

Land restoration and changing gender dynamics in the drylands of eastern Kenya

Mary Crossland, PhD student
Bangor University
afp43d@bangor.ac.uk

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Ana Maria Paez-Valencia¹, Tim Pagella², Christine Magaju¹, Anne Kuria¹, John Nyaga¹, Leigh Winowieck², Fergus Sinclair^{1,2}
¹World Agroforestry (ICRAF), Nairobi, Kenya; ²Bangor University, Bangor, UK



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The land restoration project

IFAD-EC funded project:

“Restoration of degraded land for food security and poverty reduction in East Africa and the Sahel: taking successes in land restoration to scale”

Research ‘in’ development and options by context

approach through working in collaboration with development partners to systematically testing promising options across a range of contexts (Coe at al., 2014)

Over **2000 farmers across three counties and six sites in eastern Kenya** conducting on-farm trials of planting ba: and tree planting practices



Research Questions

How do these technologies influence how men/women allocate their **time and labour**?

What are the implications of these changes on other **off-and on-farm activities**?

What are the **decision-making dynamics** around these technologies?

To what extent do men/women have **access to and control over** the income and produce from these technologies?

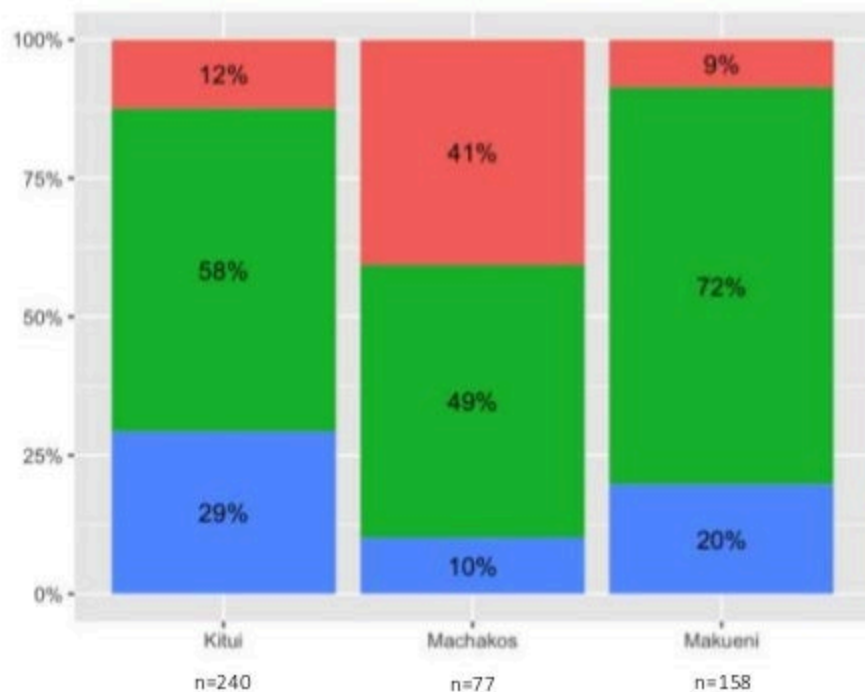
Does the adoption of these technologies affect how **farm decisions** are made?

How does all the above vary in the **context of male out-migration**?

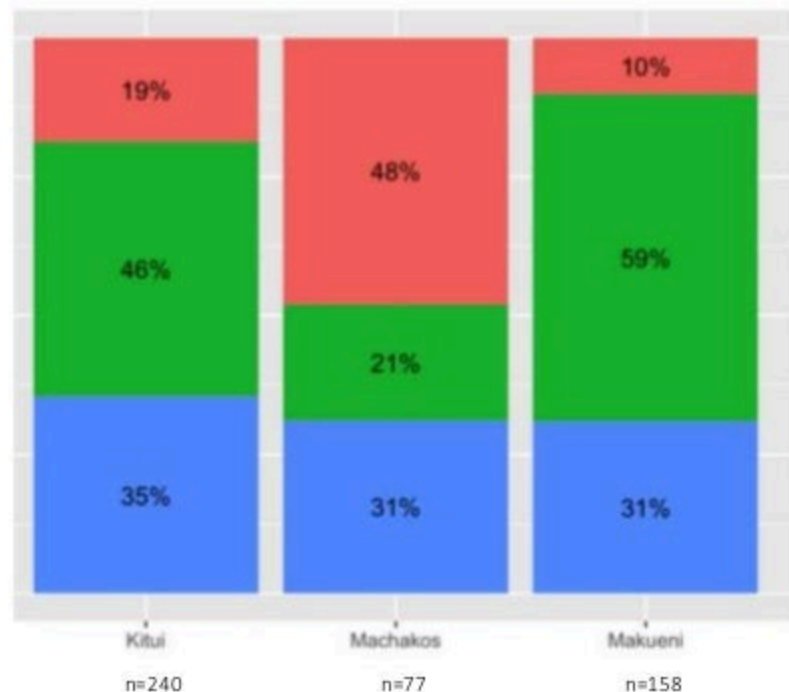


Who is involved in land preparation using planting basins and farmers' usual practice

Usual farming practice



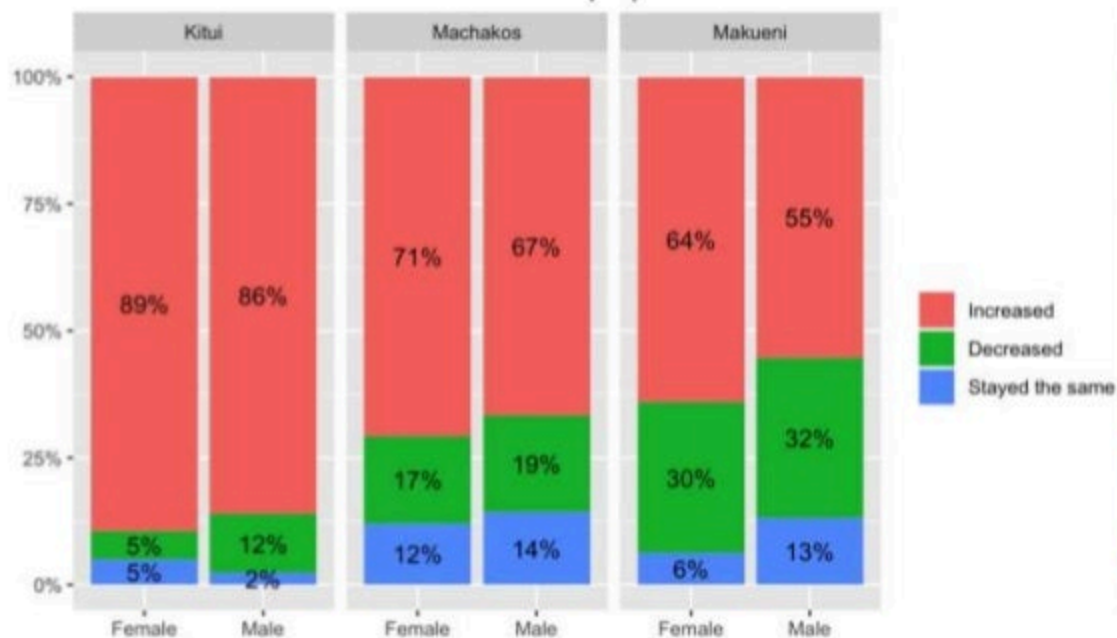
Planting basins



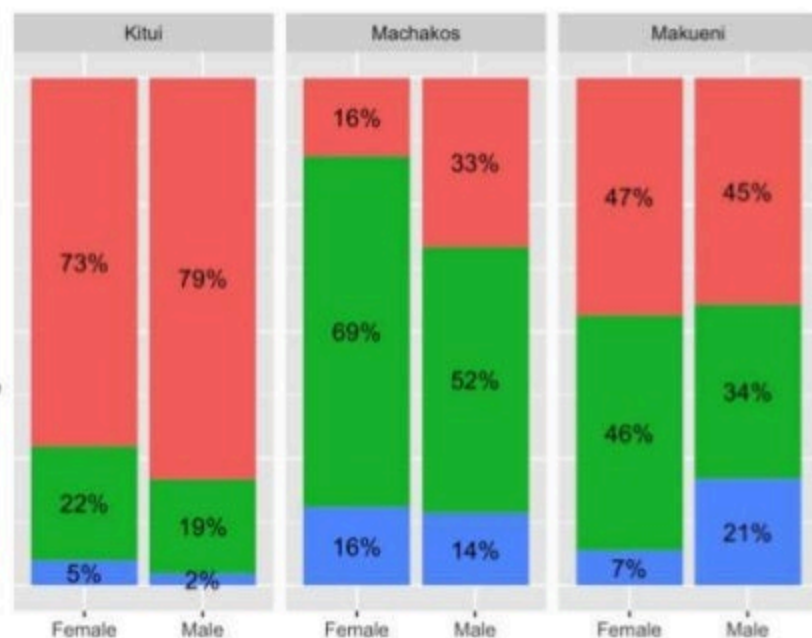
A potential shift in labour between men and women? Are basins increasing labour burden for women or providing autonomy to carry out farming activities that usually require male assistance (e.g., ploughing)?

Have basins changed the amount of time spent on the farm or preparing land?

Time spent preparing land



Overall time spent on farm



Basins increase time taken to prepare land but have advantages in reducing the time spent weeding throughout the growing season – an activity predominantly carried out by women.



Decision-making dynamics

Interviews to explore decisions over the uptake and management of land restoration technologies and control over the use of produce and income from them

- Women have different levels of autonomy over decisions depending on the type of decision being made and level of resources involved (i.e., labour and land)
- Different types of consultation and negotiations between husband and wife - from simply informing their partners of a decision to explicitly asking for permission.

"I was reluctant to embrace the idea but my wife moved fast and implemented the basins on our farm. Therefore, after I saw the idea was productive I had to allow my wife to make decisions of how many [basins] to dig at a particular season. Fortunately, with time I also joined [the] trainings and we were able to flock together."

Male farmer, Makueni County

Decision-making dynamics

Women have gained increased agency and participation in household decisions over the past five years due to:

- Women's increased participation in agricultural trainings and development projects
- Changes in laws and awareness regarding domestic violence and women's rights
- Increased education and awareness of gender equality

Women attend trainings, gain knowledge, implement new practices, and when shown to be productive, may gain more freedom to make decisions regarding the practice and greater participation in farming decisions



Ladder of power and freedom. Adapted from CGAIR GENNOVATE, 2018



Decision-making dynamics

Positive perceptions around joint decision making

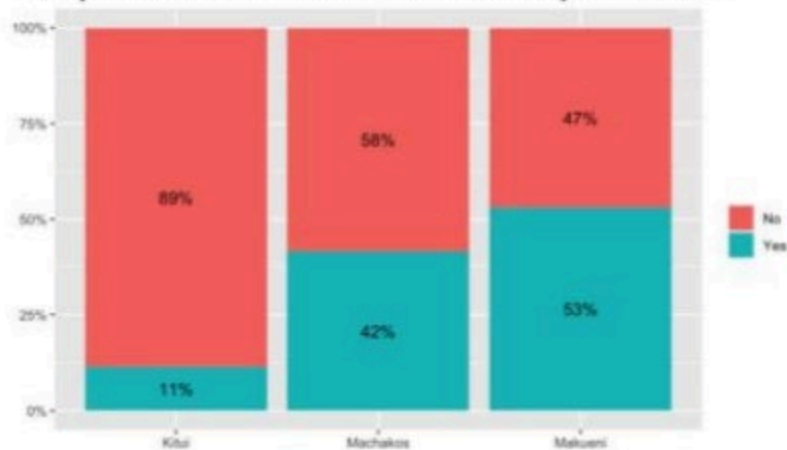
- Seen as more positive/desirable than individual decision-making
- Thought to reduce conflict and efforts are made to avoid disagreement, especially over farming decisions which are often time sensitive
- Strategic in nature - those who feel included in a decision are more likely to contribute their labour

Decision-making dynamics varied with the presence of men within the household and whether the husband worked away.

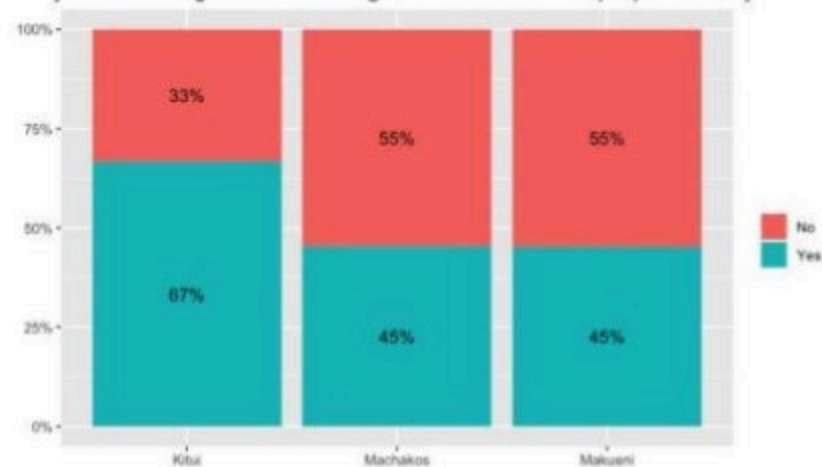
- Women in households where men work away may have more control over small financial decisions such as selling a goat, when and what to plant in the farm
- Others still consult with their husbands over the phone

Land restoration amid male out-migration

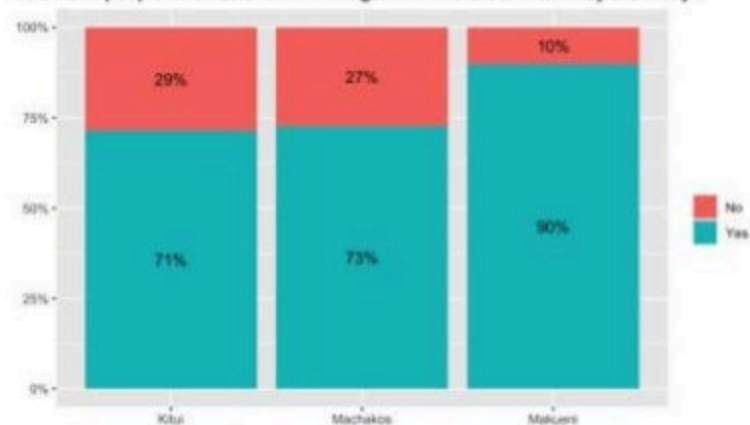
Do any household members leave for some months of the year to earn cash?



Do you have enough labour to manage the farm when these people are away?



Are these people involved in farm management decisions when they are away?



Key messages

Land restoration is often labour and knowledge intensive and presents both risks and opportunities for women.

Important to consider wider demographic and societal changes within which land restoration is occurring and how this affects not only access to labour but also how farming decisions are made

Women are gaining more access to information and trainings and receiving technical support, influencing their bargaining power

Male out-migration may lead men to renegotiate decision-making power, with women gaining more agency over certain farming decisions



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