reduce business visibility, and impede growth prospects. Interventions aimed at strengthening networks may include networking events, business forums, mentorship programs, and peer-to-peer support groups that facilitate relationship-building and knowledge exchange among women entrepreneurs (Burt, 2014)^[8].

2.3 Challenges faced by women in running poultry businesses

Women entrepreneurs are often more vulnerable to economic, environmental, and social shocks due to their limited access to resources, weaker financial resilience, and greater exposure to risks (World Bank, 2019). Shocks such as natural disasters, economic downturns, and health crises can disrupt supply chains, decrease demand for goods and services, and erode women entrepreneurs' livelihoods (World Bank, 2019). Moreover, women may face additional burdens during crises, such as increased caregiving responsibilities and heightened exposure to gender-based violence. Strategies to enhance women's resilience to shocks may include risk mitigation measures, emergency preparedness plans, social protection programs, and access to financial safety nets (World Bank, 2019).

From the literature provided, it is clear that there is a strong relationship between poverty and women empowerment. This has been confirmed by various studies conducted by researchers such as Arakai (1997)^[3], Moyoux (1998 & 2000), Kabeer (2007), and Herma and Joke (2009). Important to note is the fact that WEPs are as a result of the escalating poverty levels among communities, the rural women being the most hit. The current literature such as that by Herma and Joke (2009) suggests that participating in an empowerment program can contribute to women's empowerment which, in turn, would lead to the reduction in the levels of poverty. Therefore, the way in which poverty is defined can have an important impact on how programmes are targeted and ultimately on who benefits (Bamberger *et al.*, 1996). 2.7. The clubs date back to the efforts primarily of European women, especially

missionaries, who mobilized both rural and urban women into the so called 'clubs.' History indicates that, in Zambia, the first image and identification of women were as mothers and housewives (Arakai, 1997)^[3]. Arakai further observed that these clubs focused primarily on their role as mothers and wives and paid very little attention to agriculture production and income generation on one hand. On the other hand, men's skills and labour were utilized on the mines and settler commercial farms while the productive skills of women were neither recognized nor developed.

The reason seems to be that, as Moser (1989: 1807) points out in Arakai (1997, 130)^[3]: "Women are regarded as vulnerable groups, like as the sick and disabled and their interests remained the responsibility of the marginalized social welfare-related ministries". In the 1980s, there was a shift in the approach of women's clubs from welfare to Income Generation Activities (IGAs). This was necessitated by the fact that Zambia began facing serious economic crisis and debt problems (Noyoo, 2007).

2.4 Personal Critique of Literature Review

Several studies have found positive associations between various empowerment measures and agricultural production indicators (Anik and Rahman 2021; De Pinto *et al.*, 2020^[16]; Diiro *et al.*, 2018^[17]; Seymour 2017; Wouterse 2017, 2019). For example, in Niger, empowerment scores are positively associated with agricultural output (Wouterse 2017, 2019). Wouterse (2019) estimated that an increase of 1.0% in average empowerment would increase output by almost 1.0%. She also found that empowerment interacts positively with the value of agricultural equipment owned by the household and negatively with the use of fertilizer by the household (Wouterse 2019), and that empowered households are more likely to have zai pits, a climate change-adaptive land-preparation method also referred to as 'planting pits' (Wouterse 2017). Control over income is a critical dimension of women's economic empowerment and autonomy. Research has shown that women who have control over their earnings are better able to invest in their own and their children's education, healthcare, and well-being (Johnson & Andersen, 2015; Doss *et al.*, 2013). For example, Johnson and Andersen (2015) found that women's control over income in rural Tanzania was associated with higher expenditures on children's education and improved nutritional outcomes. Similarly, Doss *et al.* (2018) demonstrated the positive impact of women's access to mobile money services on their control over household finances and decision-making autonomy in Kenya. These findings underscore the importance of financial inclusion and women's economic empowerment in enhancing their control over income and improving household welfare.

2.5 Establishment of Research Gap

While there is growing recognition of the importance of women's participation in agriculture, including poultry farming, there may be limited research specifically addressing the challenges and opportunities faced by women in this sector. Existing studies may predominantly focus on broader agricultural contexts or specific value chains, overlooking the unique dynamics of the poultry business and its implications for women's empowerment.

Research gaps may exist regarding the contextual factors influencing women's empowerment in urban settings, particularly in the context of Chingola district. There may be

insufficient understanding of the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors shaping women's access to resources, decision-making power, and participation in urban development programs within this specific locality. While there is a body of literature on women's empowerment programs, there may be limited evidence on the effectiveness of these programs in achieving sustainable outcomes, such as increased productivity, asset ownership, and control over income, particularly in urban settings. Existing studies may lack rigorous evaluation methodologies or longitudinal data to assess the long-term impact of empowerment interventions.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study will use a descriptive case study to evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive urban development programs implemented in Chingola, Zambia since 2015 in improving the socio-economic empowerment of women engaged in poultry farming.

3.2 Target population

According to Burns and Grove (2019), a population is defined as all elements (individuals, objects and events) that meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study. For this study the population comprised of female and male residents in the selected household of Chingola District.

3.3 Sampling design

Purposive sampling techniques used in this research was a non-probability sampling design in such heterogeneity technique was used, in which respondents were both males and females. Non-probability sampling was employed because its cost and time effective, also looking at the nature of the research non-probability enables a researcher to select a group of respondents from a large population knowing full well that some members of the population had a zero chance of being surveyed, for example, respondents who were declining to provide the needed information. (O' Cathain, 2014).

3.4 Sample size determination

The research had a sample size of 60 respondents who were drawn randomly from the population of Chingola District. Thus, it comprised of 60 respondents who included both male and female residents of Chingola. These respondents were drawn from different selected households from all sides of district.

3.5 Data collection methods

Instruments used to gather data, such as questionnaires, exams, planned interview schedules, and checklists, are referred to as data collecting instruments (Seaman 1991). A questionnaire, according to Hungler (2009), is "a way of getting information on respondents' attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and feelings. A device used for measuring, such as a survey, test, or questionnaire, is referred to as an instrument in general. The tools for structured interviews and surveys will be developed to identify important concerns both before and after the projects were put into action.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is a critical and careful examination of material or data in order to understand its parts, and the

relationship between variables and to discover its trends. (Andani, 2013).

Data collected from the use of questionnaires and interviews was analyzed quantitatively. The data will be analysed by using Statistical package for Social Solution (SPSS) software, version 22 and Excel.

3.7 Triangulation

Triangulation is "the convergence of data obtained from diverse sources to assess the consistency of a conclusion," according to Yin (2014). A crucial strategy for enhancing the reliability of educational research is triangulation. Patton (2002) addresses four different forms of triangulation, including triangulation of data sources, investigator triangulation, triangulation of viewpoints on the same data set, and triangulation of procedures (Methodological triangulation).

3.8 Limitations of the Study

Accessibility to information will be on eliminating factor which the researcher faced. There has been little study about women empowerment. Also obtaining the quantitative data offinancial and performance reports was a challenge because the firm under study had a policy of non-disclosure of certain information. So, it was difficult to collect information on the budgets and from ministry of gender expenses.

4. Results

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

This section covered the general information on the characteristics of the respondents in terms of their age, sex, and employment status.

4.1.1 Gender of Respondents

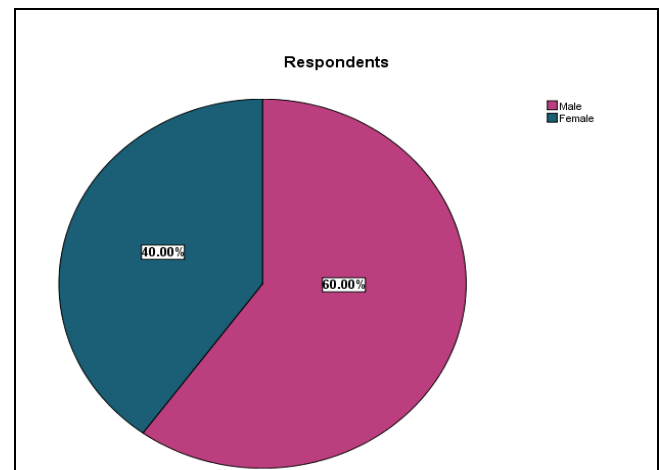


Fig 2: Below shows that data collected from respondents comprised of 60 (60%) males and 40 (40%) females

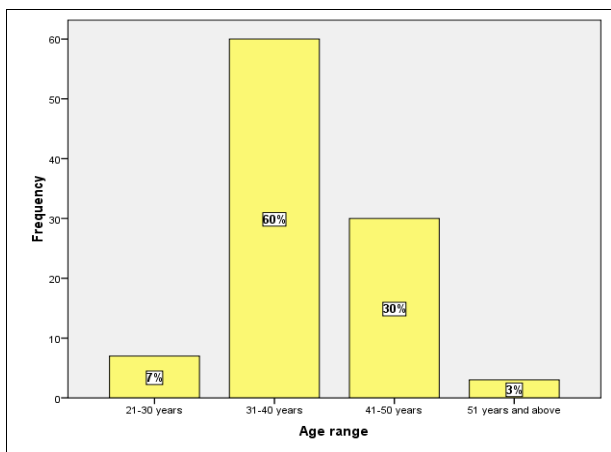
4.1.2 Level of Education

Source: Compiled by Author 2024

Table 4.1.2 indicates that 5 (5%) of the participants attained certificate level of education, 15 (15%) of the participants attained Diploma level of education, 70 (70%) of the participants attained Undergraduate degree level of education and 10 (10%) attained Master's level of education.

4.1.3 Respondents by Age

Data gathered from respondents shows that 7(7%) of the participants were aged between 21-30 years, 60 (60%) were aged between 31-40 years, 30 (30%) were aged between 41-50 years and 3 (3%) of the respondents were 51 years and above. This information is also shown on the bar graph below.



4.2 Results based on Objective One

Figure 4.2.1: How has the women groups empowered the members?

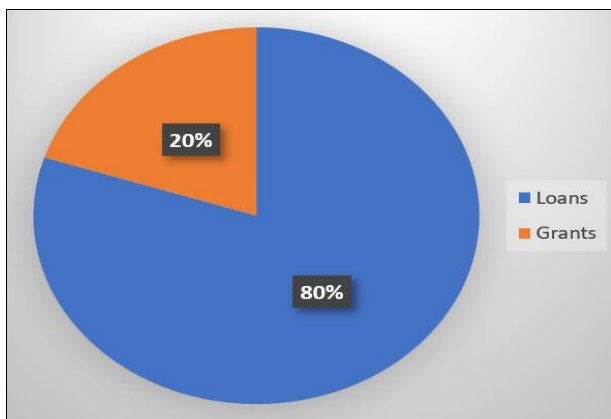
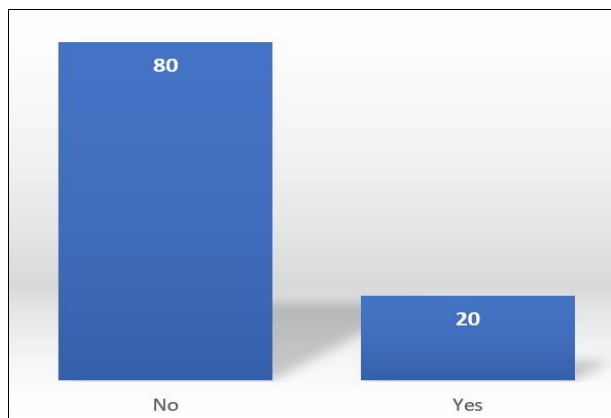


Fig 4.2.1: How has the women groups empowered the members?

From the chart above, 80% of respondents said women’s groups empowered the members through the giving of loans while 20% of respondents said through grants.

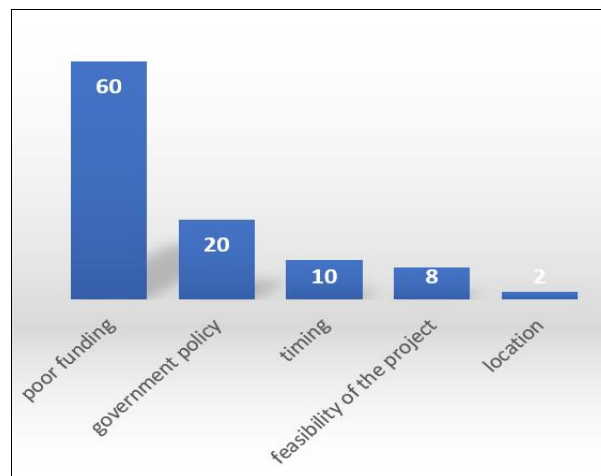
Figure 4.2.2 Are the activities of the women groups implemented according to the original plans?



From the chart above, 80% of the respondents said no the activities of the women groups are not implemented according to the original plans while 20% of respondents said yes the activities of the women groups are implemented according to the original plans.

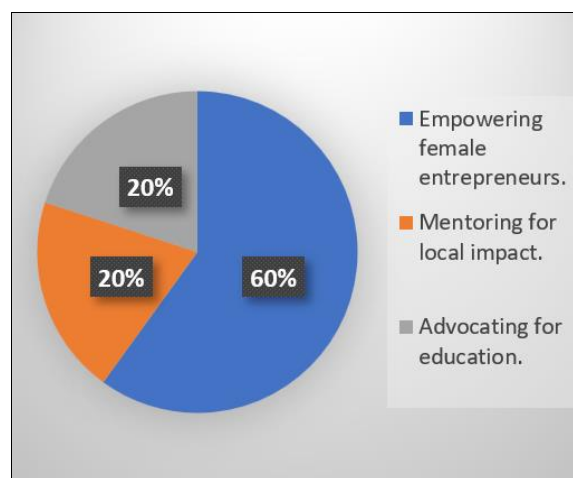
Results based on Objective Two

Figure 4.2.3 What factors influence the implementation of the WEP in the District?



From the data above, 60% of respondents said poor funding is a factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District, 20% of the respondents said government policy is the factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District, 10% of the respondents said timing is the factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District, 8% of the respondents said feasibility of the project is the factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District while 2% of respondents said location is the factor that influence the implementation of the WEP in the District.

4.2.4 Are there sustainability measures that are put in place regarding the WEP?

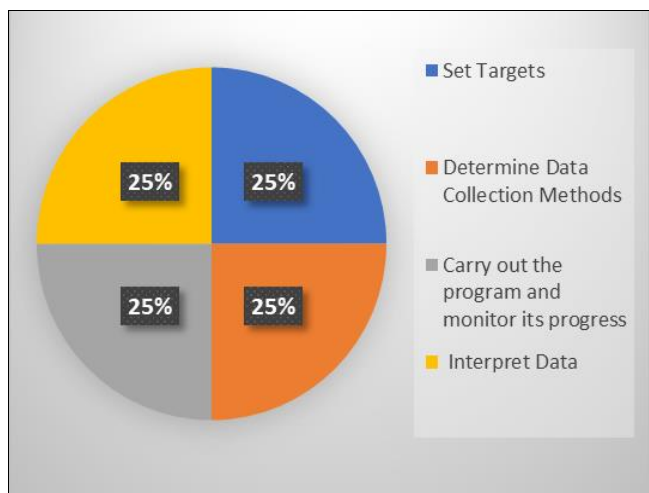


From the data above, 60% of the respondents said empowering female entrepreneurs is a sustainable measure that are put in place regarding the WEP, 20% of the respondents said advocating for education is a sustainable measure that are put in place regarding the WEP while the other 20% of the respondents said mentoring for local

impact is a sustainable measure that are put in place regarding the WEP.

Results based on Objective Three

4.2.5 Explain how monitoring and evaluation is conducted?

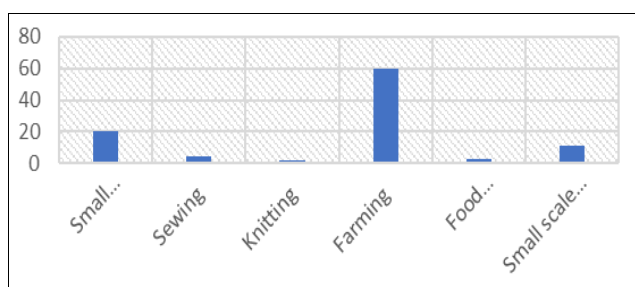


From the data above on explain how M&E is conducted at each stage 25% of respondents said; set target, determine data collection methods, carry out program and monitor its progress and then interpret data.

4.2.6 What do understand by the term empowerment?

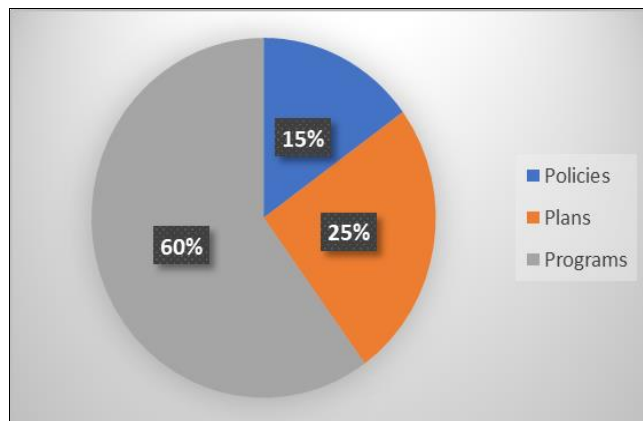
Empowerment means people having power and control over their own lives. People get the support they need that is right for them. Empowerment means that people are equal citizens. They are respected and confident in their communities. You can't empower someone else or make someone empowered.

4.3 Explain the main activities of the WEP being provided in Chingola District?



From the data above, 60% of the respondents said the main activities of the WEP being provided in Chingola District is farming, 20% of the respondents said is small animal production, 11% of the respondents said its small scale businesses, 4% of the respondents said its sewing, 3% of the respondents said its food processing and preservation while 2% of the respondents said its knitting.

4.3.1 Do you have any of the following documents in place regarding WEP.



From the data above, 60% of the respondents said programs documents in place regarding WEP, 25% of the respondents said they have plans documents in place regarding WEP while 15% of the respondents said they have policies documents in place regarding WEP.

4.4 Discussion of findings

The typical achievements include poverty, income, wealth, nutrition/health (women's and children's), education, among others. While these measures of achievement provide information about gender gaps, they are not directly aligned with Kabeer's concept of empowerment, which is about goals that are unique to individuals. Measured achievements may be linked or associated with individual goals but may not provide a full picture of whether the person is achieving their own personal goals.

On the other hand, data on agency remains scarce, especially at the national level. Much of the existing data either comes from individual projects and/or is only representative at subnational levels. Agency is also arguably more difficult to measure. The most common way of measuring agency has been to consider women's (and men's) participation in different decisions, typically within the household.

Even the current use of participation in decision-making to measure agency has its drawbacks. Typically, women report their own participation (or ability to participate) in household decision-making processes. In some cases, a joint decision could mean that women are gaining agency/voice/decision-making power—they are making decisions and acting upon their goals. In other cases, a joint decision may mean that someone else (a spouse, for example) has a say and could thus impede a woman's ability to make strategic choices. In Uganda, Acosta *et al.* (2019)^[1] found that joint decision-making can range from being informed (either before or after a decision has been taken) to participating in conversations about the decision

Furthermore, decisions included in measures of women's empowerment are not necessarily related to women's own goals. Kabeer's definition of empowerment focuses on

gaining the ability to make strategic life choices. This implies two things: first, a change over time—a transformation from not being able to make one's own choices to having that ability—and second, a focus is on strategic life choices, which implies focusing on one's own goals.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

From the literature provided, it is clear that there is a strong relationship between poverty and women empowerment. This has been confirmed by various studies conducted by researchers such as Arakai (1997) ^[3], Moyoux (1998 & 2000), Kabeer (2007), and Herma and Joke (2009). Important to note is the fact that WEPs are as a result of the escalating poverty levels among communities, the rural women being the most hit. The current literature such as that by Herma and Joke (2009) suggests that participating in an empowerment program can contribute to women's empowerment which, in turn, would lead to the reduction in the levels of poverty. However, there is also evidence demonstrating that WEPs can have negative effects on empowerment of the poor. Such contradictory findings justify the need for more studies that are devoted to this topic. To this effect, other than just focusing on microfinance and evaluation studies in WEP, it is also necessary to consider engaging in multidimensional and implementation studies so that appropriate mechanisms, interventions, plans or policies will be employed and adhered to, with a view to helping the poor women meet their needs. This aspect would subsequently lead to their empowerment. Therefore, the way in which poverty is defined can have an important impact on how programmes are targeted and ultimately on who benefits (Bamberger et al., 1996). 2.7. History of women's groups Women's projects have a colonial history in Zambia and began with Women's Club approach to development. The clubs date back to the efforts primarily of European women, especially missionaries, who mobilized both rural and urban women into the so called 'clubs.' History indicates that, in Zambia, the first image and identification of women were as mothers and housewives (Arakai, 1997) ^[3]. Arakai further observed that these clubs focused primarily on their role as mothers and wives and paid very little attention to agriculture production and income generation on one hand. On the other hand, men's skills and labour were utilized on the mines and settler commercial farms while the productive skills of women were neither recognized nor developed.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Government to improve funding

The government should improve the funding levels and procedures for the WEP. In fact, the WEP is befitting better funding because the majority of the women are poor and vulnerable. The WEP is one such program that is aimed at uplifting the standards of living of the poor and vulnerable people.

The Ministry of Home Affairs should decentralize the issuance of certificates of registration for women groups. This will go a long way help the rural women to access the certificates without much difficulties.

The Department of Community Development should re-look at the procedures and systems that surround the management of women groups. This is more so because it has been

established that these procedures and systems.

The Department of Community Development has different programs. Each program tends to be implemented individually on its own merits, with no overall strategy for setting priorities or deciding how different projects/programs complement each other. For instance, the benefits from improved house hold food security levels will be much reduced if the same families do not receive education programs on how to maintain continued effective skills in agriculture. Arising from the foresaid, the researcher strongly suggests that the Department of Community Development should work out mechanisms to ensure that all programs are integrated and packaged rather than delivering them in piecemeal or separate units. Through this approach, effective utilization of resources would be enhanced.

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