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**Exploring the contributions of the Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW) program to
rural women in Tano South Municipality.**

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

CF	-	Community Facilitator
CFMT	-	Community Facility Management Team
GAD	-	Gender and Development
GPSNP	-	Ghana Productive Safety Net Program
GSOP	-	Ghana Social Opportunities Program
LIPW	-	Labour Intensive Public Works Program
MPCU	-	Municipal Planning Coordinating Unit
MTDP	-	Medium Term Development Plan
NCO	-	National Coordinating Office
NSC	-	National Steering Committee
MLGDRD	-	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
RPCU	-	Regional Planning Coordinating Unit
TSMA	-	Tano South Municipal Assembly
WID	-	Women in Development
ZCO	-	Zonal Coordinating Office

Abstract

The research examines the contributions of the Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW) program to rural women in the Tano South Municipality of Ghana by utilizing the Longwe Women Empowerment Framework as an analytical lens. The research was aimed at assessing the

implementation strategies, explore experiences of participating rural women, as well as provide possible recommendation for enhancement of the program.

The study adopted a qualitative approach employing semi structured interviews with purposively sampled participants comprising of both program implementers and women beneficiaries of the LIPW program.

Findings of the study revealed that the LIPW program contributed positively to the welfare and economic wellbeing of women in rural areas in Tano South through the provision of employment opportunities and skill development training. Study participants reported an improvement in material wellbeing, increased self confidence and a shift in their socio cultural perspective demonstrating progress in the Welfare, Access and Conscientization levels of the Longwe Women Empowerment Framework. The research findings however revealed some challenges such as, low remuneration, limited participation in decision making processes and physical demands of work hindering deeper levels of empowerment particularly in the aspects of control. The research highlights the need for enhanced training that will women into long term empowerment, adequate remuneration and increased involvement of women particularly women in rural settings involved in government interventions in program design and implementation to achieve sustainable empowerment. Findings recommend addressing identified gaps can increase the positive contributions of the program, fostering increased gender equality and significant gender parity and long term empowerment.

Relevance to Development Studies

This study explores the contributions of the Labour Intensive public works program and its effects on rural women in Ghana. The paper contributes to existing literature on government interventions and its implications on vulnerable groups particularly women in remote areas and the need for

integrating the needs and concerns of women in government policy and program interventions. The paper explores the implementation strategies, experiences of participating rural women and suggestions for further advancement of the program and other future interventions.

The study highlights the LIPW activities women beneficiaries are engaged in, while investigating the various dimensions of rural women empowerment using the Longwe women empowerment framework in empowering rural women through the LIPW activities in the Tano South Municipality to inform development practitioners and Government authorities the inclusion of women concerns and needs in program design and implementation for improved livelihoods and development outcomes. The outcome of the study is to further strengthen the empowerment of rural women to help reduce their socioeconomic challenges in the rural setting and to help to reduce poverty in the Country to enable the Country achieve its Sustainable Development Goal 5 and 6 commitment.

Key words: Labour Intensive Public Works, rural development, poverty, rural women, income generating opportunities, unskilled labour, government interventions, Longwe framework.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Background

Rural women account for 25 percent (%) of the world's population, and in Africa, over 50 percent (%) of women live in rural areas, contributing significantly to the continent's food systems (UN Women, 2023).

However, women in rural communities worldwide often face significant socio-economic challenges, including limited access to employment opportunities, productive resources, and limited inclusion in decision-making process. This has raised a lot of concerns and gained prominence on global agenda in the last few decades. All around the world, issues regarding women are the subject matter of meetings, conferences and on other major platforms.

In Ghana, rural women are confronted with significant challenges due to their marginalized socio-economic positions (Arthur & Busia, 2021). This has further worsened their exposure to poverty and food insecurity. According to Amu (2005), women in rural communities in Ghana constitute a significant portion of the agriculture labour force however, they continue to be marginalized and their contribution to the rural economy is limited to their households and lower ranks of socio-economic life owing to their limited access to land ownership, funding options, and other economic opportunities. This limits their productivity and socio-economic empowerment that could enhance their capacity and full participation in the society.

In response to these challenges, there has been a proliferation of various interventions by Governments, through policies, programs and projects designed to particularly support women in these rural communities to achieve self-sufficiency in all aspects of their lives, which will enable them participate effectively in society and in decision-making processes (Amu, 2005). Notable among these programs is the Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW) which has the potential to curb these barriers by providing women with income-generating opportunities, skills development, and increased social capital (Doss, 2013).

The LIPW program were initiatives implemented in developing countries including the Expanded Public Work Program in South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) in Rwanda, the Ghana Social Opportunities program (GSOP) in Ghana and the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in Ethiopia (Gehrke et al., 2015). The operational mode of the LIPW program features a blend of machines as well as labour, where labour utilizes basic hand tools and light plant, rather than usage

of heavy machines especially in predominantly farming areas where economic viability is non-existent (Eshun, 2020).

Labour-intensive public works programs have emerged as a prominent strategy for poverty reduction and local development in many developing countries (World Bank, 2016). These programs aim to provide temporary employment opportunities to vulnerable populations, including women, while simultaneously addressing critical infrastructure needs in communities (Duflo, 2012).

Government of Ghana in 2010 launched its version of the LIPW program with a budget allocation of \$56 million of the Country's revenue for the implementation of the program in 60 districts and municipalities within the country classified as relatively poor (Eshun, 2020). The program was designed as a social protection program to alleviate poverty and stimulate local development in these districts and municipalities through provision of livelihood opportunities to targeted rural residents. In 2020, the program was remodeled under the Ghana Productive Safety Net Program to extend employment opportunities to poor unskilled labour with unequal access to such opportunities in rural settings while maintaining community infrastructure to improve their productivity and also respond to climate change impacts to promote community development (MLGRD, 2020). The LIPW program activities include the rehabilitation of feeder and access roads, construction of small dams and dugouts and forest restoration intervention (ibid, 2020). Rehabilitating and maintenance of feeder roads focuses on connecting communities in remote areas to town centers to promote market access. Whereas rehabilitation of small dams is essential in improving irrigation for agricultural activities especially during prolonged dry season, the reforestation interventions focusses on the cultivation of cash crops and trees on degraded lands within the community to minimize the impact of climate change and support biodiversity conservation (MLGRD, 2020).

While some studies suggest positive outcomes of participation of women in public works programs, such as increased household income and improved social status (Devereux & Solomon, 2006), others highlight challenges associated with gender disparities in wages, resources access, and decision-making power within these programs (Ravallion & Wodon, 2000). Therefore, this study would delve into LIPWs introduced in Ghana specifically the Tano south municipality to ascertain its effects on participating women remote communities in the area.

1.1 Problem Statement

The total number of women in Ghana has increased significantly in recent years (GSS, 2021). The country's development plan has both opportunities and challenges as a result of this demographic transformation, especially with regard to reducing poverty. Numerous obstacles, including restricted access to economic opportunities, education and healthcare, impede the socioeconomic empowerment of women in Ghana. Systemic injustices and conventional gender norms and roles make these problems worse. To ensure sustainable development and social fairness, a comprehensive strategy for reducing poverty that explicitly targets women is vital (Caulker et al., 2023).

According to Anyidoho and Manuh (2010), Ghana's socioeconomic growth has made some progress, but the country still faces severe poverty, especially among women. The growing number of women in the population calls for focused approaches to reduce poverty and advance gender parity. The special difficulties that women encounter have not been adequately addressed by current initiatives, which has led to gender differences in income, employment, and access to basic services that continue to exist. To avert this situation and close the yawning gap between men and women, successive governments have introduced a number of gender targeted programs that is focused on reducing poverty among women and also to empowering them as key members of Ghanaian household.

Key among these programs is the LIPW which was earmarked for execution in 80 poorest districts and municipalities in Ghana as classified by Ghana Living Standards survey (GLSS 7) in 2019, to reduce poverty among poor households in rural settings and stimulate local development. The current design of the Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) program however inadequately addresses gender-specific barriers, particularly those affecting women in rural communities including limited access to education, limited involvement in decision making processes, childcare support and unequal access to productive resources. This impedes the ability of the program to effectively empower women through the provision of an avenue to drive systematic transformative change (Sakketa and von Braun, 2019). The research seeks to understand the program's contribution to rural women, considering ongoing efforts to promote gender inequality and reduce poverty among women in rural areas who still face socio-economic barriers that limit their full involvement in development processes.

Hence, the need for context-specific research to explore the effects of the program on women in remote communities in Tano South Municipality taking into account their socio-cultural and economic factors.

1.2 Research objectives

Main Objective: To explore the effects of the LIPW program on rural women in the Tano South Municipality?

Specific objectives

1. To identify the implementation strategies adopted under the LIPW program.
2. To examine the experiences of participating rural women on the LIPW program.
3. To suggest recommendations that will enhance future programs to empower vulnerable women in rural communities.

1.3 Research questions

Main Research Question: How has the Labour Intensive Public Works program (LIPW) contributed to the socio-economic empowerment of participating rural women in Tano South Municipality?

Specific Questions

1. What are the implementation strategies adopted under the LIPW program?
2. What are the experiences of participating rural women in the LIPW program?
3. What recommendations will enhance the design of future programs to empower vulnerable women in rural communities?

1.4 Justification and Relevance of the Study

The researcher hopes that the findings of the study will offer valuable understanding into the contributions of the LIPW program and its effects on rural women in the Tano South Municipality. Outlining perspectives of participating women about the implementation processes, socio-economic benefits, challenges of the program, will serve as a good source of recommendation to stakeholders to make informed decisions in enhancing the implementation of the program or similar interventions in rural settings.

Also the research will contribute to existing literature on the adoption of the labour intensive methods in creating community assets in Ghana and serve as point of reference for future researches in labour intensive public works as avenues for rural development strategies in Ghana and beyond. The findings of the study will provide justification for replication of the program in similar rural settings or the call for additional interventions to further enhance the lot of rural women in the Tano South Municipality.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

According to Akanle et al (2020:106), the limitation of research work cannot be predetermined until the research work is underway, they however emphasized that, researchers cannot entirely be certain of occurrences that would restrict the scope of their study. Similarly, Simon and Goes argues that, limitations are occurrences and issues in a study which are beyond the control of the researcher (2013, p.1). They further argue that limitations can influence how far a researcher can pursue their study which can ultimately affect the research outcome (Simon and Goes, 2013, p.1). By strategically tackling such occurrences, a researcher is able to positively influence the outcome of a research though limitation may occur (Akanle et al., 2020, p.110).

During the course of the research work there were some limitations that the researcher encountered, notable among them were poor internet connection, financial and time constraint. The researcher employed a research assistant to facilitate the interview set up, poor connections in one of the communities prolonged the interview process which resulted in interview fatigue. But due to the strong research background of the assistant, he stepped in to ensure a smooth interview process in the community. Also, due to the wet season, some of the initial respondents were not readily available at the appointed times as they were busy on their farms preparing for planting. Those the researcher could contact referred to other beneficiaries of the program.

Also, due to resource constraint (financial and time) the study could not allow the full participation of all beneficiaries. The research was restricted to only selected women beneficiaries in LIPW program Communities which does not reflect the overall contribution to participants of the broader program. The study also focused on one study area that is Tano South District which is one out of 80 poorest participating districts of the program in Ghana hence, conclusion based on findings cannot be generalized. However, the study highlights lessons learned which may be applicable in other settings of the program (O'Leary, 2017).

1.6 Organization of the Study

The research has been structured into five chapters. Chapter two delves into related scholarly literatures and concepts relevant to the study. This was imperative in understanding related works of scholars and possible gaps that could be filled to add to knowledge. The third chapter covers the overview of the LIPW, methodology employed for the study, the research area, selection procedure, data collection method as well as data processing and analysis. The fourth chapter details key findings and discussions based on the study objectives. The last chapter covers the conclusion of the research and recommendations for improved development outcomes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

Labour Intensive public works programs (LIPW) are a significant tool for addressing unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment especially in remote areas in developing countries. These programs typically involve infrastructure projects such as road construction, environmental conservation and other community services that require a large labour force. The literature review explores the multidimensional effects of the LIPW programs with a particular focus on rural women and gendered outcomes of such initiatives.

The literature review examines the overview of the program across the world and its significance in rural development, previous studies on LIPW programs and also theoretical underpinnings in understanding the program and its application.

2.1 Overview of the Labour Intensive Public Works

The LIPW programs are development interventions designed to offer temporary employment to disadvantaged and vulnerable population especially in remote areas. These programs aims at building public assets such as small dams, irrigation systems, community roads, climate change mitigation schemes while simultaneously providing income sources to beneficiaries. Across the world, the LIPW program had been used as a strategy to reduce unemployment particularly after disasters or during economic downturns. According to Sakketa and Joachim (2019), numerous African Countries such as Nigeria, South Sudan, Senegal, and Uganda are actively engaged in labour intensive programs. These programs serve dual purposes by providing support system for the vulnerable population while enhancing infrastructure (McCord, 2012).

The LIPW in Ghana is a vital feature of the Ghana Social Opportunities project (GSOP), focused on promoting employment opportunities and enhancing social protection. The GSOP was aimed at reducing vulnerability and poverty through of temporary employment in public works with particular emphasis on enhancing the quality of lives of communities in rural areas (Parikh et al, 2019). Holmes and Jones (2013) asserts that the program is especially essential in rural communities where their livelihoods are unstable and heavily dependent on seasonal agriculture. An essential aspect of the program is to decrease food insecurity, enhance essential infrastructure and build participants' skills through targeted skill trainings.

Notwithstanding efforts made by the program, several questions have emerged concerning the accessibility, the implementation and its effects on rural women. Most labour intensive programs

according to Antonopoulos (2007), focuses mainly on male headed households while leaving out women who are unemployed in homes where men are the primary earners from participating.

Kabeer (2008) affirms this assertion by indicating, that women participated in labour intensive programs only if they were among the poor with no landed resource. This situation according to Dejardin (1996), is partly due to the limited involvement of women in decisions that revolves around them and supports their interest. The research therefore focuses on discussions regarding the strategies of implementation, outcomes of participation of rural women and possible suggestions to advance programs targeting the empowerment of vulnerable groups in rural areas.

2.1.1 Prior Research on LIPW Programs

Prior studies have thoroughly explored the role of the LIPW programs and have widely been recognized for their potential to enhance the economic and social empowerment of rural poor women. Research has established the impacts of the LIPW programs highlighting their benefits and challenges associated with their implementation. This session reviews prior researches on the contributions and challenges of LIPW programs for women in rural communities.

2.1.2 Economic Empowerment

One significant contribution of the LIPW program to women is their economic empowerment. The LIPW programs offer rural women with immediate although temporary income sources which can considerably improve their independence and financial stability (Eshun et al., 2019).

In their research findings, Hoddinott et al., (2013) reported that, Ethiopia Safety Net program made significant progress and revealed that participant's involvement in the LIPW activities improved their livelihood conditions of their respective households. According to them, the involvement of women translated into increase financial stability and household incomes.

The program offered cash and food transfers to participants which supported women, relieve them of immediate economic pressures and supported them to invest in productive ventures and small businesses. Also participating women in the Safety Net program benefited from the programs goal of agricultural productivity (ibid). They further indicated that the Labour Intensive aspect of the program included activities such as soil conservation and water preservation particularly for irrigation purposes which was aimed at improving agricultural lands. As a result, women were able to achieve higher crop yield thereby boosting food security and their household income.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India was particularly impactful in this regard. Dasgupta et al. (2018), studied the contribution of the MGNREGA on rural out migration in West Bengal, India. It was disclosed that the objective of

the program was to provide livelihood opportunities to rural households to decrease its effect on outmigration. They indicated that the program had a remarkably good effect on women as the recorded high female participation which contributed to increased household income and improved women financial stability. The MGNREGA led to increased number of female labour force participation, higher incomes, and financial autonomy for women in rural communities (Khera et al., 2009).

Additionally, the program facilitated the decline in gender wage gap in remote areas as it mandated the equal remuneration for both man and women to promote gender equity in earnings (Afridi et al., 2013).

2.1.3 Social Empowerment and Gender Equality

Beyond economic gains, the LIPW program also contributes significantly to social empowerment and promotes gender equality. By including women in public works, it provides them an avenue to challenge traditional roles that often confine women to domestic spheres. Kabeer (2016), emphasize that the inclusion of rural women in public works does not only enhance their financial autonomy but also challenges conventional gender norms by positioning women in visible economic roles. She indicated that, rural women visible involvement in these programs defies the existing traditional gender norms that restricts women to domestic spheres thus encouraging a shift in community perception about the abilities and capability of women.

In Rwanda, the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP), with several components like public works and financial literacy, empowered rural women through the provision of avenues to participate in community development projects by enhancing their social status and play key roles in public life (Abbot et al., 2017). Their study affirmed that, the Labour Intensive program contributed to the remarkable progress of the Country in attaining its MDG goals, particularly in the aspects of wellbeing emphasizing the substantial improvement in health outcomes of women.

Also McCord (2015), emphasized that, the participation of rural women in LIPW programs let to an increased confidence level and self-esteem. The study revealed that, in South Africa, the Expanded Works Program reportedly enhanced women's network and their ability to partake in decisions within their Communities. In other studies, McCord (2008) provided a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) programs as social protection mechanisms. She highlighted that these programs were able to significantly address poverty among vulnerable population particularly women enabling them to meet immediate household needs. Gehrke et al. (2015) similarly highlighted the importance of the LIPW programs and indicated the programs are particularly significant in contexts of chronic poverty where women

lacks access to livelihood opportunities. According to the study, earnings from the program reduces short term economic vulnerabilities and offer financial buffer against shocks including poor harvest, post-harvest losses, illnesses and unexpected expenditures.

They also indicated that women who participated in LIPW projects often gained elements of skill development and training, which enhances their employability in the long term. Skills acquired ranges from basic construction techniques to more specialized skills like project management. This increased visibility and participation in public domains helped in shifting societal perceptions about women's roles and capabilities within the community.

2.1.4 Improved Livelihoods and Well-Being

LIPW programs also contribute to the general well-being and livelihoods of rural women. The income earned through these programs allows women to meet their immediate needs including food, healthcare, and their children's education. For instance, according Hope (2012) the Kazi Kwa Vijana program, in Kenya which aimed to create employment for youth and women, enabled many female participants to afford better healthcare and educational opportunities for their families. Although the primary focus of the program was on the youth in particular, it extended significant contributions to elderly women within the demographic area. The Kazi Kwa Vijana program also known as (Work for Youth) was beneficial in providing temporary employment to young women, however, the sustainability and long-term impact of such programs were areas of concern (ibid).

The skills training and capacity-building components often included in LIPW programs enhance women's employability in income-generating activities beyond the program's duration. In India, MGNREGA has been associated with improved agricultural productivity as women used their earnings to invest in agricultural inputs and technologies (Dasgupta et al., 2015).

2.1.5 Challenges and Limitations

Despite these positive contributions enumerated, the participation of women in the LIPW program is associated with some challenges and limitations. One major concern is that the employment opportunities offered by the LIPW is in temporary nature. While income gained from the program is beneficial, it does not address economic vulnerabilities confronted by women in chronic poverty in the long term. This according to McCord (2005), raises concerns about the program's sustainability and its effect on livelihood security and the economic enablement of women.

Studies reveals that, physical demands of labour intensive works for women can be particularly challenging especially for pregnant women, nursing women and women with health concerns. Women who are involved in public works also are confronted with dual burden of balancing their participation in the program with their caregiving responsibilities in their respective households.

Holmes et al. (2013), also observes that, these programs occasionally face challenges regarding effectiveness and inclusiveness. For instance, targeting mechanisms may not always reach the most vulnerable women and there can be inconsistencies in the working conditions and wage payments. To ensure LIPW programs are gender sensitive and inclusive requires continuous monitoring and adaptation to effectively tackle the issues.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

The gender and development theory and the Longwe's women empowerment framework are adopted as theoretical lens in understanding the contributions of the LIPW programs to rural women.

2.2.1 Gender and Development (GAD) Theory

This theory was introduced as a response to limitations associated with previous theories and approaches to gender in development in the 1980s, notably Women in Development (WID) concept with its roots in socialist feminism. Women in Development approach aimed to address the specific needs regarding women, emphasizing their roles and ensuring they received equitable access to resources and opportunities (Boserup, 1970). He indicated that although the WID sought to integrate women into prevailing development initiatives, highlighting their economic participation and contribution to development it faced a lot of critic which led to the shift to GAD theory.

Some of these significant critics were; treating women as a uniform group, neglecting the differences among women based on ethnicity, race, class, and other social divisions. Also, the WID was seen as insufficiently addressing the fundamental structural and systemic issues that propagates gender inequalities. It focused more on integrating women into existing structures rather than transforming those structures to be more equitable (ibid).

According to Moser (2012), whereas the WID was aimed at integrating women into prevailing development processes, GAD offered a comprehensive framework by examining the underlying social structures as well as power relations that contribute to gender inequalities. He further mentioned that GAD emphasizes the socially created foundation of differences between women and men and the urgency to transform unequal gender relations. This concept advocates for an approach that is holistic to development which considers the different roles, responsibilities, and needs of both men and women, recognizing that these are shaped by social, economic, and cultural factors. The GAD theory advocated for the institutional changes within social, economic and political systems to eliminate gender inequalities to strengthen the women's position and empower them. In order to attain this transformation, the GAD theory introduced gender mainstreaming as

a key strategy. From a Gender perspective, mainstreaming involves a careful examination of how policies, programs and laws affects both men and women at all levels through the integration of gender needs aimed at equal benefits and ensuring the elimination of gender inequality (ibid).

Application of GAD Theory

Applying GAD theory to the study of LIPW programs involves analyzing how these programs impact gender roles and relations, and whether they contribute to greater gender equality. This approach requires a critical analysis of the implementation and the outcomes of LIPW programs through a gender-sensitive lens.

Implementation Strategies Adopted Under the LIPW Program

From a GAD perspective, the implementation strategies of the LIPW program should address gender-specific barriers and promote equal participation. This involves targeting and inclusion, gender-sensitive work conditions and capacity building. Holmes & Jones (2013) argues that effective LIPW programs should employ inclusive targeting approach to ensure the most vulnerable women, including those who are heads of households or single mothers, benefit from the programs. Osei-Boateng et al., (2011) affirms this assertion, highlighting the need for a careful selection process of beneficiaries and the removal of all barriers to participation. They further indicated that adjusting work conditions to integrate the needs of women through the provision of flexible working hours, child facilities and a conducive and safe environment for women. Furthermore, McCord (2012), highlights the importance of incorporating training and skills development components that will enable women to gain new competencies and improve their employability beyond the program duration making the program more sustainable.

Experiences of Participating Rural Women in the LIPW Program

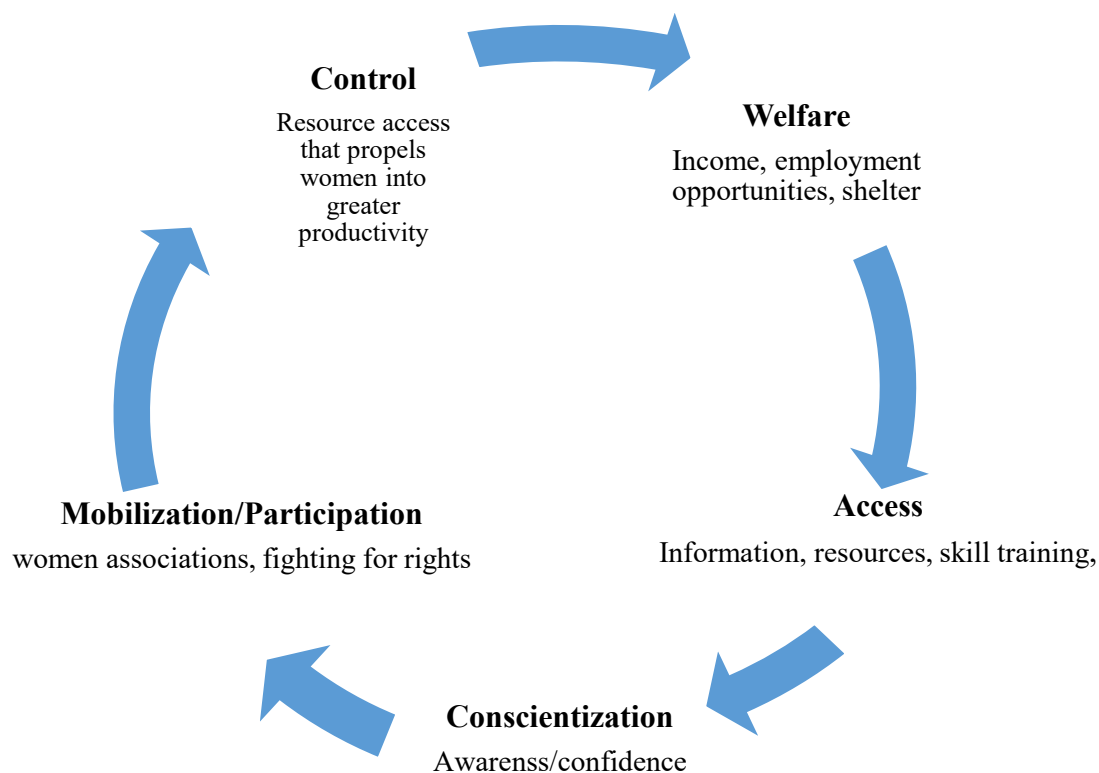
Understanding the lived experiences of rural women in LIPW programs involve examining both the economic and social impacts. In empowering women economically, Antonopoulos (2007) emphasize that the participation in the LIPW program should have impact on women's income levels, financial independence, and economic stability. This includes assessing whether the program provides women with sustainable income sources or merely temporary relief. Nevertheless, participating in LIPW programs extend beyond economic benefits, Women's involvement in these programs should lead to changes in gender roles and relations within households and communities. This includes looking at whether their experience increased respect and decision-making power at home and in their communities due to their participation in the LIPW program (Kabeer, 1999).

2.2.2 Longwe Women's Empowerment Framework

Women's empowerment is a critical component of development programs aimed at reducing poverty and promoting gender equality. One of the most influential frameworks for understanding and assessing women's empowerment is the Women's Empowerment Framework by Longwe.

A Zambian gender expert, Sara Hlupekile Longwe created the Women's Empowerment Framework to assess women's empowerment in development processes and also promote the women empowerment in rural development. The framework according to Longwe (1991), is hinged on the understanding that empowerment of women is a process involving the transformation of power relations and the elimination of barriers that inhibit women from fully contributing in political, social, and economic life. This framework also provides a structured approach to analyzing the various dimensions of empowerment and is particularly useful in evaluating the impact of development initiatives such as Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) programs on rural women. The five levels of the framework established by Longwe are Welfare, Access, Conscientization, Participation or mobilization, and Control as shown in the figure 1 below. These levels according as structured in the framework are not viewed as a linear process but as one where, each level strengthens the other with every progression symbolizing progress in women's empowerment process (Longwe, 1991).

Figure 1. Longwe's Women Empowerment Framework adopted and modified.



Source: Author's Construct, 2024.

The framework as illustrated above, depicts the five levels of rural women empowerment process as posited by Longwe. According to the framework, Welfare is the initial process of empowerment regarded as the foundational level. This level based on the framework includes aspects like improvement in material wellbeing and economic status. The focus here includes material wellbeing such as income, food supply, and healthcare. One significant critique of this level is that, women are considered as passive receivers of welfare benefits as they do not create anything contributing to their empowerment. There, at this level, empowerment is not realized.

Access level is the next level in the empowerment process according to the framework. This level is regarded as the action level towards the process of rural women empowerment. At this level, gender gaps are viewed as originating from unequal access to opportunities, requisite skills and information as well as other resources. This stage necessitates instituting measures to increase women awareness of the disparities which will enable women to pursue actions in seeking fair and equal share of resources within their household and society.

The next level in the Longwe framework is conscientization. According to the framework, women recognizes the structural forces that contributes to discrimination against them. Here,

women come to the realization that their low socioeconomic status is not as a result of their lack of ability but due to the prevailing conventional gender norms and discriminatory practices hence they engage in collective actions to make sure they are no disadvantaged. Women strive for gender relevant roles, balanced power relation as well as equitable labour division. This level according to the framework is sustained by reforms that ensures equal access to opportunities for all.

The next level identified in the framework is the participation/mobilization level. This level focuses on women putting into action the awareness gained about the structural inequalities. Women at this level collectively challenge prevailing beliefs that have disadvantaged them with focus on increasing their participation in decision making at all levels. Networking and mobilization provides them the avenue to gain greater influence over their decision. This level is key for empowerment process as it reflects collective efforts in structural issues that causes gender imbalances.

The final level identified in the framework is Control. Women at this stage of the framework gain authority over acquired resources obtained through collective efforts in the previous stages. Empowerment at this level involves a social change to balance power between women and men by ensuring neither gender dominants. Through control, women are able to influence their own wellbeing and contributes to the wellbeing of their communities and societies as a whole.

Longwe's Framework and the LIPW Programs' Contributions on Rural Women

LIPW programs are designed to provide employment opportunities and improve infrastructure in rural communities, often targeting vulnerable populations, including women. The Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework provides a lens for a comprehensive analysis of how the LIPW programs contribute to empowerment of rural women across the various dimensions of the framework.

According to Holmes & Jones (2013), contributes to the welfare needs of beneficiaries particularly in rural settings. They asserted that these programs offer incomes through temporary employment opportunities which supports women to meet basic needs including food and nutrition, shelter, wards education, healthcare which improves their overall wellbeing. They however indicated that, this level of empowerment focuses on immediate survival needs and does not challenge existing gender dynamics or addresses the root cause of the marginalization of women.

LIPW programs at the access level enhances beneficiaries access to resources by providing requisite information, access to skill trainings as well as economic opportunities that are necessary to ensure their effective participation in the program. This level is vital in settings where there are limited prospects for paid work as a result of sociocultural constraints. By ensuring the inclusion of women as beneficiaries of these programs, it improves the economic independence of participating rural women ensuring their access to resources which necessary for long term empowerment.

LIPW programs while primarily aims at economic independence indirectly focuses on conscientization by ensuring women beneficiaries gain increased awareness about their potentials and right. McCord (2012) emphasizes that, through the involvement of women in public works, they tend to be exposed to new responsibilities and roles that defy existing traditional gender norms. This experience informs an increased consciousness among participating women regarding gender inequalities, propelling them to advocate for promotion of gender equality within their spheres. The training aspects of the LIPW program includes topics regarding diverse gender participation which contributes further to women's conscientization.

LIPW programs are involved actively in women mobilizing themselves in supporting each other in a collective effort towards a common interest and goal. It provides an avenue where are able to contribute to community development and participate in the public sphere. Subbarao et al. (2012) indicates that, it ensures women are represented in these programs by building their confidence and leadership skills through participation. It provides women an avenue to be involved in decisions their communities which is a critical step towards attaining gender equality.

At the control level, the utmost empowerment is attained when women gain equal authority and influence over their lives and resources. Cooke et al. (2016) emphasizes that, LIPW program contributes to empowerment processes through economic resources and livelihood opportunities, attaining control involves altering the existing societal power structures. They however indicated that, although LIPW can play a transformative role in encouraging policies that are gender sensitive and supporting women's leadership, it requires the involvement of women in all stages of the program from the design to implantation stages.

To conclude, the Longwe women empowerment framework (1991), does not follow a linear sequence but rather iterative in nature. The process of empowerment do not necessarily follow a linear order but rather moves in between the levels either horizontally or vertically depicting changes in experiences or circumstances. When women gain more control over their lives, they get better access to resources which improves their overall economic and social standing (ibid).

Longwe (2000) emphasizes that empowering women is essential in rural development as it helps them actively participate and organize themselves leading to the emergence of structures that challenges and eliminate the diverse forms of gender discrimination. Barriers existing in these rural settings are the reason majority of women are sidelined and oppressed particularly in developing countries. Empowerment therefore makes the participation of women in rural development possible and effective.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This Section highlights the techniques and methods adopted in this research. It details the procedures followed, tools employed, sampling techniques, sources and types of data, techniques used in data collection, analytical tools utilized in the data obtained from the field and the case study applied in the research.

3.1 Background Information of Study Area

To enable the researcher situate the phenomenon in context, the Tano South Municipality was chosen as a case study for the research as it is one of the 80 participating Districts of the intervention in Ghana as indicated in the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS 7, 2019). This is to provide an insight into the experiences of rural women in remote areas and effects of the program on their lives in the Municipality.

The Tano South Municipal Assembly was established by the LI 2268, with Bechem as its administrative capital. It is bordered by Offinso North District (in Ashanti Region) to the North, Ahafo-Ano North District to the South, Ahafo-Ano South East District to the East and Tano North Municipality to the West. The Municipality covers a land area of about 635 square kilometers and lies in the Southern part of the Brong Ahafo Region between latitudes 7°00" N and 7°25" N and longitudes 1°45" W and 2°15" W. It forms 1.6 per cent (%) of the total land area of the Ahafo region. The Capital of the Municipality is located along the Sunyani-Kumasi road and approximately 76 km away from Kumasi in the Ashanti Region (TSMA MTDP, 2022-2025).

The Municipality has a population of 87,219 with women constituting 51% of the total population (GSS 2021:60). It is an agrarian economy as about 67 percent of the population. Are engaged in agriculture.

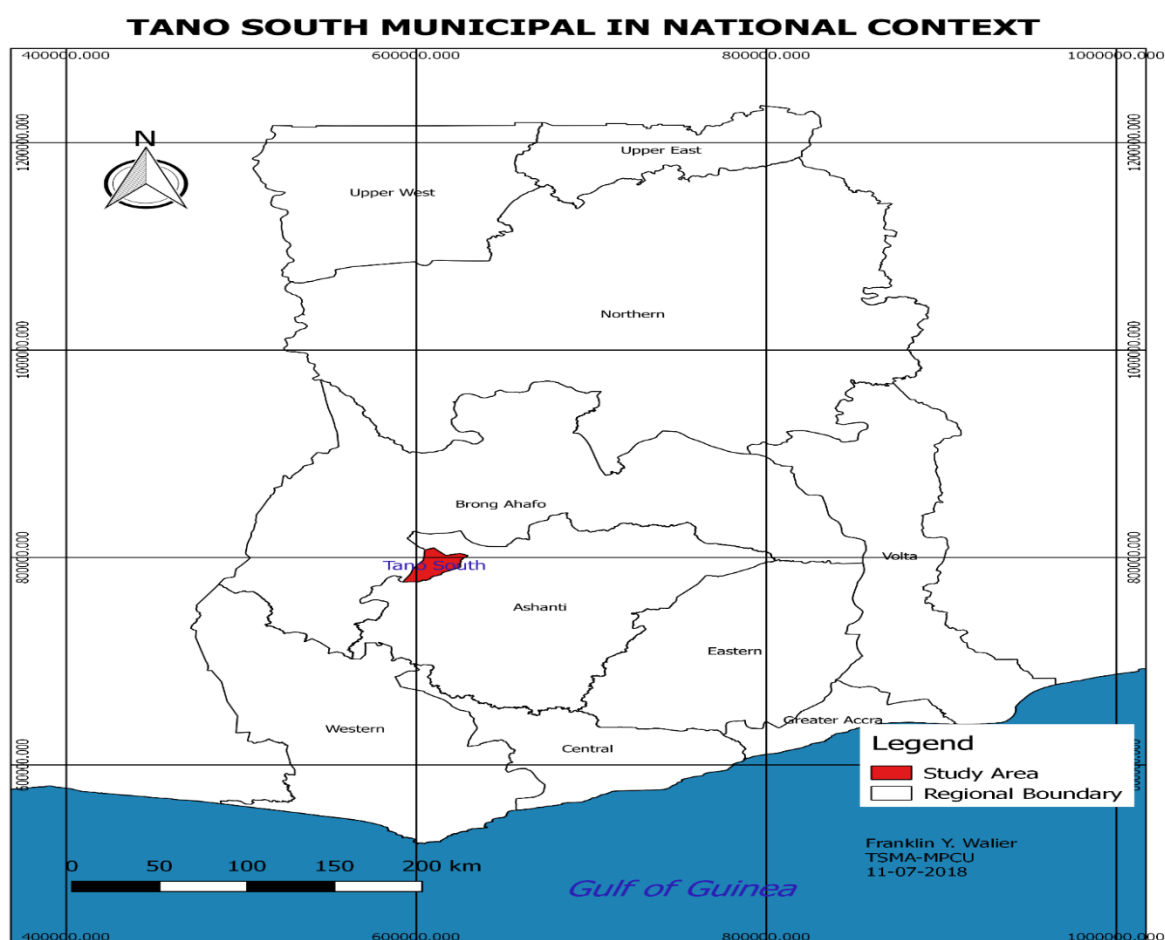
The Assembly is the local planning authority of the Municipality with sub-district structures at the local level that assist the Assembly to carry out its functions. The substructures consists of two (2) Town Councils and five (5) Area Councils. These Town/Area Councils strengthens coordination and development efforts at the local level (TSMA MTDP, 2022-2025).

The location of the area as the entry point into the Ahafo and Bono Regions from the south and north puts the area in a unique position as an investment destination for socio-economic development. It is worthy to note that most remote communities in the Municipality are

characterized by a patriarchal systems where males have significant access and control over productive resources (ibid).

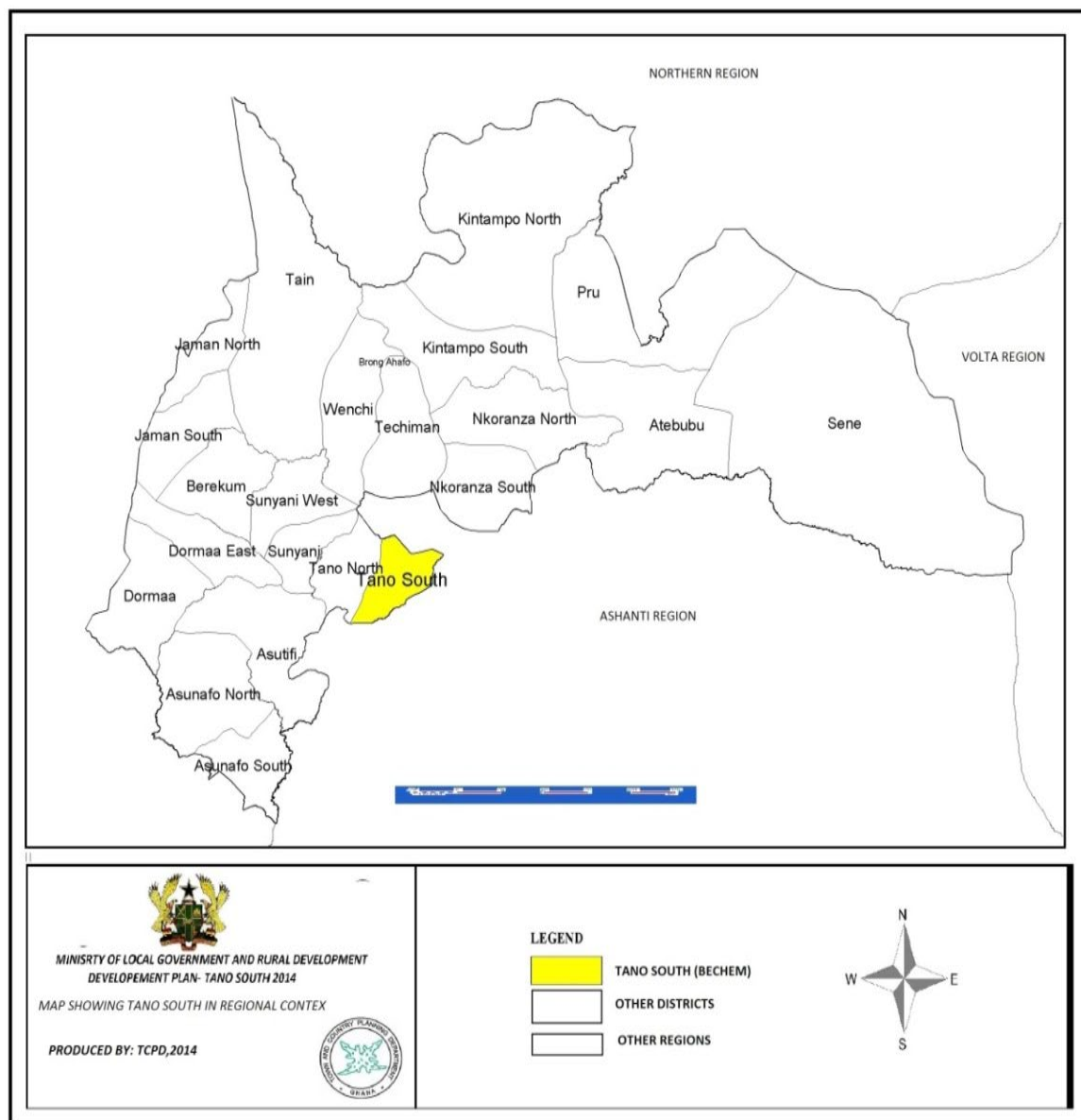
Also, cultural dynamics in the District presents a compelling opportunity for the study aiming to explore rural women’s conception of empowerment through government initiated interventions in rural settings (Apusiga, 2009). The major ethnic group of the Municipality are the Bono’s and they trace their ancestry through the male lineage. The lineage defines who can access land and control its use. There are, also, culturally determined and upheld conventional norms about female and male in these rural communities that feed into the notions of entitlements to productive resources (ibid).

Figure 2: Map of Tano South in National Context



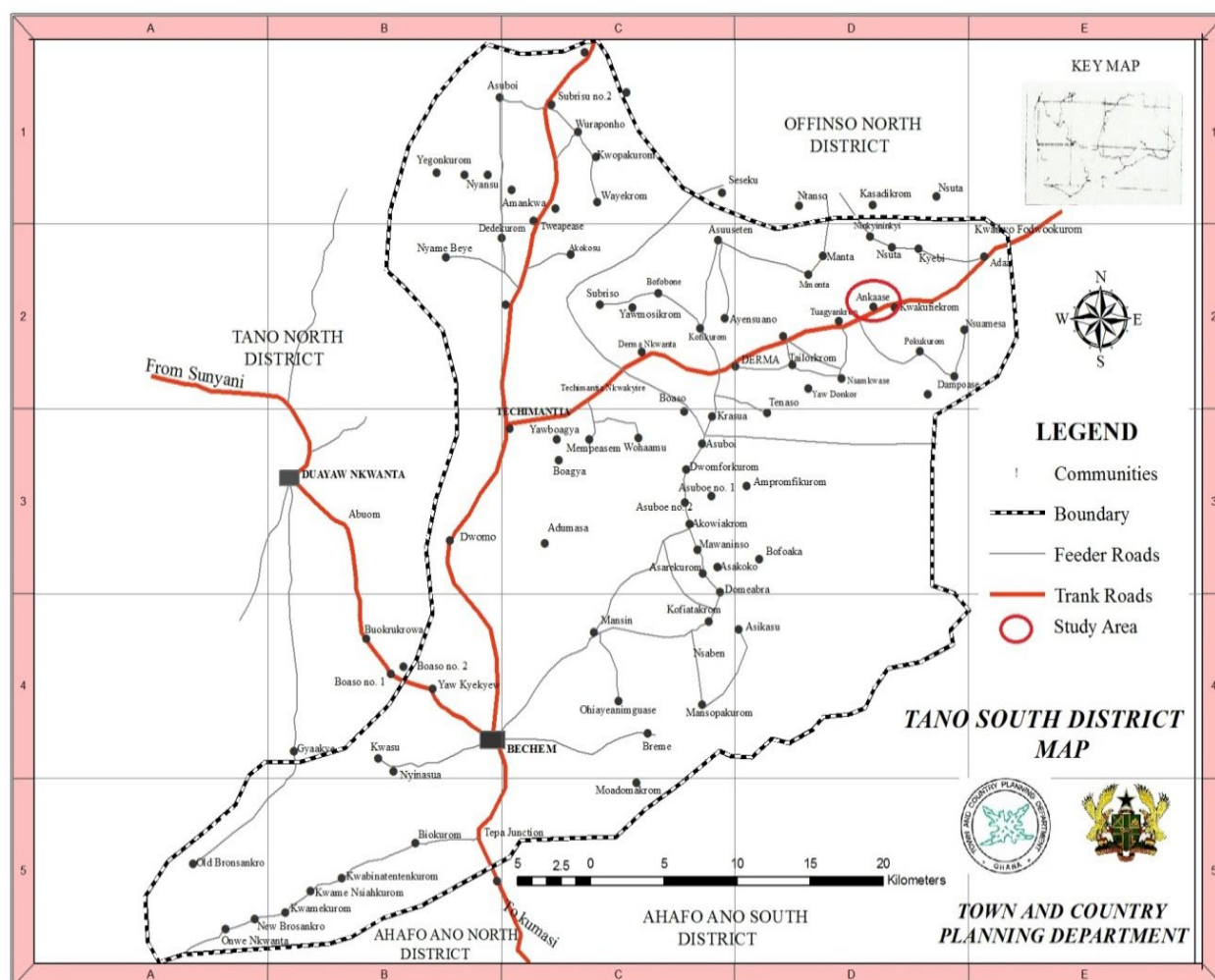
Source: MPCU, TSMA, 2022.

Figure 3: Map of Tano South Municipality in Regional context



Source: MPCU, TSMA, 2022.

Figure 4: Map of Tano South Municipality



Source: MPCU, TSMA, 2022.

3.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This section outlines the key demographic details of the rural women who partook in the Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) program activities across three remote communities in Tano South Municipality. They were carefully selected from varying age cohorts to allow a range of perspectives across various program activities and participating areas within the study area.

Participants and Community Distribution

A total of fifteen 15 female participants, distributed across three communities in Tano South Municipality participated in the study. Specifically, Tveapease had 5 participants engaged in tree planting, Derma had 5 participants involved in the rehabilitation of feeder road, and Mansin had 5 participants working on the maintenance of small earth dams.

Age

The age of participants varied from 18-55 years. The average age of participants was 37 years. The age distribution was relatively balanced, younger women were more involved in physically demanding tasks like road rehabilitation and dam maintenance, while older women were more engaged in activities such as tree planting.

Education Level

Out of the 15 women, 6 had no education, 7 completed primary education, and 2 had secondary education. Participants were from varied educational backgrounds reflecting a range of knowledge among the participants, which influenced their ability partake in the LIPW program.

Marital Status

Out of the 15 women participants, 8 were married, 4 were single, and 3 were widowed. The majority of the married women had additional responsibilities at home, which influenced their availability and participation in the program.

Household Size and Dependents

The average household size of the research participants was 6. Most participants had dependents, including children and elderly family members. This element played a significant role in their motivation to join the program, as they sought livelihood opportunities to support their families.

Employment Status

Data obtained from the field indicated prior to joining the program, 9 participants were primarily engaged in subsistence farming, while 2 were involved in petty trading. The remaining 4 women were unemployed. The program provided an essential source of income for those who were previously unemployed or underemployed.

Analysis and Implications

The demographic characteristics of participants provided valuable context for understanding their experiences and responses to the LIPW program. The diverse age range and educational backgrounds suggest that the program has been inclusive and accessible to women with varying levels of education and life experiences. Additionally, the involvement of women from different employment backgrounds demonstrates the program's potential in providing economic opportunities for various segments of the rural population.

3.3 Design and Approach

The research employed a qualitative approach which sought to unravel experiences of women beneficiaries of the LIPW program in remote areas the Tano South Municipality. The choice is buttressed by the fact that research scientist indicates, that qualitative approach is more effective for engaging participants in in-depth conversations to better understand dynamics of a particular subject (Panke 2018). The study aimed at constructing meanings from participants' perspectives based on their lived experiences. The study participants consequently consisted of rural women beneficiaries from the Tano South Municipality in the Ahafo Region of Ghana involved in the LIPW intervention.

3.4 Data Sources and Collection

Data was obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained from women beneficiaries of the LIPW program through in-depth interviews. Interview guides were developed along the research objectives drawing on research questions to elicit information aimed at answering the questions.

Primary source of information was relevant to the study as it served as the firsthand information from participants and reflected the true picture on the ground. It offered insights into the study. Participants were interviewed through semi-structured interviews using of interview guides. The interviews, enabled the researcher to gather detailed personal accounts of empowerment which would have been difficult to capture using surveys or questionnaire given the sociocultural sensitivity surrounding gender roles in rural areas (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

Secondary data was obtained from program documents, LIPW program operating manuals, relevant reports drawn from the Tano South Municipal Assembly, Ministry of Local Government, and Rural Development, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Other secondary sources such as journals, scholarly articles, and the internet was also consulted. These sources offered a broader context to the study, and aided the interpretation and validation of the primary data, and further aided the development of theoretical framework for the study.

3.5 Sampling Size and Techniques

A purposive selection technique which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques (O'Leary 2017:381) was adopted to select participants especially women beneficiaries in the three (3) participating rural communities within the Municipality, key staff of the municipal Assembly and zonal office who took part in implementing the program. A total number of twenty (20)

respondents comprising of 15 participating women beneficiaries, 3 officials from the Assembly, 1 from the Zonal Coordinating office, and 1 Community facilitator.

The technique was to purposefully select participants with the required knowledge about the program who were willing to share their experiences, to allow for in-depth assessment of participants' experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A sampling criteria was used in the selection of beneficiary women on the program.

A sampling criteria

- Women must have participated in at least one LIPW program in Tano Municipality
- Participants were selected from different age groups to capture a range of perspectives.
- Participants were selected from different communities within Tano Municipality to account for geographic variations

The sample size was suitable to obtain insights, and perception from the rural women involved in the program. The participants were deemed important for the research because they possessed relevant information, knowledge and vast experience regarding the project. This sample size covered a reasonable proportion of the targeted population of the program. Though not sufficient, it was reasonable to comprehensively capture the relevant information and insight of the LIPW program for data analysis due to time and resource constraint.

3.6 Data processing and analysis

Data gathered from field were manually transcribed from the local dialect into English language due to the illiteracy rates in rural parts of the Municipality. Transcribed data was analyzed thematically with themes corresponding to the levels of empowerment in Longwe's framework. Findings from data gathered was analyzed juxtaposing concepts from relevant literature. Appropriate meanings was derived for better illustration which facilitated a structured exploration of empowerment and identified how the LIPW program influenced each level for participants.

3.7 Background and role of Research Assistant

Stephen Boampong graduated with a BSc. in Community Development from the University for Development Studies and also pursued a master's degree from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. He has a five (5) year experience in the teaching field and a native of the research area.

His services was employed to facilitate the data collection process because his research strengths include ethnography and qualitative researches. The assistant's involvement was limited to facilitating the interview process while the researcher joined the interview online, this was because the researcher could not go to the field in person to collect data due to financial constraint. Interviews were conducted in-person to create a relaxed and familiar environment for study participants', encouraging openness.

The Assistant, familiar with the cultural context and also fluent in both English and the local dialect was present to facilitate the interviews by ensuring there is a correct set-up and also support translation where necessary and establish rapport by allowing participants to comfortably express themselves in their native language, while the researcher conducted the interview online.

3.8 Ethical Consideration and Positionality

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Ethics Review Committee of the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) under whose support the research was conducted. Permission was also granted by the Tano South Assembly to carry out the research in its jurisdiction. Ethical considerations was ensured throughout the process through informed consent and participant's willingness to participation.

Ensuring the confidentiality of participants and anonymity was a priority. Pseudonyms were used for all participants and identifying details were omitted from the reports and transcripts. The assistant signed a confidentiality agreement to further protect participant privacy. Interviews were carried out in private, comfortable settings to avoid to avoid external pressures and to ensure participants felt free to speak openly.

According to Bourke (2014, p.3), the research space is shaped by both the participants and the researcher as such, their identities have the potential to impact the processes of the research. By acknowledging bias, a researcher aims to acquire good understanding of how to navigate a study area and effectively engage participants.

Being a woman and a former staff of the Assembly with vast knowledge about the Municipality and fluent in the local dialect helped in ascertaining the needed information. However, familiarity with the terrain and people had an effect on access to some vital information, for instance some participants were reluctant to divulge certain details as they felt being a staff of the Assembly and opening up on some details meant reporting coworkers while others also required some sort of cash rewards to participate. However participants were duly informed that the research was strictly for academic purposes and were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality of shared information.

3.9 Research inclusion criteria

The research focused specifically on women beneficiaries of the LIPW program a subset of the broader program beneficiaries, program implementers at both the Zonal, District and local level including the Coordinating Director, Program focal person (Development planner), the Engineer and Community facilitator who play crucial roles in the program implementation.

3.10 Research Exclusion

Selection of study participants excluded male beneficiaries of the program and any woman in program implementing community who was not part of the list obtained from the Assembly. Also women who were unavailable or unwilling to participate in the research were omitted from the study. The research objective was specifically focused on investigating the contributions of the program on the lives of participating rural women rather than broader category of all women in the rural setting.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

To effectively understand the LIPW contributions on rural women, the research sought to unravel and understand the implementation process of the LIPW in Ghana, specifically in the Tano South Municipality, the experiences of rural women beneficiaries and suggestions for improvement. It is worth noting that reliance was on findings from the research participants as well as data from secondary sources.

This section presents the outcome of the research. Analysis of the research was based on the objectives of the research. The study adopted the Longwe's Women Empowerment Framework as its theoretical foundation, which provided a lens to assess the various dimensions of empowerment with focus on rural women in the Tano South Municipality. Presentation of findings were categorized under each objective to understand the LIPW program implementation process, the experiences of the women who participated in the LIPW program activities, and what can be done to enhance future programs for greater impact.

The analysis centered on constructing meanings based on views derived from the lived experiences of the rural women. The population of the study were female beneficiaries of the LIPW program and program implementers in the Tano South Municipality.

4.1 Presentation of the Findings

In-depth interviews conducted with the District Assembly officials revolved around the following areas; the implementation strategy of the LIPW program in Tano South with specific emphasis on the institutional and governance structure, the implementation process, challenges and suggestions for improvement. Also, the thematic areas for discussions with selected women participants dwelled on the program implementation in their respective Communities, their experiences including benefits and challenges as well as possible suggestions for further enhancement of the program and replication in other rural settings.

Field findings were qualitatively analyzed with focus on the objectives applying five (5) levels of the women empowerment framework by Longwe while establishing the theoretical implications of the study buttressing with data form secondary sources.

4.2 Institutional and Governance Structure of the LIPW

The Municipal Coordinating Director who presides over the Tano South Municipality as the Administrative Head in an interview outlined the institutional and governance structure of the program. The participant indicated that the National Steering Committee (NSC) oversees the program at the National level and it is chaired by the Minister responsible for the Local Government, and Rural Development ministry.

According to the participant, the committee is responsible for the provision of guidance on policy, strategy and issues regarding implementation of the program. *“The Committee meets periodically specifically on quarterly basis in all implementing regions of the program to undertake monitoring and supervision”*. Also, activities of other implementing ministries and stakeholders are coordinated by the committee (MCD, August 2024).

He indicated that apart from the Minister who chairs the National Steering Committee, the committee is also comprised of administrative directors of Gender, Children and Social Protection Ministry, the Ministry of roads and highways, the health Ministry, the Works and Housing Ministry, the ministry of environment, science and Technology and the finance ministry. The committee also includes heads of departments and agencies including feeder roads, Ghana Irrigation Authority and the Local Government Service Secretariat.

Further findings revealed that the secretariat for the NSC is the National Coordinating Office responsible for, coordinating, collating, consolidating and reviewing the yearly work program, budgets as well as procurement plans. The NSC makes sure funds are released to program implementing Assemblies and other agencies and departments who monitors the uses of allocated resources to ensure value for money. The Coordinating office is situated in Accra with Zonal Coordinating offices in program implementing zones containing a number of implementing regions within the catchment area of the Zone.

Data gathered from the field also showed that the regional coordinating council coordinates activities of the program implementing districts within its catchment area and is responsible for day to day administration of the program at the regional level. At the regional level, the chairperson of the regional coordinating committee is the economic planning officer who functions as the technical head of the program in the region. With support from the Zonal Offices, the regional coordinating council coordinates and oversees the program planning and implementation, assists the implementing district assemblies in the region to execute their program of work and monitor the program execution.

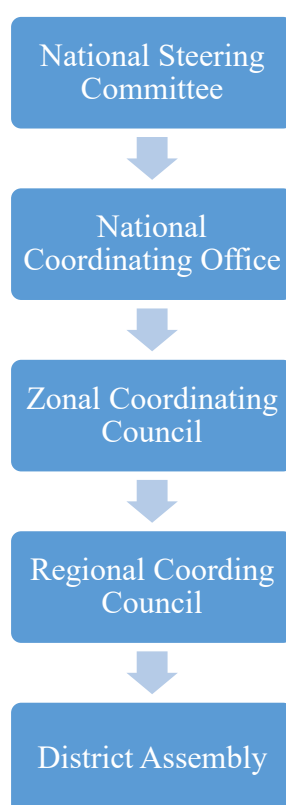
The participant illustrated that the district level, the actual execution of the LIPW program activities is done, he indicated that the coordinating unit at the Assembly level oversees the program implementation in the various implementing communities.

Based on his account, he stated that;

“I chair the District Coordinating unit and this unit includes the heads of technical departments and units of the Assembly and this committee oversees the implementation at the communities. The Committee at this level puts together the workplans and budget, monitoring and supervision, and payment arrangements”. (MCD, Tano South).

The study established that before the program implementation, a Committee led by the Focal person conducted a feasibility study in all selected communities to ensure feasibility of the program, prepare bidding documents, conducted an evaluation of tenders and was responsible for contract administration.

Fig. 5 Institutional and Governance Structure



Source: Author's Construct, 2024.

4.3 Implementation process of LIPW Program (Program Implementer's perspective)

The study sought to identify the strategies adopted for the execution of the LIPW program. The Development Planning Officer who doubles as the focal person of the program explained;

“The Ghana Productive Safety Net Program (GPSNP) was established as part of efforts by government of Ghana to ensure inclusive growth, reduce poverty and create jobs particularly among poor households in rural communities who have unequal access to employment opportunities due to low literacy and skills. The project is a successor of the Ghana Social Opportunities Program executed from 2010 to 2018 aimed at providing income support to targeted households through the LIPW. The successes chalked under the precursor program was streamlined under the current GPSNP which was introduced in 2020. The LIPW program is one of the components of the broader Ghana Productive Safety Net which seeks to improve support systems to the poor”. (District Focal Person, August, 2024).

This account aligns with report by the World Bank (2016) that, the LIPW program seek to create livelihood opportunities for the rural poor during the dry season. The participant further indicated that the livelihood opportunities are mostly generated through restoration of community asset and development of climate change intervention infrastructure including small earth dams, feeder roads improvement, soil conservation, tree planting and land preservation projects.

However, he mentioned that the LIPW sub program activities in Tano South are tree planting, rehabilitation of small earth dam and maintenance of feeder roads. He explained the justification for the selection of the program activities revealing that the small earth dam was considered because of its tendency in promoting irrigation farming during the dry season.

Further, he mentioned that feeder roads were meant to assist easy movement of goods and services to major markets in town centres to boost the rural economy whereas the major focus of the tree planting was to mitigate climate change and its related effects as well as generate income for the people and community at large.

The participant outlined six (6) cardinal processes adopted in the program implementation which comprised of; consideration and selection of program activities that qualify as labour intensive, selection and sensitization of beneficiaries, pre-program activities, workshops and trainings, monitoring and remunerations.

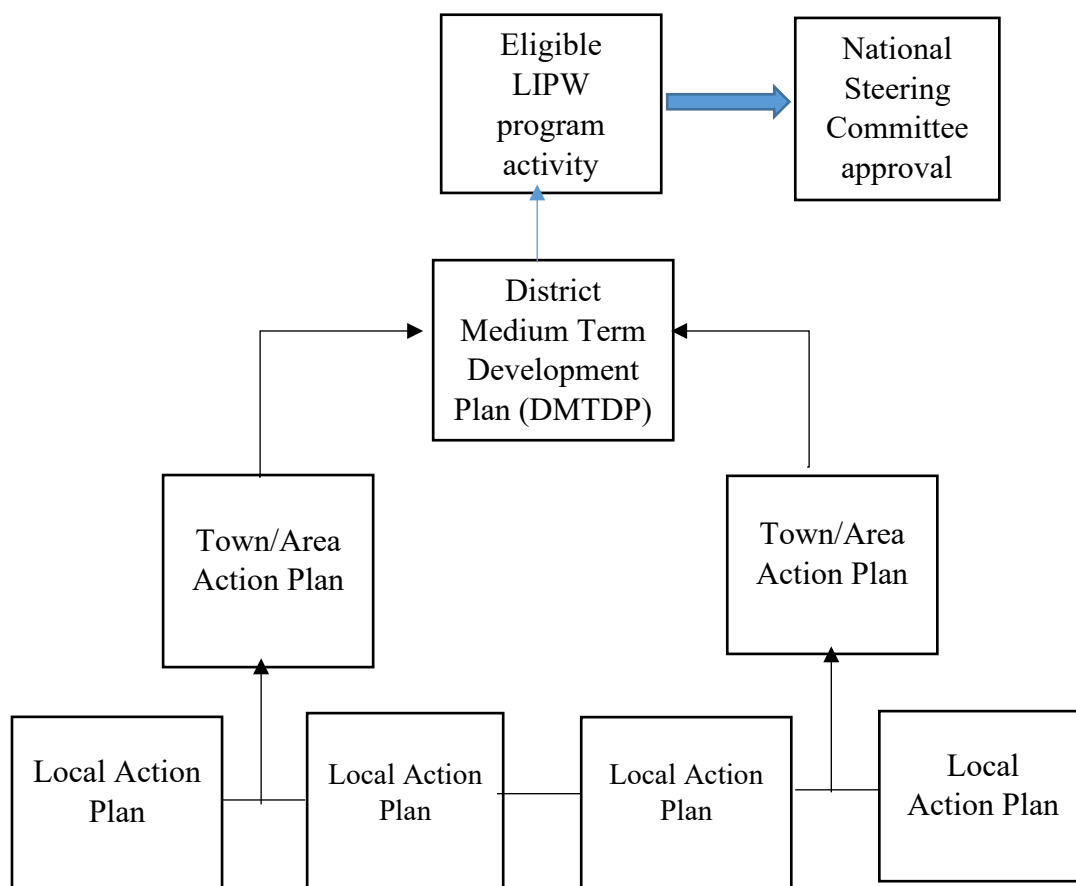
4.3.1 Consideration of program activities (projects) that qualify as labour intensive.

The Focal person of the program at the district level illustrated that LIPW program placed priority on activities that had the potential of engaging more labour in its operations. He elaborated: *“we wanted projects like road maintenance, construction of schools, dams for irrigation and tree planting which could employ more labour who were vulnerable especially the women. In a way of developing our district, reduce poverty and also train them skillfully”*.

A program that seek to address fundamental challenges to development through short term activities fits into the LIPW program design. The program was designed to target the unskilled rural poor who were not employed as indicated by the interviewee. Activities were considered based on the local action plans derived from community needs assessment. The needs assessment encapsulates the pressing needs of all members’ of the Community. A system that allows for community ownership of a particular government intervention.

The findings also revealed that, the Assembly develops Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) out of the compilation of local plans of the various community under the Town and Area councils. The MTDP which is a four year plan is endorsed by the general Assembly of the Municipality in alignment with government development policy. A structured system that run from the grass-root to the national level. A potential labour program activity is usually selected from the plan by the Assembly. The selected labour intensive project get approved after a review by the National coordinating office (NCO) and subsequently approved by the NSC.

Figure 6. Below is the diagrammatic expression of LIPW program activity identification process.



Source: Author's Construct, 2024.

4.3.2 Selection and sensitization of Communities and program beneficiaries

After consideration of an eligible LIPW activity and subsequent approval, the next process outlined by the focal person was the selection and sensitization of beneficiaries. He specified the criteria for selecting the districts, communities and the beneficiaries for the LIPW program. He indicated that, National Coordinating Office relied on statistical data from the Ghana statistical Service (GSS) which contains the poverty profile of all districts in the country, highlighting best performing and poorest district. According to him districts and communities become the geographical targets for the LIPW program i.e. districts and communities that have high prevalence of poverty are selected.

“Once the district was selected, most of the participating communities had been approved from the secretariat. Our district did not have control over the approved list of communities, but most of those community were really poor”.

Strikingly, the cascading effects were that, the selected communities might not have the required labour who would be ready and willing to work for the program. On the contrary, it was prudent

the selection was done at the top to eliminate biases and political influence from the district level. However, there are exceptions for instance some districts were selected without meeting these criteria.

The participant indicated how the districts in the northern zone dominated in the LIPW program due to the poor rainfall and its associated poor crop harvest culminating into high poverty incidence in the country (GSS, 2021).

Also, according to him, beneficiaries were carefully elected based on their readiness and willingness to work. The program started with self-selection process but also based on the selection criteria specified in the operationalization manual, 70 per cent (%) of vulnerable and the less privileged especially women in the rural area formed majority of the target population which according to him served as an avenue to empower them as revealed in the findings. Priority was given to vulnerable the group especially women who were willing to work to register their names with the Assembly at the desk office. Rural women were given priority because they were considered as most vulnerable in various rural communities as established in the Housing and Population Census (GSS, 2021).

A rotational system was instituted in situations where the registered labourers exceeded the required work force expected to be engaged. Also, before the selection of the beneficiaries, a thorough sensitization campaign was launched in the participating communities. The participant threw light on the community sensitization exercise, he indicated that,

“Members of the participating communities in the District were educated on details of the program and the program objectives. A subcommittee of the Coordinating Unit at the Assembly named the implementation committee explained during the exercise that, the program was part of efforts by government to bring development to their community, make them financially independent and provide them with requisite skills. They were informed that the targeted beneficiaries are the poor and vulnerable people who were 18 and above will be engaged for a limited timeframe hence not everyone will be selected to participate. Women in particular were encouraged to participate since the program has been designed to ensure women can carry out their household responsibility and still participate. It was explained that women are not allowed to join rigorous activities and particularly pregnant women are not allowed closer to earthmoving plants. Other details such as their remuneration was explained to allow room for self-selection by community members themselves based on the criteria” (Focal Person, August 2024).

4.3.3 Pre-program activities

The interviewee indicated that after a particular LIPW program has been approved, and targeted beneficiaries sensitized, the next action by the Assembly was seeking expert advice from the technical ministries and departments under whose purview the program activities fell under.

He indicated that *“The three (3) program activities approved by the NSC in the District where construction/rehabilitation of feeder roads, rehabilitation of small earth dam and planting of trees hence technical departments and ministries such as Agric Ministry, Ghana irrigation Authority, Feeder roads department and the Environmental Protection Agency with the support of the Zonal and Regional offices were contacted for expert advice and technical assessment of a particular program activity”* (Focal Person, August 2024).

For instance according to him, the ministry of Agriculture provided a consultant with expert advice on the particular type of seedlings to procure and the crop to venture into based on soil suitability of a particular community and its impact on the environment. Also materials needed, labour requirements, number of person hours required for the activity, required days or months a program activity was supposed to last or take before completion were all provided by the experts.

The consultant with the required expertise thereafter prepared on the Assembly’s behalf a draft tender document specifying the bills of quantities and contract details to ensure that the specifications were in alignment with the procurement laws of Ghana. The Assembly submitted draft documents prepared by the consultant to the Regional Procurement department to further certify the draft conforms to labour intensive standards. The documents are then approved for the Assembly to advertise in the national media (the newspapers, radio stations and the television station) and notice boards for public display for prospective contractors.

After deadline for bidding of tenders had elapsed, the tender committee of the Assembly opened and validated bidding documents and submitted to an Evaluation Team of the Assembly to evaluate and make recommendation for contract award to the most eligible bidder. Subject to the tender committee’s confirmation and satisfaction of the recommendations made, the Assembly awarded contracts to the proposed eligible bidder while ensuring adherence to the procurement laws of Ghana.

After contracts were awarded, community meetings were held for contractors to be introduced to program beneficiaries and entire community. The meeting in respective communities were made up of all relevant stakeholders including community members, officials of the Assembly, contractors and their teams and program staff from head offices or regional offices as well as the political representatives. The meeting was necessitated by the need to introduce contractors to communities before execution of the program and to reiterate its essence to the community as elaborated during the sensitization of the community.

4.3.4 Workshops and trainings

The Focal Person indicated that training and workshops forms part of the core of the LIPW as it serves to equip both project staff and beneficiaries with the required skills and further sharpens their performance on the program. He further added that, the LIPW program had a partnership with most of the technical institutions in Sunyani and other private experts to help train the beneficiaries of the program. Each program unit had experts on grounds to train and equip the beneficiaries with the needed skills to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the program. Participants of the training programs comprised of beneficiaries from the selected districts and communities within the specific zone especially women and Assembly officials overseeing the program implementation. He further indicated that Tano South fell within the southern zone. Beneficiaries and program staff who partook in the training sessions were taken through 1 to 2 weeks intensive training using training manuals designed for LIPW.

The training mode was hand-on practical sessions with various modules using a practitioner's guide manuals to construction and rehabilitation of feeder roads, dams and dugouts for irrigation purposes and other facilities. According to the focal person training manuals introduced trainees to labour intensive approaches of construction, focusing on the advantages and disadvantages of the approach, the types of equipment suitable and its uses. The interviewee indicated that, the ultimate goal of the training program was to realize that trainees had requisite knowledge on hand tools, safety measures and had requisite skills to ensure a good start.

4.3.5 Monitoring

Monitoring forms a major aspect of the implementation strategy of the LIPW program. The monitoring structures instituted by the program comprised of a five (5) member Community Facility Management team (CFMT) at the Community level which is voted by the community and endorsed by the Assembly, a Program Implementation Committee (DPIC) at the District level, regional monitoring team and a National Coordinating Office (NCO) which functions as the secretariat.

The function of these monitoring structures are to monitor and supervise the progress of work at various levels. Each structure supersedes the other from the lowest at the community level to the highest at the national level by closely monitoring objectives and activities to brief on progress made. The CFMT, the DPIC, the RPCU and the NCO form a multi-level monitoring structure for the LIPW in the program. Each team conducts regular spot checks, assesses progress of implementation and reports to relevant stakeholders. The goal of this multi structure is to ensure good performance and to assess capacity gaps. This resonates with Iddi et al. (2018) assertion that the involvement in monitoring and evaluation unites project stakeholders to ensure the project is

managed effectively and efficiently. This also allows for a systematic data base and submission of timely reports.

4.3.6. Remuneration

The Focal Person mentioned that the six (6th) process is the LIIPW payment structure. According to him, the National Steering Committee determines the hourly rate per task. He further indicated that due to the objective of the program which aims at strengthening support systems for the poor, the wage is therefore set at the Country's minimum wage rate thus GH\$12.00 per hour and this is subject to change once the Country's minimum wage rate is positively reviewed upwards.

Beneficiaries usually work 6 hours to 8 hours a day depending on their reporting time and this is multiplied by the wage rate per hour. He further indicated that *"workers usually work five (5) days a week excluding days set by their community to observe as a sacred day and another day usually a day in the week set aside for rest"*. Focal Person, August 2023.

"Each day, when a registered beneficiary comes to work, the contractor allocates a task to the beneficiary, sometimes it is on individual or on group basis. Being the Community Facilitator, I ensure that tasks are appropriate for either the individual or for the group's capacity with the client supervisor's support. At the end of the day, the supervisor and contractor inspect the tasks. If satisfied, I record the workers' performance on the daily attendance sheet, which I submit weekly to the Assembly for payment." Facilitator, August 2024.

The Community facilitator in an interview mentioned that the attendance records showing periods worked by each individual on monthly basis is processed at the Assembly and forwarded to the zonal office for authentication before payments are approved to be made by the rural bank partnered by Assembly.

The Focal Person affirmed the account of the Facilitator and explained that wages were initially paid through an E-zwich account which was requested of every beneficiary and then later payment of remuneration was done through a mobile money transfer, thus, a mobile payment system which was part of efforts to resolve internet issues associated with the E-zwich platform. Payment was done according to the number of present recorded in the attendance book.

4.3.7 Implementation Challenges by Program Implementers

In responding to challenges encountered since the inception of the program in Tano South, officials who represented the Assembly and the program Zonal Office enumerated some challenges outlined below;

Assembly officials highlighted inadequate capacity as a major challenge emphasizing on transfers of previously trained staff on the program. New transferred staff to the Assembly are not trained before taking up vacant roles.

The Municipal Engineer explained that *“I took over from the old Engineer who was transferred to another Assembly after exactly Six (6) months of training of all stakeholder. My former Assembly was not part of the implementing Districts and I didn’t receive any training, this made it difficult at the initial stages to fill in the position. There are four (4) staff at the Department out of which one is an intern and two national service personnel, it was challenging since I was overburdened with supervision of site due to inadequate staff and the communities are far apart. Motor bikes provided by the Zonal Office often broke down which makes it difficult to visit the sites”*.

The Focal person affirmed the District Engineer’s statement regarding the implementation challenges and indicated that apart from inadequate staff capacity and inadequate staff they also face vehicular challenges. He mentioned that the entire assembly relied on two pickup trucks making it difficult to frequently supervise the project sites and lamented that motorbikes from Zonal office frequently broke down. He mentioned further that constant delays in the funds released also affected the performance of activities. *“When funds are delayed, we are unable to start work timely in the dry season and often causes the project to extend into the rainy season. During this time, the dam and road which heavily relies on labour becomes even more challenging”* (Focal person, 2024). Also as a farming community, many beneficiaries return to help on their farms as a result the turn out rate is low during the rainy season.

These were some challenges enumerated which were encountered during implementation of the program and calls for urgent action to ensure the program objectives are met.

4.3.8 Participants’ Account on the Implementation process

The study investigated from the participants their views on the implementation processes of the LIPW program. The discussions were tailored around how they heard about the LIPW program in their various areas. Participants explained the medium through which they heard about the program. The research findings revealed that most of the participants first heard about the program through sensitizations carried out by the Assembly. A participant stated that; *“I first heard about the LIPW program through a community meeting organized by our local assembly. They informed us about the opportunity, and I was interested because they mentioned it could help us earn some money and learn new skills”* (Participant 1, Tweapease Community). Similarly, another participant indicated that *“I heard about it from my friend who was already participating. She told me there was an opportunity to work on the roads and earn some money”* (Participant 5, Derma Community). Additionally, some participants stressed that, they heard about the program through local announcements, community meetings, and from friends.

The research enquired from participants how they were selected into the LIPW program. Data from the field revealed that participants were selected based on their willingness and interest to join after sensitization by the Assembly. *“After the announcement, those of us who were interested gave our*

names to the assemblyman. A few days later, the assembly people came to the community and selected those who were physically fit and ready to work. It was mainly based on our willingness to join” (Participant 4, Mansin). Contrary to this, some participants indicated that, they went through a short interview before they were selected. *“We were selected after a short interview. They asked whether I was willing to be part of the program and whether I could handle the physical demands of road work.”* (Participant 2, Derma). While other participants indicated that, they were recommended by their assembly members.

Also the research sought to find out from participants, what motivated them to join the LIPW program. Interestingly, most of the participants mentioned that they joined the program due to the monetary benefit, while the young adults stated that they wanted an avenue to learn new skills *“we wanted hand work”* a participant mentioned. Another participant categorically stated that, *“I joined because I wanted to learn a new skill to contribute to the community and improve my living standard. Also, I needed the money to support my children’s education and my family”* (Participant 8, Derma). Others pointed out that they joined the program due to lack of employment opportunities. *“I didn’t have a job and I help on people’s farm during the rainy season, in the dry season I travel to Kumasi to hawk to get some money. So this program came as an opportunity to engage in something while here”* a participant indicated.

In investigating whether participants received any form of training before the commencement of works, findings revealed that, some training sessions were organized for program participants before works began. A participant stated that; *“Yes, they gave us training on how to maintain the dams, including how to clear weeds and reinforce the embankments. We also learned about the importance of the dam to support farming during the dry season”* (Participant 14, Mansin). Similarly, a participant from Tweapease highlighted that; *“Yes, they showed us how to plant the trees correctly. We also learned about how to care for the seedlings to ensure they grow well. The training wasn’t long, but it was helpful.”*

The study further engaged participants to openly describe the program activities they were engaged in. The research findings indicated that, the LIPW program participants were engaged in three major activities which were; tree planting, maintenance of dam and feeder roads. A participant elaborated that; *“We are responsible for planting trees, a vast portion of land which was allocated for the program was cleared of all kinds of weeds and tree stumps. We prepared a nursery for the field, created holes of about 1 foot deep which were made ready for the seedlings. Seedlings were then transplanted on the field after the rubbers covering them were removed. The holes were well covered to avoid stagnant water from destroying the seedlings on the main field, fertilizers were applied after some weeks and then pesticides are applied to prevent pest as well as other insects from destroying the plants on the main field. We also have to water them regularly and protect them from animals. It is hard work, but we see the benefits in the long run”* (Participant 5, Tweapease).

Also another participant explained the program activity she was engaged in; *“We work on maintaining the small earth dams by clearing debris, reinforcing the walls, and ensuring the water channels are not blocked”* (Participant 15, Mansin).

Also, the research sought to find out how participants were remunerated. Findings revealed that the program participants were paid wages on monthly bases via the local rural bank, e-zwich and mobile money. The data further revealed that their wages were based on their attendance records. A participant indicated that; *“After I was selected, I was registered on e-zwich. I have an ezwich account where initially payment were made into but due to network challenges, I am now paid through MTN mobile money. The amount was enough to cover basic expenses, but it was sometimes delayed”* (Participant 11, Mansin). *“We were paid monthly, and the money was transferred directly to our mobile money accounts. It was very convenient”* a participant added.

Discussions

The data findings revealed that the implementation strategies of the LIPW program were generally inclusive, prioritizing women, particularly those from low-income households. The LIPW program in the participating communities appeared to have been implemented with a focus on inclusivity, particularly in targeting vulnerable groups such as women with low or no incomes. Participant’s account revealed that information about the program was disseminated through local announcements, community meetings and referrals, which facilitated widespread awareness and attainment of requisite information. This approach aligns with the access level of Longwe's framework, as it ensures that marginalized women are aware of and able to participate in opportunities that could enhance their economic and social status.

Beneficiaries were mainly selected by their willingness to join the program. This aligns with the broader objective of the LIPW program to enhance economic opportunities for marginalized groups as emphasized by (Beegle et al. 2017). Critically assessing the responses of the participants it could be deduced that some beneficiaries had the opportunity to join the program based on their political affiliation through referrals which may affect the objective of the program in targeting the rural poor. This presupposes that the targeted vulnerable women could be left out as a result of the politics of the program. It was surprising noting that there was politics at play at the local level in a program that was meant to target the poor vulnerable groups through a selection criteria that required people who earned below the minimum wage as the target population of the program.

Also, training provided before participation was another significant aspect of the implementation strategy. This is in line with the findings of Subbarao et al. (2012), who emphasize the importance of capacity-building initiatives within public works programs to enhance their

effectiveness and sustainability. The training helped equip participants with the necessary skills to perform their tasks effectively, contributing to their capacity building. This according to Longwe (2000) is the first level or action level of the women empowerment as outlined in the framework, where women have access to the necessary information, resources, and skill training to propel them to long term empowerment. However, the findings suggest that the initial training provided was somewhat basic, focusing primarily on the immediate tasks required for participation. While participants acquired practical skills through their work, findings revealed that these skills were largely confined to the specific tasks at hand. The trainings acquired are limited to enable participants' transition into other forms of employment or entrepreneurial ventures to further enhance their participation in economic and social spheres. Whereas the framework suggest a linear progression from skill acquisition (access level) to increased participation and control, however in practice skill development alone did not lead to increased control and long term empowerment, suggesting that additional structural and cultural barriers need to be addressed to achieve genuine empowerment.

Also, data obtained from the field indicated that program beneficiaries were engaged in road maintenance work, rehabilitation of small dam and tree planting in three respective Communities in the Municipality namely Mansin, Tweapease and Derma. These are labor-intensive task that contributed directly to community infrastructure. This not only provided immediate employment and source of income but also instilled a sense of contribution and ownership over community development. However, the physical nature of the work posed some challenges, particularly for participants who were not accustomed to such demanding tasks. This highlights a need for more diversified opportunities within the program, catering to varying skill levels and physical capabilities of both males and females by ensuring their needs are integrated as stipulated in the gender and development framework. The framework overlooks the physical challenges and demands of participation, which poses significant barriers for women especially those with caregiving duties, lighting the need to consider both physical and logistical aspect of empowerment interventions aimed at vulnerable population.

4.4 Experiences of Rural Women

The experiences of women participating in the LIPW program were positive in many aspects but also highlighted some challenges. Participants were engaged to share their experiences as beneficiaries of the LIPW program. The study sought to find out changes in participant's lives after joining the program, social cultural shift or perspective they have experienced, how the program has influenced their relations within their community, skills acquired through the program, how

the program has influenced their access to other opportunities and challenges they have encountered as beneficiaries of the program.

The findings from the field revealed a positive contribution through the program as indicated by most of the participants. A participant stated that; *“Since joining, I’ve been able to save a little money at the bank. I did not have a bank account before joining the program. I also feel proud because the trees we planted are growing well, and the community is starting to look greener”* (Participant 3, Tweapease). Also, another participant added that; *“I didn’t have peace at home, I was always having problems with my husband whenever I request for money. After joining the program, my husband’s behavior has changed towards me because I now receive money through the program and contribute to household provision and even lend him some. Now my children go to school without owing school fees”*. (Participant 7, Derma).

Data obtained from the field regarding views on socio cultural experiences after the introduction of the program revealed that, there was a shift in conventional gender roles that existed in the communities. A participant explained that; *“People in the community have started to see the value of women’s work, especially in maintaining such an important resource. Women were not allowed to take part in some works, because it is assumed that, they did not have the strength and courage for such works. But since the introduction of this program, women are now seen involved in all work activities, it has given us more respect”* (Participant 14, Mansin). Similarly another participant indicated that; *“Before the program, I didn’t think much about women’s roles in our community, but now I feel that i can do more than just take care of the home. I see that women can contribute to community development just like men, and that has changed how I see myself and other women”* (Participant 8, Tweapease). This aligns with Kabeer’s (2016) assertion that, the inclusion of rural women in these programs not only enhances their financial independence but also challenges traditional gender norms by positioning women in visible, economically productive roles. She asserted that, rural women visible participation in these programs defies traditional gender norms that confine women to the domestic sphere, thereby promoting a shift in community perception about women’s capabilities and roles.

The research further investigated how the program has influenced participants’ relationship within the communities. It was evident from the findings that the program has contributed a team spirit and cohesion among women in the various communities. A Participant elaborated that; *“We established a women association for welfare purposes and to share ideas and support one another in the community. Sometimes we are able to support some women who face financial difficulties and also support any of us facing a challenge. The community appreciates our work. They even help us sometimes, which has strengthened our relationships”* (Participant 8, Derma).

Participants also indicated that through the trainings received as part of the program, they have acquired some basic skills which has helped them to improve on themselves when the researcher enquired. *“I’ve learned how to repair roads, which is something I never thought I’d be able to do. It’s a skill that could lead to other opportunities in construction”* as indicated by a participant. Another participant indicated that; *my vegetable farm its better off this year due the skills I acquired from the LIPW training program and I am religiously applying it to my farm.*

The study investigated participant’s access to other opportunities as a result of their involvement in the program when enquired. Findings revealed that, participants acquired certain skills and knowledge that aided their access to other job opportunities. A participant emphasized that; *“The program has given me the confidence and skill to work at any construction site within my community. I was hired as a forewoman at Quansah’s Construction when they came to build a facility in my community.* (Participant 11, Mansin). Another participant disclosed that; *“Currently I am working with forestry commission at the Assembly as one of thd tree planting agent on part time basis as a result of the skill I received as part of the program.”*

Despite the numerous positive contributions of the program, there were some shortfalls or challenges that participants encountered on the program. It was evident from participants’ narration that, their wages were too meager, delays in payments, lack of safety boots and other personal protections equipment for the smooth running of the program. A participant indicated, *“I didn’t have safety boots for almost 2 months, meanwhile I was always on construction site I witnessed a snake biting one of the workers, this could have been me. Also, there are always delays in payments, but the assembly will always tell me that zonal office people check before they pay which takes long. They have to do something about it.”* Participant 12, Mansin). Another participant affirmed this challenge and indicated that; *“the training that we had was very good but inadequate and there has not been any more training to keep us on the job, most of us are gradually losing the skills we acquired from the program”*.

Discussions

Experiences of Rural Women Participants

The participant’s experience in the LIPW program reflects significant impacts across the several dimensions of empowerment in relation to the Longwe women empowerment framework. Participants reported that the program provided modest income, and in some instance, additional income that improved the participant's ability to meet their family's basic needs. This financial stability contributed to their sense of security and well-being, enabling participating women in these settings to invest in their children's education and other essential household expenses.

Studies has demonstrated that women's access to employment and income is closely linked to improvements in the wellbeing of both women and children (Del Ninno et al., 2009). By having their own source of income, women are not only able contribute to their household financially but also gain a certain level of respect and agency within the family. Improving their position relative to men in their households and communities by contributing to decisions. Findings revealed that women become confident and do not wait for their men to provide their needs as before.

This highlights how the LIPW program contributes to reshaping household dynamics and promoting greater wellbeing. This aligns with the Welfare level of Longwe's Women Empowerment framework (Longwe, 2000). The improvement in material well-being is a critical indicator and foundational level of empowerment, as posited by the framework. Women at this level are seen as passive recipients of welfare benefits of the program rather than active participants, hence they do not make changes on their own that contributes to their empowerment.

The framework however does not sufficiently account for the quality and sustainability of the economic gains. While the remuneration was beneficial, it was modest and its irregularity did not fully address their economic vulnerability. While Longwe emphasizes on material wellbeing as foundation for empowerment, this study suggests that true financial empowerment also requires adequate and sustainable income to effectively address women's economic vulnerabilities.

Critically analyzing data from the field, it can be noted that, women who were not in any form of employment and women with more dependents with heavy family responsibilities noticed significant improvement in their wellbeing and in their households. The steady but modest incomes provided financial stability which allowed them to contribute significantly in their households. Women with fewer or no dependents and other income sources however, the program was less transformative. Benefits accrued from the program was seen as extra rather than crucial making the gains of the program less transformative.

In terms of socio-cultural impacts, the program played a significantly role by influencing a shift in participants' perspectives on gender roles. Many participants reported a shift in how they viewed their roles within the community, recognizing their potential to contribute beyond traditional domestic responsibilities. The program has extended the boundaries of what is normally permissible in these rural settings for women. The involvement of women has negated certain stereotypes regarding what women can or cannot do and broken down other taboos concerning women in patriarchal communities. The program has influenced the structure of distinct roles and responsibilities of men and women in the communities. This change aligns with the conscientization level of Longwe's framework, where women become aware of gender disparities

and begin to challenge traditional roles (March et al., 1999). Women come to the realization that their low status in the society is not due to their inability or lack of capability but rather due to discriminatory practices or conventional roles of men and women within their settings that contributes to their low socioeconomic status. However, the framework fails to account for the complex cultural and social dynamics that affects empowerment. While the conscientization level emphasizes awareness of gender inequalities, it fails to address how community perceptions and socio-cultural norms shapes women experiences in empowerment programs. The Social perceptions and gender norms that surrounds women's work, and influences empowerment outcomes highlights the need for addressing societal attitudes as a fundamental component of empowerment efforts.

Through critical assessment of field data, it can be deduced that, the gains of the program empowered some participants beyond welfare benefits, by fostering a higher sense of confidence, new skills and an increased awareness of their roles beyond the traditional duties. For women who had no employment opportunity, their involvement in the program challenged the long held gender roles as they engaged in works typically associated with men, as they began to question and redefine their perceived roles in their spheres. For women with prior economic opportunity, some form of education and social connections, they were able to turn the gains of the program into new opportunities as indicated by participants who were recommended to take up roles at the forestry commission as planting agent and another women foreman at a construction site.

Also the study revealed that, younger women usually found the program more demanding physically, they however were more eager to learn new skill and saw the program as an avenue to advance whereas older women on the other hand were physically constrained by the demanding nature of activities. To them, the program was a necessity than an opportunity for advancement. Differences in age, family responsibilities, education, physical abilities shaped each woman's experience.

Participation/mobilization is the action level built based on the level of conscientization or realization (Longwe, 2000). The LIPW program offered women in these remote areas opportunities to engage in community-building activities, fostering a sense of agency and belonging. One surprising finding was the degree of solidarity and mutual support that the women experienced as a result of participating in the LIPW program. Participants reported feeling a sense of togetherness and collective identity as they worked together towards a common goal. Findings revealed that, through this avenue, women beneficiaries organized themselves into groups whereby the objective was to collectively support each other, fight for their rights, common interest and goals. According

to a participant's account the formation of these women association provided them the platform to financially support each other when in need and also to advocate for opportunities for other women to participate in the program as suggested when asked to make recommendations for future enhancement of the program. This sense of belonging and peer support provided emotional and social benefits beyond tangible economic gains

While the Framework accounts for individual empowerment levels such as welfare, access and control, it overlooks the role of relational dynamics in empowerment. This finding reveals that, empowerment is not solely an individual journey, it is often strengthened or constrained by social interactions and community ties.

The control level, which involves the ability to make decisions and exercise power over one's life, is less evident in the participant's experience. Participants reported gaining confidence and competence in areas they had previously felt inexperienced, such as tool usage and also their ability to utilize the basic skills in the future. This skill acquisition is crucial for long-term empowerment, as it enhances women's capacity to participate more fully in economic activities and decision-making processes (Kabeer, 2005). The program facilitated access to opportunities. Several participants indicated that their involvement in the LIPW program opened doors to other employment and business opportunities, demonstrating the program's role in enhancing access to economic resources. According to Molyneux (2006), such access is fundamental to achieving broader gender equality and empowerment.

Although they gained confidence, skill acquisition relevant for future opportunities and a degree of respect within the community, their control over resources and decision-making processes, both within the household and the broader community, remained limited. Which suggests that while the LIPW program provided initial steps toward empowerment, additional support and opportunities are needed to help participants achieve higher levels of control and autonomy.

The study revealed that directing resources to women through public employment schemes offers limited, temporary benefits and risks reinforcing gender inequalities failing to address issues like asset control, lack of influence in resource allocation and discrimination in decision making processes.

4.5 Recommendations for Enhancing Future Programs

Participants provided several recommendations for improving the LIPW program based on their experiences. Participants were quick to suggest a number of recommendations especially on the aspect of remuneration. They indicated that, it serve them better if their wages were increased and came without delay. Others also suggested, the need for refresher training to enable them take up

emerging challenges. A participant stated proposed that, *“I think it would help if we had more training, especially on how to handle emergencies at the dam. Also, better tools would make a big difference”* (Participant 14, Mansin).

Another participant from Tweapease (Participant 6) proposed that personal safety are critical needs of participants that need to be considered. *“I suggest they provide us with good protective gears and also arrangement for our children whiles we work, also it is difficult to watch the children while we are busily working”*.

Discussions

Based on participant’s report about the program, several suggestions were made to improve the LIPW program in Tano South and other participating rural communities. From the responses, there was the need for a comprehensive training that goes beyond the immediate task at hand, which offers participants with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge that could benefit them even after the end of the program. This resonant the assertions of Subbarao et al. (2012), who emphasizes that, training in diverse fields can increase significantly the long term benefits of the program.

Further, increasing participants’ remuneration to reflect actual work done and efforts of was the major suggestion based on feedback from participants. Greater compensation commensurate with work done does not only enhance immediate welfare of participants but translates into increased ability of participants to invest in long term goals like venturing into small enterprises and other opportunities. This affirms the report of Beegle et al. (2017), who emphasizes the significances of adequate compensation in attaining the objectives of social protection programs.

Payment delays was also a major concern for all the participants as they suggested an urgent need for a well-structured payment system that ensures prompt payment of remuneration in order to make program attractive for others to also join.

Finally, asserted the need for their involvement in all aspects of the program that is, from the inception and design stages to implementation stage particularly regarding decisions. According to Kabeer (1999), the involvement of participants in decisions that revolves around them is a crucial aspect of empowerment process. She indicated that it shifts the dynamics of power and provides participants to influence outcomes that affect their lives. By ensuring that women are fully involved by having a voice in how programs are design and executed, it enhances their sense of ownership and control which is the highest level of empowerment in the Longwe empowerment framework.

The research explored the findings of the study revealed that

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Conclusion

The research examined the contributions of the LIPW program on participating women in the Tano South Municipality through the application of the Longwe's women empowerment framework as a theoretical lens for analysis. The study assessed the strategies adopted for the implementation of the program, explored the experiences of participating women beneficiaries of the program as well as provided possible suggestions for enhancing the LIPW program and future interventions by the government and development practitioners.

Findings of the study revealed that, the LIPW program supported women beneficiaries in several important ways including, enhancing their wellbeing, increasing their resource access as well as raising their awareness of gender equality. The program offered the participating rural women with livelihood opportunities which significantly improved their living conditions and provided basic training that contributed to their skill development. It also created a sense of community and mutual respect among participants which strengthened their empowerment. The study however revealed that attaining a deeper and more sustainable empowerment in terms of participation/mobilization and control is still limited. Although the program assisted women to gain confidence and skills, further efforts are required to ensure they have a voice in decision making and access to opportunities that continue beyond the duration of the program.

The LIPW program has been an effective tool for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of rural women in the Tano South. However, to fully realize its potential, the program must evolve to address the systemic challenges identified and to support women's progression through all levels of empowerment. Enhancements in training, remuneration, and participatory mechanisms will be crucial in ensuring that the program not only meets the immediate needs of rural women but also empowers them to shape their futures.

5.1 Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of the LIPW program in empowering rural women;

1. To ensure that the benefits of the LIPW program extend beyond the immediate employment, it is recommended that the training provided be expanded to include skills that can be applied in various contexts. This could include entrepreneurial training, financial literacy, and advanced

vocational skills, enabling women to pursue additional opportunities after their participation in the LIPW program.

2. Decentralise some bureaucratic administrative aspects such as payments of wages to allow implementing districts to take charge of payments, rectify all payment issues ensure prompt payment of wages to beneficiaries since the monetary benefits attracted majority of the beneficiaries.
3. The study found that the current level of remuneration is insufficient given the physical demands of the work. To improve the economic impact of the program, it is recommended that the remuneration be increased to better reflect the assigned tasks. Also there is the need for participants to partake in decisions regarding the setting of the wage rates to ensure rates commensurate with work done by beneficiaries. Higher pay would not only improve participants' immediate welfare but also enable them to invest in long-term goals such as education and small business ventures.
4. Also, Empowerment is deeply connected to having a voice in decision-making processes. It is recommended that the LIPW program involve participants in the planning and implementation stages of the projects. This could be achieved through the formation of women's committees that provide input on program activities, ensuring that the projects reflect the needs and aspirations of the women involved.
5. Institute a continuous learning platform where both beneficiaries and project staff meet regularly to share experiences and also learn. This will provide an avenue for continuous learning by both new and old participants and staff.
6. Institute an avenue for prompt response of safety concerns particularly with respects to personal protective equipment's to ensure the safety of labourers and supply robust logistics to ensure the smooth implementation of programs.
7. It is recommended that the program provide additional support, such as childcare services. This would enable more women to participate fully without compromising their family responsibilities.
8. To ensure broader participation and to reach more vulnerable women in the country, it is recommended that the program is scaled up to cover more districts to ensure that poverty is reduced.

The implementation of the outlined recommendations indicated above can further strengthen the LIPW program's role in empowering rural women, by helping them to achieve greater economic independence, social recognition, and control over their lives. Ultimately, such

improvements would contribute to the broader goal of gender equality and sustainable development in rural communities.

Appendix A

Interview Guide: LIPW Women Participants

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Can you please tell me your age?
2. What is your marital status?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. How long have you lived in this community?

Section 2: Program Implementation

5. How did you initially hear about the program?
6. How were you selected/recruited? Can you elaborate on the process?
7. What motivated you to join the program?
8. Did you receive any form of training before participation in the program?
9. Describe the program activity you are engaged in?
10. How were you remunerated? Kindly describe the mode of remuneration?

Section 3: Experiences of Women (Cultural, Social, Economic dimension)

11. What changes have you realized since joining the program? Please share with me.
12. What socio-cultural changes or perspective have you experienced due to the program?
13. How has the program influenced your relation within community?
14. What skills or knowledge have you acquired through the program? Please explain.
15. How has the program influenced your access to other opportunities? Please explain.
16. What are some challenges you have encountered while participating in the program?

Section 3: Recommendations

17. Based on your experience with the program, what suggestions will you propose to improve the program?

Appendix B

Interview guide for LIPW Program Implementers

1. Describe the implementation process of the Ghana LIPW program?
2. What is your role in the implementation process?
3. What are some challenges encountered in the program implementation?
4. How can the Ghana LIPW program be improved?

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