



**WORKING
Paper 45**

Women's participation in fish value chains and value chain governance in Malawi: A case of Msaka (Lake Malawi) and Kachulu (Lake Chilwa)

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PLAAS Working Paper45: Women's participation in fish value chains and value chain governance in Malawi: A case of Msaka (Lake Malawi) and Kachulu (Lake Chilwa)

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ABSTRACT

This paper helps to fill an important gap that exists in gender responsive fish value chains by analysing the factors that influence women's participation in fish value chains and value chain governance in Malawi. The study was based on the premise that there is limited information on how fish trade contributes to the livelihoods of specific groups within communities dependent on fisheries. In trying to assess the situation on the ground a value chain analysis framework was adopted and focus group interviews, key informant interviews and gender transformative approaches were used to analyse (a) value chain participation by men and women; (b) institutional arrangements in the value chain; and (c) perceptions and experiences of men and women in the value chain processes. In addition, relevant documents were reviewed to determine to which extent gender is considered in fish value chains and their governance. The study findings show that women are relatively integrated in all the nodes and activities of the value chain, even though their participation in leadership positions is limited because men dominate leadership and decision-making positions. From a governance point of view, the patterns of interactions identified are characterised by special proximity and family ties. The study also identified an intermediary node of auxiliary actors who play a critical role of brokering trade at the production and processing levels. It found that this role is not adequately recognised by external support and government as there are no support services targeted for such actors. The study contributed to a deeper understanding of women-specific issues in the fisheries sector in Malawi, hence providing further opportunities for gaining support for women's empowerment in the fisheries sector.

Keywords: Fish value chains, Women, Participation and governance, Malawi

ACRONYMS

BVCs	Beach Village Committees
FAs	Fisheries Associations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GTA	gender transformative approach
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VSLs	Village Savings and Loans
WFC	WorldFish Center

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fish value chains and their governance require a solid understating of women's relationship to environmental resources and their roles in the value chain (Lwenya et al, 2006). It also requires acknowledging and incorporating women's knowledge of environmental matters (Torri, 2010). The invisibility of women's work and the social space they occupy in governance has been highlighted by the national gender policy which proposes to reverse this, in particular in the production sector that is male dominated.

However, it is extremely difficult to isolate pertinent information for the fisheries sector, particularly as the data is not disaggregated by sex (Lwenya et al, 2006). The discussion of value chain governance thus focuses mainly on economic aspects (Nugraha, 2010). Nugraha contends that there are particular socio-cultural factors that exert a strong influence on the governance arrangements and actions of individuals in a value chain. Such socio-cultural factors may hinder or support the processes of value chain governance. It is acknowledged worldwide that fisheries value chains are dominated by men (Karlsdottir, 2011). It is evident though that women and sometimes children do make enormous and often unpaid contributions within the value chains (Williams, 2010).

The degree of visibility of women's participation in decision-making processes in fishing communities and fish value chains vary from country to country, depending on prevailing social and cultural values (Rahman, 1998). Numerous examples exist from almost all corners of the world that support the argument that, in spite of the crucial contribution to fisheries, women have been largely absent from decision-making processes at all levels of the value chain (Sloan et al, 2000; Neis, 2000; Power, 2009). Women play a number of specialised roles in fisheries across the globe and active roles in household adaptive strategies. Thus their contribution should not be underestimated (Pascal-Fernandez, Frangoudes and Williams, 2005:167).

While Scot et al (2010) contend that the concept of gender alone is not sufficient for analysing inequalities the research's prime focus was on women. Considering that policy makers have interest in the value chain dynamics in relation to poverty alleviation (Nugraha, 2010, WFC, 2013); this research therefore sought to investigate and document the factors that influence women's participation in fish value chain and in addition whether (and how) they are involved in governance of the value chains and if they are not, the reason for this and the consequences of how such low participation or non-participation. It also examined the perceptions of men and women on the involvement of women in value chain governance.

1.1 Fish marketing in Malawi

Fishing and the fish trade is the mainstay of many African economies and represent a significant source of foreign exchange earnings, in addition to the sectors' important role in income generation, employment and food security (FAO, 2005; FAO, 2016). Trade in fish and fishery products is guided by international agreements and conventions such as that of

the World Trade Organization (WTO) a body that controls global trade; the Trade Blocks, such as Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC); the regional fisheries bodies (RFB), such as Lake Victoria Fisheries Organisation (LVFO) and the bilateral arrangements between neighbouring countries.

According to FAO (2005) fish processing and trading is a major occupation among many fishing communities, including women in Malawi. Most of the fish sold to distant markets is in dry form for easy transportation and storage. In most fishing communities in Malawi, the traditional fish marketing system is characterised by fishermen landing their catches on scattered beaches along the shores, normally in small quantities. Most marketing activities are dominated by fish traders who also to some extent function as a source of informal credit. The traders provide necessary cash for the fishers for fishing equipment and family needs, especially during the extended seasonal periods of limited catch and income. This situation creates a strong inter-dependence between traders and fishermen, which influences market decisions over the latter.

Most of the landing sites in Malawi also serve as fish exchange and market sites. A number of strategies are used for selling fish between boat/gear owners, crew members and traders/processors: fish can either be sold either by auction whereby bidding is done by the traders or using a predetermined method set by the fisher (for example by the dozen, common for *chambo*) (Hara, 1993; Hara, 2011; Phiri et al, 2015). Auctioning is especially common for fresh, large, more valuable fish species that are usually in high demand in urban markets but also common for small species that are sold by volume using tins or buckets. Fish trade in Malawi is constrained by inadequate market and trade infrastructure and poor policy implementation (Kapute, 2008). Presently there are few fish quality standard considerations in Malawian fish trade (Kapute, 2008) despite the fact that some fish goes across national borders, which should be an important reason for imposing more stringent quality control requirements (Kooiman, 2008:129).

How fish trade contributes to the livelihoods of specific groups within society is less known due to limited localised information (ibid). A study carried out by Mtunda et al (1998) in Malawi revealed that 60% of women are involved in fish processing and trading activities. Some of the commercial fishing companies have their own fish handling, processing and marketing facilities at their landing bases (FAO, 2005). An example of this is MALDECO fishing company, which has its own ice plants, cold rooms, freezing plants, smoking kilns, within its premises very close to Lake Malawi and refrigerated fish distribution lorries. These refrigerated lorries are used to distribute fish to their fish market outlets in urban centres.

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1.2 Conceptual framework

The study adapted the global value chain analysis framework. Through the value chain analysis each node was mapped and analysed. The term “value chain” describes the full range of activities that firms, producers and workers do to bring a product from its conception to its end user (Risgaard et al, 2008). According to Bellù (2013) a value chain is operationally defined as “a set of interdependent economic activities and a group of vertically linked economic agents”. Kaplinsky and Morris (2001) similarly state that a value chain comprises a full range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception through the different phases of production, to delivery to final consumers. Hence value chains can be seen as a vehicle by which organisational relations and networks are linked and interconnected. Ruben et al (2007) argue that a value chain is characterised by its network structure (rather than only vertical relations and linkages) including its governance form and the way value is added. Coles and Mitchell (2011) assert that properly applied, value chain analysis can be a powerful tool for addressing gender inequalities in markets. In the context of the fisheries sector in Malawi a value chain consists of established production and distribution networks, the former dominated by men while the latter has both men and women participants. This study focused on the value chain network structure and governance forms. In order to establish the factors that hamper and constrain women’s participation in the value chains, the study adopted both vertical analysis, to focus on inter node dynamics and specific actors, and a horizontal analysis, to take account of constraints at each node and in the specific contexts of the study sites. Figure 1 below presents a schematic diagram of the value chain framework, which was used for the study.

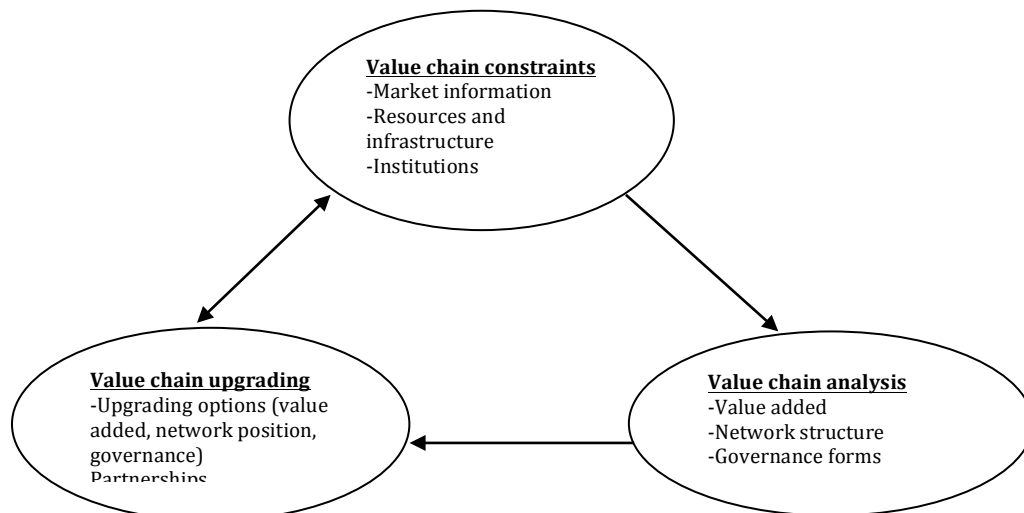


Figure 1: Value chain analysis framework adapted from Bolwig et al (2008)

The point of entry adopted for analysis is a gender transformative approach (GTA) whereby an analysis of women’s participation in fish value chains and value chain governance was conducted in line with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and

the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)'s recommendation that unequivocally argues for a stronger commitment in the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015) to realising gender equality, women's rights and women empowerment (UN Women, 2013). The GTA is a framework that helps addressing the structural impediments to gender equality and achievement of women's rights.

A GTA proposes an integrated approach for tackling the structural factors that shape gender inequalities and calls for transforming gender relations. The use of GTA in the value chain analysis for the study provides a context for understanding how participation of women in fish value chains and value chain governance is influenced by the local institutions and how participation can be enhanced.

The approach focuses on three main areas of gender equality, women's rights and empowerment namely: freedom from violence against women and girls; gender equality in the distribution of capabilities (such as knowledge, good health and access to resources) and gender equality in decision-making power across all public and private spheres including families and communities (Coles et al, 2014).

The key characteristics of a GTA (Kantor, 2013) as compared with other gender integrating approaches are as follows:

- GTA seeks to develop a deep understanding of people within their context and the way social inequities intersect to affect their choices and outcomes.
- GTA provided space for women and men for iterative process of critical learning, reflection, questioning and action.
- GTA engages with different actors across scales to redress the underlying gender norms and power relations that influence social inequalities.
- GTA provides commitment to address unequal power relations and challenging oppressive norms, behaviours and structures.

1.3 Methodology

The value chain analysis was undertaken using two main approaches. Firstly, the analysis comprised a literature review of fish marketing in Malawi and secondly an interview based analysis with actors on key species of *Barbus* (locally known as *matemba*) and *Engraulicypris* (locally known as *usipa*). The interviews were conducted to build up a detailed value chain map, including cross border activities. This study did not include upland retails market actors beyond mapping the full value chain nodes. The value chain mapping focused on upstream components of the chain for both fisheries. The mapping started with fishers (producers), intermediaries, and processors/traders.

¹ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the year 2000, which should have been achieved by 2015. Also known as "Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development", the SDGs build on the UN principles, popularly known as the "The Future We Want".



The structure of the interviews included individual interviews, focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews. A total of 20 women (age 20–45) and 20 men (age 20–58) were interviewed.

The interviewees were purposively selected, taking into account gender, nodes at which they are positioned in the value chain, and the species that are involved inland where they normally sell their fish. Two fish landing sites were used for the research, namely Kachulu on Lake Chilwa and Msaka on the South West Arm of Lake Malawi. The main species are landed at the two selected beaches, namely *Barbus palodinosus* (*matemba*) for Kachulu and *Engraulicypris surdella* (*usipa*) for Msaka. The respondents' answers were transcribed, analysed and organised, based on key thematic areas.

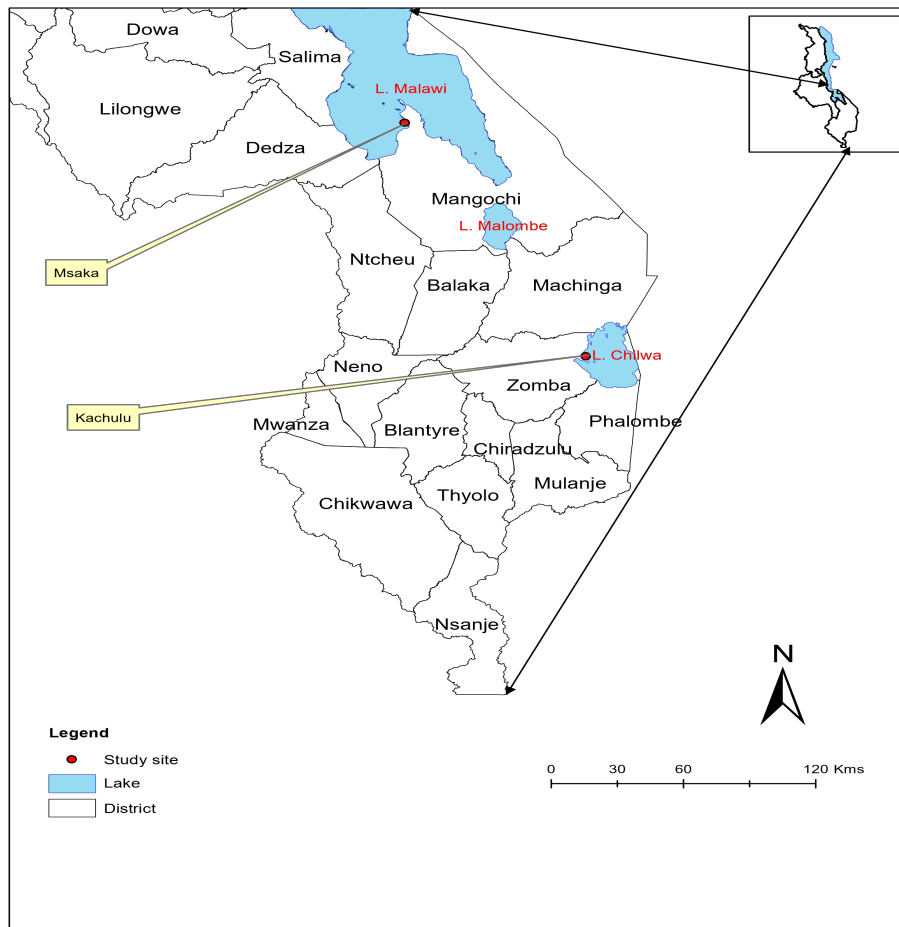
1.4 The study areas: Kachulu and Msaka

Kachulu beach is located about 60km from Zomba City on the western side of Lake Chilwa in Likapa Village (see Figure 2), group village headperson Mbalu traditional authority Mwambo. Historically, fishing activities have provided some of the most important livelihoods and natural assets in the village and local areas, including for those from outside the area, who participate and transact in the fish economy.

The importance of fisheries-based livelihoods has increased, with more people engaged in fishing and fish processing and trade-related activities (Njaya, 2002). Fish is also a relatively cheap and accessible source of protein for Kachulu's low income households (Njaya, 2002).

Msaka beach lies on the south west arm of Lake Malawi in Chimphamba Village in Mangochi District (see Figure 2). It is situated within Lake Malawi National Park. The group village headman is Chembe and the traditional authority is Nankumba (Njaya and Kachilonda, 2005). Although the village has a diversity of ethnic groups including the Chewa, Tumbuka, Tonga, Yao and Sena, fishing in the area continues to be dominated by the Tongas from Nkhata Bay who invented and introduced *chilimira* fishing to the central and southern Lake Malawi (Hara, 2011). The majority of the population in the area derive their livelihoods from fishing and related activities such as processing, trade and firewood selling.

Figure 2: Map of Southern Malawi showing the positions of Msaka on Lake Malawi and Kachulu on Lake Chilwa



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2. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings and analysis are presented under the following themes: value chain map and structure; gender differentiated value chain roles; perceptions of women's participation in value chain activities; women and governance and factors that hamper women's participation in decision making in the value chain. We conclude with recommendations for policy interventions.

2.1 Value chain structure

This section gives findings regarding how fish moves from fishers through the main nodes (stages) in the value chain and describes the main actors (and roles) at the specific nodes and the general activities in the chain. It describes the identified support services and governance structures and provides an estimation of the proportion of women involved at each node. These findings are schematically presented in Figure 3.

2.1.1 Value chain map, structure, the supporting services, governance structures and women's participation for *Engraulicypris* (Msaka beach) and *Barbus* (Kachulu beach) species

Seven major nodes and actors could be identified in the value chains for *Engraulicypris* and *Barbus* species, namely fishers, local brokers, local processors/traders, transporters, market intermediaries, retailers and foreign export buyers. The production node (gear/boat owners and actual fishing)² is dominated by men. Over 95% of gear owners both at Kachulu and Msaka were men with almost all the fishing out on the lake being undertaken by men (crew members³). Fishers sell their catch to local processors/traders as soon as it is landed at the beach.

At Kachulu a new intermediary role between fishers and processors/traders which is largely played by women (estimated at 70 to 90%) has been institutionalised. These auxiliary intermediary actors are locally known as *macheu*. Their role is to broker the sale of fish between fishers and processors/traders for a fee based on a determined amount of Kwacha per number of tins sold/brokered for. In this role these actors are presumed to negotiate not only the best price for the fish for both sides (fishers and processors) but also to provide access to fish for the processors/traders in a sellers' market that is usually highly competitive. The gender issue with the *macheu* at Kachulu was that most of them are divorced or widowed women who do not have financial muscle to run a proper business.

² The Department of Fisheries in Malawi defines a "fisherman" as the "gear owner". In this study we refer to gear owners and crew members as "fishers".

³ Traditionally and culturally, fishing has been a male activity, though women do participate in trap fishing on Lake Chilwa and in mosquito net fishing along the beaches in Lake Malawi.

It is also important to note that they are outside the normative and hegemonic power structures – marriage in particular. The *macheu* get their power for this role from being local (from within the community) illustrated by respondents who stated that no one from outside the community was allowed to participate in the role.

At Msaka, fishers get some of the fish from the catch after landing and sell some to some to local people. The intermediary actors (again, mostly women) are referred to as *jolova*. At Msaka, the fish has traditionally been sold (or passed on) to the spouse/wife of the boat/gear owner (and also in some instances crew members). The wife then processes the fish before selling it to a trader. In some instances, the wife might choose to sell the fish to the processor/trader before processing them herself.

The local processors/traders at both sites, (this role also played by some intermediaries) process the fish at the landing site. *Barbus* species are sundried, brined and smoked, while *Engaulycypiris* species is either sundried immediately or parboiled or smoked before it is sundried. Processors/traders spend a number of days buying and processing fish until they have a consignment that is big enough to take to the market. Some processors (especially a number of women at Kachulu) sell their processed fish to traders right at the beach.

However, an increasing number of women are taking the processed fish to upland markets themselves, instead of selling them to the traders at the landing site. Traders are also increasingly using real time information through contacting others, using mobile phones in making decisions about where to take their fish, based on supply and demand and therefore where the most profit could be made.

The geographical spread of the value chain goes beyond the national borders of Malawi to neighbouring and more distant countries, such as Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania and South Africa. Thus some women processors/traders at Kachulu mentioned they sell fish across into Mozambique through the Nayuchi border at Ncuamba market or sometimes buyers from Mozambique through Mulanje border and Limbuli market.

The women traders from Msaka mentioned that they sell their fish to buyers from Zambia, who cross the border to Lilongwe Market. Fish is also transported into South Africa, mainly though Johannesburg Park Station (Hara et al, n.d.; Jimu, n.d.). The participation of women at this node was estimated to be over 90%. Table 1 shows the proportion of women at each node of the value chain structure at each beach.



Table 1: Proportion of women in the value chains of *Barbus* and *Engraulicypris* species

Value chain actor	Msaka Beach				Kachulu Beach			
	Total	Men	Women	% women	Total	Men	Women	% women
Fishers	167	158	9	5	42	39	3	7
BVCs	10	5	5	50	11	8	3	27
Local brokers	60	20	40	67	24	8	16	67
Processors/ Traders	54	26	28	51	48	9	39	81
Transporters	4	3	1	25	4	4	0	0
Exporters	4	0	4	100	6	1	5	83

At the retail markets, especially the urban markets, traders sell their consignments wholesale to retailers for two main reasons. Firstly, cartels exist at most urban retail markets that deny any outside fish retailers from retailing fish (Hara, 1993). Therefore, fish traders who bring fish from the lake landing sites have to sell their fish to the retailers who own slab spaces at the markets.

Secondly, most traders specialise in fish trade only, and prefer to sell their full consignment quickly, in order to return to the landing site to gather the next consignment. The traders use various means of transport to markets, including pick-ups, buses (including minibuses) and sometimes bicycles (for example, some traders at Kachulu said that they used bicycles to take fish to local markets within Zomba, Mulanje and Phalombe districts).

The last node is the foreign export markets, where some fish traders sell across the borders. For example, a number of women from Msaka reported that they had taken *Engraulicypris* species to Johannesburg (South Africa) to sell, and a number of women traders from Kachulu said that they routinely take fish into Mozambique to sell.

In both instances, the argument and justification were that profit margins are better, despite some of the problems that one might encounter with border formalities. Women participate significantly in the fish export market, with 60% of the participants being women. This is in line with findings that over 70% of the informal cross border trade in the SADC region is undertaken by women (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2012; Njiwa, 2013).

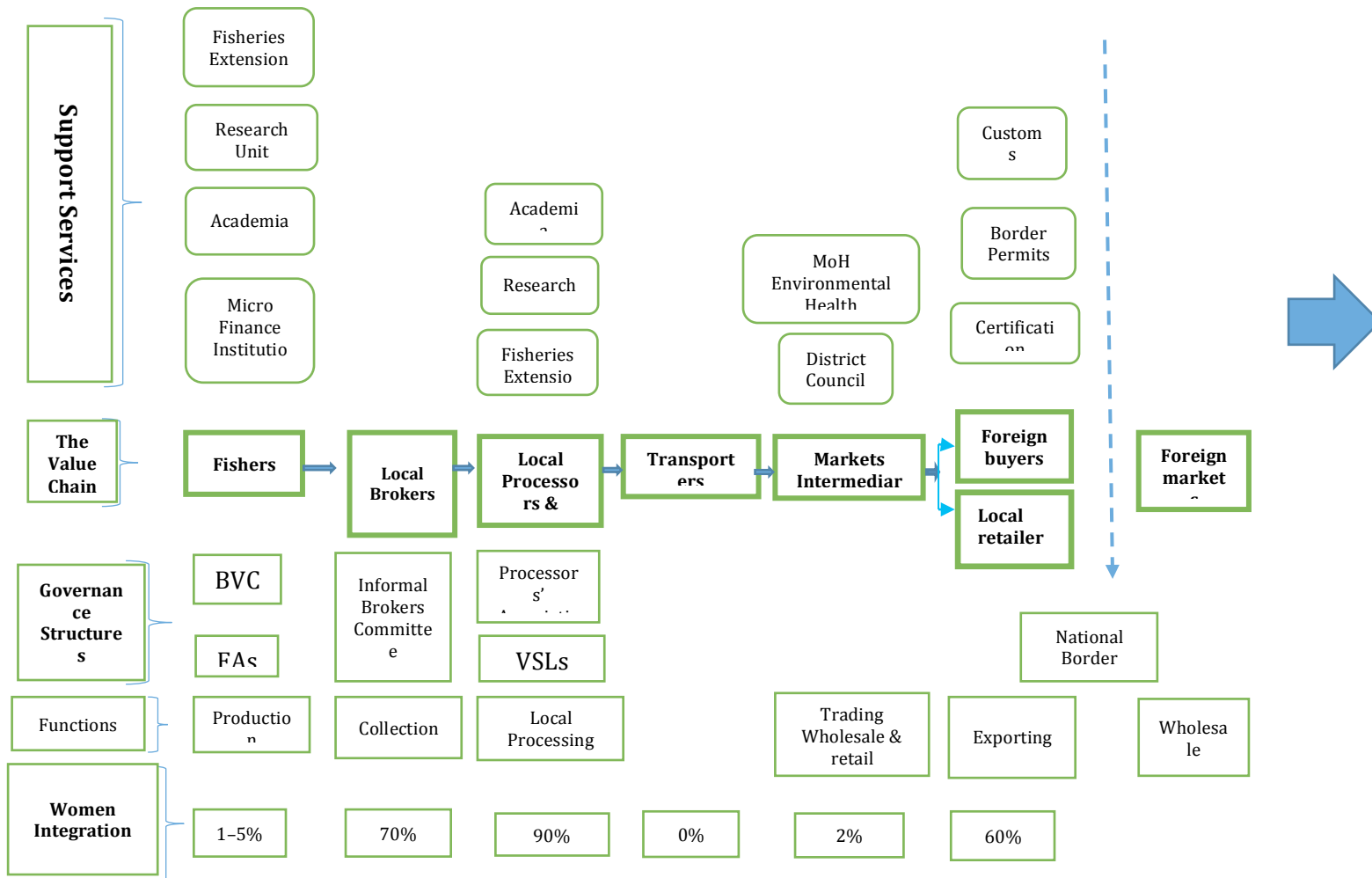


Figure 3: Value chain map for Usipa and Matemba from Msaka and Kachulu beaches



National and international markets for *Engraulicypris (usipa)* and *Barbus (matemba)* are widespread and highly informal. Thus, the transport channels and logistics to retail markets are characterised by long distances and high transport costs. As indicated, traders do not limit themselves to specific markets but go to markets based on real time prices communicated through mobile phones. Women, particularly, participate in fish exports. Some of the final destinations for processed fish for both local and foreign markets are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Markets for different fish products

Product type	Destinations for <i>matemba</i>	Destinations for <i>usipa</i>
Fresh	Zomba (Chinamwali, Mpondabwino, Mpunga, Songani)	not applicable
Sundried	Zomba (Songani), Mangochi turnoff, Balaka, Lilongwe	Mangochi turnoff, Lilongwe (Chimwaza, Nsumdwe), Mbulubuzi, Mkando, Limbe, Zambia, Mozambique (Thete using Chiponde border), Tanzania, South Africa
Smoked	Mbulumbuzi, Mulanje (Limbuli, Lauderdale, Chiringa) Bvumbe, Thondwe, Limbe, Mozambique (Ncuamba, Ncuba)	Ntcheu (Pengapenga, Kasinje, Tsangano, Kampepuza), Lirangwi, Songani, Limbe, Thondwe, Mkando
Fried	Bembeke, Thyolo, Lilongwe, Limbe	Lilongwe, Lizulu, Blantyre (Limbe)
Parboiled	NA as <i>matemba</i> is not parboiled	Lilongwe, Limbe, Mangochi turnoff

2.2 Gender differentiated value chain roles

This section provides an analysis of the findings for the roles played by men and women within the value chain. It also highlights the power relations between men and women within the value chains and also perceptions on women's participation in the value chains.

The study found that men and women often fulfil different roles in the value chain and have differential access to assets and have separate levels of influence in decision-making processes. In both case study communities, men tended to dominate fishing while women dominate the post-harvest fishing activities. At Msaka, the fishers' wives are given priority for processing and trading.

At times, however, especially when catches are low, traders are allowed to buy the fish. In such cases, the wives play an intermediary role (*jolova*) by brokering the deal between fisher (husband) and processor/trader. At Msaka, widowed and or divorced women were less privileged and thus unable to access the catch for further processing and trading, even though some operated as brokers.

It was learnt that men and women processors/traders spent equal amount of time (approximately 8 hours per day) on fish processing and trading activities. However, responsibility for household duties and childcare often resulted in much longer workdays for women.

As a result, women require support in order to find time to fulfil their reproductive responsibilities in addition to fish processing and trading and hence hire casual labourers and/or sometimes use their children to provide extra hands. Apart from fish processing and trading, 56% of the women and 22% of the men at both sites were engaged in other economic activities such as selling firewood, food/agriculture commodities and other small groceries to make ends meet.

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Table 3: Gender roles played by men and women and power relations in fish value chains for both case study communities

Value chain function	Gender roles for both communities	Power relations
Production: Fishing	Both men and women are involved, as some women gear owners go fishing because of the challenges they face with the crew members (especially at Kachulu). Women use limited number of fishing methods and fish inshore at Msaka. Women play the role of preparing food for the husbands who go fishing all day and cover vast distances.	Crew members have influence on where to fish. Sometimes the crew members operating women-owned gear decide to go fishing for five days or for a week without reporting back to the gear owner, and when they return they give no money – a scenario they call <i>chisabwana</i> (without the boss). This they frequently do to the women gear owners and not to the men gear owners.
Collection: Intermediaries/local brokers	Both men and women are involved as intermediaries, but women are more predominant (over 70%) than men.	Local women are strongly positioned for this role, usually surpassing both female and male processors and traders from outside Msaka and Kachulu. Their power lies in the fact that they are wives or live locally and hence are allowed to broker the trade. They have bargaining power with fishers to obtain the fish at relatively reasonable prices and then sell the fish to processors and traders with a small mark up, or process it and take it to the markets themselves. Without them most processors/traders are unlikely to have access to fish, especially at Kachulu.
Processing: Sun-drying, parboiling, smoking and brining	Women dominate in all methods of fish processing of <i>usipa</i> as well as <i>matemba</i> (sun-drying and parboiling, smoking and brining) and usually sell to male traders who go to sell to other markets outside the communities. Women also are involved in trading in upland markets themselves.	An increasing number of women receive technical support from different projects to improve processing, especially sun-drying, using solar dryers, and smoking, using an Ivory Coast smoking kiln. They have power to control who has access to the solar drying and smoking facilities.

Trading	<p>Traders from outside markets are predominantly men. However, women are involved in trading, including export. Relatively large numbers of women sometimes travel long distances (including international destinations) to trade their fish.</p> <p>Men dominate the intermediary agent role selling the traders' fish to local retailers and foreign export buyers at national retail markets.</p>	<p>Women from male-headed households are allowed by their husbands to travel to inland markets and even foreign markets to trade the fish. They are not necessarily constrained by the reproductive role of caring for the home.</p> <p>Although women usually lack full control over usage of the proceeds from fish sales, they are involved in some of the major decisions made over the use of the income. In most households, husbands make decisions over how the money is used, without consultation with their wives. In cases where decisions are jointly made, women economise and want to spend on family needs, while men might want to spend outside the family requirements. Some women traders withhold the money from their husbands (since men and women have different spending patterns) in order to prioritise household expenditures.</p> <p>Women from female-headed households have full control on the use of the money accruing from the sale of fish.</p>
Retailing	<p>In inland local markets, selling is done by men, women and children.</p>	<p>Joint decisions are made in male-headed households, while in female-headed households it is the women who have the power to make decisions for the family.</p>

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2.2.1 Perceptions on women's participation in value chain activities

Marital status has a bearing on the choice of enterprise and how women participate in the value chain activities. At Kachulu, we found a widespread belief and practice of divorced, widowed and single women dominating the intermediary (*macheu*) and processing nodes of the value chain. This was attributed to the limited options that they have to support their livelihoods. In addition, they have more liberty to engage in other economic activities, compared to married women. In contrast, married women dominate the processing and trading nodes at Msaka, where they are given priority in buying fish from their fisher husbands. The women at Msaka were allowed to take the processed fish to upland markets and beyond with permission from their husbands. In effect, such women combined processing and trading, thereby adding value to the fish they traded, but they also cut out the middlemen for the benefit of their households. The women processors and traders at both sites decided which markets to go to, depending on which markets were offering better prices. The women at Msaka were allowed to retain the money as household managers but could not make single-handed decisions over using it. Therefore, they shouldered responsibility for managing the money, even though they did not have the right to personal spending.

2.2.2 Women and governance

Analysis of governance involved identification of institutions (and groups/associations) that influence value chain actors' roles through rules, regulations, and traditional practices.

At the production node of the value chain there are formal associations called Beach Village Committees (BVCs) and Fisheries Associations (FAs). The structures were formed with the facilitation and guidance of the Department of Fisheries (as provided for in the Part II of the Fisheries Management and Conservation Act) with the idea of promoting participatory fisheries management. Women's participation and representation was rated at 5% overall in these structures. The few women in these committees were involved as committee members, since men often held most of the leadership positions, due to customary power relations and the underlying cultural attitude that fishing is a "macho" activity for men. This study found that, given the lowly positions that women hold in such committees, they do not have much influence on the decisions made by the BVCs and FAs. This is in tandem with Agrawal (1997) who acknowledges that women's lower positions in formal structures often make it difficult for them to influence key decisions affecting their livelihoods.

At the intermediary node there were self-organised groups (informal structures) that coordinated the activities of the actors among themselves. Considering that the node is dominated by women, their representation in the informal governance structures for the groups was also very high – 90%. Even then, these informal groups did not exert much traction with BVCs, FAs and projects for recognition of their roles and translation of such recognition into institutional and material support.

The value chains for *Engraulicypris (usipa)* and *Barbus (matemba)* extend beyond the national boundaries. In this regard, several factors are likely to have an influence on the

export segment of the value chain, in particular with respect to duties and excise, and the sanitary and phytosanitary regulatory environment of the target countries. In assessing governance aspects in relation to quality and standards, it was learnt that fish products from both Kachulu and Msaka beaches are not subjected to quality control. Our observation was that processing and drying is done without proper handling facilities. Processors and traders were of the view that, if government had put in place the necessary infrastructure and quality standards and such standards were enforced, they would get more value for the fish they processed and traded.

2.2.3 Factors that hamper women's participation in decision-making processes in the value chain

Factors and issues that limited or constrained the participation of women in the value chain and the decision-making processes thereof were identified, as shown in Table 4. Also identified was scope for overcoming these impediments.

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Table 4: Factors affecting women's participation in value chains and their governance

Factor	Description
Environmental	<p>Dwindling stocks had negatively affected most of the women gear owners. Most of those who were interviewed used to operate between 2 and 7 gears. Some had resorted to selling their gears, due to the decline in catches, to the extent that some remained with one gear only. This had impacted their livelihoods heavily.</p> <p>One woman from Kachulu lamented that “I used to have four <i>zilimira</i> [seine nets] but now I only have one. I had to sell the other three due to inadequate catches. When I had the four <i>zilimira</i> I once bought a pickup with finances from fishing, which I was using to transport my processed fish to inland markets, thereby greatly adding value to my catch. With the decline in catches, I was forced to sell my gear and the pickup, and now I am struggling with the single gear that I have.”</p>
Social exploitation	Exploitative trading practices exist both at the beach and the markets. Women are sometimes forced to engage in sexual affairs with the fishers to access the fish. At the markets the local brokers steal from the women.
Economic	Processors/traders lamented about the high transport costs coupled with long distances to markets that characterised the different market channels. They indicated that they would take the most risky means of transport, such as on top of packed trucks, because they only charge the cargo and not the individual; unlike buses, which charge the cargo double the fare of a person. Other costs included hire of drying racks, accommodation and food at landing sites when buying and processing fish and also the retail markets when they went to sell their consignment

<p>Legal</p>	<p>There is lack of provision of government infrastructure at landing sites (e.g. drying racks, smoking kilns, fish stores) and of storage facilities at the retail markets. Another key issue mentioned was the unhygienic environment (in particular, lack of toilets) both at the landing sites and retail markets. The lack of storage facilities sometimes meant that the local traders had to return to their homes with the fish if they failed to sell their consignment within a reasonable period.</p> <p>As one trader stated “We sometimes go back home with the fish after we fail to sell because of the low prices offered by inland/urban traders/retailers, coupled with the fact that the market places do not have proper storage facilities where we can store our fish until prices are conducive for sale. This is common at Lilongwe market since the market for wholesale starts at 4am and closes at 9am (only offers us five hours to sell off our fish) whereas at other markets we are allowed to sell the whole day.”</p>
<p>Socio-cultural and technological</p>	<p>There is a lack of fishing skills, due to the cultural and traditionalist perceptions that the lake is not a safe place for women. The inability of women to go fishing results in women gear owners losing a lot of income from their gears due to malpractices by crew members. This was the case with women at Kachulu who expressed dissatisfaction over how the crew members sometimes treated them.</p> <p>“We experience a lot of theft of our fish [and thus the revenue for such catches] by the crew members that go fishing and dock at other beaches to sell the catch and do this again and again. By the time they come back, say after five days or so, they come with no money, saying that they did not catch any fish for all those days [they blame, among other things, bad weather, bad luck, etc.]” They term this practice <i>chisabwana</i>, meaning “without the boss”.</p> <p>There is a lack of knowledge and skills in post-harvest management – it was reported that the traders/processors lost a lot of the catch that they bought, especially during the rainy season when it is difficult to process fish, using almost any method of processing. As a result their livelihood can be affected negatively.</p>



3. CONCLUSIONS

While the study findings showed that a limited number of women are involved in leadership and decision making in the various governance structures, it can be acknowledged that women tend to be relatively integrated in most of the activities at the various value chains of *Engraulicypris (usipa)* and *Barbus (matemba)* species, since participation in such value chain nodes requires limited resources, such as finances and business skills, as argued by Coles and Mitchell (2010). The few women with financial muscle, usually through inheritance (Hara, 2011) have integrated in the production node as gear owners. Even then, most struggle or tend not to have full control of where to catch fish (or sometimes even where to land and sell the catch) since they cannot go out fishing themselves and thus have to employ men as crew members to operate their fishing units. It is important, therefore, for government policy to focus on empowering women with better access to finances so that they are able to invest in fishing operations, and also can wield power directly over fishing activities.

As denoted by Sturgeon et al (2008), in the context of governance of the value chain, the patterns of interactions are characterised by spatial proximity, family and ethnic ties, whereby the identified auxiliary actors, *macheu*, are allowed to transact between fishers and processors. Through the family and ethnic ties, the fishers in Msaka prioritise selling fish to their wives when there is a shortage of catches. In addition, the intermediary actors play a crucial role in the local economy, through facilitating trade between fishers and processors/traders as well as adding to the wellbeing of their families through the fee that they earn for their services. It is apparent that such family ties could be leveraged upon for the betterment of women fish traders. For example, women who are not able to access fish could be deliberately linked to their kinsmen who are fishers. However, caution must be exercised to ensure that such linkages do not necessarily disadvantage those women who do not have fisher-kin.

In male-headed households, men dominate decision making on the finances that accrue from the sale of fish. Women decide where to sell the fish, in consultation with the men, but the men have final say on what to do with the finances. It was observed that women go to upland and urban markets, including exporting the fish to neighbouring countries, such as Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. Joint decision making on how to use proceeds from fish trade appears to be common in households headed by men, and fewer women than men control proceeds in such households.

Women are dominant at the processing node of the value chain, largely because this node involves preparing the fish for processing, including washing, sun-drying, smoking and parboiling. This is a reflection of cultural stereotyping of gender roles and abilities, as the processing exercise requires keenness and patience to ensure the end product is good enough. The processing activity also requires less physical energy, compared to actual fishing, yet it is time consuming and at the same time low paying. For example, at Kachulu those women who were involved in fish smoking got USD 0.069 (K50) per *chigoba* while those in Msaka got USD 0.041 (K30)/*chigoba* for processing the fish. The findings corroborate with Dolan (2001) who found that the majority of the women were

concentrated at the lower end of the value chain and performed unskilled manual labour in high agricultural value chains.

On the other hand, this study has revealed that women play a crucial role as local brokers in the fish value chain at the production/processing level. This activity is an important source of income for women who are divorced, single or widowed. The role of women as brokers has not been recognised adequately by external support organisations and governance structures, or by the other chain actors. As a result, no support services have been provided for such actors, nor for their inclusion in governance structures. Since brokerage does not require major capital outlay, special policy and technical support to ensure that women are better trained as brokers could go a long way towards empowering them. Furthermore, such women could be organised into groups/clubs, in order to enhance their collective bargaining power. Nalule (2015) reported that social capital among the female-headed households is significant because they share information, ideas, and livelihood resources to build their assets and find solutions to their problems.

The results suggest that interventions geared towards enhancing the participation of women in the different stages and nodes of the *Engraulicypris (usipa)* and *Barbus (matemba)* species value chains at the household level will differ for the different categories of women. For instance, women in female-headed households, who are, in most cases, widowed, automatically assume the role of the household head, and hence have access to and control of productive resources. This particular group of women make decisions regarding production, marketing and use of the proceeds.

Women in male-headed households participate in fish processing and trading. The fisher husbands often prioritise their wives when the catch is sold for further processing and trading. Once the women sell the fish, they report to their husbands, who control the finances, though the women may use some of the money for subsistence-related things. This finding is in tandem with the finding by Dey (1992), who noted that, while such women generally had the right to dispose of the product, in practice they were constrained about using the income that accrued from such sales, even to meet their household and reproductive responsibilities for certain basic necessities.

4. RECOMMENDED POLICY INTERVENTIONS

This study raises some important issues and should act as a stepping stone towards policy interventions as follows:

- There is a need to collect statistical information about the number of participants by sex and age at the different value chain nodes, the activities, earnings, etc., which could help build a clearer picture of the characteristics of the value chain and also a gendered perspectives of the value chains.
- There is a need to establish fish processing/trading organisations as an entry point for capacity building but also as a forum to gather information on fish processors/traders' needs, problems, and interests. These types of organisations could be facilitated and promoted by the Government of Malawi through the Department of Fisheries and work as a platform for men and women to discuss common or different issues related to fish processing and trade, and share knowledge and ideas for empowering women.
- There is a need for the Department of Fisheries to create capacity for gender analysis among its field extension officers. Therefore, trainers should organise training sessions to impart gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming skills, not only for government officers but also NGO partners working among the fish-dependent communities.
- In line with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women (CEDAW GR 34) (2016), there is a need to create an enabling environment to ensure the economic and social independence of the intermediaries through programmes aimed at improving the conditions of the local brokers who are currently not targeted with any interventions.

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