

GENDER AND MARKET GOVERNANCE IN MZUZU CITY

1.0 Background and Objectives

The Africities Food-loss project was implemented in Malawi by the Mzuzu University in collaboration with the Urban Research and Advocacy Center (URAC).

The project was funded by the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the International Development Research Centre



Figure 1: Mr Yona Simwaka from Mzuzu City Council training women on Mzuzu City Council Bye-Laws at Mphatso Motel

(IDRC) Canada. Titled, *Managing Food Value Chains for Improved Nutrition for Vulnerable Population in Mzuzu City (Malawi)*, the project aimed to reduce losses in quality and quantities of fresh foods along the urban food value chain. Considering significant losses in quantities incurred during harvest, post-harvest, transportation and trading at the open market stages, the project intervened by mainstreaming gender in the governance of the markets by revising the market bylaws.

Currently Mzuzu City Council Bye Laws are not gender sensitive and the committees that government traders' affairs do not recognize the roles women play in the market governance. The findings of the research showed that women traders have less capital and profit returns which puts

them at a disadvantage in competing with men for positions in the market committees. In addition, due to their weak position most women do access primate trading sites within the markets and hence prefer to trade along the streets so that they can easily access their potential customers.

2.0 Project Intervention

The project embarked on gender advocacy to mainstream gender issues in market governance and decision-making around the trading

of fresh foods in Mzuzu City's markets.

On 17th February, 2023 organized a one-day training for women market traders at Mphatso Motel where 25 women traders selected from all the markets in the city participated. These women were trained on cooperative formation, constitution formulation, and market governance. At the end of the training the women representatives elected an Executive Women Market Committee to represent



Figure 2: Elected Women Market Committee at Mphatso Motel

fellow women in market advocacy issues with Mzuzu City. During the training the

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During the meeting with the need to review the Mzuzu City Bye Law was per acknowledged by Mr. Gomezgani Nyasulu, Chief Executive Officer of Mzuzu City Council, who chaired the meeting. The Chief Executive Officer observed that

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market bylaws were reviewed and key areas were identified including the lack of gender mainstreaming and the ‘ownership’ of the committee by the council. The bylaw provision that the committees would be put in place was found to be democratically wanting as it denied the market traders the right to elect their own market leadership.

On 19th April 2023, the project team held an engagement meeting with the Mzuzu City Council at Mzuzu Centre with a purpose of introducing the Women Market Committee to the City Council officials and to lobby for gender mainstreaming in the market bye-laws and for the adoption of the women market committee as a sub-committee of the main market committees in the city to improve market governance.

3.0 The Women Market Committee

The key results of the study revealed that women are underrepresented in market committees meaning that they are not actively involved in market governance and decision-making. Decision making issues in the market relate to size of trading space and positioning of the site of the trading space in relation to the main entrance and visibility to potential customers. To access such trading spaces was seen to be associated with power derived either from holding an elected position in the market committee or having adequate capital with which to influence the decision making market elite. The main committees were men dominated and women only held lower level positions.



Figure 3: The Women Market Committee members after meeting Mzuzu City CEO on 19th April 2023

“the by-laws were gender blind and that there is need for revising them to address the gender gaps”.

He then called for the need to extend mainstreaming gender issues in all Mzuzu city by-laws, except that there was need to move incrementally to carry all other stakeholders on board.

In line with his call, a workshop to mainstream gender in market bye-laws, the project organised a gender mainstreaming in June, 2023 at Illala Lodge in Nkhata Bay Town where Mzuzu University, URAC, Women Committee, Market committees and Mzuzu City Council officials and elected councilors discussed and agreed on specific reviews to make the market bye-laws gender sensitive. The documented reviews have since been compiled by the Mzuzu City Officials in readiness for debate and resolutions for adoption by the full council.



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4.0 Conclusion

Mzuzu City Council has recognized the need to gender sensitive by-laws and the need to mainstream gender issues into market by-laws committees. The Mzuzu City wide market committee was endorsed by the main market committee. The main market committee also agreed to review their constitution to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all section committees.

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