

Gender Equity in Participation in Land Cases Decision-Making Bodies in Tanzania: Evidence from Ward Tribunals

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Abstract

Participation in decision-making is one of the aspects of Sustainable Development and African Agenda 2063. Gender equity in decision-making bodies in Tanzania is considered a right and a tool for women's empowerment. In Tanzania, the law encourages women's and men's involvement in land case decision-making bodies. However, women's participation is not socially recognized. The study examines gender equity in participation in the Tindiga Ward Tribunal in the Kilosa District. Data were collected through documentary reviews, interviews, and Focus Group Discussions. Purposive sampling was adopted in selecting the study participants and data were analyzed through content analysis (gathering opinions and concepts within the obtained data). The findings indicated that in Tindiga Ward Tribunal both men and women were represented in the composition of the members and quorum of the meetings as stipulated by law. Village meetings were found to be the best means of informing community members about their rights to participate in decision-making bodies. There was a claim that low levels of education and socio-cultural norms blocked women's rights to apply for the membership position in the Ward Tribunal. The study concludes that in Tanzania, gender equity in participating in land case decision-making bodies is partial. Policies promoting gender equity in land decision-making should not ignore the role of education and cultural practices that constrain such equity for the good of the whole society.

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1. Introduction

Equity is not a new concept but a step towards achieving equality. Chelimo (2023) conceptualizes equity as a fair treatment where equals should be treated equally and the differences in the treatment should be “fair”. Gender equity pertains to giving equal weight to the diverse behaviors, aspirations, and needs of both men and women. It indicates that a person's opportunities, rights, and duties are unaffected by whether they were born male or female; it does not imply that men and women must become equal.

Kolm (1971) provides the concepts of fundamental and partial equity. According to Kolm, when equity is not essential, it refers to partial equity. Fundamentals involve the same identity for all members of society. There is fundamental equity if the individual's states belong to the same indifference class. Gender equity in decision-making is an increasingly important aspect of the international community and is one of the ways of empowering women. Skene (2021) has defined empowerment as the expansion of people’s ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in a context where this ability has been denied to them. Women’s empowerment is highlighted in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and African Agenda 2063 which has been recognized as one way to suppress discrimination practices against women.

The principle of gender equity requires that women as men have equal opportunity in decision-making bodies and failure to do so undermines the traditional legitimacy of such bodies (Tøraasen, 2023). Worldwide, women are underrepresented in land decision-making positions compared to men. Policies aiming at achieving gender equality encourage women and men to participate in decision-making organs (Profeta, 2017). Participation is the involvement of people in decisions that affect their lives (Shi, et al., 2023). Participation is a core aspect of open democratic societies, it is regarded as a right against discrimination, particularly for most marginalized groups (Lukumay & Patrick, 2019). Participation allows people to identify the strategies for action, and create unity to effect change. Despite the importance of gender equity in decision-making, in third-world countries women lack decision power to some extent (Zahra & Ansari, 2014). In the context of land rights, women are powerful actors in change and have more say in influencing decisions (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017). However, they are denied such opportunities as the result of gender discrimination resulting in low levels of decision-making and little participation in land management and governance structures (Halolen, 2023; Genda, 2024).

Some international frameworks advocate for gender equity and participation in land decisions. Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries, and forests in the context of food security (VGGT) of 2022, emphasize legal recognition and allocation of land rights and duties to create equitable land access to women. Section 9.2 of VGGT provides that local or traditional institutions should encourage the effective participation of men, women, and youth in decisions regarding their tenure systems. Africa is committed to addressing equitable participation in deciding on land issues. Large-scale land-based investment in Africa (principal No. 4) encourages respect for women's land rights, recognizes their voice, generates meaningful opportunities for women alongside men, and does not worsen the marginalization of women. A framework and guidelines on land policy in Africa (2010) promotes equitable participation in land administration structure. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that gender equity in decision-making and leadership at all levels is one of the aspects of democracy. Gender equity may increase women’s power in negotiations within the households and at a societal level.

Under the customary land tenure system, gender equity in decision-making is complex. Such complexity arises from community norms and values (Doss & Meinzen-Dick, 2020).

Literature has discussed unequal gender access to land where women lack involvement in the decision-making at family and community levels and rarely participate in decision-making meetings (Kandusi & Waiganjo, 2015). In some communities, women may enjoy decision power over production while others are disempowered in deciding on land. The nature of gender inequality varies across countries and the conditions to create equity in deciding on land may vary. For example, Southeast Asian women have more relative decision-making power to control their earnings differing from other developing countries (IFAD, 2013; Akter, et al., 2016). Gender equity in decision-making must start at home (Knapman & Sutz, 2015). Within the family, a person who participates in land management has decision-making power. Some women own land jointly (husband and wife) and may not participate in decision-making on land use (Mwaura-Namubiru, 2014).

Literature argues that gender equity in decision-making is one of the aspects of land rights. Yunxian (2013) suggests that land rights comprise three aspects; legally recognizable, socially recognizable, and enforceable by external authorities. If one of these elements is missing, the right is incomplete. It remains questionable whether the African norm is gender-neutral or accepts gender equity in decision-making. Traditional practices regarding access to and control of land in rural Africa often disadvantage women. In certain areas, despite national laws promoting gender equity in place, women have no right to decide on land, and men (as heads of the family) hold all decision-making power over the land. Societal perceptions deny women's right to decide on land, whereas in most rural areas' women are seen as bound to be in charge of household welfare only (Mwaura-Namubiru, 2014). Participation in decision-making is a catalyst for sustainable development and social justice (Asuako, 2020). According to Bayisenge (2018), gender equity in land rights can empower women and improve their social and political status. In a democracy, gender equity in decision-making bodies allows equal representation of every part which may reduce conflicts through collaborative decisions. Traditionally in Tanzania, it is uncommon to involve women in deciding for land matters at household or village levels. However, land laws advocate gender equity in decision-making bodies.

2. Law and gender equity in decision-making

In Tanzania, efforts to enhance gender equity in decision-making bodies were the product of the Constitutional reform in the 1990s where quotas in parliament and Local Councils were introduced (Misafi, 2014). The government has taken legislative steps to increase the number of women representations in land decision-making bodies. Information about the rights of women's participation in decision-making can be found in several sources such as Legislation, regulations, and Legal Provisions. The National Land Advisory Council established by the Land Act No. 4 of 1999, consists of seven members three of whom are women appointed by the Minister (S.17 (1& 2 and Regulation 3). The main function of the Village Council is to manage all land issues within the village boundaries. The Village Council is composed of 15-25 democratically elected members. The quorum for validating decisions requires half of the Council members to attend the meeting. The Local Government (District Authorities) Act, 1982 requires a minimum of one-fourth of Council members to be women.

One of the challenges facing Tanzania is land disputes originating from the population pressure and the increased land value. The country is experiencing an increase in land resource-based disputes due to the country's decreasing land supply, affecting both rural and urban areas (Gwaleba & Silayo, 2019). The boundary disputes in Katavi region (Khamis, 2022), conflict between farmers and pastoralists in Kilosa District (Semiono & Niboye, 2019), and disputes between investors and local people such as in Geita Gold mine (Balula, 2019). The Land Dispute Courts Act of 2002 established formal administrative organs for resolving land disputes including the Village Land Council, The Ward Tribunal, and the District Land and Housing Tribunal, with jurisdiction over land matters in the district, region, or zone in which it is established, the High Court, and the Court of Appeal comprising of both men and women. The Village Land Council was established under section 67 (1)(e) of the Village Land Act (1999) which consists of not less than five and not more than seven persons of which not less than two women (S. 60 of Village Land Act, 1999). The village Adjudication Committee shall comprise at least six but not more than nine persons, three of whom are women (Section 53 (1&2) of the Village Land Act, 1999).

In the country, studies have noted gender equity in quotas in village institutions (Moyo, 2017; Sutz, et al., 2019). In other cases, there is a lack of gender equity in participation in the Village Land decision-making bodies. In studying women's land rights and Village Institutions in Tanzania, Genicot & Benito-de-Hernandez (2022) observed that women are less actively participating in Village Assembly meetings and their opinions were rarely heard. This may be attributed to gender roles where women hold heavy workloads in caring for families and performing domestic activities, limiting their time to attend the scheduled meetings. Some rural women in Tanzania have been restricted from attending Village Land Council meetings because of the gendered division of labour in the households (Massay 2017; Kiambu, 2016; Misafi, 2014). This implies that equity in decision-making may be a challenge where male ideology is dominant.

The most preferred land dispute resolution organ in rural areas of Tanzania is a Ward Tribunal, unlike other traditional systems such as agreements involving villagers, family meetings, and religious institutions (Umar & Nyanga 2022). However, no serious study has explored gender equity in participating in land case decision-making in Ward Tribunals. The Ward Tribunal Act of 1985 encourages men and women to decide on land cases. Although laws guarantee gender equity to participate in land decision-making, women generally participate less actively than men at Ward Tribunals. A study conducted in the Dodoma and Mbeya regions in Tanzania by Mwamlangala (2019) found that husbands and families were not allowing women to participate in Ward Tribunals for decision-making. In addition, Mwamlangala (2019) found that in villages women were less involved in Tribunals due to fear of applying for membership positions in such Tribunals. This paper aimed to explore gender equity in participation in land decision-making bodies in Tanzania by drawing evidence from the Tindiga Ward Tribunal in Kilosa District. The findings of this study contribute to the efforts to attain inclusive society and socioeconomic development in Africa.

The feminist theory guided the study. Feminist theories first emerged as early as 1792 in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft in Europe. There are different tenets of feminist theory including radical feminism, liberal feminism, Marxian feminism, and socialist feminism, they share a common idea of gender equality and empowerment of women (Usmani, et al., 2014).

Feminists claim that patriarchy is the main source of gender inequality and suggest the reconstruction of society through abolishing patriarchy and empowering women economically, politically, and socially (Mardiyani & Tawami, 2022). Women face gendered stereotyped roles, particularly in households in society and they are regarded as weak and viewed as second class to men (Urassa, 2023). This theory was relevant because in many African societies' women are powerless to decide on land matters due to the community's negative attitudes. The theory advocates for changes in society to empower women which is the aim of policies aiming to suppress gender discrimination and create a just society.

3. The Ward Tribunal

A ward tribunal was established under the Ward Tribunal Act, of 1985 as a court with jurisdiction over land valued at three million dollars to bring a satisfactory solution to both parties (Alfred, 2019). It investigates and adjudicates issues under the Land Act of 1999 and the Village Land Act of 1999. The primary duty of the Ward Tribunal is to maintain peace and harmony by resolving disputes and reaching mutually agreeable resolutions on land-related issues (Balula, 2019). The Ward Committee appoints the members of the Tribunal and there shall be a Secretary to the Tribunal who also shall be appointed by the local government where the tribunal belongs (Ngemera, 2017). The Village Land Act(1999) encourages men's and women's involvement in the Ward Tribunal. The Ward Tribunal shall comprise not less than four and not more than eight members of whom three are women elected by the Ward Committee (S. 10&11 of the Land Disputes Court Act No. 2 of 2002).

The quorum in mediation of disputes in the ward tribunal must composed of three members with at least one (1) woman. Section 5 (1) of the Ward Tribunal Act (1985) provides that, no person is entitled to be nominated a member of the Ward Tribunal if he/she is; (i) a member of the National Assembly (ii) a member of Village Council or a Ward Committee (iii) a Civil Servant (iv) a legally qualified person or any person who is employed in the judiciary (v) a person wider the apparent age of eighteen years (vi) a mentally unfit person (vii) a person who has previously been convicted of a criminal offense involving moral turpitude (viii) a person who is not a citizen of the United Republic of Tanzania. According to Section 5 (1) of the Ward Tribunal Act (1985), no person shall be recommended as a secretary of the Ward Tribunal unless he/she is, in the opinion of the Ward Committee sufficiently literate educated, and capable of satisfactorily discharging the duties of the Secretary. Section 6 (1) of the Ward Tribunal Act (1985) spells the duration of a Ward Tribunal Member which is three years from the date of election and shall be eligible for re-election.

4. Methodology

4.1 Area of the study

The Kilosa District lies between 6° and $8^{\circ}S$ and between $36^{\circ} 30'$ and $38^{\circ}E$ (Kilosa District Council Profile, 2010). The Kilosa District Council has a total area of 12,394 square kilometers, of which 536,580 hectares is arable land used for agriculture (The Kilosa District Council Strategic Plan 2020). Given the statistics in the national census, the population of Kilosa District recorded 438,175 in 2012 and the number rose to 617,032 in 2022. Kilosa District has a history of resource-related conflict in tenure and management resulting in the death of many people. For example, the Kilosa district conflict in 2000 when the Maasai Warriors attacked the Rudewa Mbuyuni village resulted in 38 farmers' deaths and wounded many others (Benjaminsen, et al., 2009). In Kilosa District, the conflict between farmers and

Pastoralists is due to competition for fertile land, and poor land laws and regulations enforcement (Luanda, 2020).

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Malui and Tindiga Villages. The District Land Officer and a Ward Executive Officer (WEO) facilitated the selection of these villages. A study adopted the qualitative approach which allowed to explore the existing land disputes, the resolution mechanisms of such disputes, and experiences on the involvement of women in the decision-making in resolving such cases in the Ward Tribunal. Specific questions were: To what extent are women and men involved in the decision-making bodies? What are the existing strategies to inform community members about their rights to participate in decision-making bodies? What issues constrain the community members from being members of the Ward Tribunal? Data collection involved a review of documents related to the land dispute resolution organs, and gender equity in participation in the decision-making bodies including land laws and regulations, books, and reports from previous studies. Primary data were obtained through interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

A total of 40 community members (16 from Malui and 24 from Tindiga villages) were conveniently selected from July to August 2024. Malui Village is located 15 kilometers from Kilosa town. The village was established in 1975. Malui is bordered by Kivungu village in the south, Mkonda river in the north, Tindiga village in the east and Magomeni village in the West. Tindiga Village is located 17 km from Kilosa town. It was established in 1974. Tindiga village is bordered by Kivungu village in the south, Malangali village in the north, Mikumi village in the east and Malui village in the west. Purposive sampling was used to select 4 key informants (2 women and 2 men) and officials including 2 Village Executive Officers (men), 4 members of a Ward Tribunal (2 men and 2 women), and a Tindiga Ward Tribunal Secretary (man). The study comprised 4 focus group discussions. There were 2 groups of women of different sizes (10 and 7 participants). The 2 groups of men were composed of (8 and 7) participants. Content analysis was used to analyze data, where summaries of emerging opinions and concepts were made and conclusions were drawn.

One of the challenges in the study is the lack of previous data (before 2024) related to gender equity in decision-making meetings in the Tindiga Ward Tribunal. This was because the Tribunal is based on a new building that became operational four months before the study and the office is still under construction. The floods in Tindiga village in late 2023 led to the loss of many files and data. The researchers took the available data.

5. The Research Findings and Discussion

5.1 Demographic characteristics of the participants

The study employed more females than males. The ages of participants ranged from 31 to 72. The age mean was 53. Ages were categorized into two: 53 or below and 54 or above. The study consisted of more participants aged 53 years or below and a few aged 54 years and above. More participants were married than those who were single and widowed. More participants had a primary level of education, few were not educated, and very few had adult education (Table 1).

Table 1 Socio-economic characteristics of the studied participants

Characteristic	No.
Sex: Female	28
Males	12
Age (years): 53 or below	26
54 or above	14
Marital Status: Married	30
Single	5
Widow	4
Widower	1
Education: Primary	30
None	8
Adult Education	2

Source: Field data 2024

6. Gender equity in the land cases decision-making

6.1 Composition of Ward Tribunal

The study found that the Tindiga ward Tribunal comprised 7 members (4 men and 3 women). This finding implies that the composition of Ward Tribunals in Tindiga is consistent with the Village Land Act (1999) which emphasizes gender equity by involving men and women in land case decision-making bodies. Other scholars for example (Halolen, 2023) acknowledge that in many cases, women are underrepresented in decision-making organs. However, the Tindiga Ward Tribunal took into consideration women's representation in deciding on land cases. In Tanzania specifically in Tindiga, the nomination of a Ward Tribunal member is guided by the conditions provided in section 5(1) of the Ward Tribunal Act (1985). In addition, the nominated members shall be able to read and write and a Ward Tribunal Secretary must have completed ordinary secondary education (Form Four) regardless of gender. It is questionable if in Tanzania men and women hold the same qualifications to participate in land case decision-making bodies.

6.2 The Existing Land Disputes

The study found that out of the 40 community members studied, 26 had entered land disputes (time was not specified). The findings indicate that in Malui and Tindiga villages, land disputes reported were those related to boundaries, farmers and pastoralists, double sales, double rent, and inheritance (Table 2).

Table 2 Reported Land Disputes in Malui and Tingiga Villages

Dispute	Frequency per villages		Total
	Malui	Tindiga	
Boundary	8	7	15
Farmers and pastoralists	5	3	8
Double sell	0	1	1
Double Rent	0	1	1
Inheritance	0	1	1

Source: Fieldwork 2024.

The findings indicate that boundary disputes were common in the studied area. This was attributed to the lack of permanent boundaries where some people exceeded their boundaries and farmed their neighbor's land. One male participant in Malui village explained:

“.....there is a dispute with the neighboring family over where my land ends and theirs begins. We have been using the same boundary for years, but now they claim that I am encroaching on their territory.....”.

The study found that in the case study area, 13 community members presented disputes to Ward Tribunals, 8 to the Village Land Council, 1 to the heads of the clan and 4 did nothing. This is similar to Umar & Nyanga (2022) who suggest that the Ward Tribunal is the most preferred land dispute resolution organ. Interestingly, some community members found traditional systems such as clan meetings the best option for resolving such disputes. This is because, in many communities in Tanzania, land rights are embedded in traditional practices that are lawfully accepted. Although the study participants reported many land conflicts between farmers and pastoralists, it emerged that these cases were regarded as criminal and Ward Tribunals did not resolve them, they were reported to the Village Council because it is village land hence taken to the police and then resolved in the Court.

6.3 Involvement of men and women in mediating land disputes

The study found that complaints were received in a Ward Tribunal preferred in writing; the Ward Tribunal Secretary issued summons to the parties involved in the complaint requiring them to attend before the Tribunal on the specified date. The Secretary conveyed the meeting to hear the case. It was noted that in the Tindiga Ward Tribunal, gender equity in mediating land cases was given attention. Consistency to the law, the quorum for the Ward Tribunal disputes resolution meeting was 3 people and 1 person should be a woman.

“Unless there is at least 1 woman, the ward tribunal meeting to resolve the land dispute shall never be conducted, and in case of absence of a chairperson, the attendees can choose one member to chair the meeting” (interview with a Ward Tribunal Secretary on 17/7/2024).

The Ward Tribunal mediated the parties, and if a case was not resolved, it was referred to the District and Housing Tribunal for further decision. The study found that 6 (4 boundary, 1 double sell, and 1 double rent) cases were received in the Tindiga Ward Tribunal from January to June 2024 where 4 cases were resolved and 2 were referred to the District and Housing Tribunal. In attending such cases, 14 meetings were conducted which involved both men and women (Table 3).

Table 3 Land cases received in Tindiga Ward Tribunal January-June 2024

Boundary Disputes (3 cases)		Members attended (N)	
		Men	women
Case 1	Meeting 1	4	2
	Meeting 2	3	1
	Meeting 3	3	1
Case 2	Meeting 1	2	1
	Meeting 2	2	1
	Meeting 3	2	1
Case 3	Meeting 1	3	1
	Meeting 2	4	1
	Meeting 3	3	1
Case 4	Meeting 1	4	1
	Meeting 2	3	1
Double Sell Dispute (1 case)			
	Meeting 1	3	1
	Meeting 2	3	2
Double Rent Dispute (1 case)			
	Meeting 1	3	1

Source: Tindiga Ward Tribunal Register, 2024

These findings reveal that gender equity in participation in meetings to resolve land cases in the Tindiga Ward Tribunal was in line with the law. One of the notable issues was that few women participated in meetings compared to their composition in the Ward Tribunal. Out of 14 meetings, only 2 were attended by 2 women while only one woman attended other meetings. This is attributed to the gendered division of labour, where women mainly performed domestic activities which constrained active participation in other tasks outside their households.

“Women's participation in Ward Tribunal meetings is limited by time as they stay at home, taking care of the families and the situation is critical during tiling and planting the crops although they tend to present with apology for other reasons such as illness” (Interview with a female Ward Tribunal Member on 17/7/2024).

6.4 Strategies to promote gender equity in decision-making

Findings observed that village meetings were the main strategy used to promote gender equity and participation in decision-making bodies. During the village meetings, the Village Executive Officers in Malui and Tindiga informed the villagers about the Ward Tribunal's responsibilities and their rights to participate in decision-making in such a body, and they encouraged them to apply for the membership post. Although it is a democracy for every person to be a member of a ward tribunal, it was reported that more men than women tended to apply for that position.

“We convene the Village meetings where one of the agenda is to encourage everyone regardless of gender to be a member of a Ward Tribunal. Many men show up to apply for the Ward Tribunal membership, women are shy and the majority have low levels of education” (Interview with Malui Village Executive Officer on 18/7/2024).

Similar views emerged from the interview with the Tindiga Village Executive Officer on 19/8/2024 who remarked that:

“In village meetings, community members are informed about the qualifications and the procedures to apply for the Ward Tribunal member. Some women in the village have low levels of education and fail to qualify for the position of Ward Tribunal member and some attend village meetings rarely”.

These findings imply partial equity in participating in decision-making in Ward Tribunals. This is similar to Kolm (1971) who refers to partial equity as a different identity for members of the society.

The study found that out of 40 community members who were studied 12 reported that they were aware of their rights to participate in decision-making bodies. There were disparities in the opinions that were given where 5 (2 women and 3 men) provided that participating in making decisions in the Ward Tribunal is a human right, 4 reported being Tanzanian citizens (1 man, 3 women) and 3 men provided that it is freedom. This implies that both women and men were aware that participating in decision-making bodies is a right regardless of gender. This finding is consistent with Asuako (2020), who claims that participation in decision-making is one aspect of a right. Participants were asked to provide sources of information about the rights to participate in decision-making, 8 mentioned village meetings, and 4 mentioned storytelling by friends.

The study has revealed that education level is important because it influences participation in land case decision-making bodies and the procedures followed when resolving such cases. Among the studied population, more women were not educated (6) compared to men (2). Apart from the formal efforts by land officials to create awareness of gender equity in participating in deciding land cases, such equity was limited due to disparities in levels of education. This means that participation in decision-making bodies favors certain groups particularly the educated which is a critical problem among women compared to men.

Another constraint for attaining gender equity and participation in the Ward Tribunal was socio-cultural norms. Knapman & Sutz (2015) argue that gender equity must start at home where men and women should have equal rights in decision-making. However, this is not the case in many Tanzanian societies due to the complex traditional practices which discriminate

against women. In Malui and Tindiga villages, the study found that the issue of empowering women in families has been given little attention. Some women were qualified and willing to apply for the membership position in the Ward Tribunal but their husbands did not permit them. This claim is supported by a female participant in Tindiga village who said:

“... several times I expressed my concern to apply for the membership position in Ward Tribunal to my husband but it has appeared difficult for him to accept by arguing that he does not believe that I will influence anything in such body since ideas of women are weak”).

This implies that power relations may influence gender equity in participation in decision-making bodies. In Tanzania, laws advocate equity in land rights and discourage discriminatory practices against women. However, some women’s rights are constrained by cultural practices. Mwamlangala (2019) found that in Tanzania traditional practice is a barrier to women’s participation in land cases decision-making bodies. These findings criticize the existence of gender equity in participation in land case decision-making bodies. Feminist theorists argue that cultural norms are gender-biased, and women are powerless compared to men. The decision to participate in land cases decision-making bodies better represented by Ward Tribunals in Tanzania is male-centered. It is clear from the findings that the country has made progress in some men and women participating in Ward Tribunals. However, there is an experience beyond such numbers concerning gender equity in deciding land cases.

7. Conclusion

The paper explored gender equity in participation in decision-making bodies in Tanzania by drawing evidence from the Tindiga Ward Tribunal in Kilosa District. Based on the findings the study concludes that in line with law, gender equity was observed in the composition of the Tindiga Ward Tribunal which comprised of men and women. Gender equity was also observed in quorum meetings to mediate land disputes where both men and women were given attention. The study observed that participation in decision-making bodies in Tanzania is a right. The study found that in Malui and Tindiga villages human rights, being Tanzanian citizens, and freedom were the justification for the right to participate/be a member of the Ward Tribunal. In the case study area, the village meetings were the main strategy to inform community members about their rights to participate in decision-making. Some persons were also informed through the storytelling by their friends.

Findings show that education is a pre-condition to being a Ward Tribunal member. In the case study area, more women than men were not educated which constrains them from applying for the membership position in decision-making bodies. Gender equity in participation in decision-making bodies is an aspect of democracy. However, cultural practices undermined such democracy. Some husbands restricted their wives from applying for the membership position in a Ward Tribunal. The findings imply that gender equity in participating in land cases decision-making bodies is partial.

These findings have policy implications. In improving gender equity in decision-making bodies, the role of education should not be underestimated. Policies should address the concerns that influence the participation of women like men in deciding on land cases which may be a step toward achieving sustainable Development Goals 2030 and African Agenda 2063. To gain a real democratic society in decision-making, there is a need to combat the community’s negative attitude toward women. Gender equity as far as decision-making in the

households and land case decision-making bodies is concerned, is inevitable if any sound decision and action is taken for the good of the whole society.

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