

C:AVA

Cassava: Adding Value for Africa



GENDER AND DIVERSITY AUDIT - MALAWI

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Executive summary

In May 2010, the NRI and a local gender consultant conducted a Gender and Diversity Audit of the Cassava: Adding Value for Africa (C:AVA) in Malawi. The objective of the study was to identify the ways in which partners think and act in relation to gender and diversity within their organisations and as part of their operations. This is designed to ensure that the project impacts are equitable, that opportunities for vulnerable groups are promoted and that adjustments are made to encourage participation.

This section presents the main findings from the C:AVA Gender and Diversity Audit in Malawi in the following performance areas: organisational management; equal opportunities and promotion of equality; awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs; impact on women's strategic needs and empowerment; awareness and responsiveness to diversity issues; enabling participation and innovation. This report presents the *general* performance of partners, highlighting issues that could be addressed.

Organisational management

Overall, partners were very positive about their organisations and felt that they made significant contributions to the livelihoods of farmers. Areas that partners felt they were best at were: i) planning their work according to targets and farmer needs; ii) organisational participation between staff and management, and iii) financial management and transparency. Areas that partners felt required improvement in their organisations were: i) monitoring and evaluation systems, ii) national policy influence, and iii) the level of incentives and resources. Inadequate resources were cited as the most significant constraint on the organisation and the C:AVA project, which sometimes resulted in poor community engagement.

Partners' also had problems in communicating with other development actors in the communities they work in, as there were some cases of duplicated work and conflicting approaches. C:AVA partners share different strengths and weaknesses so there are opportunities for shared learning to improve individual and collective performance.

Recommendations for C:AVA from partner organisations are to undertake HQCF market advocacy, and to provide capacity building and shared-learning opportunities for C:AVA partners (particularly in monitoring and evaluation). Recommendations for partners are to increase monetary and non-monetary incentives for staff, create internship opportunities, and improve communication between different development actors in the communities they work in.

Providing equal opportunities and promoting equality

C:AVA partners had a good understanding of equal opportunities and felt that it was provided in their workplace. However, partners had difficulty identifying more subtle types of discrimination and there was a lack of policies to provide an organisational foundation for equal opportunities. Recruitment decisions were based predominantly on merit, although some partners were using affirmative action measures. Some partners had recruitment targets for women, but these were not often met.

The representation of women was low at the majority of partner organisations (approximately 20% overall). Partners cited a number of reasons for this, including women's childcare responsibilities, the rural location of the communities and offices, lack of qualifications, low interest in agriculture as a career choice, and gender discrimination. Despite this finding, the majority of staff and management reported a supportive work environment and equal terms of employment for women and other groups. However, there were instances where stereotypical gender roles were reinforced in the workplace.

In terms of operations, partners felt that they provided equal opportunities for beneficiaries to participate in their activities; however, there was evidence that some partners had implicit requirements, such as literacy, which can disproportionately exclude women and vulnerable groups who are less likely to be literate. Partners had varying capabilities in monitoring and evaluating equality issues, but it generally requires improvement.

Recommendations include: improve understanding of inequality, especially hidden types of discrimination; develop equal opportunities policies, analyse terms of participation for staff and beneficiaries in the office or in field activities, and target women in recruitment activities. C:AVA should work with partners to develop comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems that include participation, progress and outcomes indicators for different groups.

Awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs

Partners had a good understanding of gender in their organisations and field operations; however, it could be improved. There was some indication of negative perceptions of a gender approach, for example, that it excluded men, went against personal belief systems, or that it was too often poorly applied in practice.

Generally the practical gender needs of female employees at partner organisations were heeded, such as through the provision of maternity rights and some flexible working – which wasn't extended to men.

In field operations, partners have instituted a number of programmes addressing practical gender needs and livelihood issues around food security and health, which have been successful. Partners were using a range of methods to increase women's participation in field activities, such as setting targets and utilising female staff to engage with female beneficiaries, which addresses women's practical needs. Participation of men in programmes was becoming a challenge, because a greater number of activities were being associated more with women, or that women were increasingly being targeted.

Recommendations included: increase staff skills and knowledge on gender and address practical gender needs; assess and address workplace needs for men and women on a regular basis; integrate gender considerations into all field operations; ensure women's benefit by analysing the opportunity cost of women's time spent on C:AVA; develop labour saving tools and machinery to reduce drudgery (cassava peelers); address health impacts in cassava processing, and address men's needs in profitable agricultural activities.

Impact on women's strategic needs and women's empowerment

There was good understanding of women's empowerment and strategic gender needs among partners, although their work concentrated mainly on addressing practical gender needs. There was recognition among most partners that their understanding of gender should include a greater focus on the relations between men and women to identify more strategic opportunities for change. For most partners, their main focus in terms of gender was on women's participation in parallel with poverty reduction and agricultural development programmes, reflecting a 'women in development' approach as opposed to a more strategically focused 'gender and development' approach.

Within partner organisations, the number of women in management positions was low overall, which management felt was due to the lack of qualifications of women in this sector. Women were also more likely to be found in management positions that corresponded with traditional gender roles, such as the Head of Women in Development Department. Three partners, all government extension organisations, had a gender focal point person. One of these positions was filled by a man.

In field operations, many C:AVA partners were using basic gender analysis tools. However, there were some reports of problems in using the tools due to lack of understanding and experience of staff. Nonetheless, partners felt that their activities were helping to empower women and meet their strategic needs, by shifting traditional gender roles to increase opportunities for women, improving incomes and increasing confidence and skills of women. Partners were encouraging female beneficiaries to take-up leadership positions; however, they experienced many challenges in achieving results, such as cultural norms, and lack of confidence and skills among women. Activities could be extended for women in accessing credit and technology to increase the strategic impact of the C:AVA project.

Recommendations for empowerment include: strengthen capacity of partners in understanding and addressing women's empowerment and strategic gender needs, specifically in developing the analytical skills of staff; partners to develop a clear gender framework for their organisation reflecting a holistic approach; increase the number of women in management positions; establish a person responsible for gender with appropriate training. In field operations, partners should provide greater investment opportunities and provide affordable credit; women's access, maintenance and control over physical assets in C:AVA should be prioritised; criteria for leadership positions should be reviewed to ensure they are gender-friendly, and monitoring and evaluation systems should include gender indicators and collect information to form case studies to encourage others to follow positive examples.

Awareness and responsiveness to key diversity issues

Overall there was low awareness of diversity as a social concept, but a high appreciation among partners for the insight the concept provides. Partners were addressing key diversity issues through their work on tackling poverty and vulnerability, such as the delivery of specialised programmes, or informal targeting of women headed households, youth, people with HIV and AIDS, elderly and orphans. Some staff felt that vulnerability was increasing for certain groups, such as the elderly and orphans, due to the breakdown of the extended family.

Partners did not show an explicit commitment to diversity in the workplace, and felt that introducing measures to increase the representation of specific groups ran contrary to the merit-based system that they used. However, staff felt that their work environments were generally inclusive, with different religions and ethnic identities represented. HIV and AIDS were found to be an important issue among staff and management, but the extent to which this was reflected in employment policy was minimal. It was also found during the study that there was general hostility towards homosexuality in the country.

In field operations, staff felt that there could be more projects that address specific diversity issues, specifically issues related to loan distribution to people with HIV and AIDS, targeting illnesses other than HIV and AIDS, working with elderly and providing more opportunities for disabled people. Partners also need to improve the collection of data and information on the participation and benefit of different groups, as monitoring and reporting on diversity indicators was limited.

Recommendations were: partners to improve their understanding of diversity and provide capacity for staff on how diversity issues can be addressed; developing a set of tools to help staff apply diversity in their work; build capacity in group negotiation and conflict resolution skills; involve young people in profitable cassava farming and processing activities; investigate technologies or modifications to existing technology to be used by disabled people; facilitate linkages for community groups to access processing and other technology, and integrate diversity characteristics into monitoring and evaluation systems such as: gender, age, tribe, disability, or country of origin, marital status etc.

Enabling participation

All partners had a good understanding of participation and felt it was crucial to their organisations and activities in the field. However, their understanding could be furthered by examining and addressing power relationships within communities to identify barriers to participation. Participatory methods could be integrated into more activities, such as in monitoring and evaluation. Internally, organisational participation was mainly conducted through staff meetings and staff felt it was good, but improvement could be made in general, and specifically on the participation of women and minority groups.

Within field operations, the majority of staff used participatory methods. The foundation of partners' approaches was Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which includes separating groups by sex, consulting beneficiaries on their needs and priorities, and conducting action planning, problem trees, seasonal calendars etc. Partner organisations are mostly communicating with communities through village leadership, which has inhibited participation in some instances, leading to problems with community trust when the relationship with leaders and the community has been tenuous. Common barriers that partners felt prevented the participation of groups were illiteracy and poverty/lack of assets. Men's participation has also decreased as there is a feeling that development projects and assistance is targeted at women.

Recommendations: promoting shared learning on participatory methods; developing creative ways to encourage staff participation; holding community meetings in neutral locations; developing a range of gender- and diversity-friendly communication methods; addressing, or supporting others to address, systemic barriers to female and male participation, and undertaking regular participatory evaluations with beneficiaries.

Innovation

For partners, innovation was largely understood as the production and introduction of new technologies, which was an essential part of most partners' work. But this understanding can be extended to look at processes of shared learning between organisations and informal ways of learning. Most organisations possess an organisational culture that supports innovation and has an openness to try new things to some extent, but they felt that they often lacked resources to realise some of their ideas. Staff meetings were the tool most often stated for knowledge sharing within an organisation. There were few examples of partners using new and challenging methods or activities to address gender and diversity issues that C:AVA should draw upon. There were also some examples of knowledge sharing through external partnerships on various levels (grassroots to policy level), particularly among NGOs, which is critical for gaining new insight, influencing, and even gaining additional funding. However, some of these partnerships need to become stronger and communication needs to improve.

Recommendations include: partners to undertake an 'innovation systems' approach, which focus less on the production of new technologies and more on partnerships and information sharing; conduct a review of organisational and project structures and processes to identify their conduciveness for innovation (e.g. bureaucracy, rigid rules etc); encourage staff development through skill and confidence building and incentives using bonuses, training opportunities, bottom-up participatory approaches and management support; encourage greater ownership in the organisations, giving staff responsibility over budgets and trying new methods; facilitate more participatory processes between staff and with external partners for shared learning, new ideas and information dissemination.

Next Steps

C:AVA will need to disseminate findings from the Gender and Diversity Audit to the Malawi C:AVA office and to partners. Partners should prioritise the recommendations that they feel are more appropriate for their organisations and field activities. The C:AVA monitoring and evaluation team will provide support and monitor progress of partners. Monitoring visits will also provide capacity building opportunities for partners in gender and diversity.

Partners will also need to develop their own strategy on how they will improve their responsiveness to gender and diversity issues within their organisations and in their field operations based on the recommendations made in the gender and diversity audit report. This should include a focus on empowering women and men through their activities. There is tremendous opportunity for partners to learn from each other, as all organisations have vast skills and experience.

1. Introduction

Cassava: Adding Value to Africa (C:AVA) is a four year project aimed at creating sustainable and equitable high quality cassava flour (HQCF) value chains and thereby improving the livelihoods and incomes of smallholder households and micro, small and medium scale enterprises. The project is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and operating in five African Countries: Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and Malawi. The project is committed to mainstreaming gender issues and social inclusion throughout its activities, emphasising equitable distribution of benefits, participation, and the empowerment of women and disadvantaged groups. While this is an important end in itself, it is also a means to ensure project efficiency, sustainability and viability (World Bank 2006).

As part of this commitment to equitable project activities, the Gender and Diversity Audit was conducted with C:AVA partners to inform all project activities. A Gender and Diversity Audit is a type of social audit that is used to analyse organisational culture, technical capacity, policies and practices in order for partners to develop more sensitive practices and structures.

Objective

The objective of the Gender and Diversity Audit is to identify how partners think and how they do things regarding gender and diversity. This is to help ensure that the impacts of the project are equitable, that opportunities are promoted for different groups and that adjustments are made to encourage participation at all points along the value chain. The idea is not to impose ideas but rather explore opportunities for C:AVA partners to meet project goals.

Purpose

The purpose of the gender and diversity audit is to:

- identify good practice and areas for improvement in gender and diversity
- identify the training and capacity strengthening needs of partners to address gender and diversity issues in their work
- provide accessible and understandable results
- provide a baseline for monitoring and evaluation
- be participatory and encourage ownership
- inform overall activities in the C:AVA project

C:AVA partners

The gender and diversity audit was conducted with local service providers (government and non-government) and learning institutions. Due to the considerable diversity among the partners, the Gender and Diversity Audit was conducted in a flexible manner.

This report attempts to discuss general performance of partners and identify issues that can be addressed through the C:AVA project. However, each partner had very different mandates and structures, which posed some difficulties in terms of writing an overall report on findings. Therefore there are some exceptions to the findings in which qualifiers, such as 'some', 'few' or 'many' partners, are used to flag this issue.

In this report, C:AVA partners will be referred to as ‘partners’, which includes NGOs and government agricultural extension support.

The partner organisations involved in C:AVA Malawi are provided in the table below.

C:AVA Malawi Partners	District of Head Office	Staff participating in the audit
Nkhotakota District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO)	Nkhotakota	Crops Officer (female) Food and Nutrition (female) AGRESSO (male)
Nkhata Bay District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO)	Nkhata Bay	DADO (male) AGRESSO (female) Extension Methodology Officer (male) Crops Officer (male)
Zomba District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO)	Zomba	Assistant DADO (male) AGRESSO (female) Food and Nutrition Officer (female) Extension Development Officer – C:AVA (Male) Extension Methodology Officer (male) Crops Officer (male)
Mulanje District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO)	Mulanje	AGRESSO (female) Food nutritionist (female) Agricultural Extension Development Officer x 4 (males)
Malawian Entrepreneurs Development Institute (MEDI)	Central	Executive Director (male) Manager of Training (male) Training Officer x 4 (men)
Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS)	Central	No interviews conducted as it wasn't approved by Directors.
National Association of Smallholder Farmers of Malawi (NASFAM)	Central	Human Resources Staff (female) Training Manager (female) Community Outreach (male)
Chancellor College, University of Malawi	Zomba	Principle of Chancellor College (male) Research Scientist in Chemistry Department Lecturer in Food (female) Lecturer in Home Economics (female)
Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)	Blantyre	Project Manager (male)

Approach

The analytical approach to the C:AVA Gender and Diversity Audit includes equal attention to structures (rules, policies, leadership) and power relationships (discourses, language, symbols) in performance areas. This will help to identify both explicit and implicit opportunities and constraints to achieving equality. Importantly,

the audit approach is non-judgemental. As was the case in the gender audit of DfID Rwanda (2008), a partnership approach will help encourage debate, discussion and shared learning. This contrasts to other audits that establish an ideal type to measure performance against. As such, a broad understanding of the concepts is utilised to be responsive to the context of each participating partner.

The analytical framework utilised for the gender aspects have been informed by literature on gender analysis frameworks, particularly Moser (1987, 1989 and 1993) and Kabeer (2001). These frameworks emphasise practical and strategic gender needs and women's empowerment in overcoming poverty, which are helpful to identify gender priorities and their impact. These frameworks are also reflected in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Gender Strategy and C:AVA project objective one.

The approach to diversity was to examine areas of social difference (including age; class; disability; ethnicity; national origin; language, and religion) and how partners responded to issues and needs that arise due to these differences.

Participation and innovation are included within the overall approach to bring additional context to Gender and Diversity Audit. Participation is widely accepted as being an intrinsic part of development processes and business innovation. Participation in socio-economic and political life is also a crucial tool for achieving greater equality, overcoming poverty and gender equality (Sen, 2001; Chambers, 2007). Participation therefore is a key element of partners' performance.

Innovation is included as part of the audit in order to gauge partner performance in responding to a rapidly changing environment. New constraints and opportunities are continually arising and require new methods for understanding and addressing differences. In this context, innovation is examined through a gender and diversity lens to identify the extent to which partners create an equitable environment for new ideas to be realised. Analysis will include an 'innovation systems' approach that will examine the extent to which innovation is stimulated through communication (Hall et al., 2004). This will highlight innovative work of partners in gender and diversity, and how it is used, transferred and built-on by partners.

Performance

The approach of the Gender and Diversity Audit is to measure partner performance in six gender and diversity areas, as described below. The performance areas reflect overall project objectives, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Gender Strategy, and have been informed by a review of academic and grey literature on gender and social audits.

Performance areas:

- Providing equal opportunities and promoting equality
- Awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs
- Impact on strategic gender needs and women's empowerment
- Awareness and responsiveness to key diversity issues
- Enabling participation
- Innovation

The performance areas are interrelated and mutually dependent; therefore, references are therefore added to related chapters to signpost some of the areas that overlap.

Each performance area or chapter is split into an 'Organisation' and 'Operations' section. The design highlights the dual roles of partners in operational activities (services it provides or goods it produces) and as an organisation (employer).

Methods

Based on the lessons learned from previous social audits (Underwood, 2000), the methodology for the C:AVA Gender and Diversity Audit triangulates evidence by interviewing management and staff members separately and facilitating a self-assessment questionnaire. This will ensure that the data obtained is reliable, and reflects both tangible and intangible gender and diversity aspects. However, because the partners have different structures and levels of participation in the C:AVA project, the tools were used flexibly while still emphasising comparability.

A key point of clarity in conducting the audit is to clearly establish the level at which the audit was conducted in partner organisations. This is because some partners have only a few staff dedicated to the C:AVA project; they are large bodies and have alternative objectives to C:AVA. To overcome this, the scope was limited in the organisational sphere to a sample of staff that are most relevant to C:AVA. This is to ensure that the audit is reflective of the resources, remit and responsibilities of all those directly involved with the project. The methodological tools, their scope and the staff interacted with are tabulated below:

Methodological tools	Who	Description
Document review	Partners and country lead	All available strategies, policies, learning material, reports and evaluations relevant to gender and diversity.
One-to-one interviews	Partners and country lead	Interview with C:AVA managers and/or strategic, operational and human resource management staff.
Focus groups	Partners	Approximately two discussion groups with C:AVA staff, separated by sex where numbers were large enough (over 3 women).
Self-assessment questionnaire	Partners	Self- assessment questionnaire distributed to a sample of staff and management. The sample consisted of those who participated in the interviews and discussion groups, and anyone else showing interest in completing the questionnaire. Questions rating performance on a scale of one to five.

Structure of Report

This report presents an analysis of gender and diversity issues with C:AVA partners in six main areas of Malawi: Zomba, Mulanje, Blantyre, Lilongwe, Nkhatakota, and Nkhata Bay. It includes government and non government service providers and learning institutions. Each section considers the current understanding of performance areas among staff and management, identifies trends in the organisational and operational spheres and summarises recommendations for C:AVA partners.

Where relevant, the chapters of the report are split into organisational and operational sections to distinguish between the two spheres. The report starts with a

short chapter on the findings from the organisational analysis conducted with staff, which identified strengths and areas for improvement for C:AVA partners. This is followed by six chapters, which are based on the six performance areas.

2. Organisational analysis

An organisational analysis identifies how organisations meet their set objectives. Various elements that make up an organisation, such as governance, planning, incentives or reporting, are examined to determine overall organisational performance. The organisation's strengths and areas for improvement are made explicit so appropriate actions can be taken. This chapter examines partners' organisational management performance based on the views of staff and management. The box below indicates key findings.

Key findings

- All partners felt that they had made a positive contribution to the livelihoods of farmers.
- Areas that partners felt they were best at were: i) planning their work according to established targets and needs of farmers, ii) participation in their organisation among staff and management, and iii) financial management and transparency.
- Areas that partners felt required improvement were: i) monitoring and evaluation systems, ii) wider national policy influence to increase the effectiveness of their work, and iii) incentives and resources for staff motivation and effectiveness.
- Inadequate resources was cited most often among partner organisations as being a significant constraint on the organisation and the C:AVA project, resulting in poor community engagement (due to the lack of transportation to the field and staff).
- Partners' communication with other actors in rural communities was poor in some instances, resulting in duplication of work and conflicting approaches and messages.
- C:AVA partners share different strengths and weakness and could work with each other to improve individual and collective performance.

Organisational performance

In order to access views on organisational performance, staff at partner organisations were asked to rate various aspects of their organisation out of ten to identify what was being done well in their organisations and what needed improvement.

Table 1 Staff ratings of key organisational areas by region (average, rounded score)¹

	Mulanje DADO	Nhkotakota DADO	Zomba DADO	Nkhata Bay DADO	MEDI	NASFAM	Average Score
Management	7	9	7	3	4	7	6
Financial management	6	8	8	3	6	8	6.5
Planning	7	9	7	7	5	9	7
Communication	7	9	8	4	5	6	6.2
Governance	7	7	6	4	4	7	5.7
Monitoring	6	8	7	4	3	8	6

¹ Note that not all organisations could participate in the exercise due to time constraints of the organisations.

systems							
Learning	6	7	6	4	7	7	6
Organisational polices	8	8	6	3	4	7	6
Policy influence	4	7	6	2	3	7	4.7
Incentives	3	8	5	4	4	6	4.7
Participation	8	8	7	6	6	6	6.7
Innovation	6	8	7	2	5	5	5.5
Total	6	8	7	4	5	7	5.9

The areas identified as function well among C:AVA partners are as follows:

- *Planning*: partners had work-plans in place that enabled them to prepare for work and were flexible enough to handle change. One government extension organisation described their planning process “*we establish targets and incorporate the farmers’ needs and we make plans. This is done yearly, quarterly and monthly*” (extension agent).
- *Participation*: staff felt that they had regular opportunities to discuss issues with management and share their views.
- *Financial management*: partners felt that their organisations handled money well and were transparent.

It was noted that all organisations had extensive experience and knowledge of rural communities and the livelihood issues. Most organisations reported that they had made improvements in the quality of life of farmers.

The areas identified as requiring improvement are as follows:

- *Monitoring systems*: monitoring was not comprehensive in partner organisations. One partner stated that this is due to the low level of resources.
- *Policy influence*: some partners felt constrained by national policy and they were unable to influence it to change it. This finding was particularly strong among government extension services.

For example, in Nkhata Bay there is an environmental policy that restricts farmers from cultivating along riverbanks. However this is the location where soil fertility is the highest and farmers want to plant there. This positions extension agents in a precarious position as they are meant to support food security and the interests of farmers, but they also must follow government mandate: “*If you see that you can do something, but the policy contradicts, you have to obey the policy. You follow whether good or bad. As implementers, we need to be involved in policy making so implementation can be better*” (male, government extension agent).

In another case, a government policy restricts activities from being conducted that the farmer and extension agent might feel are necessary: “*in our area the policy is to promote maize production even if they [farmers] want cassava. We need a platform to discuss this*”.

- *Incentives*: it was often cited that staff felt that they did not receive adequate pay or resources in order to conduct their work. Staff felt that they wanted greater remuneration and benefits in general support, training, allowances and mobility. It is noteworthy that staff felt that these requests should be provided by organisations as they are necessary to meeting the organisations' goals.

Key barriers to improving performance

Inadequate resources was stated most often among partner organisations as being a significant constraint on achieving their goals as an organisation and in meeting C:AVA objectives. Inadequate resources was the primary reason for another commonly cited problem, lack of transportation or resources to cover the maintenance cost of transportation, which is most often bicycles for extension agents. This was true for NGOs and government extension.

Another consequence of inadequate resources for partners was lack of staff. One government extension organisation lacked 56 staff to adequately cover each section of their field of operations, giving some staff double the amount of work. This is related to the lack of students graduating with qualifications in agriculture. However, this is starting to change and internship programmes with government extension are starting to fill capacity gaps. Importantly, partners reported that there are increasing numbers of female graduates.

Partnership working is another area requiring improvement. Although C:AVA partners all work with a number of governmental, non-governmental and private sector organisations under government decentralisation plans, there were some examples of duplication in work and mixed-messages to the communities, stemming from poor communication and strategic planning at the district level in some areas. Extension agents should keep informed about projects and approaches used by other organisations in the area. For example, in some cases, NGOs have been giving incentives to farmers to participate in their projects. However, this undermines the government's approach, and C:AVA's, who work on a non-incentive basis.

Opportunities for shared learning

As the table above demonstrates, there were large differences in the average ratings in partner organisations in some instances. One government extension organisation gave the highest overall average rating of their organisation, eight out of ten. In contrast, another government extension organisation gave the lowest average rating of 3.6. Both these organisations are in the Northern area of Malawi. While the methodology was based on self assessment and thus cannot reveal real differences in performance, it could indicate the possibility of shared-learning opportunities being beneficial for partners.

MEDI, for example, a specialised training and capacity building organisation, could be best placed to train other extension staff in HQCF production and processing. They also have previous experience in establishing cassava-starch factories and training large farmers.

Recommendations for C:AVA from partners

- Undertake government advocacy to promote the market for HQCF

- Promote partnership working among C:AVA partners to share learning and experiences, particularly in areas that need strengthening (e.g. monitoring systems, policy influence)
- Make capacity building in monitoring and evaluation a priority
- Equipment should be sourced locally or tax removed to reduce costs
- Training and capacity building on C:AVA

Recommendations for partners

- Explore ways to provide greater incentives for staff, including non-monetary incentives to increase motivation and organisational commitment
- Work with universities to provide internship opportunities for students to fill capacity gaps and provide students with field experience
- Improve communication and learning with other actors in the communities they work in and streamline approaches and responsibilities with them
- Extension agents need to find channels to be more informed about projects and approaches used by other organisations in the area

3. Providing equality of opportunities and promoting equality

Equality of opportunities and promoting equality relates to the ways that opportunities, access and participation are enabled in their organisations. This impacts on the livelihoods of staff and beneficiaries, and can create benefits to organisations such as meeting legal requirements and donor expectations, using labour more efficiently and contributing to community and personal development. Unfortunately, however, disparities exist in all societies in terms of access to income and resources, ownership, employment, safety and security, mobility, decision-making, discrimination and violence. These disparities often form along lines of social difference, particularly gender and age in Malawi. This chapter will examine these issues in the context of the capacity of C:AVA partners' to provide and promote equality of opportunities for their staff (organisation) and clients (operations).

Key findings

- Overall, C:AVA partners had a good understanding of equal opportunities and felt that it was provided in their workplace. However, they had difficulty understanding discrimination if it was indirect or more 'hidden'. Recruitment decisions were based predominantly on a merit-based system, with some support for affirmative action. However, Chancellor College and government agricultural extension had affirmative action targets in place for women, but they were not being met.
- The far majority of staff and management surveyed reported a positive working environment that was supportive of women and other groups, despite the fact that they formed minorities, particularly among professional staff. However, there were examples where stereotypical gender roles were reinforced in the workplace, as discussed in this chapter.
- The representation of women was low at the majority of organisations (approximately 20% overall). Partners felt this was due to: childcare responsibilities for which women were considered to be responsible, the rural location of the communities and offices, lack of qualifications of women, low preference among women to work in the agricultural sector, and discrimination.
- Staff felt that the expectations and terms of employment of male and female staff were the same.
- Partners felt that they provided equal opportunities for beneficiaries to participate in their activities; however, there was evidence that some partners had implicit requirements, such as a literacy, which can disproportionately affect the participation of women and vulnerable groups.
- Partners had varying capabilities in monitoring and evaluation, but it generally requires improvement. There are also information gaps on gender and diversity.

Organisation

Understanding and application of equal opportunities

Overall, C:AVA partners had a good understanding of equal opportunities within their organisations. To a large extent, equal opportunities were seen as providing support and encouragement to both men and women in recruitment, which is merit based and non-discriminatory. However, most partners lacked a strategic approach to equal opportunities, particularly among smaller organisations.

For some partners, such as Chancellor College, management were going beyond providing equal opportunities to taking affirmative action. Under government directive, universities were to meet quotas for female entrants and provide scholarships for women, although it is unknown how successful these initiatives are, there was a general feeling among staff that they weren't meeting their recruitment targets.

DADOs, also under government directive, were also responsible for meeting quotas for women's employment; the government has set a goal of having 50:50 female to male staff by 2050. In Nkhotakota DADO for example, training opportunities must be given to the same number of women as men. Some felt that this meant that women were favoured, but others felt it has led to an increase in the number of female staff and management.

"We employ each male or female based on equal opportunities. They have to compete equally. Opportunities are given based on merit. It is a silent policy. In all aspects of employment it [the position] should be given regardless of gender" (HR manager, NASFAM).

Organisational culture

Most organisations reported a positive working environment. In most partner organisations women represented the minority of staff, particularly among professional staff. However, women felt that they were supported by their male colleagues. In fact, 16 out of 17 staff and management surveyed in the self-assessment questionnaire reported that their organisation was very supportive of women and minority groups. One Chemistry lecturer at Chancellor College for example, was encouraged by her male colleagues to act as a role model for female students in order to encourage more women into the sciences, particularly at the Masters and PhD level.

Table 2: Do you think your organisation is fair and provides equal opportunities for women and disadvantaged groups?

	Women	men	Total #
Strongly disagree	0	0	0
Disagree	0	1	1
Agree	6	6	12
Strongly agree	1	3	4
Total	7	10	17

Some of the staff and management consulted felt there were issues around favouritism and gender insensitive behaviour, as Table 3 below illustrates. For example, when one DADO held events, female staff would be enlisted to do the cooking for the participants which led to them missing the presentations and discussions:

"There is a tendency at the workplace, when there are activities where food is cooked, such as open days, women will do all the cooking. Most women workers are supposed to cook food while male workers attend the meeting. So female staff don't get the message of the function" (male, AGRESSO, DADO).

“I am the only female in crops and I feel comfortable with men. There is no threat” (female crops officer, DADO).

In addition, because so few partners had equal opportunities policies in place, organisations rely on the informal culture of the organisation to be supportive. This is not always conducive in an equal opportunities environment, which can shift and change with different staff dynamics and power-relationships. Partners should take a more critical look at their organisations to examine formal and informal work practices to identify more subtle types of discrimination. It is also important for policies to be established to provide the foundation of equal opportunities.

Table 3: Does preferential treatment, favouritism etc. take place in your organisation on the basis of someone’s personal characteristics?

	Women	Men	Total #
Often	1	1	2
Sometimes	4	5	9
One Occasion	0	0	0
Never	1	3	4
Total	6	9	14

Low representation of women

The majority of organisations had a low representation of women in their workforce. This is true for the learning institution, government extension organisations and NGOs (refer to the table below). Partners stated that this was due to the reproductive responsibilities of women, the rural locations of the offices and communities (MEDI), lack of qualifications of women – particularly in agriculture and the sciences, women self-excluding due to the perceived masculine nature of the agricultural sector, male-bias in recruitment procedures and female stereotyping.

Table 4 Number of female staff in partner organisations

Institution type	Number of females among core staff
DADO Nkhotakota	43% female EPAs (3/7)
Zomba DADO	21% female extension workers (approx 20/95) 13% female managers (1/8)
Mulanje DADO	19% female staff (25/134) 19% female managers (5/26)
NASFAM	26% female employees at the association level 50% female managers 65% female board of directors
MEDI	20% female staff (approx) mostly at the administrative level

Note: Some of these figures are based on estimates

“It is difficult to get qualified women. It is difficult when they get married and the spouse lives elsewhere. For example, in Lilongwe. men don’t want to live in Mponela if their spouses cannot find a job. Some staff are

commuting from Lilongwe which is a discouraging issue” (male NGO manager, MEDI).

There was also some indication that staff and management felt that gender-equity would reduce staff skills at the organisation: *“The nature of [our organisation] is that it is performance oriented. So people are employed on merit but they need to prove themselves. Even women must prove themselves for them to be retained. MEDI is performance driven so performance matters.”*

The lack of women in organisations could be due to the lack of strategic attention in recruiting female staff. To improve women’s representation in the workforce, there is a need for targeted recruitment of women beyond stating that *‘women are encouraged to apply’* on job advertisements. This can include posting job advertisements in areas frequented by women, visiting classes with high numbers of female students and even visiting schools to encourage girls into science at a young age, such as was being undertaken by Chancellor College. Partners should also attract women to their organisation by stating their commitment to addressing practical gender needs of female employees, such as by providing posts that are close to the home, delivering drivers training, providing crèche facilities or flexible working (which are discussed in the next chapter). Partners who have been successful in recruiting women could also share their methods with other partners.

Terms of employment

There was little evidence of any incidences of discrimination among staff and management in their terms of employment, despite the often poor labour market position of women and minority groups. NGOs and government agricultural extension stated that there were no differences in salaries between staff that would reveal inequality and discrimination. Staff also felt that the expectations of male and female staff were the same.

It is also important that as C:AVA supports the growth of cassava processing enterprises, they encourage employers to provide equal terms and conditions of work for men and women. Although processing enterprises were not visited as part of this piece of research, experience in other countries with established processing enterprises shows that there are often unequal employment terms between men and women. Women’s employment was typically casual, paid by piece rate and characterised by a lack of benefits (although there were some female staff employed as secretaries in factories). Underlying this situation are stereotypes of women’s ability for factory work and capability of operating mechanised equipment. These barriers also keep the benefits from participation in the labour market low for women. Therefore, as the C:AVA project progresses and processing enterprises are established they should be encouraged to apply a gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy in their organisation.

Operations

Equal requirements for participation

Partners felt that they provided equal opportunities to beneficiaries in their programmes. However, some organisations, such as MEDI, had implicit literacy requirements for participation for some of its training programmes. This had the consequence of excluding many women and poor people who have been without the opportunity to receive an education. However, some partners, such as Chancellor

College, have conducted many community-driven activities by using methods such as drama to train community members, without requiring literacy: *“The limiting factor in the rural areas is literacy. It’s too low so it’s important to understand what level to talk to them at and which materials you use”* (male trainer).

However, it is important that C:AVA take further steps to ensure that the poorest persons are included in outreach activities to have more of an impact on poverty. This may be, for example, having reasonable and appropriate fees/cost for services for poorer clients.

Client monitoring and evaluation

Systematic and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems are important for identifying the reach and impact of projects and ultimately how well the project works. It is also very important in determining outreach and impact for different groups. However, among partners there was a great degree of variance in their monitoring and evaluation systems, specifically on data collection from different groups and impact assessments.

Table 5: Type of data collection by partners and region

Implementing partner	Collects disaggregated data
Nkhotakota DADO	Sex and age
Zomba DADO	Sex and age
Nkhata Bay DADO	Sex, age, household headship
Mulanje DADO	Sex and age
NASFAM	Sex, age, family size, household headship
MEDI	Sex, qualification, age

Nkhotakota DADO undertakes regular and comprehensive field supervision to check on farmer progress: *“We go to specific farmers and we check on the progress of how we are doing. In that way we are also evaluating ourselves. The farmer will ask if what they have achieved is good. We also have a target. We see if we have achieved the target and ask why we haven’t or why we have”* (male extension officer, Nkhotakota DADO).

NASFAM’s extension agents keep a journal to record progress. Every two years, an impact assessment is conducted of activities and this is where the data officer is responsible for collecting information on group members. NASFAM also has the most comprehensive data collection on the characteristics of its members, disaggregating data by gender, age, family size and household headship. They have tried to monitor ethnicity but have found it difficult because it is not easily verifiable and could be generalised.

There are also gaps where important information is not being collected. For example, as the table below demonstrates, the majority felt that impact assessments for different groups were ‘seldom’ to ‘never’ conducted.

Table 6: Is an analysis or monitoring undertaken on the impact of the programme concerning different groups?

	Women	Men	Total #
Never	1	1	2
Seldom	2	6	8
Usually	2	2	4
Always	1	1	2
Total	6	10	16

Nkhata Bay DADO shows the difficulty that some C:AVA partners are experiencing with monitoring, due to the lack of skills and tools among staff. In terms of equality, their main goal is to help facilitate a change in the attitude of farmers; but they find it difficult to show impact and evidence for change in relation to this goal. Problems such as these result in inadequate information on the impact of activities for different groups of clients, which is crucial to the C:AVA mandate. There are a range of indicators that can be included in surveys and questionnaires that would supply this information, such as gender, marital status age, tribe, disability, or country of origin etc. This will require that partners revise their field tools and documents. This information can then be applied against department and position to determine how diversity is addressed internally, and in field activities, against the type of farming, farmer wealth or village location.

Recommendations

- Improve understanding of inequality, stereotypes, and hidden types of discrimination and favouritism in formal and informal practices.
- Develop explicit written policies on equal opportunities in recruitment, retention and promotion, along with conditions of work, for more consistent, formalised and transparent practice. This should be monitored by gender and diversity indicators.
- Undertake an analysis of recruitment, retention and promotion by demographic factors to identify patterns of inequality and investigate why the patterns occur.
- Undertake assessments of partners' formal and informal activities with staff and beneficiaries and examine if women, men and other groups are participating and on what terms. Inclusion and mutual support should be promoted in all activities
- Target women in recruitment activities, such as posting job advertisements in areas frequented by women, visiting classes with high numbers of women in agricultural higher education institutions and even visiting schools to encourage girls into science at a young age.
- Encourage and support cassava processing enterprises to provide equal opportunities and terms and conditions of work for male and female employees.
- C:AVA should work with partners to develop comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems that include progress and outcomes for different groups. This should include participatory monitoring where beneficiaries are directly consulted on their experiences. This should be done at each stage of the project cycle, ensuring that information is disseminated and used to inform all planning and activities.

4. Awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs

Practical gender needs are what women and men perceive to be the immediate necessities for their livelihoods, such as water, food, employment or healthcare. These needs correspond to different responsibilities and priorities of women and men based on their traditional gender roles. Due to inequalities in access, authority, and resources, however, women often experience difficulty in fulfilling their needs. Consequently, discussion around practical gender needs usually focuses on women, as is done in this chapter. Addressing practical gender needs is an important area for partners as it can improve the livelihoods of the people they work with and work for. This section reviews the findings on partners' awareness and responsiveness to practical gender needs in the workplace and in field activities.

Key findings

- Overall, partners had a good understanding of gender and gender issues in their organisations and field operations, which was evident to a greater extent in Malawi than compared with other C:AVA countries. However, staff and management expressed a need for capacity building in gender to improve their application and effectiveness.
- Partners cited a number of positive changes in the status of women in wider society.
- Basic maternity rights and informal flexible working were provided by partner organisations; however the work environment and conditions of work could be improved for women and disadvantaged groups, particularly in paternity rights.
- Gender sensitivity could also be improved in partner organisations; however, female employees overall felt supported in the workplace.
- Partners have instituted a number of programmes that address the practical needs of women and men, taking a holistic approach by addressing a range of livelihood issues around food security and health-related support, which have been very successful.
- Most partners were aware of the importance of gender composition of beneficiary groups, have targets for women's participation, and were utilising female staff to engage with female beneficiaries. However, it was notable that partners were struggling in addressing a number of barriers to women's participation in extension, such as illiteracy and gender discrimination.
- Participation of men in programmes has become a challenge, because development activities, particularly food security and literacy, have been associated more with women than men.

Organisation

Understanding of gender and practical gender needs

Overall, NGOs and public agriculture extension organisations had a good understanding of gender and gender issues in their workplace and in the field. Staff were able to describe the importance of different gender roles and responsibilities and how it influenced livelihood outcomes. Importantly, staff referred to the importance of practical gender needs in the workplace, which was not identified in

other C:AVA countries to such an extent. This reveals a deeper understanding of gender and how it organises society as a whole, not only its relevance in rural areas and development interventions. In particular, gender specialists at government agricultural extension organisations demonstrated a high level of skills in gender analysis and in-depth understanding of socio-economic complexity in rural areas. However, overall, partners would benefit from a capacity building in gender to heighten their skills in gender terms/concepts and their application.

“Basically gender is providing equal opportunities between men, women, boys and girls (Male, Mulanje DADO).

“Gender means assigning different laws to men and women. But they should work together to achieve goals despite their beliefs” (female, Nkhotakota DADO).

Gender roles were mostly understood as being constructed by local culture: *“It is about cultural issues. In our culture women should do this and that”* (Male, Medi). However, other staff related changing gender roles to economic necessity. For example, that it was more acceptable for women to work because two incomes were increasingly required for household wellbeing.

Staff were able to quickly identify important gender-related changes in society at large, which were mostly positive, and these were often related to the impact of government gender equity policy:

“We used to see men having top positions in the civil service but now we see ladies in top positions” (male extension agent, Nkhata Bay DADO).

“I talk to a lot of female field officers and there is still a lot of putting down of women. They say they have limitations. But all-in-all it’s positive” (female extension agent, Nkhata Bay DADO).

“Here in the north the male child inherits his father’s land. But this has changed; now the land goes to everyone, both boys and girls. This is changing because of messages from the government” (female extension agent, Nkhata Bay DADO).

Work environment and conditions of work

Staff and management at partner organisations described changes in the workforce in the past decade and how women’s employment has increased. However, there was evidence that the work environment and the conditions of work were unfavourable to female staff in some cases. The table below illustrates that some staff (six) felt that the workplace was insufficiently meeting the needs of women and disadvantaged groups, but the majority of staff surveyed felt they were sufficiently (eight) or excellently (three) meeting the needs of women and disadvantaged groups in the workplace. Partners should regularly assess the workplace for the needs of different staff members, particularly when partners are looking to increase the number of female staff.

Table 7: Is the work environment and conditions of work adequate for the needs of women and disadvantaged groups?

	Women	Men	Total # of staff
Not at all	0	1	1
Insufficient	2	4	6
Sufficient	2	6	8
Excellent	3	0	3
Total	7	11	18

Maternity leave was considered by all partners as the most important practical gender need in the workplace and it was provided for the most part. Partners abided by government law for mandatory three-month paid maternity leave. However, there was an example where women on leave were called back to work if there was an important issue. Most partners also provide leave for mothers on an informal basis if they need to address childcare duties. The same rights for men, such as paternity leave, were not afforded. Partners also lacked written policies on practical gender issues such as these.

“Sometimes we get maternity leave but because there is work to be done women are called back to work” (female extension agent, Mulanje DADO).

“It’s informal. If a child is sick the employees can report it and get compassionate leave whether they are male or female. Sometimes if employees work on holidays or weekends they can take that time [in lieu] to be with families” (male trainer, MEDI)

Some partners, particularly government extension, are also ensuring that women have equal access to training. This is under a wider government mandate to equalise the situation between men and women in agricultural employment.

“In government they are promoting both men and women. Like sponsoring people for certain training they select two women and two men. Women are encouraged to apply for jobs and we see them being favoured. The government wants 50:50 in female/male staff by 2050 . We have seen a great change” (female extension agent, Nkhotakota DADO).

Some partners stated that they have enabled women to work closer to their homes to meet reproductive responsibilities.

Other practical gender needs that should be taken into account in the workplace are:

- **Facilities:** working in male-dominated sector, it is important for women to have separate and secure facilities (washing and toilet) for their comfort.
- **Manageable working hours:** offering job-shares and part-time work opportunities.
- **Travel for extension agents to the field:** compared to other C:AVA countries, transportation was not cited as a major barrier to women working in extension or the agricultural sector in general; however, it was still mentioned as an issue. Partners need to ensure that all staff, but particularly women who are often more likely to experience physical threats and harassment, are

secure, have gender-friendly transportation (bicycles, vehicles), training to drive motorcycles, providing phones, and are located close to home.

Workplace culture

Overall staff reported a positive workplace culture in their organisations; however, the self-assessment survey indicated that there was some room for improvement in the gender-sensitivity of the workplace. Some staff felt that their colleagues ‘never’ or ‘seldom’ complied with gender-sensitive behaviour (two women and six men as the table shows below).

Table 8: Does the organisation and staff comply with gender-sensitive behaviour in and outside the office?

	Women	Men	Total #
Never	1	1	2
Seldom	1	5	6
Usually	2	3	5
Always	3	1	4
Total	7	10	17

There were some examples of inequality in the culture of partner organisations. For example, one extension agent noted that women were often responsible for food preparation at work functions, which prevented them from attending the seminars. On further discussion, both male and female staff were found to accept this division of labour:

“Gender influences how work is perceived at the office. There is a tendency at the workplace that in some activities where food is cooked, such as open days, women do all the cooking. Most women workers are supposed to cook food while male workers attend the meeting. So female staff don’t get the message of the function. It is difficult to change this because the values of people are that women should cook. Women would feel bad if men were cooking” (Male AGRESSO, Mulanje DADO).

This indicates that there is some behaviour in partner organisations that is not conducive or appropriate to meeting the needs of women in the workplace. Despite these findings, discussions with staff indicated camaraderie and teamwork among male and female staff, as the quote below demonstrates. Overall, management and staff would benefit from greater awareness in gender sensitivity in the workplace.

“I am the only female in the crops department and I feel comfortable with them [male staff]. There is no threat” (female extension agent, DADO).

Operations

Programme focus on practical gender needs

Partners have instituted a number of programmes that address the practical needs of women and men. Most providers take a holistic approach by addressing a range of livelihood issues around food security and health-related support, which have been very successful. Interestingly, partners’ programmes in Malawi reflected a more progressive understanding of gender that wasn’t found to such an extent in other C:AVA countries. In some C:AVA countries, most activities for men and women were developed and delivered along firm gender distinctions, e.g. focusing on production

activities for men and processing activities for women. However, in Malawi, partners showed evidence of delivering activities that addressed practical gender needs.

For example, food security programmes have a tendency to focus on the household unit as a 'black box' and rely heavily on women's ability to provide food in the home through subsistence farming. However, ADRA's food security programme, for example took an approach that included both men and women and the responsibility of both in producing food for the home. They also had a programme to increase the amount of water points in communities, which aimed to reduce the amount of time women spent collecting water, which increased their leisure and family time.

In addition, many partners were experienced in using participatory exercises that identified the different practical needs of men and women. For example, the Mulanje DADO used Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) with seasonal calendars to identify gender roles in agriculture – who did what, when and how.

“We use symbols to depict a man and women. For example, a man has a hoe and women a bucket. The symbols used are decided on the agreement of the community. This is put beside the activity. Then you count the frequency of the hoes and buckets to see the work of men and women and the accessibility of resources for men and women. This has to be done across the district but due to financial limitations we just do it in a sample village” (extension agent, Mulanje DADO).

Areas where partners should increase their work in meeting practical gender needs are:

- providing economic opportunities in agriculture to ensure that both men and women participate in creating profitable agricultural activities and reduce migration
- including women as a target group in distribution of multiplication material
- equal access to training on production techniques
- reduction in exposure to smoke and harmful fumes from cassava frying.

Gender targeting and including women

Most partners were aware of the importance of gender composition of client groups because of the barriers that women experience in receiving agricultural services.. A number of partners have established targets for women and men's participation, as shown in the table below. These approaches have different impacts in terms of gender, which need to be considered when planning and implementing programmes. For example, a 'women only' group may provide women with the necessary space to participate and not to feel intimidated by men, but it also weakens the chance of linking with men for more strategic activities that challenge gender roles. A 'one third women' group could place women in marginalised positions, especially in terms of decision making within the group. There were no targets for male participation, but some partners did encourage it.

Another important attribute to increasing women's participation in activities is to have female extension agents to work with female beneficiaries. This was done by most of partners and can help overcome culture barriers for female beneficiaries who may not be able to speak with men alone. This reinforces the need for increasing the number of female extension agents in the workforce, particularly to meet C:AVA's targets of female participation.

Table 9: Implementing partner targets for women’s participation in activities

Implementing partner	Participation targets
Mulanje DADO	50%
Zomba DADO	50% but there are often more women than men
MEDI	30% in training, 200 women in Women in Entrepreneurial Development Initiative - WEDI
NASFAM	35% participating and in decision making, 30% in training

Practical gender issues in service delivery

There are a number of gender issues common in rural areas, which highlight women’s practical needs. The following table presents these issues and comments on the ability of partners to address them through extension services in terms of the C:AVA project.

Table 10: Gender issues and comments on the ability of partners to address them

Time constraints: Women can become over-burdened with additional activities.	Partners were aware of some of the different approaches needed for men and women in service delivery in terms of time. They follow the schedules of men and women and choose to visit women after meal times or on non-market days when they are free.
Social spaces	Partners were holding some community or group meetings in spaces that could deter some individuals from participating. For example, some were using churches or village leaders’ houses for meetings, which could have the possibility of making some groups uncomfortable about attending the meeting. Holding meetings in a more neutral location, such as a classroom, may be more effective in encouraging greater participation.
Access to finance: Rural men and women, but especially women, have low access to credit facilities.	The capacity of partners to provide credit to rural men and women requires improvement if cassava production and processing is to expand sustainably.
Physical capital: Women have difficulty in accessing and controlling labour saving, gender-friendly, technology.	There was difficulty in identifying if there was the ability or motivation for service providers to increase technology in women’s activities or to ensure technology remains in women’s control. This area should be addressed if production is to be increased under C:AVA. Partners need to build the capacity of groups to use and maintain new technology, such as graters, mobile graters and drying equipment for women to access benefits from the C:AVA project. Equipment maintenance is a very important capacity need.

<p>Human capital: Men have greater access to labour, technology, information, media and higher rates of literacy and time.</p>	<p>The participation of men and women in training depended largely on existing gender roles. For example, if partner training was about food safety or nutrition, women would be the main beneficiaries. However, introduction of technology or work with high-income generating crops will mean more men will participate in training.</p> <p>In MEDI's training programme, they group participants in similar levels of education. While this could lead to some public embarrassment, it also allows participants with low or no literacy skills to support each other and learn from one another at an appropriate level.</p>
<p>Social capital: Women are organised in communities.</p>	<p>Service providers are currently building on women's existing social capital and enriching it by working with and promoting women's groups. Mixed-sex groups can also provide the opportunity for partners to promote gender-sensitivity among group members.</p> <p>One partner explained how they had advocated women to soak cassava at the home instead of going to another location – so they could spend more time at home. However, while this could meet women's time needs, it could also reduce social time with other women spent together soaking their cassava.</p>

Technical capacity to address gender

Responses from the questionnaire revealed that gender was generally considered in planning, implementation and monitoring of field activities. As the table below illustrates, five respondents include gender 'to some extent' in their work, but a higher number, nine, felt that gender was integrated 'to a great extent'. However, in some cases partners had addressed gender issues in past projects but do not apply the same approach in current projects unless it is specified by the donor. Partners should be encouraged to apply these experiences in their current projects to improve the quality of their work. As such, all partners felt that they would benefit from capacity strengthening in applying a gender approach in their operations in order to meet C:AVA objectives.

Table 11: To what extent do you consider and include gender in planning, implementation and monitoring activities?

	Women	men	Total #
Not at all	0	0	0
To some extent	1	4	5
To a great extent	5	4	9
Completely	0	2	2
Total	6	10	16

As reflected in the table below, the majority of staff felt they were 'good' to 'excellent' in group formation, mobilising women, group management and managing women's groups. This reveals that that most staff feel they can do a good job in these aspects, but there are still some staff who feel there is room for improvement – particularly in addressing gender issues overall.

Table 12: Staff rating of their skills and ability in gender-related activities

Key gender skills	Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Satisfactory (%)	Poor (%)	Very Poor (%)	Total count
Group formation	6	7	2	-	-	15
Mobilising women	6	4	4	-	-	14
Group management	3	10	2	-	-	15
Women's group management	2	7	6	-	-	15
Addressing gender issues	1	3	8	2	-	14

Most partners had not received capacity building in gender, which is most likely due to funding constraints or lack of will from management. Some staff had undertaken courses on gender as the dedicated contact on gender issues; however, they often felt that they lacked knowledge in the practical application of gender. Despite that many staff have not been trained in gender issues, approximately 65 per cent of staff surveyed had 'access to information/resources/people with expertise available regarding gender and diversity'. Staff should be encouraged to use resources in this area.

Recommendations

- Support a more nuanced understanding of gender concepts, theory and practice that includes men. This should be implemented in a simple way, for partners to gain more understanding of the relational aspect of gender.
- Equip staff with the skills to negotiate and work within a shifting societal structure and promote equal responsibility and roles between men and women.
- Partners should continue to assess the workplace for the needs of different staff members (including facilities, manageable working hours, reduced travel requirements), particularly when partners are looking to increase the number of female staff, and provide written policies on issues of maternity and paternity leave and childcare. Rights should also be extended to fathers.
- Identify the opportunity cost of women's time spent on C:AVA activities compared to other activities, to ensure participation, (for example, ensure that the project does not increase women's workload, introducing labour saving technology).
- Develop labour saving tools and machinery to reduce drudgery and provide training to increase women's employment
- Use a holistic approach as much as possible in designing activities, and acknowledge the many roles women play in agricultural production and processing, in the home, the community and the economy as a whole.
- All partners should encourage women's participation in all activities, particularly areas where women are not traditionally found. Targets should be agreed for C:AVA that balance participation between men and women in activities, along with a separate set of activities to work with women to address their specific constraints.
- Activities that aim to increase women's access, maintenance and control over physical assets pertaining to C:AVA should be prioritised. Access to credit should be enhanced for C:AVA areas.

- Attention to health impacts of increased processing and production of cassava and cassava products should be is required, particularly in the reduction in exposure to smoke and harmful fumes from cassava frying.
- Partners also address men's needs in providing economic opportunities in agriculture to ensure that both men and women participate in creating profitable agricultural activities.
- Capacity building in gender is essential for partners. The aim of this should be to improve overall competence of staff in addressing gender issues in participation, access, ownership and equal benefits. Other areas where skills gaps were identified included community engagement, (such as group mobilisation), needs assessments and participatory methods. In the interim, providers may explore other learning sources such as the internet and shared-learning platforms such as online discussion groups and partner meetings.

5. Impact on strategic gender needs and women's empowerment

Strategic gender needs and women's empowerment are concepts that focus on the systemic factors that discriminate against women. Strategic gender needs are long-term, usually non-material, and are often related to structural changes in society regarding women's status and equity. Empowerment is an expansion of this concept, and refers to the ability of women to make strategic life choices in a context where it has previously been hindered or denied. This section examines partners' impact in this area.

Key findings

- There was good understanding of women's empowerment and strategic gender needs among partners. Their description of strategic needs included women's participation in decision making, leadership and access and control over resources and assets.
- There was recognition among most partners that their understanding of gender should include greater focus on the situation of men and the relations between men and women. Capacity strengthening is required in analytical and critical reflection skills to facilitate effective implementation of gender concepts and theory.
- There were differences between approaches and application of gender concepts between partners. The main focus for partners was on women's participation in activities in parallel with poverty reduction and agricultural development programmes.
- The number of women in management positions in C:AVA partner organisations was low overall. Management felt that this was due to the lack of qualifications of women in this sector. Women were also less likely to be found working in positions that conflicted with traditional gender roles.
- Three partner organisations had leadership or a person responsible in their organisations for gender.
- Many C:AVA partners were using basic gender analysis tools in their fieldwork, which included an activity profile of men and women, access and control over resources and assets, and an analysis of needs and influencing factors.
- Partners felt that their activities were helping to empower women and meet their strategic needs, such as by shifting traditional gender roles to increase opportunities for women, improving livelihoods and increasing confidence of women. However, partners could provide greater strategic opportunities for women, such as investment opportunities and ownership of technology.
- Partners were encouraging female beneficiaries to take-up leadership positions; however, they experienced many challenges in achieving results.
- Other capacity needs for partners are in understanding social difference and impact on projects, gender-friendly training, group management and group facilitation techniques, linking farmers to the market, women's entrepreneurship and encouraging shared-responsibility in households.
- Partners will need to establish gender objectives with a set of gender indicators to measure progress.

Organisation

Understanding of and approach to strategic gender needs and women's empowerment

There was a general understanding among partners of women's empowerment and strategic gender needs. Partners cited a number of examples of women's empowerment, including participation in decision making, leadership and access and control over resources and assets. Partners understood that the disparities between men and women in education, income etc. were limiting women's potential and livelihood outcomes.

There was recognition among most partners that the concept of gender needed to be applied in a more nuanced fashion. Some staff expressed their disappointment with the implementation of a gender approach as it often resulted in the exclusion with men from activities. Other staff showed resistance to gender concepts on the basis of their personal beliefs concerning men and women's roles or due to frustration in the poor application of theory and concepts.

Despite the good level of understanding of women's empowerment and strategic gender needs among partners, capacity is required in strengthening the analytical skills of staff and how to implement their understanding in the field. Staff also have to be enabled to critically reflect on their work from a gender perspective to identify and address issues. Some staff, such as a Food Crops specialist at the Nkhotakota DADO, believes that capacity strengthening in gender cannot be achieved due to the lack of resources in public agricultural extension: *"We are on the right track but the problem is the resources. The resources are limiting us"*.

Strategic approaches to gender

There were differences between strategic approaches and implementation strategies of gender concepts between partners. While partners had a good understanding of gender and were making positive contributions to women's empowerment, they still operated mainly by encouraging women's participation as part of a larger poverty reduction and agricultural development strategy, or to meet more practical needs of the programme and not on the basis of empowerment in its own right (for example, some partners felt that if women were targeted in microcredit programmes it would be more efficient because woman will pay back loans whereas men are more likely to default). In addition, some of partner activities are based on assumptions of gender roles in agriculture, such as women do subsistence farming whereas men are responsible for cash crops. This largely reflecting a practical gender needs approach.

"We make sure there are women in the groups in leadership positions. We advocate this message to staff and farmers but the farmers are mostly self-forming groups so it is left up to the farmers to decide" (male extension agent, Zomba DADO).

The approaches of partners reflected elements of both a 'gender and development' approach and a 'women in development' approach. However partners are encouraged to move away from seeing women as a homogenous group and tool for development (women in development), towards a more holistic understanding of both gender and development that emphasises gendered power relations and differences in livelihood outcomes (gender and development). The extent to which staff were aware of how to implement the 'gender and development' policy as opposed to a

'women in development' policy at the three DADOs visited, was limited mainly to the AGRESSO (staff person appointed responsible for HIV and Gender).

Another issue is that public agricultural extension, under the mandate of the National Gender Policy, has combined gender and HIV and AIDS in a single department in DADO offices. This is problematic because it assumes that the two issues have commonality in vulnerability, which may not adequately reflect the diversity of situations for women in rural Malawi.

Chancellor College specifically was not operating under a specific gender strategy or policy. There was a Gender Studies Unit but it was disbanded due to lack of resources. In 2005, a gender sensitisation week was conducted where the staff and student community were targeted with a variety of activities for gender-awareness, including drama, lectures and information. This was very successful.

Overall, there is a need for partners to establish a clear gender framework for their activities alongside existing strategies, and provide capacity building for staff in application of the policy. This is a critical capacity need as it will establish a consistent and clear organisational approach that will identify precisely what organisations are aiming to achieve with regard to gender. This approach should be 'mainstreamed' throughout organisational and operational spheres to reduce the segregation of gender issues in one department or programme. A gender strategy will need to be supported by a strong commitment from management, with adequate human resources and finance along with long-term monitoring and evaluation to inform activities. This will help to achieve a greater and more sustainable impact for women.

Women in decision-making within partner organisations

A key method of meeting strategic gender needs and promoting women's empowerment within organisations is to promote women into management positions. While this doesn't translate directly to the integration a 'gender' point of view, it can increase representation, assist in changing perceptions, challenge stereotypes, increase confidence for individual women and provide role models for other women. The extent to which C:AVA partners had women in management positions, however, varied but was generally low overall.

Table 13: Number of female staff in managerial positions

Institution type	Number of females in managerial positions
Zomba DADO	1/8 females among heads of department (the one female was Departmental Head for Human Resources)
NASFAM	50% female senior management team 65% female board of directors

Note: Some of these figures are based on estimates

As a result, staff felt that there were an inadequate number of women and other groups among their managerial staff. According to the self-assessment survey of staff and management, over half of staff felt that there was 'insufficient' or no representation of women and other groups at the managerial level at their organisations (see table below). Most management and staff were enthusiastic about changing this situation and encouraging more women's leadership.

Table 14: Is there adequate representation of women and other groups among staff at the managerial level?

	Women	men	Total #
Not at all	0	2	2
Insufficient	4	5	9
Sufficient	3	4	7
Excellent	0	0	0
Total	7	11	18

Partners cited a number of challenges in addressing the low number of women in management positions, including lack of skills and qualifications and childcare responsibilities:

“We follow the national gender policy which advocates 30% of women in decision making positions. But practically there are no female, qualified staff to meet this objective so this is a big challenge” (male manager, DADO).

Segmented workforce

In general, women in most organisations were working in fields that were stereotypically female (such as horticulture, nutrition, home economics, processing etc). However, it is important for female staff to work in non-traditional areas, according to their expertise, to challenge long-held beliefs of specific genders being more or less capable in particular sectors. Partners can perhaps take special measures, such as mentorship programmes and school visits, to encourage greater numbers of women into fields with low female representation.

Chancellor College was found to be taking active steps to encourage women in its science departments. A female crop scientist interviewed described that her success in her field was due to the encouragement and mentorship she received from the department and the AWARD programme (see box below).

Chancellor College and the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD)

AWARD offers two-year fellowships to fast track careers of African Women delivering pro-poor research and development. The fellowships are open to women post - B.Sc., post - M.Sc. and post - Ph.D. The fellowships are built on three cornerstones: establishing mentoring partnerships, strengthening scientific skills and providing leadership training (Kayondo et al 2010). Chancellor College has been an active participant of the AWARD programme, where staff have been both mentors and mentees.

For a young, female food scientist newly graduated from her PhD, the AWARD programme has been important for career development and providing her personal support in a male dominated field. Although her colleagues have been supportive of her work and encouraged her to be a role model for others, the AWARD programme has brought her in touch with other female academics through the mentorship and networking programme, and had led to cross-disciplinary work with women in other universities. Following the mentorship programme, participants will then pass on what they've learned and become a mentee to others.

Responsibility for gender in partner organisations

Overall, three partner organisations had leadership or a person responsible in their organisations for gender, and all were Government Extension. NASFAM had community development officers, where addressing gender issues was a component of their responsibilities. The extent of their formal training in gender was minimal.

Having a person responsible for gender or equality in an organisation is important to ensure the consistency and long-term commitment to gender in all activities. It also allows for more strategic placement of these issues within the organisation. Although mainstreaming gender is a responsibility of all staff members and department heads, it is important for there to be guidance and a role to oversee activities that staff can access.

Operations

Gender analysis tools

Many C:AVA partners were using basic gender analysis tools in the communities they work in. The tools were based on the Harvard Gender Analytical framework, which focuses on the activity profile of men and women in production and reproduction, access and control over resources and assets, and an analysis of needs and influencing factors. The underlying aim of this approach is to contribute to making projects more efficient in addressing the needs of men and women.

Nkhata Bay DADO revealed the greatest experience in using the framework and clarity in the description of the tools. However, the extent to which the tool had been applied was not extensive (only two communities per year). Some staff have indicated that the framework is difficult to understand as the concepts are new to staff, and that beneficiaries aren't able to gain an understanding of gender through the exercises, as the quote below demonstrates:

"We were introduced to this framework and to a few of us it wasn't part of our training but it was known to people coming out of college. It is difficult for staff members to grasp this. So we found it wasn't working. The farmers didn't feel that they have learned about gender" (female AGRESSO, Nkhata Bay DADO).

Impact on women's empowerment

Overall, partners felt that their activities were having an impact on women in a strategic way (13 out of 17 consulted). Partners also felt that wider societal changes were making it more acceptable for men and women to expand and challenge their traditional gender roles.

Table 15: Do you consider that your work has helped empower women or help them to make strategic life changes?

	Women	Men	Total #
Not at all	0	0	0
Insufficiently	2	3	5
Sufficiently	4	7	13
Completely	0	1	1
Total	6	11	17

The strategic gender impacts identified by partners that they have achieved in the past are detailed below.

Change in gender roles and working with men: the increased focus of women in agricultural extension activities in the last decade has led to a change in gender roles for both men and women, which indicate that processes of empowerment are taking place. There were a number of examples of men taking on some household responsibilities, such as cooking and childcare, and women's participation in group decisions and leadership was increasing.

“You can see a lot of women participating now. In the past there were no women because people would say that women should be at home. This has changed because of the messages we are sending” (male extension agent, Nkhotakota DADO).

“We are an example for farmers. When there is training, such as food preparation, we often have male extension workers helping to prepare the food so that the community sees this” (female extension agent, Mulanje DADO).

ADRA reported that their ongoing sensitisation activities had led to more open communication between men and women in communities and in the household. This was helping families to make decisions that were beneficial to the household. For example, women and men were encouraged to discuss the number of children they would like to have, in order for both to contribute to decision making on household issues.

Improved livelihoods and food security: Many partners felt that they had increased the incomes of men and women, which has improved livelihoods and contributed to poverty reduction. This was mainly through training activities targeted at male and female farmer groups focused on improving crop yield of staple crops. In one example from Mulanje DADO, a woman who was recently divorced received one-to-one assistance with maize production for both food security and income, which enabled her to support herself and children.

“There was a woman who was divorced last year and she came to me and asked for assistance with her crops for food security. I went there with all the information and inputs. After this, she reported that she had a lot of maize and was selling it. It was impressive because while the husband was not there, she had taken up the challenge; whatever the husband was doing before, she has done it” (Male AGRESSO, Mulanje DADO).

Increased confidence for women: Importantly, partners felt that their work has contributed to increasing women's confidence. This was done through the provision of leadership opportunities, and training and community sensitisation, where women were able to explore and recognise their capabilities. The leadership positions in particular, have helped to build women's confidence and self-esteem, and institutionalise their views into decision-making processes.

Areas to improve

Ownership and control: To increase opportunities for women's empowerment, women should be encouraged to purchase, access and manage technology through investment opportunities. This is an important intervention area for C:AVA and is where both practical and strategic gender needs can be met. Technical ownership can address women's need for assets and increase productivity and income. Emphasis also has to be on outputs and control over income. However, partners have not worked extensively in this area.

Although processing is generally done by women, there are instances where men will be involved if the crop is of high value. This poses a threat for women's participation in the CAVA project, as women's participation and benefit could diminish as the value of cassava increases. This was seen already with pigeon peas by Mulanje DADO staff.

Leadership opportunities: Overall, partners found it difficult to involve women in group decision making due to pervasive stereotypes and cultural norms that deem women ineffective in leadership positions. In addition, there were some cases where women's leadership was compromised by a lack of women putting themselves forward for positions or they were segregated into administrative positions. Partners said this was mainly due to the high prevalence of illiteracy among women and lack of confidence. Some partners had implemented targets in decision-making positions for women in mixed-sex groups to encourage participation but often the targets weren't reached.

"We say it's a collective decision making process in the community but it varies according to the area. But it is mostly men; especially when it is decisions about selling produce or decisions in the household" (male extension agent, Mulanje DADO).

"Decision making is mostly men. Only in female headed households do the women decide" (female extension agent, Nkhotakota DADO).

Nkhotakota DADO tries to overcome the barriers to women's leadership by enforcing a rule that men and women must alternate different leadership positions. For example, if the Chair of the farmer's group is a male, the Vice Chair must be a woman. NASFAM is also undertaking a campaign to focus specifically on women's participation and leadership. However, it is important that when partners are undertaking these activities that training and sensitisation is provided alongside activities such as this to create greater awareness of the importance of women's participation. Staff also need to be skilled in negotiating the different priorities of men, women and the existing village leadership, which can arise with greater representation of women.

NASFAM's campaign for women's participation

NASFAM is currently undergoing a campaign to increase women's representation throughout its Farmer Clubs and Associations. Club leaders are given gender sensitisation training and are encouraged to discuss the involvement and leadership of women in their own groups. There are also posters and campaign material from NASFAM to promote women's involvement in leadership and demonstrate the benefit of it. There is a trained gender sub-committee at Club and Association level that

undertakes information dissemination, training, monitoring and impact mitigation activities in the area of gender. They also make sure that there is equitable gender participation; for example, if they become aware that the number of women is decreasing in club membership or leadership positions, they will implement a plan to rectify this. Messages on women's participation and leadership are also encouraged with farmer-to-farmer extension services.

Lack of skills in social relations and intra/inter household dynamics: Most of the partners have vast experience working with farmers' groups, but their skills could be improved. Partners were aware that their activities, whether explicit or not, were changing gender roles in the household, which has caused conflict in some cases. Staff generally felt uneasy in these situations because gender roles were equated with culture, which they felt should be respected and not interfered with.

Additional capacity skills required in conducting fieldwork are:

- Gender, empowerment and social difference, how it affects group dynamics and management and project outcomes
- Reduction of gender disparities in training farmers in new technologies
- Gender-friendly group facilitation and mobilisation techniques
- Skills in intra-household and inter-household dynamics to understand roles in the household and cooperation/conflict and social organisation of community and how this impacts on livelihoods
- Linking farmers with markets and value-added activities
- Women's entrepreneurship

Partners were aware of the increasing time and labour constraints faced by women in managing their productive and household activities and skewed use of women's income for family upkeep and welfare. C:AVA and partners should assist in redressing these issues and help promote greater shared-responsibility among men and women; the rights of women to their own personal development and leisure; household labour saving, child development, health and wellness issues. It is envisaged that gender training for partners will equip their staff to enhance their understanding of underlying concepts of gender and development and their operationalisation at the field level.

Monitoring and evaluating gender

As the chapter on equal opportunities discussed, it is important for partners to ensure that their monitoring and evaluation processes are comprehensive and that gender and diversity is mainstreamed, which is not currently being done by most partners. Partners will need to establish gender objectives with a set of gender indicators to measure progress. Gender indicators that are particularly relevant to C:AVA are:

- Number of women and men participating in the activity
- Number of women in leadership or decision making positions
- Number of women and men receiving training
- Number of women and men receiving technological support
- Number of women and men with access to additional support

It is also important for gender impacts to be drawn out in evaluation procedures. Most partners were able to identify the impacts their programmes have had on men and women, but the methods to acquire this information were not applied in a rigorous or systematic way. Partners may want to adopt gender indicators that are measured

consistently overtime, gathering evidence through one to one interviews with men and women or participatory evaluations.

Recommendations

- Strengthen capacity of partners in understanding and addressing women's empowerment and strategic gender needs, specifically in developing the analytical skills of staff to understand and question complex issues of power and discrimination.
- Partners to develop a clear gender framework for their organisation alongside agricultural or poverty reduction strategies, and provide capacity building for staff in application of the policy. This should reflect a holistic approach that recognises the multiple roles and responsibilities of men and women and examine organisational assumptions, values and culture and firmly establish a budget for activities and monitoring and evaluation.
- Increase the number of women in management positions and in non-traditional sectors within partners organisations and the C:AVA project. As a long-term strategy, partners may want to consider training or mentorship in the workplace to up-skill female employees to take on management roles.
- Partners that do not have a person responsible for gender should create one, and provide appropriate training and resources for that person. The person needn't be female.
- Provide investment opportunities and ownership of technology for women, supported through provision of affordable credit.
- Review criteria for leadership positions to ensure they are gender friendly, this may include removing literacy requirements, minimising the time required for the position and providing capacity building and personal encouragement. Female youth and existing female community leaders or elders could be good candidates for leadership positions. These activities should be conducted alongside community-wide gender sensitisation activities.
- Increase staff skills in understanding rural power structures and institutional analysis from a social relations perspective, focusing on managing conflicts, group management, intra and inter-household dynamics and understanding empowerment and social difference.
- Develop a set of gender indicators that measure quality of participation and performance through the project lifecycle. Link with reporting and communication.
- Develop case studies based on success stories to work as role models. Within the beneficiary and neighbouring communities there may be women role models who will be willing to share their experiences and mentor project beneficiaries. Alongside, there may be male mentors who are averse to the traditional power relations that are detrimental to women's empowerment.

6. Awareness and responsiveness to key diversity issues

While gender is a principal area of social difference, it can interact with other characteristics and increase vulnerability or social exclusion of particular groups. Some of these characteristics are: age; class; ethnicity; religion; disability; national origin or language. Diversity is important when looking at gender, as when it is combined with other personal characteristics such as age or marital status, an individual can experience a higher likelihood of exclusion. With these characteristics in mind, the extent to which partners are aware of and responsive to key diversity issues will be examined.

Key findings

- Overall there was low awareness of diversity as a social concept but a high appreciation for the insight the concept provides. Partners were already addressing some key diversity issues in the communities they work in, such as the delivery of specialised programmes or informal targeting of women headed households, youth, people with HIV and AIDS, elderly and orphans.
- Partners identified that the breakdown of the extended family has increased vulnerability of certain people in the family unit.
- Partners did not show an explicit commitment to diversity in the workplace, and felt that introducing measures to increase representation of specific groups is contrary to a merit-based system. However, staff felt that their work environments were generally inclusive.
- There was general hostility towards homosexuality in the country.
- Partners lacked data and information on how different groups participate and benefit from their work, as monitoring and reporting on diversity indicators was limited.
- Staff felt that there could be more projects that address specific diversity issues, specifically issues related to loan distribution to people with HIV and AIDS, targeting illnesses other than HIV and AIDS, working with elderly and providing more opportunities for disabled people.

Organisation

Understanding of diversity

Overall there was low awareness of diversity as a social concept but a high appreciation for the insight the concept provides. Partners did not have explicit policies or strategies on diversity or vulnerability, but they felt they were addressing issues of difference through their work in poverty reduction more generally. For most partners, this included specialised programmes or informal targeting for particular groups. It would be beneficial for partners to include the concept of diversity in their approach and recognise how they already address diversity issues in order to formalise the recognition of the needs of different groups in communities and the workplace. This includes attention to various areas of social difference such as marital status, tribe, age, disability, language, national origin, sexual orientation etc. This will help to identify groups that may be more prone to exclusion, particularly if multiple characteristics interact. By striving to improve services and the work environment with different groups in mind, it will help to create more effective services and support for all.

Diverse workforce

A diverse workforce is increasingly being recognised as a valuable asset for organisations and businesses. As stated in the chapter on equal opportunities, partners did not show an explicit and defined commitment to diversity in the workplace, as recruitment and promotion procedures were based on merit. This reinforces the finding that partners feel that providing equal opportunities or introducing measures to increase representation of specific groups is contrary to hiring on merit. However, staff felt that their work environments were generally inclusive to different groups, with different religions and ethnic identities represented. HIV and AIDS was found to be an important issue among staff and management, but the extent to which this was reflected in employment policy was minimal and there were some examples of discrimination against people with HIV and AIDS in the labour force at large. C:AVA partners are encouraged to take a diversity approach to build a workforce with a range of skills and experiences.

“I knew someone with HIV and he wanted employment. He didn’t get the job. The authorities thought there would be a lot of absenteeism and he would not be able to carry out duties” (Male, DADO).

Operations

Programmes targeting diverse groups

All partners were participating in some activities that addressed diversity issues indirectly by their work with vulnerable groups for poverty reduction. The main diversity focus for partners was on youth unemployment, women-headed households and people with HIV and AIDS, elderly and orphans. This was conducted through both targeted and mainstream programmes. However, partners lacked data and information on how different groups participate and benefit from their work, as monitoring and reporting on diversity indicators was limited.

Staff and management felt they were addressing diversity in their work and had an ability to help the poor and marginalised, as the tables below demonstrates. However, there is still considerable room for improvement on partners’ approaches to identifying and addressing the needs of different groups. Staff also felt that there could be more projects that address specific diversity areas in their work.

Table 16: To what extent do you consider and include diversity in your work?

	Women	men	Total #
Not at all	0	0	0
To some extent	2	3	5
To a great extent	2	6	8
Completely	2	2	4
Total	6	11	17

Table 17: Ability to help the poor and marginalised

	Women	men	Total #
Very poor	1	1	2
Poor	0	1	1
Satisfactory	0	4	4
Good	1	2	3
Very good	3	2	5
Total	5	10	15

Some examples of C:AVA partners working on diversity issues are:

- DADOs: HIV and AIDS - poultry projects and status disclosure programmes aiming to reduce stigmatisation of this group
- Nkhotakota DADO: works with migrants from other countries and promotes learning between different groups. Also focuses on sensitising Muslim communities for women's participation and leadership
- MEDI: a Youth training programme

Diversity issues that need to be addressed

Some partners felt that the wider social fabric was changing causing significant changes in family structure and wellbeing, and staff identified that the breakdown of the extended family had led to vulnerability of certain groups of people in the family unit. Staff explained that this trend was due to changes in people's lifestyles, the higher cost of living and requirements of both men and women to work, which has required family members to live in nuclear family arrangements at a distance from their relatives. This has resulted in a gap in care, where previously, family and gender roles would have provided care within the family unit, such as for the elderly.

"We don't belong to big families and we are starting to live in smaller families. The farmers say that life is sad and that extended family is breaking down. I grew up with five of my fathers' brothers, their families, and my grandmother. We all ate from the same pot. If you were ill you would be taken care of well" (female extension agent).

Another area of diversity that should be addressed, but is recognised for being a highly contentious issue in Malawi, is homosexuality. At the time of the study, the sentencing of two gay men was taking place because of their sexuality, which revealed a lot of hostility towards homosexuality in the country generally.

Staff raised a number of other issues that will need to be addressed in C:AVA activities to ensure equal distribution of benefits in communities. The issues that were identified are as follows:

- Loan distribution to people with HIV and AIDS: there was a report that people with HIV and AIDS were not receiving loans because they weren't believed to have the ability to repay the loans
- People with illnesses other than HIV and AIDS: *"It's AIDS and it's not AIDS. I don't agree [with the focus only being on HIV and AIDS] because there are other diseases. Government is concentrating on AIDs but there are other issues"* (extension agent, Nkhata Bay).
- Working with the elderly
- Making activities friendly to disabled people
- Monitoring different groups included and excluded in activities

Monitoring and evaluation

As discussed in previous chapters, monitoring and evaluation systems were in place for partners, but improvements should be made to include diversity and gender indicators. Without this, some partner management staff felt that they had very little information on their clients and the impact of their activities on different groups. Examples of diversity indicators that should be incorporated into monitoring and evaluation systems are: age, nationality, tribe, language group etc. Based on a study of the communities it works in, partners can select the most relevant indicators and include them into baseline surveys, monitoring and needs and impact assessments.

Close attention should be paid to the characteristics of those included and not included in programme activities.

Recommendations

- Improve understanding of diversity and provide capacity for staff on how diversity issues can be addressed, and how activities could be extended or improved for different groups who may be more prone to exclusion or vulnerability, particularly with the changing nature of the household unit. This includes attention to various areas of social difference such as marital status, tribe, age, disability, language, sexual orientation, national origin, etc.
- Develop a set of tools or revise existing tools to help staff apply diversity in their work and investigate how their programmes reaching out to different groups.
- Ensure staff are equipped with group negotiation and conflict resolution skills to help mitigate circumstances where the interests of different groups conflict.
- Involve young people in profitable cassava farming and processing activities through training in modern methods.
- Research institutions should also investigate technologies or modifications to existing technology (e.g. cassava peelers) that reduce the drudgery of work and that work effectively for groups such as the disabled or people with long-term illness. Facilitate linkages for community groups to access processing and other technology.
- Integrate diversity characteristics into monitoring and evaluation systems such as: gender, age, tribe, disability, or country of origin, marital status etc.

7. Enabling participation

Participation in socio-economic and political life is widely seen as a crucial tool for achieving greater equality and overcoming poverty, and is an intrinsic part of development processes and business innovation (Sen, 2001; Chambers, 2007). Consequently, the Gender and Diversity Audit includes an analysis of participation among C:AVA partners both internally and with their clients. There are a range of processes and mechanisms for participation; therefore the purpose of this performance area is to identify what is currently being done to enable participation and how it can be improved with gender and diversity in mind, within organisations and in their field operations.

Key findings

- All partners had a good understanding of participation and felt it was crucial to their organisations and activities in the field. However, their understanding could be furthered by partners examining and addressing power relationships and the complex circumstances in which people participate in various ways and terms. Furthermore, participatory elements could be added to more activities, such as in monitoring and evaluation.
- Internally, organisational participation was mainly conducted through staff meetings and staff felt it was good, but improvement could be made on the participation of women and minority groups.
- The majority of staff used participatory methods in their work. The foundation of partners' approaches was Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which includes separating groups by sex, consulting beneficiaries on their needs and priorities, and conducting action planning, problem trees, seasonal calendars etc.
- Partner organisations are mostly communicating with communities through village leadership, which has led to problems in some instances with community trust when the relationship with leaders and the community has been tenuous. Holding meetings at the home of village leaders can also prevent people from participating.
- Common barriers that partners felt prevented the participation of groups were illiteracy and poverty/lack of assets. Men's participation has also decreased as there is a feeling that development projects and assistance is more for women.

Organisation

Understanding participation

All partners felt that participation was crucial to their organisations and external activities, whether their work involved business, extension services or rural development. The general understanding of participation was that it was a process to include the views, experiences and knowledge of staff and/or beneficiaries. This was conducted in a variety of ways, as this chapter will illuminate; however, a more nuanced understanding of participation could increase the quality of activities. A gender analysis of participatory approaches for instance, reveals that the general understanding of participation lacked attention to power relationships or complex social circumstances that influence the participation of different groups. Moreover, participatory approaches were understood and applied only in particular contexts and not mainstreamed throughout organisations.

Means of participation within organisations

Internally, organisational participation was mainly conducted through staff meetings held on a weekly/bi-weekly basis. The majority of partners felt that meetings were an effective way for staff to share their difficulties and learning from the field, which fed into the overall direction of the organisation. One organisation reported that it made management more accountable and increased transparency in their organisation.

“Every Monday morning we hold meetings where everyone is invited. In these meetings we plan the activities of the week, review the previous week and discuss any other business. This is inclusive. Even budgeting is done in a transparent way and each department participates in decision making” (male manager, Nkhata Bay DADO).

Importantly, the Nkhata Bay DADO, among other partners, holds meetings with all departments on a monthly basis. This builds staff awareness and learning in disciplines outside their area of focus and will enable staff to tackle issues in a multidimensional manner.

According to the self-assessment questionnaire distributed to staff and management, eight people felt that participation within their organisations was ‘good’ to ‘excellent’, while eight people thought it was satisfactory and two people felt it was ‘poor’ to ‘very poor’. This shows that staff felt that participation could be improved within their organisation. A higher proportion of public extension organisations rated participation in their organisation more positively.

Table 18: Ratings effectiveness of partner’s encouraging participation with staff

	Women	Men	Total #
Very poor	1	0	1
Poor	0	1	1
Satisfactory	2	6	8
Good	1	4	5
Very good	3	0	3
Total	7	11	18

The majority of staff among partner organisations felt that the opinions and views of women and diverse groups were sought out within their organisations. Ten people thought they were ‘usually’ sought out and two people ‘always’ sought out. However, six people surveyed felt that they were ‘seldom’ sought out, and a higher proportion was women than men. This was slightly more prominent among public extension organisations.

Table 19: Are the opinions and views of women and different groups actively sought out by your organisation?

	Women	Men	Total #
Never	0	0	0
Seldom	3	3	6
Usually	2	8	10
Always	2	0	2
Total	7	11	18

Operations

Current participatory methods in field activities

Among staff and management, the far majority of staff stated that they used participatory methods when planning and conducting their work (12 people out of 17 used participatory methods 'usually' or 'always' used). There was evidence of a good understanding and application of participatory methods among partners, which are activities that are intrinsic to building community ownership and trust: *"They take you seriously when you go into their groups and they feel respected and they tell you what they want to do"* (male employee, MEDI).

Table 20: Do you use participatory methods with different community groups when planning and conducting your work?

	Women	Men	Total #
Never	0	0	0
Seldom	1	1	2
Usually	1	5	6
Always	4	5	6
Total	6	11	17

A wide range of consultative and collaborative approaches were used by C:AVA partners. The public extension services all use Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as the basis for community engagement, where gender is taken into account. DADOs undertook the basic principles of gender analysis, which includes separating groups by sex, and asking questions about access and control over resources. A number of different activities were conducted by DADOs within the PRA framework, as demonstrated below:

- Nkhotakota: needs assessments, action planning, disaggregated discussion groups by age and sex.
- Zomba: disaggregated discussion groups by age and sex and problem ranking.
- Nkhata Bay: *"We use the PRA, [including] wealth ranking and community mapping. Also the transect walk where you physically see the community. When you look at the resources you have at the end of the day you ask about ownership, control and access to these resources. We share the information with the AGRESSO [gender specialist and NGOs]"* (female extension officer).
- Mulanje: *"We use seasonal calendars to identify activities about the cultural practices within agriculture – who does the work and which agricultural tasks. We use symbols to depict a man and women (for example, a man has a hoe and women a bucket). This is put beside the activity. Then you count the frequency of the hoes and buckets to see the work and also look at the accessibility of resources for men and women"* (male extension officer).

There was a range of use of participatory and gender friendly methods by other C:AVA partners. For example, NASFAM was using PRA methods with gender included for community consultations. MEDI and ADRA didn't refer to a specific methodological approach to participation, but were principled on community led development.

However, partners would benefit from expanding their methodological approaches, such as drawing on farming systems concepts and the sustainable livelihoods framework (Carney, 1998). Approaches such as this can assist in identifying issues

for a range of rural actors in a holistic way, and be used to develop multi-faceted solutions. Furthermore, methods incorporating greater emphasis on 'who' is participating and 'how', as well as issues of access, power structures and inequality would be beneficial in delivering more people-centred agricultural services. Participatory exercises should also be integrated into all project stages, in planning, implementation and monitoring evaluation, not just in the initial phases of the project.

Addressing power structures in initial community engagement

Partners should be encouraged to reflect on their relationships with community authority structures and understand the impact this has on their relationship with the beneficiaries. All C:AVA partners were using existing political structures or community authorities to mobilise clients, which is a common and effective method for gaining community legitimacy and entry into rural communities. However, too close an alignment can limit the ability of partners to effectively engage with the community as a whole and with minority groups and even threaten to reinforce structures of inequality.

Currently, many partners start the planning phase of their programmes by communicating through the community authority and asking leaders to form groups, which is sometimes based on different social criteria (sex, age, education etc.). Community leaders are typically older men, but are also women in some cases. This contact is required in order to conduct work and gather people together in the village, and was seen by both staff and management as being important to community relations. However, it can also associate the organisation with the beliefs and practices of the authority that may be detrimental to the community or particular groups, as the quote below demonstrates:

"There are people that have problems with village leaders. For example, some people don't receive fertiliser subsidy coupons and they think it's the village chiefs' fault. So they have longstanding issues with the village chief. So if we had meetings at the leaders' place they would come but they wouldn't feel comfortable" (Male extension agent, Mulanje DADO).

As the quote above demonstrates, some partners were using the private residences of community leadership for community meetings. However, partners recognised the consequences that this form of relationship has on participation levels if some people do not feel comfortable in this environment.

In addition, staff who work within their own villages of origin may be situated within local hierarchies and be more influenced by existing power structures, resulting in privileging some groups or families. Given this, partners would benefit from reflecting and examining their own position and alignment with existing power structures and how any negative impact could be reduced.

Barriers to participation

Partners incorporated methods that enhanced the participation of different groups in most of their activities, such as working with women's groups and setting targets for women's participation. However, some partners had eligibility criteria that were restrictive to particular groups of people that dis-proportionately affect the marginalised. For example, some of the meetings and training offered are held in locations that are not considered culturally or politically neutral, such as churches. Schools may be a better location as they are partially removed from this context. Some organisations have made literacy a requirement for certain types of training or

leadership positions, which can be detrimental to women's participation as they are more likely to be illiterate. However most C:AVA partners in Malawi had worked around this problem. DADOs work for leaders doesn't require literacy, as long as candidates can articulate messages. MEDI revises its training based on the educational level of the group they are training.

Other barriers to participation are poverty. Requirements such as requiring members to have land or ownership of other assets or require significant time have been noted to impact participation of the poor. Partners should look critically at their requirements for participation in their activities, such as during distribution of new cassava varieties, and to reduce them.

Partners also felt that there was need to encourage men to participate in their programmes. In MEDI's experience for example, illiterate men were the most reluctant to come to training, due to embarrassment about their illiteracy and therefore required specific encouragement from partners. While this finding is important, and women-targeted initiatives must be balanced with attention to male participation, it must also be kept in mind that women have been traditionally excluded from extension support and require focused support and space for their participation.

“Sometimes women are free to come and say they are illiterate but men are embarrassed. That is why there are more women in literacy classes. Men are too shy” (male, MEDI).

Recommendations

- Promote shared learning among partners on participatory methods to improve effectiveness and the range of participatory tools for partners. Partners would benefit from other approaches such as the livelihoods framework and farming systems approaches.
- Develop more creative ways to encourage individual and collective staff participation, such as interdepartmental or field visits, theatre and role-playing, staff presentations and external partnerships to increase learning and enhancing performance. This is particularly important for female staff and staff who belong to a minority group.
- Partners should ensure that meetings are held in neutral locations and use communication channels alongside village leadership.
- Instate a range of communication gender- and diversity-friendly communication methods, such as radio programmes with female announcers, presentations in local languages, establishing female community facilitators to distribute messages and limiting, if not omitting, written materials.
- Address or support others in addressing systemic barriers to female and male participation, such as illiteracy, control over resources, gender stereotypes, lack of confidence and lack of trust towards development workers.
- Partners should undertake capacity strengthening in group dynamics and conflict management to work more effectively with groups and encourage their participation.
- Undertake regular participatory evaluations with clients such as through community monitoring committees, direct beneficiary consultations.

8. Innovation

Innovation simply means ‘a new way of doing something’, or for organisations, doing something new. Innovation provides different ways to achieve a goal often in terms of improving efficiency, productivity, quality etc. In terms of gender and diversity innovation is also important because gender and diversity relations are constantly shifting and being re-negotiated. New constraints and opportunities are continually arising and requiring new methods for understanding and addressing differences. In this context, innovation is examined to identify the extent to which partners facilitate processes for the creation and use of new ideas.

Key findings

- Innovation was largely understood as the production and introduction of new technologies, which was an essential part of most partners’ work. But this understanding can be extended to look at processes of shared learning between organisations and informal ways of learning.
- Most organisations possess an organisational culture that supports innovation and has an openness to try new things to some extent.
- Staff meetings were the tool most often reported to be the mechanism for knowledge sharing within an organisation.
- The majority of staff reported that they weren’t able to be innovative because they didn’t have adequate resources to test new ideas.
- There were few examples of partners using new and challenging methods or activities to address gender and diversity issues.
- Knowledge sharing occurs through external partnerships on various levels (grassroots to policy level), which is critical for gaining new insight, influencing, and even gaining additional funding. Some of these partnerships need to become stronger and communication needs to improve.
- NGOs may be more likely to be innovative in their field activities, which is most likely due to their independence from Government and more flexible structure.

Understanding and level of innovation among partner organisations

Innovation was largely understood as the production and introduction of new technologies, which was an essential part of most partners’ work. Most organisations strive to be innovative but in a structured way. There were some partners that had a more in-depth understanding of innovation and saw it in terms of internal processes and opportunities for learning and communication.

“This is being done. We have meetings where we review our work. For example, the department of crops will report and then others will critique. Same applies to other departments. We try to come up with the way forward for the next quarter” (male extension officer, Zomba DADO).

Partners generally felt that their organisations sufficiently valued and promoted innovation in their workplace to some extent. Over half of staff and management surveyed felt that the value and promotion of innovation in their workplace was ‘sufficient’ or more, which indicates that staff feel they are in a supportive environment to try new ways of doing things. A slightly higher proportion of public extension staff reported that it was ‘insufficient’, compared to NGOs, which was a finding found in other countries as well.

Table 21: Is innovation (new ideas and ways of doing things) valued and promoted in your organisation?

	Women	Men	Total #
Never	0	0	0
Insufficient	2	4	6
Sufficient	4	6	10
Very sufficient	1	1	2
Total	7	11	18

Partners felt similarly about applying innovative methods to their fieldwork with regard to gender and diversity. Most staff surveyed said they sometimes used innovative approaches, but there were few examples of partners using new and challenging methods to address gender issues. This work should be enhanced, as innovative practices are core to addressing gender and diversity issues in the midst of social change and changing roles and responsibilities. Organisations need to be aware and adapt to changing roles to deliver more effective services.

Table 22: Do you feel that you use new and innovative methods in your work regarding gender and diversity?

	Women	Men	Total #
Never	0	0	0
Once or twice	1	3	4
Sometimes	4	6	10
Often	1	2	3
Total	6	11	17

External partnerships

Partners were engaging with the external environment in many ways, which staff felt contributed to innovation and learning among staff. Partners had a number of external partnerships with the national government, local government, civil society organisations and private companies. For example, MEDI has partnered with the Kellogg Foundation, which has helped them to establish four cassava-starch factories, provided training for farmers and support to four staff to undertake masters programmes. The table below demonstrates that 13 out of 14 staff surveyed felt that these partnerships were 'effective' or 'very effective'. Public extension services rated their partnerships to be slightly more effective than NGOs.

Table 23: Does your organisation have effective partnerships with external organisations?

	Women	Men	Total #
None at all	0	0	0
Ineffective	0	1	1
Effective	4	6	10
Very effective	1	2	3
Total	5	9	14

“ADRA Malawi brings policy makers and communities together to discuss issues and for policy officials to respond to issues. For example, farmers will complain about prices of crops and the government official will come and respond” (male manager, ADRA).

However, some staff consulted felt that partnerships between NGOs and government extension needed to be improved in order to share learning and experience, and prevent the duplication of work, which was happening in some areas. Addressing these constraints is difficult due to the short-term nature of projects, which often hinders ongoing partnerships and a consistent direction of work.

“Due to the nature of our work we are working in many sectors with NGOs but sometimes we do the same work. We realise when we get to the community that an NGO has already tried something or has already sent that message. The response from farmers is that this has already been done” (male extension officer, Mulanje DADO).

Barriers to innovation

There were a number of barriers that prevented staff and management from being more innovative. Some of these barriers were lack of motivation and inadequate incentives (bonuses, training, and management support) and rigid management structures. Another constraint which partners felt hindered their ability to be innovative was lack of resources: *“If someone has that inclination it is difficult because of lack of resources. This is our major problem”* (male, Mulanje DADO). NGOs were found to rate themselves slightly higher in terms of innovation, which could be related to their flexible institutional structures.

Recommendations

- Improve understanding of ‘innovation systems’ as an approach to innovation, which focus less on the production of new technologies and more on partnerships and information sharing.
- Undertake a review of organisational and project structures and processes to identify their conduciveness for innovation (e.g. bureaucracy, rigid rules etc).
- Encourage staff development through skill and confidence building and incentives using bonuses, training opportunities, bottom-up participatory approaches and management support. Also encourage greater ownership in the organisations, giving staff responsibility over budgets and trying new methods.
- Facilitate more participatory processes between staff and with external partners for shared learning, new ideas and information dissemination. A number of shared-learning platforms can be used, such as regular discussion groups, sharing contact information of partners, online discussion groups etc, which can help increase knowledge transfer between organisations. This is particularly important between research and field operations, which are critical for gaining new insight, influencing, and even gaining additional funding.

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