

# **GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OF BENEFITS ACCRUED FROM TEA FARMING IN KIGANJO DIVISION, GATUNDU DISTRICT**

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**ABSTRACT:** Agriculture is the cornerstone of Kenya's economy with most households depending on it for food and livelihood. Women provide the largest share of agricultural labour in many households. Despite the important role that women play, they are discriminated in the area of access to and control over the agricultural benefits. In agriculture, tea farming was the main foreign exchange earner in the year 2011. But despite the important role tea farming plays in Kenya, there are gender inequalities in the access to and control of the benefits accrued from tea. The existing gender inequalities have not been adequately investigated and documented. Therefore the objective of this study was to investigate the gender dynamics in the access to and control of the tea benefits in Mundoro location, Kiganjo division, Gatundu District. Simple random sampling was used to select two sub-locations while random sampling was used to select seventy three tea-farming households. The respondents were the household heads and two officials from Theta tea factory. Data was collected using an interview schedule for the household heads and an interview guide for the tea factory officials. Data collected was analyzed according to the emerging themes based on the research objectives. The findings showed that women within the male-headed household were discriminated in the area of access to and control over tea benefits. However, women household heads had access to and control over tea benefits within their households. The Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA), culture, widowhood and the level of education, were identified as the barriers that encouraged gender discrimination. Deliberate efforts should be put in place to sensitize the stakeholders on the need to equitably share the tea benefits. The study recommended that strategies that enhance gender equity be put in place to enable all women and men access and control the tea benefits.

**Keywords:** DYNAMICS, CONTROL, FARMING, TEA

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***Background to the Study***

Agriculture is the main economic base for many people in Africa and constitutes a key economic sector in most countries. Agriculture has been described as the cornerstone of human life and the backbone of many countries especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the European Union, agriculture accounts for about a third of Africa's Gross Domestic Product (EU, 2007). The sector also provides 60-90% employment with low-income farmers accounting for most of the production in Africa (FAO, 2008). Agriculture has significantly reduced poverty in India, China and Bangladesh (Lipton, 2001), and therefore agriculture in Africa has the same potential to create employment and lift people out of poverty.

According to the World Bank (2000), Africa has a lot of unexploited resources in agriculture plus hidden growth reserves in its people especially the women. In Africa, women play different but very substantial roles in agricultural production. Women provide more than half of the labour in the continent although they lack equal access to and control over the resources. Women's contribution in agriculture is made invisible and therefore overlooked (ILO, 2002). The African women have little or no voice in decision making while their needs and constraints lack influence to inform public policy choices and priorities (World Bank, 2001). Extreme gender imbalance in land ownership, access to and control over agricultural benefits is a major hindrance to women's economic development (Cornhiel, 2008). According to UNDP/IMF (2007), women in Africa are important to agriculture and their initiatives to raise the sectors productivity cannot be ignored especially in because most societies are agrarian.

Kenya is a tropical East African country with diverse climate and geographical regions that allow many crops to be grown successfully. Agriculture is therefore the leading driver for economic growth, employment and foreign exchange earner and the primary source of livelihood for many households now and in the future (Republic of Kenya, 2004). The main cash crops in Kenya are tea, coffee, wheat, sugarcane and tobacco. Tea is the leading export crop in Kenya with Kenya being among the largest producer of black tea in the World competing only with India and Sri Lanka (TBK, 2010). The tea sector is the largest employer with more than eighty thousand people working in the sector and about three million people earning their livelihood from the sector (Anonymous, 2003). Tea farming is therefore Kenya's single largest foreign exchange earner with the tea total earnings for the year 2010-2011 having reached 97 billion Kenya shillings up from 69 billion Kenya shillings the previous year (TBK, 2011).

Women in Kenya constitute over 80% of the agricultural labour force, but they only account for 5% of registered landholders nationally (FAO, 2008). Women play a significant role in smallholder tea farming providing most of the labour required however their ability to access and control the tea benefits is questionable (Tanui, 2005). Women are also discriminated in the area of ownership to other farm equipment while women household heads own less than half of the equipment owned by male-household heads (World Bank, 2001).

In Kenya, the farmers grow tea in contract with Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA). KTDA is an independent and private tea enterprise owned by smallholder tea farmers and offers management and professional services to individual factories and companies. The Tea Board of Kenya (TBK) also works together with the farmers by offering management, professional services, leadership on production and quality. However, despite the fact that women and men participate in tea production, there is no mention of gender issues and concerns in both the Kenya Tea Development Authority and the Tea Board of Kenya strategic plans.

The Government of Kenya in its National Poverty Eradication Plan (NAPEP), notes that agriculture influences the performance of the overall economy through its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product and it is therefore the basis for growth in other sectors of the economy (Republic of Kenya, 1999). The government continues to rely on agriculture as the key leader in development. The Poverty Reduction Strategy (Republic of Kenya, 2001) and the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERSWEC) (Republic of Kenya, 2003), both identify agriculture as the sector that will steer economic growth and create employment for the Kenyan people. But according to Cornhiel (2008), the said economic growth in agriculture can only be realized by addressing the specificity of women's contribution and the constraints they face as they undertake their different roles and responsibilities.

However, despite the important role agriculture plays in Kenya, the ambitious strategies and policies, the sector fails to address the gender dynamics that do affect supply response or hold increases in production. Failure to address gender inequalities can result in women failure to benefit from structural adjustment measures in agriculture thus denying them their livelihood. The World Bank (2005) asserts that the urgency for securing agriculture prominence in the development agenda can only be tackled by addressing gender issues. At the same time, gender inequality can be addressed by agricultural growth that benefit men and women hence the basis of this study.

Gender is the social relationship between men and women both perceptual and material. It is socially constructed and it is often used to organize and govern the processes of production, reproduction, consumption and distribution (March, 1999). Gender biases make some people face multiple deprivations due to the interaction of economic and social processes (World Bank, 2000). There are deep-rooted socio-economic factors that underlie farming and it is imperative therefore to understand the conditions under which women and men gain access to and control over productive resources (Overholt, 2008). Access to and control of productive resources is associated with membership in social groups while the structures of relations among members influence patterns of production and land ownership (UNDP, 2001). It is therefore important to establish the constraints faced by women farmers within their households in the area of access to and control over tea benefits and to identify the influencing factors.

According to a report by the African Union (AU) Protocol on women, the rights of women are to be promoted, realized and protected for the women to fully enjoy all human rights (AU, 2003). This was advocated with the hope

that all stakeholders in agriculture and other sectors will now and in the future use gender lenses to be able to ask; who produces, who earns, who reproduces, who owns, who accesses, who controls, who decides, who benefits and who loses? Therefore, women's tremendous contribution in agriculture and especially tea farming cannot be ignored (Nyamu-Musembi, C., 2002). Agricultural and rural development that is equitable and sustainable cannot be pursued without emphasizing the crucial role women play in determining and guaranteeing the well being of the entire household. It is imperative to ensure that all the potential actors in tea farming are given the support to access and control the benefits in order to enjoy sustainable livelihoods and better lives (Overholt, 1999). Within this context, women's empowerment will be central for them to access and control tea benefits and to enhance their living conditions particularly in Gatundu District.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Women and men play substantial roles in the agricultural sector. They are involved in tea production activities though in different ways within the households. Women's roles in tea production are more evident and more strenuous than those of men. Women work on the tea farms for many hours than the men by providing most of the labour needed on the tea farms. But despite their involvement, women suffer discrimination in all matters related not only to land ownership but are also excluded in the area of access to and control of agricultural benefits including tea. Out of this concern, this study intended to establish the gender discrimination in the access to and control of tea benefits since tea farming is one of the agricultural activities that the women are involved in specifically in Kiganjo Division of Gatundu District.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The overall objective of the study was to investigate the gender dynamics in the access to and control of benefits accrued from tea farming in Kiganjo division.

#### **The specific objectives of the study were: -**

- a) To identify the gender roles in tea production.
- b) To identify benefits accrued from tea farming in Kiganjo division.
- c) To establish the access to and control of specific tea benefits in different households by gender.
- d) To identify factors influencing the access to and control of tea benefits in different households.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Janet Chafetz Gender Equity Theory developed in 1990 guided this study. Janet Chafetz was one of the most prominent feminist theorists committed to developing scientific explanations of gender stratification. Gender equity theory presents a set of propositions to explain the forces maintaining a system of gender inequality as well as a theory of how such a system can be changed. The theory is based on the assumption that coercive acts of gender inequality are ultimately related to gendered division of labour in a society. The argument being that division of labour is gendered and that work and resources are defined and distributed based on a person's sex (Chafetz, 1990).

The more material and power advantage males have over the women stemming from the gendered division of labour, the more men will use this power in their relations with women. As a result, men will less likely contribute to family and domestic work thus overburdening the women with domestic chores. This makes it increasingly difficult for women to compete with men in the area of access to and control of resources (Asimwe, 2010). The theory asserts that men control material and power resources to their advantage, that they define, control the work situation and regulate micro encounters between men and women. This helps men control elite positions in society hence perpetuating definitions of worth that favour men leading to devaluation of women's work inside and outside the domestic sphere (Randall, 1993). The theory asserts that women family roles go unpaid or undervalued because they are not valued highly as men's roles. This was significant to this study in identifying the household roles, the benefits, the value of women's work and the tea beneficiaries by gender. Therefore, based on the study focus and the theoretical framework, below is the conceptual framework that guided this study.

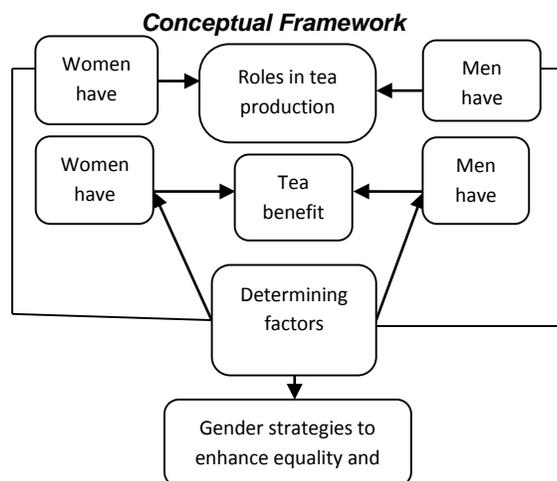


Figure 1: Gender Dynamics in Access to and Control of Tea Benefits

From the above conceptual framework, the main roles performed within the households were tea planting, picking, transporting, weeding and pruning. Men had more access to and control of tea benefits than the women. Gender, community norms, culture and KTDA policies determined the distribution of roles and access to and control of resources.

### Research Design

The study adopted an exploratory descriptive survey design that describes the nature of the existing conditions. As such, scheduled interviews were utilized to identify and describe the gender roles in tea production and the tea benefits. The design also helped establish the access to and control of the tea benefits and to identify factors that enhance the access and control thus allowing for the identification of engendered strategies. The study collected data that depicted people’s opinions and ideas and described the situations as they were on the ground.

### Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Mundoro Location was purposively selected out of five locations because it is the largest producer of tea. Through simple random sampling, two sub-locations out four sub-locations in Mundoro location were selected. The two sub-locations had 1797 tea farming households. 5% of the households were selected according to Boyd (1981), that a sample size should be a figure greater or equal to 5% of the households’ population. The respondents were 24 female household heads, 49 male household heads and two tea factory officials randomly selected.

### Research Instruments

Data collection instruments included interview schedule for household respondents and interview guide for the tea factory officials. Observation checklists were also used within the households and at the tea factory to get an insight of the daily activities.

### Data Collection Procedure

Primary data was collected using interview schedule and questionnaires. The researcher with the help of two research assistants did the scheduled interviews while interview guide guided the tea factory respondents in collecting data. Observation of activities within the households and at the factory was done to understand the involvement of the respondents. In addition, secondary data on registered ownership of tea farms and the beneficiaries was collected from the factory records.

### A Summary of the Study Findings

The study established that women from male-headed households had more roles in tea production than their husbands. The women were assigned the roles that were tedious and took many hours like tea plucking and transportation while the men undertook seasonal roles like tea planting and pruning as shown below.

**Gender roles in tea production**

| Activity           | Male | Female |
|--------------------|------|--------|
| Land preparation   | a    | a      |
| Tea planting       | a    | a      |
| Weeding            |      | a      |
| Pruning            | a    |        |
| Picking            |      | a      |
| Tea transportation |      | a      |

The male household heads had access to and control over benefits accrued from tea farming within their households while the women within male-headed households. However, the female-household heads had access to and control over the tea benefits within their households. Therefore, women from male-headed households were discriminated in the area of access to and control of tea benefits within their households.

**Tea benefits, access to and control over in MHH and FHH**

| Benefits      | Access |     | Control |     |
|---------------|--------|-----|---------|-----|
|               | MHH    | FHH | MHH     | FHH |
| Finance       | 49     | 25  | 49      | 25  |
| Fertilizer    | 49     | 25  | 49      | 25  |
| Processed tea | 49     | 25  | 49      | 25  |
| Total         | 49     | 25  | 49      | 25  |

Factors such as KTDA Policy of registering men as tea owners, community norms, lack of title deeds by womengender biased culture and illiteracy made it hard for women to benefit from their tea production roles.

All the male household heads were able to access and control the benefits within their households. They made decisions on how to use the resources and how much to allocate to their wives and to the other needs of the family. However, most of the females from the male-headed households were discriminated in the area of access to and control over the tea benefits because men had power over the benefits within the households. The females had unequal access to and control over the tea benefits with their husbands. The male household heads had the power to access and to control the tea benefits because they were the registered tea owners. They controlled the women’s productive benefits even though they did not actively participate in the production of the benefits. However, the females from the Female Headed Households were able to access to and control over the tea benefits because they had acquired the tea owners’ rights after the death of their husbands and inheritance from their fathers.

**Conclusion**

It is evident from the research findings that there was gender discrimination in the area of access to and control over tea benefits within the households in Kiganjo division. Though women were involved in tea production they could not access and control the tea benefits except through their husbands, fathers or if they were widowed. The study concludes that the male household heads need to recognize women as equal partners in access to and control over the tea benefits. Appropriate measures need to be put in place to empower women in the area of access to and control over tea benefits without gender discrimination.

**Recommendations**

This study recommends that tea ownership be reviewed by the Kenya Tea Development Authority with the aim of licensing men (husbands) and women (wives) as tea owners. This would empower women from all tea-farming households to grow their own tea or to have a portion of the family tea farm under their names to enable them access and control the tea benefits. Regular workshops should be held to educate the tea farmers on gender issues and concerns in regard to access and control of tea benefits. This could help demystify the gender stereotypes that men have about women and thus eliminate gender discrimination.

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