THE IMPACT OF MILLENIUM VILLAGES AS A STRATEGY OF EMPOWERING WOMEN SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY: A CASE STUDY OF MWANDAMA MILLENIUM VILLAGES, MALAWI

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) as a strategy to empower women socially and economically, a case study of Mwandama Millennium Villages, Malawi. The study attempted to establish the inequalities women experience in all aspects of life, for instance in agriculture, business, health, education, community development and leadership. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: To examine the approaches and new technologies of the Millennium Villages in meeting its objectives and guidelines of empowering women socially and economically, to assess how the MVP has empowered women socially and economically and To determine factors that are inhibiting and contributing to women’s empowerment socially and economically through the MVP.

Systematic random frame was used to select the sample size and purposive random frame helped the study to select the population and target group. A sample size of 150 household respondents was drawn from the population of 8,500 households. Pair wise ranking was used in the group discussion to analyze the effectiveness, quality and satisfaction of women social-economic conditions. With the MVP strategies and approaches by the respondents, the research used a questionnaire guide to collect data from the study population. Household survey, group discussion and key informants were methods used in data collection.

Data was analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel by using percentages, graphs and tables. The study connected the three theoretical models as related to women’s empowerment, for example structural theory emphasized the general and traditional socialization of women where they are being viewed as weak vessels and that their role and position is to take care of the home and family.

The study reviewed that women had low education levels because, traditionally they were not allowed to go to school and not allowed to take up leadership positions, In regard to education model women have acquired more knowledge in business and agriculture and health training programmes that have enlightened them and given them the chance to understand things they did not know about issues, needs and opportunities. In the liberal theory MVP is connected as the strategy that has liberated women in Mwandama Village from poverty, food insecurity and other social economic issues. The conceptual framework of the study agrees and connects MVP as a powerful strategy to enhance and empower the poor and women

The study revealed that the MVP project has met the needs of women and achieved its objectives and guidelines with the use of effective approaches and strategies in agriculture/business, health, education and community development.

The study also found out that the MVP has improved social-economic status of women. This was in relation to the findings of the social economic data that showed that, before the MVP there were no social services in the area such as schools, health and participation in the leadership position. In addition the study also showed that the MVP have very effective strategies in that women were satisfied with the quality of services offered which have contributed to the improvement of the living standards of the poor and women in Mwandama Millennium Village. However, the study noted that, inequalities in cultural beliefs and poor local leadership are inhibiting factors to women’s
empowerment in the MVP.

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