



## **Political economy of inclusive agricultural intensification**

### **Synthesis Report – insights from case studies of Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia**

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*"Agricultural intensification has been neither inevitable nor continuous in African farming systems. In some areas, intensification was halted or reversed by changing environmental or political and economic conditions; in others, it has occurred not as an adaptive response to population growth or commercialisation, but in the face of growing labour shortages and declining commercial activity. Such cases underscore the importance of studying farming as a dynamic social process. As farmers contend with social as well as environmental conditions, changes occur not only in what is produced and how much, but also in when work is done and by whom. Thus changes in cropping patterns and methods of cultivation are influenced by social factors which govern the timing as well as the amounts of labour devoted to farming, as well as the control of effort and output. Variations in the pace and/or direction of agricultural intensification are occasioned not only by exogenous events, such as war and peace, drought or flood, but also by changes in the production dynamics of particular crops" (Berry 1993: 189)*

## Executive Summary

This report presents a brief political economy of agriculture in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia, with a specific focus on the concept of inclusive and sustainable intensification, and is undertaken as a background working paper for *Afrint IV/Papaya-Equity and Institutions in Sustainable African intensification*. The Afrint IV/Papaya project frames equity as an exploration of the experience of the identity categories of *women* and *youth*. This report does consider these groups, but we argue that to restrict an analysis of power and institutions to these groups is mistaken, given the critical dimension that a class analysis continues to play in agricultural dynamics. In this paper we engage with some of the debates on definitions of 'sustainable intensification', in order to both problematise the concept, and also to demonstrate how such debates relate to power relations and politics at play in shaping agricultural interventions and outcomes.

In the introduction, we consider the concept of agricultural intensification. There is a necessity of contextualising this drive, within a wider literature of agricultural transformation. This literature is vast and has an extensive historical base. **We allude to this, as many of the debates on 'intensification' are far from new, and much evidence already sits unread and ignored.** We also define the value of taking a political economy approach to understand power and politics in agricultural change.

In chapter 1, we offer an overview of key actors, and dynamics of agricultural change in the three countries, comparing critical points of similarity and difference. All three countries share commonalities of colonial engagement, post-independence state-led agricultural investment, followed by structural adjustment and liberalisation, moving to a current concern with the 'African green revolution', large scale commercial investment, and climate-smart agriculture. All three countries are heavily influenced by donors in policy direction, but the politics of this is complex. Full-scale agricultural transformation, through intensification and commercial investment, is the aim of all three, but it remains elusive, and whilst the share of agriculture in GDP may be declining to variable degrees, small-scale agriculture remains highly significant in the livelihoods of the majority of the population. All countries are experiencing large scale land acquisition, and increasing differentiation of wealth. Malawi is land constrained, whereas Tanzania and Zambia are characterised as having 'unused' land, although this is a considerable simplification. At the local level, all three countries have experienced an intended and incomplete decentralisation, and local government support to agriculture is under-resourced and fragmented. Tanzania abolished 'traditional authorities', but they retain a central role in governance in Malawi and Zambia.

Malawi and Zambia both maintain significant state spending on input subsidies, in the face of protracted donor opposition. These are politically significant programmes and the focus of considerable debate, relating both to their design, impact, and political capture.

Gender and youth as categories of inclusion are present in the form of 'policy noise', workshops, committee quotas (very common in Tanzania) and groups. However, in all three cases the greatest frontier of differentiation and exclusion appears to be class-based, within which gender and youth also have some significance. An intersectional approach is therefore critical to inclusion.

In all three countries, donor and NGO intervention is confused, contradictory, driving elite capture, supporting corruption, and seen by interviewees as problematic.

In chapter 2 we consider the formal and informal rules of the game. In this section, we do not present a description of the policies that are in place- these are well documented elsewhere. Rather we consider the gap between policy and practice in a number of critical areas- such as input subsidy schemes, and land policy. All three countries reveal a gulf between policy in theory and policy in practice. Analysis using the wider literature on local service delivery and governance underlines this case. All three countries exhibit a critical lack of implementation capacity in local government support to agriculture (as well as other sectors) and are forced to attempt 'gap-filling' through donor projects and NGOs.

Land policy in all three countries has similarities of a duality of systems- customary or collective tenure, and more formal systems of individual ownership. Again- there is a broad literature on this that support this analysis, and this is further confirmed in field work. There is some evidence in all three countries, that differentiation in land holdings is growing, that exploitation of customary land is being enabled by traditional and other local leaders.

In chapter 3 we focus on incentives and interactions in agriculture in all three countries. All three countries have similar approaches to irrigation development. This again reflects donor priorities of encouraging public-private investment in irrigation infrastructure- but state-led expansion remains slow. All three countries have inadequate implementation capacity (even where they have comprehensive policy frameworks) for managing contested water use, and water scarcity is growing, as water resources are increasingly exploited for a wide range of uses.

Increasing levels of indebtedness are reported for small farmers in all three countries, whilst also suggesting that insufficient credit at affordable rates is available.

In Malawi and Zambia, state subsidy and market controls have significant impacts on driving maize production, although both countries are attempting to diversify their schemes. In Tanzania, the government does intervene through setting of tariffs and import/export bans on particular goods. These can be erratic and have significant impacts on farmers in some cases.

There is strong evidence in all three countries that access to reliable and fair markets remains a challenge for small farmers, even when they successfully increase their production.

In conclusion, Afrint IV/Papaya needs to engage with inclusion beyond the superficial incorporation of 'gender' and 'youth'. To enable an honest interaction with local institutions, it should also adopt a problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) approach (Andrews et al 2013; Mdee et al 2017) to working with policy in practice rather than policy in theory. The four principles of PDIA are:

- Starting from locally recognised performance problems
- Seek to create an 'authorising environment' for experimentation and learning from positive deviance.
- Embed experiential learning as opposed to 'ex-post evaluation'
- Engage a wide range of actors to ensure reforms are viable, legitimate and relevant to the context.

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## **About Afrint IV/Papaya**

Afrint IV/Papaya – Equity and Institutions in Sustainable African Intensification is a research project funded by DFID through Wye and Greenwich University and implemented by the Department of Human Geography at Lund University in cooperation with the University of Malawi, Sokoine University of Agriculture, the University of Zambia and LUCSUS. The aim of the project is to analyze patterns of smallholder intensification in Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi from a sustainability perspective with a particular attention to: (a) gender and youth; and (b) the ways existing rural institutions could be enabled and incentivized to improve equity given prevailing policies, norms and structures. This work stream sets out to offer some answers to the following research question:

What is the role of local institutions in creating sustainable intensification? How can these roles be improved to increase equity?

Afrint IV/Papaya is an integral part of SAIRLA – Sustainable Agricultural Intensification Research and Learning in Africa. An initiative comprised of six research projects as well as national and regional learning alliances aimed at providing a forum for mutual learning and for increasing joint policy influence. For more information about Afrint IV/Papaya see <https://www.keg.lu.se/en/research/research-projects/current-research-projects/afrint/afrint-iv>Afrint IV/Papaya-0

## Introduction

This component of the Afrint IV/Papaya project set out to contribute to the following question:

### **What is the role of local institutions in creating sustainable intensification? How can these roles be improved to increase equity?**

Afrint IV/Papaya research focuses on the concept of sustainable intensification of agriculture. This refers mainly to increasing the intensity of agricultural production on existing land holdings, rather than the extensive cultivation of new land areas, but in ways which do not cause environmental degradation. As populations increase, this extends pressure on land holdings and therefore necessitates the intensification of production (Boserup, 1965). For this to be sustainable (Tiffen et al, 1994), and ultimately for it to play a role in agricultural transformation and poverty reduction, then intensification also needs to be inclusive in sharing the benefits of intensification.

However, in order to answer the above question, a political economy analysis of wider processes of agricultural policies and dynamics in relation to local institutions is required. This informs an analysis of the possibilities of sustainable intensification, but does not assume that sustainable intensification is necessarily occurring.

What do we mean by sustainable intensification?

Sustainable intensification (SI) is a debated term, given the intensely slippery nature of 'sustainability' as a discursive and normative construct (Loos et al. 2014, Peterson & Snap 2015). For Pretty et al (2011):

*"..... it is defined as producing more output from the same area of land while reducing the negative environmental impacts and at the same time increasing contributions to natural capital and the flow of environmental services. (2011:7)".*

Whilst the idea of intensification in agriculture is certainly mainstreamed, and is now entrenched in the push for a new green revolution (Fairbairn et al 2014, Snyder & Cullen 2014, Vanlauwe et al 2014), this can mean a narrow focus on technical interventions to increase production, and an unclear and contested relationship with the idea of 'sustainability'. Mdee & Lemma (2016) demonstrate that these debates also relate to positions and assumptions relating to capitalist economic and environmental transformation.

Therefore, it is not easy to identify a specific focus on 'sustainable intensification' in African agricultural policy, but rather there is an emphasis on intensification. The extent to which intensification is influenced by debates on sustainability as defined by Pretty et al (2011) above is variable, and frequently marginal. Agricultural intensification and transformation as a means of capital accumulation to drive industrialisation remains the dominant developmental model (Mdee & Lemma 2016)

Agricultural policy and agricultural support institutions can play a key role in shaping and driving how agriculture evolves and ultimately transforms. At the macro level,



national governments are responsible for agricultural policy, but are influenced through dialogue and support of development partners. Therefore, it is suggested that development partners and governments have a responsibility for creating an enabling context of macro policy that could support inclusive and sustainable agricultural intensification.

At a more meso-level, sub-national agricultural institutions and actors (including extension services, farmer organisations, traders, investors in contract farming, input suppliers and local authorities who control land tenure systems) are some of the most important mediators that determine the extent to which agricultural policies contribute to equity and sustainability in ongoing intensification processes. The resources and capabilities present at the meso-level have a critical role in enabling policy and strategy to be implemented. Where resource and capability gaps are present, then the gap between stated policy and practice can be wide. At the micro level, we need to understand how policies are interpreted, implemented and how farmers experience agricultural support. We also need to understand where customary arrangements e.g. on water and land access, or social norms operate alongside more formalised institutions.

Our point of departure in this endeavor is recent interest in the extent to which and how state/party/business relationships contribute to agricultural transformation and poverty reduction. In essence, this research agenda is a quest to understand a country's political economy as it relates to agricultural transformation. Here we use a simple definition of this contested term: for Afrint IV/Papaya, political economy analysis refers to how elite groups in a society (based on ideology, class ethnicity, kinship, patronage or collective economic interests) compete for and use resources, rents and power. In relation to agricultural intensification, political economy analysis focuses on how policies related to agricultural transformation (often through intensification) influence and shape control over resources, and may drive processes of both inclusion and exclusion (Jerven 2014). Thus, the key issue for this stream of work is to understand whether such changes in competition between elite groups associated with agricultural intensification lead to the inclusion/exclusion of women and youth, and poorer farmers, and to what extent environmental degradation is mitigated or avoided.

The incentives, opportunities and obstacles for local actors in promoting (or discouraging) equity are related to both the political economy of local development processes and a range of often conflicting national policies and programmes. Institutional change processes may lead to either inclusionary or exclusionary tendencies. National-level policies impinging on local institutions and their role in sustainable intensification include not just agricultural policies, but also climate, employment and other relevant policies. They also include issues of market regulation and support.

The political economy of inclusive agricultural intensification component of the research involved analyses of district-level praxis and national-level policies for agricultural transformation with specific attention to their implications for gender and youth.

It employed a three-lens approach looking at:

- (a) Mapping the organisational actors (who does what?)
- (b) The formal and informal rules of the game in which they operate (how are things supposed to work and how do they work in practice);
- (c) The differing incentives and interactions among actors (what are the dynamics of the actors working on agriculture?).

The political economy analysis will thus provide the basis for an informed and pragmatic dialogue with decision makers and civil society based on an in-depth understanding of who the decision makers are and what spaces exist for processes that address potential policy conflicts and channel attention to the equity implications of investments in agricultural intensification. These will be integral to Afrint IV/Papaya's engagement in SAIRLA's National Learning Alliances.

### Methodology

Political economy analysis entails multiple methods of data collection, to triangulate many perspectives, competing narratives, and to map particular contexts. It aims to provide a reasoned explanation for how a current situation comes to be as it is. It therefore requires understanding of how change happened, who influenced it and what outcomes it has led to. The nature of institutions and how they shape change is particularly key to this.

This report draws on separate country working papers for Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia. These are available at <https://www.keg.lu.se/en/research/research-projects/current-research-projects/afrint/afrint-ivAfrint IV/Papaya-0>

It is important to recognise the limitations for the timeframe for this study. The period of fieldwork in each country was limited to seven days. This is very short for an in-depth political economy analysis. However, in all three cases, the working papers drew on very recent additional empirical research exploring agricultural transformation.

## Chapter 1 - Structural dynamics and key actors in agricultural change

This section explores the macro level structure and dynamics of change in agriculture. To understand processes of inclusion and exclusion, it is necessary to analyse the evolution of agricultural policy, practice and outcomes. Simply to focus on actors who explicitly work on the inclusion of women and youth would be mistaken. Current initiatives which emphasise the inclusion of women and youth can sometimes make blanket assumptions about how gender relations or age categories operate in society, and in our case in relation to agriculture. However, the use of these categories needs to be understood in relation to the wider dynamics of structural change.

It is very difficult to generalise patterns of agricultural evolution in all three countries. Certainly, large scale transformation has not occurred beyond some small areas. In some areas there has been intensification, in other areas, extensification and in some areas agricultural decline. Therefore, for a political economy analysis it is important that we also examine the structures that link the macro forces to local dynamics.

### **Dynamics of Agricultural Transformation**

There is a considerable literature on the political economy of agriculture in all three countries, and this type of report will struggle to capture this in its entirety. To make this literature accessible, the following table 1 outlines the significant policy and structural dynamics of agriculture from the pre-colonial to the current era. The table also charts this alongside some of the macro dynamics on the inclusion of women and youth.

All three countries share commonalities of colonial engagement, post-independence state-led agricultural investment, followed by structural adjustment and liberalisation, moving to a current concern with the 'African green revolution', large scale commercial investment, and climate-smart agriculture. All three countries are heavily influenced by donors in policy direction, but the politics of this is complex. Policies on agriculture tend to favour commercial investment, and do not sufficiently engage with the subsistence and small scale agriculture as it is practiced (Birner & Resnick 2010). Full-scale agricultural transformation, through intensification and commercial investment, is the aim of all three, but it remains elusive, and whilst the share of agriculture in GDP may be declining to variable degrees, small-scale agriculture remains highly significant in the livelihoods of the majority of the population. All countries are experiencing large scale land acquisition, and increasing differentiation of wealth. Malawi is land constrained, whereas Tanzania and Zambia are characterised as having 'unused' land, although this is a considerable simplification. At the local level, all three countries have experienced an intended and incomplete decentralisation, and local government support to agriculture is under-resourced and fragmented. Tanzania abolished 'traditional authorities', but they retain a central role in governance in Malawi and Zambia.

Malawi and Zambia both maintain significant state spending on input subsidies, in the face of protracted donor opposition. These are politically significant programmes and

the focus of considerable debate, relating both to their design, impact, and political capture.

Gender and youth as categories of inclusion are present in the form of 'policy noise', workshops, committee quotas (very common in Tanzania) and groups. However, in all three cases the greatest frontier of differentiation and exclusion appears to be class-based, within which gender and youth also have some significance. An intersectional approach is therefore critical to inclusion.

**Key message for Afrint IV/Papaya-** check the assumption that sustainable intensification is a policy objective, or even a significant process in Malawi, Tanzania or Zambia. Inclusive and sustainable intensification would represent a significant revolution in relation to current agricultural transformation narratives.

Table 1 - Evolution of structures and actors in agricultural change in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia

<b>Era</b>	<b>Pre-colonial</b>	<b>Colonial era</b>	<b>Independence-structural development</b>	<b>Structural adjustment and PRSP 1985-2000- transition to multi-party democracy</b>	<b>MDGs 2000-2015 Debt relief Highly indebted poor countries</b>	<b>SDGs 2015</b>
<b>Agricultural Policies</b>	None	Extensification Plantations Codification and taxation of customary lands Enforcement of patriarchal norms from UK e.g. on property ownership Modernisation of agriculture colonial extraction Malawi and Zambia- more settler agriculture and segregation of subsistence production	State led investment Nationalisation Agricultural subsidies State led co-operatives Modernisation of agriculture for state-building - Tanzania- collectivisation - Malawi and Zambia- elite accumulation Zambia – significant mining activity in economy, migration	Removal of subsidies Dismantling of parastatal and co-operatives Liberalisation- requiring agricultural modernisation for market-driven growth Re-emergence of subsidy (Zambia/Malawi)	Gradual freeing up of agricultural markets Greater access to inputs for those who can pay Liberalisation- stimulating agricultural modernisation for market driven growth and attracting foreign investment Land reform (land grab?) Significant subsidy in Malawi and Zambia Public-Private Partnership New outgrower schemes	Intensification (new green revolution Climate smart agriculture and sustainable intensification Missing potential from irrigation Industrialisation- underpinned by agricultural transformation
<b>Key actors</b>	Customary arrangements Arab traders (Tanzania) Early commercial interests	Colonial authorities Tribal authorities Commercial investors	Government Donors- esp World Bank Tribal Authorities (but banned in Tanzania)	Government (but significantly reduced state investment) Donors Private sector and civil society growth Tribal Authorities (Zambia and Malawi)	Government- poverty reduction strategy Donors (with increasing influence from China) Private sector (increasing influence from South Africa) and civil society growth	Government- new industrialisation and climate change challenge Donors Private sector and civil society actors
<b>Agricultural outcomes</b>	Peasant and pastoral societies	Mainly peasant and pastoral mode with some large schemes- e.g. sisal and groundnuts, tobacco	Outcomes disputed- failure of some co-operatives Disruption of peasant mode in some places Peasant mode underpins food security	Agricultural decline and soil degradation- food production keeps up with population expansion Diversification of livelihoods increasing	Agricultural growth- but limited Urban expansion- migration Continued increase of off-farm income	No clear story- except of differentiation Extensification in some areas Decline in some areas Intensification in some areas

			Zambia – more urbanisation and migration- mining	off-farm income (deagrarianisation) Zambia- copper price decline	Tz- high growth sectors- mining, construction Zambia- commodity price boom	
<b>Inclusion of women and youth</b>	Women and youth embedded in customary relations (these are not uniform, unfixed or unchanging)	Imposition of patriarchal laws from UK Taxation requires increased waged work Increasing home production burden on women and youth	Critical role of women within liberation movements Youth leagues Increasing access to education	Beijing Declaration on Rights of Women 1995 Special seats and women's representation (Tanzania- 30% quotas) Increasing influence of NGOs working on women's rights SAPs cause decline in access to education and other public services	Increased visibility of women in education and formal employment Legal reform on ownership giving women rights to land Civil society focus on women- access to loans	Educated Youth unemployment Increased youth interest in commercial agriculture (for those with resources) Increasing debt levels

Source: Authors own: amalgamated from working papers 1-3

## Chapter 2 - The formal and informal rules of the game

This section considers systems of agricultural support operating at national and district levels. In doing so it is necessary to identify formal policies and processes as they are stated, and also how they are implemented in practice. *In many cases there is a significant gap between systems in theory and operation in practice.* In addition, agricultural change is also mediated by informal institutions, such as customary ownership of land or social norms. It is very important that social norms are not understood as fixed, uniform and unchanging. The key point for this section is that there may be multiple routes for individuals to navigate the creation of agricultural livelihoods. Instead, for the formal rules of the game, we selected some current policy instruments in all three countries in order to examine the current context. Hence, *we set out the intentions of a policy and reviewed evidence of what happens in practice.* This emphasises the policy-practice gap. We then turned to the informal rules of the game through a discussion of governance and accountability at the interface of the national and district levels.

We considered the gap between policy and practice in a number of critical areas- such as input subsidy schemes, and land policy. All three countries reveal a gulf between policy in theory and policy in practice. Analysis using the wider literature on local service delivery and governance underlines this case. All three countries exhibit a critical lack of implementation capacity in local government support to agriculture (as well as other sectors) and are forced to attempt 'gap-filling' through donor projects and NGOs.

### **Rules in theory**

All three countries have extensive policy frameworks relating to agriculture and related areas- such as irrigation, climate change, gender and so on. With donor focus on 'good governance' institutional change over the last decade, considerable resources and incentives have been in place to create policy and make 'policy noise'. There is significant evidence of 'isomorphic mimicry' in creating a policy architecture that has the appearance of reform, without having the capability to implement extensive change (Andrews et al 2013).

### **Policy in practice**

How things work in practice is considerably different from the neat intentions set out in policy. The reasons for this are multiple- relating to the creation of policy in vacuums in central government and elite level, the hierarchical tendencies of government bureaucracy, the practical politics of power and patronage, and significant resource constraints- see Mdee et al 2017 for a detailed exploration of this in the Tanzanian context.

An excerpt from our working paper on Malawi also illustrates this issue:

"The NAP policy processes demonstrate that policies in Malawi involve multiple stakeholders, multiple arenas and multiple levels. This has significant implications for the level of coordination and coherence required to achieve the desired goals and objectives of any policy process. The level of complexity varies depending on the nature of the specific policy. The challenges demonstrate that policy and policy making is conditioned and shaped by the political, social and economic context, as well as historical factors. This emphasizes that policy processes in a particular realm can only be fully understood if placed in a proper context. It matters a great deal because grasping the constraints and opportunities in a particular context is critical since the success of policy processes is not only dependent on what to do but how to do it (Leftwich, 2012). It is also important to note that lack of internal sense of urgency to systematically address policy challenges within government. This implies that the government is not proactive when it comes to initiating processes leading to the development of relevant policy documents. Almost always, policy processes are a reaction to international pressures, and implemented on a project basis. Ministry or departmental led policy processes can be overshadowed by politically orientated policy pronouncements. There is often a sense of urgency to do something about these policy pronouncements since they may relate to political profiles for electoral purposes and are, usually, at the expense of other equally pressing policy processes and priorities"

This view is consistently confirmed in interviews with representatives from government, NGOs, academics and donors (off record comments by local staff) in January 2018.

*"Aid is weakening everybody- we need to kick out the donors. There is so little capacity to implement the policies that are designed by them. In the end, the Districts just rely on NGOs to do anything."* Comment from interview in January 2018."

### **Elite capture and dimensions of inclusion**

Land policy in all three countries has similarities of a duality of systems- customary or collective tenure, and more formal systems of individual ownership. Again- there is a broad literature on this that supports this analysis, and this is further confirmed in field work. There is some evidence in all three countries, that differentiation in land holdings is growing, that exploitation of customary land or collectively managed land (e.g. village land in Tanzania) is being enabled by traditional and other local leaders. In all three countries, we find evidence of elite capture in both land allocations and agricultural subsidy schemes. The formal systems (such as the distribution of vouchers or selection of recipients for subsidy) interact with the more informal systems of power.

Elite capture drives class differentiation, as those with connections to power holders access opportunities for subsidy, capital accumulation and investment.

Differentiation of gender and youth should be understood against this background. Neither can discriminatory gender and generational institutions arrangements be assumed. Such social relations are dynamic and shifting, for example in relation to the shape of the wider economy e.g. if there are significant waged labour opportunities



that can enable men to migrate. The burdens of those who take responsibility for domestic reproduction are much greater where the state does not ensure the provision of basic services, and therefore gendering of labour must be understood in the wider context of the economy and class differentiation (Fakier & Cock 2018)

**Key learning for Afrint IV/Papaya:** work with the realities of local contexts, as is recommended in a problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA)- see work by Andrew et al (2013). This work engages directly with the problem of isomorphic mimicry and capacity gaps, created by the current interactions of governments and donors. Redefine inclusion beyond the problematic simplifications on 'gender' and 'youth' that appear as tropes in policy discourse

## Chapter 3 - Incentives and interactions

In this section we consider the incentives that drive the dynamics and interactions between actors in agricultural transformation.

The shape of the economy as a whole is critical to the agricultural sector. The three countries in our study all have a large base of the population who derive a significant proportion of their livelihoods from agriculture. However, there are differences relating to the size of land holdings and the shape of the wider economy. In Zambia, a significant mining sector underpins significantly more urbanisation than in Malawi or Tanzania. However, wider economic growth in the mining, tourism and construction has also driven urbanisation in Tanzania. Malawi remains significantly dependent on agricultural production for export revenue. The poorest households in all three countries continue to attempt to feed themselves from their production, but the non-farm sectors are also critical to their livelihoods, as are strategies of migration and family network remittances.

Poor households remain disadvantaged in accessing new market opportunities, lacking in resources and knowledge for investment, and they frequently lose out on donor and government schemes of investment and subsidy. Our analysis of input subsidy schemes in all three countries shows elite capture, and the creation of political and financial incentives that maintain and extend maize production: we note incentives for farmers to keep producing maize and to use inorganic inputs, for government to win rural votes, and for fertiliser companies to benefit from government contracts. In Malawi and Zambia, state subsidy and market controls have significant impacts on driving maize production, although both countries are attempting to diversify their schemes. In Tanzania, the government does intervene through setting of tariffs and import/export bans on particular goods. These can be erratic and have significant impacts on farmers in some cases.

There is strong evidence in all three countries that access to reliable and fair markets remains a challenge for small farmers, even when they successfully increase their production.

Otherwise, the current key incentives and drivers come from the donor-government-agribusiness interactions, and inclusion is not a significant feature of these programmes, although there is an attempt to suggest that outgrower schemes will offer potential to smaller farmers in the areas where they are established. The evidence reviewed for this research casts significant doubt on these claims, as is set out in all three country studies.

All three countries have similar approaches to irrigation development. This again reflects donor priorities of encouraging public-private investment in irrigation infrastructure- but state-led expansion remains slow. All three countries have inadequate implementation capacity (even where they have comprehensive policy frameworks) for managing contested water use, and water scarcity is growing, as water resources are increasingly exploited for a wide range of uses.

Increasing levels of indebtedness are reported for small farmers in all three countries, whilst also suggesting that insufficient credit at affordable rates is available.

A major source of the gap between policy and practice is related to poor capacity for implementation, in turn connected to expensive policies of subsidizing farm inputs (in Malawi and Zambia) that drain both staff and financial resources away from more long term extension for instance. This then opens up for donors and perhaps especially NGOs in contributing to haphazard, piecemeal solutions as an answer to the void created by poor implementation capacity and lack of resources.

There appears to be a failure of policy at multiple scales: at the global level policies of sustainable intensification are framed by a vague understanding of environment and productivity in a way which nobody can question on normative grounds. Who can possibly be opposed to a policy of sustainable, inclusive, intensification? This then interacts with national and local political economies of politicians eager to ensure electoral wins and poor regional and local implementation capacity, to create local level outcomes that favour local elites, but at the same time also encourages the entry of a multitude of actors locally to compensate for the shortfall in implementation capacity, creating a mess of donor interventions being carried out through NGOs acting as implementing partners.

There is little significant incentive within these interactions for the three countries to engage in *sustainable* intensification, and this is not a key feature in the political economy of agriculture. Climate change narratives, and interventions are present, but appear rather disconnected from wider narratives on agricultural transformation. Again- the reader can seek more detail on this in Mdee and Lemma (2016)

**Key learning for Afrint IV/Papaya:** There are few incentives for national and local institutions to pursue policies for inclusive and sustainable intensification, perhaps because it is not clear on either what these concepts are or as to how they would be achieved. The policy-practice gap in governance and service delivery drives a fragmented approach- characterised by excessive 'policy noise' or isomorphic mimicry (the creation of appropriate sounding phrases in documents and committees within institutions) but resulting in capability gaps)

## Conclusion

This analysis of the political economy of agriculture in all three countries offers no easy answers to inclusive agricultural transformation. The quest to transform agriculture has a long history. Government in conjunction with donors have consistently developed agricultural policies and initiatives aimed at the commercialisation of small scale agriculture. However, the fundamental problem is that they remain disconnected from the realities of small scale agriculture and the operation of local institutions. Despite mainstreaming inclusive language in relation to youth and women in policy, the scale of activities being undertaken on this front are hardly transformational.

It is also debateable whether this approach to inclusion (primarily the reservation of spaces in committees and targeting of loans) is effective in transforming agriculture. It can be argued that women and youth will benefit from a strategic effort to transform small scale agriculture as a whole, through state-led investment, that addresses elite capture of resources, land, markets and incentives. Neither women nor youth are a unified category of persons with the same needs and interests. Committee and political reservations for women are likely to benefit elite and well-connected women who have far greater power than poor men (see Mdee 2008, or Tsikata 2016)

It is recommended that the Afrint IV/Papaya project considers the following critical issues:

### **Working with the policy-practice gap**

There is a significant gap between stated agricultural policy and actual practice on the ground. Some evidence of Government-led initiatives is visible in fieldwork, but the scale is often limited.

Despite a rhetorical commitment to decentralisation, it is central government that holds the power to act on these issues, as local level actors have little power or resource to do so. Incentives for actors are uneven and largely relate to incoming projects- related to donors funding and therefore operating on limited timescales. Public investment in infrastructure is patchy and often reliant on attracting donor and private funds. It is also common for projects to have capture of resources by local elites, and therefore a limited impact on more marginalised farmers.

Despite policy commitment to a transformational role for private actors, this research finds that private sectors contract farming is not mentioned as significantly beneficial by respondents. Farmers and Districts report disillusionment and exploitation with these initiatives. Contract farming may also be driving new processes of elite capital accumulation in the areas where this is practiced.

### **Benefits from increased agricultural production are not guaranteed.**

Even if agricultural production intensifies and increases, this may not create greater profitability in agriculture, or food security in agriculture. This research confirms other published literature suggesting that increased production of commercial crops such as sugar can increase local level food insecurity. More intensive production methods may increase costs, debt and reduce profitability. Further that, initiatives that facilitate

increased production can fail to produce benefits for participants, as a result of wider market problems.

Additionally, agricultural initiatives aimed at increasing production through irrigation, overstate the potential increases and insufficiently recognise the dangers of over-extraction of water resources.

**Making agricultural intensification more inclusive is more than policy statements, women's groups and land titling.**

There is no uniform gendered or youth experience, and policy statements on inclusion are vague and have little meaning in implementation. Women are seen as critical to agriculture, but the position of youth is more ambiguous. However- there are some educated urban youth who see agriculture as an investment opportunity- they have capital to invest

Agriculture remains largely the business of the family unit, and inclusion initiatives must take this into account. Neither should the family unit be assumed to be nuclear and clearly defined. Land is not a purely individual asset, it is part of complex customary, legal and collective relationships, and land titling initiatives will not transform gender relations or youth access to land. Additionally, it is potentially harmful to treat all women or all youth as equally disadvantaged, as this underpins considerable opportunity for elite capture by more advantaged and well-connected members of these groups.

Going beyond representation to inclusive transformation requires differentiation to the specifics of the local context.

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