

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Friday, 2 July 2021 08:00 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Gender Equality for Food Systems Transformation in Malawi
CONVENED BY	Malawi Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence, ActionAid, Concern WorldWide, Goal, Irish Rule of Law International, Irish Forum on International Agricultural Development, Oxfam, Self Help Africa, Trocaire
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/28241/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Malawi

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

70

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

0 51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

Male

Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

The event was convened through a consultative process that fully subscribed to the principles of engagement. Two multi stakeholder forums partnered to host the event, which involved seven NGOs collaborating and sharing resources to plan and deliver the dialogue (ActionAid, Concern Worldwide, GOAL, Irish Rule of Law International, Oxfam, Self Help Africa, and Trócaire). In this way, the dialogue built on the existing work of others and avoided unnecessary duplication. A strong effort was made to ensure a wide range of stakeholders were included in the Dialogue, including from government, civil society, the private sector and research institutes. Smallholder women farmers were facilitated to travel to the physical event to share their experiences. For those who were unable to attend in person, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the dialogue was also available online where the hybrid approach was used to ensure wide participation. Pre-recorded farmer testimonies were broadcast to further ensure multi-stakeholder inclusivity including cultural insights. Keynote speakers included Dr Judith Kamoto, Senior Lecturer at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) who spoke on Gender Equality in Food Systems; Mr. Lawrence Munthali, Trócaire Malawi, who made a presentation on Fixing Farming Systems which referenced evidence from recent Trócaire funded research on agroecology and women in farming. In addition, two local women farmers; Mary Jeffrey and Catherine Amin who are part of Trócaire's programme with the Catholic Development Commission Zomba (CADECOM Zomba) in Machinga, spoke passionately about their experience of working within the Food Systems value chain and how they are adapting their farming practises to the impacts of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, a farming entrepreneur, Ms. Ngabila Chatata, outlined the potential for improved food systems in Malawi and the challenges that need to be addressed by various stakeholders, such as government, before these positive changes can be realised.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The Dialogue was curated and facilitated in a way which created a "safe space" and promoted trust, encouraging mutual respect. In particular, a system of breakout rooms was organised to ensure that individuals could discuss the dialogue questions in small groups and contribute to the overall Dialogue findings. The conclusions emerging from the breakout rooms were shared in plenary and were not attributed to any individuals. The breakout rooms were both within the meeting space and online to ensure maximum participation. The breakout room dialogues were complemented by keynote presentations which outlined the gender and food systems context in Malawi and across Africa. These presentations helped to set the scene and encourage dialogue and discussion.

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

The hybrid format of the Dialogue (physical and online) was very effective in enabling the participation of a wide variety of stakeholders and is something that should be considered for future dialogue events. Seeking out partners for hosting a dialogue event is also recommended to complement the work of others and to build on existing initiatives.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?

Yes

No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The dialogue was convened under the Malawi Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence (MICGBV) and the Irish Forum on International Agricultural Development (IFIAD) with the aim of integrating issues of gender equality into the dialogues on the food systems sector.

The aim of the Independent Dialogue session was to discuss “how to achieve gender equality for healthy and sustainable food systems”. Through the dialogue the conveners sought too:

1. Develop a set of recommendations for gender equality in food systems in Malawi
2. Establish the position of the MICGBV as to what they believe are the commitments needed to achieve gender equality in food systems for Malawi.

These recommendations will be in support of the work of the Government of Malawi and in line with Malawi’s vision 2063, pillar one in particular on, “enjoying food security and sustainable agricultural growth by having an optimally productive and commercialised agricultural sector”.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- ✓ Finance
- Innovation
- ✓ Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- ✓ Policy
- Data & Evidence
- Governance
- Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

Key Messages:

- While rural women play a major role in productive activities, gender inequality in agriculture is stifling productivity.
- Food insecurity and hunger are well known in Malawi and throughout much of the developing world. Women and girls represent 60% of undernourished people in the world.
- Investing in women farmers is one of the most effective strategies for reducing extreme poverty and hunger, yet women, are seldom targeted effectively or reached by agricultural investments. Therefore, many Consortium member organisations in collaboration with Government and Development Partners work on food and agriculture with a focus on women and youth.
- There is need to target both men and women within the household and community when seeking to achieve gender equality in food systems transformation. As we empower women, there is need for interventions that involve men as well. If everyone takes part, this will lead to transformation in our food systems. Inclusion of Chiefs, religious and local leaders is also critical.
- All programming focusing on agriculture and women needs to be context specific. Research on sustainable agriculture diversification from Malawi indicates that it is not effective to take recommendations wholesale using a one size fits all approach as this will not be successful. For instance, research has shown that even within districts there is a need to have different approaches for effective agriculture programming. All programming must be context specific.
- To overcome barriers which constrain women's access to land and other assets, behaviour change initiatives and mind-set change are key. This is not an option; it is a must.
- There is a need for strong gender analyses to inform all activities conducted within food systems programming. GBV is real in agriculture – we must be conscious of it in interventions and ensure that we are addressing this within our programmes.
- Promoting joint advocacy: There is a need for stakeholders to work together on one common agenda and common purpose to advocate for women's rights.

ACTION TRACKS

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

Guaranteeing women's rights to land

Women's access to, use of and control over land and other productive resources are essential to ensuring their right to equality and to an adequate standard of living. Throughout the world, gender inequality when it comes to land and other productive resources is related to women's poverty and exclusion.

- There is a need for better reinforcement/implementation of existing laws and policies by the police and judiciary, to protect women.
- Women often don't know their rights. Creating awareness among women on their rights to land and the specific laws that exist can help them to take action when their rights are violated.
- Advocate for men's involvement in gender activities
- Access to land is not just about discrimination but is also about money, women's economic empowerment through Small & Medium Enterprise (SME) activities can help them to purchase land.
- To overcome barriers to women's access to land and other assets, behaviour change initiatives and mind-set change are key. This is not an option; it is a must.
- Involvement of local and religious leaders in advocating for land rights is key. For example, Chiefs in Malawi are the custodians of much of the land. Chiefs are a key stakeholder when it comes to shifting mind-sets, as they are custodians of social and cultural values. The church also has a big role to play in sensitising their followers.
- The economic empowerment of women is a critical enabling factor which supports women to be more involved in decision making at the household and community level. Examples of economic empowerment activities that have been successful include IGAs, diversification, irrigation and providing capital for small businesses.
- Promoting joint advocacy: There is a need for stakeholders to work together on one common agenda and common purpose to advocate for women's rights.
- Households should be encouraged to own land as a family, for example, the land ownership model in Southern Malawi is joint ownership.
- Agriculture policies should respond to gender issues including land ownership. For example, government policies should be able to respond to different contexts such as where land is owned by women or owned by men.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

2. Economic empowerment of women in food systems and addressing women's unpaid care and agricultural labor burden

Women play multiple roles in the food system, as producers, traders, processors, wage workers, consumers and researchers. Pathways to their economic empowerment are going to be different depending on where they are in food systems. New ways of thinking are needed to ensure women's economic empowerment at scale.

- Financial institutions should work with women as individuals in their own right to support them to access loans, and not defer to husbands for permission.
- Central banks (Reserve Bank of Malawi) should monitor the percentage of loans accessed directly by women
- There is a need for stronger monitoring and enforcement of gender policies such as The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act
- Work on behaviour change on social cultural norms is critical. However, there is need to start this work much earlier when children are young, as mindsets once ingrained are difficult to change.
- For effective programming, it is important to use the District Based Agricultural Extension Services (DAESS) system for coordination at district level.
- The quantity and coverage of extension services was identified as an issue and there is a need to reduce the ratio of farmers to extension workers, as at present this is much too high. The group also observed that there are very few women extension workers. Therefore, many of the extension workers do not fully understand the specific challenges facing women farmers and adapt their support to take account of this. Power relation issues in households also negatively impact women's ability to access to extension services, as in many instances women are denied access to training because their husbands won't allow them attend. This results in less agricultural knowledge being passed on to women.
- Evidence from Malawi shows that women's household workload is 7.7 hours compared to 1.2 for men. The group considered the impacts of this and how this time poverty impedes the ability of women to engage in more diverse livelihood and agriculture activities. It also noted how it is social cultural norms that bring about this situation and that these practices start at a very young age. The key to addressing this issue is social behavioural change programming. However, with current social change programming the focus tends to be on adults, not children. Therefore, there is a need to engage with people while they are still young. Possible entry points include schools, churches, and local leaders who can act as agents of change.
- There is often a concept of "women's crops" and "men's crops" which acts as a barrier to women's full participation in the value chain. For example, legumes are regarded as women crops but when a market appears for legumes men jump in. Addressing this social practice requires engaging with households as a whole and not just with the head of a household. Support should focus on creating more harmony in the home and getting men to see that women in value chains can have benefits. One approach cited was the "Family Life Approach" which can support families to create a shared vision for the management of households and farms. This approach uses Gender Champions who go to families and work with them on visioning. However, this approach is challenging, resource intensive and relies on the goodwill and personal commitment of champions (lack of incentives for champions). There needs to be more social workers / extension workers who can support gender programming and work with families on gender equity issues.
- In general, women are active in the lower parts of the agri-food value chain and have no control over higher value crops. We need to support women to move to the next stage in the value chain so that they move beyond household level and link with markets for high value crops. All work on gender in agriculture needs to make business sense.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

3. Women's voice, leadership and decision making in food systems: how to create gender transformative agriculture and food systems policies while addressing institutional barriers and systemic GBV

Women are actively involved in food systems in many roles, but their contributions often go unrecognized and they face many inequities. Part of the problem is that women's voices are often missing from decision making processes in the food system. Women's leadership is central to ensuring that women's needs are well articulated and addressed.

- For women's social movements to be effective it is important to understand the dynamics in the different districts of Malawi and to not take a homogenous approach. In particular, social norms must be addressed.
- There is need for a strong gender analysis before engaging in any programming involving women and food systems. This will help programmes to better understand the barriers that are there for women's movements and the involvement of women in decision making.
- It was recommended that public procurements should set aside a proportion of funding to be allocated towards purchasing from women only co-operatives, this will help support the capacity of these cooperatives and help them grow to the next level.
- Government programmes such as the Access to Mechanisation programme needs to be looked at with a gender perspective. This will help ensure that the government better understands the barriers that women face in accessing these programmes.
- There is a need to monitor expenditure of the national budget with regards to gender.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

4. Access to technologies, including digital technologies

There are gaps in access to technologies and this leads to productivity and profitability gaps between male and female owned and managed firms, as well as male and female owned food businesses. Closing this technology gap is critical for making food systems inclusive and equitable. Digital technologies, Artificial Intelligence and other disruptive technologies are expected to play a key role in driving the transformation of food systems. Whether it is accessing information, making payments, accessing markets, or getting insurance for their farms, farmers are relying more and more on technologies.

- There is a need to promote technologies which are user friendly to both men and women. For example, some Treadle Pumps are not user friendly to women. Other technologies such as solar are very expensive and not easily accessed by women.
- Increase coordination and partnership between service providers and end users, especially women, so that technologies are designed in a way that will work for women. Existing coordination platforms should be used to facilitate this.
- Women economic empowerment for accessing the agricultural technologies is important.
- There is a need to make better use of existing Research Institutes to design food system technologies that respond to the needs of women.
- Support for agriculture research and development should be strengthened by viable public-private partnerships, where both sides see the value in the partnership, indeed there is a lack of research on this viability. At present, within the government's agriculture budget research is least funded budget line. Funding for research should be increased as this will bring about improvements in food systems.
- There is a need for more civic education on the importance of information technologies in order to close the technology gap. Information on technologies which are currently easily accessible should also be made available to women.
- Social norms also impact women's access to and use of technology and need to be addressed, for example, in some communities, a radio is seen as men's property.
- Successful business models can be supported by engaging banks, and other financial service providers. Advocacy for more access to loans, and to strengthen the capacity of women in financial literacy is also important.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There was some debate also on why are we not seeing more gains for women in the southern and central regions where women have more access to productive assets, like land, due to matrilineal systems? It was found that land is just one factor in production. You might have access to land through the matrilineal system, but the final decision maker is still a man, in most cases their uncle. So, women may have access to land but there are other factors which they lack access to such as inputs, labour etc., and together this will produce food system inequalities. Once the food is produced, there are also other challenges at the market like gender inequalities so there is need to look into all the factors of food production and not only land.

One group discussion considered whether Conservation Agriculture can reduce women's work burden? For example, farmers who are using the Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) / drip kit irrigation method spend less time irrigating their crops. In addition, soil fertility improves, and they have a better yield which reduces the lean season, all contributing to reduce burden on women. However, some conservation techniques like potholing is labor intensive and may increase women's work burden.

Another question raised was on the risks of women empowerment and whether women's empowerment would increase GBV in the household. Here the importance of ensuring that all programme fully integrate issues of gender and that men are actively engaged in programme delivery were identified as potential ways of addressing these concerns.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

RELEVANT LINKS

- **Dialogue recording**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEV0AtUyZZ4&t=14522s>