

Abstract

Gender differentials in collection and commercialization of forest products in Malawi

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Abstract: Gender equality is viewed as a means as well as an end to achieving various development outcomes. Projections on the implications of gender gaps derived from agricultural crops indicate that closing these gaps has the potential of improving productivity and reducing global hunger by 30% and 17%, respectively. Contrary to agricultural chains, there is a high involvement of women in forest products chains. However, with increasing commercial potential, enterprises have been shown to switch from women to men's domain. Given the recent commercialization patterns in forest products, we seek to empirically investigate the presence of gender gaps in utilization of forest products. Our paper analyses gender disparity in baobab collection and commercialisation in Malawi using a primary dataset from 864 baobab collectors. An exogenous switching treatment effect regression (ESTER) and multiple linear regression were applied in the empirical analysis. Our findings show a significant gender gap in both the amount of whole fruit collected and the value of baobab pulp commercialized. Compared to male baobab managers (MBMs), the amount of whole fruit collected is significantly lower among female baobab managers (FBMs). Results show that the gap in fruit collection between MBMs and FBMs is due to the observable characteristics (group membership, household size, wealth index) and unobservable characteristics (entrepreneurial ability) of the baobab manager. Similar patterns are also observed in the commercialization of baobab pulp. Hence, for women to make use of the business opportunity and income generating potential that collection and commercialization of baobab offers, they require support to be able to compete with men. This support would be most beneficial in terms of strengthening network density by coming up with programs that improves networking of women with collectors and between collectors and traders.

Keywords: Gender gap; Baobab; Exogenous switching treatment regression; Malawi
