SOWK 675 S01 Gender & International Development Assignment 1:

Case Analysis of Malnutrition in Mozambique Using the Moser Gender Analysis Framework

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**Introduction**

Mozambique gained independence from five centuries of Portuguese rule in 1975 but its development was stalled until the mid-1990s due to severe drought, a long civil war, high emigration and economic dependency on neighbouring South Africa (CIA World Factbook, 2013). Currently, it is one of the poorest countries in the world and chronic and severe malnutrition in children under five years of age is a very pressing concern (UN Mozambique, 2013). Also, gender inequality and inequity are ongoing issues in Mozambique as women experience discrimination, domestic violence, and the feminization of poverty (UNDP, 2013). In this paper, I will be analyzing a case study of malnutrition in Mozambique using the Moser Gender Analysis Framework. I will first introduce the case study and then the selected gender analysis framework. Next, I will critically analyze the case using this framework and then conclude with a discussion of social workers’ contribution to such an analysis.

**Case Study**

Various support groups, such as Save the Children, have identified malnutrition as a serious issue in Mozambique with considerable consequences that needs to be addressed. In Mozambique, more than one third of children die from malnutrition and over 1.5 million children under the age of five suffer from stunting caused by long-term deprivation of nutritious food and diseases such as diarrhea (UK Aid, 2012). Stunting is a major concern as it puts children at greater risk for poverty, poor school performance, disease and death (Save the Children, 2012, p.7). The overall degree of risk for serious infectious diseases is ranked as very high and a considerable 21.2% of children under the age of five are underweight in Mozambique (CIA World Factbook, 2013).

But malnutrition is not only a concern among children as it carries serious deleterious consequences among women as well. Mothers who are malnourished are at increased risk of having malnourished children and as much as half of stunting in children occurs in utero (UK Aid, 2012; Save the Children, 2012, p.18). Therefore, ensuring proper nutrition is just as significant for mothers as it is for children. It has been identified that the ‘first 1,000 days,’ or the nine months of pregnancy plus the first two years of a child’s life, are the critical period in which to address malnutrition (UK Aid, 2012).

In response to malnutrition in Mozambique, various groups including Save the Children and their partners are implementing community-based programming focused on improving education, health and nutrition and food security in Maputo, Gaza, Nampula, Zambezia, Sofala and Manica (UK Aid, 2012). Most of these communities are rural as 60% of Mozambicans live in rural areas where livelihoods are heavily dependent on agriculture with 70% of the labour force engaged in agriculture (UNDP, 2013). Nutrition classes led by community volunteers are held where mothers can learn about recommended breastfeeding practices and how to provide balanced and nutritious diets for their families (UK Aid, 2012). However, with 54% of the population living below the poverty line, which is defined as < 0.50 USD per day, most families can only afford the most basic of diets as food prices rise (CIA World Factbook, 2013; UNDP, 2013; UK Aid, 2012).

**Gender Analysis Framework**

In the area of development, it is significant to tie in the gender piece as development should be considered as action that brings sustainable improvement in the well-being of both individuals and groups and this is not wholly feasible without taking into consideration gender differences in equity and equality (Birks, 2013). Gender analysis involves examining the role differences between women and men and can be thought of as a ‘tool kit’ that can be used to address gender inequalities and inequities and to inform action (Birks, 2013). The focus is on gender, rather than on women solely, as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships and roles between men and women (Wach & Reeves, 2000, p.1). In response efforts to malnutrition in Mozambique, there thus needs to be taken into account the different roles of women and men and existing gender inequalities and inequities in order to inform how to best facilitate change in order to achieve the desired outcomes in the communities.

I am selecting the Moser Gender Analysis Framework as the most suitable framework with which to analyze the case study of malnutrition in Mozambique. The Moser Gender Analysis Framework, initially developed by Caroline Moser in the 1980s, is suited for community and project planning with the purpose of achieving equity, empowerment and equality for women (Birks, 2013a; The World Bank, 2012). I find that this framework is especially well suited for analyzing this case because it places a heavy emphasis on economic and food security related gender planning which directly connects to the issue of malnutrition (Birks, 2013a). This framework is also suitable for this case study as it can be used for planning at all levels so it can be applicable to, for example, the one specific Save the Children nutrition project but also to Mozambican communities as wholes (The World Bank, 2012). Also, I find that because this framework comprises six different ‘tools,’ it allows for a deeper analysis of the case by bringing focus to various interconnected facets of the case (The World Bank, 2012). For example, using the tool for identifying gender roles makes it very clear what specific activities are designated for men and for women which then helps point to any existing gender inequities in the communities (The World Bank, 2012).

**Case Analysis**

***Identifying gender roles:*** There is a clear gendered division of labour in Mozambican communities. As official statistics on women’s economic participation have generally underestimated their contribution to the labour force by excluding their significant roles in the informal work sector, it is beneficial to explore all of the various activities that women and men are involved in (Wach & Reeves, 2000, pp.17, 28). In terms of productive activities, while both men and women engage in agriculture, it is men who are the main generators of income for households and as such may provide ‘allowances’ to their female spouses (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, pp.85, 95). It is men who have the central role in monetary income, which then translates into authority. The women’s roles appears to be significantly defined by reproductive activities as their roles includes food preparation, breastfeeding, maternal and child health care, house maintenance day-to-day activities, child care, early marriage and health clinic visits (UK Aid, 2012; Arts, Geelhoed, De Schacht, Prosser, Alons, & Pedro, 2011, pp.27, 92; Lindelow, 2008, p.575; Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, pp.92, 95; Roby, Lambert, & Lambert, 2009, p.348). The female responsibilities of food preparation, breastfeeding, and maternal and child health care are clearly emphasized in project activities discussed in the case study.

Women are also responsible for the provision of traditional medicines to children but it is the men who have the power as the decision-makers about these medicines (Arts, Geelhoed, De Schacht, Prosser, Alons, & Pedro, 2011, pp.27, 29). Men’s other reproductive activities include sexual abstinence during spouses’ breastfeeding, because traditionally, it is considered harmful to the infant if a breastfeeding mother is sexually active, and taking care of non-food expenses including clothing, medical care, agricultural tools, transport and educational costs (Arts, Geelhoed, De Schacht, Prosser, Alons, & Pedro, 2011, p.28; Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, p.92). For the most part then, men’s reproductive activities revolve around them being the main income generators and them having the ability to make larger purchases for the household.

In terms of community activities, both genders engage in some formal education, with men being educated to a greater extent (UN Mozambique, 2013). However, some women are also involved with informal education programs that are targeted at women, such as the Save the Children nutrition classes (Burchi, 2010, p.343). Overall, women and men have considerably differing roles in their communities with men being mostly occupied with education and income and women being mostly occupied with reproductive activities in and around the home while also being involved in income generating and some community involvement.

***Analysis of gender needs:*** As women have different roles than men, this leads to the idea that women and men thus have different needs (The World Bank, 2012). In Mozambique, women’s practical gender needs may include access to information on nutrition and health, seedlings for vegetables and fruit trees, more paid work, safe drinking water, and adequate sanitation (UK Aid, 2012; Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, pp.85, 94; Roby, Lambert, & Lambert, 2009, p.344). As women are mostly dependent on their male spouses’ higher income, other practical gender needs would include increased access to male spouses’ earnings, more bargaining power in the household, and higher incomes for the male spouses which allows for the women to bargain for more time to dedicate to child care (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, &Li, 2001, pp.94, 95).

Strategic gender needs are needs that if met would enable women to change the existing power imbalances between the genders and in the case of Mozambique, these would include greater decision-making authority in households and greater enforcement of the law regarding minimum marriage age for girls (The World Bank, 2012; Roby, Lambert, & Lambert, 2009, p.348). Also, such needs would include more schools that are closer to women’s homes and communities, the need to integrate gender equality into school materials and curriculums, and more female teachers, all of which facilitate greater access for women to formal education (The World Bank, 2012; UN Mozambique, 2013). Facilitating greater access for women to education is vital as education both promotes equality and yields the benefit of educated women being more productive in their household roles and being better paid in formal employment (Roby, Lambert, & Lambert, 2009, p.343). Also, specifically to the case study, a woman’s education has a large impact on the probability of her utilizing available maternal and child health services and there is a positive association between mothers’ levels of education and their children’s nutrition (Lindelow, 2008, p575; Burchi, 2010 p.332). Adding to this, it is argued that children with mothers who have no formal education are more likely to suffer severe malnutrition and are also 130 times more likely to die before reaching the age of five (Roby, Lambert, & Lambert, 2009, p.344).

***Gender differences in the control of and access to resources:*** As there are clear differences in the roles and needs of women and men, there too are gender differences in the control of and the access to resources in the communities (The World Bank, 2012). In terms of resources, women have access to income-generating agricultural activities and informal education programs targeted at women, such as the Save the Children project. They have some but less access to formal education in comparison to men as women’s school life expectancy is on average eight years to men’s ten years (Lindelow, 2008, p.570; CIA World Factbook, 2013). Barriers to women’s access to formal education include girls being viewed as being needed in the home, being at risk of danger by attending school, and less likely to benefit from education (Roby, Lambert, & Lambert, 2009; p.350). Foreseeable benefits to women’s access to these resources include nutrition and health knowledge, some outside income, and some formal education. Men, on the other hand, have greater access to formal education, agricultural equipment, paid labour, and cash income leading the benefits of higher levels of education, higher literacy rates and greater outside income (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001).

In terms of control, it is evident that women lack control of resources. For example while women may control how meals are prepared, it is the men who have authority and are the ones who control cash in the household (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001). As such, men have the benefits of being the decision-makers in the household as household heads, being the authorities on how cash is spent, controlling what basic needs are met, and having asset ownership such as of agricultural tools. Overall, it is evaluated that men have considerably more control over resources and decision-making, which yields more benefits, than women and women are left to bargain for access to resources.

***How the project will affect any of the roles women have:*** While women are already in the role of having the most responsibility for reproductive activities, these programs are reinforcing this gender role by focusing on mothers as being the sole individuals who are to be responsible for responding to malnutrition. Maternal and child health programs tend to exclude fathers and current education activities on exclusive breastfeeding in Mozambique are specifically targeting mothers solely even though fathers are highly influential members of the household (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, p.95; Arts, Geelhoed, De Schacht, Prosser, Alons, & Pedro, 2011, p.29). This is highly problematic as fathers should also have a role in these areas, for example, by providing funds for higher quality foods (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, p.95). Also, by including fathers, the responsibility of improving nutrition is not placed exclusively on mothers who are the ones who have the least control over resources with which to adopt new practices (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, p.95).

Additionally, by heavily emphasizing women’s reproductive roles, women have less time to allocate to income generating activities. As already is the case, generally women earn significantly less cash than men and what little income they have goes toward food so they are dependent on their spouses for allowances and cash to purchase higher quality foods (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, pp.92, 95). In the case study, it is emphasized that families cannot afford foods that are higher in nutrition, especially with rising food prices, but higher maternal income is suggested to be associated with greater purchases of nutritious foods such as meat and fresh fish (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001, p.92). Also, if women earned higher and more regular incomes, this may boost their bargaining power within the household (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001 p.95). As such, women’s income can be correlated with improving nutrition practices. If women’s workload in the area of reproductive activities is being stressed solely, this detracts from their ability to participate in other activities such as income generating. This could then negatively impact their ability to translate the health and nutrition knowledge that they gained from their nutrition classes into actual practice.

***Evaluating intervention aims:*** In the nutrition programs discussed in the case study, the development planning approach that is being utilized is best evaluated to be a welfare approach which is defined as recognizing women’s reproductive role and seeking to meet their practical gender needs in a top-down manner (The World Bank, 2012). The nutrition programs do not emphasize women’s ability to contribute economically nor do they aim to empower women or foster gender equity and so the welfare approach is deemed most appropriate (The World Bank, 2012). The programs are placing importance solely on women’s reproductive role, namely in preparing nutritious diets for their families, and serving only to meet the practical need of health and nutrition. Addressing strategic needs are seemingly not part of the programs’ mandates.

***Examining the degree to which women and gender-aware organizations and planners are involved:*** It is unclear to what extent women are involved with the nutrition programs being implemented in Mozambique. Neither the Save the Children and UK Aid websites explicitly point to nor discuss to what extent the organizations and their partners can be considered ‘gender-aware’. However, based on the top-down approach that is being used, it could arguably be assumed that female involvement with project planning is not at the forefront.

**Social Workers’ Contribution to Implementation of Analysis**

In a gender analysis such as with the case of malnutrition in Mozambique, a social worker can contribute a culturally-sensitive perspective that may be lacking. For example, the field of social work recognizes the significance of cultural practices and norms that may both shape and reinforce women’s subordinate position such as in the case of Mozambique and so a social worker could ensure that culture and a cultural perspective are integral aspects of the analysis (Reeves & Baden, 2000, p.3; Birks, 2013a). For example, it is necessary to take into account the cultural context of why traditional medicines are provided to children and only 37% of infants younger than six months are exclusively breastfed in Mozambique in order to understand why these are the customary practices (Arts, Geelhoed, De Schacht, Prosser, Alons, & Pedro, 2011, p.26).

Adding to this, social workers can contribute a holistic worldview that encompasses both the micro and macro levels. With such a worldview, a social worker would recognize that gender inequities and inequalities can encompass a range of areas including income, leisure, education and cultural expectations (Birks, 2013b). For example, a social worker could analyze a case taking into account factors ranging from the amount of time an individual woman has to dedicate to fetching water for the household to the patriarchal culture that the woman lives in and how that culture influences a woman’s responsibilities. Also, development efforts have generally benefited men’s interests more because, in the case of a male-dominant society such as Mozambique, men are the influential decision-makers (Reeves & Baden, 2000, p.3). A social worker has the role of being the one to ask critical questions that remain unasked and as such could question the authority that men have over development objectives.

**In Conclusion**

Overall, while the support programs in Mozambique discussed in the case study recognize the significance of improving food security and maternal and child nutrition, they do not aim to achieve any form of gender equality or equity. One of the most notable weaknesses in the case is that the focus on responding to malnutrition is placed only on mothers. A suggestion would be that the focus of such programs should not rest only on the women but should also include men as well. Also, there needs to be recognition that women have more than just their reproductive roles and women’s income generating activities could further the goals of responding to malnutrition and achieving greater food security. From a social work perspective then, it is recommended that such programs need to incorporate a greater participatory approach and involve both the women and men of the Mozambican communities as well as their concerns and their input in planning further nutrition-based projects.

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