



FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS PARTICIPATION IN SMALL SCALE FARMING AND FOOD SECURITY IN SEMI-ARID REGION TANZANIA

Deodata V. Mtenga

Department of Development Studies, School of Social Sciences, College of Humanity and Social Sciences, University of Dodoma (UDOM), P. O Box 259, Dodoma, Tanzania

deodatamtenga@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Female headed household is one in which female has high decision power and play a key role in all household chores such as income generation and provision of care to their members. Female headed households have been engaging in a very low pay job which is not defined as economically active employment in national account just to support their family. In case of female headed households involved in small scale farming and particularly in semi- arid regions are not fully studied. Therefore this study aimed at investigating food security status in female headed households involved in small scale farming in semi-arid region. The study was conducted at Chololo village Kikombo ward in Dodoma Municipality whereby 30 female headed household involved in small scale farming were interviewed. Multiple data collection methods were utilized ranging from Household Survey, Focus group Discussion, Key Informant Interview and Observation. The study found that, female headed household involved in small scale farming in semi arid region are always suffer from food insecurity. The reason is due to the fact that they are in disadvantage side in regard to resource ownership as it was revealed that the maximum size of land one own was two hectares which is very small to support enough food production in semi arid region with precarious climatic condition. Also due to lack of male support they suffer

from increased household burden for which they have to carry it alone. All these contribute to food insecurity in female headed household. The study recommends that female headed household should be given special attention by government and considers them as vulnerable group so that they can be included in development agenda.

Key Words: Female Headed Households, Small Scale Farming, Food Security, Semi-Arid

1.0.INTRODUCTION

Female headed household has been defined differently by different scholars in different time. In 1994 Muthwa defined female headed household as a woman who legally becomes the head of the household when there is no permanent male partner, due to death, desertion, divorce, separation or single motherhood (Muthwa 1994). In addition Hossain and Huda (1995) defined female headed Household as any household in which the adult male is away for 6 months or more at a time and a woman assumes the usual functions of the household head. So the definitions imply that in female headed households woman has high decision power and she plays a great role in all household chores including income generation and providing care for their members. Moreover they may sometime carry extra economic activities if they have large number of children (Chant, 2003).

Several factors have in recent times contributed to the rise in the number of FHHs. These include migration of male spouses for work, widowhood and changing social norms that have led to reduced marriage rates among women (Kassie 2014). These factors have led to two major categories of female headed Household (Chant 2003, Kassie 2014) The first categories is *de jure* characterized by no spouse due to widowhood, divorce, separation or non-marriage and the second category is *de facto* characterized by spouse physically absent for many reasons such as wives of male migrants, or women who play the dominant role even with the presence of a male partner in their lives (Chant 2003, Kassie 2014).

Having heading their own household female has to carry out several economic activities to cater for the need of their family members and especially children. They have to ensure for their food, clothing and shelter which are the basic needs for all human being. Therefore, female headed household has been reported to be vulnerable than male counterpart. Kassie (2014),

report that vulnerability become part of life in many FHHs and there are invisible and visible factors that emphasize women's vulnerability in the field of agriculture thus contributing to food insecurity in their households. These factors are caused by limited access to information, cultural practices that disenfranchise female heads of household or minimize status of girls and women (*ibid*).

In addition inequality in access to resources and particularly land which is the most important productive factors exacerbate the condition. It is supported by FAO (2011), where land ownership was considered as a leading cause of poverty in female headed household but in many parts of the world women's rights to land and property is systematically denied. Laws give women fewer or less secure rights than men, and discriminatory attitudes and practices undermine them. This leaves many women almost entirely dependent on the men in their lives for basic economic survival. Female headed household in this case are more affected as they have no support from male partner who is at advantage position with regard to resource ownership (FAO, 2011).

Therefore, due to their vulnerability female headed households have mostly engaged in low pay job which hardly support their life. They mainly engage job which is not defined as economically active employment in national accounts but they are essential to well-being of rural households (FAO 2011). The major work includes producing agriculture crop, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agriculture or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engage in trade and marketing and also they are responsible for caring of family members as well as maintain their home (*ibid*). In addition due to the fact that women have less secure right to land, hence female headed household in rural area engaged in small-scale farming are more vulnerable and they mostly suffer from food insecurity in this regard (FAO, 2011).

Many studies focus on the causes of food insecurity and poverty in households including female headed household and their impact to their livelihood security. Example the study by (Asmelash, 2014) point out that household food insecurity is the result of high population pressure, lack of alternative employment opportunities, serious land degradation, heavy dependency on agriculture based livelihood strategies and inappropriate utilization of land based resources which cumulatively lead to diminution of agriculture land and thereby its production and productivity. Another study by Aman (2004), propounded that food insecurity, is due to over

dependence on rain fed agriculture which has been a major constraint to sustainable increase in crop production. He contends that, although there is an abundance of water in rivers and lakes in Tanzania, there is very limited application of irrigation in agriculture. Those in rural areas with long dry seasons, in particular Dodoma, Singida, Shinyanga and some parts of Arusha and Tanga regions exhibit food insecure because they continue depending on rain fed agriculture (Aman 2004)

Nevertheless few studies have been done on female-headed households participating in small-scale farming and their household food security status whereby food insecurity in addition to other factors is contributed by vulnerability. Generally Female headed household are exposed to several unfavorable conditions in labor market leading to productivity shortfalls and negative consequences on the livelihood of their members. In addition they are responsible for both household and non-household productions. Household production involves the maintenance of the family, including the child care and other household chores (Akadiri *et al* 2017). Also due to their vulnerability nature, including ownership of few resources such as land and alternative entitlements such as livestock to command for food they always suffer from food insecurity. Therefore this study focused on female headed households' participation in small-scale farming and their household food security in Dodoma Municipality taking Kikombo ward as a case. This study is worth-fully as it will be a tool for informing the policy makers on the way women livelihood can be improved through inclusion and equal division of resources and particularly land.

2.0. Material and Methods

2.1.The Study Area

The study was conducted at Kikombo Ward in Dodoma Municipality where Chololo Village was selected for this purpose. Kikombo ward is located about 50 km from Dodoma town. Chololo village has the population of 4,079 people with 1,039 households (Njau *et al.*, 2014). The main sources of income are farming (94%), livestock (47%) and small business (24%) Chololo village was therefore selected for this study as is located in semi-arid region and is an example of the vulnerable area to climate change in the region with frequent droughts and insufficient food. Female headed household reside in this area are more affected than male headed household.

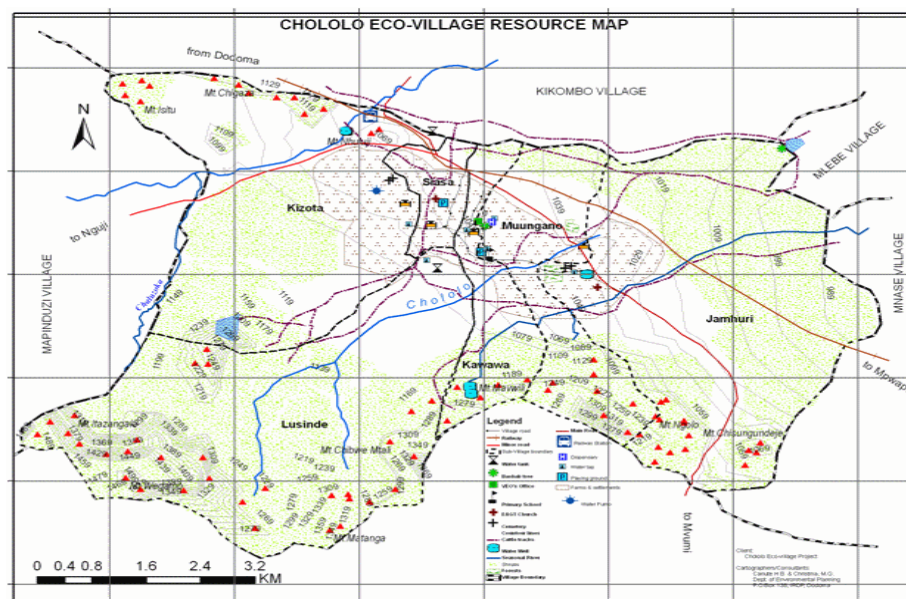


Fig 1: Chololo village resource map showing different land uses (Source: Njauet *al.*, 2013)

2.2.Data Collection

This study comprised of descriptive data that were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data collection comprised of several socio-economic methodologies; key informant and face-to-face interviews and semi structured telephone interviews with potential staff from Dodoma Municipality at Chololo village like the village chairperson, and ward counselor. Also Focus group discussion was employed to female headed household who participate in small scale farming so as to get their view on farming and food security.

Secondary data were collected to support primary data by using documentary reviews where relevant reports, journals, different articles, published papers, and electronic libraries materials were reviewed.

2.3.Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentage and mean were carried out with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16.0). Furthermore, content analysis was used to analyze data from the key informant interview and focus group discussion.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Type of female-headed household in the study area

Most of the female headed households in the study area and in most part of the world are usually involuntary rather than by choice as supported by Chant (2007). In the study area respondents were asked to tell reasons for heading their own household. The majority of them were widow which was due to the death of their husband caused by different health related problems. After death of husband it is difficult for woman to get another marriage as their male counterpart. So In the study area 14(46.7%) of female headed household were widow.

It was followed by divorced female headed household which was the result of separation of the spousal due to marital related problem. This is also supported from literature by Acosta (2003) that when marital relationship turns extremely problematic the couples decide to end up their relationship. In this case mostly women decide to take the custody of their children and assume the full responsibility for their basic needs include clothing, education, health and provision of shelter. This is also in the case to the study area where 10(33.3%) of the respondents head their own houses due to marital separation. It was supported by 47 years old female head her own house due to separation;

We were married in 2005 and we were blessed with our first born in 2006. It did not take us long time as by 2008 we got another child. They were both daughter and we were altogether live in happy life. Our life changed as my spouse starting behaving different form my expectation. He started coming home late than usual and when I tried to inquire he was very hash and he was even sometime biting me. I tried my best to seek the solution from village leaders and elders but it did not work. Then I came to realize the he had extra marital affair with other woman just the next village. After that I decide to separate and remain with my two daughters. My ex-partner is now married to another woman and he has three children with no support to my children.

Another type of female headed household is single-Unmarried women who live in her own house with other dependents like children and other relatives Account to 6(20%). This happened when woman get pregnant before marriage the man concern with the pregnant does not marry her.

3.2. Major economic activities in female headed household

Generally women are at disadvantage position due to the fact that they have few resources to support their economic activities. According to IFAD (2006) poverty exhibited by many women is due to possession of few assets as they have less opportunity to access resource such as land and credits which are the most important factor of production. This is also in the case of female headed households in such that they found themselves involving in low pay job and subsistence farming. Therefore in the study area female headed household engage in multiple low pay work just to earn living with their children. They rarely concentrate in a single activity as they perform in small scale so doing multiple activities is like supplementing each activity by the other.

Therefore 88% of the respondents reported to engaged in both farming and livestock keeping in small farm which they own or rent. 15% together with their substance farming they reported to work as laborer in different kind of work mostly farming, assisting in building activities and any related work just to earn life. In this they receive a daily payment ranging from 4000Tsh to 7000Tsh depending on the type of work.

3.3. Food security status in female headed household

Households are food secure when they have year round access to the amount and variety of safe foods their members need to lead active and healthy lives (FAO 2010). At the household level, food security refers to the ability of the household to secure, either from its own production or through purchases, adequate food for meeting the dietary needs of all members of the household (FAO 2010). So it is a function of production resource, income availability for purchases which is sufficient to meet the aggregate demand for all household members. It is therefore concerned with intra household micro economics. To be food secure the household must have means to produce (Land, production tools and inputs) and or purchase (Job and income) the food that the household need (Leathers and Foster, 2005).

In the study area in addition to above aspects, food security status was viewed by amount of cereal crops which can be kept as reserve throughout the year. Due to its semi-arid nature the major types of crop grown in the area are those drought resistant crop such as millet, bulrush millet, sunflower, groundnuts and few maize for the good season. However the ability of female headed household to ensure adequate diets intake for their family in the study area is minimum.

The respondents claimed the maximum time they can feed their family with crop harvested is three to six months. This is attributed by several factors as mentioned by respondents.

Firstly is small area of land for crop farming and other economic activities, such as livestock keeping. Most of the interviewed women own small piece of land for cultivation which cannot support production of enough food. The maximum size of land for the participants was 2 hectors, in which 17(56.7%) had two hectors and 13(43.3%) had only one hector. With regards to land ownership 12(40%) claimed to have no their own lands rather they do farming activities in the rental land. This type of farming in rental land is detrimental to food security as agriculture production will be low due to several reasons as supported by (Muraoka, 2017), that land rental do not enable farmers to achieve their desired amount of operated farm size. Moreover land productivity of rented parcels is significantly lower than owned parcels, and farmers apply significantly less organic fertilizer to rented land than to own land (*ibid*). Women are forced to rent land as they have no right to own land attributed to several socio-cultural factors. The study by (USAID 2016) had the view that women make up approximately 43 percent of the agricultural labor force and produce a significant portion of the food grown in the developing world, nevertheless have consistently less access to land than men and women's land rights are less secure (USAID 2016) .

Another factor which contributes to food insecurity in female headed household is lack of off-farm income generating activities. The respondents mentioned other economic activities which performed including wage labour, petty businesss, selling fire wood, grinding stone to get pebbles for house construction. These are some of activities done by respondents; but they just provide petty cash which can not support household budget for food security. Many studies commend the importance of off-farm income generating activities as factor to food security at household level. Example the study by (Washa, 2002) propounded that income generating activities are important for creating employment, production of locally needed commodities, income generation, growth of farm activities and poverty alleviation (Washa, 2002). It further elaborated by (Minde, 1988; UDEC, 2002) that apart from creating employment, these activities are important in their contribution to food security and raising household income through selling of products. In the study area this opportunity is minimal hence they are more vulnerable and they mostly suffer food insecurity.

In addition, household burden was another factor affecting food security status in female headed households in the study area. The average household dependants in the study area are shown in Table one. Household dependant refers to those individual who cannot work in any matter and they depend on the household head (female in this case) for their survival. The household head is responsible for provision of food, shelter clothes and other necessities such as health care and education. This is detrimental to food security as supported by (Mannal and Uddin 2012) that increase in household size would lead to decrease in the food security status of the household. This result is expected because increase in the member of household means more people are eating from the same resources, hence, the household members may not be able to take enough food when compared to a situation with smaller household size, thus increasing the probability of the household to be food insecure (Mannal and Uddin 2012). Though in reality the household size is normal for normal family but in female headed household is precarious due to the presence of a single working labour with little assistance from their children.

Table 1: Household Size of Female Headed Household in the Study Area

Household size	Number of respondents	Percentage
2-4	8	26.67
4-6	13	43.33
6-8	7	23.33
8-10	2	6.67
Above 10	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: Survey Data 2018

4. Conclusion

Food insecurity is common to many vulnerable groups all over world. In semi arid region food insecurity is due to harsh climatic condition which is drought for long period of the year. Female headed household involved in small scale farming in this area are always suffer from food insecurity due to their vulnerability nature. They have no support from male partner who is at

advantages side in regard to resource ownership. In this case they have few resources or not at all to support production. Women are generally denied their right to resources particularly land which is the most important factor for production. Also they have less access to credit which can support many other alternative livelihood strategies such as income generation activities including small business. Also household burden hamper their ability to produce enough food for their members. Therefore female headed household involved in small scale farming in semi arid region are always food insecure and may need government intervention in this case.

5. Recommendation

This study recommend for the government and policy makers to give attention to all vulnerable groups including female headed households in rural area and particularly to the area where the climate is not favorable for production of enough food. Specifically to female headed household the government may design mechanism which can support them access resources particularly land and credits which can boost economic activities.

REFERENCE

- Akadiri S., Mwaka D. and Jenkins P(2017). Are Female-Headed Households Less Food Secure? Evidence from Nigeria and Ethiopia, AFEA Session, Allied Social Science Association Annual Conference, Philadelphia 2018
- Amani H.K.R, (2004). *Agricultural Development and Food Security in Sub Saharan Africa., Tanzania Country Report*. Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. August 2004. 31pp.
- Asmelash, M. 2014. Rural households food security status and its determinants: the case of Laelaymychew Woreda, central zone of Tigray Ethiopia. *Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development*, 6(5):162-167

- Chant, Sylvia H. (2003). Female household headship and the feminisation of poverty :
Facts, fictions and forward strategies from London School of Economics
- Chant , Sylvia H. (2007). Children In female-headed households: Interrogating the concept of an
'inter-generational transmission of disadvantage' with particular reference to the Gambia,
Philippines and Costa Rica, London School of Economics, Gender Institute
- FAO (2010). Household food Security and Community Nutrition in
http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/household_en.stm accessed 30/12/2018
- FAO(2011). Women in Agriculture. Closing the Gender Gap for Development Rome The
State of Food and Agriculture, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United
Nations
- Huda S. and Hossain N. Risk factors for women headed households: What makes them
vulnerable? BRAC ICDDR, B Joint Research Report (manuscript), 1995.
- International Fund for Agricultural Development IFAD (2006): Annual Report. Rome
- Leathers, H. and P. Foster. (2009) *The world food problem: Toward ending under-nutrition in
the third world*. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Mannal M., and Uddin T., (2012) Socioeconomic Factors Influencing Food Security Status of
Maize Growing Households in Selected Areas of Bogra District *Bangladesh J. Agric.
Econs. XXXV, 1&2(2012) 177-187*
- Minde, I. (1998). *Economic Analysis of Farm and Non- farm rural employment* in Morogoro
District, Tanzania. Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University, Michigan, US.
- Muraoka, R., Land Use Policy (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2017.10.045>

Muthwa, S. 1994. Female household headship and household survival in Soweto. *Journal of Gender Studies*. 3(2): 165-175.

Njau, F. B. C., Lwelamira, J. and Hyande, C.,(2013). Ruminant livestock production and quality of pastures in the communal grazing land of semi-arid central Tanzania. *Livestock Research for Rural Development*, 25, 146

University of Dar es Salaam Entrepreneurship Centre (UDEC). 2002. *Women entrepreneurs in Tanzania*, Preliminary Report, prepared for the ILO Office, Oct. (Dar esSalaam)

USAID, 2006, Study on Women and Property Rights Best Practices in
<https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-developmen> accessed in 25/12/2018

Washa, F. L. (2002). Assessment of on-Farm and Off-farm Income Generating Activities in Kisarawe District. Dissertation for Award of MSc Degree at Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro Tanzania. 55pp.