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A Gendered Analysis of the *Ziziphus mauritiana*'s State in Muzarabani District, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Globally, efforts are underway to develop and domesticate wild fruit trees with improved levels of provitamin C. Efforts are directed to help fight dietary deficiency for the resource-poor rural farmers. *Ziziphus mauritiana* (*Zm*). is the most dominant and widely used wild fruit tree species in the semi- arid region of Muzarabani District in Zimbabwe. *Zm* contributes to food security. Since *Zm* is the most important wild fruit in the study site, a test run breeding program. was instigated to develop improved provitamin C varieties, with some genetic copies already tested in highly developed yield choice trial stages. There is need to comprehend the gendered-based restrictions and opportunities leading rural farmers' decisions to grow *Zm*. The study uses a mixed methodology guided by the Actor Network Theory and logistic regression computation to establish diverse actors, predictors of ability and willingness to grow *Zm*. All respondents ranging from youth, women and men, were aware of *Zm*'s importance and the continuous loss of the fruit tree in Zimbabwe. Also, at least 81 % of the respondents produced and owned the *Zm* cultivar. Engagingly, men and women distinct out early seasoned maturity and high *Zm* fresh fruit harvest as attributes controlling their preference for the *Zm*. The study also found that women executed the bulk of the value chain activities including production, regeneration and processing of *Zm*, with men predominantly involved in land preparation, pruning and protecting of products. Nonetheless, both women and men showed strong indication of acceptance and willingness to cultivate *Zm*, which is an encouragement for prospective uptake of such *Zm* varieties in the future. Yet, there is poor knowledge on the nutritional benefits of *Zm*. Scarcity of knowledge signifies the need for nutritional edification when propagating improved provitamin C varieties. The study presents the need to breed provitamin C *Zm* varieties that have farmer-desired traits amidst over harvesting and disease resistance. Thus, an output that could be accomplished through undertaking all actors' should be taken on board on variety selection trials.

Keywords: Actor network theory, gender, provitamin C, *Ziziphus mauritiana*