

CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYMENT ON HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOODS IN SWAZILAND – THE CASE OF ZOMBODZE PHASEMDZIMBA COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the contribution of women employment on household livelihoods in rural areas of Swaziland and was conducted in Zombodze Phasemdzimba community. The issues investigated include: contribution of woman employment on family income; effects of women employment on household expenditure, determining whether employed women contribute to the education of children or not; and effects of women employment on agricultural activities. The study used in depth interviews guided by an interview schedule to solicit data from heads of households. The interviews were also complemented by the use of guided direct observation. Using purposive sampling techniques 40% (126 out of 315) of the households in the study area was selected for inclusion in the study. The main findings of the study reveal that employed women earn more income than those who are unemployed. Consequently, the expenditure of employed women was also higher than that of unemployed women. However, the education of children at primary school level was found to be negatively affected by the employment of their mothers. Nonetheless, at secondary and high school levels, women employment had a positive effect on the children's education. Regarding agricultural production, the finding depicts that it tended to decrease with women employment. In other words, where the women were not employed agricultural production tended to be high. In a nutshell, women employment is a good livelihood strategy but not the best to overcome rural poverty.

Keywords: Women employment, Household livelihoods, Family income, Children's education, Household expenditure, Agricultural production

INTRODUCTION

Generally women perform 66% of the world's work, but receive only 11% of the world's income (Anonymous, 2009a). Moreover, of the total land available in the world, only one per cent is owned by women while they also comprise 66% of the world's illiterate adults. Furthermore, in terms of employment, women are mainly represented in unskilled, manufacturing, service jobs, and on part-time occupations (Webster, 1996). Therefore, the importance of promoting gender equity strategies aimed at enhancing women employment and sustainable livelihoods for poor people in developing countries need not be over-emphasized (Masika and Joeke, 2009). In response to this need, governments of most countries including Swaziland have embarked on women empowerment programmes aimed at uplifting the status of women in social and economic terms. As a result, the number of educated as well as employed women has since increased although without remarkable self-

sufficiency in many rural households of developing countries. Despite the insignificant self-sufficiency realised, women employment *per se* implies a qualitative change on rural livelihood patterns, which will see them changing their income sources complement meagre incomes derived from crop sales and remittances.

A livelihood comprises capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. It is sustainable if it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation (Frankenberger, Drinkwater, and Maxwell, 2009). Therefore, household livelihood can be defined as access to income and resources to meet basic needs. This includes; access to food, potable water, health facilities, educational opportunities, housing, as well as time for community participation and social integration. Thus livelihoods can be made up of a range of on-farm and off-farm activities which conjointly provide a variety of ways for obtaining food and cash. On this basis, wage labor seems to consume the time and energy that could otherwise be used in agricultural production; hence it affects rural household livelihoods (Frankenberger, Drinkwater, and Maxwell, 2009).

Women employment has made the female gender to have access to reliable and constant if not increasing wages. Obbo (1980) states that a woman who leaves subsistence agriculture to join the wage sector of the economy attains a salary increase of 100%. It is apparent therefore, that agriculture does not only have little profit but is also unreliable for women who do not even have access to land ownership. This is because livelihoods are secure when households have secure ownership of or access to resources; tangible and intangible as well as income-earning activities. These include reserves and assets, to offset risks, ease shocks and meet contingencies. Households have secure livelihoods when they are able to acquire, protect, develop, utilize, exchange and benefit from assets and resources (Frankenberger, Drinkwater, and Maxwell, 2009).

The African continent has experienced a considerable increase in the number of women that are employed due to the mushrooming of textile industries in the continent. Lately, women's education has made them eligible for employment in professional jobs like teaching, nursing, accounting to mention but a few (Obbo, 1980). This has a great effect on rural household livelihoods in that it marks a change from one form of existence to another (*i.e.* from agriculture to wage labor). Such a change is desirable in view of that Africa South of the Sahara has the highest proportion of people living in poverty, with nearly half of its population (around 300 million people) living below the international poverty line of 1 US dollar a day (Anonymous, 2009b). On this basis there is an urgent need for women to be involved in well-paying jobs in this region.

In Swaziland, women employment has steadily increased from 24.1% in 1995 to 30% by the year 2000 (Mndzebele, 2000). The increase in women employment has to a large extent been spearheaded by government through women empowerment. Consequently, this has created a socio-economic change in the lives of many people in Swaziland. This is in due consideration of the fact that the Swazi culture regarded women's duty as feeding the family by engaging in agricultural production. Men on the other hand used to spend their time hunting, paying tribute labor and engaging in warfare. The domestic chores of women among others include: cooking, cleaning, and collecting water and firewood, taking care of children as well as working in the fields.

Studies have been conducted to look at gender equity at work (Webster, 1996), reasons why women work (Charmes, 2009) and discrimination of women at work (Hunt, 1988). However, there is a paucity of information on the contribution of women's employment on household livelihoods, which is what this study addresses. This information is indispensable in understanding the socio-economic lives of rural dwellers a determining factor of whether or not women employment is appropriate for rural areas in Swaziland. Evidence suggests that subsistence agriculture does not provide economic self-sufficiency and sustainability, hence the need for both males and females to be actively and effectively involved in the wage sector to meet basic needs since they are often deficient in rural households (McFadden, 1982). However, women engagement in wage labor entails that agriculture is left on the hands of children, old people, and hired labor. Consequently, this has seen agricultural production decreasing despite that women employment normally helps to bring extra income to the family and improves the standard of living (Charmes, 2009). This is mainly because over and over again children cannot work well without parental supervision since they are fond of playing, old people do not have the energy to work in the fields and hired labor is costly and does not work well if unsupervised. Just like agricultural production, children's education is also normally affected by women employment due to lack of or minimal supervision. Therefore, this study focused at Zombodze Phasemdzimba a rural area situated in the Manzini region under Ludzeludze constituency and under Zombodze chiefdom.

Objectives

The main objective of the study was to investigate the contribution of women employment on household livelihoods in Zombodze Phasemdzimba community.

The specific objectives were to:

1. investigate the contribution of employed women on family income.
2. determine the effects of women employment on household expenditure.
3. determine whether employed women contribute to children's education or not.
4. investigate the effects of women employment on agricultural activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focus specifically on the contribution of women's employment on family income, household expenditure, children's education, and agriculture.

Family income

According to Dasgupt (2009) an increase in women's market wages relaxes the family budget constraint and thereby increasing the amount of the consumption of goods the household can produce. Thus, the unitary model of household decision-making provides a ground for assuming that an increase in women's income opportunities may improve their welfare as well, but does not imply that this will necessarily be the case.

Thus, increased access to employment and income for women does not readily translate into an improved status or bargaining power for women. Instead involvement in economic activity is a necessary condition for the attainment of gender equity in the economic sphere. However, this is in itself not sufficient, because not all economic activities are empowering, and

because additional measures are required to promote gender equity in other spheres – legal and political (Masika and Joekes, 2009).

Household expenditure

The employment of women leads to improvement in family care, health, nutrition, and housing. This ultimately leads to the wellbeing of household members. According to Chikezie (2008), a job ensures sustainable livelihood if the financial compensations realized from it are adequate to cater for the minimum basic needs of the employee and her or his household.

Women who play a full and equal role in the workforce do so at the expense of family life. According to Robeyens (2008) a husband's job is to earn income while the wife has to take care of the children, hence family life suffers if the woman works fulltime. This means that children of employed mothers are undoubtedly not getting enough attention from their parents and always eating prefabricated meals which may be of significant harm to them.

According to Kristof (2009) when women work, they are far more likely than men to spend their income on improving their children's future (food, education, healthcare, clothing, and housing). The strategy of eliminating poverty in the developing world through women is to get them educated and employed. When women have work they are less likely to be abused by their husbands because they are seen as valuable rather than a burden. They provide employment for their neighbors. They invest in their children's education and as a result they boost their countries' overall economies both now and hopefully in the future through their children (Kristof, 2009).

Children's education

Hunt (1988) avers that children with employed mothers have higher academic achievements greater career success, more non-traditional career choices, and greater occupational commitment. It is assumed that working women are always interested in monitoring the academic performance of their children. This is because they play a part in paying for their children's school fees.

However, if poor children do go to school they often leave home with an empty stomach. For instance, approximately 170 million of the world's children who attend school learn while fighting hunger (Atchoarena and Gasperini, 2007). Furthermore, 70 % of the world's poor people are found in rural areas where educating a larger number of people is crucial for sustainable development and improvement of household livelihoods (Atchoarena and Gasperini, 2007). In addition, rapidly changing technologies and globalization also suggest that better education and training is indispensable for sustainable livelihoods and the competitiveness of the rural economy. It is therefore important to educate children to achieve sustainable rural livelihoods in both on-farm and off-farm activities. Women employment has thus led to an increase in school enrolment and to a certain extent minimized school dropouts caused by financial problems (Atchoarena and Gasperini, 2007).

Agriculture

Obbo (1980) argues that the employment of men causes a decline in agriculture, because production is normally left on the hands of women. On the other hand, employment of women at times causes a further decline in agricultural production, since production is normally left on the hands of old people, children, and hired labor. Old people are normally too weak to perform well in agriculture while children and hired labor's performance depends on close supervision. However in some households, women's employment has improved agriculture in the sense that the income earned by women can play a vital role in buying farm inputs more especially in female headed households. Furthermore, women employment, like the employment of men, helps to increase capital for buying farm inputs resulting in increased agricultural production (Duting, 1985). On the other hand, the employment of men often leads to an increase in cattle rearing since most men normally use their earnings to buy cattle. In fact, cattle have for many years acted as a bank for many Swazi men (Duting, 1985).

Cattle herding is normally carried out by women during the absence of their husbands and when children are at school. Therefore, women employment implies a change in roles, which is likely to affect livestock farming.

METHODOLOGY

Study area

Zombodze Phasemdzimba community lies between latitude $26^{\circ} 25'$ and $26^{\circ} 29'$ S and longitude $31^{\circ} 15'$ and $31^{\circ} 19'$ E (Figure 1). This area is in Matsapha under Manzini region and is situated below Mdzimba Mountain, one of the highest mountains in Swaziland. The terrain therefore is steep, hence soil erosion is dominant. This area is well drained by rivers and streams. The rivers are Mtilane and Manzimnyama and they also forms a boundary of the community (Figure 1). Furthermore, the banks of Mtilane River in particular are very good for crop production.

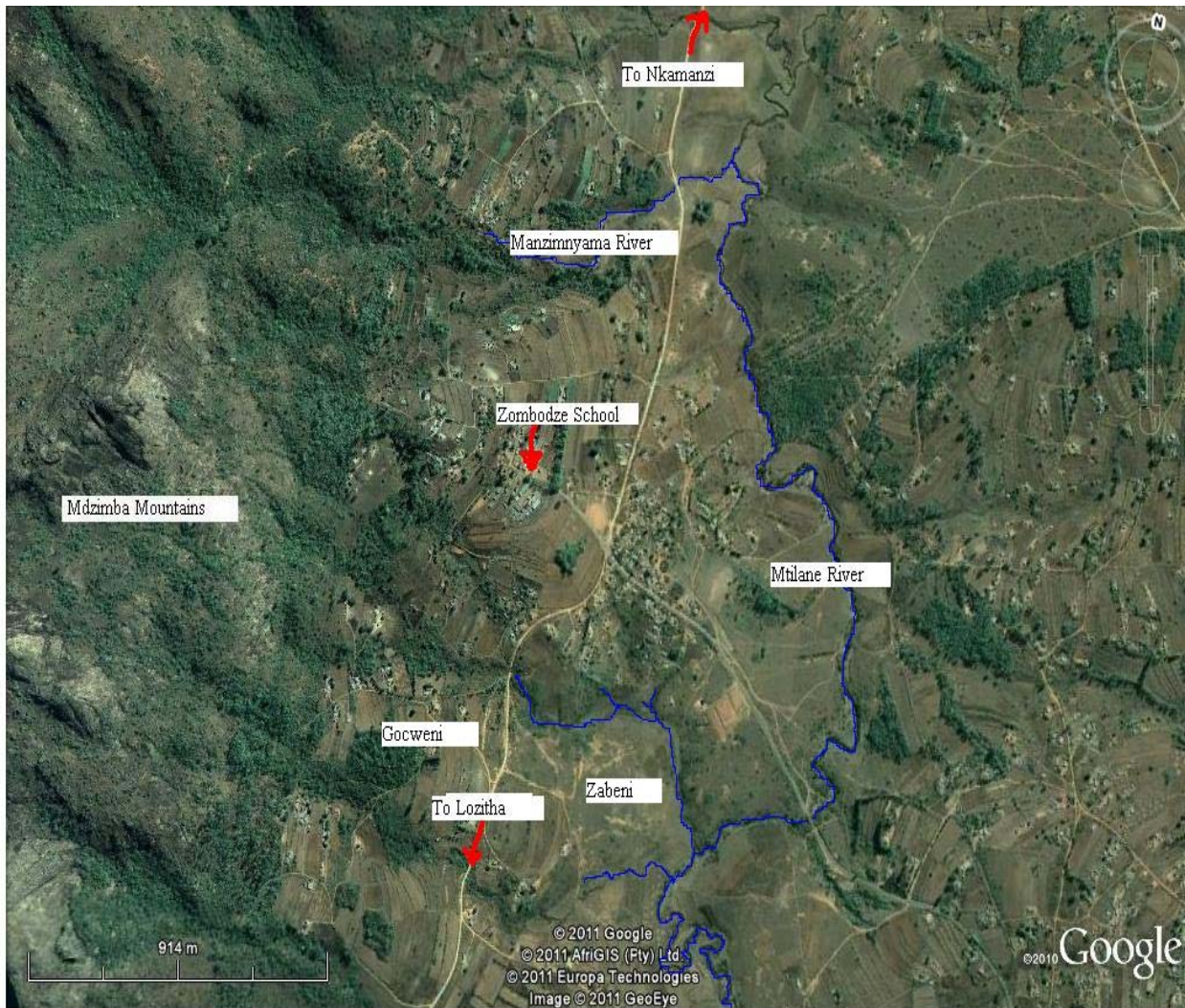


Figure 2.1: Zombodze Phasemdzimba community

Source: Google Earth (2011)

In terms of vegetation, it comprises grasslands, forests, scattered trees, and shrubs. Zombodze is heavily settled and the increase in population has a negative impact on the natural vegetation. Land is continually being cleared for agricultural production, settlement construction as well as other and development activities. The indigenous species such as *Acacia ataxacantha* (Lugagane) and exotic *Caesalpinia decapetala* (Lugagane) have become problem plants and tend to form impenetrable thickets along riverine fringes and in wooded areas. Furthermore, other wide and fast spreading species include *Psidium guajava* (Umgwava) and *Pteridium aquilinum* (Lihlindzafuku) which continue to increase, especially around the hills of Mdzimba Mountain and near rivers.

Regarding population distribution, Zombodze Phasemdzimba community has 213 homesteads and 315 households (Government of Swaziland, 2007). A cross-sectional research design was used in this study, so as to undertake an in-depth analysis of the contribution of women’s employment on household livelihoods. The cross-sectional design has an advantage

of measuring different groups at one point in time (Tevera and Peter, 2008). In this study the focus was on households where women were employed and those where they were not employed for purposes of comparison.

With respect to land use activities, in Zombodze they include; settlement construction, crop cultivation, and livestock rearing. The cultivated land is normally near the homesteads but in some instances far away from the homesteads such as along the banks of Mtilane River. The most cultivated crop is maize, with other crops including sweet potato, groundnuts, beans, jumbo-beans and to some extent sunflower. Vegetables are also grown under irrigation for both subsistence and commercial purposes. Livestock farming in the area, include rearing cattle, goats and sheep as well as pigs, chickens, and ducks.

Data collection

The study employed in-depth face to face interviews guided by a questionnaire and guided direct observation to solicit data from heads of households in the Zombodze Phasemdzimba community. Purposive sampling was used to select 40% of the population which is 126 out of the 315 households. Out of the 126 households selected, 63 households had employed women with the other 63 with unemployed women. The data for this study are presented in narratives, graphical techniques, and tables. For purposes of analysis, interpretative analysis was used. This is a method of analyzing qualitative data, which emphasizes on the role of patterns, categories and basic descriptive units.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Household income

Household income is dependent on the employment status of both the man and woman in the household. For instance, the findings depicts that employed women’s households have fewer employed men (47.6 %) than the unemployed women’s households (52.4 %). Notably 23.8 % of the employed women are widowed, which may be a reason why they resorted to wage labour (Table 1).

Table 1: Employment status of men

Employment status of men	Employed women’s households		Unemployed women’s households	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
working	30	47.6	33	52.4
not working	15	23.8	19	30.1
late	15	23.8	10	15.9
divorced/unmarried	3	4.8	1	1.6
Total	63	100	63	100

Source : Fieldwork (2010)

Regarding income earned by employed men and women, the findings depicts that it ranged from <E1 000 to E10 000+. For instance, 4.4% of the men earned < E1 000 while 16% of the women also earned the same amount (Table 2[a]). Moreover, 11.1% of the men eaned E10 000+ with only 1.5% of the women earning the same amount (Table 2[a]). Generally, there

were more men earning high incomes E10 000+ than women, while the opposite was true regarding earning low incomes <E1 000.

Furthermore, regarding earnings in unemployed women's households the income ranged from <E1 000 to E10 000+ for men and <E1 000 to E9 000 for women. However, it is notable that women dominated the low income earning group (53.3%) while only 20% of the men earned <E1 000 (Table 2[b]). This is not surprising considering that the women are not working so they only derive income from their husbands, relatives, gifts, grants, also selling handicrafts and agricultural products where possible. For those women who were earning more than E1 000 they were mainly self-employed such as owning small business enterprises. This therefore shows that the employment status of women is a major determinant of their income.

Table 2 (a): Income in emalangenzi earned in employed women's households

Amount in Emalangenzi (E)	Men		Women	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<1000	2	4.4	10	16
1000 - 2000	4	9	17	27
2001 - 3000	10	22.2	10	16
3001 - 4000	5	11.1	5	8
4001 - 5000	0	0.0	2	3
5001 - 6000	6	13.3	2	3
6001 - 7000	4	9	3	5
7001 - 8000	7	15.5	5	8
8001 - 9000	2	4.4	6	9.5
9001 - 10 000	0	0.0	2	3
10 000+	5	11.1	1	1.5
Total	45	100	63	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

Table 2 (b): Income in emalangeni earned in unemployed women's households

Amount in Emalangeni (E)	Men		Women	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<1000	11	20	32	53.3
1000 - 2000	8	14.5	16	26.7
2001 - 3000	13	23.6	6	10
3001 - 4000	3	5.5	3	5
4001 - 5000	2	3.6	0	0
5001 - 6000	4	7.3	0	0
6001 - 7000	3	5.5	2	3.3
7001 - 8000	4	7.3	0	0
8001 - 9000	2	3.6	1	1.7
9001 - 10 000	2	3.6	0	0
10 000+	3	5.5	0	0
Total	55	100	60	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

The findings further reveal that depending on the employment status of women, households faced various economic challenges. The challenges include expensive school fees, high food prices, unemployment, as well as expensive farm inputs and building material. Although both categories of households faced the challenges the unemployed women's households suffered a heavy blow. This is inevitable because sometimes even though the men were working, they earned low incomes yet in employed women's households the income of the women often complemented that of the men.

Household expenditure

Concerning monthly expenditure the findings indicate that employed women spend more money than their unemployed counterparts. For instance 14% of the employed women spend more than E1 000 on food while none of unemployed women spend that amount on food per month (Table 3[a] and [b]). On toiletry employed women's households also spend more money than unemployed women's households. For instance 5% of the employed women's households spent between E401 and E500 in a month while none of those unemployed women spent that amount. (Table 3[a] and [b])

With respect to clothing, the findings reveal that employed women's households spend up to E600 per month whilst unemployed women's household spend up to E500. Its is also notable that, a large proportion, 50% of the unemployed women's household were not spending (E0.00) on clothing (Table 3[b]). Moreover, 26% of the employed women spend between E201 to E300 on clothing, while only 10% of the unemployed women spend that amount in a month (Table 3[a] and [b]). Furthermore, the discrepancies in expenditure between employed and unemployed women's households were also

notable on health, housing (procure of building material where there was construction), entertainment and transport. Worth noting is that entertainment in rural households is regarded as an unnecessary waste of money, hence not normally included in household budgets. On the other hand, transport was also not a serious concern since children were attending in local schools, hence they walked to and from school.

Concerning money remaining after the household expenditure, 85% of the employed women's households and 46% of the unemployed women's households had some remaining money after their expenditure. On the other hand, 15% and 54% of the employed and unemployed women's households had no money remaining after the household expenditure. The remaining money was saved in a bank, used to pay school fees, purchasing agricultural inputs and in payment of debts.

Table 3 (a): Expenditure of employed women's household

Amount in (E)	Expenditure percentage (%)						
	Food	Toiletry	Clothing	Health	Housing	Entertainment	Transport
0	3	6	3	6	76	58	54
1 - 100	6	32	3	41	5	10	5
101 - 200	11	38	11	32	3	6	10
201 - 300	14	16	26	10	5	10	11
301 - 400	11	3	22	6	5	8	8
401 - 500	8	5	11	5	3	5	6
501 - 600	13	0	24	0	3	3	3
601 - 700	6	0	0	0	0	0	3
701 - 800	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
801 - 900	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
901 - 1 000	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
1 000+	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

Table 3 (b): Expenditure of unemployed women's household

Amount in (E)	Expenditure percentage (%)						
	Food	Toiletry	Clothing	Health	Housing	Entertainment	Transport
0	32	35	50	35	89	97	79
1- 100	16	41	16	50	8	3	10
101 - 200	18	19	11	10	3	0	6
201 - 300	13	5	10	5	0	0	5
301 - 400	10	0	8	0	0	0	0
401 - 500	8	0	5	0	0	0	0
501 - 600	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

Children's Education

Pertainig children's education the findings reveal that it is greatly affected by women employment. The enrolment at school was such that in the employed women's households 6% did not have children who attended school while 94% had children attending school. Conversely in the unemployed women's households 10% did not have a child who attended school while 90% had their children attending school.

Regarding the level of education of the children the findings depicts that unemployed women's households had a high number of school going children compared to employed women's households. This is logical considering that employed women normally have few children than those who are unemployed. For instance, in employed women's households there were 8% children at at pre-school level and 10.8% in unemployed women's households (Table 4). However, the most striking factor is notable at tertiary level where employed women's household have a large propotion of children (18%) than unemployed women's households (6.9%) (Table 4).

Table 4: Education level of children

Level of education	No. of children in employed women's households		No. of children in unemployed women's households	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pre-School	8	8	22	10.8
Primary	40	40	107	52.7
Secondary	26	26	42	20.7
High School	8	8	18	8.9
Tertiary	18	18	14	6.9
Total	100	100	203	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

With respect to the amount of money spent on children's education (school and transport fees) in a year, the findings revealed that the employed women's households spend more than the unemployed women's households. For instance, 6.8 % of the unemployed women's households spend more than E10 000 on school fees, while none of the unemployed women's households spend that amount (Table 5). On the other hand, 24.6% of the unemployed women's households none of the household spend <E1 000, with only 8.5% of the employed women's households spending the same amount. On transport the employed women's households spend up to E8 000 in a year while the unemployed women's households spend up to E7 000 (Table 5).

In terms of payment of fees (school and transport fees) the findings reveal that it was either made by the man, woman, both parents or relatives as well as sponsors. However, in most cases payment of fees was done by the man.

Table 5: Expenditure on school fees and transport

Amount (E)	Employed women's households				Unemployed women's household			
	School fees		Transport		School fees		Transport	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<1 000	5	8.5	11	18.6	14	24.6	13	22.8
1 001 – 2 000	12	20.3	12	20.3	16	28	20	35.1
2 001 – 3 000	12	20.3	6	10.2	10	17.5	4	7
3 001 – 4 000	10	16.9	14	23.7	6	10.5	9	15.8
4 001 – 5 000	8	13.6	9	15.3	3	5.3	7	12.3
5 001 – 6 000	3	5.1	3	5.1	4	7	2	3.5
6 001 – 7 000	2	3.4	2	3.4	1	1.8	2	3.5
7 001 – 8 000	1	1.7	2	3.4	1	1.8	0	0
8 001 – 9 000	0	0	0	0	1	1.8	0	0
9 001 – 10 000	2	3.4	0	0	1	1.8	0	0
10 000+	4	6.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	59	100	59	100	57	100	57	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

Regarding academic performance of the children it varied with the employment status of the women. For instance, at pre-school level, 25% of the children from employed women's households performed very poor, whereas in the unemployed women's households none of the children performed very poor at that level (Table 6[a] and [b]). Moreover, 61.1% of the children from employed women's households performed very good at tertiary level while in the unemployed women's households it was 57.1% (Table 6[a] and [b]). Variations in children's performance are also notable in the other school levels. Contrariwise, the findings reveals that there were children who did not attend school for different reasons, such as: lack of money, pregnancy, expulsion, and sickness.

Furthermore, the contribution of women to their children's education included, paying school fees, providing lunch, encouraging the children to study, buying uniforms, providing transport fee, and assisting in homeworks.

Table 6 (a): Children's performance in employed women's households

School level	Very good		Good		Poor		Ver Poor	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-school	3	37.5	3	37.5	0	0	2	25
Primary	9	22.5	25	62.5	3	7.5	3	7.5
Secondary	8	30.8	18	69.2	0	0	0	0
High school	2	25	6	75	0	0	0	0
Tertiary	11	61.1	7	38.9	0	0	0	0

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

Table 6 (b): Children's performance in unemployed women's households

School level	Very good		Good		Poor		Ver Poor	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-school	4	18.2	14	63.6	4	18.2	0	0
Primary	28	26.2	60	56	11	10.3	8	7.5
Secondary	11	26.2	26	61.9	5	11.9	0	0
High school	3	16.7	11	61	3	16.7	1	5.6
Tertiary	8	57.1	6	42.9	0	0	0	0

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

For instance, in the payment of school fees more employed women (44%) contributed than unemployed women (12.3%) (Table 7). However, the most striking finding is with respect to encouraging children to study as well as helping them in their homeworks, where unemployed women were more active than employed women. Contrariwise, in terms of buying uniforms and provision of transport fees employed women as expected were more active than those who were unemployed (Table 7).

Agricultural production

The impact of women employment on agriculture was both positive and negative. With respect to farmland the findings indicate that 90.5% of the employed women's households owned farm land and 88.8% among the unemployed women's households. The land ranged from less than one hectare to more than five hectares per household. However, farm land

ownership by households did not necessarily mean that it was cultivated. Hence, some fields were cultivated yet some were not.

Table 7: Women's contribution on children's education

Contribution	Employed women's households		Unemployed women's households	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Paying school fees	26	44	7	12.3
Providing lunch	14	23.7	15	26.3
Encouraging studying	4	6.8	15	26.3
Helping in homework	3	5	15	26.3
Buying uniform	7	12	2	3.5
Transport fees	5	8.5	3	5.3
Total	59	100	57	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

For instance, among the employed women's households 19.3% of the land was not cultivated while among the unemployed women's households uncultivated land amounted to 3.2% (Table 8).

Table 8: Size of land under cultivation

Size of lands (in hectares)	Employed women's Households		Unemployed women's Households	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0 - 1 ha	11	19.3	21	33.3
1.1 - 2 ha	13	22.8	22	34.9
2.1 - 3 ha	13	22.8	10	15.9
3.1 - 4 ha	1	1.7	5	7.9
4.1 - 5 ha	5	8.8	2	3.2
Above 5 ha	3	5.3	1	1.6
Not cultivated	11	19.3	2	3.2
Total	57	100	63	100

Source : Fieldwork (2010)

Regarding the provision of farm capital, the findings depicts that men were mainly responsible in both categories of households although in some instances they collaborated with women. Obviously, employed women also played a bigger role in the provision of farm capital than those who were unemployed. For instance, in the employed women's households 28.1%

of the women provided farm capital whilst 21.4% , among the unemployed women’s households also providing farm capital (Table 9). Worth noting is the role of children in the provision of farm capital which was more significant among the unemployed women’s households than in employed women’s households.

Table 9: Household members who provide farm capital

Capital Provider	Employed women’s Households		Unemployed women’s Households	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Man	22	38.6	33	59
Woman	16	28.1	12	21.4
Children	1	1.7	7	12.5
Man and Woman	18	31.6	4	7.1
Total	57	100	56	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

In addition, concerning provision of labour in the fields, the findings show that it was family labour (man, woman, and children) or hired labour, as well as a combination. However, as expected hired labour was notably very dominant among the employed women’s households, 29.8% than in unemployed women’s households, 5.4% (Table 10). Since capital investment is very important in agricultural production, employed women’s households who had an added advantage of increased access to capital were able to produce high yields be it maize, or beans than those households with unemployed women. In addition to crop farming, the households also raised domestic animals such as; cattle, goats, sheep, chickens, pigs, ducks as well as dogs.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, women employment plays a pivotal role in contributing to households’ livelihoods. Despite the noted negative impacts of women employment, its benefits seems to outweigh the costs, hence a viable household livelihood strategy. For instance, employed women contribute to an increment of family income, thus increasing a household’s expenditure. Furthermore, with increased family income children’s education is improved although working mothers pay less attention on encouraging children to study and assisting them with their homework. However, this is likely to be due to fatigue since working women still have to carry out some of their domestic chores after work. Finally, increased family incomes also boost agricultural production in that it averts the shortage of farm inputs. However, women employment also costs agricultural production through loss of dedicated labor which is normally substituted by children and hired labor. The disadvantage of children and hired labor is that it requires close supervision in order to perform well. All in all, women employment despite it noted disadvantages contribute immensely in the sustainability of livelihoods in households. This is through guaranteed payment of school fees for children and procurement of farm inputs, which in turn entails literacy in the population and food security in the households.

Table 10: Farm labor in households

Labor	Employed women's households		Unemployed women's households	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Man	2	3.5	6	10.7
Woman	3	5.3	6	10.7
Children	2	3.5	0	0
Woman and children	4	7.0	19	33.9
Woman and man	9	15.8	2	3.6
Family labor	8	14.0	12	21.4
Woman and hired labor	5	8.8	5	8.9
Children and hired labor	4	7.0	3	5.4
Man and hired labor	3	5.3	0	0
Hired labor	17	29.8	3	5.4
Total	57	100	56	100

Source: Fieldwork (2010)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further studies should consider the following:

1. Taking into consideration both the impact of men and women on household livelihoods.
2. Carrying out similar studies in other communities to enable generalization of the findings since areas differ in economic, social, and physical features.

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