

Women and men farmers perceptions of economic and health benefits of OFSP in Phalombe and Chikwawa district in Malawi



Research
Program on
Roots, Tubers
and Bananas



**Netsayi N Mudege, Sarah
Mayanja and Tawanda
Muzhingi
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
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Structure of the presentation

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Background

Why the study:

It is important to understand what makes farmers happy and interested to keep using a technology, how they perceive benefits from the different array of crops they grow as these perceptions may also be key in determining whether they adopt biofortified crops or not.

- Gender is a key element in link between nutrition and agriculture (Margolies, and Buckingham 2013) and also incomes and agriculture
- Nonpecuniary benefits are as important to farmers as pecuniary benefits (Howley 2015) so need to go beyond the obvious economic/financial benefits.
- Malawi close to 85% still reside in rural areas making agricultural strategies viable for addressing economic and nutritional deficiencies
- 57% stunting among children under 5

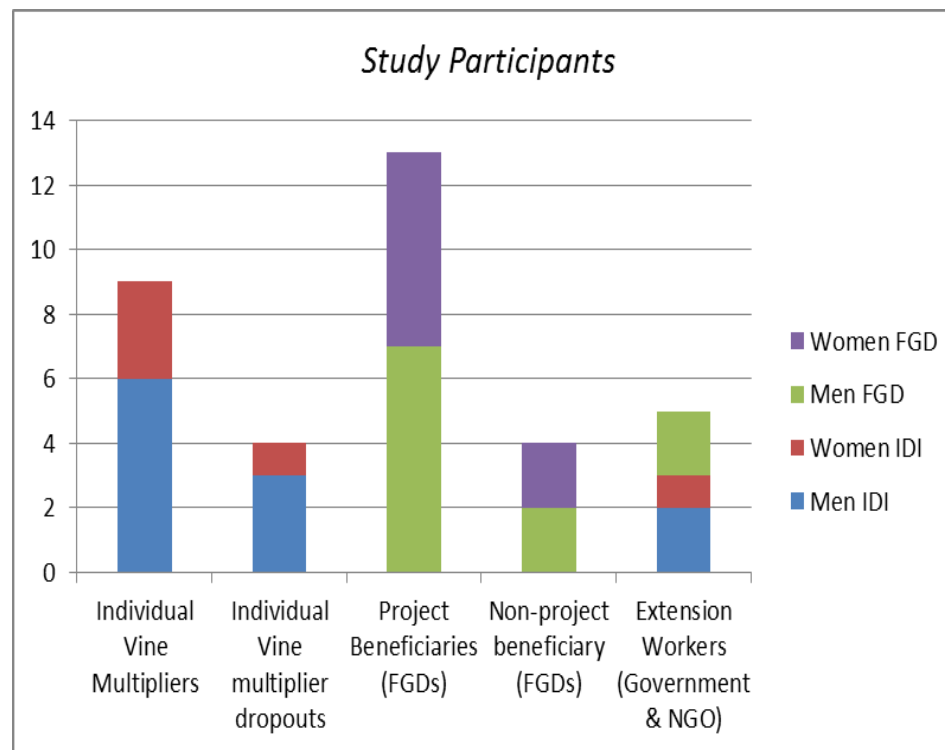
Specific Objectives

- Understand men and women farmer perceptions of economic and health benefits of OFSP vine multiplication and root production since perceived benefits may influence adoption



Methodology

- Social Relations approach
 - Perceptions of health and economic benefits may be influenced by a variety of social relationships including gender dimensions in terms of the way men and women participate
- Gender roles and norms may influence the extent and ability of men and women to benefit as well as shape type of benefits



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



Why men and women adopted OFSP (roots & vines)

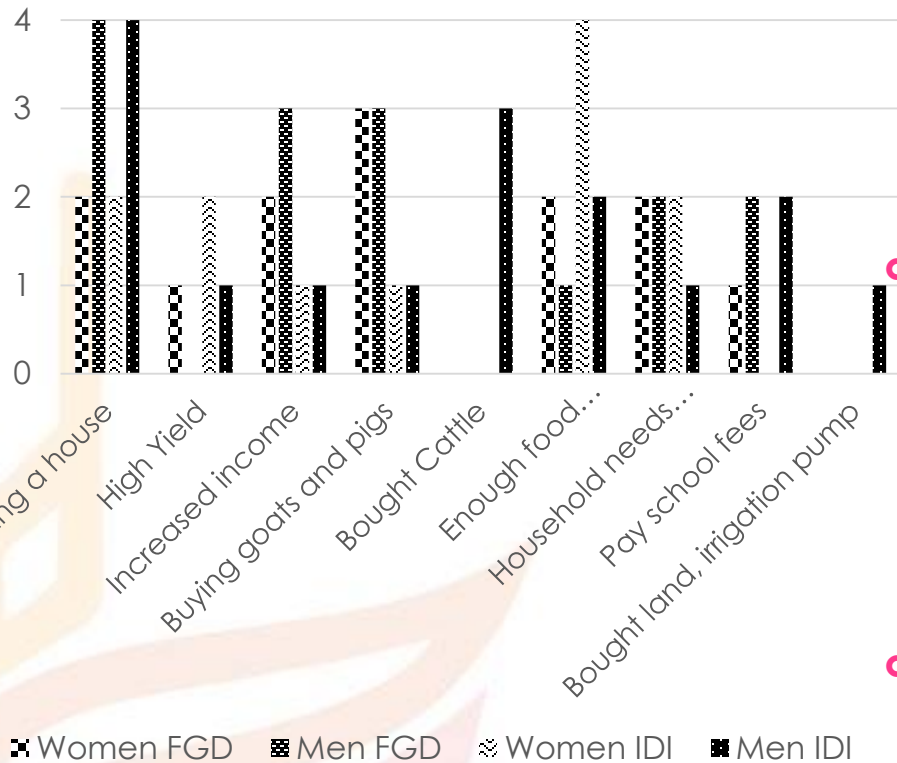


- Anticipated economic benefits (promise of higher incomes)
- Health Benefits such as vitamins A

Yes they are [beginning to plant OFSP]. They are just looking at our achievements, because ...when they saw that I had managed to build a house, many people are seeing that the orange fleshed sweet potato can help improve homes. (A woman FGD participant, Phalombe)

Participant: we built this house so it seems many people have seen what we have done and they are joining. ... when others saw that we were benefiting [from multiplying OFSP vines] that is when they started joining (growing OFSP) after seeing that there are benefits. (A man FGD participant Phalombe)

Perceived Economic Benefits of OFSP roots and vines by sex



○ we had tried to farm rice and many other crops but we never got anything in return but when we decided to try this OFSP, that year we had big returns and that is how we built this house (Man FGD participant, Phalombe)

○ Mostly we were always having food shortages...because the maize yield was low due to inadequate rains. The maize wasn't enough to last the whole season. We could not get extra to sell. So when we discussed we saw that if we start vine multiplication we will get enough food and we will be able to earn money. (Female DVM, Phalombe)

○ The thing is before everything that I wanted to buy for the household I had to ask. I had to ask for money from my husband for everything, be it soap, salt, the child's needs this at school. Since I started growing and selling orange fleshed sweetpotato vines and roots, now I have my own money. I don't have to ask for money from my husband even if he has money. *I no longer have to kneel to ask for money for small things like salt* (Interview with woman DVM, Phalombe).

○ Men more likely to mention larger livestock than women and building houses than women

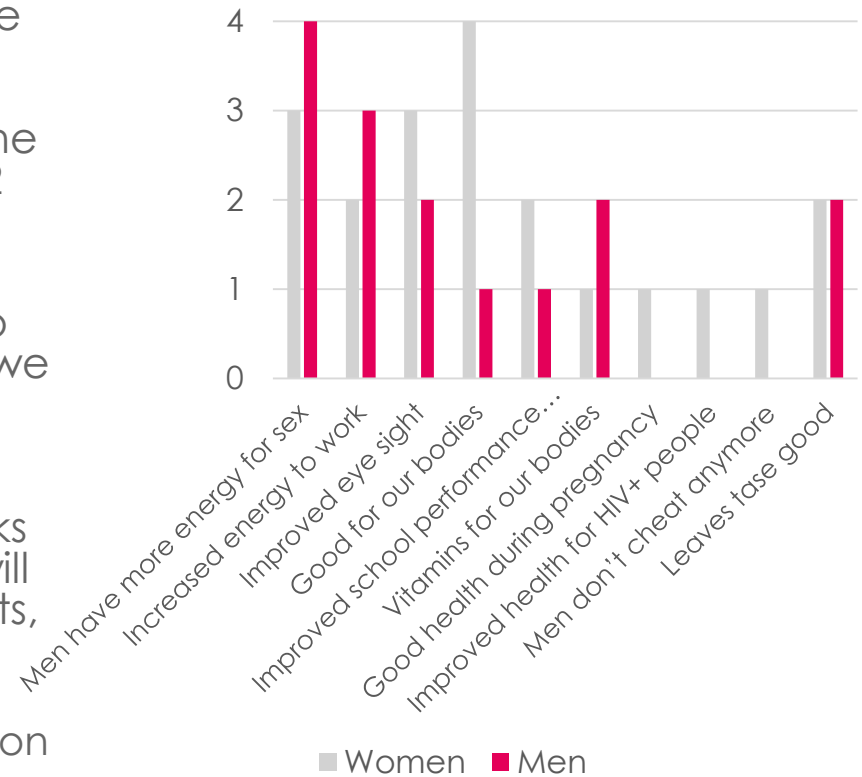
○ Women talk more about enough food than men

○ Do men and women benefit equally from 'family investments'?

Perceived Health and social benefits of consuming OFSP Roots and leaves by sex



- Participant: Before this sweet potato came we were very weak. But when we were given these sweet potato vines and grew them it's like we have been given medicine or injections. I am old but I have just had 2 children twins,
- For me before we had other sweet potato and we were also eating vine leaves but we were not getting the power that we have now. My wife is testifying on how I am performing [in bed]. She likes to cook the vine leaves and she knows when she cooks leaves in the afternoon, that night there will be work to be done (Men FGD participants, Chikwawa)
- The sweetpotato is good because I have a son who is in school. The time we started eating OFSP I saw he changed even in school. His thinking has improved he is small but is now in the higher class. It is because when he eats the OFSP he is full and is able to understand more in class. It has improves his interaction as he can think quicker (Man FGD participant, Phalombe)



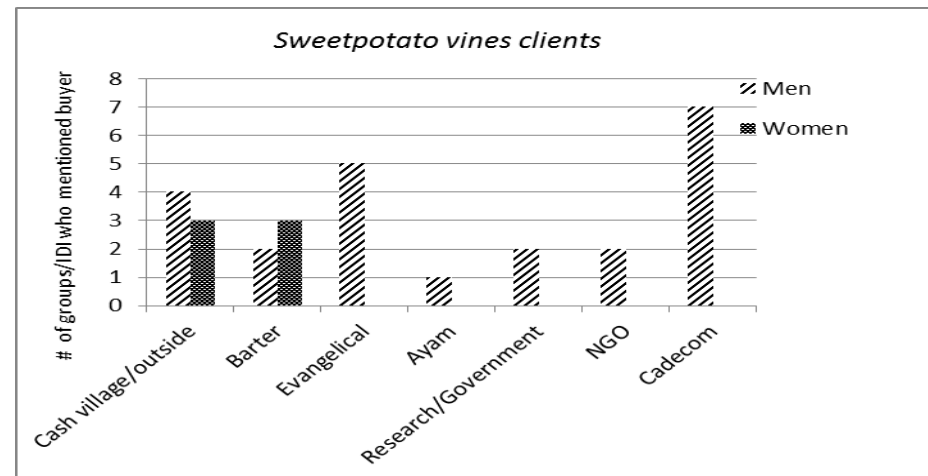
Determinants to accessing benefits

- Men controlled income from vines and women dealt with roots that were less profitable
 - Women had neither time nor resources to invest in vine multiplication (extension)
 - For example maize was less demanding and it was perceived that women preferred to cultivate rice because when they sell it they could control the money to buy what they wanted which was different from incomes received from sale of vines
 - Type of marital union (Matrilineal communities men preferred to invest in cattle which they could claim in case of dissolution of marriage (need to have additional research to determine whether marriage systems influence investment decisions)
- When asked about women's ability to benefit from agricultural endeavors one woman from a matrilineal community mentioned that men controlled the money and did not share it with women claiming that because they were household heads they should keep the money and decide on its use. Thus even the ability of women in matrilineal communities to control benefits was limited by norms related to household headship

Determinants to accessing benefits

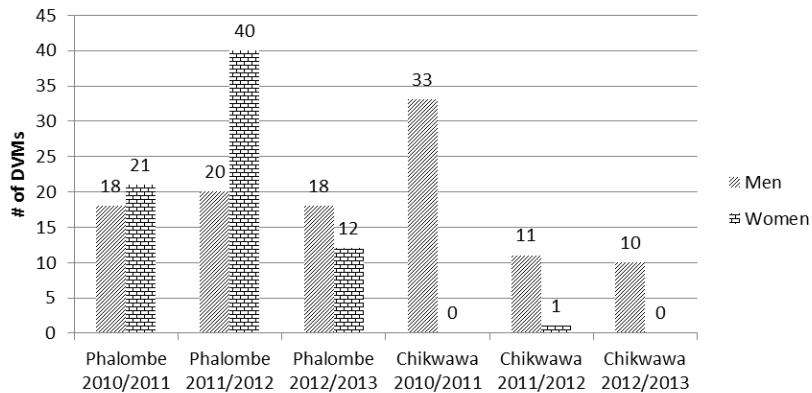
- Women mentioned lack of markets as limiting them to participate in vine multiplication and increasing root production
- Women excluded from markets and dominated barter

- we have met the multipliers households who are mainly headed by men. But the men together with the woman come into the plot they assist one another in planting even weeding but when it comes to selling it is men who dominates the selling and receiving the cash. (extension worker)

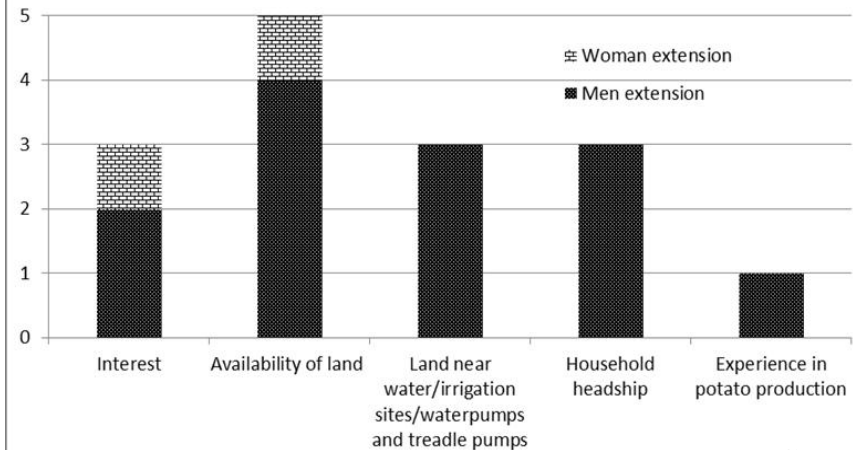


Determinants to accessing benefits

DVMs producing and marketing clean planting material by sex, district and season



Reason for selecting farmers for vine multiplication



- P1: the water is available but it is not accessible because we don't have pumps.
- P2: If we get the treadle pumps, or even engines...
- P: Our farming will prosper and we will increase our yield. (Women FGD Participants, Chikwawa)

R: For me as a woman I have not benefited in any way. Because benefitting as a woman would mean that I can also buy what my heart desires but because I am working. But I am working for somebody's else's plan then that part I feel it is not good....I wanted to buy livestock like goats and he said no.

Several women's groups rented land/asked for land from village chief to produce vines

P: We have our own land; all of us have big pieces of land and all of us plant our vines in our own fields....We can say that since we are married, when there is less land on the men's side and there is more land on the woman's side so we plant on both lands. (Chikwawa, Women

Conclusion

- Study demonstrates agriculture, nutrition and health linkages
- Increased OFSP incomes linking to diversification of livelihood portfolio (e.g. investment into livestock leading to diet diversity)
- Benefits on energy levels, sexual performance, skin health and cognitive capacities not implausible because of function of Vitamin A in the body but may need more objective measurement
- Importance of access to markets in adoption cannot be over emphasized
- Women more likely to invest in small animals than large animals

Conclusion



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- 'Trading up' (Ellis, 2003) assets can be a sign of moving out of poverty
 - (men vine multipliers are the ones who managed to purchase cattle compared to men and women who did not multiply vines (promote and expand roots markets
 - Does trading up always empower women?...there is need to understand who has control over what animals
- Restrictive gender norms such as those related to control of certain resources within the home may make it harder for women to climb out of poverty. Ownership of cattle could also be a status symbol especially for men.
- Choice of investment options when it came to livestock depended on gender and amount of agricultural income that one had

Conclusion

- Investments in most off-farm activities especially related to small shops and restaurants was a field mostly dominated by men, also because of lower incomes that women received from roots as compared to the higher incomes men made from vines.
- Women mentioned an improvement in their income from selling of roots and also increase in self-esteem and self-respect because they no longer had to ask money from their husbands to buy household consumables. Building self-esteem among women has been regarded as important in interventions that seek to empower them (Farnworth and Colverson 2015)

Thank you

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