

The Hidden Roots of Problems in Kenya's Agriculture: Gender and Differential Access to Resources in Nandi North District, 1963 - 2000

Prisca Tanui-Too *

**Department of History, Political Science and Public Administration
Moi University**

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of gender differential access to resources on agricultural production in Nandi District between 1963 – 2000. Feminist political economy approach is applied to analyse government policies and cultural constraints that curtail women's full potential in agricultural production. Qualitative data from the field as well as archival material deposited with Kenya National Archives and Secondary data have are used. The primary argument is that agricultural problems in Kenya and Nandi district, in particular, will be solved if adequate understanding of gender relations in agriculture is realized and shortcomings addressed. The majority of farmers are women but they are marginalised in policy formulation and also operate within ideological environments defined by male dominated political, social and cultural structures. Women as agents of change struggle to bring about liberation to their status which also impacts on the agricultural production.

Key words: Agriculture, Gender, Differential Access, Kenya

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Introduction

Kenya is basically an agricultural country. The agricultural sector, a major foreign exchange earner, employs 75% of the country's labour force and provides nearly all national food requirements and raw materials for the industrial sector. However, the sector has not been experiencing stable growth since 1970 (Omwoyo 1999:50, Ndege 2000:208). Indeed, in the years between 1991 and 1993, the sector recorded negative growth rate. This has consequently made Kenya unable to meet her food requirements and world market share for major agricultural exports such as tea, coffee and sugar. The majority of studies on Kenyan agri-

culture attribute the decline to high population growth, drought and increase in petroleum prices and bureaucratic weakness (Maxon 1992, Omwoyo 1999, Ndege 2000). However, there has been a shift towards the realisation that there are deep-seated socio-economic factors that explain Kenya's agricultural crisis (Staudt 1987, Musalia 1999).

This paper employs a feminist political economy approach to focus on agricultural development in Nandi District since 1963. It analyses government policies and cultural constraints that curtail women's full potential in agricultural production. It argues that a progressive and effective solution to Kenya's problem must be based on an adequate understanding of gender relations in agriculture. The majority of farmers in Kenya are women, but they are marginalised in policy formulation and

* Corresponding author: Prisca Tanui-Too, Moi University, P.O. Box 3900, Eldoret, Kenya.
Email: Priscatanui@yahoo.com

operate within ideological environments defined by male dominated political, social and cultural structures. The exploitation of their labour, inaccessibility to resources such as land, credit, technology and extension services negatively affects the agricultural sector. Women as agents of change also struggle to bring about liberation to their status which also impacts on the agricultural sector.

Conceptual Framework

Stamp (1989) selected elements from the various feminist theories and some of the paradigms used in African historiography to come up with an eclectic theory known as feminist political economy. Among the theories from which feminist political economy is derived is Marxist political economy. Marxist political economy is not only materialist and dialectical but also critical and analytical. However, feminist political economy rejects the Marxist argument that women's oppression is a function of class oppression which supersedes all other forms of oppression. Williams points out that Marxist political economy is flawed fatally in reductionalism, because gender relations are reduced to relations of production (Williams 1997: 145). Feminist political economy departs from Orthodox Marxism without abandoning Marx's project of historical materialism.

Feminist political economy takes advantages of what Marxist tradition offers through dialectical and historical materialism in analyzing the sources of gender oppression. By going into the historical past, it is possible to focus on women's agency in agriculture since 1963. The approach is interested in understanding historical changes in the society's economic, political and social institutions and how these affected production relations.

Central to the feminist political economy is the concept of relations between men and women that are grounded on biological differences but are expressed at the level of society in

a concrete and historically specific way. Gender relations in any society are closely linked to relations of production, but are separate from them and not reducible to them. That is, feminist political economy recognizes the complex interaction of economic, political and ideological aspects as determinant in all instances (Williams 1997: 147). This perspective also draws on historical and cultural specifics in order to interpret local conditions.

Feminist political economy also challenges the reality of public/private dichotomy in Africa's past and present. That is, the notion whereby men are seen to inhabit "public" social sphere while women are confined to a "private" sphere. It points out that the two do not represent distinct separate spheres but integrated activities structured by gender relations.

This approach recognizes the fact that relations between men and women are essentially power relations in which the majority of women in society have less power than men. Thus it challenges the notion of an undifferentiated "household" unit devoted of internal contradictions or divisions. Instead, it recognizes that men and women engage in separate economic activities, separate income and expenditure and different competing interest with regard to the family and community resources which define roles of men and women within the household.

Feminist political economy also argues that gender relations change with the imposition of new economic, social and political structures. However, the changes are not on unilinear course between traditional and modern existence. Pre-colonial elements of gender relations have been retained in a dominated and distorted form, providing the ideological raw materials to constrain the autonomy and power of women, for example the appropriation of household labour among the Nandi.

The paper pursues the question of women's empowerment and conscious intervention in

the agricultural sphere as a means of confronting and removing the obstacles which impede progress in agricultural production. It is also an extremely useful approach in understanding the agency surrounding gender questions as a means of shaping access to and control over agricultural resources.

Land

The independent Kenyan government did not change the inherited colonial land policy. Land consolidation and registration in male names and transfer of European farms for African ownership continued. The Kenyan government agreed to compensate the outgoing settlers for land which had been alienated from Africans. Although the return of land in the White Highlands had been one of the most important objectives of African nationalism, the process of Africanising the White Highlands was undertaken on European interests given foremost consideration (Harberson 1973:77). New regional and district boundaries became effective in Kenya in 1963. Nandi district acquired land on three of its boundaries: in the North, Kipkarren Salient, Lessos and Nandi Hills to the Southeast and Songhor area to the South. The area of the district was increased by almost one and a half times its previous size (Economic Survey 1963 – 1964, Republic of Kenya 1965:6).

Land registration in Nandi started in 1958. By 1963 it had not progressed much. However by the end of 1988 almost 70 percent of land in Nandi had been registered (Nandi District Development Plan, Republic of Kenya 1989:3). Land in Nandi, like other parts of the country, was registered in male names. The process ignored the significance of women's usufruct rights in land. Land transfer to an almost-exclusive male individual tenure system was an imposition by the government, but it was institutionalized by the Nandi within a short period. Patriarchal arrangements, in

Nandi closed out women from participating in all these processes. Women were not allowed to participate in deliberations which affected the community, this was mainly the domain of male elders. Land had acquired value, which could be equated to cattle. Men owned anything of high value in the Nandi society.

The custom that evolved regarding inheritance of land in Nandi was similar to the tradition providing for the inheritance of cattle. Land held by a man would be divided equally among the "houses" of his wives and each household share was divided equally among its male heirs (Oboler 1989: 253). The distribution of land titles to men closed out women from inheriting agricultural land. Inheritance was passed through male children denying women ownership rights and forcing them to be dependent on males for access to land.

The adoption of cash crops, grade cattle and the growing population contributed to an increased demand for land after 1963. Men and women disproportionately bore the brunt of land pressure. Women's cultivated plots or gardens now tended to be smaller and some located in less desirable parts of the land. Among the Nandi, a wife had to get permission from the husband in order to cultivate a kitchen garden. The husband also determined its location. Lack of control over land limited women's agricultural production and especially cash crop production in Nandi. They ended up engaging in subsistence crop production and offered their labour in cash crop production, the proceeds of which were controlled by their husbands.

In practice, the majority of Nandi women had access to land but lacked control or ownership of it, which remained in the hands of their male kin. This gave some men the right to dispose of land from which their wife and male junior relatives expected to draw their livelihood. The rate at which the male landowners in Kenya were selling land without the consent of

the family members was so high that in the 1980's the presidential decree requiring the consent from all family members before any land transaction being undertaken was issued.

Individual land titling created a situation for women under certain circumstances to be denied land which was formerly available to them. Their access to land became indirect and often by means of a relationship with an individual male; husband, father, son or brother. A successful claim became dependent on the quality of a woman's relationship with a particular male individual who could change with time.

As portrayed by the advocates of feminist political economy, men and women have different competing interests with regard to family resources, in this case, land. The power relations between men and women favoured men who ended up controlling women's access and use of land. Male control over land affected agricultural production. Women are the majority in rural areas yet they lack the freedom to produce cash crops, the freedom to determine the amount of land to cultivate and even where to locate their farm.

Labour

The introduction of a capitalist economy and the spread of wage labour in agricultural and industrial production assumed very different roles for men and women in the economy. Women were excluded from wage employment but the availability of cheap labour relied on women's unpaid labour mainly on farms. This situation did not end at independence. Labour patterns in independent Kenya were influenced by a number of actors: male rural out migration, adoption of western education and increased technology. Kenyan women have always played a significant part in farming activities, providing most of the labour force required to provide food for subsistence and agricultural commodities for export. Women and men have

always had different roles and responsibilities and usually respond differently to economic reforms.

Male labour migration did not stop at independence. In fact a large number of men moved to urban centres as resources in the rural areas shrank (Musalia 1999:37). This contributed to the destruction of the traditional division of labour. Wives of migrant labourers found themselves with extra duties, their traditionally assigned role and those of their absent husbands. In Nandi, male labour migration continued unabated after independence. Most of the Nandi men worked in the army, police, prisons and urban centres. In most cases wives were left behind in rural areas to take care of farming activities, children and aging parents.

Male labour migration made women to be responsible for what traditionally was considered men's work. In Nandi, apart from milking, men were more active than women in livestock keeping. However, this changed by 1970, adult women spent more time caring for livestock than the adult men, which indicated male decreasing role in agricultural activities (Oboler 1989:226). The traditional division of labour based on age and gender was no longer distinct. Women who remained on the farms as men engaged in wage employment started to take over agricultural roles which were initially carried out by men.

In the northern part of the district, the use of tractors greatly increased land under cultivation. This increased the need for labour to work on the farms during peak periods especially during weeding and harvesting seasons. This increased women's workload. They were expected to weed, harvest, thresh and transport the produce. This adversely affected the production of subsistence crops, especially millet and sorghum which were also labour intensive. The fact that most men who were employed as wage earners did not participate in weeding of crops was pointed out as early as

1965 when it was indicated that:

The farmer spends money on having his small farm weeded, when there seems little real necessity for employment of extra people at all as the farmer has no other employment to distract him (Economic Survey, 1963-1963, 1965:52).

The fact that men did not participate fully in crop cultivation was also pointed out by the District Agricultural Officer in 1974, when he stated that "labour is the main problem in Nandi as the native traditionally prefers to tend cattle and never touch a Jembe" (DAO Nandi, Annual Report, 1974). Labour shortages were overcome by hiring labour. However, not all Nandi farmers were able to hire agricultural labour; work had to be carried out by women.

From the foregoing it is evident that women accounted for a high proportion of workers involved in farming; processing, drying, storage of crops and taking care of livestock. Oboler states that "most men have some cash getting activity other than farming and they spent considerable amounts of time at such activities" (Oboler 1989: 163). Although women offered their labour, the controllers of the benefits were usually the men. Women offered their labour in tasks such as planting, weeding, harvesting, picking of tea and applying fertilizers. Men on the other hand were often limited to land clearance, ploughing and fencing.

Apart from the above tasks, women also performed domestic chores such as collecting firewood, water, cooking, cleaning and looking after children and aged members of the family. Labour offered by women in all these areas was neither valued nor paid. Women also lacked control of the proceeds accrued from selling agricultural commodities. They did not get equal share with men. Women did much of the agricultural work even for the advanced farmer who hired contract labour. It was mainly

women who fed the labourers and ascertained that work in the farms was done.

Seasonal hired labour was mainly from the neighbouring Luhya community. From 1982, this seasonal labour was no longer forthcoming due to ethnic clashes, which affected the district. The prices for seasonal labour went up. Most small-scale farmers resorted to family labour. By 1984, the shortages of labour supply was being experienced throughout the year (Nandi District Development Plan, 1984-1988, 1980:54). In the 1980's, the number of Nandi men employed as tea pickers in the neighbouring tea plantations went up. Apart from prices of labour going up, white-collar jobs in urban areas were no longer available.

Technology

After independence, technology used in the agricultural sectors increased; it included tractors, hybrid maize, artificial insemination, cattle dips, lorries, fertilizers, ox ploughs, carts and knapsacks for spraying the farms. From 1960's the Kenyan government actively supported small-scale agricultural areas. In regions where the numbers of tractors was inadequate, a government tractor hire service was established to supplement private services.

Tractor ploughing became quite popular in Nandi after independence. In the northern part of the district, there were several tractors by 1965 (Economic Survey 1963 - 1964, 1965: 58). By 1969, nevertheless, a shortage of tractors for ploughing was reported in the district. The inadequacy of the numbers of tractors made contractors charges to go up by 1972 (DAO Nandi, Annual Report, 1972). Most of the tractors were turned in for planting after fitting with planters. The tractors were designed for male use; women were unable to acquire tractors due to lack of finance to purchase them. Men acquired loans from the bank or Agricultural Finance Cooperation (AFC) to purchase tractors, while women lacked collateral, espe-

cially land titles to access the loan.

Other kinds of mechanical technology were not given much attention. In the 1974-1978 Development Plan, it was proposed that small types of mechanical equipment would be tested and promoted in small-scale farms but this was not implemented. The official policy also under-emphasized the use of ox-ploughs which are suitable for small-scale farms. However, sharp rise of prices of machinery, fuel and spares parts since 1974 led to a new interest in ox-ploughs. The cost of mechanical alternatives was too high, and the prices of agricultural products have not matched the increasing prices of farm implements and inputs that had been rising because of inflation and devaluation (Meena 1992: 74).

The price of farm inputs, such as fertilizers, was not stable. In 1973 the price was quite high, forcing farmers to turn to manure. The price of fertilizer had been reduced by 1978 but a greater number of Nandi farmers used manure (DAO Nandi, Annual Report, 1978). In 1979, the Farm Input supply scheme was started in Nandi. It was aimed at making inputs readily available to small-scale co-operative farmers. Farmers got farm inputs, such as hybrid maize seeds and fertilizers on credit from co-operative societies. Recoveries were made by deduction from farmers' milk sales through the societies. Those who were not members of co-operative societies suffered from non-availability of fertilizer in the market in 1979. Most women were not members of the co-operatives; thus they were unable to access most of the above technologies.

From 1987, Kenya Grain Growers Co-operative Union (KGGCU) gave credit in terms of farm inputs. In Nandi by 1987 there were 21 loanees who received farm inputs worth KSh. 297,432.30. The small-scale farmers who could not afford fertilizer suffered from under-application of fertilizer especially top dressing (DAO Nandi, Annual Report, 1989).

However, most of the co-operative societies were not able to give loans from the 1990's onwards due to the imposition of Structural Adjustment Policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank. Men dominated the membership of cooperatives that granted loans in terms of inputs. Men on the other hand were also able to use income from agricultural products to acquire technologies that suited their tasks.

Agricultural technologies promoted by the government in Kenya and Nandi district between 1963-2000 were aimed at enhancing yields in cash crop and dairy production. Most of the technologies were acquired through loans, consequently, men had access to them but not women. Technologies which could promote women's productivity in agriculture were not given much attention, yet women were the majority in this sector.

Credit

Credit became a much more significant component in agricultural development after independence. Credit was allocated for the production of cash crops while the food production sector was neglected. Credit was linked to the need to modernize the agricultural sector. However, credit was not evenly distributed. It flourished in areas of high agricultural potential where coffee, tea, maize and dairy keeping flourished. The large-scale farmers were also able to obtain credit easily compared to the small-scale farmers. Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) was established in 1963. AFC made loans available to farmers, cooperatives and local authorities engaging in agricultural industries. Most finances channelled through AFC came from loans from European countries that were provided through the Kenyan government (Heyer and Waweru 1976:355).

The location of Nandi district in a high agricultural potential region qualified her for most of the loans provided through AFC.

There were loans used to purchase grade cattle and technology such as tractors, fertilizers, ploughs and planters. The Nandi also enjoyed the production of maize and wheat using seasonal loans. The crops planted acted as security for this short-term credit and it mainly provided seasonal input for large-scale maize and wheat producers.

Agricultural credit was also channelled through co-operative societies. The Kenya Co-operative production credit scheme started in 1970 (Heyer and Waweru 1976:355). The programme provided short-term credit through the cooperative movement. The collateral used was the direct deduction from future produce marketed through co-operatives. Farmers got credit in terms of inputs such as animal feeds, fertilizer and hybrid seeds.

Commercial bank credit was another important source of finances for the agricultural sector in Nandi during this period. However, the number of farmers who secured agricultural credit from commercial banks in Nandi was small. They were mainly large-scale farmer who could use a land title deed as collateral.

From the foregoing, it is evident that agricultural credit in Nandi was unevenly available. Credit was available in ample quantities for large-scale household heads who were mainly male. Women were unable to acquire credit from AFC and commercial banks due to lack of collateral and they also failed to benefit from cooperatives because the male land owners dominated the cooperative membership. The dominance of patriarchal norms and government policies closed out women from being members of cooperatives and engaging in cash crop production. Consequently, they were denied access to sources of credit. Thus women's farming continued to be affected by lack of finance leading to low agricultural productivity.

Extension Services

Government policies on agricultural extension services have always targeted commercial agriculture. Extension officers often worked with a few farmers judged to be progressive while neglecting the resource poor and landless including women. Agricultural information would be passed on to the husband, with the assumption that the information would be passed on to the female members but this has not always been the case (Saito 1990:12). The extension meetings were scheduled during the hours when women were unable to attend because of their household responsibilities.

The extension officers continued to target men. Women who offered much of their labour in agricultural production were not able to access information that could enhance their agricultural production. What women were taught was not relevant to the agricultural task, which took much of their time. The extension services provided by the Ministry of Agriculture during this period perpetuated the myth that the Kenya farmers were male. Consequently, men continued being beneficiaries of the training programmes and other resources. Women, who produced subsistence crops and offered their labour in cash crops production and dairy farming, were left out. In the long run, the sector was negatively affected.

The United Nations declared women's decade in 1975. From then, the Kenyan government demonstrated in the National Development Plans that it was committed in promoting women's integration in development. This would have entailed addressing gender inequalities in all economic fields and especially agriculture where women were and are still the majority. However, the bulk of the extension advice continued to be directed to men, especially those who had advanced in agricultural commodity production. Agricultural extension agents rarely contacted women,

who worked as unpaid labourers on family farms.

Extension workers also avoided women because of their lack of power to make decisions on the implementation of recommendations. Most women had to wait for the "owner" of the land, men, to make the decision. This took time in case the man was away in urban areas engaging in wage employment. Most of the female-headed households also lacked finances to implement the recommendations. The government was not even aware that women's rights were denied in any manner in the period before 1975, but the government policies in collaboration with patriarchy curtailed women's access to resources leading to the reduction of the levels of agricultural production.

Women's Response

From the foregoing it is evident that women in Kenya and Nandi district in particular were not taken into account in the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies. Government policies and patriarchal norms ignored the fact that women were farmers on their own right, thus sidelining them in access to resources. Access to agricultural resources was mediated through husbands and it was assumed that women would offer free labour. However, women were not necessarily the passive victims of circumstances with no possibility of resisting or reacting to the situation.

Women reacted to the appropriation of their labour in distinct ways. They became bitter and lax and this affected production negatively. In Nandi, this led to brutal beatings either by the husband or by people to whom responsibility was delegated by the husband. The intensification of wife beating was an effort to make them work better and harder in producing agricultural commodities. In response many Nandi women from 1940s to mid 1960s, took off from

their rural homes to urban centres. These women preferred to run away to towns where they could engage in income generation activities such as beer brewing and prostitution, which they could control. They were not ready to remain in marriages where they were physically abused and forced to offer their labour in commodity production, for which they had no control over income acquired from the produce.

Land is critical to farming and women in Nandi responded to the loss of access to land by resorting to the institution of "women to women" marriage. This institution was in existence from pre-colonial period, but it became more widespread in late 1960's and 1970's. In such a marriage, a woman who had aged without an heir could decide upon "marrying" another woman in order to secure an heir for the property and land meant for her house. The institution was not common in pre-colonial and colonial periods. However, its occurrence increased in the post-colonial period (Oboler 1989:133). The apparent increase in the occurrence of women-women marriage since land partitioning had the effect of ensuring rights in land to the women who could otherwise stand the danger of losing it.

Another institution, which became common as a result of women's limited access to land, was the "marrying of daughters to the house" (*kitunchi gaa/toloch*). In this form of marriage, a sonless woman could retain her younger daughter at home. The daughter would have children and her sons, would inherit her mother's property (Oboler 1989:357). These practices gave elderly women in Nandi a chance to control property and especially land. They could also engage in autonomous economic actions such as tea planting which was not possible when access to land was through the husband. Most of the women who married other women were childless and above 50 years. They could have stayed in their marriage or not. Most of them had moved to urban areas

where they acquired wealth. On their return to the rural areas, they bought property such as land and cattle. Some of these women were entitled to land and property from their husbands irrespective of the years they had spent away from home, because divorce was non-existent among the Nandi.

Another group of women in Nandi reacted to the appropriation of their labour by withdrawing their labour from commodity production. As already indicated maize and tea were the major cash crops in this region. Dairy cattle were also adopted. In this situation, men increasingly attempted to control the labour of their wives due to the increased need for labour to work on the farms. Maize production and cattle keeping had gradually become both subsistence and commodity production. Due to the fact that maize and milk formed an essential part of the daily diet, men were able to justify that daily routine with cattle and maize production was women's sphere of work. However, some women in Nandi withdrew their labour from maize production as early as 1965, forcing men to hire labour to work in maize farms.

Small-scale tea production in Nandi, moreover, has always been affected by shortage of labour. Tea being a pure cash crop under the control of men made it possible for woman to negotiate their labour input (Bulow and Sorenson 1988:149). Shortage of labour in picking and weeding of tea in Nandi was reported as early as 1967. Tea officers indicated that many of small scale producers were only picking about half of the available tea on the bushes (AN/42/171, KNA, 1967-197). This situation persisted to the 1980s because women were not willing to offer their labour on tea production because they had no control over the proceeds from tea. In 1979 it was once again reported that "It is generally noted that even small holder farmers tend to hire casual workers, the majority of who originate from outside

the district" (Nandi District Development Plan 1979-1981, 1979:15). Shortage of labour in tea production persists in Nandi to date. Those who are capable of hiring contract labour do so but in case of a situation where they are not capable of hiring such labour, the tea farms become neglected.

Following the first UN Women's Conference in 1975, the Kenyan government created a women's Bureau to oversee the development and implementation of official programmes meant for the development of Kenya's women. Consequently, women groups were established throughout the country. However, in Nandi, not all women were able to join such groups due to lack of entrance fee. Apart from the government sponsored women groups, independently established groups came into being. The groups provided labour and financial assistance to the members. Most of these groups were able to contribute a small fixed amount of money which they used to buy household equipment such as plates, *sufurias*, cups, to name but a few. Some of the elite women used money collected in this manner to engage in autonomous agricultural activities. Most of these activities were not disclosed to their spouses because they would want to control or dictate on how the income would be spent. For example, one women's group at Kosirai division formed in 1978 collected money and leased farms in which they planted maize. Norah Bett, who was a divisional extension officer in the region from 1964 to 1999, organized the farms and claimed ownership of the produce. She was able to do so because her husband was away on wage employment. Members of this group were able to make substantial money, which they used to acquire valuable assets. One of them bought a plot in Kapsabet town, but unfortunately her husband discovered this and demanded an explanation on how it was acquired. He later managed to convince the wife to sell the plot. Some of the members

acquired a cow or sheep and gave it to a trusted relative to keep on their behalf (Norah Bett 2001, Oral Interview). These activities indicate women's resistance to the appropriation of their labour. They would rather engage in autonomous agricultural activities, which gives them a chance to control the products of their labour. However, only small fraction of women were able to engage in such activities due to the demand for contribution of money.

Another group of women in Nandi responded to the constraints they faced in agricultural production by trying to control their spouses using a magic. The man would be secretly fed a magical concoction. The practice was in existence in Nandi since pre-colonial times, but its use was not frequent. Daughters of a woman who was suspected to have used the concoction, then known as *mbe-enik* or *kwambisik*, were shunned and would not easily get marriage partners. However, in the 1980s and 1990s the practices became quite widespread in Nandi. One account indicates that Nandi women were buying the magical concoction from their neighbouring Luhya community. The magic portions then acquired new names including *Tuliza* from the Kiswahili word *tulia* which means to pacify and *Kwalilokwine* from the Nandi word *Kwolilen*, which simply means to be confused. The practice was shrouded with a lot of secrecy but there were occasions when it came out. For example, a woman in Mosoriot gave the husband the concoction she had acquired from a friend. The husband became quite sick. The wife panicked and called the neighbours for assistance since she was too scared that the husband would die and revealed that a friend has supplied her with the concoction.

The man was treated in hospital but never fully recovered; he became mad (Rosbella Misiong' 2001, Oral Interview). Most men fed on such magical concoction ended up vegetating at home and were no longer actively in-

involved or interested in commodity production. Instead, some ended up performing domestic chores which society expects to be done by women such as cleaning clothes, utensils, the house, fetching firewood, and vegetables to name but a few. Such women took over the running of the family income. They end up controlling the production and income from the proceeds from the farm. The concoction should not be confused with love potion, because such women looked for partners outside their marriage. In the process of resisting the appropriation for their labour and lack of access to agricultural resources such women ended up destroying their spouses who would otherwise contribute equally toward agricultural production if resources and proceeds from the farm were equally accessed.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that gender relations of agriculture contribute greatly to the instability in the agricultural sector. Government policies and patriarchal norms curtail women access to agricultural resources yet women are the majority in this sector. They participate in the production of subsistence agricultural products and offer their labour in the production of marketed agricultural produce. However, women do not have any power over the income from agricultural produce, such income is controlled by men, who at times squander all the income alone. Over time women have responded to this situation in distinct ways which in most cases lowers agricultural production in the district and the country as a whole. Such resistance can only be stopped by addressing the constraints faced by women farmers, particularly access to land. Land should be jointly own by men and women so as to enable women to have equal control in what is produced from the farms. This will enable the country to realize full potential of women's role in agricultural production.

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