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## Knocking on the Door – A Study on Nutrition and Women’s Empowerment on Village Level in Chamwino District, Dodoma Region

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### Abstract

In sub-Saharan Africa, food is often prepared by women, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters or sisters-in-law. Despite their crucial role in household food security, women as a group are often disempowered and cannot decide over their own lives. When women are empowered, it positively affects household food and nutrition security. In Tanzania, many are food insecure and 33 % suffer from undernourishment. Therefore, during 2016–2017, the Scaling up Nutrition (Scale – N) project started to offer nutritional education, to enhance nutrition sensitive, diversified agriculture and to empower women. In this paper, we map the pathways to women’s empowerment that nutritional education can create and explore to what extent these have been achieved through the Scale – N project. Specifically, we consider whether the nutritional education have brought about changes in power relations within the households.

We draw on data from 24 face-to-face semi-structured interviews with women and men, and four gender-segregated focus group discussions in two villages in Chamwino district, Dodoma region. The data has been analysed using a social relations framework proposed by Kabeer (1999). Findings suggest that the nutritional education has benefited household food consumption, but not necessarily affected power relations within the household. There is a need for women to be part of all food related decisions, to contribute to their entire family’s nutritional needs. Women are generally disempowered and they have low decision-making power. Neither do they decide what to cultivate, nor who gets what and how much food within the household. In addition, they struggle with the double burden of domestic and productive work. However, women do have their own strategies for how to become less dependent on their husbands. In families where both wife and husband have participated in nutritional education, there are signs on adapting to new techniques, a slight change in diet but mostly a better knowledge in what is good and nutritious food. Thus, it is imperative for Scale – N to continue conducting nutritional education with both women and men.

**Keywords:** Household level, nutritional education, scale – N, women’s empowerment

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