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**MYTHS AND REALITIES OF GENDER AND WORK DISTRIBUTION
IN PLANTATION AGRICULTURE.
A CASE OF TIKO BANANA PROJECT, TIKO, CAMEROON**

A Research Paper presented by

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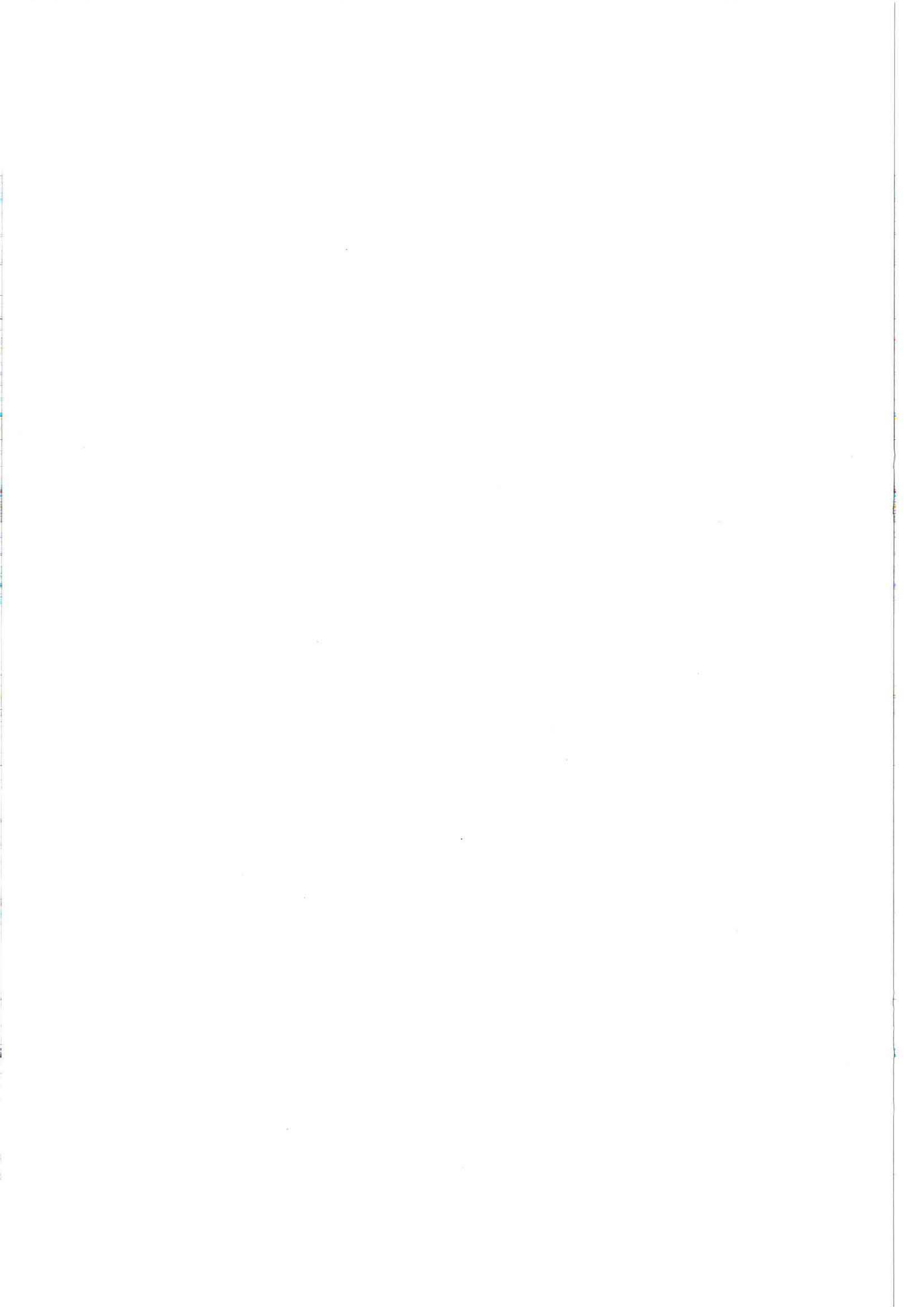
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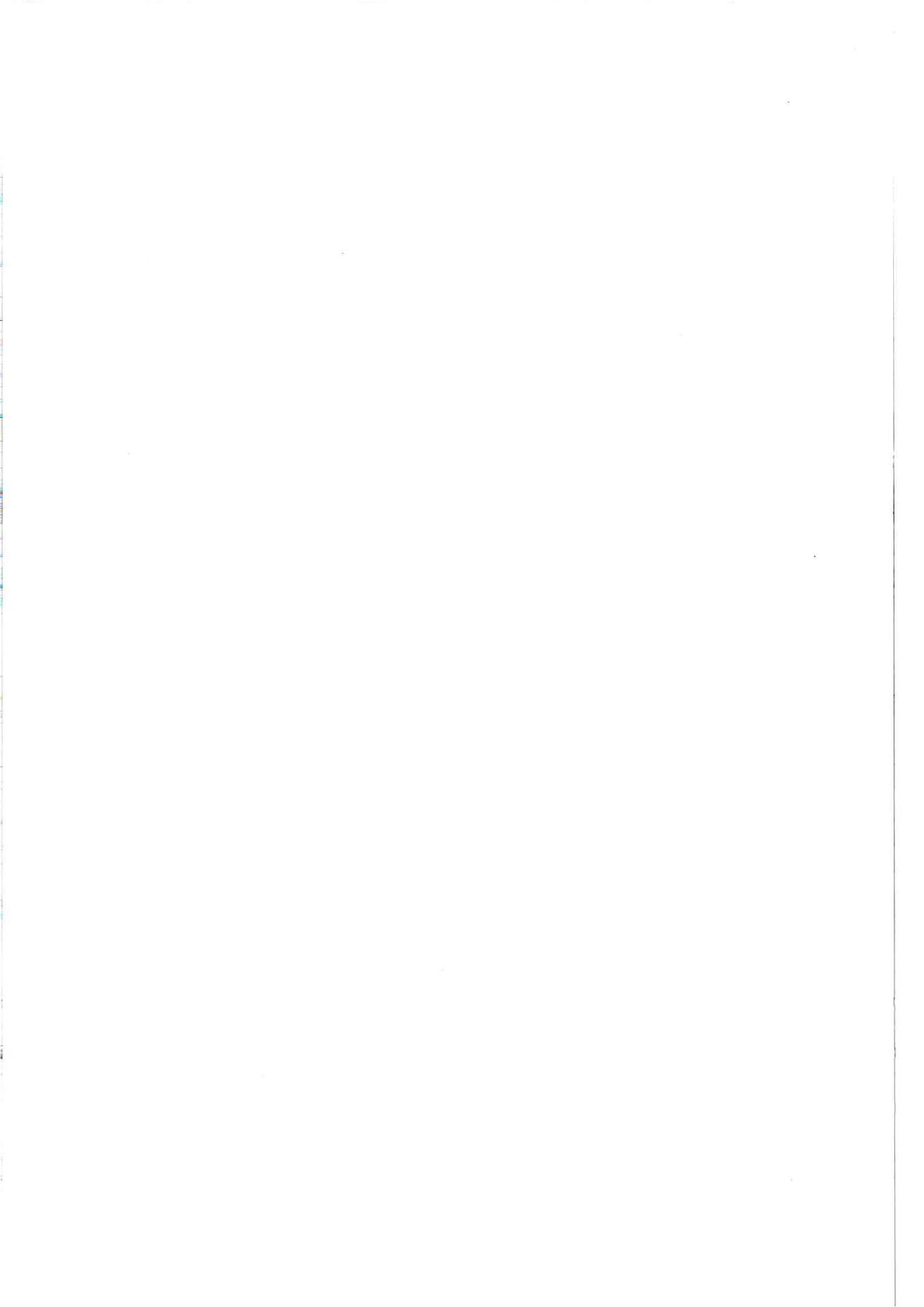
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DEDICATION

To my beloved wife and children. Budi Hilda limunga, my twin boys Budi Herbert Jackai, and Budi Norbert Mbua for their support and inspiration. To my father Sebastian Mange Tumenta and mother Martina Nye Tumenta.



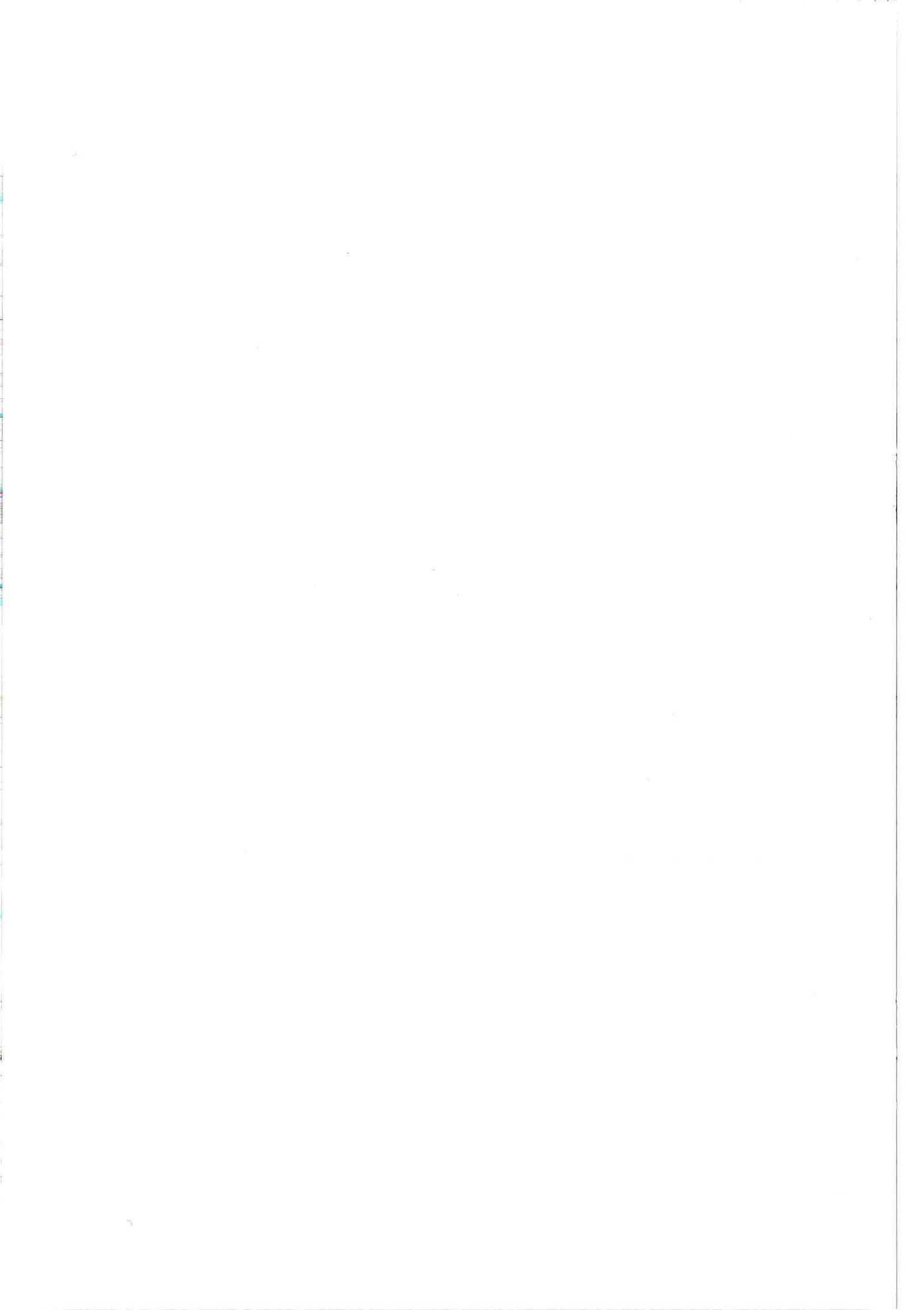
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“I will always thank the lord; I will never stop praising him. I will praise him for what he has done” (Ps 34: 1-2). Without the almighty father this work couldn't have been done. He gave me the strength and courage to move on when things were rough. I give him the glory.

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Abbreviations

CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
DMC	Delmonte Tropical Fresh Fruit Company
FIDA	International Federation of Female Jurists
ACAFEJ	Association of Cameroon Female Jurists



ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the myths and realities of gender and work distribution in plantation agriculture with Tiko Banana project of Tiko, Cameroon as a case study. It sets out with four main objectives: to investigate the myths and realities of gender and work distribution in plantation agriculture, to study the implications of these on the gender distribution of income and benefits, to illustrate some of these problems in the case of Tiko banana project in Cameroon and to suggest appropriate policies that will contribute in improving plantation agriculture which is a vital sector of the economy in general and Cameroon in particular. To achieve these objectives, the following questions have been answered in the paper. (1) What are the myths that contribute to gender division of labour and benefits in plantation agriculture and what are the realities? (2) What is the role of ideology in explaining sexual division of labour, wage differentials and the post of responsibilities occupied by men and women in plantation agriculture? (3) What is the link between the gender division of work and the material distribution of resources and benefits?

Sexual division of labour as argued by feminists is not just a division of work between equal partners but it is base on some myths and ideology. Some myths were identified. They include women are a weaker sex; they lack the physical strength, the myth of the male breadwinner, the woman's place is in the home, women are a cheap source of labour, women are docile, the myth of 'nimble fingers' and women's productivity is low.

In order to find out the realities of what obtains on the plantations, a comparative analyses of different regions of the world (Africa, Latin America and Asia) has been made with three plantation crops as a frame work for analyses i.e. tea, sugar cane and banana. This is because the type of crop grown influences the sexual divisions of labour to a certain extent. The analyses show that men do 'heavy' work while women do 'light' work. However, variations exist from one region to another, which is an indication that

sexual division of labour on plantation has no objective base, but it is as a result of myths and ideology. The outcome is that women are concentrated in certain sectors and occupations; they tend to be in positions of at the bottom end of the occupational hierarchy and women as a group earn less than men. The human capital theory, dual and segregated markets and gender role socialisation theories have been used to explained sexual division of labour on plantations.

Myths are stories which when embedded in a culture of a people are translated into ideological assumptions. These ideologies have played an important role in perpetuating and persuading people to accept the status quo. According to Marx, ideology naturalises, historicises and eternalises. The role of ideology in sexual division of labour on Tiko banana plantation can be seen in four work situations: field work, packing house, administration and the medical section. Field work is divided into two category: skilled manual and unskilled manual operations. Only men do skilled manual work. Patriarchal ideology accounts for this situation. Despite the fact that men and women do unskilled manual work, men are found to be doing the 'heavy' work while women do 'light' work. Women are concentrated in the packing house because of the ideology that women have 'nimble fingers'. Only one woman was a supervisory staff while in the medical section the sexist stereotypes of nurturing and caring which society expects from women was exhibited.

The material bases of these ideologies are that women occupy few posts of responsibilities and have a lower income than men. These differences in incomes are an outcome of differences in incentives in male and female tasks. The paper concludes by stating that sexual division of labour on plantations base on myths and ideology has no objective base and has been disadvantageous to women. The following recommendations were made. (1) The ILO should institute a percentage for which women are supposed to be represented on the plantations. (2) Women already working on the plantations should prove that they are capable of performing any task on the plantation. (3) Research on equal opportunities in plantation agriculture should focus on barriers, both structural and cultural factors which impede women's progress on the plantations. (4) Women's

organisations and trade unions should carry out gender awareness campaigns so as to change attitudes that work against women on plantations. (5) Men should be encouraged to take up household responsibilities.



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gender and Plantation Agriculture

Women have played an important role in plantation agriculture since the period of slavery, working as hard as men, engaged in tasks which even today are considered among the hardest on sugar plantations (Kurian 1982). However, with the abolition of slavery, sexual division of labour began with the introduction of indentured labour based on the assumption that women were not strong enough to do heavy work on the plantation. This myth that women are not strong enough to do heavy work and sociocultural factors discriminated against women in plantation agriculture. In many parts of Africa, the European not only restricted recruitment to men, but also employed strategies like low wages paid to men and dormitories to deter women from the plantations (Boserup 1970). This paper attempts to unravel the myths and realities underlying the sexual division of labour and to investigate the ideology behind it in plantation agriculture.

Plantation agriculture first became a note worthy agricultural system in parts of the Americas, in the 16th century. Plantations came even later to West Africa, except for those areas under German control before 1914, Liberia, where American-owned estates rubber dates 1926 (Tiffen and Mortimore 1990). In Cameroon under the Germans a number of plantations were created from 1885 at the foot of mount Cameroon (Epale 1985). The plantation system of agriculture has in fact been the classical form of capitalistic exploitation in tropical areas where it developed as a political and as well as an economic institution (Reddock and Jain 1998). However, in Africa, plantation agriculture was of less importance under the British than it was under the Germans. When the British took over after the First World War, the plantations were merged and a government department was formed to manage the plantations in Cameroon for example. By 1922, however, the British Mandate Authority had already decided to get rid of them, as the administrative cost of maintaining them were prohibitive but in the end dropped the idea (Konings 1993) because of its importance to the development of the territory.

Studies on women and plantations have looked at women's work on the plantations, their income, productive and reproductive activities and welfare facilities and wants of women (Kurian 1982; Rutten 1982 and Jain and Reddock 1998). In Cameroon research has focused on gender and class (Konings 1995a), how women used their money (DeLancey 1978), women in banana industry (Nkoli and Fonsah 1993), and women plantation workers and economic crisis in Cameroon (Konings 1998). However, these studies appear to have taken gender distribution of labour as a given. None of these studies has gone far enough in the discussion of the underlined reasons for the sexual division of labour that exist on plantations. This paper fills that gap by finding out the myths and realities about sexual division of labour and the impact of ideology on income and benefits of men and women in plantation agriculture. The paper concludes by arguing that in as much as sexual division of labour exists on the plantation, it has no objective base.

1.2 Statement of the problem.

The word 'gender' is a social construct of femininity and masculinity. Gender is an important variable upon which society bases its organisation and work, and distribution of resources and benefits to men and women. The assignment of different tasks to women and men, is a fundamental feature of work. All societies delegate tasks in part on the basis of workers' sex, although which sex does exactly which tasks has varied over time and differed across the countries of the world. Tasks some societies view as naturally female or male are assigned to the other sex at other times or in other places. Within the same country and the same occupation, either sex may do a particular job. Changes in which sex does a task occur slowly, because the existing sexual division of labour shapes social expectations. Kinds of work become labelled in people's minds as belonging to one sex and inappropriate for the other. Societies gender work by labelling activities as appropriate for one sex or the other. These labels influence employers' and workers' expectations of who ought to perform various jobs. Across societies and over time, however, no hard-and-fast rules dictate which sex should do a particular task (Redskin and Padavic 1994). The origin of sexual division of labour in agriculture has been debated in many circles. Feminists argue that the origin can be found in the asymmetric,

hierarchical exploitative relationship between men and women and not a simple division of tasks between equal partners. Other social scientists say it is a consequence of the capitalist mode of production (Mies 1981, Bradley 1989). Capitalist mode of production might have increased the sexual division of labour but its origin cannot solely be found in it because sexual division of labour existed before the penetration of capitalism in the third world. Goheen (1996) for example, explained how during the precolonial period among the Nso people of Cameroon, men were hunters and warriors while women were basically farmers.

In plantation agriculture sexual division of labour is reflected not only in the employment of workers but also in the different types of crops grown. For example, on the Tole tea plantations in Cameroon and in Asia, female employment remains high, the rationale for this preferential demand is based on the managerial belief during the colonial rule and it is still held today, that compared to men, women are naturally more suited to performing certain tasks (they had 'nimble fingers'), more docile (they were habituated to subordination), and cheaper (their income was defined as supplementary to that of so called breadwinner the husband) (Konings 1995a p 11). Although, the concept of breadwinner has never been African, people eternalised this foreign concept. Female employment or participation remains relatively low on the Tiko Banana project because of the subordinate position of women in the society. Even when women are recruited, women occupy few posts of responsibilities and earn relatively low income compared to men.

1.3 Objective of the study

- (1) To investigate the myths and realities of gender and work distribution in plantation agriculture.
- (2) To study the implications of these on the gender distribution of income and benefits.
- (3) To illustrate some of these problems in the case of Tiko Banana project in Cameroon.
- (4) To suggest appropriate policies that will contribute to improving plantation agriculture, which is a vital sector of the economy in general, and Cameroon in particular.

1.4 The research question

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the myths that contribute to gender division of labour and benefits in plantation agriculture and what are the realities?
- (2) What is the role of ideology in explaining sexual division of labour, wage differentials and the post of responsibilities and power occupied by men and women in plantation agriculture?
- (3) What is the link between the gender division of work and the material distribution of resources and benefits?

1.5 Justification

Plantation agriculture in Cameroon is the largest employer after the government. The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), the largest plantation, alone employs about 15.000 people. Tiko Banana project employs about 3000 workers. With the economic crisis that hit Cameroon in the early 80s, the myth that men are breadwinners on whom the colonial officials and employer based their argument for not recruiting women on the plantations has been completely eroded. Even wives of civil servants who used to only look up to their husbands, have also become breadwinners. More women have become breadwinners either because their husbands have lost their jobs or to augment the family income which has been slashed as a result of the structural adjustment programme. The female-headed household has been on the increase (18-20%) in Cameroon. Besides, the number of school leavers and drop outs are on the increase. Consequently, more and more women are looking up to the plantations as a source of employment and income. In this case any sexual division of labour which does not allow an individual to make use of his or her potentials on the plantation and enjoy the benefits accruing from it, will be contrary to article 23-sub (1), (2) and (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The research will bring out some of those myths, which shaped work distribution in plantation agriculture by sex. The findings will be important in that it is going to improve

on the gender division of labour, thereby giving each person the opportunity to chose the work which he or she does well, rather than basing work distribution on gender.

1.6 Overview of plantation agriculture in Cameroon.

The Republic of Cameroon is found in the central part of Africa, with a surface area of 475.422 sqkm and a population of 14.3 million people mid 1998 (Population reference bureau 1998). Agriculture is the backbone of the economy and accounts for about 30 % of GDP, providing jobs for the bulk of the labour force, and is the largest source of non-oil export revenue (Prime Ministers' office 1997). Plantation agriculture started in 1885 during the period of German administration, with the establishment of the first two plantations by Woerman and Jantzen and Thormahlen respectively. In 1887, Dr. Max Esser founded a third plantation, which was known as Westafrikanische Pflanzungsgesellschaft Viktoria (WAPV) (Epale 1985). Since then many more plantations have been created in the anglophone and francophone Cameroon.

There are many plantations today in Cameroon with Cameroon Development Corporation being the largest agro-industrial parastatals located in the present South West Province of Anglophone Cameroon. It was founded in 1946/47, for the purpose of developing and managing of the approximately 100.000 hectares of estate land confiscated by the British Trusteeship Authority from the German planters at the start of the World War II (Konings 1993). Between 1946/47 and 1985/86, it almost doubled its cultivated area, from about 20.000 hectares to 40.000 hectares, with the assistance of huge loans from several well-known financial institutions, including the World Bank, the International Development Association (IDA), the European Development Fund (FED), the Commonwealth Development Cooperation (ComDev), and the (French) Central Fund for Economic Cooperation (CCCE). It is the second largest employer of labour in the country, surpassed only by the government itself. In the early 1950s it employed about 25000 workers. At present, it employs about 15000 permanent workers and a few thousands seasonal and casual workers. Its main crops are rubber, oil palm, banana and tea (Konings 1995b).

Many scholars have attempted tracing the origin of women in plantation agriculture in Cameroon. However, the exact date is not known except for DeLancey (1978) who stated that Tole tea began to hire women to replant tea fields in the early 1950s. Koenig (1978) says women were first hired to do palm work. The planting of palms to replace the old rubber trees required a large number of workers to be recruited in a short period. Hence, the management recruited the wives of the workers who had lived on the plantation for years to join the planting team. This move was advantageous to the management because new houses will not be needed and this will also contribute to employee stability among both workers. This is an indication that women had not been part of the labour force from the outset.

As in other parts of the world, plantation workers in Cameroon receive low remuneration for their arduous work. There is also sexual division of labour on the plantation. In Cameroon there is equality of pay irrespective of sex. However, income differences do exist between the men and women because male tasks have a higher premium or bonuses. At the Tiko Banana Project more women are concentrated in operations whose extra time of work is not paid or have a lower incentive. For example, in the packing house where women make up about 57 %, the incentive for one box of banana packed during extra hours of work or over time is 33 FCFA while one bunch of banana harvested is 40 FCFA (Budi 1997).

Cameroon bananas under the Lome Convention banana protocol enjoy a fair share of the European market and accounting for 13.4 % of the total agricultural exports of Cameroon (the Courier 1996). Total banana production as at 1995 stood at 980.000 metric tonnes with a total export of 184.294 metric tonnes giving a total of \$756.600 (FAO 1997). The banana sector in Cameroon with a total of four plantations employs 10.000 direct workers and indirectly creates about 50.000 other jobs. It realises a turnover of about 43 billion francs a year. The preferential policy by the European Union allowed 857.000 tons of bananas from the ACP countries to their markets without competition (Boh 1999). The

four banana plantations include Societe Plantation de Nyombe–Penja (SPNP), Societe de Bananaraie de la M'bome Tiko, Ekona Banana plantation and Tiko Banana Project.

In 1987, the Delmonte Tropical Fresh Fruit Company (DMC) contracted with CDC to open a new banana plantation in Tiko. The contract required CDC to provide land and labour while DMC provided capital, inputs, technology, technical assistance, and assured quality control. The fruit produced would be bought from CDC by DMC at free-on-board (FOB) price, if the quality specifications were met (Fonsah and Chidebelu 1995). Work on the new plantation started in December 1987 and by 1st November 1988, the first export of bananas from the new plantation was made. According to Nkoli and Fonsah (1993), total export has grown steadily since 1988. In 1989, export stood at 16.578 metric tonnes while 1992 and 1993 exports were 25.547 and 42.868 metric tonnes respectively. As a result of the reorganisation of CDC, CAM FRUIT COMPANY limited came into being from January 1996 with two banana plantations: Tiko Banana Project and Ekona Banana plantation. According to the project manager in 1996 Tiko Banana project employed 2.736 workers and cultivated an area of approximately 2000 ha. Out of the 2517 workers who fall between categories 1-6 and whose names are found on the employees' individual information sheet September 1996, 516 were women while 2001 were men. Fifty-four workers fell between categories 7-12 and only 8 women belong to this bracket. Category in this paper refers to the classification of workers in terms of their wage levels. The categories range from one to twelve. Workers in categories 1-6 are field workers while categories 7-12 are supervisory and management staff.

Sexual division of labour does occur on the plantations. Men do the supposedly "arduous" tasks while women do the 'light' work. This is based on the argument that women lack the physical strength. In banana plantations in Latin America and Africa unlike in rubber plantations, women are better represented in the packing house or factories. Women are employed as deflowers, dehanders, clusterizers, weighers, labellers, and packers in the packing house since these operations need to be done carefully and skillfully to minimise quality defects while on rubber plantations women are coagulators

of liquid latex. On the other hand, men are employed to do harvesting, pruning, drainage, bagging and propping, holing, chopping and cableway maintenance. In the packing house, men do boxing and loading. Operations like deleafing, input application, material preparation and picking snails are done both by men and women (Koenig 1978; Nkoli and Fonsah 1993). Both male and female workers of Tiko Banana project have an eight-hour day of work but this is not usually respected because of prolonged hours of work. Workers get up as early as 4 a.m. to move to collection points where they are picked up by lorries to the plantation. This is because workers do not live on camps. Female workers who have children do leave them with relatives. To avoid the problem of providing creche for its workers, the management of Tiko Banana project prefers recruiting young and single women.

1.7 The Research Methodology

Gender is an important variable on which society bases its organisation and work, distribution of resources, roles and responsibilities. Gender plays a very important part in the way agricultural tasks are distributed among men and women. In plantation agriculture, women are given the supposedly 'light' work while men do heavy work. The basis of this division is a myth, which this paper seeks to explore.

Tiko is a plantation town surrounded by many plantations like the Benue oil palm estate, Sonne and Likomba rubber estates, Societe de Bananaraie de la M'bome and the Tiko Banana project. My interest for working on a topic of this nature stems from that fact I have lived and worked in Tiko as an agricultural extension worker since the inception of the Tiko Banana Project in 1987 and I have had the opportunity to interact with plantation workers of CDC and Tiko banana project on a daily basis. Besides, I have done some research on gender issues in plantation agriculture with Tiko banana project as a case study. The division of labour between men and women in Tiko banana project and the reasons advanced for it motivated me to carry out a research on the myths and realities of gender distribution of labour. Hence, my own experience of having lived and worked in Tiko will be of great importance to this research.

In order to carry out the study it will be necessary to make theoretical and comparative analyses of myths and realities of gender and work distribution in plantation agriculture in Africa, Asia and Latin America bringing out some myths that have contributed to sexual division of labour on the plantation. Some plantation crops will be selected on which the comparisons will be based. The role ideology plays in the sexual division of labour in Tiko banana project will be discussed from four work situations: field work (general labour), packing house or factory, administration, and medical field. The paper will then look at the impact of ideology on the income and benefits of men and women on the plantation in terms of employment, posts of responsibilities occupied by men and women and wage differentials. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis will be used in analysing the secondary data collected.

As at September 1996, Tiko banana project was made up of six farms: Farm I (Mafanja I), Farm II (Mafanja II), Farm III (Pungo), and Farm IV (Mondoni I). Farm V (Mondoni II), Farm VI (Moquo) Those who work in the field make up the bulk of the workers on the plantation (98 %). Out of the 2736 workers on the Tiko Banana Project in 1996, only 54 workers were not field workers and fell between categories seven and twelve. The employees' individual information sheet carries only the names of those in categories one to six giving a total of 2517. At the time the list of workers was drawn up, 165 workers who had just been recruited were not yet documented.

1.8 Source of data

The research will depend mostly on secondary data collected from books and journals in libraries. The Tiko Banana Project Employees Individual Information sheet of September 1996 will provide basic information about Tiko banana project. Some of the information for this paper will be from information I gathered in 1996 for a research project and from my experience and interaction with the workers of Tiko banana project having lived and worked in Tiko since the inception of the plantation.

1.9 Limitation

One of the major limitations of the study is that information and data at hand is that of 1996 so it will be difficult to use it to compare over time because things have changed. A topic of this nature (myths and realities of gender and work distribution in plantation agriculture) where little or no study has been carried out, it is unfortunate that a field survey could not be carried out. Besides, the Employees Individual Information Sheet September 1996 could not answer all the questions for a topic of this nature which has to do with how the society perceive women in agriculture and plantation agriculture in particular. A field survey could have provided the much-needed primary data to answer some of those questions that cannot be found in literature.

1.10 Organisation of the paper

This paper is divided into five chapters. The chapters are as follows:

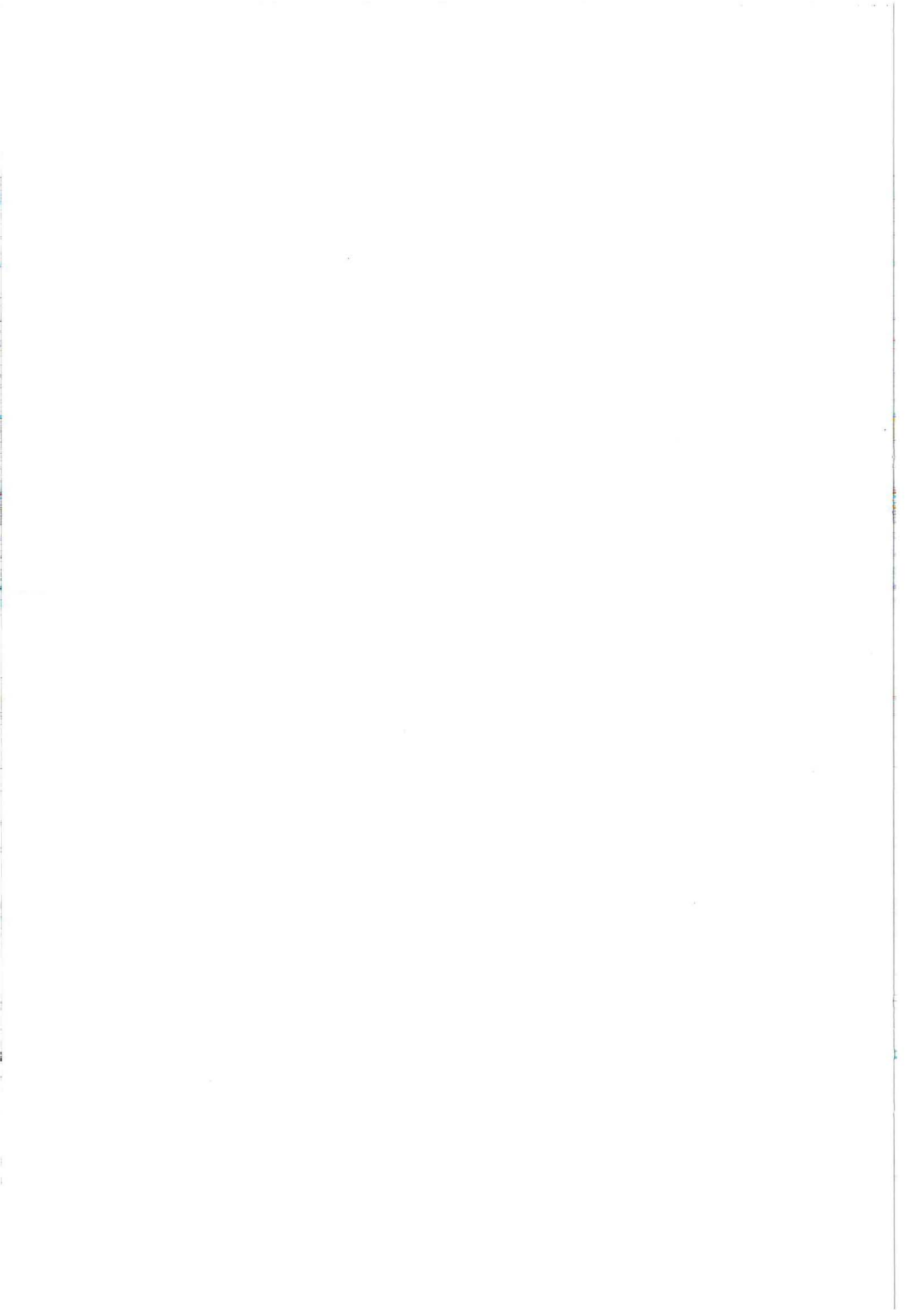
Chapter one gives the framework of the paper: the statement of the problem, objective of the study, the research questions, methodology, limitation, justification and an overview of plantation agriculture in Cameroon.

Chapter two deals with the theoretical and comparative analysis of myths and realities of gender and work distribution in plantation agriculture. This chapter will look at the concepts of gender, myths, patriarchy and plantation. A comparative analysis of the realities as it obtains on plantations in different regions of the world will be made, selecting some plantation crops. Literature will be reviewed based on three major theoretical frameworks. These theories are human capital theory, dual and segregated market theory and gender-role socialisation theory. These theories will be used to explain the myths and realities of gender division of labour in plantation agriculture and some of those ideological arguments which are use to justify why some tasks are done by either men or women.

Chapter three discusses the demographic characteristics of workers in Tiko Banana project in terms of sex, age, marital status and level of education. This chapter attempts to bring out the role ideology plays in the sexual division of labour in Tiko Banana project. It will also look at what kinds of tasks are performed by men and women on the plantation in the field, packing house, administration and the medical field.

Chapter four investigates the impact of ideology on the income and benefits of male and female workers in Tiko banana project. The focus will be on employment i.e. the type of persons or gender to be employed, who holds what position of responsibility and why and who earns what and if there is any wage differentials.

Chapter five gives a conclusion and brings out some recommendations, which can be of importance to both management and workers of Tiko Banana project at the wake of privatization. This will help improve working relationship between the genders, hence increase productivity.



CHAPTER II

Theoretical and comparative analyses of myths and gender distribution of work and benefits in plantation agriculture.

2.1 The concept of gender

The word “gender” is a social construct of femininity and masculinity and it needs to be distinguished from the biological differences between women and men. In other words, it refers to differences between women and men that are socially learned. Gender is an important aspect, which also influences the organisation and distribution of resources and benefits to men and women in the society. (Endeley and Tetebo 1995). Gender is used in the distribution of roles and responsibilities. It is not fixed but determined by social and cultural values. This means that gender differences between men and women vary across countries and regions as well as over time within countries consequently can be changed by education, government, policy, media images, social movements and opinion leaders. Some difference between men and women are biologically determined, yet aside from differences in the reproductive process, these differences are small on average. For example, while men have greater physical strength than women do on average, some women are stronger than men are (Anker 1998).

Reskin and Padavic (1994) on their part refer to gender as a classification that society construct to exaggerate the differences between females and males and to maintain sex inequality. According to March et al (1999), the concept of gender is used by sociologists to describe all socially given attributes, roles activities, and responsibilities connected to being a male or a female in a given society. One thing is clear about these definitions which I hold strongly, that gender is a social construct which begins at birth with the names we are given. The roles and responsibilities that we perform and hold as men and women are a result of the differentiation that began at birth and the socialisation process that we go through.

The conception of gender encourages us to examine the ways that social institutions embody gendered arrangements and at the same time create and maintain differences in

their female and male members. To stress the fundamental role of gender differentiation in creating differences between men and women, some social scientists use gender as a verb to refer to the process of differentiating the sexes. They called the process of gender differentiation *gendering* and speak of activities that organisations or cultures have attached to one or the other sex as *gendered*. These terms signify outcomes that are socially constructed and give males advantages over females. They describe the production of assumptions about gender as well as the institutions that are shaped by those assumptions. One such institution is gendered work (Reskin and Padavic 1994). The sexual division of labour brought about by gender differentiation is socially constructed and has no objective base but it is a result of some myths. What then are myths?

2.2 The Concept of myth

A myth is a story in which people define themselves, and in which characters represent opposing sets of social values (McGee et al 1997). Culturally, a people have a warehouse of stories, or narratives, that embody their ideological assumptions. These stories are called mythical narratives. Mythic narratives are different from ordinary stories in that they are about “ideal” things (people, events, conflicts, and crisis) rather than “real” things. Most stories are influenced, maybe governed, perhaps even determined by one or more myths (McGee et al 1997).

Myths in my opinion are socially constructed stories whose foundation at times cannot be traced. In every society there are myths which have been handed down from generation to generation. These myths that are embedded in the cultures spell out guidelines on how people should behave, what should be done and who should do what. They have become eternalised and do influence different aspects of life including gender division of labour. Myths usually work to resolve conflicts in favour of existing relations especially between men and women when it comes to gender division of work and benefits in agriculture. The particular tasks done on farms by men and women have certain common patterns. In general, men undertake the heavy physical labour of land preparation and jobs which are

specific to distant location while women carry out the repetitious, time consuming tasks like weeding, and those located close to the home, such as care of the kitchen garden. This division of labour is based on some myths in the society and is not immutable. Myths have not only influenced the gender distribution of work but also the type of crop grown by men or women and who controls the benefits. Even in the Northwest province of Cameroon where Goheen (1996) says men own the fields and women own the crops, men in their assumed position of breadwinner still control the returns from agriculture leaving the women with little or nothing. In commercial agriculture, myths also determine who to employ, who occupies which post of responsibility and the wages earned by men and women.

Culturally, women are defined through a series of myths. For the most part, popular cultural images of women are responses to definitions of “ideal” from male perspective (McGee et al 1997) which brings about differentiation between men and women. What then produces this differentiation which is responsible for sexual division between men and women in agriculture? According to Elson and Pearson (1981), there is widespread belief that it is a ‘natural’ differentiation, produced by innate capacities and personality traits of women and men, and objective differentiation of their income needs in that men need an income to support a family, while women do not. This is still a myth because the sexual division of labour is not natural or based on some innate capacities or personality traits but it is socially constructed and there is no objective differentiation in income needs between men and women.

Myths are a result of the gender relationship and have given rise to different tasks being assigned to different genders. This is a characteristic of a patriarchal society. The relationship of gender to the division of labour is as old as human species and no study has ever been able to free its ideas entirely from the prevailing social system in which it functions (Mintz, 1998). The process of gender division of work and benefits in agriculture is not ‘natural’ as it is claimed, but it is rather a process of subordination of women as a gender. This is not only an ideological process, taking place in the realm of

attitudes and values but it is also a matter of people ascribing lesser value to women's gender roles. Although ideology plays a role, it can be argued that the subordination of women as a gender cannot be understood simply as a matter of 'patriarchal attitudes'. The process of subordination of women as a gender can be understood in terms of the exclusion of women as a gender from certain activities, and their confinement to others; where the activities are constituted as public, overtly social activities, and these activities to which women as a gender are confined are some of those which are constituted as private, seemingly purely individual activities (Elson and Pearson, 1981). Sheperd (1998) also argued that the gender ideology of men's place being in the public domain and that of women their homes shaped the social and economic experience of female Indian workers during and after indentureship. These situations confirms the myth that a woman's place is in the home and is reflected on the plantation in that the tasks done by women is a result of the socialisation process, the perception of women or on the myth of women as a weaker sex.

2.3 The concept of patriarchy

Patriarchy unlike gender and myths are variables that shaped sexual division of labour in the society. Patriarchy refers to a form of social organisation in which there is a structural dominance of men over women. Patriarchy may take on different forms and expressions and be subject to changes overtime. It is legitimised ideologically and is reflected in, among other things, male control over the means of production, especially land, and over women's labour, sexuality and mobility (koninigs 1995a).

Radical and Marxists feminists both agree that patriarchy is a system of male domination and female subordination but Marxist feminists have attempted to analyse the relationship between the subordination of women and the organisation of various modes of production (Beechey 1979). Feminists (gender) theories are mainly concerned with non-labour market variables which economists take as given. A basic premise of gender theories is that women's disadvantaged position in the labour market is caused by, and is a reflection of, patriarchy and women's subordinate position in the society and the family. In all

societies, household work and child care are seen as the main responsibility of women, while men are seen as mainly responsible for being the breadwinner. That these societal norms and perceptions differ from reality for many women, men and families does not detract from their influence on behaviours and their effect in causing discrimination against women (Anker 1998).

Whatever, the definition of patriarchy, in this paper, the material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men's control over women's labour power. Patriarchy as an ideology has influence sexual division of labour in agriculture and plantation agriculture in particular in Cameroon. The case of Ndu and Njutittsa tea estates where men pluck tea instead of women as is the generally the case, are example to cite to show how patriarchal ideology has played a major role in sexual division of labour on plantations in Cameroon.

The question one is bound to answer at this point is how gender and myths have brought about gender distribution of work and benefits in plantation agriculture. To better answer this question, I will first of all look at the concept of plantation and its characteristics and secondly, I look at those myths that have directly contributed to sexual division of labour in plantation agriculture in almost every part of the world where it exist.

2.4 Plantation and its characteristics

The word "plantation" was originally used to describe settlements of colonists in an overseas area (Epale 1985). However, as most European colonies became associated from the seventeenth century onwards with certain new agricultural products, a plantation came to refer to an agricultural establishment for the production of export crops (Sajhau and Muralt 1987). Over the years the word "plantation" has changed its meaning and is now generally used to describe a particular economic system of crop production, largely for export. The problem is therefore to define what the major characteristics of such a system are.

The first is that plantations are located mainly in tropical and subtropical regions. Another characteristic is that plantations originally specialised in the cultivation of a single export-oriented commodity. Modern plantations are generally characterised by scientific cultivation, mechanical progress and operational efficiency for which to a large extent inputs are necessary. This creates a double dependency on international markets, since most of the produce is also exported. Plantations also differ from other types of agricultural establishments as regards the organisation of labour, since they employ on a regular basis hired workers, most of whom live on the plantation (Sajhau and Muralt 1987). Even on the basis of these different characteristics - location, type of crop, export orientation, minimum size and regular employed labour, it is difficult to arrive at a definition of a plantation, which could be applied uniformly in all parts of the world. According to the ILO Plantation Convention, 1958 (No. 110), the term "plantation" includes-

"Any agricultural undertaking regularly employing hired workers which is situated in the tropical or subtropical regions and which is mainly concerned with the cultivation or production for commercial purposes of coffee, tea, sugar-cane, rubber, bananas, cocoa, groundnuts, cotton, tobacco, fibres (sisal, jute and hemp), citrus, palm oil, cinchona or pineapple; it does not include family or small-scale holdings producing for local consumption and not regularly employing hired workers" (p 7). This definition does not include housing, which is one of the major characteristics of plantations.

According to Graham and Floering (1984), the word plantation has borne a host of meanings and they make an attempt to define 'the modern plantation estate' as follows: an organisation for the large-scale production of commodity crops by a uniform system of planting, cultivation and often onsite processing under a central management and with a trained labour force, sometimes living in estate housing in an environment controlled by the same management. Its foundation is the expert direction and training of its work force by the use of a technology of detailed routine working and supervision (p 15).

From all these definitions, it becomes clear that modern plantation agriculture is a 'capitalist' type of organisation with a large labour force; extensive land areas; skilled management; close supervision for a system of detailed routine and export of the product. On-site processing and its integration with small holders' production is important but is an essential element of the plantation only for certain crops, and is not a universal feature. Similarly estate housing is not universal, but when it exists; it then becomes a defining part of the plantation (Graham and Floering 1984; Greenfield 1997).

2.5 Myths of gender distribution of work in plantation agriculture

There are some common myths, which explain the gender division of work and benefits in plantation agriculture in almost every part of the world where plantation agriculture is practised. They include:

(1) Women are a weaker sex; they lack the physical strength. In other words women are not strong enough to do tough manual work, nor are they clever enough to master things technical (Mair 1998). Both assumptions have been well proven to be without foundations, but are frequently invoked as strategies of female subordination. During the slavery period women did the same work as men on the plantation. Women have been found to be doing work that require physical strength like cutting cane in the Philippines and loading of banana in St Lucia.

(2) The myth of the male breadwinner. It is always assumed men will be employed, while for women, employment is still considered an option. Why? How did the image of breadwinner originate? The myth of breadwinner is a powerful norm in the western industrial society that is rooted in women's dual productive/reproductive role. Women, even if they are employed, are assumed to be responsible for domestic chores and child care, while male responsibilities in the household are minimised in favour of their primary roles as breadwinner (Safa 1995). When plantation agriculture was instituted in the developing world, the myth of breadwinner was adopted. Hence, in most cases only men were employed and sometimes doing work like weeding which men would not have done in the village where women do it (Boserup 1970). When women were employed,

they were at a distinct disadvantage in the labour market because of the dual productive-reproductive role. Women were thus exploited as a source of cheap labour because their salaries are deemed as supplementary to the primary male breadwinner.

(3) The woman's place is in the home. The establishment of wage labour system and the separation of home and work place brought about the restructuring of the household and the emergence of an ideology of familialism. The ideology centred on the extension of women's procreative functions to women's responsibility for the home; women were not only child bearers, they were also child rearers, husband-carers, housekeepers, and overall system-maintainers. This social definition of women was encapsulated in the phrase 'woman's place is in the home'. The newly defined tasks of women involved assigning the domestic sphere - the home - as the sphere of women and of feminine activities. In this ideology were included such notions as feminine nurturance, masculine protection, maternalism, self-sacrifice, and emotional and financial security (Eviota 1992). This is a myth that has contributed immensely in collaboration with the myth of male breadwinner to gender distribution of work and benefits in plantation agriculture in the early days and it is still being felt even today. It should be emphasised that women's employment is linked to their reproductive role.

(4) "Women are a cheap source of labour". In the early days wages were so low, it was imperative for women and children to work and contribute to the household. The owners of the plantations found it profitable to employ females and children, as their remuneration was lower than that of men (Sinnathamby and Wickramasekar 1984). Where female labour is high, it must either be cheaper to employ than comparable male labour, or have higher productivity (the case of Assam and Tole tea plantations in India and Cameroon respectively), or some combination of both; the net result being that unit costs of production are lower with female labour. The lower wages of women are attributed to their secondary status in the labour market, which is seen as a natural consequence of their capacity to bear children.

(5) Women are docile. Women are considered to be more docile and more easily manageable, and willing to accept tough discipline, and naturally less inclined to join trade unions, than men do; and to be more naturally suited to tedious, repetitious, monotonous tasks (Elson and Pearson 1981). The idea of docility is a myth. Konings (1995a) records subtle resistance of female pluckers against managerial efforts to increase labour productivity at Tole tea estate in Cameroon on the grounds that they do not want to become slaves but to be treated as human beings in the field. Elson and Pearson states that, it is in the context of the subordination of women as a gender that the supposed docility, subservience and the consequent suitability for tedious, monotonous work of women in the third world must be analysed. In the conditions of their subordination as a gender, this is the appearance that women often present to men, particularly men in some definite relation of authority, such as father, husband, and boss.

(6) The myth of nimble fingers has contributed a lot to sexual division of labour in plantation agriculture to the advantage of women. According to a quote from the Malaysian Investment brochure by Elson and Pearson (1981), a vivid picture is given of what nimble fingers' mean. "The manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous the world over. Her hands are small and she works fast with extreme care". Women are considered naturally to have nimble fingers. The myth of nimble fingers has been common in factories especially in bench – assembly production line. It is very important today on tea plantations for plucking and in the packing house on banana plantations. In banana plantations women are concentrated in the packing house where extreme care is needed not to bruise the bananas.

(7) Women's productivity is low. It is assumed that women's productivity is low because of absenteeism, pregnancy, childcare, health reasons and since profitability is the goal of the plantation, employing women in plantations will bring down the profits. This is just another myth. Direct productivity comparison between male and female workers are hard to make, since so few men are employed in comparable labour intensive operations. In the few documented cases where men have been employed (in Malaysian electronic

factories and Malawi factories), their productivity was in fact lower than that of women employed in the same plants (Elson and Pearson, 1981).

2.6 Realities: comparative analyses of what obtains on plantations in different regions of the world with examples of some plantation crops.

The capitalist process in the underdeveloped countries gave rise to stereotypes whereby women were disadvantaged. Cultures where the sexes had parallel roles in the social relations of production were reorganised, granting status to men and male activities (Eviota 1992). The segregation of men and women into different occupations is related to patriarchy. Women are found in jobs in which the social expectations that are nurturing, caring and supportive of others tend to be confirmed. Similarly for men, beliefs that strength or analytical abilities come with masculine genes result in men's domination of both manual jobs depending on strength and occupations requiring analytical skills (McDowell, 1999). This societal expectations of men and women leads to sexual division of labour which is not only the differentiation of tasks but also a differentiation of worth, status and power. The whole idea of gender distribution of work and benefits is surrounded by a number of myths that have already been mentioned. In this section I will make a comparative analyses of sexual division of labour on plantations in different parts of the world with my framework being some plantation crops. There are many types of plantation crops but I will make use of three: tea, banana and sugar cane. The reason for using crops as the basis for my comparison is that the types of crops grown also determine to a certain extent the sexual division of labour. For example, rubber and oil palm plantations employ fewer women than do tea plantations.

2.6.1 Tea.

Tea is one of the rare plantation crops that employ predominantly women. Since 1886 when tea became the most important plantation crop in Sri Lanka replacing coffee (Kurian, 1982), Sri Lanka has become the highest producer of tea in the world today. There is a high degree of sexual division of labour in the tea industry with plucking done almost exclusively by female labour. The more arduous or physically strenuous tasks of

pruning, forking, weed control, manuring, ridging, etc are done by males (Sinnathamby and Wickramasekara, 1984). This pattern of division of labour is also reflected in the financial benefits between men and women. Sinnathamby and Wickramasekara (1984) report that wage differential which is a legacy of the colonial period has remained unchanged with male rates being a little more than those of females. Jain (1998) records similar sexual division of labour on the Nimari tea plantation in Assam, India where women are involved in tea plucking while most adult and minor male workers carry out field work, involving weeding, pruning, digging trenches, spraying chemicals over tea bushes. Fieldwork is considered to comprise heavy manual tasks while plucking is generally described as a skill that women have achieved through nimble fingers. Since the task of plucking is the single most costly operation on the garden, and women perform this task, employing them is a matter of necessity to the planters.

In Malawi, a colonial report gives a different picture of gender division of labour on tea plantation from that of Sri Lanka during its inception. Men did the plucking of tea. Women were often reluctant to take paid employment in the tea plantation. This amazed planters, who came from India, where women formed the majority of the tea pluckers. Attempts made to persuade women to undertake tea-plucking work failed (Vaughan and Chipande, 1986). The reason for the women unwillingness to do this work was because they were good at hoeing task. A woman could hoe with a baby on her back but could not pluck tea with a baby on her back since she has to carry a basket. On the tea estate men did the clearing of the land, digging of dams, tree-felling, cutting firewood, road making, the preparation of nurseries, holing, pruning, tipping, most of the plucking and the heavier work in brick, block or potmaking. The women did most of the weeding, hoeing of firebreaks, the cutting and collection of grass, and most of the carrying of water, earth or bricks (Vaughan and Chipande, 1986).

According to Vaughan and Chipande, there is a clear-cut division of labour along sex lines on the tea estates in Malawi today. Just like in Sri Lanka, women tend to dominate tea plucking but instead of men weeding like in Sri Lanka, women do weeding.

According to the managers these jobs require dexterity and patience and women possess such qualities. Few women were working permanently on the estates as nurses (Where the estates provided dispensaries), homecraft, secretaries etc.

In Cameroon, women are still found to be doing the plucking of tea which is supposedly light task at Tole tea estate while at Ndu and Djuttitsa tea plantations the majority of tea pluckers are men (Konings 1995a; Konings 1996). The presence of male pluckers on the plantation in Ndu and Djuttitsa like in Malawi was disappointing to the planters. The reason for male pluckers in Ndu tea estate instead of female pluckers like in Tole tea was as a result of an agreement between the chief of Ndu and the Estates and Agency Company Ltd (EAC). The chief wanted exclusively a male labour to be recruited. The chief was strongly convinced that the employment of women on the estate would challenge the 'traditional' male control over women's productive and reproductive labour (Konings 1996). Here we see the role of patriarchal ideology in determining division of labour. The company's preference for female labour goes to confirm the myths surrounding sexual division of labour on tea plantations.

Firstly, there was the general belief in the management circles that women were naturally suited to pick tea (they had 'nimble fingers'), were docile (they were habituated to subordination) and were cheaper (their income was defined as supplementary to that of the so called breadwinner, the husband). The company's long experience with tea plucking in India and Sri Lanka had strengthened these managerial beliefs (Elson and Pearson 1984; Kurian 1982).). The belief that females are more suited for plucking tea is just a myth because in many estates (Ndu and Djuttitsa tea estate in Cameroon) where male labourers have been used the quality of their plucking have been found to be as good as that of female workers. Secondly, tea plucking had to a large extent become identified as 'women's work' due to high employment rate of women on the tea estates in Asia and elsewhere. Lastly, the company was not sensitive to differences between the African and Asian sociocultural situation with regards to the position of women (Konings 1996).

2.6.2 Sugar cane.

The myth of physical strength has contributed to a greater extent to the sexual division of labour on sugar cane plantation. However, in 1832 on the Jamaican sugar plantations in the extraction of labour, no distinction was made between men and women. Women and men did the same work of digging cane holes, planting, trashing, cutting, tying, loading and carting. More females were employed than males to the ratio of 920 males to 1000 females (Mair 1998). Here we see the myth of physical strength having no influence on the sexual division of labour. The economic self-interest was the main reason for the Jamaican colonial establishment to discard the image of women as a frail creature, and converting them into the mainstay of estate manual labour. On the other hand, with the introduction of indentured labour, after the abolition of slavery, in Trinidad and Tobago, sexual division of labour, was based on the assumption that able – bodied men can do full tasks of heavy work, while women do full tasks of light work. Women did weeding, manuring, supplying and cane cutting and these, though necessary tasks, were the lowest paid occupations. In Thailand, women perform the same tasks but harvesting and loading of cane which is considered as ‘male tasks’ is frequently done by women (Graham and Floering 1984). Male labour in Trinidad and Tobago was concentrated on forking, cane – cutting, truck loading and mill work (Reddock 1998). According to various reports, this sexual division of labour is not constant. Reddock (1998) gives accounts from Major Commin’s reports of 1893, which states that women did loading in Trinidad and Tobago unlike in Thailand alongside men. Truck– loading was officially a heavy male task, but apparently many women preferred doing this kind of work. This shows that in reality women are capable of doing any kind of work on the plantation if they are not excluded on the grounds of some myths.

In the sugar cane plantation or ‘hacienda’ in the Philippines, men and women like in Trinidad and Tobago and Thailand perform the same tasks, but women in the Philippines do not load canes. In the Philippines, tradition and the preference of most of the women themselves, both govern the allocation of work (Rutten 1982, Eviota 1992). The overseer often takes into consideration the labourers’ strength and preferences when he assigns the

daily tasks. Both men and women consider heavy work more fit for men and lighter work fit for women. Men who participate in work done only by women were laughed at and there was a lot of resentment when women did men's work. A story is told of a woman who cut cane together with the men and women recall this with respect. It seems that the esteem attributed to this work is not related to the fact that men do it, but rather its heaviness, and to the strength required (Rutten 1982).

In present day, hacienda tasks off the field are also differentiated by sex. Men are given supervisory roles and positions, such as overseer and foreman, while women are preferred as timekeepers or bookkeepers because they are better suited for this type of work (Eviota 1992). Rutten (1982) reports that some women on the hacienda explained that the reason for their exclusion from supervisory jobs might be the lack of physical strength, in case of disputes, men are more suited for the work since they are stronger.

2.6.3 Banana

Banana is one of those plantation crops with a clear-cut division of labour along sex lines. Tasks are more sharply delineated. Fieldwork, 'heavy' work, skilled work and supervisory positions in the plantations as a rule go to men and these are higher paying than women's work. Women do 'lighter', repetitive and the more 'delicate' operation. But women's assignment to these tasks has a material base: work is irregular and almost always lower paying. Since women are seen as auxiliary income-earners, they fit into this type of work (Eviota 1992). Banana production in Cameroon began in 1908 under the Germans (Houtkamp 1996) unlike in the Philippines where it began as late as 1960s (Eviota 1992). In the Philippines, about thirty percent of the work force in the banana plantations consists of women involved in packing and few field operations (Eviota 1992) while in Cameroon about 57% of those working in the packing house in Tiko Banana project were women (Budi 1997). In both countries, women are preferred for packing because bananas have to be handled carefully because bruised bananas are priced lower in the world market. This situation confirms the myth of nimble fingers. Men are employed in field operations like pruning, drainage, harvesting, bagging and propping, holing,

chopping and cableway maintenance and in the packing house they do loading. Both men and women do operations like deleafing, input application, packaging, material preparation and snail picking. In most plantations, among the skilled workers, women are mostly found as medical and clerical personnel while men do construction, electrical work, truck and tractor driving and mechanics (Koenig 1978). In banana plantations in Latin America, Africa and Asia, women are better represented in the packing house but Momsen (1991) reports of women loading banana in St Lucia, which is thought to be men's work. In Jamaica men and women were seen heading bananas from the fields to the railway siding or wharf (Sheperd 1998) while in Cameroon, heading was done by the "banana back-boy" (Ardener et al 1960).

2.7 Some thoughts about the material basis of sexual division of labour

These variations in the jobs done by men and women from one region to another, suggest that it is not the characteristics of jobs themselves that demand attributes or skills that are associated with supposedly masculine or feminine traits, but rather it seems that who does a job depends on how it is socially constructed, valued and concomitantly rewarded. This gender distribution of work has had a lot of implications on the income and benefits of women. McDowell (1999) states that three key features universally distinguish the pattern of women's participation rates in wage employment. Women are concentrated into certain sectors and occupations (this is known as horizontal segregation); they tend to be in positions at the bottom end of the occupational hierarchy (this is known as vertical segregation), and women as a group earn less than men as a group. Even in countries where statutory minimum wage exists, women's income are lower than those of men because of the seasonal nature of their employment and the jobs they do. For example, on the tobacco plantation in Malawi, overtime pay applies only to those tasks, which are usually assigned to men. According to Vaughan and Chipande (1986) no clear explanation was given for the lower payment of women on some estates. Managers said that women were only given the lighter tasks to perform and that "one woman – day does not equal one man – day". In jobs where women are concentrated, incentives tend to be lower thereby affecting the income of women. For example, in Tiko banana project

Cameroon the incentive for one box of banana packed during extra working hours is 33 FCFA while for any extra bunch of banana it is 40 FCFA (Budi 1996). The gender distribution of work has had implications not only on the incomes of women but also the levels of responsibility, privilege and power that are assigned to women. Women are concentrated at the lower occupational hierarchy hence they have little or no power in decision making because they occupy very few posts of responsibilities. Jain (1998) reports that on the Nimari plantation in Assam, only one woman has ever been appointed to a supervisory position in the 1930s.

2.8 The role of ideology in work distribution and benefits in plantation agriculture

According to the dictionary definition, the word ideology means a set of ideas or beliefs that form the basis of an economic or political theory or that are held by a particular group or person (Hornby 1995). Marx, Engels and other 19th century and 20th century social theorists think about ideology as not just any system of ideas, but the ruling system of ideas advocated by those who hold economic power in the society. It is not only economic power but also social and political power. On this view ideology was thought to be a “false consciousness”, or a distorted picture of reality that gets exploited and oppressed people to accept adverse conditions. Ideology functions as rhetoric, they persuade people to share in systems of belief that they had no part in choosing for themselves (McGee et al 1997).

Ideology has influenced the gender division of labour in plantation agriculture in that it perpetuates the status quo and persuade people to accept the existing patterns of division of tasks as a given. It is worth citing some examples how ideology has contributed to sexual division of labour on plantations. In many parts of Cameroon women are not supposed to climb an oil palm tree. The reason for this is not known. However, this could have influenced sexual division of labour on oil palm plantations where women are employed only as loose nuts collectors while men do the harvesting of cones. According to a Cameroon Radio and Television programme, a woman in Bafut village in the North West Province of Cameroon who took upon herself to do harvesting of oil palm cones

met with a lot of resentment from men. However, the chief of the village decorated this woman. The division of labour in precolonial Nso was strictly gendered, allocating women's labour to food farming and men's to hunting, warfare, and trade. This division lasted well into the colonial period. According to Goheen (1996), women are believed to be naturally endowed with the capacity to do farm work. Women's productive and reproductive labour freed men to involve in trading and other occupations. This could have been a reason for Nso men moving down to the south to work in the plantation. Ardener et al (1960) state that 189 and 82 Nso men were employed at CDC in 1955 and 1958 respectively. With the end of hunting and warfare period men had nothing to do since ideologically farming was considered as women's occupation, men found it difficult to work on the farm.

According to Eviota (1992) ideology is the realm of meanings. Ideologies are meanings that enable individuals to make sense of the world around them. Patterns of these meanings, as they are lived by social individuals, constitute a 'way of life', a culture. It gives meaning to roles women and men play within the social totality. An ideology of gender is built into the historical construction of the division of labour and the reproduction of labour-power in capitalism. The ideology of gender is manifested as an ideology of familialism, involving the assignment of appropriate roles for women and men within the household and outside of it. It decides the type of jobs, the grade of work, and the wages workers received. Work and who does it is based on the perception of abilities of men and women. One gender is suitable for certain trades and not for others; men usually get better jobs because they are men and the jobs that men do are in any case better than those done by women.

Lye (1997) states that ideology functions as structure of assumptions which form the imaginative world of groups. Ideology, writes Althusser, is a "representation of the imaginary relation of individuals to the real condition of existence". Ideology creates us as persons: it "hails" us, calls us into being. According to Marx, ideology naturalises, it historicizes, and it eternalises, i.e.:

- 1) ideological structures appears to be natural, “according to the order of things” (naturalisation);
- 2) ideological structures appears to be a logical conclusion to historical development (historicization);
- 3) there is an assumption that now that this (natural) state of affairs has been reached, things will be that way, barring regression (eternalisation).

Because of the role ideology has played in shaping gender distribution of work, sexual division of labour now looks natural since people have eternalised it and any attempt to challenge the sexist stereotypes, you are deemed to be unwell, abnormal, and in need of a physician (Finca 1998).

2.9 Different explanations of sexual division of labour.

Many theories have been advanced to explain the gender distribution of work and benefits in the labour market. Some theories tends to argue in favour of sexual division of labour while others try to explain the underlined reasons for sexual division of labour in the work place and why men and women have to perform different tasks or earn different wages. Gender distribution of labour on plantations can be explained by three major theories. The human capital theory, dual and segregated markets and gender role socialisation theory.

2.9.1 Human capital theory.

The theory seeks to explain that the rationale for division of labour is constructed based on the amount of human capital each member embodies and on the relative rates of return that might be achieved through its sales in the labour market. Momsen (1991) uses the neo-classical theory to explain the gender differences in employment in terms of differences in human capital where women are disadvantaged, because of their family responsibilities, physical strength, education, training, hours of work, absenteeism and turnover. Men, it is argued are, in general, better educated than women do and have invested more time and energy gaining skills or credentials. Thus it is sensible for them to

enter the labour market as they received commensurately higher rewards than their female partners, who more appropriately undertake the essential unwaged labour necessary to run a home and bring up children (McDowell 1999; Fine 1998; Reskin and Padavic 1994).

The human capital school, views women's relatively low pay primarily as the outcome of women's free choice: specifically their decision to make smaller investments in productivity - enhancing human capital. Earnings commanded in the labour market depends on an individual's productivity, which in turn relates to his/her innate abilities and to acquired characteristics like education and training, summarised as human capital (Becker 1964). The neo-classical economists failed to see that women's low pay is not of their free choice but as a result of the types of work for which they have been socialised. Feminist reaction to the work on gender within the neo-classical framework has been fierce. They question the 'productivity' differences between male and female workers which the neo-classical economists use to explain the earnings gap and points out that these differences, particularly the educational and occupational patterns of the female workforce, are themselves likely to be the product of discrimination (Humphries 1995).

Momsen (1991) goes further to show that human capital theory has some shortcomings because it is based on certain assumptions:

- (1) It assumes that the gender-based wage differentials can be largely overcome by improving the education and training of women.
- (2) The second assumption is that men and women have equal access to the labour market and compete on equal terms for job opportunities. This ignores the gender-based segregation of the labour market, which exists in all countries and does not appear to decline as gender differences in the education levels even out.
- (3) A third underlying assumption is that women's labour force participation is of necessity intermittent because of their "natural" child bearing role.

These assumptions have been found wanting because women still have low incomes and women do not still have equal opportunity in the labour market despite the improvement in the level of education as we shall see with the case of Tiko banana project. Dual and segregated labour market theory attempts an explanation for this.

2.9.2 Dual and segregated labour markets theory

The orthodox assumptions that the allocation of labour based on rational decision-making by individuals have been challenged. Labour economists have argued instead that the institutional structure of the labour market is based on discriminatory practices. Two related approaches are important in explaining gender divisions: dual or segmented labour market theory and labour process theory. Dual labour market theorists, argue that there are two labour markets, a primary one and a secondary one, differentiated by the terms and conditions of employment. The former offers high wages, good working conditions, security of employment and opportunities for promotion, whereas jobs in the secondary sector tend to be poorly paid and offer few opportunities for advancement. The majority of women are assumed to work in the secondary sector, although the explanatory mechanisms are left untheorized (McDowell 1999; Humphries 1995). The dual labour market theorists do not give the reason why women are assumed to work in the secondary sector. In my opinion, patriarchy and male chauvinistic attitude in the labour market might control women's access to the primary jobs.

It is clear economic theories cannot fully explain gender differences in the labour market and much of the marginalisation of women is the result of discrimination based on societal expectation of women. Gender role socialisation theory can better explain the gender distribution of labour in plantation agriculture. However, Momsen (1991) and other feminists have tried to incorporate gender into labour market theories and have shown that women occupy the secondary sector in the labour market (Rubery 1994). Radical feminists add patriarchy as an important determinant of segregation. Besides, male workers, unions, and employers all play a role in maintaining occupational segregation (Sayed and Tzannatos 1998).

2.9.3 Gender-role socialisation theory

Gender-role socialisation is the process by which families, peers, schools, and the media teach a society's expectations of 'appropriate', dress, speech, personality, leisure activities, and aspirations for each sex. This division of responsibilities and patriarchal ordering of society helps determine why women tend to accumulate less human capital as compared to men before entering into the labour market – that is, why female children receive less education than male children, and girls are less likely to pursue fields of study which are relevant to the market such as sciences and crafts. Women are seen as having less need for labour market skills. This patriarchal ordering of society and women's responsibility for household work/child care helps determine why women acquire less market experience, on the average, as compared to men – why many women withdraw from the labour force early and many other women withdraw from the labour market temporarily (Anker 1998).

Gender- role socialisation might contribute to unequal workplace outcomes in several ways. Firstly, it might lead women to orient more to their families and men more to their jobs. Secondly, the different socialisation of females and males may incline them to seek only those jobs that society has deemed acceptable for their sex. Thirdly, socialisation may contribute to a tendency for men and women to hold different values that affect their work lives, such as how important it is to have authority on the job or make lots of money. Finally, men's gender-role socialisation may encourage them to expect a sexual division of labour at work that reserve for them certain jobs, an inside track on promotions, a position of authority, and higher pay for their work. Because men are usually the workplace decision-makers, they are in position to enforce these expectations (Reskin and Padavic 1994). Ideology plays a very important role in the process of socialisation as it helps to perpetuate the myths that govern the distribution of work in the society. Koenig (1978) argues that it is not socialisation process that is responsible for the gender distribution of work but that women self- selects themselves from certain jobs or they may be discriminated against as they apply for jobs. Koenig fails to see that different

and separate stream of education and training continue to influence the labour market in maintaining a dividing line between jobs for women and jobs for men.

2.10 Conclusion

Gender has contributed immensely to sexual division of labour in plantation agriculture more than any other factor. Gender alone could not have brought about such a distinct division along sex lines, were it not of the myths that set guidelines to who does what in the society. It is worth noting that this division of labour varies from culture to culture and over time. The link between myths and gender relationship is not very clear but each turns to influence the other. Ideology has played an important role in perpetuating and persuading people to accept this sexual division of labour where men supposedly do heavy work while women do light work. This gender division of labour is not only reflected in the work men and women do but also in the posts of responsibilities women occupy on the plantations and the relative low income they earn. Human capital theory, dual and segregated labour markets theory as labour theories explains why there is division of labour in the labour market but do not explain the differences between men and women. However, gender role socialisation theory tries to explain why men and women earn different wages and, perform different tasks and try to find reasons for the sexual division of labour that characterise workplace.

CHAPTER III

Realities of gender and work distribution in Tiko banana project

3.1 Introduction

Sexual division of labour does exist in Tiko banana project. In chapter two I brought out the myths that have led to sexual division of labour on plantations. Myths as earlier defined are stories, when embedded in a culture of a people are translated into ideological assumptions. These, in turn influence the sexual division of labour. The aim of this chapter is to bring out the gender distribution of work in Tiko banana project and to find out the role of ideology in shaping the sexual division of labour on the plantation. This will be done by a study of four work situation: field work, packing house, administration, and the medical field. However, to have a vivid picture of workers of the plantation, it is necessary to look at the demographic characteristics of Tiko banana project because it may have an influence on the sexual division of labour.

3.2 Demographic characteristics of workers in Tiko Banana project

The Tiko banana project employs people from all parts of Cameroon. However, most of the workers are from the English speaking provinces of South West and North West Provinces. As at September 1996, the number of workers on the plantation stood at 2736. 219 workers out of this number were not documented on the Employees Individual Information Sheet of September 1996. Hence, the percentage of men and women on the plantation was calculated on the basis of the 2517 workers whose names appear on the Employees Individual Information Sheet. Men made up 79.5 % while women represented 20.5 % of the workers.

3.2.1 Age

Table 1: Age of plantation workers by sex and percentage

Age	Sex			
	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
Less than 20 years	30	1.6	14	2.8
20 - 30	1170	62.8	341	67.5
31 - 41	453	24.3	120	23.8
42 - 52	171	9.2	28	5.5
53 and above	40	2.1	2	0.4
Total	1864	100	505	100

Source: Computed from the Employees Individual Information Sheet. September 1996.

About 70% of the female workers were below the age of 30 while about 64% of the male workers also fell below 30 years. A much lower percentage was recorded for both sexes for 31 years and above, 35.3 and 29.7 for men and women respectively. Age is a determining factor in female participation in the plantation agriculture (Koenig 1978). The high percentage of young people especially among the women is a reflection of the administration's desire for young and energetic workers. Thus confirming the ideology that physical strength is necessary on banana plantation. Besides, the cost of employing young workers is low since management might not be faced with the problem of paying higher wages as a result of seniority. The drop in percentage for women between the ages 31-41 years on Table 3, could be as a result of women of this age group getting married and when they start having children, family responsibilities make it difficult for them to continue to work on the plantation. This may be an explanation to why married women on the plantation according to Table 2 was only 5 %. The ages of 366 workers were not documented.

3.2.2 Marital status

Table 2: Marital status of men and women workers

Marital status	Sex			
	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
Single	1584	79.2	471	91.3
Married	415	20.75	27	5.2
Divorced	1	0.05	14	2.7
Widowed	0	0.0	4	0.8
Total	2000	100	516	100

Source: Computed from the Employees Individual Information Sheet. September 1996.

About ninety one percent of the women on the plantation were not married while about 79 % of the men were single. Only 5 % of the women were married as compared to about 21% of the men. The reason could have been that most of the women on the plantation were found within the age group of 20-30 years when young women are just leaving school or have left school and are preparing to get married. In the early days, when early marriages were still rampant, women of this age group would have all got married. It is common today to find women between the ages of 20-30 years and above who are not married. This could have been the explanation for the very low percentage of married women besides management's preference for young and single women. Some of the women on the plantation in 1996 told this researcher that the prolonged working hours account for the high percentage of single women because most of their time is spend on the plantation and this reduces their chances of being seen by potential suitors in town. The low wages may also look unprofitable in terms of opportunity cost in the management of their social life i.e. productive activities of childcare and home management. To work such long hours will mean that women have to employ hired labour for child care, cooking and other domestic chores which they are unlikely to be able to afford on a plantation field worker's wage. The very high percentage of single women on the plantation could be a strategy by the management to avoid an anticipated higher cost of providing facilities for married women, which will affect the profits. On

the other hand, the relative higher percentage for married men is strategy to stabilised labour. It is assumed that since men are breadwinners, family commitment will force them to remain in their jobs. Among the female workers 2.7% were divorcee while one divorce case was recorded among the men. Only 0.8% of the women were widows.

Information about the number of children and the level of education of the plantation workers was not recorded on the Employees Individual Information Sheet of September 1996. However, according to a survey I carried out in 1996 on Farm I (Mafanja I), on workers in categories 1-6, showed that majority of the workers, 73.3 and 60 percentage for men and women respectively had no child, one or two children. These figures tell us that being single does not mean not having children. The gap between men and women in terms of level of education was not wide. Women were equally educated as men. Twenty seven percent of the women have not had any formal education as against zero for men. For those who had completed primary education, women made up 30 % while men had 50 %. Ten percent and twenty percent for women and men respectively had had some secondary education while 30 % percent of the women had completed secondary education as against 27% for men. An identical percentage of three for men and women was recorded for those who had completed the college of agriculture (Budi 1997).

The Project manager said in 1996 that the relative low education of the women has influenced the division of labour on Tiko banana plantation and only few women are promoted because they lack the skills. Though women may lack the skills because of the type of education tailored for them, I disagree with the fact that sexual division of labour has been influenced by the educational background of women since women are equally educated as men according to the figures above. Hence, the reasons for this can only be found in myths and ideologies, which tends to subordinate women. It is worth mentioning here that women's employment and the tasks they performed on the plantation is link to their reproductive role in the society. This gender division of work is link to the material distribution of resources and benefits in that women are concentrated at the bottom end of the occupational hierarchy of categories one and two and earn less than men as a group.

In 1996 some women told me that they are only working on the plantation because they have no alternative and that if they could have another job they will quit the plantation.

3.2.3 Length of employment

Table 3: Length of employment of workers by sex

Length of employment	Sex			
	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
0 – 4 years	641	32.07	169	32.75
4 – 9 years	1338	66.93	344	66.67
10 – 14 years	1	0.05	1	0.19
15 – 24 years	7	0.35	2	0.39
25 – 29 years	9	0.45	0	0.0
30 and above	3	0.15	0	0.0
Total	1999	100	516	100

Source: Computed from the Employees Individual Information Sheet. September 1996.

About 32% of both men and women were employed in the first four years of the plantation. In the second four years the percentage of those employed on the plantation rose to about 66% for both sexes, giving a total of percentage of 99 for both sexes of those recruited since the plantation was created. Despite the fact that women and men have the same percentages in terms of the length of employment, on the whole more men are employed than women. About 79 % of the workers are men while women make up 21% This gives us the picture that men are preferred on banana plantations than women thus confirming the ideology that banana production demands a lot of strength and men are stronger than women. One might ask why is it that some workers have worked for more than nine years when the plantation was created in 1987? According to the contract CDC signed with DMC, CDC is supposed to provide the land and labour while DMC provide the technology. So when Tiko Banana project was created some workers from CDC were transferred to work in the new plantation.

3.3 Sexual division of labour in Tiko banana project

Labour on the Tiko banana plantation can be divided under two main categories i.e. skilled and unskilled labour. On recruitment, workers cannot determine the work they will do because everybody is recruited as general labour to work on the field especially those in categories 1-6. However, the administration has the prerogative of determining who does what on the plantation. In the case of those in categories 7-12, what they bring into the labour market might determine what type of work they will do. There is a tradition on the plantation that everybody must do some general labour before assuming any particular function or work.

3.3.1 Field work

Field work is composed of the most important skilled manual and unskilled manual operations that goes into the production of banana on the plantation alongside work in the packing station which is the final phase of the production process. Most of the workers on the field are found between categories 1– 6 and are either skilled manual labourers or unskilled manual labourers. Those who had acquired some technical skills before being employed on the plantation are given jobs that require some technical skills. These jobs include mechanics, drivers, plumbers, builders, carpenters, and electricians among others. Only men do these jobs and these jobs usually receive higher pay. They were 125 workers in this group on the plantation. Ardener et al (1960) referred to this group of plantation workers as ‘Artisans’. They include only men holding Trade–Tested Certificates in their trade. Here, we see the ideology of the “natural” role of women contributing to gender distribution of work on the plantation beside the ideology that a man’s place is out of home while a woman’s place is in the home. Boys are trained in technical skills while girls are brought up to be good mothers. Human capitalist theorists will see nothing wrong with this because the men are simply paid for the skills they have while gender role socialisation theory argues that women do some particular jobs because of the way they have been socialised.

The unskilled manual work on the plantation are harvesting, material preparation, deleafing, pruning, input application, snail picking, deflowering, replanting, bagging and propping. Skills in these operations are usually acquired on the plantation. Men do the supposedly heavy and arduous tasks, which require some physical strength while women do the light work. Harvesting, pruning, replanting and bagging and propping were done only by men. These tasks are considered heavy and tedious and demand a lot of physical strength. The management might argue that the division of labour is not based on any deliberate gender considerations but the law that prescribe that women should not be given jobs that are beyond their strength but should be transferred to more suitable work (Cameroon Labour Code 1992). Here, we see the ideology that men are stronger than women embedded even in the law and do influence the sexual division of labour. This might be the reason why women are the not given jobs like harvesting, pruning, bagging and propping which are considered heavy tasks.

There are some unskilled jobs like night/day watch, security guard and yardmen that are done only by men. Two reasons can be advanced for this. Firstly, there is the belief that being a night/day watch or a security guard needs some physical strength so as to protect the plantation's property against theft. Cases have been recorded where the night/day watches and security guards have had scuffles with either plantation workers taking away banana or thieves. Secondly, legally it is not permitted to employ a woman to do any work between ten p.m. and six a.m. (Cameroon Labour Code 1992, ILO 1987).

3.3.1.1 Types of work done by plantation workers

Table 4: Type of work done by workers and sex

Type of work	Sex		
	Men	Women	Total
Harvester	290	0	290
Deleafing	7	14	21
Input application	15	18	33
Prunner	47	0	47
Material preparation	4	7	11
Bagging and propping	25	0	0
Deflowering	7	6	13
Replanter	1	0	1
Chemical weeding	13	0	13
Snail pickers	7	5	12
General labour	999	307	1306
Total	1415	357	1772

Source: Computed from Employees Individual Information Sheet. September 1996.

According to Table 4, 290, 47, 1, 25 and 13 men did harvesting, pruning, replanting and bagging and propping, and chemical weeding respectively. According to the Farm manager of Farm I, only one woman has attempted doing harvesting since the inception of the plantation but she soon abandoned it. The reason for the woman abandoning harvesting might not have been because she lacked the physical strength to do it but it could have been because men resent women joining the so called “men’s work”. Women who attempt to “cross over” to the supposedly men’s work are subject to suspicions that they are not “real women”. On the other hand she might have been afraid of being sexually harassed. Harvesting is paid a higher premium or incentive for overtime than operations in the packing station. Only men did chemical weeding. Chemical weeding requires that you carry a knapsack sprayer containing 25 or 50 litres of chemicals on your back. Management might have considered that women do not have the physical strength to carry the knapsack or women may not have been assigned to do chemical weeding because of the toxic nature of the chemicals and women were considered delicate to do it or women simply shunned this operation. Momsen (1991) says that in most cultures the application of pesticides is considered a male task, as women are aware of the danger of

their unborn children of exposure to chemicals. Some operations that are done by both men and women and are considered light work are deleafing, material preparation, deflowering and snail picking. According to Table 4 women are more in operations like input application (18), material preparation (7) and deleafing (14). These are jobs that were considered as light work. This situation is link with the idea that women are not as strong as men are, and has contributed to gender distribution of work on the plantation.

According to Table 4, 1306 workers do general labour. The term 'general labour' is another word for unskilled work done on the field (Ardener et al 1960). Everybody who is employed to work on the plantation especially in categories 1-6 is employed as general labour. It is after sometime that one is given a particular task to do. This explains why many workers still have 'general labour' as their job title. As long as they have not been given a specific task, they are assigned a task to do each working day and are usually move from one operation to another.

3.3.2 Packing house

Packaging is one of the most important operations in commercial banana production. It is the last and crucial stage in the production process. Successful sales depend on how well the product is packed. Rough packing and handling cause several undesirable damages such as neck injuries, latex stains, box burns, bruising, and scarring. These damages greatly affect the general appearance and quality of bananas, as they leave dark blemishes on either green or the ripened fruits. Consequently, the blemishes distract potential customers, which subsequently reduces sales volume and leaves regular customers complaining (Fonsah and Chidebelu 1995).

3.3.2.1 Sexual division of labour in the packing house

Table 5: Sexual division of labour in the packing house.

Types of operation	Sex		
	Men	Women	Total
Statistician	11	7	18
Packing	54	46	100
Labeller	0	1	1
Weighers	5	19	24
Trayer	3	0	3
Box former	13	1	14
Fruit quality inspector	6	1	7
Loader	5	0	5
Dehanders	4	0	4
Packing house overseer	2	0	2
Box quality inspectors	8	0	8
Box inspector	0	2	2
Selector	13	63	76
Switcher	3	0	3
Total	127	140	267

Source: Computed from the Employees Individual Information Sheet. September 1996.

According to the Project Manager of Tiko banana project, in 1996 about 80% of the workforce in the packing stations on the six farms were women. In the Philippines 30 % of the total workforce on the plantation consist of women involved in packing - packing operations – cleaning, dehanding and weighing (Eviota 1992). So when one looks at Table 5 with only 140 women, it is clear that job titles in the Employees Individual Information Sheet of September 1996 was not well documented. However, the figures on table 5 gives an indication of the concentration of women in the packing house i.e. 140 out of 524. A majority of women are found in the packing house as statisticians, selectors, weighers, trayers, labellers, and packers. On the other hand men work as dehanders, switchers, packers, box formers, loaders and are incharge of harvesting equipment. This division of labour is linked to the ideology of ‘nimble fingers’ and that of women not being as strong enough as men. This is reflected in the packing house where women do operations that need a lot of care and patients like selection, weighing

and packing. On the other hand men perform tasks that demand physical strength like switching the bunches of banana on the cable ways when they are brought into the packing stations and loading. Both men and women work as statisticians in the packing house keeping all production and harvesting data.

3.3.3 Administration

Administration in Tiko banana project as at 1996 was in the hands of the 54 workers who were in categories 7-12. According to the Project Administrative Officer out of the 54, 33 were supervisory staff and 21 were management staff. The supervisory staff are those who had a diploma or are graduates from high school and are between categories 7-9. They include junior field assistant and field assistants. The managerial staff are those with a bachelors degree or a diploma from a trade school and several years of experience and a proven track record of excellent output and are between categories 10-12 and are senior field assistant, farm administrators and estates managers. As already explained in chapter two only one woman was a supervisory staff. As mentioned earlier this is not a result of any relative low education of women as intimated by the Project Manager. Women are equally educated as men according to the 1996 survey (Budi 1997).

3.3.4 Medical field.

The medical field has been one of those areas on the plantation where gender distribution of work has shown the sexist stereotypes society expects from women that is nurturing and caring. Out of the nine workers in the medical section only two were men. There were two dispensary attendants, one almoner, one nurse/midwife and four nurse aids (three women and one man), and one man as a state registered nurse. The concentration of women in the medical field is in conformity with the ideology that society holds that women are more caring than men are and this has contributed to this type of sexual division of labour on the plantation. What is important to note here is that women in the medical field unlike those in the packing house who are unskilled, have acquired some skills through their training in professional schools consequently they receive a higher reward for their labour than those in the packing house. All the workers in the medical

section were between categories 3-6. Out of the two women who were in category six, one was in the medical section and the other was an Accounts clerk. One might question why a large plantation with almost 3000 workers has only nine medical staff. Tiko banana project has only a health post and serious cases are referred to the CDC Tiko central clinic. Following the contract which CDC signed with DMC, CDC is responsible for providing labour so it is imperative that CDC should take care of the health needs of the workers of Tiko banana project.

3.4 Conclusion

Ideologies that are embedded in the culture and alien to Cameroon have both contributed to the sexual division of labour on the Tiko banana project. Examples include women are not as strong as men are, women's productivity is low, and the ideology of 'nimble fingers'. The ideology of physical strength has led to some jobs like harvesting, pruning, bagging and propping on the plantation being exclusively for men since women's productivity in these type of operations which are considered heavy are thought to be low. Women on the other hand are concentrated in the supposedly light work like deleafing, deflowering and snail picking. This confirms the Managing Director's position that work on banana plantation demands a lot of physical strength. Thus, majority of those working on the plantation both men and women are within the energetic age group of 20-30 years. The concentration of women in the packing house performing operations that demand a lot of care, confirms the fact that the ideology of 'nimble fingers' has also contributed to the gender division of work on the plantation. These ideologies have been found to have no objective base because the sexual division of labour as discussed in this paper is not universal. There are variations from one region to another and from one plantation crop to another. However, ideology has played a big role in the gender distribution of work in Tiko banana plantation.

Chapter IV

The impact of ideology on gender and work and resource distribution in Tiko banana project.

4.1 Introduction

Ideologies of gender and work distribution in agriculture have led to the concentration of women in some operations on the plantations though variation exist from one region of the world to another. Concentration is concerned with the sex composition of workforce in an occupation or set of occupations. Whereas segregation refers to the separation of the two sexes across occupations, concentration refers to the representation of one sex within occupations. Usually it is measured as the percentage of workers in an occupation who are women (Siltanen et al 1995). In this chapter I will discuss the impact of ideology on gender and work distribution on male and female workers in Tiko banana project. I will begin with employment i.e. the type of persons or gender to be employed, who hold what post of responsibility and why and who earns what. There might not be an explicit employment policy or a written document for Tiko banana project but implicitly the impact of ideology on gender and work distribution is seen in this area.

4.2 Employment

Workers in Tiko banana project are divided into permanent and non-permanent labour. According to the Project manager, 1989 workers were permanent workers while 747 were non-permanent workers. Less than 30 % percent of the non-permanent workers were women. Employment is still done massively in Tiko banana project in the case of general labour for both permanent and non-permanent workers. It is a common sight to see a crowd of people standing in front of the Project Managers' office each day waiting to be recruited. In the case of senior staff (categories 7-12) an interview is usually organised. Despite the fact that employment is done massively, one still find that there are very few women who are employed on the plantation. According to the Employees Individual Information Sheet of September 1996, out 2517 workers in categories 1-6, only 516 were women while in categories 7-12 only 8 were women out of 54 workers. To be able to understand this disparity in the employment of men and women in Tiko banana project, it

is important to look at the employment histories on plantations in Cameroon so as to come out with the ideologies surrounding it.

According to different accounts of employment histories on the plantations in Cameroon, female employment was very insignificant or if not absent. Ardener et al (1960) in their research in the 1950s does not even mention the employment rate of women. However, in their ethnic analysis of workers of CDC in the 1950s, they make mention of 28 women employed on the Corporation's Tole Tea Garden of whom 8 were Bakweri. DeLancey (1978) states that Tole tea began to hire women to replant tea fields in the early 1950s. In the 1950s with the introduction of tea plantations, it was not common for women to be employed. In some cases there was outright refusal for women to be recruited by the chiefs of the locality. The reason was that employing women on the estate would challenge the 'traditional' male control over women's productive and reproductive labour (Konings 1996). This is in line with the ideology that a woman's place is in the home and the man is the breadwinner. The cases of Ndu and Djuttitsa tea estates where men were employed to pluck tea are examples to cite. However, at Tole tea the case was different, women were available for recruitment because people from this area had been more exposed to the western culture than those in the grassfields where culture was still more intact. Because of the strong patriarchal ideology in the grassfields that tend to subordinate women, many women have moved down to the south to escape from this patriarchal subordination. This explains why many women from the grassfields are working at Tole tea estate (Konings 1995a).

It is not clear whether women were part of the labour force on the banana plantations from when the first banana plantation was created in 1907 by Afrikanische Frucht A.G. of Hamburg (AFC) under the Germans and located around the Tiko plain, Fako, in the present South West Province (Fonsah and Chidebelu 1995). Ardener et al (1960) writing about the organisation of work on banana plantations in the CDC do not make mention of any operation carried out by women. Ardener et al (1960) and Houtkamp (1996) reports that in Cameroon under the Germans during the inter-war period, banana bunches were

ready for transport just 24 hours after they had been cut at the plantations. They explained how the fruits were directly loaded into wagons, which were stationed on branch-lines. After loading, the wagons were pushed to the main line by plantation workers. At the main line the locomotives, picked up the wagons, after which they were taken to Tiko or Victoria port where the banana were loaded into ships for export. Ardener et al states that up to 1955 the shipment of bananas was in the hands of specialist agency and transport section, which employed on the average something over 1000 men.

When one looks at these historical accounts and operations mentioned and considering that neither Ardener et al nor Houtkamp makes mention of the presence of women on the plantations, then it can be concluded that women were not employed on banana plantations at this period. What then could have been the reasons? In as much as socio-cultural reasons could have contributed to women not being employed, in my opinion I would want to think that banana plantations began employing women with the introduction of packing stations on the plantations. The ideology of women having 'nimble fingers' could have been a major reason for this sexual division of labour on the plantation. The argument by management could be that packing banana needs a lot of care since bruised banana is priced low on the world market and women are good at this. Since it had been proven on tea plantations elsewhere. On the other hand it could be argued that women were not employed because the harvesting of bananas, pushing of the wagons, and loading of the banana into the ship were considered heavy and tedious for women to do or women shunned banana plantations. This shows that the ideology of physical strength also could have been a reason for women not being employed.

In Tiko banana project, physical strength still remains a strong factor in determining who to employ. In 1996, the Managing Director of Tiko banana project told this researcher that physical strength is an important factor in considering who to employ for general labour on the plantation. This is reflected in the age groupings of those employed on the plantation. Those between the ages of 20-30 years form the majority on the plantation i.e. about 68 % and 63 % for men and women respectively. Nkoli and Fonsah (1993) states

that, in banana plantations, the employment policy is the preference of young and single women. This prejudice is based on the anticipated higher cost of providing facilities for married and older women, which affect profits. Furthermore, young and single women are perceived to represent 'fresh and diligent labour' thus confirming the ideology of physical strength. Single women make up 91.3 % of the female population of Tiko banana project. On the other hand there is a preference for married men on the grounds that family commitment will make them stable. This thinking is based on the ideology of male breadwinner but the management forgets to see that single women also have children whom they look after.

4.3 Posts of responsibilities

Labour force on the banana plantation according to Nkoli and Fonsah (1993) can be classified into four main headings: management staff, supervisory staff, some skilled positions and general labour. As mentioned already, the management staff are those who have a bachelors degree or a diploma from a trade school and several years of experience and a proven track record of excellent output. They fall between categories 10-12 and do occupy the following posts: senior field assistants, farm administrators and estate managers. The supervisory staff are those who hold a diploma or high school graduates. They are found in categories 7-9 and can hold the posts of junior field assistants and field assistants. There are some skilled positions on the plantation, which are: overseers, headmen/women, statisticians and foremen. Their educational background varies from primary school to secondary and occasionally high school and they belong to categories 3-6. General labour is between categories one and two.

Table 6: Positions occupy by workers by sex

Positions	Men	Women	Total
Senior overseer	6	0	6
Overseer	21	0	21
Junior overseer	11	7	18
Packing station overseer	2	0	2
Foreman	12	0	12
Junior foreman	7	0	7
Headman/woman	64	2	66
Statisticians	11	7	18
Storekeeper	7	3	10
Farm clerks	7	0	7
Pay roll clerk	0	1	1
Store inventory clerk	4	0	4
Fruit quality inspector	6	1	7
Box quality inspector	8	0	8
Chief security	1	0	1
Assistant chief security	2	0	2
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Total	169	21	190

Source: Computer from the Employees Individual Information Sheet, September 1996.

Out of 190 posts on the field as shown on Table 5, 169 were occupied by men and only 21 positions were occupied by women. Many women were junior overseers (7) and statisticians (7) as against 11 junior overseers and 11 statisticians for men. No woman was an overseer. Sixty-four men were headmen while only two women were headwomen. Headmen/women are those who directly supervise work on the field. They are in charge of a labour gang composed of 10-25 members usually. As shown by the figures, they were more headmen than headwomen. In field operations like material preparation and deleafing where women were concentrated men were still found as headmen. In the packing stations where women are concentrated, one would have thought that women would occupy many posts of responsibilities. Instead men were still found as fruit quality inspectors, box quality inspectors and packing house overseers. Only one woman was a fruit quality inspector. It is worth noting that the positions found on Table 5 are only occupied by those in categories 1-6. Among the workers in categories 7-12, only one

woman was a supervisory staff (field assistant) while the rest of the supervisory and management positions went to men. The Managing Director, Project manager, Project administrative officer and all the Farm administrators were men. The assistant Project Administrative Officer was a woman.

When I questioned why there was this large gap between men and women in terms of the positions they occupy in 1996, the Project Manager said there are some criteria, which are taken into consideration for the promotion of workers to positions of authority. They are accuracy at work, power of taking responsibilities from start to finish, power of supervision, organisational abilities, reliability, neatness and conduct. A board sits to decide on those to be promoted. The board consists of the General Manager of DMC, Managing Director, Project Manager, Project Administrative Officer and his assistant (a woman). Men dominated the board and in a situation of this nature male chauvinism can influence the outcome of the board in favour of men.

In addition to the criteria, the Project Manager said, more men are usually promoted than women are because men have the physical strength to do field work and women lack the skills. Here, again the ideology of physical strength is coming up to determine the distribution of positions between men and women. Rutten (1982) gives an account on the importance of physical strength on the sugar plantation in the Philippines where women themselves explained that supervisory jobs are probably better suited for men, since it may call for physical strength in case of disputes and men are stronger than women are. Other reasons advanced by management were that women had a relative less educational qualification for supervisory positions than men did but this is not true. Women were equally as qualified as men according to figures for the level of education mentioned in chapter three for those in categories one to six. Cultural factors were also advanced as reasons for the differences in terms of posts occupied by men and women on the plantation. It was feared that in a male dominated society, men would not be willing to work under female authority (Nkoli and Fonsah 1993). The dual and segregated labour market theories attempt an explanation to the concentration of women in the lower rungs

(categories one and two) on the plantation as already discussed in chapter two. Women are found in the secondary market with low wages and few opportunities for promotion. However, they do not explain why women are found in the secondary market. Gender role socialisation theory on its part argues that men occupy more positions of authority than women because gender role socialisation may encourage men to expect a sexual division of labour at work that reserve for them certain jobs, an inside track on promotions, a position of authority, and higher pay for their work. Because men are decision-makers, they enforce these expectations (Reskin and Padavic 1994). In Tiko banana project all those in management and supervisory positions were all men but for one woman which suggest that male chauvinism as well as the ideology of physical strength could have contributed to distribution of positions in Tiko banana project between men and women

4.4 Wage differentials

The discussion of wages is very important as it lays bare the material impact of the ideology governing women's labour on plantations. Looking at the history of plantation agriculture, women have always been paid lower wages because women's paid labour was always considered a supplementary activity. For example from the inception of indentureship system in Trinidad and Tobago, women were paid lower wages than men even in cases where men and women did the same job as men, the differences in wages were justified by stating that it was 'because it was decided that they are unable to do a full task' (Rhoda 1998). Patriarchal ideology also contributed to wage differentials on Jamaican plantations. Wage differentials was made part of the indenture contract before tasks were being allocated. Women's work was not valued as that of men hence they received low wages. For example, in Malawi women were paid low wages for reasons already discussed in chapter two (Vaughan and Chipande 1986). In the Philippine tasks which were exclusively men's like cutting, loading and hauling on sugar cane plantation, are considered the most onerous tasks and are also highest paid. Besides, the concept of 'breadwinner' has also contributed to women receiving low wages. Women's income is defined as supplementary to that of the so-called breadwinner.

Table 7: Wage category of plantation workers by sex and an average wage rate for each category per hour.

Category	Average Rate/hour	Sex		Frequency	Percentage
		Men	Women		
1	124 FCFA	1103	352	1455	57.8
2	131 FCFA	530	137	667	26.5
3	143 FCFA	178	13	191	7.6
4	208 FCFA	133	7	140	5.6
5	296 FCFA	46	5	51	2.0
6	396 FCFA	10	2	12	0.5
Total		2000	516	2516	100

Source: Computed from the Employees Individual Information Sheet. September 1996.

Generally wages on the Tiko banana project are low. 98 % of the workers are found in categories 1 - 6 while the 2 % are in categories 7-12. Eighty four percent of the workers in categories 1 - 6 whose names were registered on the Employees Individual Information sheet of September 1996 earned an average wage of 124.6 FCFA and 131.9 FCFA per hour as shown on Table 6, for categories one and two respectively. On average, on a normal working day of eight hours, a category one worker earns 996.8 FCFA (US \$1.9) with a monthly wage of 23,923 FCFA (US \$47.9) while a category two worker earns 1,055 FCFA (US \$ 2.1) with a monthly wage of 25,325 FCFA (US \$ 50.7). No worker earned up to US \$ 1 an hour. About 95 % of the women were in categories one and two as against 82 % for the men. The average wage of workers in categories 1 - 6 was 127.9 FCFA for women and 144.9 FCFA for men. This tells us that a majority of workers on the plantation earn very low wages. For details of wage rates for each category (1 – 6) see appendix 1

Men and women in Cameroon are entitled by law to the same remuneration for the same type of work, irrespective of their origin, sex, age, status and religion according to the Cameroon Labour Code (Law No. 92-007 of 14th August 1992). However, men on the average earn more income than women do in Tiko banana project. Two reasons can be advanced for this. Firstly, only men were found to be doing work that required some

skills like electricians, mechanics, plumbing, drivers and irrigation operators among others. These operations went with higher categories and consequently higher wages. Secondly, unlike in Malawi where overtime pay applies only to those tasks which are usually assigned to men (Vaughan and Chipande 1986), in Tiko banana project, harvesting which is exclusively done by men has a higher premium or incentive than in the packing station where women are concentrated. For every bunch of banana harvested after normal working hours, an incentive of 40 FCFA is paid while a box of banana packed is 33 FCFA shared among the workers in the packing house. Considering that the packing house usually has about a hundred workers as against five workers in a gang of harvesters, this amount is very small. No clear explanation was given for this disparity in incentives. However, it could be the perception the authorities have about these two operations. Harvesting banana is considered heavy and tedious while packing bananas is light work and does not demand physical strength. Besides, the two reasons, the limited number of women in positions of authority which goes along with a change in category and a consequent change in wage could be a contributing factor to the difference in income between men and women. So we see how sexual division of labour which has come about as a result of some ideologies has led to income differences on the plantation.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show that the role ideology has played in gender distribution of work in plantation agriculture, has not only led to the concentration of women in certain activities but has also had an impact on employment, posts of responsibilities and the income earned by men and women. Very few women are employed on Tiko banana project as compared to men because it is believed that women do not have the strength to do heavy and tedious work, which characterise banana plantations. The ideology of physical strength has not only had an impact on employment but has also affected the number of women in position of authority and the income they earn. Among those in categories 1 – 6, only 21 women held any position of authority as against 169 for men. Wage differentials do not exist in Cameroon. However, the higher incentives on work done exclusively by men like harvesting, have affected incomes

between men and women. The ideologies of male breadwinner, women's productivity is low and patriarchal ideologies in conjunction with the ideology of physical strength have had an impact on women on the plantation in the distribution of material benefits.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to bring out the concepts i.e. gender, myths and plantations. Gender is a social construct of feminism and masculinity. Gender is an important variable upon which society bases its organisation of work. Gender distribution of work in agriculture displays a common feature all over the world though they might be variations in some areas. Women's work are considered to be 'lighter' than men's work, physically undemanding, often repetitive and requires dexterity rather than skill and usually indoors. On the other hand, men's work is characterised by strength and physicality, heavy, and requires skill and training. It is frequently highly technical, based on mechanical knowledge, at the highest level; it requires characteristics of creativity, innovation, intelligence, responsibility, authority and power (Bradley 1989). This sexual division of labour has no objective foundation but it depends on some myths that tend to give credence to it.

The variations that exist in different regions question the gender distribution of work because in one area work that is considered male is done by women and vice versa. For example, women in St Lucia (Momsen 1991) do loading of banana that is considered a male task on banana plantations in Cameroon. Hence, it becomes difficult to come out with a clear reason for this gender division of labour other than saying it is based on some myths. The origin of sexual division of labour is still debatable. Social scientists see the origin in capitalism, socio-cultural factors and genetic and biological differences. Feminists argue that sexual division of labour is a social construct to oppress and subordinate women and not a biological destiny. Sexual division of labour therefore means this asymmetric, hierarchical and exploitative relationship and not a simple division of tasks between equal partners.

This paper delves into and explains some of those myths that have contributed to sexual division of labour in plantation agriculture. They are, women are a weaker sex or they

lack the physical strength, the myth of male breadwinner, the woman's place is in the home, the myth of 'nimble finger', women are a cheap source of labour, women are docile and women's productivity is low. In order to find out if the sexual division of labour is universal on plantations all over the world, a comparative analyses has been made. I have used three plantation crops (tea, sugar cane and banana) as a framework, since the type of crops planted determines which gender is employed.

In fact variations do exist in who does what on the plantation from one region to another. These variations suggest that it is not the characteristics of jobs that demand attributes or skills that are associated with supposedly masculine or feminine traits, but rather it seems that who does a job depends on how it is socially constructed, valued and concomitantly rewarded. This has had an implication on women in that they are concentrated in certain jobs on the plantation (packing house) and positions at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, thus women earn less than men (McDowell 1999).

Three theories have been used in this paper to explain the sexual division of labour that exist on the plantations across the world. They include human capital theory, dual and segregated labour markets theory and gender-role socialisation theory. These theories tend to explain why men and women perform different tasks and earn different wages and to find reasons for the sexual division of labour on the plantations. However, gender role socialisation theory goes further more than the human capital theory and dual and segregated markets theory to look at the gender aspect of the labour market.

Ideology has played a major role in the sexual division of labour on the plantation. Ideology functions as structure of assumptions which form the imaginative world of groups. According to Marx, ideology naturalises, historicizes and it eternalises. The ideology of gender is manifested as ideology familialism, involving the assignment of appropriate roles for women and men within the household and outsides of it. It decides the type of jobs, the grade of work, and the wages workers earn. Work and who does it is based on the perception of abilities of men and women (Eviota 1992). In Cameroon

ideologies like women are not strong enough to do heavy work, women cannot climb an oil palm trees, women are naturally endowed with the capacity to do farm work especially in the grassfields of Cameroon, and patriarchal ideologies have contributed to sexual division of labour agriculture which has been translated to plantation agriculture. These ideologies now look natural, since people have eternalised them. These ideologies alongside the ideology of men being the breadwinner, and women's productivity is low among others have contributed to a sexual division of labour on the plantation which put women at a disadvantage position. But the ideology that women have 'nimble fingers' has contributed to the high employment rate of women at Tole tea and places like Asia except Ndu and Njuttitsa tea estates Cameroon where patriarchal ideology was so strong that men are tea pluckers instead of women.

In chapters three and four, I have brought out how ideology has contributed to sexual division of labour in Tiko banana project and the impact it has had on the incomes and benefits of men and women in terms of who to employ, who holds which position of authority and who earns what. The ideology that a man is stronger than a woman has contributed more than any other ideology on Tiko banana project to sexual division of labour. According to the Managing Director banana production demands a lot of physical strength. So physical strength is a very important determining factor for who works on the plantation. Since physical strength goes with age, age is a determining factor for both male and female participation on the plantation. This explains the high percentage of the youthful population of less than 30 years old on the plantation for both men and women. The percentage is very high for women about 71 while for men it is 64. This accounts for the very high percentage of single people (91% for women and 79% for men) on the plantation. Besides, management's preference for young and single women so as to avoid the high cost of providing facilities for married women, people of this age group are those who have just left school or still intending to get married.

On the field men were found to be doing 'heavy' work like harvesting, pruning, replanting, and bagging and propping while both men and women did deleafing,

deflowering, input application and snail picking which were considered 'light' work. In the packing house women were found as packers, weighers and selectors which are jobs that need a lot of care and men were doing jobs that were considered heavy like box forming, switching banana bunches on cable ways as they enter the packing house and loading of banana into trucks to be taken to the Douala port for export. In the administration only one woman had a supervisory position. This could be explained by the patriarchal ideology, the assumption that women lack the skills and male chauvinism could also be a reason since all the decision – makers who sit to select workers for promotion were men. The medical field exhibited one of those sexist stereotypes society expects from women i.e. nurturing and caring. Out of the nine medical workers only two were men.

As mentioned earlier, the ideology of men being stronger than women, patriarchal ideology and the type of crop planted on the plantation determines who and what gender to be employed. Looking at the history of banana plantation in Cameroon, it is clear that women were not part of the plantation from the inception of banana plantation in 1907 because of the ideology of physical strength. Women only became part of the banana plantations with the introduction of packing stations on the plantations. Female employment still remains low on the Tiko banana plantation. As at September 1996, women made up only about 20% of the workers of Tiko banana project. Patriarchal ideology, lack of skill, women's reproductive role which is reflected in the division of labour (packing house and the medical section) in Tiko banana project and physical strength, has contributed more to women occupying few positions of authority in Tiko banana plantation. Out of 190 posts of responsibility, women had only 21. It was feared that in a male dominated society, men would not be willing to work under female authority. Besides, men occupied all the position of decision-making on the plantation. So in case of promotion, male chauvinism could work in favour of men. These ideologies have also had an impact on the income earned by men and women on the plantation. Women's works are not valued as that of men. Hence, incentives paid for work done by men is higher than that of work done by women. This on the average brings

in differences between incomes earned by men and that earned by women. For example, the incentive for harvesting that is done by men is more than that of the packing house where women are concentrated. In summary, sexual division of labour is not only a differentiation of tasks; it is a differentiation of worth, status and power on the plantation.

5.2 Recommendations

Issues of gender distribution of work have always raised a lot of debate as we have seen so far. So it becomes difficult to make recommendations on an issue like sexual division of labour in plantation agriculture and agriculture in general. The question here is recommendations to whom and for whom. If we look at it from the part of the employer especially at a time when plantations in Cameroon are being privatised, it becomes difficult to recommend to an employer to employ more women if he or she holds the ideologies mentioned in this paper. With profit maximisation being the major goal of the employer and if he or she sees women as not being able to provide the needed profits, women will not be employed. However, some recommendations can still be made:

- (1) The International Labour Organisation should institute a percentage for which women are supposed to be represented in each operation on the plantation. This will reinforce the resolution taken at its 71st (1985) session on equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women in employment (ILO 1988). This will do away with the indirect discrimination women suffer on the plantation because of some archaic attitudes and stereotypes as regards the distribution of “male” and “female” tasks in agriculture and plantation agriculture in particular.
- (2) Women who are already working on the plantations should take this opportunity to prove that they have enormous potentials and women are capable of performing any task on the plantation. The variation in the tasks that are performed by women in different regions of the world on plantation as seen in this paper is a clear proof of this.
- (3) More research for the advancement of equal opportunities at work on plantations should be done; attention must focus on the barriers, both structural and cultural, which impede women’s progress on the plantation. These barriers include: traditional

stereotypes of women which hinder women's vertical progress within the plantations; general attitudes towards the rights and roles of women in society; the lack of adequate child care facilities for women on the plantation; and the various structural devices which contrive to make plantations women unfriendly. If these barriers are removed more women will participate in plantation agriculture thereby bridging the gender gap that exist between men and women.

- (4) The role of women's organisations (FIDA, ACAFEJ, and Women's cultural groupings among others) and trade unions are encouraged to take up gender awareness campaigns so as to change attitudes (myths and ideologies) in the society that tend to work against women in agriculture and plantation agriculture in particular.
- (5) Men should be encouraged and educated to take up household responsibilities. This will enable women to better participate in paid work on plantations. This can be done through radio programmes and pamphlets organised by the Ministry of women's affairs. This is of vital importance especially at a time when many men are loosing their jobs because of the structural adjustment programme in Cameroon and more women are becoming breadwinners.

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Appendix I

Wage rates per hour for each wage category

Category	Grade	Wage/hour (FCFA)
ONE	1 E	122.87
	1 F	124.17
	1 G	126.77
TWO	2 A	124.17
	2 B	128.42
	2 C	128.70
	2 D	130.95
	2 E	133.50
	2 F	135.50
	2 G	144.35
THREE	3 A	125.88
	3 B	131.65
	3 C	137.45
	3 D	143.25
	3 E	149.05
	3 F	154.85
	3 G	160.67
FOUR	4 A	145.81
	4 B	166.56
	4 C	187.26
	4 D	207.93
	4 E	228.66
	4 F	249.41
	4 G	270.11
FIVE	5 A	235.65
	5 B	255.17
	5 C	276.10
	5 D	296.32
	5 E	316.52
	5 F	336.95
	5 G	356.95
SIX	6 A	327.04
	6 B	346.04
	6 C	365.10
	6 D	385.56
	6 E	405.04
	6 F	425.04
	6 G	483.11

Source: Compiled from the Tiko Banana Project Employees Individual Information Sheet.
September 1996.