

Livelihood and Land Use in Some Villages of Southern Province, Zambia
- A Case Focusing on the Production of Commodities and Petit Trading by Women -
(Summary)

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1. Background and Objectives

International aid agencies, local government and NGOs seem to focus on farming of major crops such as maize in rural development assistance. Through the series of field works in southern Zambia, however, we observed that people's livelihood are supported by diverse activities including animal husbandry, maize and cotton farming, vegetable farming, petit trading and so on. It is also remarked that women's activities, which have not been carefully focused and described in the context of rural development, are significant for their household income and maintenance of daily life. Standing on such understanding, the objectives of the study were set to depict general aspects of people's livelihood and land use, and to reappraise women's roles and functions through describing the activities such as vegetable farming and petit trading.

2. Outline of the study area

Zambia has a dry season (April-November) and a rainy season (December-March) with annual precipitation between 700 mm and 1,000 mm. The study villages (Malabali, Mapobwe, Mweemba and Siachaya village) are located in the undulating terrace and sloping landscape along the road on the way from the southern highland down to Lake Kariba in Southern Province and area believed as drought-prone area due to its relatively lower precipitation of 700 mm. In reality, the record of yearly precipitation shows great fluctuation of precipitation from wetter side over 1,200 mm and to drier side down to 300 mm. Actually, flooding and over-wetting damaged crops in 2007.

3. Livelihood and land use

Major crops during rainy season are maize, cotton, sweet potato and beans for self-consumption and household income by selling. This farming is operated in the vast area of slope and ridge. The farming works in the rainy season are done by family members. Women, in addition, take duties for housekeeping such as cooking, fetching water and cleaning. Fields along shallow inland valley, not cultivated during rainy season due to the risk of flooding and over-wetting, are utilized for green maize and vegetables, e.g. rape, cabbage, tomato and onion during dry season. Women take initiative for managing vegetable fields and petit trading of the commodities from their fields.

4. Commodities and petit trading by women

We identified 35 commodities obtained year round from cultivation fields and bush land. Thirteen out of 35 were from vegetable field in dry season. Women frequently carry their commodities to marketing places for selling. Such petit trading was not only practiced in the market places, but also in the villages. Among the income sources recorded, women's petit trading shared 24% to the total household income (average of 97 households surveyed).

5. Concluding remarks

These facts revealed that women's activities are greatly significant in maintaining daily life and household economy and, therefore, to be paid more attention in rural development assistance. Existence of diverse commodities produced all year round and income sources may contribute to the resilience at household and village level.