

GENDER EQUALITY IN CO-OPERATIVES: A CASE OF SELECTED AGRICULTURAL AND MARKETING CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN MALAWI

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality has been a shout in so many aspects in the World and much more intense in the developing economies due to cultures and scramble for resources. Agricultural and Marketing Co-operative Societies (AMCOS) exist worldwide and provide essential services which would otherwise be not affordable by small holder agriculturalists. As such they have managed to serve the poor people especially in rural areas who are less powerful to compete in the agricultural markets. It is well established that the performance and development of AMCOS depends on the quality of participation of its members. The fact that AMCOS are made up of ordinary members, board members and employees, all with varying skills and experiences, they hold the potential of being equally dominated and managed. Despite of AMCOS importance and potential for better social economic development, in most African countries, still they are experiencing low level of participation for women in the associations. This study therefore intended to examine gender equality in AMCOS using experiences of the selected AMCOS in Malawi. Due to traditions holding back women in business participation, lack of information as well support from their life partners has been found to be causes of non participation and hence equality in management of the AMCOS in Malawi. More advocacies on women empowerment and support in co-operatives are recommended.

Keywords: AMCOS, Gender Equality, Malawi.