

**SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS UNDERLYING THE
LOCATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN A FISH
VALUE CHAIN: THE CASE OF LAKE VICTORIA
TILAPIA TRADE, OGAL BEACH, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs play a significant role in promoting development. They own the majority of businesses in the micro, small, medium scale categories. Women's entrepreneurial pursuits are impeded by myriad of constraints. These constraints are structural in nature but hinged on socio-cultural aspects while others are purely cultural with negative implications on women's entry, mobility and location within a value chain.

A great deal of attention has been paid to economic dynamics which influence the location and performance of women entrepreneurs in a value chain while little attention has been paid to socio-cultural factors. The study focused specifically on women entrepreneurs in tilapia trade at Ogal fishing beach. Our aim is to map the tilapia value chains, locate women in the chains, establish factors which influence their location in the tilapia value chains and identify the socio-cultural factors that influence the location of women in the tilapia value chains.

The study established that culture is not entirely detrimental to women involvement in entrepreneurship. However, there are several aspects in which social cultural factors deter or constrain women involvement in entrepreneurship thereby eroding their competitiveness. Women have less access to formal education, fewer resources of their own, have less control of their time, income or decisions they make. High dependency level takes away the time and resources that could be used in enterprise development. Women also face excessive demand on their time as mothers, wives and managers of their homes. They face competing demand in relation to domestic commitments and entrepreneurial pursuits. These socio-cultural constraints hinder their ability and opportunity to unleash optimally their entrepreneurial potential.

For reversal of these trends, there should be concerted effort to manage changing socio-cultural environment to favour women engagement in entrepreneurship. Adoption of appropriate technology should be championed as a means of saving time and energy spent by women in fetching water, firewood and cooking amongst other duties. HIV/AIDS as a major contributory factor to high dependency level should be treated as a key development agenda. The government should come up with strategies of relieving the women the dependency burden. The society should embrace the changing role of women. There should be a mind shift towards support of women entrepreneurs (socially, financially and politically). Entrepreneurship training is vital in building the capacity of women entrepreneurs. Financial institutions should also tailor make credit products that are friendly to women taking into consideration the unique socio-cultural environments in which they operate.

All in all, the study advocates for deliberate efforts by all the stakeholders in embracing gender-balanced and gender-sensitive policies in pursuit of sustainable development through empowerment of women entrepreneurs.