

Factors affecting women's participation
in sweetpotato markets for vines, fresh
roots and processed products in
Malawi



Research
Program on
Roots, Tubers
and Bananas



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Structure of the presentation



- Background
- Specific objectives
- Methodology
- Vine Marketing
 - The role of institutions
 - Pricing of vines
 - Perceptions about opportunities and obstacles
- Fresh roots markets
- Processed sweetpotato products
- Conclusions and recommendations



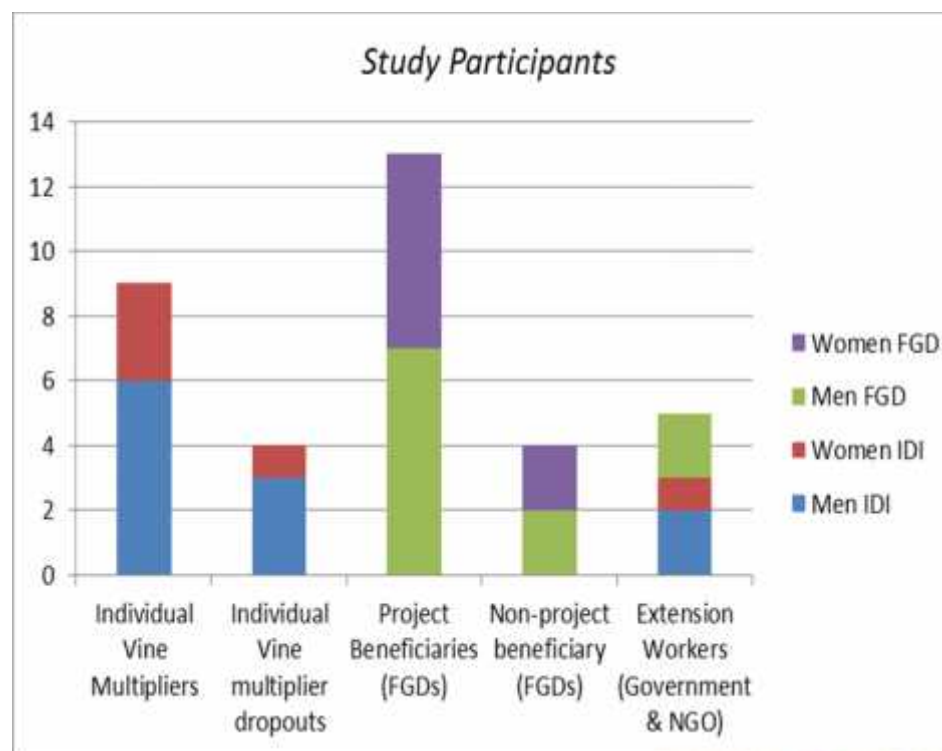
Specific Objectives



- Understand how sweetpotato markets work
- Examine how social and other values (e.g. gender norms) in communities affect the performance of markets
- How gender relations shape men and women's experiences of agricultural markets and benefits
- Provide recommendations for the sweetpotato interventions and Irish Aid funded sweet potato project in Malawi to ensure the design of sweet potato value chains that will benefit both men and women.

Methodology

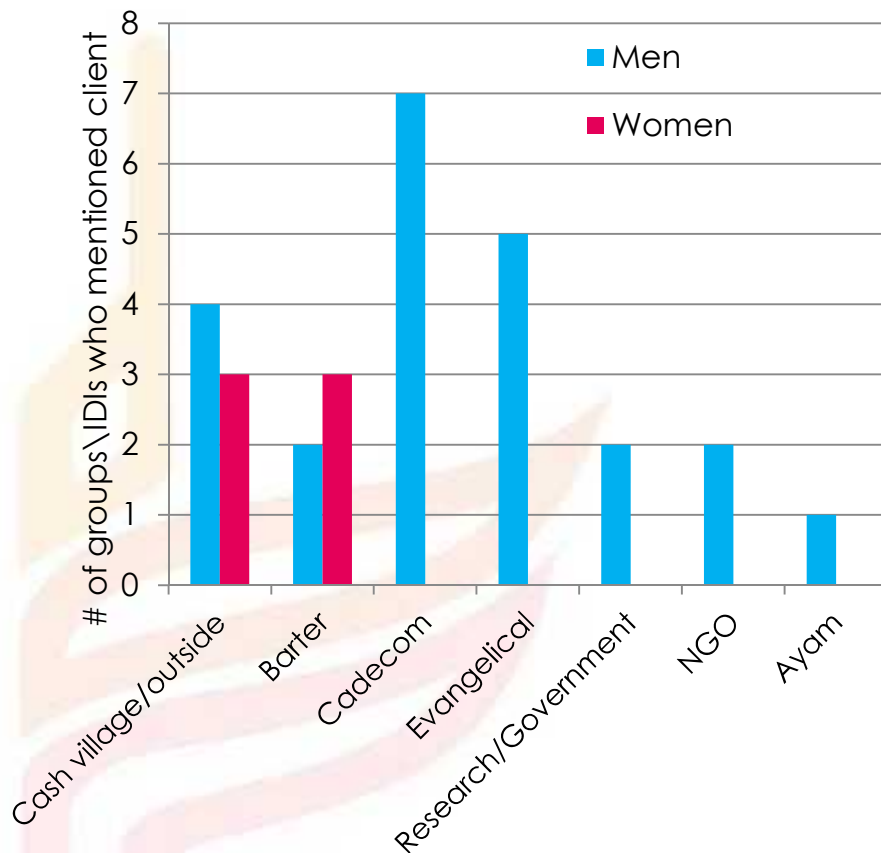
- Social Relations approach to markets (Real Markets Approach)
 - Markets are social institutions that have gender dimensions in terms of the way men and women come to the market and participate
 - Look at the interaction of cultural, structural, and economic factors (Zelize, 1998)'
- Current economic analysis focus on price analysis but lacks attention to institutional and political factors underlying market development (Baden, 1998)
- Market analysis is not able to perceive other signals except price (Polanyi) and profitability
- Power and inequality



Irish AID funded Rooting Out Hunger in Malawi with Nutritious Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato as entry point

How institutions shape men and women's participation

Sweetpotato vine clients



- In contrast to men women did not have a diverse set of institutional buyers. Why?
- Institutional bias against recruiting female DVMs...household headship (Research Organizations, NGOs, Extension services...)
- Women dominated barter tradewhat are the implications?

How institutions shape men and women's participation



We can say that we need assurance that we will have markets when we grow the vines, and if that assurance is there every woman will start a nursery at her home because we know it will bring developments to our houses, but the problem is that we may grow the vines but not get any market at all (Women, FGD)

- Women vine beneficiaries formed groups to multiply vines but mention lack of markets as a major obstacle to vine multiplication
- Women excluded from benefiting from vine marketing

How institutions shape men and women's participation

- Men mentioned lack of knowledge for women as a reason why husbands did not allow women to sell vines. This is also linked to lack of access to training

...when it comes to vines women don't know how to weigh the vines and they don't know when the vines are not enough, they may sell too much or sell less (Participant in Men FGD)

Selling vines by bundle or by weight

	Bundle	weight
Male	0	6
Female	4*	3*

- None of the male DVMs sold by bundle
- Men sold to institutional buyers and had been trained compared to women who sold mostly to local buyers and had little training
- Women sell in 50kg burlap bags (bags expand due to age and can disadvantage the seller)

How institutions shape men and women's participation



- Family rules designating men as household heads meant that men could make decisions related to participation in vine markets... (vine marketing as business)

Participant: Men are the ones who have the power [to decide].

Participant: You as a woman you will be leading in doing the sales but when you come with the money the husband takes everything and he is the one who will know what to do with the money.

(Women, FGD participants, Livunzu, Chikwawa)

Respondent: He [my husband] says he is the one who can sell vines, he says that ' I will be the one who will be selling' ...He will insist on going to sell the vines,Because he says you cannot sell the vines well but I can do it better as man and your job as a woman should be to stay at home. So as women we don't argue we stay just at home (Wife of DVM2, Chikwawa)

Pricing (vines)

Pricing	W	M	Reasons
Type of buyer (whether institution or local individual)	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher prices for institutional buyers lower prices for individual buyers • Local buyers may also buy smaller bundles which are cheaper
Demand and supply	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When demand was high prices increased to even about 500MK per bundle (4kg)
Prices are determined by the buyer	4	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional buyers like CADECOM tell us how much they are buying the vines • There is no room for negotiation because vines are perishable
Trait preference	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disease resistant SP varieties fetch more • Farmers sometimes pay for overpriced OFSP vines if the vines higher yielding (1000MK in East Bank Nakondwe Chikwawa)

Marketing of Sweetpotato roots



- Whose crop is it anyway: ‘
 - ‘the woman will have the power because that field is hers, it is her office’
 - Where sweetpotato was a major cash crop men were more involved
- When sweetpotato is cooked women dominated because it was sold in small quantities at local markets
- Mobility limited women’s ability to participate in sweetpotato markets
- Male DVMs not interested in sweet potato roots so wives can make decisions on those

R: This OFSP here because of our soil type we get small roots. That is why I said we love this OFSP because of its vines, Cadecom buys the vines... that is why we want a new variety so that it can help this one out because it doesn't produce a lot of sweet potato roots (man in an FGD)

Marketing of Sweetpotato roots: what men and women said



- Men know how to sell vines and women do not while sweetpotato production is for women therefore it is women who sell
- Some sweetpotatoes are bartered whilst men prefer cash.
- Vines are easy to sell compared to roots so men prefer to sell vines
- Roots are labour intensive (digging and carrying to the market men are not willing)
- Men do not want to sell roots in the market because it takes long to sell the roots and the money comes in small amounts and is therefore difficult to invest (compared to cash from vines)

I can say that we haven't sold the vines but the sweetpotato roots us women go to the market to sell because men say it a woman's job... the men are not interested like my husband here right now he is in the fields and to tell him come and let us dig these roots and go to sell he will 'say do that. I can do other things'. (Female DVM dropout, Chikwawa)

Processed products

- Men dominate fries women mandazi and samoosas
- Sweetpotato fries are easy to make and sell and need less inputs/ingredients while mandazi are expensive to make and not profitable

The reason [why men prefer to make fries] is chips are easy to make you just need to heat cooking oil and put the chips but mandazi requires a lot of things

- Mobility issues women cant sell sweetpotato fries by the roadside (compare with vines)

- We have tried to substitute but it is not easy especially when it comes to making cakes, they need their own ingredients to make them soft, we cannot make samoosas without meat, we really need the meat. We use sweet potato leaves to make tea and juice but for other products there are no substitutes (Women beneficiary FGD , Chimwemwe, Chikwawa)

If processing is not at industrial scale farmers may not benefit economically

Conclusion



- Institutions such as research organizations and extension need to reform as they shape the gender dynamics of markets and ability of men and women to benefit (focus on HH)
- The way DVMs were recruited and linked to markets limited women's access to extension support for vine multiplication and ultimately to the markets.
- Men were able to link much more with formal information channels which gave them more advantages than women
- Need for research to understand how so called non-market institutions influence how markets operate
- Women bore the cost of imperfect markets....e.g. the cost of transportation of roots to local markets, lacked access to information and market networks therefore dominated barter trade characterized by small quantities of vines

Conclusion



- The market is not a neutral space but structured by power and inequality. As a result interventions need to take this into consideration (Why was sweetpotato vine marketing dominated by men even in communities where sweetpotato had traditionally been a woman's crop)
- If women are able to be targeted as vine multipliers and marketers either in groups or as individuals, this will increase their voice in decision making since the vine multiplication and potato production will be regarded 'as their office'
- Developing markets for industrial processing of sweet potato may benefit both male and female farmers if they have access to the markets than local processing which is often not profitable and usually for home consumption

Thank you

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Men and women's voices matter in designing gender equitable and efficient sweet potato value chains