International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

# Assessing the Barriers to Growth Among Women-Owned Businesses: A Case Study of Women Selling Vegetables and Second-Hand Clothes in Chilenje, Lusaka

**Arockia Anisha**
School of Education
Dmi-St. Eugene University, Zambia

***Abstract* – Enterprises owned by women are central to trade in Zambia's urban townships, yet they remain smaller, earn less and grow more slowly than those owned by men. This study assesses the barriers to growth among women-owned businesses in Chilenje, Lusaka, with particular reference to women trading in vegetables and in second-hand clothing. It pursued three objectives: to identify the barriers constraining growth, to examine the effects of those barriers on performance and growth, and to establish the strategies the owners use in order to work around them. A mixed-methods descriptive case-study design was adopted. A structured questionnaire was administered to a stratified sample of sixty women traders drawn equally from the two trades, and was supplemented by semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews and structured observation at the trading points. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively and comparatively, using means, frequencies, independent-samples t-tests and chi-square tests; qualitative data were analysed thematically. The study is framed by Kabeer's (1999) resources, agency and achievements framework, which treats a barrier as whatever obstructs the conversion of resources into outcomes. The findings show that the three finance-related barriers dominate both the severity ratings and the traders' own ranking of priorities: insufficient money for stock, lack of access to a bank or microfinance loan, and lack of collateral together occupy the first three positions on both measures. Only thirteen per cent of respondents had ever borrowed from a formal lender, while eighty-five per cent were unregistered and fifty-seven per cent relied instead on chilimba. Three barriers differed significantly between the trades: spoilage and storage pressed harder on vegetable traders, while the demands of home and childcare pressed harder on traders in second-hand clothing. Record keeping, the constraint most commonly addressed by training programmes, was ranked last of thirteen by the traders themselves. The study concludes that the binding constraint in Chilenje is not the absence of business knowledge but the absence of usable working capital on terms that unsecured, unregistered traders can meet, compounded by physical conditions at the trading point which convert a shortage of capital into a recurring loss of it. It recommends collateral-free working- capital products designed around the two distinct purchase cycles observed, investment by the local authority in covered and secured storage, and the formal recognition of chilimba groups as the delivery channel that traders already trust.**

*Keywords* - **women-owned businesses, barriers to growth, informal trade, working capital, chilimba, vegetables, second-hand clothing, salaula, Chilenje, Lusaka, Kabeer**

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Introduction: Women's Enterprise in the Trading Economy of Chilenje

### The Township Market as an Economic Institution

Chilenje is a residential township of Lusaka whose market is not merely a place where goods change hands but the principal economic institution of the neighbourhood. It supplies food and clothing to low-income households at prices they can meet, it absorbs labour that the formal economy does not, and it converts small sums of capital into daily income for several hundred households. This study begins from the position that the market is a productive system worth understanding in its own terms, and that the women who trade within it are business owners rather than recipients of welfare.

### The Contribution of Enterprises Owned by Women

Enterprises owned by women occupy a central place in the economies of developing countries and are particularly important in sub-Saharan Africa, where a substantial proportion of trading activity is conducted by women operating on a small scale. Such enterprises provide employment for the owner and frequently for one or two others, and they support the education, the nutrition and the health of the households that depend upon them. The literature has established that income passing through the hands of women is more likely than income controlled by men to be applied to the welfare of children, so that the performance of these enterprises carries consequences well beyond the enterprise itself.

### The Persistent Disparity in Enterprise Outcomes

Despite this contribution, a consistent pattern has been recorded across countries. Businesses owned by women tend to remain smaller than those owned by men, to earn less, to employ fewer people and to grow more slowly, and they are concentrated in a narrow range of activities in which barriers to entry are low and margins are correspondingly thin. The disparity has proved durable across widely different policy environments, which suggests that it is produced by something more structural than a temporary shortage of any single input.

### Why Capital Alone Has Not Closed the Gap

Buvinic and O'Donnell (2019), reviewing the evidence on interventions in women's economic empowerment, reported that capital alone rarely alters the position of women in business, and that outcomes improve only where finance is combined with training, with mentoring and with measures addressing the constraints women face outside the enterprise. Their conclusion indicates that the difficulty is not one of a single missing input but of several constraints operating simultaneously, and that a programme addressing only one of them may produce no measurable effect at all.

### The Financial Access Explanation

The first group of explanations advanced in the literature concerns access to finance. Women are more likely than men to be excluded from formal financial services, and the gender gap in financial access has narrowed only slowly (World Bank, 2017; FinMark Trust, 2025). The International Trade Centre (2023), in a guide prepared for women entrepreneurs in Zambia, reported that unclear funding criteria and difficulty in identifying suitable sources of funding are among the barriers women encounter, and that longer-term loans generally require security many women are unable to provide.

### The Asset and Collateral Explanation

The second group concerns assets and property. Women own less property than men and are therefore less able to pledge security for a loan, which places formal credit beyond reach even where an enterprise is otherwise sound. The World Bank (2021), reporting on a survey of six hundred and twenty-one enterprises conducted under the Zambia Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, examined precisely those barriers to finance which affect enterprises led by women more severely than those led by men. Collateral operates as a gate rather than as a price: without it the application is not assessed at all.

### The Household Division of Labour Explanation

The third group concerns the division of labour within the household. Women carry the greater part of the responsibility for the care of children and for domestic work, which limits the hours that can be devoted to trade, restricts the distances that can be travelled to buy stock, and constrains the ability of the owner to leave the business in order to pursue an opportunity elsewhere. A constraint of this kind is invisible in the accounts of the enterprise yet determines what the enterprise is able to become.

### The Theoretical Account: Resources, Agency and Achievements

These constraints have a theoretical explanation as well as an empirical one. Kabeer (1999) conceived of women's empowerment as the expansion of the ability to make and to act upon economic choices, and identified three linked elements: resources, agency and achievements. On that account a woman may possess a resource, such as a stock of goods or a place at a market, and yet lack the agency to convert it into growth if the decisions governing her time, her mobility and the disposal of her earnings are taken elsewhere. The framework indicates that a study of the barriers facing women in business must look beyond the enterprise to the household.

### The Zambian Position

In Zambia the position corresponds with the general pattern. Women own about thirty per cent of formal Small and Medium Enterprises, and a considerably larger number operate informally in markets and from their homes (Zambia Development Agency, 2020). Their enterprises are concentrated in petty trading and in related low-margin activities, and they remain smaller and less profitable than those owned by men. Government and cooperating partners have responded through empowerment funds, the Constituency Development Fund, microfinance and programmes of training, yet the disparity has persisted.

### The Implication of Persistent Disparity

That the disparity has persisted in the face of sustained intervention is itself a finding of consequence. It suggests either that the measures adopted have not reached the intended beneficiaries, or that they have reached them but have addressed constraints other than those which bind. Distinguishing between these two possibilities requires evidence from the level at which the trader actually operates, and it is this that the present study sets out to supply.

### The Selection of Chilenje as the Site

Chilenje was selected because it contains a substantial and identifiable population of women traders, because its market is large enough to permit a stratified sample yet compact enough for a single researcher to cover systematically, and because the two trades of interest are both well represented within it. It is neither the largest nor the smallest of Lusaka's township markets, which makes it a reasonable representative of the class of market in which the great majority of urban women trade.

### The Selection of the Two Trades

The sale of vegetables and the sale of second-hand clothing were selected because they are the activities in which women in the township are most heavily represented and because they differ from one another in instructive ways. A study examining both trades within one locality is able to establish which barriers arise from the character of the commodity and which arise from the position of the woman who trades in it, a distinction which a single-trade study cannot make.

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

**The Contrast Between a Perishable and a Non-Perishable Commodity**

The sale of vegetables involves a perishable commodity, requires the purchase of stock every few days, ties up little capital in any single purchase and yields a small margin upon a rapid turnover. The sale of second-hand clothing involves a commodity that does not perish, requires the purchase of a bale at a price representing a substantial outlay, ties up capital for a longer period and yields a larger margin upon a slower turnover, while exposing the trader to the risk that the contents of a bale prove unsaleable. The two trades therefore impose quite different demands upon the same scarce resource.

**The Undocumented Knowledge of the Trader**

Women who have traded for a decade have devised methods for managing shortage, for spreading risk and for sustaining a business through a period of low takings. This body of practical knowledge is transmitted informally between traders and has not been documented. Its absence from the record means that programmes are designed without reference to what the intended beneficiaries already do, and occasionally in ways that duplicate or undermine it.

**The Justification: Why This Assessment Matters Now**

What is not known is how the barriers documented at national level are configured in this particular setting, which of them the women themselves regard as binding, and what they do from one day to the next in order to work around them. At a time when public resources for enterprise support are constrained and when the Constituency Development Fund has devolved allocation decisions to the local level, evidence of which constraint binds in a specific market is of immediate practical use. It is these questions that the present study addresses.

## 2. Meaning of the Study (Significance of the Research)

**Establishing an Evidence Base for a Specific Market**

The study supplies, for the first time, a systematic record of the constraints reported by women traders in Chilenje, together with the severity each is accorded and the ranking the traders themselves place upon them. Evidence at this level of specificity does not exist for the township, and its absence has meant that any support directed there has necessarily been designed on the basis of national aggregates.

**Distinguishing Between the Presence and the Severity of a Constraint**

Almost every small trader will report that capital is short. A study that records only the presence of constraints will therefore produce a list on which everything appears, and will offer no guidance about where to act first. By measuring severity on a graded scale and by requiring each respondent to rank her three most pressing difficulties, this study distinguishes the constraint that is merely present from the constraint that binds.

**Separating Commodity Effects from Gender Effects**

Poor drainage at a market affects the woman selling tomatoes and the man selling the same tomatoes equally. The obligation to be home when children return from school does not. By comparing two trades with contrasting commodity characteristics within a single locality, the study is able to indicate which difficulties follow from what is being sold and which follow from the position of the person selling it.

**Documenting the Strategies Traders Have Already Devised**

The study records the twelve adjustments most commonly made by traders in response to constraint, the proportion using each, and the effectiveness each is accorded by those who use it. This converts an undocumented body of practical knowledge into evidence that can inform the design of assistance, and it identifies which existing practices a programme should reinforce rather than replace.

**Informing the Design of Financial Products**

By establishing how much a trader spends on stock per purchase, how often she purchases, what she has ever been offered by a formal lender and why she was refused or did not apply, the study indicates with precision the points at which existing financial products fit the circumstances of these traders and the points at which they do not. This bears directly on loan size, on repayment frequency and on the security demanded.

**Supplying Evidence for Local Authority Decisions**

Several of the constraints examined — the security and cost of trading space, the availability of storage, drainage and shelter — lie within the competence of the Lusaka City Council and the market committee rather than of any lender or trainer. The study documents the conditions under which the traders operate and quantifies the losses attributable to them, which converts a matter of complaint into a matter of measurable cost.

**Testing an Assumption Embedded in Training Programmes**

Business and bookkeeping training is among the commonest forms of support extended to women traders. The study tests the assumption on which such programmes rest by asking the traders to rate the severity of poor record keeping and limited business training alongside eleven other constraints. The result bears directly upon whether training resources are being deployed where they are needed.

**Making the Traders' Own Priorities Visible**
The study places the traders' ranking of their own difficulties beside the researcher's measurement of severity, and reports both. Where the two diverge, the divergence is itself informative. This gives the women of Chilenje a documented voice in decisions that are ordinarily taken on their behalf and without reference to them.

**Contributing to the Literature on the Urban Informal Economy**
The existing literature tends to treat women entrepreneurs as a single undifferentiated group, or to examine a single trade in isolation. By setting two contrasting trades side by side within one locality and reporting the differences between them, the study contributes a form of evidence that the literature currently lacks.

**Demonstrating the Application of Kabeer's Framework**
The study demonstrates the application of Kabeer's (1999) resources, agency and achievements framework to the analysis of barriers in an urban trading setting. The framework is well established in the literature on empowerment but is less often operationalised in enterprise research, and the study shows how each of its three elements can be rendered into measurable survey items.

**Providing a Replicable Instrument**
The questionnaire, the interview guides and the observation checklist developed for this study are reproduced in full in the appendices. They constitute an instrument that can be applied without modification in any comparable township market, which permits both replication and the eventual accumulation of comparable evidence across localities.

**Quantifying Recurrent Losses at the Trading Point**
By recording the frequency of stock loss and the value lost in a typical week, the study converts spoilage and damage from an acknowledged hazard into a figure. A figure can be compared against the cost of the storage or shelter that would prevent it, which is the form in which the question must be put if it is to be acted upon.

**Examining the Boundary Between Business and Household Money**
The study records how often business money is used to meet household needs and who decides how business money is used. This addresses directly the element of Kabeer's framework concerned with agency, and it identifies a form of leakage from working capital that no injection of credit can prevent.

**Supporting Accountability in Enterprise Support Programmes**
Where evidence exists as to which constraint binds in a given market, the design of a programme becomes a matter on which its sponsors can be held to account. The study therefore contributes to a culture of evidence-based advocacy in a sector that has been governed largely by assumption.

**Serving as a Baseline for Subsequent Measurement**
Because the study records the position of sixty enterprises on a defined set of indicators at a defined point in time, it establishes a baseline against which the effect of any subsequent intervention in Chilenje could be assessed. Without such a baseline, the effect of an intervention cannot be distinguished from the effect of everything else that changed.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

### General Objective
The general objective of the study is to assess the barriers to growth among women-owned businesses in Chilenje, Lusaka, with particular reference to women trading in vegetables and in second-hand clothing.

### Specific Objectives
The specific objectives of the study are:
- To identify the barriers that constrain the growth of women-owned businesses selling vegetables and second-hand clothing in Chilenje.
- To examine the effects of these barriers on the performance and the growth of the businesses concerned.
- To establish the strategies that the women owners use in order to work around the barriers that they face.

### Operational Objectives Derived from the Specific Objectives
In order to render the three specific objectives measurable, the following operational objectives were pursued in the field:
- To measure the severity accorded by traders to each of thirteen defined barriers on a five-point scale.
- To establish the rank order in which traders place their three most pressing difficulties.
- To compare barrier severity between the vegetable trade and the second-hand clothing trade and to test whether observed differences are statistically significant.
- To record the frequency and the monetary value of stock lost through spoilage or damage in a typical week.
- To establish the proportion of traders who have applied for formal credit, the outcome of those applications, and the reasons for refusal or for not applying.
- To measure change over two years on six indicators of enterprise growth: stock held, sales, retained earnings, range of goods, trading space and persons assisting.

- To record the concrete business actions taken over the same period, including the addition of a new line, the purchase of equipment and the opening or closing of a trading position.
- To establish which of twelve coping strategies each trader uses and how effective she considers each strategy she uses to be.
- To establish the extent to which business money is applied to household needs and who takes the decision as to its use.
- To identify the form of external support that traders themselves consider would be most useful.

**Research Questions**

Corresponding to the three specific objectives, the study is guided by three research questions. First, what barriers constrain the growth of women-owned businesses selling vegetables and second-hand clothing in Chilenje? Second, what effects do these barriers have on the performance and the growth of the businesses concerned? Third, what strategies do the women owners use in order to work around the barriers that they face? The general research question, of which these are components, asks what constraints hold back the growth of women-owned businesses in Chilenje and how women owners work around them.

## 4. Characteristics of the Study

**Empirical and Data-Driven Nature**

The study rests upon primary data collected from sixty women traders at their places of business, supplemented by interviews and by direct observation. Every claim advanced in Chapter Four is traceable to a recorded response or to an observed condition, and the instruments by which those responses were obtained are reproduced in the appendices.

**Contextualisation to a Single Urban Township**

The study is deliberately confined to one township. Depth is preferred to breadth on the ground that the configuration of constraints in a particular market is precisely what national surveys cannot show, and that a detailed account of one market is of more practical use to those who must act in it than a thin account of twenty.

**Comparative Design Across Two Trades**

The defining characteristic of the design is the paired comparison between a perishable and a non-perishable commodity within a single locality. Because the two groups share the same market, the same local authority, the same customer base and the same broad social context, differences observed between them can reasonably be attributed to the trade rather than to the environment.

**Mixed-Methods Orientation**

Quantitative and qualitative evidence are combined. The survey establishes how widely a condition obtains and how severely it is felt; the interviews establish why, and in what sequence, and with what consequence. Neither component is subordinate to the other, and the two were collected in the same period rather than in sequence.

**Descriptive Rather Than Explanatory Ambition**

The study is descriptive and diagnostic in ambition. It does not claim to establish causal relationships between barriers and outcomes, and it does not employ a design capable of doing so. Where associations are reported they are reported as associations, and the limitations of cross-sectional self-reported data are stated in section 3.17.

**Cross-Sectional Temporal Frame**

Data were collected at a single point in time, with respondents asked to report retrospectively on the two years preceding the survey. The two-year reference period was chosen so that a single unusual season would not determine the findings, while remaining short enough for recall to be reasonably reliable.

**Attention to the Household as Well as the Enterprise**

Following Kabeer (1999), the study treats the household as part of the environment in which the enterprise operates rather than as external to it. Items on dependants, on childcare, on the use of business money for household needs and on who decides how business money is spent are therefore integral to the instrument rather than demographic background.

**Grounding in the Trader's Own Assessment**

Severity is measured as the trader reports it, not as the researcher infers it. Where the researcher's observation and the trader's assessment diverge, both are reported. The study proceeds on the view that a trader of nine years' standing is a competent judge of what constrains her business.

**Sensitivity to a Resource-Constrained Setting**

Instruments were designed for administration in the middle of a working day at a trading position, by a researcher speaking the respondent's language, to a woman who might be serving customers throughout. Length, wording and sequence were all determined by that constraint, and the pilot was used to test it.

**Inclusion of Informal and Unregistered Enterprises**

The definition of a women-owned business adopted here turns on control rather than on registration. Eighty-five per cent of the enterprises surveyed are unregistered, and a study restricted to registered firms would have excluded almost the entire population of interest.

**Use of Direct Observation as a Check on Self-Report**

A structured observation checklist was applied at each selected trading position, recording shelter, storage, drainage, display method and the presence of assistants.

Observation supplies an independent check on matters where self-report is least reliable and supplies the photographic record reproduced in Chapter Four.

**Documentation of Coping as well as of Constraint**

The study gives equal weight to what the trader does as to what obstructs her. Twelve coping strategies are measured for both use and reported effectiveness, on the view that a study which records only difficulty produces a portrait of helplessness that the evidence does not support.

**Ethical Sensitivity to Private Financial Matters**

The instrument asks about household money, about unpaid debt and about borrowing from moneylenders. Consent procedures, the option to decline any item, and the handling and storage of responses were all designed with the sensitivity of these matters in view, and are set out in section 3.13.

**Policy Orientation**

The study is written for use. Chapter Five directs its recommendations to named actors— the local authority, financial service providers, the Ministry responsible for enterprise development and the traders themselves — rather than issuing general exhortations.

**Replicability**

Every instrument, the sampling procedure, the coding scheme and the analytical steps are documented in sufficient detail to permit exact replication in another market. The study is intended as the first application of a method rather than as a self-contained exercise.

## 5. Factors Related to the Study

**The Factor of Working Capital**

Working capital is the money a trader requires in order to purchase stock and to meet the recurrent costs of trading before the proceeds of sale are received. It is the factor around which most of the others organise themselves: a shortage of it constrains the quantity that can be bought, the price at which it can be bought, the range that can be carried and the ability to withstand a poor week.

**The Factor of Collateral and Asset Ownership**

Formal lenders require security, and security requires title to an asset. Women in Zambia own less property than men and are therefore less able to satisfy this requirement. Collateral operates as a threshold condition rather than as a matter of degree: its absence prevents the application from being assessed on its merits.

**The Factor of the Commodity Cycle**

The character of the commodity determines the rhythm of the business. A perishable good requires frequent small purchases and imposes a penalty for holding stock; a non-perishable good permits infrequent large purchases and imposes a penalty for tying capital up. Each pattern generates a different financing need and a different vulnerability.

**The Factor of Household and Care Responsibility**

The hours a trader can devote to her business, the distance she can travel to buy stock and her ability to leave the stall in order to pursue an opportunity are all determined in part by responsibilities discharged at home. This factor is invisible in the accounts of the enterprise but sets a ceiling on what the enterprise can become.

**The Factor of Intra-Household Decision-Making**

Where the earnings of a business are disposed of by someone other than the woman who generated them, or where business money is routinely absorbed by household consumption, the capacity of the enterprise to accumulate is impaired irrespective of its trading performance. This is the element Kabeer (1999) identifies as agency.

**The Factor of Physical Trading Conditions**

Shelter from sun and rain, the condition of the trading surface, drainage and the security of the position at night all bear directly upon the rate at which stock is lost and upon the hours during which trade is possible. These conditions lie within the competence of the local authority.

**The Factor of Storage**

Where stock cannot be stored securely overnight, the trader must either carry it home, sell it at a reduced price before closing, or accept the risk of loss. Each of these responses imposes a cost, and the cost recurs daily. Storage is therefore a capital question as much as a facilities question.

**The Factor of Transport**

Stock must be moved from the point of wholesale purchase to the trading position. The cost of that movement, and the practical difficulty of accomplishing it while also minding a stall, constrain both the supplier a trader can use and the quantity she can buy at one time.

**The Factor of Competition Within the Market**

A market in which many traders sell an identical commodity in close proximity compresses margins and limits the scope for any single trader to raise prices. Competition is a structural feature of low-barrier trades and is experienced as a constraint on earnings rather than on capital.

**The Factor of Customer Purchasing Power**

The traders' customers are drawn largely from the same low-income population as the traders themselves. When household incomes in the township fall, the effect is transmitted directly to the market in reduced unit sizes, requests for credit and slower turnover.

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

**The Factor of Informality and Registration**
An unregistered enterprise is invisible to programmes that require registration as a condition of participation, cannot readily open a business bank account and has no documented trading history to present to a lender. Informality is therefore not merely a legal status but an access condition.

**The Factor of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations**
Chilimba and village banking groups supply lump sums at intervals to members who contribute regularly. They require no collateral, they enforce repayment socially, and they are trusted. They are also limited in scale by the contributions of the membership, and the timing of a payout may not coincide with the moment capital is needed.

**The Factor of Mobile Money**
The near-universal adoption of mobile money among traders has altered how payments are received and how money is held between purchases, without necessarily altering access to credit. The gap between transaction access and credit access is a feature of the Zambian financial landscape that bears directly on this study.

**The Factor of Business Skills and Record Keeping**
The ability to price accurately, to distinguish turnover from profit and to keep a record of stock and takings is commonly assumed to condition enterprise performance. Whether traders themselves regard its absence as a binding constraint is an empirical question which this study puts to them directly.

**The Factor of Collective Organisation**
Membership of a traders' association affects the capacity to negotiate with the local authority over levies and conditions, to obtain information, and to act collectively in matters such as transport. The extent of such membership in Chilenje is recorded in Chapter Four.

## 6. Global Statistical Scenario of the Study

**The Global Scale of Women's Enterprise**
Women constitute a substantial and growing share of business owners worldwide, and in many developing economies the majority of micro-enterprises are owned by women. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor has documented rates of early-stage entrepreneurial activity among women that approach or exceed those of men in several low-income economies, a pattern driven largely by necessity rather than by opportunity.

**The Global Gender Gap in Enterprise Outcomes**
Across economies at every income level, businesses owned by women are on average smaller, less capitalised and slower-growing than those owned by men. The consistency of the pattern across widely differing legal and cultural environments indicates that it is not attributable to any single national institution.

**The Global Picture on Financial Inclusion**
The World Bank (2025), in the Global Findex Database 2025, records that account ownership among women in low- and middle-income economies reached seventy-three per cent in 2024, an increase of seven percentage points since 2021. Transaction access has therefore expanded considerably, while access to credit has not expanded at anything like the same rate.

**The Distinction Between Account Access and Credit Access**
The expansion of accounts, driven largely by mobile money, has narrowed the gender gap in one dimension of financial inclusion while leaving another largely intact. A woman may hold an account, receive payments into it and save within it, and still be unable to borrow against it. This distinction is central to the present study and is tested directly in Chapter Four.

**The Global Evidence on Women's Informal Employment**
UN Women (2024) reports that close to sixty per cent of women's employment worldwide is informal, and that in low-income countries the figure exceeds ninety per cent. Any analytical framework restricted to registered enterprises therefore excludes the overwhelming majority of women's economic activity.

**The Global Evidence on Business Closure**
The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2025), reporting on surveys covering fifty-one economies, found that women were markedly more likely than men to close a business for family or personal reasons rather than for reasons internal to the enterprise. The trajectory of a woman's business is therefore often determined by circumstances that have nothing to do with its commercial performance.

**The Global Evidence on Capital Interventions**
Randomised evaluations of cash and capital grants to micro-enterprises have repeatedly found weaker returns among women-owned enterprises than among those owned by men, with the difference frequently attributed to the capture of transferred capital by household consumption or by other household members.

**The Global Evidence on Bundled Interventions**
Interventions combining capital with training, mentoring or attention to household constraints have produced more durable effects than capital alone. This finding, consistent across several settings, underlies the argument of Buvinic and O'Donnell (2019) and shapes the analytical approach adopted here.

**The Global Evidence on Collateral Requirements**
Collateral requirements in developing-country lending markets commonly exceed the value of the loan sought, and the assets accepted are typically immovable property and vehicles— precisely the categories in which women's ownership is lowest. The requirement therefore operates with disparate effect even where it is applied neutrally.

**The Global Evidence on Time Poverty**
Time-use studies consistently find that women in developing economies perform between two and ten times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men. The differential is largest in low-income settings and is directly relevant to the hours a trader can keep and the distance she can travel.

**The Global Evidence on Rotating Savings Associations**
Rotating savings and credit associations are documented across Africa, Asia and Latin America and are used disproportionately by women. Their persistence in settings where formal microfinance is available suggests that they supply something formal products do not: absence of collateral, social enforcement and flexibility of timing.

**The Global Evidence on Market Infrastructure**
Studies of urban markets in developing economies have documented substantial post-harvest and point-of-sale losses attributable to the absence of cold storage, shelter and secure overnight facilities. Losses of this kind fall hardest on traders in perishable commodities and operate as a recurring tax on working capital.

**The Global Evidence on the Second-Hand Clothing Trade**
The international trade in used clothing is a substantial global industry supplying employment to large numbers of traders in importing countries. The bale system by which goods reach retailers concentrates risk at the point of purchase, since quality cannot be verified before payment.

**The Global Evidence on Enterprise Registration**
Rates of enterprise registration among micro-traders in developing economies are low, and the costs of registration in time and money frequently exceed any benefit perceived by the owner. Programmes conditioning support on registration therefore systematically exclude those most in need of it.

**The Position of the Present Study Within the Global Picture**
The global evidence establishes that the constraints exist and that they are widespread. What it cannot establish is how they are configured in a particular market, which of them binds there, and what traders do in response. The present study addresses that question for one township.

## 7. Local Statistical Scenario of the Study

**The Share of Enterprises Owned by Women in Zambia**
Women own about thirty per cent of formal Small and Medium Enterprises in Zambia, and a considerably larger number operate informally in markets and from home (Zambia Development Agency, 2020). The formal figure therefore substantially understates the extent of women's participation in enterprise.

**The Concentration of Women's Enterprise in Low-Margin Trades**
Women's enterprises in Zambia are concentrated in petty trading, in food preparation and in the retail of low-value consumables. These are activities with low barriers to entry, which accounts both for the high rate of participation and for the thin margins that characterise them.

**The Zambian Evidence on Barriers to Finance**
The World Bank (2021), reporting on a survey of six hundred and twenty-one enterprises under the Zambia Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, examined the barriers to finance affecting enterprises led by women more severely than those led by men, identifying collateral requirements and the absence of documented trading history as principal among them.

**Guidance Prepared for Zambian Women Entrepreneurs**
The International Trade Centre (2023), in a guide prepared for women entrepreneurs in Zambia, reported that unclear funding criteria and difficulty in identifying suitable sources of funding are among the barriers women encounter, and that loans of longer term generally require security that many women are unable to provide.

**The Pace of Change in Financial Access**
FinMark Trust (2025) records that the gender gap in financial access in Zambia has narrowed, but slowly, and that the narrowing is attributable principally to the expansion of mobile money rather than to any change in access to formal credit.

**The Growth of Mobile Money in Zambia**
Mobile money has achieved near-saturation among urban traders in Zambia and has become the principal means by which payments are received and money is held between purchases. Its adoption has not, however, been accompanied by a comparable expansion of credit to the same population.

**The Position of Lusaka's Township Markets**
Lusaka's township markets, of which Chilenje is one, supply the greater part of the food and clothing consumed by the city's low-income population. They are administered by the Lusaka City Council in cooperation

with market committees, and they levy daily or monthly charges on trading positions.

**Public Instruments for Enterprise Support**

Government and cooperating partners have deployed a range of measures, including empowerment funds, the Constituency Development Fund, microfinance and programmes of training. The devolution of CDF allocation to constituency level has increased the relevance of local evidence to local decisions.

**The Persistence of the Disparity Despite Intervention**

Notwithstanding these measures, the disparity between enterprises owned by women and those owned by men has persisted, which suggests that the measures adopted have not addressed the constraints that bind most tightly, or have not reached those they were intended to reach.

**The Vegetable Supply Chain in Lusaka**

Vegetables reach Lusaka's township markets principally through Soweto Market, which functions as the city's central wholesale point, and through direct purchase from peri-urban farms. The choice between these sources is governed by the trader's capital, her transport and the time she can spend away from her stall.

**The Second-Hand Clothing Supply Chain in Lusaka**

Second-hand clothing, known locally as salaula, reaches retailers through bale suppliers concentrated in Kamwala and central Lusaka. A bale represents a substantial single outlay and its contents cannot be inspected before purchase, which concentrates both capital requirement and risk at a single point in the cycle.

**Rotating Savings Practice in Zambian Markets**

Chilimba and village banking are widely practised in Zambian township markets and function as the principal source of lump-sum capital for traders excluded from formal credit. Contribution amounts and payout intervals vary considerably between groups.

**Informal Lending in Township Markets**

Informal lending at high effective rates, known locally as kaloba, is available in township markets and is used where capital is required urgently and no alternative exists. Its cost is well understood by those who use it, which is reflected in the effectiveness ratings reported in Chapter Four.

**Trading Space and Levies in Chilenje**

Trading positions in Chilenje range from stalls inside the covered market to tables and stands outside it and to positions along the road. Charges attach to most of these positions, and the security and physical condition of a position varies considerably with its type.

**The Absence of Market-Level Evidence**

No study has established which barriers the traders of Chilenje face, how severely each is experienced, how the position differs between the two trades, or what the women themselves do in response. It is this absence which the present study addresses.

## 8. Usefulness of the Study

**Usefulness to the Individual Trader**

The study records in the traders' own terms the difficulties they face and the strategies they have devised, and it places their priorities before those who plan on their behalf. It makes visible a body of practical knowledge at present transmitted informally between traders and nowhere documented.

**Usefulness to the Market Committee**

The market committee of Chilenje obtains a quantified account of the conditions under which its members trade, including the value of stock lost in a typical week and the proportion of traders lacking secure storage. This equips the committee to place specific proposals before the local authority.

**Usefulness to the Lusaka City Council**

The Council obtains evidence on trading space, levies, storage, drainage and shelter — matters within its own competence — in a form that permits the cost of remedial investment to be compared against the losses it would prevent.

**Usefulness to Financial Service Providers**

Providers obtain evidence on the size of loan these traders require, the frequency at which they purchase stock and would therefore wish to repay, the security they are able to offer, and the specific reasons for which they have been refused or have not applied. This bears directly upon product design.

**Usefulness to Microfinance and Village Banking Promoters**

The study establishes the extent of chilimba membership, the contribution amounts in use, the purposes to which payouts are applied and the effectiveness members accord to the mechanism. Promoters obtain a picture of what the existing informal system already delivers and where it falls short.

**Usefulness to the Ministry Responsible for Enterprise Development**

The Ministry obtains evidence as to which constraints women in trade actually experience and the order of severity in which they themselves place them. Since programmes of support are designed upon assumptions about which constraint binds, evidence of this kind bears directly upon whether those assumptions hold.

**Usefulness to Constituency Development Fund Committees**

With allocation decisions devolved to constituency level, committees require local evidence on which to base them. The study supplies exactly that for one township, and the instrument reproduced in the appendices permits the same evidence to be gathered elsewhere at modest cost.

**Usefulness to Designers of Training Programmes**

The study tests directly the assumption that deficits in business skills and record keeping constrain these enterprises. Where the evidence does not support that assumption, resources presently committed to training may be redirected to constraints the traders identify as more pressing.

**Usefulness to Non-Governmental Organisations**

Organisations working with women traders obtain a diagnostic baseline for one market and a replicable method for establishing the same in others, which permits intervention to be targeted rather than standardised.

**Usefulness in Separating Gendered from General Constraints**

By distinguishing barriers affecting all small traders from those affecting women in particular, the study helps to prevent the general difficulties of petty trading from being addressed as though they were gender barriers, and the reverse.

**Usefulness to the Academic Community**

The study contributes evidence from a single urban locality examining two contrasting trades side by side, addressing the tendency of the existing literature to treat women entrepreneurs as a single undifferentiated group.

**Usefulness in Demonstrating an Analytical Framework**

The study demonstrates the operationalisation of Kabeer's (1999) framework in an urban trading setting, showing how resources, agency and achievements may each be rendered into measurable items within a single survey instrument.

**Usefulness as a Baseline for Evaluation**

The record established here of sixty enterprises on defined indicators at a defined time permits the effect of any subsequent intervention in Chilenje to be assessed against a prior state rather than against conjecture.

**Usefulness in Supplying a Replicable Instrument**

The questionnaire, interview guides, observation checklist and coding scheme are reproduced in full and may be applied without modification in any comparable township market, permitting the accumulation of comparable evidence across localities.

**Usefulness to the Researcher**

The study fulfils the researcher's academic obligation while developing competence in instrument design, field administration, statistical analysis and the interpretation of mixed evidence, which are the skills the degree is intended to impart.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 1. Introduction to Literature Review

**Purpose and Scope of the Review**

This chapter examines the body of work bearing upon the barriers to growth among women-owned businesses. It begins by clarifying the concepts on which the study depends, since terms such as growth, barrier and women-owned business are used loosely in much of the writing on the subject and a study that fails to define them risks measuring different things under the same name. It then reviews the literature at global, regional and national level before turning to the two trades with which the study is concerned.

**Defining a Women-Owned Business by Control Rather than Registration**

Much of the international literature classifies an enterprise as women-owned on the basis of a majority shareholding or a registration document, a criterion that works reasonably well for formal firms but has little meaning in a market where few enterprises are registered at all. Kabeer (1999) argued that possession of a resource does not by itself indicate the power to use it, and the same reasoning applies here. A stall may stand in a woman's name while the earnings are surrendered to a husband.

**The Deliberate Inclusion of Informal Enterprises**

In Zambia the great majority of women in trade operate outside the register. The Zambia Development Agency (2020) reported that women own roughly thirty per cent of formal small and medium enterprises while a considerably larger number trade informally. Globally, UN Women (2024) reports that close to sixty per cent of women's employment is informal, exceeding ninety per cent in low-income countries. A definition restricted to registered firms would exclude almost the entire population of interest.

**The Problem of Defining Growth**

Growth is understood here as an increase in the scale of an enterprise, indicated by the value of stock held, the level of sales, earnings retained, the range of goods carried, the trading space occupied and the number of persons employed. A multi-indicator approach is adopted deliberately, because in trades of this kind no single indicator is adequate alone.

**Why Sales Figures Alone Mislead**

A vegetable trader may record higher takings during a season when supply is abundant and prices are low, without her position improving in any way that matters, since the additional turnover may cover no more than the additional cost of stock. Employment is equally unreliable taken alone, since many of these enterprises will never employ anyone and unpaid assistance from a daughter is common but is not employment in any formal sense.

**Whether Growth Is the Appropriate Lens**

Evidence from several settings indicates that a substantial proportion of women's enterprises are entered out of necessity rather than opportunity, and that the owner's aim may be a stable daily income rather than expansion. Kinyanjui (2014), writing on women in the urban informal economy in Africa, argued that women's trading is organised around social ties, sharing and mutual support rather than around accumulation, and that judging such activity purely by the standards of enterprise expansion misses much of what it achieves.

**The Internal and External Location of Barriers**

A useful distinction separates barriers located inside the enterprise, such as limited working capital or weak record keeping, from those located in the environment, such as the cost of transport, the condition of the trading area or the level of competition. The distinction matters because it points to different remedies, the former addressed through training and finance and the latter through the action of a local authority.

**Barriers Affecting All Traders and Barriers Affecting Women**

Poor drainage at a market affects the woman selling tomatoes and the man selling the same tomatoes equally. The obligation to be home when children return from school does not. A study that does not separate the two will describe the general difficulties of petty trading and call them gender barriers.

**The Distinction Between Presence and Severity**

Almost every trader will report that capital is short, but a constraint that is universally reported is not necessarily the one that binds. Identifying which constraint binds most tightly is more useful than compiling a list of all constraints reported, and it is for this reason that the second objective of the present study concerns the effects of the barriers rather than merely their existence.

**The Scope of the Literary Search**

The review draws principally on material published between 2015 and 2026, supplemented by earlier work of continuing theoretical importance, notably Kabeer (1999). Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, reports of multilateral institutions, national statistical publications and previous theses. Preference has been given throughout to primary sources over secondary summaries.

**The Treatment of Grey Literature**

Reports of the World Bank, the International Trade Centre, the International Labour Organization and FinMark Trust are relied upon where they present primary survey evidence. Such sources are the principal repository of enterprise-level data for Zambia and cannot reasonably be excluded, but they are read with attention to the interests of the commissioning institution.

**Organisation of the Review**

The review proceeds from the global to the regional to the national, and then to the two trades specifically. This sequence is adopted so that the Zambian evidence may be read against the general pattern, and so that features specific to Chilenje may be distinguished from features common to township markets generally.

**The Approach to Empirical Studies**

Empirical studies are examined for what they investigated, how they investigated it and what they established, and are compared with one another rather than listed in sequence. Attention is given to sample, method and setting, since a finding from a national SME survey and a finding from a market-level case study are not equivalent evidence for the present question.

**The Position of the Present Study Relative to the Literature**

The review is conducted with a specific purpose: to establish what is known, what is contested and what has not been examined, so that the contribution of the present study may be stated precisely rather than asserted. That statement is made in section 2.4.

**Transition to the Thematic Review**

Having established the concepts and the scope, the chapter now turns to the substantive literature, organised by theme and by level of analysis.

## 2. Reviews of Related Literature and Studies

**Review of the Global Evidence on Access to Finance**

Access to finance is the constraint most consistently reported in studies of women's enterprises, but the evidence suggests the difficulty is not simply an absence of credit. The World Bank (2025), in the Global Findex Database 2025, records that account ownership among women in low- and middle-income economies reached seventy-three per cent in 2024, an increase of seven percentage points since 2021. Transaction access has expanded while credit access has not.

**Review of the Distinction Between Account and Credit Access**

The expansion documented by Findex is driven principally by mobile money. A woman may hold an account, receive payments into it and save within it, and remain unable to borrow against it, because lending decisions turn on collateral and on documented history rather than on transaction volume. The present study tests this distinction directly by recording account holding, mobile money use and loan application history for the same respondents.

**Review of the Evidence on Capital Grants to Women's Enterprises**

Randomised evaluations of capital grants have repeatedly found weaker returns among women-owned micro-enterprises than among those owned by men. The explanations advanced include capture of transferred capital by other household members, diversion to consumption, and the concentration of women's enterprises in sectors where the marginal return to capital is low.

**Review of Buvinic and O'Donnell on Bundled Interventions**

Buvinic and O'Donnell (2019), reviewing the evidence on women's economic empowerment interventions, concluded that capital alone rarely alters the position of women in business and that outcomes improve only where finance is combined with training, with mentoring and with attention to constraints faced outside the enterprise. Their conclusion implies that identifying which constraint binds most tightly is more useful than compiling a list of all constraints reported.

**Review of the Evidence on Collateral and Asset Ownership**

Women own less property than men across virtually every developing economy, and the assets accepted as security by formal lenders — immovable property and vehicles — are precisely those in which women's ownership is lowest. Collateral therefore operates as a gate rather than as a price, preventing the application from being assessed on its merits.

**Review of the World Bank Zambia We-Fi Enterprise Survey**

The World Bank (2021), reporting on a survey of six hundred and twenty-one enterprises conducted under the Zambia Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, examined the barriers to finance affecting enterprises led by women more severely than those led by men. The study is the most substantial enterprise-level evidence available for Zambia, but its sampling frame is drawn from enterprises above the scale of the market trader.

**Review of the International Trade Centre Guidance for Zambia**

The International Trade Centre (2023), in a guide prepared for women entrepreneurs in Zambia, reported that unclear funding criteria and difficulty in identifying suitable sources of funding are among the barriers women encounter, and that loans of longer term generally require security many women cannot provide. The finding that criteria are unclear is significant, since it implies a barrier of information distinct from the barrier of eligibility.

**Review of the Evidence on Household and Care Responsibilities**

Time-use evidence consistently finds that women in low-income settings perform several times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men. For a trader this translates into constrained opening hours, constrained travel to wholesale sources, and an inability to leave the business in order to pursue an opportunity elsewhere.

**Review of the Evidence on Intra-Household Allocation**

Studies of household resource allocation have established that income controlled by women is more likely than income controlled by men to be applied to children's welfare, and simultaneously that women's business capital is more vulnerable to absorption by household consumption. The two findings are consistent and together describe a mechanism by which enterprises owned by women accumulate more slowly.

**Review of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Evidence on Closure**

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2025), reporting on surveys covering fifty-one economies, found that women were markedly more likely than men to close a business for family or personal reasons rather than for reasons internal to the enterprise. The trajectory of a woman's business is therefore often determined by circumstances having nothing to do with its commercial performance.

**Review of the Evidence on Market Access and Competition**

Trades with low barriers to entry attract many entrants selling an identical commodity in close proximity, which compresses margins. The literature treats competition of this kind as a structural feature of necessity entrepreneurship rather than as a market failure, and notes that it limits the returns to any intervention that increases the number of traders without changing the composition of what they sell.

**Review of the Evidence on Transport and Logistics**

The cost and difficulty of moving stock from wholesale point to trading position constrains both the supplier a trader can use and the quantity she can purchase at one time. Traders who cannot travel are obliged to buy from intermediaries at higher prices, which converts a mobility constraint into a margin constraint.

**Review of the Evidence on Storage and Post-Harvest Loss**

Studies of urban markets in developing economies have documented substantial losses at the point of sale attributable to the absence of cold storage, shelter and secure overnight facilities. Such losses fall hardest on traders in perishable commodities and operate as a recurring deduction from working capital rather than as an occasional misfortune.

**Review of the Evidence on Trading Space and Tenure**

Kabeer's (1999) insistence that resources are claims and entitlements rather than simply things possessed applies directly to trading space. A stall held under a secure allocation is a different resource from the same stall occupied on sufferance, since the latter cannot support investment in fixtures, cannot be used to store stock and cannot be relied upon for planning.

**Review of the Evidence on Business Skills and Training**

Training in bookkeeping, pricing and stock management is among the commonest forms of support extended to women traders. The evaluation literature reports modest and inconsistent effects, with stronger results where training is combined with capital and where content is tailored to the specific trade rather than delivered generically.

**Review of the Evidence on Record Keeping**

Few micro-traders separate business money from household money or maintain written records. The literature is divided as to whether this constitutes a binding constraint or an adaptation to circumstances in which the distinction has little operational meaning. The present study puts the question to the traders themselves.

**Review of the Evidence on Rotating Savings and Credit Associations**

Rotating savings and credit associations are documented across Africa, Asia and Latin America and are used disproportionately by women. Their persistence where formal microfinance is available suggests they supply something formal products do not: absence of collateral, social enforcement of repayment, and lump sums at predictable intervals.

**Review of the Evidence on Informal Lending**

Informal lending at high effective rates is available in most township markets and is used where capital is required urgently and no alternative exists. The literature treats recourse to it as an indicator of exclusion from cheaper sources rather than as a preference, and notes that its cost is generally well understood by those who use it.

**Review of Kinyanjui on Women in the Urban Informal Economy**

Kinyanjui (2014) argued that women's trading in African cities is organised around social ties, sharing and mutual support rather than around accumulation. The argument is important for the present study because it warns against treating the absence of expansion as evidence of failure, and it informs the decision to ask traders what change they seek rather than to assume it.

**Review of the Literature on the Vegetable Trade**

Studies of vegetable trading in African urban markets emphasise the short cycle, the small unit of capital, the dependence on daily turnover and the vulnerability to spoilage. Traders in this commodity are characterised as capital-constrained at a daily frequency rather than at the level of any single large requirement.

**Review of the Literature on the Second-Hand Clothing Trade**

The trade in used clothing reaches retailers through bales whose contents cannot be inspected before purchase. The literature identifies this as a distinctive risk structure: capital requirement and quality risk are concentrated at a single point in the cycle, so that a single misjudged purchase can immobilise a trader's entire working capital for weeks.

**Review of Takaza and Chitereka on Coping Strategies**

Takaza and Chitereka (2022), examining informal women traders in Zimbabwe, documented a range of coping adjustments including reduction of stock quantities, diversification of goods and reliance on informal credit. The study is among the few to treat coping as a subject in its own right, though its setting differs and the strategies recorded are not linked to measured growth.

**Review of the Evidence on Enterprise Registration**

Rates of registration among micro-traders are low and the costs of registration in time and money frequently exceed any benefit perceived by the owner. Programmes conditioning support upon registration therefore systematically exclude those most in need of it, a point of direct relevance to the design of assistance in Chilenje.

**Review of the Evidence on Mobile Money in Zambia**

FinMark Trust (2025) records that the gender gap in financial access in Zambia has narrowed, but slowly, and that the narrowing is attributable principally to the expansion of mobile money rather than to any change in access to formal credit. The Zambian evidence therefore reproduces the global pattern identified in 2.2.2.

**Synthesis of the Reviewed Literature**

The literature establishes with reasonable consistency that the constraints exist, that they cluster around finance, assets and household responsibility, and that interventions addressing one constraint in isolation tend to disappoint. What it does not establish is how these constraints are configured in a particular market, which of them binds there, how the configuration differs between trades, and what traders do in response. Those questions define the gap set out in section 2.4.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

### The Choice of Kabeer's Framework

The study is guided by the framework advanced by Kabeer (1999), introduced in Chapter One and developed here. No additional theory is introduced, since Kabeer's framework is sufficient for the analytical purpose and the introduction of further theories would add complexity without corresponding gain. Kabeer conceived of women's empowerment as the expansion of the ability to make and act upon consequential choices, and identified three linked components: resources, agency and achievements.

### Resources

Resources are the material, human and social assets through which choice is exercised. For the traders in this study these include working capital, stock, a stall or trading position, transport, storage, tools such as scales or a cool box, education and literacy, knowledge of the trade, and membership of savings groups and trading networks.

Kabeer's important contribution here is the insistence that resources are not simply things possessed but claims and entitlements, whose value depends on the terms on which they are held. A stall held under a secure allocation is a different resource from the same stall occupied on sufferance, even though the physical space is identical.

### Agency

Agency is the capacity to define one's own goals and act upon them. In this study agency appears in decisions about what to buy, where to buy it, what price to charge, whether to extend credit to a customer, whether to join a savings group, and whether to reinvest earnings or apply them to household needs.

Agency is exercised within relationships, chiefly within the household, and it is here that the framework earns its usefulness. Two women may hold identical resources and yet differ entirely in what they can do with them, because one controls the disposal of her earnings and the other does not. The present study operationalises this element through items on who decides how business money is used and on how frequently business money is applied to household needs.

### Achievements

Achievements are the outcomes that follow. In this study they correspond to the six growth indicators defined in Chapter One — stock, sales, retained earnings, product range, trading space and persons assisting — and also to outcomes the traders themselves value, such as stability of income, the ability to meet school fees, and independence from having to ask others for money.

### The Relationship Between the Three Components

The framework holds that resources without agency do not produce achievements. A loan received by a woman who does not control its use will not expand her enterprise. Conversely, agency without resources is equally sterile: a trader who knows exactly how she would grow her business and has no capital with which to do so remains where she is.

Achievements in turn feed back into resources and agency, since retained earnings become working capital and a woman who has demonstrably built a business may hold a stronger position in decisions about her own time and money. Barriers, in the language of this framework, are whatever blocks the conversion of resources into achievements, and they may sit at either the resource stage or the agency stage.

### Application to the Vegetable Trader

For a vegetable trader, the resource question concerns daily working capital, a position at the market and access to transport to the wholesale point. The agency question concerns whether she can leave the stall to buy at a cheaper source, whether she can decide to reinvest the day's takings rather than surrender them to household expenditure, and whether she can travel early in the morning. The achievement question concerns whether her stock and earnings rise over time or merely repeat.

### Application to the Second-Hand Clothing Trader

For a salaula trader, the resource question concerns the lump sum required for a bale, secure storage, and a display position with good customer traffic. The agency question concerns whether she can commit a substantial sum to a bale of uncertain contents, and whether she can hold stock rather than being forced to sell quickly for household cash. The achievement question concerns whether she moves from part bales to full bales and from a single stand to a larger operation.

### The Analytical Leverage of the Comparison

Because the two trades differ in the resources required and in the timing of their capital cycles, while the women share a common position within their households and within the township, the framework allows the study to distinguish barriers arising from the commodity from barriers arising from the position of the woman who trades in it. This is the principal analytical device of the study.

### Operationalising Resources in the Instrument

Resources are measured through items on capital spent per stock purchase, purchase frequency, source of start-up capital, type of trading position, whether the position is paid for, storage availability, transport arrangements, education, years in the trade, and membership of savings groups and associations.

**Operationalising Agency in the Instrument**

Agency is measured through items on who decides how business money is used, how often business money is applied to household needs, the number of dependants and children under eighteen, whether the respondent is the principal income earner, trading days missed in a typical week, and the severity accorded to home and childcare demands.

**Operationalising Achievements in the Instrument**

Achievements are measured through the six growth indicators rated on a five-point change scale over two years, through a checklist of concrete business actions taken in that period, through overall business status, and through the respondent's two-year goal for the enterprise.

**The Treatment of Barriers Within the Framework**

Each of the thirteen barriers examined is located within the framework as obstructing either the acquisition of a resource, the exercise of agency, or the conversion of one into the other. Insufficient stock money and absence of collateral obstruct at the resource stage; home and childcare demands and external control of business money obstruct at the agency stage; spoilage, storage and transport obstruct the conversion itself by consuming resources already acquired.

**Alternative Frameworks Considered and Set Aside**

Resource-based theories of the firm, the Technology Acceptance Model and institutional theory were each considered. Each addresses part of the question, but none accommodates the household as a site of constraint, which the evidence reviewed above establishes as central. Kabeer's framework was retained on that ground.

**Limitations of the Framework**

The framework is descriptive rather than predictive: it organises the analysis of constraint but does not specify the magnitude of any relationship, and it cannot by itself establish which constraint binds. That determination is empirical and is made in Chapter Four.

**The Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Following the logic of Kabeer's framework, the conceptual framework of this study treats the thirteen barriers as independent variables, the six growth indicators as dependent variables, and the twelve coping strategies as intervening variables which may attenuate the effect of a barrier upon an outcome. Trade — vegetables or second-hand clothing — operates as a moderating variable, since the same barrier may bear differently upon the two commodity cycles. Figure 2.1 presents the relationship.

BARRIERS (Independent variables)
Resource-stage barriers: insufficient stock money · no bank or MFI loan · no collateral · no safe storage · trading space small, insecure or poor · cost and difficulty of transport
Agency-stage barriers: home and childcare demands on time · external control of business money
Conversion-stage barriers: spoilage or damage · competition · low customer purchasing power · limited business training · poor record keeping · limited market information

↓

COPING STRATEGIES (Intervening variables)
Twelve adjustments including buying smaller quantities · chilimba · own savings · price reduction · borrowing from family, moneylender or institution · pooling transport · family assistance
at the stall · sale on credit · other work

↓

GROWTH OUTCOMES (Dependent variables)

Value of stock held · level of sales · earnings retained · range of goods carried · trading space occupied · number of persons assisting
MODERATING VARIABLE: Trade (vegetables / second-hand clothing)

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

## 4. Research Gap

**The Gap of Scale**

The Zambian evidence on women's enterprises has been generated largely at the level of the small and medium enterprise, as in the World Bank (2021) survey, or at national level, as in financial inclusion reporting. The women who sell vegetables and second-hand clothing in a township market operate below that level. Their capital is measured in small sums, their transactions are daily, and they are largely absent from the registers on which such studies draw.

**The Consequence of the Gap of Scale**

What is known about small and medium enterprises owned by women in Zambia cannot be assumed to hold for market traders. A constraint that binds a registered enterprise seeking a term loan is not necessarily the constraint that binds a trader seeking two hundred kwacha to buy tomatoes on a Tuesday morning.

**The Gap of Differentiation**

The existing literature treats women entrepreneurs as a single category. Yet the two trades examined here differ fundamentally in their capital cycles: the vegetable trade turns small sums over rapidly and loses money through spoilage, while the second-hand clothing trade commits larger sums for longer periods and loses money through misjudged stock.

**The Consequence of the Gap of Differentiation**
No study has examined the two trades side by side in a single locality, and until that comparison is made it is impossible to say which barriers arise from the nature of the commodity and which arise from the position of the woman trading in it. That distinction matters because the two call for different responses.

**The Gap Concerning Strategies**
Barriers are documented far more thoroughly than responses. Where coping strategies are examined, as by Takaza and Chitereka (2022), the setting is different and the strategies are not linked to measured growth. What women traders actually do when capital runs short, when stock spoils, when a bale disappoints, or when a child falls ill, and what those adjustments cost them, remains largely unrecorded.

**The Consequence of the Gap Concerning Strategies**
This body of accumulated practical knowledge is at present transmitted informally among traders and is absent from the evidence available to those who design assistance. A programme designed in ignorance of it may duplicate what traders already do, or may displace an effective informal arrangement with an inferior formal one.

**The Gap of Place**
No study has been conducted in Chilenje. The conditions of any market — the security of trading space, the levies charged, the state of drainage and shelter, the distance to wholesale sources and the composition of the customer base — are specific to that market and determine which of the general constraints bite hardest there.

**The Gap Between Severity and Priority**
Studies that measure the presence of constraints rarely require respondents to rank them. The result is a literature in which every constraint appears and none is decisive. The present study measures severity and elicits priority separately, permitting the two to be compared and any divergence between them to be examined.

**The Gap Concerning Effectiveness of Coping**
Where coping strategies are recorded, their effectiveness is seldom assessed by those who use them. A strategy may be widely used and largely ineffective — adopted because nothing better is available — and a study that records use alone cannot distinguish the two cases.

**The Gap Concerning the Household Boundary**
The extent to which business capital is absorbed by household consumption, and the identity of the person who decides, are central to Kabeer's framework yet are rarely measured in enterprise surveys. Their omission means that a well-documented mechanism of slow accumulation goes unrecorded in the very studies designed to explain it.

**The Gap Concerning Quantified Loss**
Spoilage and damage are universally acknowledged in the literature on perishable trades and rarely quantified at the level of the individual trader. Without a figure, the loss cannot be weighed against the cost of the storage or shelter that would prevent it.

**The Gap Concerning the Reasons for Non-Application**
Studies of credit access commonly record whether a trader has borrowed. Far fewer record why she did not apply. The distinction between refusal and self-exclusion is material to policy, since the two call for entirely different remedies.
2.4.13 The Gap Concerning the Traders' Own Assessment of Training

Training is among the commonest interventions and among the least often tested against the recipients' own ranking of their difficulties. Whether traders regard skill deficits as binding is an empirical question that the literature has largely assumed rather than asked.

**The Methodological Gap**
Much of the Zambian evidence relies on a single method. The present study combines a structured survey, semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews and structured observation with a photographic record, permitting self-report to be checked against observed condition.

**Statement of the Question the Study Answers**
The question this study answers may therefore be stated directly. Among women who sell vegetables and second-hand clothing in Chilenje, which barriers actually constrain the growth of their businesses, how severely does each bear on performance, how does the pattern differ between the two trades, and what do the women themselves do in response?

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**1. Introduction to Research Methodology**
**The Purpose and Scope of Chapter Three**
This chapter sets out the manner in which the study was conducted. It presents the philosophical position adopted, the research approach and design, the study area, the universe and target population, the sampling procedure and sample size, the sources of data, the methods and instruments of collection, the measures taken to secure validity and reliability, the analytical tools employed, the variables examined, the ethical considerations observed, the limitations of the approach and the difficulties encountered in the field.

**The Philosophical Underpinning: Pragmatism**
The study adopts a pragmatic position. Pragmatism holds that the method should be selected by reference to the question rather than to prior commitment about the nature

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

of knowledge, and that quantitative and qualitative evidence may legitimately be combined where the question requires both. The question here requires both: how widely a condition obtains is a quantitative matter, while why it obtains and what follows from it is not.

**Justification for the Research Design**
A descriptive case-study design within a mixed-methods approach was selected because the object of study is a bounded population in a defined locality about which no prior evidence exists. The design permits both the measurement of distributions across sixty respondents and the examination of process and reasoning in a smaller number of cases, which a purely quantitative or purely qualitative design could not achieve.

**The Site of Investigation: Why Chilenje**
Chilenje was selected because it contains a substantial and identifiable population of women traders in both commodities of interest, because its market is large enough to permit a stratified sample yet compact enough for a single researcher to cover systematically, and because it is neither the largest nor the smallest of Lusaka's township markets and is therefore a reasonable representative of its class.

**Defining the Target Population**
The target population comprised women who owned and operated businesses selling vegetables or second-hand clothing in Chilenje and who had traded for at least one year. Persons employed by a trader rather than owning the business, men trading the same commodities, and women trading other commodities were excluded, since the study concerns the position of the woman who owns the enterprise.

**The Sampling Strategy Framework**
Stratified sampling was used, with the two trades forming the strata and equal allocation between them, followed by systematic selection of trading positions within each stratum. Purposive sampling was used for the in-depth interviews and for the key informant interviews. The full procedure is set out in section 3.9.

**Instrumentation**
Four instruments were used: a structured questionnaire administered face to face, a semi-structured interview guide for traders, a key informant interview guide, and a structured observation checklist. All four are reproduced in the appendices.

**Reliability and Validity Controls**
Content validity was addressed through supervisory review and alignment of every item to a stated objective; construct validity through the operationalisation of Kabeer's three components; reliability through pilot testing, standardised administration and the calculation of internal-consistency coefficients for the two composite scales. Details are given in section 3.14.

**Data Collection Procedures**
Data were collected at the traders' places of business during ordinary trading hours over a three-week period, following the grant of permission by the local authority and the market committee and the construction of a sampling frame during a reconnaissance visit.

**Data Analysis Techniques**
Quantitative data were analysed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, and comparatively using independent-samples t-tests, chi-square tests of independence and Pearson correlation. Qualitative data were analysed thematically. Section 3.15 sets out the procedure.

**Ethical Considerations**
Informed consent was obtained in writing or by recorded verbal assent before each interview; participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any point; no respondent was identified by name; and photographs were taken only where specific permission had been recorded. Section 3.13 gives the full protocol.

**The Researcher's Role and Objectivity**
The researcher administered every questionnaire personally, which secured consistency of administration but introduced the possibility of interviewer effect. The steps taken to limit that effect, including standardised wording and neutral probing, are described in section 3.14.
3.1.13 Limitations of the Methodological Approach

The design is cross-sectional and relies substantially on self-report, which constrains what may be inferred about causation and about absolute magnitudes. The limitations are stated fully in section 3.17 rather than being minimised.

**The Importance of Triangulation**
Four sources of evidence — survey, interview, key informant and observation — were combined so that a finding resting on self-report alone could be checked against an independent source. Where sources diverged, the divergence is reported rather than reconciled.

**Transition to the Detailed Methodological Sections**
The sections that follow set out each element of the methodology in the sequence in which it was applied in the field.

**2. Formulation of the Research Problem**
**The Genesis of the Inquiry**
The inquiry began from an observation available to anyone who walks through a township market: that the great majority of the traders are women, that many have traded

for a decade or more, and that few of their businesses appear appreciably larger than when they began. The question of why this should be so is the origin of the study.

**From General Concern to Specific Research Focus**
The general concern — that women's enterprises grow slowly — is documented at national and international level. The specific focus was arrived at by asking what could be established at the level of a single market that could not be established from aggregate data, and the answer was the configuration and ranking of constraints as the traders themselves experience them.

**The Existing State Against the Desired State**
The existing state is one in which women own a large share of the country's small businesses while those businesses remain smaller and less profitable than men's. The desired state is one in which the constraints binding these enterprises are known with sufficient precision that support may be directed at them. The gap between the two is the problem the study addresses.

**Identification of Contradictory Evidence**
The literature contains an apparent contradiction: financial inclusion in Zambia has expanded substantially, yet women traders remain capital-constrained. Resolving this required distinguishing transaction access from credit access, a distinction the study measures directly.

**The Role of Preliminary Consultations**
Preliminary discussions with traders and with the market committee during the reconnaissance visit informed the wording of items, the sequence of the instrument and the decision to include specific local practices — chilimba and kaloba — by name rather than under generic headings.

**Evaluation of the Socio-Economic Context**
The problem was located within a context in which the traders' customers are drawn from the same low-income population as the traders themselves, so that constraints on demand and constraints on supply are transmitted through the same households.

**Establishing the Practicality of the Problem**
The problem was selected in part because it is actionable. Several of the constraints examined lie within the competence of a single local authority, and the devolution of Constituency Development Fund allocation has made local evidence directly usable in local decisions.

**Grounding the Problem in Theoretical Inconsistency**
The observation that capital injections produce weaker returns for women's enterprises than for men's is inconsistent with a purely resource-based account of enterprise growth. Kabeer's framework resolves the inconsistency by locating part of the constraint in agency, and the study is designed to test whether that resolution holds in Chilenje.

**Synthesising the Impact on Household Welfare**
Because income passing through women's hands is disproportionately applied to children's welfare, a constraint on the growth of these enterprises is also a constraint on household welfare. The problem is therefore not confined to the enterprise.

**Distinguishing Between Presence and Bindingness**
A central refinement in formulating the problem was the recognition that listing constraints is not the same as identifying the one that binds. The instrument was accordingly designed to measure severity on a graded scale and to elicit a forced ranking of the three most pressing difficulties.

**Refining the Research Questions and Objectives**
Three specific objectives were settled — identification of barriers, examination of their effects, and establishment of coping strategies — each with a corresponding research question, and each decomposed into operational objectives measurable by specific items in the instrument.

**Considering the Ethical Implications**
Formulation took into account that the study would require respondents to disclose information about household money, unpaid debt and informal borrowing. The decision to proceed was accompanied by a commitment to anonymity, to the right to decline any item, and to the recording of consent before any photograph.

**Aligning with National Development Priorities**
The problem aligns with national priorities relating to micro, small and medium enterprise development, to financial inclusion and to women's economic empowerment, which situates the findings within an existing policy conversation rather than outside it.

**The Diagnostic Perspective of the Problem**
The problem is framed diagnostically. The study seeks to establish what is wrong and in what order of severity, on the model of a diagnosis preceding a prescription, rather than to evaluate any existing intervention.

**Final Statement of the Formulated Problem**
The problem may be stated finally as follows: although the constraints facing women in business in Zambia are documented in the aggregate, no evidence exists as to which of them bind women traders in Chilenje, how the pattern differs between a perishable and a non-perishable trade, or what the traders themselves do in response, with the result that support directed at them rests upon assumption rather than upon evidence.

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

## 3. Need of the Study

### The Absence of Market-Level Evidence

No systematic evidence exists for Chilenje. Decisions affecting the traders — concerning levies, trading space, storage and the allocation of development funds — are therefore taken without reference to any record of what the traders require or of what constrains them.

### The Need to Test the Capital Assumption

Support programmes commonly assume that capital is the binding constraint. The assumption may be correct, but it has not been tested against the traders' own ranking in this setting, and a programme built upon an untested assumption may expend resources without effect.

### The Need to Test the Training Assumption

Business and bookkeeping training is among the commonest interventions. Whether traders of nine years' average standing regard skill deficits as binding is a question that must be asked rather than assumed, and the study asks it directly.

### The Need to Distinguish Commodity from Gender Effects

Without a comparison across trades, the general difficulties of petty trading will continue to be addressed as though they were gender barriers, and genuinely gendered constraints will continue to be addressed as though they were matters of enterprise management.

### The Need to Document Existing Practice

The strategies traders have devised represent accumulated practical knowledge. Documenting them prevents assistance from duplicating what already works and identifies the informal arrangements a programme should reinforce rather than replace.

### The Need for Evidence on Product Design

Financial service providers require evidence on loan size, repayment frequency and security in order to design products these traders can use. Such evidence does not presently exist for this population and cannot be inferred from SME surveys.

### The Need to Quantify Physical Losses

Spoilage and insecure storage are acknowledged everywhere and quantified almost nowhere. A figure for weekly loss permits the cost of remedial investment to be weighed against the loss it would prevent, which is the form in which the question must be put to a local authority.

### The Need to Examine the Household Boundary

The absorption of business capital by household consumption is a documented mechanism of slow accumulation which enterprise surveys rarely measure. Measuring it is necessary if the effect of any capital intervention is to be predicted correctly.

### The Need to Distinguish Refusal from Self-Exclusion

Policy responses to credit exclusion differ according to whether traders are refused or do not apply. The distinction has not been drawn for this population and is drawn here.

### The Need for a Baseline

Without a record of the present position on defined indicators, the effect of any future intervention in Chilenje cannot be distinguished from the effect of everything else that changes in the interim.

### The Need for a Replicable Instrument

Comparable evidence across markets cannot accumulate without a common instrument. The study develops and documents one that may be applied elsewhere without modification.

### The Need to Give the Traders a Documented Voice

Decisions are routinely taken on behalf of market traders and rarely with reference to their stated priorities. Recording those priorities in a citable form alters the terms on which such decisions may be defended.

### The Need to Apply Theory to This Setting

Kabeer's framework is well established but is less often operationalised in enterprise research. Demonstrating its application here contributes a method as well as a set of findings.

### The Need for Evidence at the Constituency Level

With allocation devolved to constituency committees, evidence at the level of a single market has become directly usable in a way that national aggregates are not.

### The Academic and Social Responsibility of the Researcher

The study discharges an academic requirement while addressing a question of consequence to the community in which it was conducted, and returns its findings to the market committee that made the fieldwork possible.

## 4. Impact of the Study

### Redirection of Enterprise Support Resources

Where the evidence shows that a constraint commonly addressed is not the one traders regard as binding, resources may be redirected. The study makes such redirection defensible by supplying the evidence on which it would rest.

### Improved Design of Financial Products

Evidence on purchase frequency, purchase value, security available and reasons for non-application permits lenders to design working-capital products matched to the two observed cycles rather than to a generic micro-enterprise template.

**Informed Investment in Market Infrastructure**
A quantified figure for weekly loss attributable to spoilage and insecure storage permits the local authority to assess remedial investment against a measurable return, rather than treating it as discretionary expenditure.

**Strengthened Position of the Market Committee**
The committee obtains documented evidence with which to represent its members to the local authority on levies, space and conditions.

**Recognition of Informal Financial Institutions**
Evidence on the extent, contribution levels and reported effectiveness of chilimba supports the argument for treating these groups as a delivery channel rather than as a substitute for one.

**More Accurate Targeting by Non-Governmental Organisations**
Organisations working with women traders obtain a diagnostic baseline and a replicable method, permitting intervention to be targeted to the specific configuration of a market.

**Contribution to Policy on Informality**
Evidence that the overwhelming majority of these enterprises are unregistered bears upon the design of any programme that conditions participation on registration.

**Contribution to the Academic Literature**
The study supplies the paired-trade comparison that the literature lacks and demonstrates the operationalisation of Kabeer's framework in an urban trading setting.

**Demonstration of a Replicable Method**
The instruments and procedures are documented in sufficient detail to permit exact replication, which is the precondition for accumulating comparable evidence across markets.

**Visibility for an Undocumented Body of Knowledge**
The coping strategies recorded here enter the written record for the first time, which makes them available to traders elsewhere and to those who design assistance.

**A Baseline for Subsequent Evaluation**
The position of sixty enterprises on defined indicators at a defined time permits later measurement against a prior state.

**Improved Accountability in Programme Design**
Where local evidence exists, the design of a programme becomes a matter on which its sponsors may be held to account rather than a matter of professional discretion.

**Contribution to the Understanding of Gendered Constraint**
By separating constraints that follow from the commodity from those that follow from the position of the trader, the study sharpens a distinction that is frequently blurred in both literature and practice.

**Cultivation of a Research Culture Within the Institution**
The study contributes to the body of locally generated evidence produced within DMI–St. Eugene University and available to subsequent students.

**Practical Return to the Study Community**
A summary of findings was undertaken to be returned to the market committee, so that those who supplied the evidence also receive it.

## 5. Scope of the Study

**Geographical Scope**
The study was conducted in Chilenje, a residential township of Lusaka District in Lusaka Province, covering the market and the trading points at which women sell vegetables and second-hand clothing within that township. It did not extend to other townships of Lusaka or to markets outside the defined study area.

**Sectoral Scope**
The study covers retail trade in two commodities only. Wholesale operations, food preparation, services and manufacture were outside its scope even where conducted by women in the same market.

**Population Scope**
The study targeted women who owned and operated businesses in the two trades and who had traded for at least one year, together with key informants holding specialised knowledge of trading in the township.

**Exclusions from the Population**
Men trading the same commodities, women trading other commodities, and persons employed by a trader rather than owning the business were excluded, since the study concerns the position of the woman who owns the enterprise.

**Content Scope: Barriers**
Thirteen barriers were examined: access to capital and credit, absence of collateral, household and care responsibilities, security and cost of trading space, competition, customer purchasing power, availability and cost of transport, storage, spoilage of stock, record keeping, business skills, and access to market information.

**Content Scope: Effects**
Effects were examined through six growth indicators measured over two years, a checklist of concrete business

actions, overall business status, frequency and value of stock loss, and trading days missed.

**Content Scope: Strategies**
Twelve coping strategies were examined for both use and reported effectiveness, covering adjustments to stock, price and product, four distinct sources of borrowing, and arrangements involving family and other traders.

**Content Limitation**
The study examined barriers as experienced and reported by the traders and as observed at the trading point. It did not extend to audited financial accounts, to the internal operations of lending institutions, or to the national policy framework except so far as that framework bears upon the traders' circumstances.

**Temporal Scope**
Literature published mainly between 2015 and 2026 was drawn upon, and fieldwork was conducted during the 2026 academic year. Respondents reported upon their experience during the two years preceding the survey, so that a single unusual period would not determine the findings.

**Methodological Scope**
A mixed-methods descriptive case study was employed, combining a structured survey, semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews and structured observation.

**Analytical Scope**
Analysis was descriptive and comparative. Tests of statistical significance were applied to comparisons between the two trades and to associations between composite indices, but no causal model was estimated.

**Linguistic Scope**
Instruments were administered in English, Nyanja or Bemba according to the preference of the respondent, with standardised local renderings of key terms established during the pilot.

**Theoretical Scope**
The analysis is conducted entirely within Kabeer's (1999) framework. No competing framework is tested, and the study does not claim to adjudicate between theories of enterprise growth.

**Scope of the Photographic Record**
Photographs were taken at trading positions to document layout, display, storage and physical conditions. They serve as evidence of observed conditions and were taken only with recorded permission.

**Policy Scope**
Recommendations are directed at the local authority, the market committee, financial service providers, the responsible Ministry and the traders themselves, and are confined to matters within the competence of those actors.

## 6. Objectives of the Study
The objectives set out in Chapter One are restated here in the form in which they governed the design of the instruments. The general objective was to assess the barriers to growth among women-owned businesses in Chilenje, Lusaka, with particular reference to women trading in vegetables and in second-hand clothing.

**Objective One and Its Instrumentation**
To identify the barriers that constrain the growth of women-owned businesses selling vegetables and second-hand clothing in Chilenje. This objective was served by Section C of the questionnaire, in which thirteen barriers were each rated on a five-point severity scale, and by Section F, in which respondents ranked their three most pressing difficulties. It was served further by the in-depth interviews and by the key informant interviews.

**Objective Two and Its Instrumentation**
To examine the effects of these barriers on the performance and the growth of the businesses concerned. This objective was served by Section D of the questionnaire, comprising six growth indicators rated on a five-point change scale over two years, a checklist of concrete business actions, an overall assessment of business status and its principal reason, and items on the frequency and value of stock loss, trading days missed and the use of business money for household needs.

**Objective Three and Its Instrumentation**
To establish the strategies that the women owners use in order to work around the barriers that they face. This objective was served by Section E of the questionnaire, in which twelve strategies were each recorded as used or not used and, where used, rated for effectiveness on a three-point scale, and by the in-depth interviews in which the sequence and the reasoning behind these adjustments were explored.

**Alignment of Objectives, Questions, Data and Instruments**
Table 3.1 sets out the alignment between each objective, its corresponding research question, the data required, the participants from whom those data were obtained and the instrument by which they were obtained.

Table 1: Alignment of objectives, research questions, data required, participants and instruments

| Objective | Research question | Data required | Participants | Instrument |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Identify barriers | What barriers constrain growth? | Severity ratings on 13 barriers; forced ranking of top three | 60 traders; key informants | Questionnaire Sections C and F; KII guide |
| 2. Examine effects | What effects do these barriers have? | Change on 6 growth indicators; business actions; loss frequency and value; days missed | 60 traders | Questionnaire Section D; observation checklist |
| 3. Establish strategies | What strategies are used? | Use and effectiveness of 12 strategies; reasoning and sequence | 60 traders; 12 interviewees | Questionnaire Section E; in-depth interview guide |

## 7. Research Design

### Adoption of the Mixed-Methods Paradigm

A mixed-methods approach was adopted because the three objectives require different kinds of evidence. Objective one requires distributions across a population; objective three requires an account of reasoning and sequence. Neither a purely quantitative nor a purely qualitative design could serve both.

### Convergent Parallel Design Strategy

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the same period rather than in sequence, and were analysed separately before being brought together at the interpretation stage. Neither strand is subordinate to the other.

### The Descriptive Survey Component

The survey component is descriptive. It establishes what proportion of traders report a condition, how severely they rate it and how the distribution differs between the two trades, without attempting to model the determinants of any outcome.

### The Case-Study Frame

The study is a case study in that it takes a bounded system — women traders in two commodities in one township and examines it in depth. The boundary is defined by geography, by commodity, by sex of owner and by minimum duration of trading.

### The Cross-Sectional Temporal Framework

Data were collected at a single point in time with a two-year retrospective reference period. A longitudinal design would have been preferable for the examination of growth but was not feasible within the time available for the degree.

### The Diagnostic and Evaluative Orientation

The design is diagnostic rather than evaluative. It establishes the configuration of constraints without assessing the performance of any existing programme, since no programme specific to Chilenje was identified during the reconnaissance.

### The Comparative Element

The paired comparison between trades is integral to the design rather than incidental to it, which is why equal allocation between strata was preferred to proportional allocation. A design yielding fifty traders in one trade and ten in the other would have made the comparison unreliable.

### Triangulation Within the Design

Four sources were designed to bear upon overlapping questions so that self-report could be checked against observation and against the accounts of key informants. Physical conditions reported by traders were independently recorded on the observation checklist.

### Structural Use of Variables

The design treats the thirteen barriers as independent variables, the six growth indicators as dependent variables, the twelve strategies as intervening variables and trade as a moderating variable, following the conceptual framework at Figure 2.1.

### Integration of Deductive and Inductive Logic

The barrier list was derived deductively from the literature and from Kabeer’s framework. The interview component was designed inductively, with open questions permitting matters not anticipated by the barrier list to emerge.

### Control Measures Within the Design

Standardised wording, a fixed item sequence, administration by a single researcher, and a systematic rather than convenience selection of trading positions were adopted as control measures against the principal threats to internal validity.

### Pilot Study Integration

A pilot was conducted with traders not included in the main sample, and produced revisions to wording, to the ordering of sensitive items and to the local rendering of key terms. The pilot is described at 3.13.11.

### Ethical Alignment in the Design

Consent procedures, anonymity, the right to decline individual items and the protocol for photography were built into the design rather than added to it, since the instrument requires disclosure of sensitive financial information.

**Scalability and Replicability**
The design is documented so as to be reproducible in another market by a single researcher within a comparable period and at comparable cost, which was a design criterion rather than an afterthought.

**Synthesis of the Design Logic**
The logic of the design may be stated compactly: measure the distribution of constraint across a stratified sample, compare it between two contrasting trades, check it against observation, and explain it through interviews with a purposively selected subset.

## 8. Universe of the Study

**Definition of the Research Universe**
The universe comprises all women who own and operate businesses selling vegetables or second-hand clothing within the boundaries of Chilenje township and who have traded for at least one year.

**The Geographical Boundaries of the Universe**
The boundary is the township of Chilenje, encompassing the covered market, the tables and stands in its immediate surrounds, the trading positions along the adjacent roads and businesses operated from residential premises within the township.

**The Basis for Estimating the Universe**
No register of traders exists that distinguishes by sex, commodity and duration of trading. The magnitude of the universe was therefore estimated during the reconnaissance visit by enumerating eligible trading positions within each stratum in cooperation with the market committee.

**Categorisation of Trading Positions**
Four categories of position were distinguished during enumeration: stalls inside the covered market, tables and stands immediately outside it, positions along the road, and trading from home. All four were included in the frame.

**The Vegetable Stratum**
The vegetable stratum comprises women selling fresh produce — leafy greens, tomatoes, onions and related items — whether from a fixed stall, an outside table or a roadside position.

**The Second-Hand Clothing Stratum**
The salaula stratum comprises women selling imported used clothing purchased in bales or part-bales and resold in units, whether from a stall, a hanging display or a table.

**The Minimum Duration Criterion**
A minimum of one year in the trade was imposed so that respondents could report meaningfully on a two-year reference period and so that the sample would not be dominated by entrants who had not yet encountered the full cycle of the trade.

**The Ownership Criterion**
Ownership was defined by control rather than by registration: the woman must take the principal decisions concerning what is bought and sold, the prices charged and the disposal of earnings, whether or not the enterprise is registered.

**Exclusion of Employees and Assistants**
Persons minding a stall on behalf of an owner were excluded, since their responses would describe the constraints of an employee rather than of an enterprise owner.

**Exclusion of Male Traders**
Men trading the same commodities were excluded by the definition of the population. The study accordingly cannot make the comparison between male and female traders that some of the literature reports, and this is acknowledged as a limitation at 3.17.

**The Key Informant Universe**
A separate and much smaller universe comprises those holding specialised knowledge of trading in the township: members of the market committee, officers of the Lusaka City Council with responsibility for markets, and officers of financial service providers operating in the area.

**Demographic Diversity Within the Universe**
The universe encompasses considerable variation in age, marital status, education, household size and duration of trading, and the sampling procedure was designed to distribute the sample across that variation rather than to concentrate it.

**The Universe as a Microcosm**
Chilenje is neither the largest nor the smallest of Lusaka's township markets, and the two trades examined are those in which women in such markets are most heavily represented. The universe may therefore reasonably be regarded as typical of its class, though this is an argument for plausibility rather than a claim of statistical representativeness.

**The Stakeholder Universe**
Beyond the traders and key informants, a wider stakeholder universe — customers, wholesalers, transporters and household members — bears upon the questions examined but was not sampled, being outside the scope defined at 3.5.

**Justification of the Universe for the Research Purpose**
The universe is justified by the research question. A question about how constraints are configured in a

particular market requires a universe defined by that market, and generalisation beyond it is offered as analytical rather than statistical.

## 9. Sampling Procedure

### Overview of the Procedure

A stratified systematic procedure was used for the survey, and purposive procedures for the in-depth interviews and the key informant interviews. Each is described below.

### Construction of the Sampling Frame

During the reconnaissance visit, and with the cooperation of the market committee, eligible trading positions were enumerated and listed separately for each stratum. The list constituted the sampling frame and was compiled before any selection took place.

### Stratification by Trade

The two trades formed the strata. Stratification was essential rather than optional here, because the study is built upon a comparison between the trades and simple random sampling from the market as a whole could have produced an unbalanced allocation that would weaken that comparison.

### Equal Allocation Between Strata

Thirty respondents were allocated to each stratum. Equal allocation was preferred to proportional allocation because the comparison is a central purpose of the study; proportional allocation would have been inappropriate if one trade happened to be more numerous than the other.

### Systematic Selection Within Strata

Within each stratum the researcher established the number of eligible trading positions, divided by the number of respondents required, and approached every kth position beginning from a randomly chosen starting point.

### Handling of Absence, Ineligibility and Refusal

Where the trader at a selected position was absent, ineligible or declined, the next eligible position was approached and the interval resumed. This rule was fixed in advance so that substitution could not be exercised at the researcher's discretion.

### Rationale for Systematic Rather than Convenience Selection

Systematic selection distributes respondents across the whole trading area rather than concentrating them at the entrance. Traders at the periphery may differ systematically from those at the front in customer traffic and therefore in performance, and convenience selection would have introduced that difference as a bias.

### Geographic Distribution Within the Market

The interval procedure secured coverage of all four categories of trading position identified at 3.8.4, so that the sample includes traders inside the covered market, outside it, along the road and operating from home.

### Selection for In-Depth Interviews

Twelve traders, six from each trade, were selected purposively from among the questionnaire respondents to represent variation on characteristics that Chapter Two indicates are consequential: years in the trade, savings group membership, formal credit history, number of dependants, and whether reported performance had risen or remained level.

### Rationale for Purposive Selection of Interviewees

Purposive selection is appropriate because the interviews seek depth and range of experience rather than representativeness, which the survey already provides. Six accounts from each trade permit variation to be observed within each while remaining manageable for a single researcher to conduct, transcribe and analyse.

### Selection of Key Informants

Key informants were selected purposively by virtue of the offices they hold: the market committee, the local authority and a financial service provider operating in the area. Snowball referral was used to a limited extent where an informant recommended another person with direct knowledge.

### Voluntary Participation and Replacement

Participation was voluntary throughout and refusal was treated as a routine outcome to be recorded rather than overcome. Replacement followed the fixed rule at 3.9.6.

### Management of Self-Selection Bias

Because those who agree to participate may differ from those who decline, the pattern of refusals was noted during fieldwork. Refusals were distributed across positions rather than concentrated in any category, which offers some reassurance though it does not eliminate the concern.

### Documentation of the Sampling Process

The frame, the interval used, the random starting point and every substitution were recorded in the field diary, so that the selection is reconstructible.

### Synthesis of the Sampling Logic

The logic may be stated compactly: stratify by the variable on which the study turns, allocate equally to protect the comparison, select systematically to distribute across the market, and substitute by a rule fixed in advance.

## 10. Sample Size

### The Basis of the Calculation

Where the population is known, sample size may be calculated using the formula of Yamane (1967):

$$n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$$

where n is the sample size, N is the population size and e is the level of precision, taken as 0.05 for a confidence level of ninety-five per cent.

**The Final Sample Achieved**
A total of sixty women traders completed the questionnaire, comprising thirty vegetable traders and thirty traders in second-hand clothing. The achieved sample corresponds exactly to the target set at the design stage, and no stratum was under-filled.

**Justification of the Sample Size**
The figure of sixty satisfies three requirements simultaneously. It is sufficient to permit descriptive statistics and a meaningful comparison between the two trades, since each subgroup of thirty is large enough for percentages to be interpretable and for a t-test on a difference of moderate size to have reasonable power. It is achievable by a single researcher administering questionnaires face to face in a market over a fieldwork period of three weeks. And the equal allocation protects the comparison that is central to the study.

**Statistical Power Considerations**
With thirty respondents in each group, a two-sample comparison has approximately eighty per cent power to detect a standardised difference of about 0.74 at the five per cent level. Differences smaller than this may exist without being detected, and the absence of a significant difference is accordingly reported as inconclusive rather than as evidence of equality.

**Sample Size for the Qualitative Component**
Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted, six in each trade. Interviews are intended to explain and illustrate the survey findings rather than to establish their frequency, and saturation in the accounts of coping and of household constraint was reached before the twelfth interview.

**Number of Key Informant Interviews**
Four key informant interviews were conducted, the number depending on availability and on the relevance of the offices identified.

**Response Rate**
All sixty questionnaires distributed to selected and eligible respondents were completed, since administration was face to face and a questionnaire was commenced only where consent had been obtained. The effective response rate is therefore reported at the point of approach rather than at the point of return, and substitutions arising from absence or refusal are recorded in the field diary.

**Treatment of Missing Data**
Missing values arose principally by design rather than by omission: effectiveness ratings were sought only from those using a given strategy, and reasons for loan refusal only from those who had applied or had decided not to. Such values are reported against the relevant denominator rather than against the full sample of sixty.

**Feasibility Against Rigour**
A larger sample would have improved precision at the cost of either a longer fieldwork period or a shallower instrument. The instrument was preferred, on the ground that the study's contribution lies in the detail of what is measured rather than in the number of respondents.

**Representation of the Range of Experience**
The achieved sample spans ages from twenty-four to fifty-eight, durations in the trade from one to fifteen years, household dependants from one to eight, and all four categories of trading position, which indicates that the systematic procedure distributed the sample across the variation present in the universe.

**11. Sampling Area**
**Location and Administrative Position**
Chilenje is a residential township of Lusaka District in Lusaka Province, falling under the jurisdiction of the Lusaka City Council. Its market is administered by the Council in cooperation with an elected market committee.

**The Character of the Township**
Chilenje is an established residential area of mixed housing stock whose population is drawn predominantly from low- and lower-middle-income households. The market serves that population directly and its trade follows the rhythm of local household income.

**The Physical Layout of the Market**
The market comprises a covered section containing fixed stalls, an apron of tables and stands immediately outside it, and a ribbon of trading positions along the adjacent roads. The four categories differ materially in shelter, security and customer traffic.

**The Covered Section**
Stalls inside the covered market offer shelter from sun and rain and a degree of overnight security, and are occupied predominantly by traders in non-perishable goods including second-hand clothing. Charges attach to these positions.

**The Outside Tables and Stands**
Tables and stands immediately outside the covered section offer higher customer traffic and lower shelter. They are occupied predominantly by traders in perishable produce, which exposes precisely those traders whose stock is most vulnerable.

**The Roadside Positions**
Positions along the adjacent roads carry the least security of tenure and the least shelter, and are occupied by traders

operating on the smallest capital. Tenure at these positions is generally informal.

**Trading from Residential Premises**
A small number of traders operate from home, principally in second-hand clothing, which removes the levy and the travel but reduces customer traffic to those who already know the trader.

**The Customer Base**
Customers are drawn overwhelmingly from the surrounding township. The traders and their customers therefore belong to the same income population, so that a contraction in local household income is transmitted immediately to the market.

**Proximity to Wholesale Sources**
Chilenje is served for fresh produce principally by Soweto Market, the city's central wholesale point, and by peri-urban farms; and for second-hand clothing by bale suppliers concentrated in Kamwala and central Lusaka. The distance to these sources determines transport cost and the time a trader must spend away from her stall.

**Transport Conditions**
Movement of stock from wholesale point to trading position is accomplished by minibus, by hired vehicle or by handcart, and the cost is borne by the trader. Pooling arrangements between traders are common and are recorded as a coping strategy in Chapter Four.

**Shelter, Drainage and Surface Conditions**
Shelter is uneven across the market, drainage is variable and the trading surface ranges from paved to bare ground. These conditions were recorded on the observation checklist and are documented photographically in Chapter Four.

**Storage Facilities**
Secure overnight storage is limited and is available principally to those holding stalls within the covered section. Traders without it must carry stock home, dispose of it before closing or accept the risk of loss.

**Levies and Charges**
Charges attach to most trading positions and are levied daily or monthly according to the category of position. The great majority of respondents pay for their trading space.

**Language and Social Environment**
Trade is conducted principally in Nyanja, with English and Bemba also in use. Traders are organised informally through neighbourly relations at adjacent positions and, for some, through savings groups and a traders' association.

**Accessibility for the Research**
The market is compact enough to be covered on foot by a single researcher and is accessible by public transport, which made systematic selection across the whole trading area practicable within the fieldwork period.

**12. Sources of Data**

**Primary Source: The Women Traders**
The principal source is the sixty women traders who completed the questionnaire, of whom twelve also gave in-depth interviews. They supplied all data on barriers, effects, strategies, household circumstances and business characteristics.

**Primary Source: Key Informants**
Four key informants supplied contextual evidence on market administration, levies, trading space allocation, and the terms on which credit is available to traders in the township.

**Primary Source: Direct Observation**
Structured observation at selected trading positions supplied independent evidence on shelter, storage, drainage, display method, stock volume and the presence of assistants.

**Primary Source: Photographic Record**
Photographs taken with recorded permission supply a visual record of trading conditions and are reproduced as plates in Chapter Four with an accompanying log at Appendix G.

**Primary Source: The Field Diary**
A field diary recorded the sampling process, substitutions, refusals, conditions on each day of fieldwork and observations not captured by the checklist.

**Secondary Source: Peer-Reviewed Literature**
Journal articles supplied the theoretical framework and the comparative empirical evidence reviewed in Chapter Two.

**Secondary Source: Multilateral Institution Reports**
Reports of the World Bank, the International Trade Centre, the International Labour Organization and UN Women supplied survey evidence at national and international level.

**Secondary Source: National Statistical Publications**
Publications of the Zambia Statistics Agency and the Zambia Development Agency supplied national context on enterprise ownership and on the composition of the informal sector.

**Secondary Source: Financial Inclusion Reporting**
FinMark Trust and Global Findex reporting supplied evidence on account ownership, mobile money adoption and the gender gap in financial access.

**Secondary Source: Previous Theses and Dissertations**
Previous student research on informal trade and on women's enterprise in Zambia and the region was consulted for method as well as for findings.

**Secondary Source: Local Authority Records**
Records held by the Lusaka City Council and the market committee concerning trading positions and levies were consulted so far as access permitted.

**Justification for the Combination of Sources**
The combination was designed so that each principal claim rests upon more than one source: a condition reported by traders was, where possible, independently observed and independently described by a key informant.

**Assessment of Source Quality**
Secondary sources were assessed for the recency of their data, the transparency of their method and the interests of the commissioning institution. Primary sources predominate in Chapter Four, and secondary sources are used there only for comparison.

**Limitations of the Available Sources**
No register distinguishing traders by sex, commodity and duration exists, and no prior study of Chilenje exists. The absence of both is itself part of the justification for the study.

**Data Storage and Custody**
Completed questionnaires, recordings, transcripts and photographs were stored securely by the researcher, with electronic files password-protected and paper records held separately from any list of names.

## 13. Method of Data Collection

**Securing Research Clearance**
A letter of introduction was obtained from the University and presented to the Lusaka City Council and to the market committee of Chilenje. Permission was granted before any approach to a trader, and the committee was briefed on the purpose and scope of the study.

**The Reconnaissance Visit**
A reconnaissance visit preceded fieldwork, during which the layout of the market was recorded, eligible positions were enumerated with the assistance of the committee, and preliminary discussions with traders informed the wording of the instrument.

**Administration of the Structured Questionnaire**
The questionnaire was administered face to face by the researcher at the trader's place of business. Face-to-face administration was used rather than self-completion because levels of literacy vary and because a trader can answer while continuing to attend to customers, which raises the response rate substantially.

**Timing of Administration**
Interviews were conducted during ordinary trading hours, avoiding the early morning period during which vegetable traders buy and arrange stock. Where a respondent was serving a customer the interview paused and resumed, which lengthened administration but preserved the relationship.

**Language of Administration**
Items were administered in English, Nyanja or Bemba according to the preference of the respondent, using standardised local renderings of key terms established during the pilot so that the same question was asked in each language.

**Informed Consent and Participant Briefing**
Before each interview the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to decline any item or to withdraw at any point, and the treatment of responses were explained. Consent was recorded in writing, or by recorded verbal assent where a respondent preferred not to sign.

**Conduct of the Semi-Structured Interviews**
Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected respondents at a time and place of their choosing, using the guide at Appendix B. Interviews lasted between thirty and fifty minutes and followed the respondent's own ordering of topics where she offered one.

**Use of Audio Recording**
Interviews were audio-recorded where the respondent consented and otherwise recorded in contemporaneous notes. Recordings were transcribed and the transcripts checked against the recordings before analysis.

**Conduct of the Key Informant Interviews**
Key informants were interviewed at their offices using the guide at Appendix C, with questions directed at the matters within each informant's competence rather than at a uniform schedule.

**Structured Observation at Trading Points**
The observation checklist at Appendix D was completed at selected trading positions, recording shelter, storage, drainage and surface, display method, approximate stock volume, presence of assistants and the presence of children at the stall.

**Pilot Testing and Instrument Refinement**
The instrument was piloted with traders not included in the main sample. The pilot produced three substantive revisions: sensitive items concerning household money were moved later in the sequence; the barrier scale anchors were restated in terms recognisable to respondents; and

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

chilimba and kaloba were named explicitly rather than subsumed under generic headings.

**Photography Protocol**

Photographs were taken only where specific permission had been recorded for that purpose, separately from consent to the interview. Respondents were informed that photographs might appear in the final report and were offered the alternative of a photograph in which no person appears.

**Data Collection Timeline**

Fieldwork was conducted over three weeks for questionnaire administration and observation, followed by a period for in-depth and key informant interviews, in accordance with the work plan at Appendix H.

**Quality Checks During Collection**

Each completed questionnaire was reviewed at the end of the day of collection for omitted items and for internal inconsistency, and ambiguities were resolved by a return visit where the respondent was willing.

**Ensuring Adequacy of Qualitative Data**

Interviews continued until the accounts of coping and of household constraint ceased to yield material not already recorded. Saturation on these themes was reached before the twelfth interview, which was nonetheless conducted as planned.

## 14. Tools of Data Collection

**The Structured Questionnaire**

The questionnaire comprises six sections: background information, the business, barriers, performance and growth, coping strategies, and priorities. It is reproduced in full at Appendix A. Every item is traceable to a stated objective.

**The Five-Point Barrier Severity Scale**

Each of thirteen barriers was rated on a five-point scale anchored at 1 (not a problem), 2 (a small problem), 3 (a moderate problem), 4 (a serious problem) and 5 (a very serious problem). Verbal anchors were used in preference to numbers alone so that the scale would carry the same meaning across respondents.

**The Five-Point Growth Change Scale**

Each of six growth indicators was rated on a five-point change scale over two years, anchored at 1 (much less), 2 (a little less), 3 (about the same), 4 (a little more) and 5 (much more).

**The Three-Point Effectiveness Scale**

Each coping strategy actually used was rated on a three-point scale anchored at 1 (does not help), 2 (helps a little) and 3 (helps a lot). A three-point scale was chosen because finer discrimination was found in the pilot to exceed what respondents could reliably supply.

**The Forced Ranking Item**

Respondents were required to nominate their first, second and third most pressing difficulties from the thirteen barriers. The forced ranking was included precisely because severity ratings alone tend to compress toward the upper end of the scale.

**The Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Traders**

The guide at Appendix B covers the history of the business, a typical week, the point at which capital runs short, the sequence of adjustments made in response, the role of the household, and what the respondent would do with additional capital.

**The Key Informant Interview Guide**

The guide at Appendix C covers market administration, levies and space allocation, storage and physical conditions, the terms on which credit is available, and the informant’s assessment of what constrains women traders in the township.

**The Structured Observation Checklist**

The checklist at Appendix D records the physical characteristics of the trading position and the conditions under which trade is conducted, supplying an independent check on matters where self-report is least reliable.

**The Informed Consent Form**

The form at Appendix E sets out the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the treatment of responses, and separate provision for consent to photography.

**The Photograph Log**

The log at Appendix G records for each photograph the date, location, subject, relevance to the study, whether permission was obtained and whether any person is identifiable.

**Content Validity**

Content validity was addressed by deriving every item from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two or from Kabeer’s framework, by mapping each item to a stated objective, and by supervisory review of the complete instrument before piloting.

**Construct Validity**

Construct validity rests on the operationalisation set out at 2.3.9 to 2.3.11, in which each of Kabeer’s three components is rendered into a defined set of items rather than being assumed to be captured by any single question.

**Reliability of the Composite Scales**

Internal consistency was assessed by Cronbach's alpha. The six-item growth scale returned α = 0.78, which is acceptable for a composite of this length. The thirteen-item barrier list returned α = 0.47, which is low; this is expected and appropriate, since the thirteen barriers form a checklist of distinct and largely independent constraints rather than a unidimensional construct, and a high alpha would in fact indicate that the items were measuring the same thing when they are intended not to.

**Measures Against Interviewer Effect**

Wording was standardised, item sequence was fixed, probing was confined to neutral requests for elaboration, and the researcher refrained from indicating approval or disapproval of any response. Administration by a single researcher secures consistency at the cost of preventing any assessment of inter-interviewer reliability.

**Instruments for Analysis**

Data were entered into Microsoft Excel and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, with descriptive and inferential procedures as set out at 3.15. Qualitative transcripts were coded manually.

## 15. Tools for Data Analysis

**Data Entry and Cleaning**

Responses were entered into a structured spreadsheet with one row per respondent and one column per item. Entries were checked against the paper instruments, out-of-range values were identified by inspection of frequency distributions, and internal inconsistencies were resolved by reference to the original questionnaire.

**Coding of Categorical Variables**

Categorical responses were coded numerically according to a codebook prepared in advance and retained with the dataset, so that the coding of any variable is reconstructible.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Frequencies and percentages were computed for categorical variables, and means, standard deviations, medians and ranges for continuous and scale variables. Percentages are reported to one decimal place throughout.

**Presentation in Frequency Distribution Tables**

Findings are presented in frequency distribution tables reporting the count for each trade separately, the combined count and the combined percentage, so that the reader may inspect the comparison directly rather than relying on the researcher's summary of it.

**Ranking by Mean Severity**

The thirteen barriers were ranked by mean severity score across the full sample, and the proportion rating each as serious or very serious was computed as a second and more conservative indicator of bindingness.

**Weighted Ranking of Stated Priorities**

The forced ranking was analysed by assigning three points to a first priority, two to a second and one to a third, and summing across respondents. This yields an ordering that reflects both how often a barrier is nominated and how urgently it is placed.

**Independent-Samples t-Tests**

Differences between the two trades on the barrier scales and on continuous variables were tested using independent-samples t-tests with Welch's correction for unequal variances. The five per cent level was adopted as the threshold for significance.

**Effect Size Estimation**

Cohen's d was computed for each t-test, since a significance level indicates whether a difference is distinguishable from chance but not whether it is large enough to matter. Effect sizes are reported alongside p-values throughout Chapter Four.

**Chi-Square Tests of Independence**

Associations between trade and categorical variables were tested by chi-square. Where expected cell counts were small the result is reported with that caution attached.

**Pearson Correlation**

Associations between composite indices and between indices and continuous variables were assessed by Pearson correlation, with the coefficient and the p-value reported together.

**Construction of Composite Indices**

A barrier index was constructed as the mean of the thirteen severity ratings and a growth index as the mean of the six change ratings, in each case only where all constituent items were present.

**Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data**

Transcripts were read in full, coded line by line, and codes grouped into themes organised around the three research questions, following an approach consistent with that of Braun and Clarke. Themes not anticipated by the barrier list were retained rather than forced into it.

**Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

The two strands were integrated at the interpretation stage, with interview material used to explain patterns observed in the survey and with divergence between the strands reported rather than resolved in favour of either.

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

**Analysis of Observational Data**
Checklist entries were tabulated and compared against the corresponding self-reported items, with any systematic divergence noted in Chapter Four.

**Presentation Conventions**
Tables are numbered sequentially within the chapter and each is followed by an interpretation paragraph stating what the table shows and what may reasonably be inferred from it. Statistical results are reported with the test statistic, the degrees of freedom where applicable, the p-value and the effect size.

## 16. Variables Used in the Study

**The Dependent Variable: Business Growth**
Business growth is the principal dependent variable, measured through six indicators— value of stock held, level of sales, earnings retained, range of goods carried, trading space occupied and number of persons assisting — each rated on a five-point change scale over two years and combined into a growth index.

**Independent Variables: The Thirteen Barriers**
The thirteen barriers constitute the independent variables, each measured on a five-point severity scale: insufficient money for stock, no bank or microfinance loan, no collateral, home and childcare demands, competition, low customer purchasing power, transport, storage, spoilage, trading space, business training, record keeping and market information.

**The Moderating Variable: Trade**
Trade — vegetables or second-hand clothing — operates as a moderating variable, since the same barrier may bear differently upon the two commodity cycles. It is the variable on which the sampling was stratified.

**Intervening Variables: The Twelve Coping Strategies**
The twelve coping strategies operate as intervening variables which may attenuate the effect of a barrier on an outcome. Each is measured for use and, where used, for reported effectiveness.

**Demographic Variable: Age**
Age in completed years, examined both as a continuous variable and in four grouped categories.

**Demographic Variable: Marital Status**
Marital status recorded in four categories: married, single, widowed, divorced or separated.

**Demographic Variable: Education**
Highest level of education completed, recorded in four categories from primary to college or university.

**Household Variable: Dependants and Children**
The number of persons dependent on the respondent's income and the number of children under eighteen in the household, each recorded as a count.

**Household Variable: Position as Income Earner**
Whether the respondent is the principal income earner in her household, recorded in three categories including equal contribution.

**Agency Variable: Control of Business Money**
Who decides how business money is used, recorded in three categories, and how frequently business money is applied to household needs, recorded on a five-point frequency scale.

**Enterprise Variable: Duration and Scale**
Years in the trade, amount spent on stock per purchase, frequency of stock purchase, number of paid workers and number of unpaid family helpers.

**Enterprise Variable: Formality and Financial Access**
Whether the business is registered, whether the respondent holds a bank account, whether she uses mobile money, and her loan application history including the reason for refusal or non-application.

**Institutional Variable: Membership and Training**
Membership of a savings group and the contribution made, membership of a traders' association, and whether business training has been received and of what type.

**Outcome Variable: Loss and Disruption**
Frequency of stock loss, value of stock lost in a typical week, and trading days missed in a typical week, each treated as an outcome of the physical and household conditions under which trade is conducted.

**Operationalisation Summary**
Every variable listed above is measured by a specified item or set of items in the instrument at Appendix A, and the mapping between variable and item is preserved in the codebook retained with the dataset.

## 17. Limitations of the Study

**Reliance on Self-Report**
Most variables are self-reported, and traders who keep no written records may estimate rather than recall amounts. Values for stock spend and weekly loss should therefore be read as orders of magnitude rather than as precise figures, and the comparison between trades is more reliable than either absolute figure.

**The Cross-Sectional Constraint**
Data were collected at a single point in time. Growth is measured by retrospective self-assessment over two years rather than by comparison of recorded positions, which is

the weakest of the available measures of change and the only one feasible in a population that keeps no accounts.

**Inability to Establish Causation**
The design permits associations to be described but not causal relationships to be established. Where an association is reported between a barrier and an outcome, the direction of any causal relationship cannot be determined from these data.

**Positive Skew in the Growth Measures**
Responses on the six growth indicators cluster toward the upper end of the scale, with very few respondents reporting decline. This restricts the variance available for analysis and is likely to reflect in part a tendency to report favourably about one's own business. The consequence is discussed at 4.5.6 and treated as a material qualification to the findings on effects.

**Absence of a Male Comparison Group**
Because the population is defined as women, the study cannot establish which of the constraints reported are specific to women and which affect all small traders. The separation attempted in Chapter Four rests on theoretical reasoning and on the comparison between trades, not on a direct comparison by sex.

**Sample Size and Statistical Power**
With thirty respondents per group, differences smaller than a standardised effect of about 0.74 are unlikely to be detected. Non-significant differences are therefore inconclusive rather than evidence of equality.

**Limits on Generalisability**
Findings pertain to Chilenje. Generalisation to other markets is offered as analytical — the mechanisms described are likely to operate elsewhere — rather than statistical, and the specific magnitudes should not be transferred.

**Absence of a Complete Sampling Frame**
No register of traders distinguishing sex, commodity and duration exists. The frame was constructed by enumeration during the reconnaissance visit, and may have omitted traders absent on that day or trading intermittently.

**Under-Representation of Intermittent Traders**
Because selection operated on trading positions occupied at the time of the visit, women who trade irregularly are less likely to have been selected. Such traders may be those operating under the greatest constraint, which would bias the findings toward the more established.

**Sensitivity of Financial Items**
Items concerning household money, informal borrowing and unpaid debt touch on private matters. Some under-reporting on these items is likely notwithstanding the assurances given, particularly in respect of borrowing from moneylenders.

**Interviewer Effect**
All interviews were conducted by a single researcher, which secures consistency but means that any systematic effect of the researcher's presence or manner applies uniformly to the whole dataset and cannot be estimated.

**The Hawthorne Effect in Observation**
Traders observed at their positions were aware of being observed, which may have altered display, tidiness or the presence of assistants during the period of observation.

**Low Internal Consistency of the Barrier List**
The barrier list returned a low alpha, which is appropriate for a checklist of distinct constraints but means that the barrier index constructed from it should be treated as a summary of the number and severity of constraints reported rather than as a measure of a single underlying construct.

**Restricted Access to Institutional Records**
Access to lending institutions' internal criteria and to complete local authority records was limited. Evidence on the terms of credit rests substantially on the accounts of traders and of a single financial service provider.

**The Trade-Off Between Breadth and Depth**
The decision to examine two trades in one market in detail necessarily excludes breadth across markets. The study accordingly establishes a great deal about one market and nothing about how typical that market is.

## 18. Difficulties Faced During the Study

**Securing Permissions**
Obtaining clearance from the local authority and briefing the market committee required several visits and occupied more of the fieldwork period than had been allowed in the work plan.

**Interviewing During Trading Hours**
Respondents were working throughout. Interviews were repeatedly interrupted by customers, which lengthened administration considerably and required patience on both sides.

**Initial Suspicion of the Researcher's Purpose**
Some traders initially assumed the researcher to be an officer of the Council or a tax authority. Explaining the academic purpose of the study, and the fact that it carried no consequence for their trading position, was necessary before consent could meaningfully be given.

**Expectation of Material Benefit**
Several respondents expected that participation would lead to assistance. It was necessary to state plainly that the

study offered no such prospect, which in a small number of cases led to withdrawal of interest and to substitution under the rule at 3.9.6.

**Reluctance on Financial Items**
Questions concerning household money, borrowing from moneylenders and unpaid debt met with visible discomfort in some cases. The option to decline individual items was exercised, and pressing was avoided.

**Absence of Selected Traders**
Traders selected by the systematic interval were absent on the day of approach with some frequency, particularly among vegetable traders who travel to buy stock. Each absence required substitution and a record in the field diary.

**Variability in Recall**
Respondents keeping no written records found it difficult to state amounts spent or lost with precision. Prompts based on recognisable units — a box, a bundle, a bale — were used to assist recall without leading the response.

**Language and Terminology**
Certain terms, notably collateral, retained earnings and market information, have no exact everyday equivalent in Nyanja or Bemba. Standardised renderings were established during the pilot, but some loss of precision is unavoidable.

**Weather and Physical Conditions**
Heat, dust and, on two days, rain interrupted fieldwork and affected both the researcher's and the respondents' capacity to sustain an interview at an exposed trading position.

**Scheduling Key Informant Interviews**
Officers of the local authority and of the financial service provider were difficult to schedule, and two appointments were postponed. This is the principal reason the number of key informant interviews stands at four rather than five.

**Obtaining Photographic Permission**
Several traders were willing to be interviewed but unwilling to be photographed. The offer of a photograph in which no person appears resolved this in most cases, and the photographic record is accordingly weighted toward images of goods, display and conditions rather than of persons.

**Noise in Audio Recording**
Market noise degraded several recordings. Contemporaneous notes were taken alongside recording throughout, which allowed affected passages to be reconstructed reliably.

**Transport and Cost**
Repeated travel to the study area over the fieldwork period, together with printing and communication, exceeded the estimate in the budget at Appendix I.

**Time Pressure of the Academic Calendar**
The fieldwork period, analysis and writing were compressed into the time available within the academic year, which constrained the possibility of returning to respondents for clarification as often as would have been desirable.

**Data Entry and Cleaning**
Entering ninety-two variables for sixty respondents and reconciling inconsistencies against the paper instruments was more time-consuming than anticipated and required a full re-check of the dataset before analysis could begin.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

### 1. Data Analysis

**Overview of the Analytic Framework**
This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from sixty women traders in Chilenje, thirty in each of the two trades. The presentation follows the order of the three research questions: the demographic and business profile of the respondents is established first, the barriers are then identified and ranked, their effects on performance and growth are examined, and the strategies adopted in response are set out. Each table is followed by an interpretation stating what the table shows and what may reasonably be inferred from it.

**Quantitative Data Processing**
Responses were entered into a structured spreadsheet with one row per respondent and ninety-two columns corresponding to the items of the instrument, checked against the paper questionnaires, and analysed using standard statistical procedures. Frequency distributions were inspected for out-of-range values before any analysis was conducted.

**Application of Descriptive Statistics**
Frequencies and percentages are reported for categorical variables and means and standard deviations for scale variables. Percentages are given to one decimal place and are computed on the full sample of sixty except where an item was asked of a subset, in which case the applicable denominator is stated.

**Inferential Statistical Testing**
Comparisons between the two trades were tested using independent-samples t-tests with Welch's correction for scale and continuous variables, and chi-square tests of independence for categorical variables. The five per cent level is adopted throughout as the threshold for statistical

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

significance, and significant results are marked with an asterisk in the tables.

### Reporting of Effect Sizes

Because a significance level indicates only whether a difference is distinguishable from chance, Cohen's d is reported alongside each t-test in the accompanying text. A d of about 0.2 is conventionally regarded as small, 0.5 as moderate and 0.8 as large.

### Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Transcripts of the twelve in-depth interviews and the four key informant interviews were coded line by line and the codes grouped into themes organised around the three research questions. Interview material is used in this chapter to explain patterns observed in the survey rather than to establish their frequency.

### Integration and Triangulation

Four sources bear upon overlapping questions. Where the survey, the interviews and the observation checklist agree, the finding is stated without qualification; where they diverge, the divergence is reported and the likely reason for it discussed.

### Reliability of the Composite Scales

The six-item growth scale returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78, which is acceptable. The thirteen-item barrier list returned 0.47. As explained at 3.14.13, the low figure is appropriate rather than problematic, since the thirteen barriers are intended to measure distinct and largely independent constraints rather than a single underlying construct.

### Data Cleaning and Quality Control

Every questionnaire was reviewed on the day of collection and the complete dataset was re-checked against the paper instruments before analysis. Missing values arose principally by design: effectiveness ratings were sought only from users of a given strategy, and reasons for non-borrowing only from those who had not received a loan.

### Handling of Demographic Variables

Continuous demographic variables are presented both as summary statistics and in grouped categories. Grouping boundaries were fixed before inspection of the distribution so that the categories were not chosen to produce any particular pattern.

### Treatment of the Barrier Ranking

Two distinct measures of bindingness are reported. The severity rating establishes how serious each barrier is felt to be; the forced ranking establishes which barriers traders place first when compelled to choose. The two are reported separately at 4.4 and 4.7 and compared at 4.7.3.

### Contextualisation Within the Chilenje Environment

Findings are interpreted against the physical and economic conditions of the market described at 3.11 and documented photographically at 4.8. A barrier rating is not self-explanatory, and the conditions under which it was given form part of its meaning.

### Use of Verbatim Material

Where an interview statement illuminates a quantitative finding, it is paraphrased or quoted briefly and attributed by trade and respondent number only, in accordance with the undertaking of anonymity given at the point of consent.

### Comparative Analysis by Trade

Every table reports the two trades separately as well as in combination. This is the central analytical device of the study and permits the reader to inspect the comparison directly rather than relying on the researcher's summary of it.

### Alignment with the Research Objectives

Every table and every theme is tied to one of the three specific objectives stated in Chapter One. Sections 4.2 and 4.3 establish the profile against which the remainder is read; 4.4 addresses objective one; 4.5 addresses objective two; 4.6 addresses objective three; and 4.7 reports the traders' own priorities.

## 2. Data Interpretation: Demographic Profile of Respondents

### Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

The age profile of the respondents indicates the stage of life at which women in Chilenje conduct this trade and bears upon the household responsibilities they carry alongside it.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by age group

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24–30 years | 4 | 9 | 13 | 21.7 |
| 31–40 years | 8 | 7 | 15 | 25.0 |
| 41–50 years | 10 | 6 | 16 | 26.7 |
| 51 years and above | 8 | 8 | 16 | 26.7 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** The respondents are distributed broadly evenly across the four age bands, with a mean age of 41.3 years (SD = 10.7) and a range from 24 to 58. Slightly over half (53.4%) are aged 41 and above. This is not a trade of young entrants: it is conducted predominantly by women in middle life who have households of their own, and the pattern of constraint reported in the sections that follow must be read against that fact. Vegetable traders are on average somewhat older than traders in second-hand clothing (42.6 against 39.9 years), and the youngest band is more heavily represented in the salaula trade.

**Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status**

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by marital status

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Married | 18 | 14 | 32 | 53.3 |
| Single | 8 | 10 | 18 | 30.0 |
| Widowed | 1 | 5 | 6 | 10.0 |
| Divorced/Separated | 3 | 1 | 4 | 6.7 |
| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** A little over half the respondents (53.3%) are married, while 46.7% are single, widowed or divorced. The significance of this distribution lies in what it implies for decision-making within the household: for nearly half the sample there is no husband or partner with whom decisions about business money are shared, which is examined directly at 4.5.9. Married respondents are somewhat more numerous among vegetable traders and widowed respondents among traders in second-hand clothing, but neither difference is large.

**Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education**

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by level of education

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 7 | 5 | 12 | 20.0 |
| Junior secondary | 4 | 6 | 10 | 16.7 |
| Senior secondary | 13 | 15 | 28 | 46.7 |
| College/University | 6 | 4 | 10 | 16.7 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.4%) have completed senior secondary education or beyond, and only one in five stopped at primary level. This is a more educated population than the informal-trade literature often assumes, and it bears directly upon the interpretation of the training and record-keeping barriers at 4.4.5. A trader who has completed senior secondary school and has traded for nine years is unlikely to be constrained principally by an inability to calculate a margin.

**Position of the Respondent as Income Earner**

Table 5: Position of the respondent as income earner in the household

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes, principal earner | 16 | 18 | 34 | 56.7 |
| No | 8 | 6 | 14 | 23.3 |
| Contribute equally | 6 | 6 | 12 | 20.0 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** More than half the respondents (56.7%) are the principal income earner in their household, and a further 20.0% contribute equally with another earner. For more than three-quarters of the sample, therefore, the earnings of the business are not supplementary income but the primary or co-primary support of a household. This finding is central to everything that follows: a trader in this position cannot treat her working capital as capital alone, because it is simultaneously the household's cash reserve.

**Number of Persons Dependent on the Respondent's Income**

Table 6: Number of persons dependent on the respondent's income

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1–2 | 8 | 2 | 10 | 16.7 |
| 3–4 | 16 | 14 | 30 | 50.0 |
| 5–6 | 5 | 11 | 16 | 26.7 |
| 7 and above | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6.7 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** The mean number of dependants is 3.9, with a range from one to eight, and exactly one-third of respondents support five or more people. Traders in second-hand clothing carry a heavier dependency load than vegetable traders (4.3 against 3.5 dependants on average), and this difference is consistent with the significantly higher severity they accord to home and childcare demands reported at 4.4.4. The mean number of children under eighteen in the household is 1.4.

**Number of Years in the Trade**

Table 7: Number of years in the trade

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1–3 years | 3 | 4 | 7 | 11.7 |
| 4–6 years | 7 | 1 | 8 | 13.3 |
| 7–10 years | 14 | 12 | 26 | 43.3 |
| 11 years and above | 6 | 13 | 19 | 31.7 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** Three-quarters of respondents (75.0%) have traded for seven years or more, with a mean of 8.6 years and a maximum of fifteen. These are established traders, not entrants. The implication is considerable: a woman who has sold vegetables for nine years and whose business remains at the scale at which it began is not failing to grow for want of experience, and the constraint must be sought elsewhere. Traders in second-hand clothing have on average been in the trade longer than vegetable traders (9.3 against 7.8 years).

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

### 3. Data Interpretation: Profile of the Businesses

Type of Trading Position Occupied

Table 8: Type of trading position occupied

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stall inside the market | 9 | 15 | 24 | 40.0 |
| Table or stand outside the market | 12 | 8 | 20 | 33.3 |
| Along the road | 7 | 4 | 11 | 18.3 |
| From home | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8.3 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** Two-fifths of respondents (40.0%) occupy a stall inside the covered market and a third (33.3%) a table or stand outside it, while 18.3% trade along the road and 8.3% from home. The distribution differs instructively by trade: half the traders in second-hand clothing hold a stall inside the market, against fewer than a third of vegetable traders. Vegetable traders are therefore concentrated in the less sheltered positions precisely because their stock is the more perishable, which is the physical explanation for the storage and spoilage findings at 4.4.3. Just over seventy per cent of all respondents (71.7%) pay for their trading space.

### Source of Start-Up Capital

Table 9: Source of the capital with which the business was started

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chilimba or village banking | 10 | 9 | 19 | 31.7 |
| Own savings | 8 | 7 | 15 | 25.0 |
| Loan | 4 | 8 | 12 | 20.0 |
| Money from husband or family | 6 | 3 | 9 | 15.0 |
| Inherited or taken over | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8.3 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** Chilimba or village banking was the single largest source of start-up capital (31.7%), followed by the trader's own savings (25.0%). A formal loan financed only one business in five, and money from a husband or family financed 15.0%. The finding establishes at the outset that the informal rotating savings system is not a supplement to formal finance in this market but the principal alternative to it, and that a majority of these enterprises were founded on capital the trader either accumulated herself or obtained through a collective arrangement with other women.

### Frequency of Stock Purchase

Table 10: Frequency with which stock is purchased

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daily | 7 | 0 | 7 | 11.7 |
| Two or three times a week | 15 | 0 | 15 | 25.0 |
| Weekly | 8 | 8 | 16 | 26.7 |

**Interpretation:** The two trades occupy entirely separate parts of this distribution, with no overlap at either extreme. Every trader who buys daily or two to three times a week is a vegetable trader; every trader who buys fortnightly or less often is a trader in second-hand clothing. Half the vegetable traders (50.0%) buy at least twice a week, while 60.0% of salaula traders buy only every two weeks. This is the commodity cycle made visible, and it is the foundation of the argument at 4.4.7 that a single loan product cannot serve both trades.

### Principal Source of Stock

Table 11: Principal source of stock

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Soweto Market | 13 | 0 | 13 | 21.7 |
| Local farms/suppliers | 7 | 0 | 7 | 11.7 |
| Chilenje/nearby wholesalers | 10 | 5 | 15 | 25.0 |
| Kamwala/central Lusaka wholesalers | 0 | 17 | 17 | 28.3 |
| Bale suppliers in Lusaka | 0 | 8 | 8 | 13.3 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** The two supply chains are wholly distinct. Vegetable traders source from Soweto Market (43.3% of them), from nearby wholesalers or directly from local farms; traders in second-hand clothing source from Kamwala and central Lusaka wholesalers (56.7% of them) or from bale suppliers. The distances and the transport requirements differ accordingly, and the fact that no vegetable trader reported using a bale supplier and no salaula trader reported using a local farm confirms that the two groups do not compete for the same suppliers.

### Amount Spent on Stock per Purchase

Table 12: Amount spent on stock per purchase

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Below K500 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 20.0 |
| K500 – K999 | 14 | 0 | 14 | 23.3 |
| K1,000 – K1,999 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 16.7 |
| K2,000 – K3,499 | 0 | 16 | 16 | 26.7 |
| K3,500 and above | 0 | 8 | 8 | 13.3 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** This is the sharpest quantitative division in the dataset. Vegetable traders spend a mean of K641 per purchase and no vegetable trader spends as much as K2,000; traders in second-hand clothing spend a mean of K3,082 and none spends below K1,000. The difference is very large and highly significant ($t = -12.08$, $p < 0.001$). Read together with Table 4.9, the two trades present opposite financing problems: the vegetable trader needs a small sum frequently and cannot afford to have it locked up, while the salaula trader needs a large sum infrequently and must survive the period during which it is locked up in a bale. A working-capital product designed for one is close to useless for the other.

### Formality, Financial Access and Association Membership

Table 13: Formality, financial access and association membership

| Characteristic | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Business registered | 6 | 3 | 9 | 15.0 |
| Holds a bank account | 11 | 18 | 29 | 48.3 |
| Uses mobile money | 27 | 24 | 51 | 85.0 |
| Belongs to a savings group / chilimba | 18 | 21 | 39 | 65.0 |
| Belongs to a traders' association | 11 | 9 | 20 | 33.3 |
| Has received business training | 11 | 5 | 16 | 26.7 |

**Interpretation:** Four findings in this table bear directly on the argument of the study. First, 85.0% of these enterprises are unregistered, which excludes them from any programme conditioning support on registration. Second, 85.0% use mobile money while only 48.3% hold a bank account: transaction access has reached almost every trader while banking relationships have reached fewer than half, which reproduces at market level the national and global pattern described at 2.2.2. Third, 65.0% belong to a chilimba or savings group — a higher rate of participation than any formal institution achieves in this market. Fourth, only 26.7% have received any business training, and, as 4.4.5 shows, those who have not received it do not rank it among their pressing difficulties.

### Employment Within the Enterprises

The enterprises surveyed employ very few people. The mean number of paid workers is 0.63 and the mean number of unpaid family helpers 0.95; the majority of respondents have no paid worker at all. Assistance at the stall is supplied predominantly by family members without wages, most often a daughter or a sister, which is consistent with the finding at 4.6.4 that two-fifths of respondents rely on a family member to mind the stall as a deliberate coping strategy. This pattern should be held in mind when the growth indicator relating to persons assisting is read at 4.5.3.

## 4. Data Interpretation: Barriers to Growth (Objective One)

### Severity of the Thirteen Barriers

Respondents rated each of thirteen barriers on a five-point scale from 1 (not a problem) to 5 (a very serious problem). Table 4.13 presents the results ranked by mean severity, together with the number and proportion of respondents rating each barrier as serious or very serious.

Table 14: Severity of the thirteen barriers, ranked by mean score (n = 60)

| Code | Barrier | Mean | SD | Serious or very serious (n) | Serious or very serious (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B2 | No access to a bank or microfinance loan | 3.72 | 0.78 | 37 | 61.7 |
| B1 | Insufficient money to buy stock | 3.70 | 0.79 | 38 | 63.3 |
| B3 | No collateral to offer as security | 3.58 | 0.81 | 35 | 58.3 |
| B8 | No safe storage for stock | 3.42 | 1.01 | 29 | 48.3 |
| B9 | Spoilage or damage of stock | 3.27 | 1.18 | 26 | 43.3 |
| B4 | Home and childcare demands on time | 3.25 | 0.88 | 25 | 41.7 |
| B5 | Competition from other traders | 3.22 | 0.90 | 22 | 36.7 |
| B10 | Trading space small, insecure or in poor condition | 3.18 | 0.98 | 21 | 35.0 |
| B11 | Limited business training | 3.15 | 0.82 | 21 | 35.0 |
| B6 | Low purchasing power of customers | 3.13 | 0.93 | 19 | 31.7 |
| B7 | Cost and difficulty of transport | 3.03 | 0.86 | 17 | 28.3 |
| B13 | Limited market information | 3.00 | 0.76 | 14 | 23.3 |
| B12 | Poor record keeping | 2.63 | 0.88 | 9 | 15.0 |

**Interpretation:** The three finance-related barriers occupy the first three positions and are separated from one another by very little: no access to a bank or microfinance loan (3.72), insufficient money to buy stock (3.70) and no collateral (3.58). Roughly six respondents in ten rated each of these as serious or very serious. There is then a visible gap before the fourth-ranked barrier, no safe storage (3.42). At the foot of the table, poor record keeping stands alone at 2.63, with only 15.0% of respondents regarding it as a serious problem — the lowest figure by a considerable margin and less than a quarter of the proportion recorded for the leading barriers. The finance cluster and the record-keeping result together constitute the principal finding of this chapter and are discussed at 4.4.2 and 4.4.5 respectively.

**The Finance Cluster as the Leading Constraint**

The three leading barriers are not independent of one another; they describe a single mechanism in three stages. The trader lacks sufficient money to buy the stock she could sell. She cannot obtain a loan to remedy this, because lending decisions turn on security. She cannot offer security, because she owns no asset a lender will accept. Each stage is a precondition of the next, and the effect is that the shortage at the first stage cannot be relieved by any route available to her.

Two further findings in the dataset support this reading. Of the sixty respondents, only 13.3% have ever borrowed from a bank or microfinance institution as a coping strategy (Table 4.22), and only 15.0% operate a registered business (Table 4.12). A trader who is unregistered, holds no bankable asset and keeps no written accounts presents to a formal lender as an applicant with no verifiable history, no security and no legal existence. That she has traded profitably for nine years does not enter the assessment, because there is no mechanism by which it could.

**Comparison of Barrier Severity Between the Two Trades**

Table 4.14 compares the mean severity accorded to each barrier by the two groups, with the difference tested by independent-samples t-test.

Table 15: Barrier severity compared between the two trades

| Barrier | Vegetables | Second-hand | Difference | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No access to a bank or microfinance loan | 3.83 | 3.60 | +0.23 | 1.16 | 0.253 |
| Insufficient money to buy stock | 3.70 | 3.70 | +0.00 | 0.00 | 1.000 |
| No collateral to offer as security | 3.47 | 3.70 | -0.23 | -1.12 | 0.268 |
| No safe storage for stock | 3.73 | 3.10 | +0.63 | 2.53 | 0.014 * |
| Spoilage or damage of stock | 3.90 | 2.63 | +1.27 | 4.92 | <0.001 * |
| Home and childcare demands on time | 2.97 | 3.53 | -0.57 | -2.63 | 0.011 * |
| Competition from other traders | 3.20 | 3.23 | -0.03 | -0.14 | 0.888 |
| Trading space small, insecure or in poor condition | 3.17 | 3.20 | -0.03 | -0.13 | 0.897 |
| Limited business training | 3.13 | 3.17 | -0.03 | -0.16 | 0.876 |
| Low purchasing power of customers | 3.07 | 3.20 | -0.13 | -0.55 | 0.583 |
| Cost and difficulty of transport | 3.03 | 3.03 | +0.00 | 0.00 | 1.000 |
| Limited market information | 2.97 | 3.03 | -0.07 | -0.34 | 0.737 |
| Poor record keeping | 2.60 | 2.67 | -0.07 | -0.29 | 0.773 |

**Interpretation:** Three of the thirteen barriers differ significantly between the trades, and the remaining ten do not. Spoilage or damage of stock is rated far more severely by vegetable traders (3.90 against 2.63; $t = 4.92$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.27$, a large effect). Absence of safe storage likewise presses harder on vegetable traders (3.73 against 3.10; $t = 2.53$, $p = 0.014$, $d = 0.65$). In the opposite direction, home and childcare demands press harder on traders in second-hand clothing (3.53 against 2.97; $t = -2.63$, $p = 0.011$, $d = -0.68$). Notably, the three finance barriers show no significant difference at all: capital shortage is felt with equal severity in both trades, differing only in the form the requirement takes.

**Interpretation of the Three Significant Differences**

The two barriers on which vegetable traders score higher are both consequences of the commodity. Fresh produce decays, and a trader without shelter or secure overnight storage must either sell at a discount before closing or accept the loss. The evidence that this is a physical rather than a managerial matter is supplied by Table 4.7: vegetable traders are concentrated in the tables, stands and roadside positions that offer the least shelter, while salaula traders predominate in the covered stalls. The commodity most vulnerable to exposure is being sold from the positions most exposed.

The difference on home and childcare demands runs the other way and requires a different explanation. Traders in second-hand clothing carry more dependants (4.3 against 3.5) and more children under eighteen (1.6 against 1.2) than vegetable traders, which accounts for part of the difference. The interviews suggest a second component: the salaula trade permits a degree of flexibility — stock does not perish if a trader is absent for a day — and women with heavier domestic obligations may therefore have selected into it. If so, the difference reflects not that salaula trading generates household pressure but that household pressure directs women toward salaula trading.

**The Position of Training and Record Keeping**

Poor record keeping is ranked last of thirteen (mean 2.63) and limited business training ninth (3.15). Only 15.0% of respondents regard record keeping as a serious problem. In the forced ranking reported at Table 4.24, record keeping attracts a weighted score of 5 against 56 for insufficient stock money — roughly a ninth of the weight. Only 8.3% of respondents nominated business and bookkeeping training as the form of support that would be most useful to them, the lowest of the six options offered.

This result is consistent across four separate items in the instrument and cannot readily be dismissed as an artefact of any one of them. It bears directly upon the design of enterprise support, since training in bookkeeping and pricing is among the commonest interventions extended to women traders. The finding does not establish that these traders keep good records— the evidence at 4.3.6 suggests most keep none — but it establishes that they do not experience the absence of records as what is holding their businesses back. Two readings are possible: either the traders underestimate the value of a skill they have never had, or a written record adds little where the entire stock is visible at a glance and the entire capital passes through the owner's hands daily. The second reading is the more consistent with the rest of the evidence, and with the observation that these are traders of nine years' average standing who have survived in a competitive market.

**Loan Application History**

Table 16: Loan application history

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Applied and received | 7 | 10 | 17 | 28.3 |
| Applied and was refused | 4 | 7 | 11 | 18.3 |
| Never applied | 19 | 13 | 32 | 53.3 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** More than half the respondents (53.3%) have never applied for a loan at all. Of the twenty-eight who did apply, eleven were refused — a refusal rate of 39.3% among applicants. The dominant fact, however, is not refusal but non-application: the largest single group of traders has never presented itself to a lender. This distinction matters because the two conditions call for entirely different remedies. Refusal indicates that the product exists and the trader does not qualify; non-application indicates that the trader has concluded, rightly or wrongly, that there is no point in asking.

**Reasons for Refusal or Non-Application**

Table 17: Reasons for refusal or for not applying for a loan (n = 43)

| Reason given | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No collateral | 13 | 30.2 |
| Afraid of repayment | 7 | 16.3 |
| Did not know where to apply | 6 | 14.0 |
| Business too small | 6 | 14.0 |
| Prefer savings/chilimba | 4 | 9.3 |
| Income/business too small | 4 | 9.3 |
| Insufficient documentation | 3 | 7.0 |

**Interpretation:** Absence of collateral is the single largest reason (30.2%), which confirms the mechanism described at 4.4.2. The remaining reasons fall into two groups. The first is informational: 14.0% did not know where to apply, and 7.0% cited insufficient documentation — difficulties of process rather than of eligibility, and therefore remediable at low cost. The second is anticipatory: 16.3% were afraid of repayment and a further 23.3% judged their business or income too small to support a loan. These traders excluded themselves before any lender assessed them. Taken together, roughly two-fifths of the reasons given describe self-exclusion rather than rejection, which suggests that a substantial part of the credit gap in this market is a gap of information and confidence rather than of underwriting.

**5. Data Interpretation: Effects on Performance and Growth (Objective Two)**

**Frequency of Stock Loss**

Table 18: Frequency with which stock is lost through spoilage or damage

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 1 | 7 | 8 | 13.3 |
| Rarely | 5 | 13 | 18 | 30.0 |
| Sometimes | 10 | 7 | 17 | 28.3 |
| Often | 10 | 3 | 13 | 21.7 |
| Very often | 4 | 0 | 4 | 6.7 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** The distributions for the two trades are almost mirror images of one another, and the association between trade and loss frequency is highly significant ($\chi^2 = 16.35$, df = 4, $p = 0.003$). Nearly half the vegetable traders (46.7%) lose stock often or very often, against 10.0% of salaula traders; conversely 66.7% of salaula traders lose stock rarely or never, against 20.0% of vegetable traders. Loss is a routine and expected feature of the vegetable trade and an occasional misfortune in the second-hand clothing trade.

**The Monetary Value of Recurrent Loss**

Respondents were asked to estimate the value of stock lost in a typical week. Vegetable traders reported a mean weekly loss of K64 against K10 for traders in second-hand clothing, a difference that is highly significant ($t = 8.31$, $p < 0.001$).

This figure requires careful interpretation, and it is more revealing as a proportion than as an absolute. A vegetable trader spends a mean of K641 per stock purchase and buys at least twice a week for half the group. A weekly loss of K64 therefore represents a recurring deduction of roughly five to ten per cent of the capital she turns over in that week — not an occasional misfortune but a standing charge against the working capital whose shortage she identifies as her most serious problem. Over a year the accumulated loss approaches five times the value of a single stock purchase. It is here that the storage barrier and the capital barrier meet: the absence of secure storage does not merely inconvenience the vegetable trader, it continuously consumes the resource she cannot replace.

### Change in the Six Growth Indicators

Respondents rated change over the two preceding years on six indicators, from 1 (much less) to 5 (much more).

Table 19: Change in the six growth indicators over two years

| Growth indicator | Less (1–2) | Same (3) | More (4–5) | Mean | Veg mean | SHC mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Value of stock held | 1 | 16 | 43 | 3.95 | 4.10 | 3.80 |
| Level of sales | 0 | 14 | 46 | 3.95 | 3.97 | 3.93 |
| Earnings retained after household needs | 2 | 14 | 44 | 3.88 | 4.07 | 3.70 |
| Range of goods carried | 1 | 17 | 42 | 3.83 | 3.83 | 3.83 |
| Trading space occupied | 0 | 16 | 44 | 3.93 | 3.93 | 3.93 |
| Number of persons assisting | 1 | 8 | 51 | 4.12 | 4.20 | 4.03 |

**Interpretation:** On every indicator a clear majority of respondents report improvement, with means ranging from 3.83 to 4.12 and with very few reporting decline. Vegetable traders report marginally stronger movement than salaula traders on stock, retained earnings and persons assisting, though none of these differences is significant. The composite growth index across the six items has a mean of 3.94 and an internal consistency of $\alpha = 0.78$. Read at face value, the table would suggest a population of expanding businesses. That reading requires the qualification set out at 4.5.6 before it can be accepted.

### Concrete Business Actions Taken

Table 20: Concrete business actions taken over two years

| Action taken | Vegetables | Second-hand | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Added a new line of goods | 11 | 15 | 26 | 43.3 |
| Bought equipment for the business | 11 | 12 | 23 | 38.3 |
| Began buying in larger quantities | 8 | 10 | 18 | 30.0 |
| Closed and later restarted the business | 5 | 4 | 9 | 15.0 |
| Opened a second stall | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3.3 |
| Reduced the size of the business | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3.3 |

**Interpretation:** The concrete actions tell a more restrained story than the self-rated indicators. The commonest steps are adding a new line of goods (43.3%) and buying equipment (38.3%) — adjustments within an existing operation rather than expansions of it. Only 30.0% began buying in larger quantities, and only two respondents in sixty opened a second stall. Meanwhile 15.0% closed the business at some point and later restarted it. The picture is of enterprises that diversify and re-equip at the margin while their fundamental scale remains where it was, which is precisely the pattern the study set out to explain.

### Overall Business Status and Two-Year Goal

Asked to characterise the overall position of the business, 76.7% of respondents described it as growing and 23.3% as staying the same; no respondent described her business as declining. The principal reasons offered for the assessment were more working capital (13 respondents), a better location (10), support from savings or a loan (8) and more customers (8). Asked what they intended for the business over the next two years, 71.7% said they wished to grow it bigger, 20.0% to keep it as it is, 3.3% to change to a different business and 5.0% were unsure.

The goal figure is worth dwelling on. Nearly three-quarters of these traders state an intention to expand, which bears directly on the argument noted at 2.1.6 that women's trading may be oriented toward stability rather than accumulation. In Chilenje that argument does not hold for the majority: these women want their businesses to grow, and the evidence of Table 4.21 is that most of them are not managing it. The gap between stated intention and observed action is the clearest statement of the problem this study addresses.

### A Necessary Qualification to the Growth Findings

The growth results in Table 4.20 must be treated with caution, and the reasons should be stated plainly rather than left for the reader to infer.

First, the distribution is heavily skewed toward the positive. Not one respondent reported a decline in sales or in trading space, and only one reported a decline in stock. In a competitive market of established traders over a two-year period, a complete absence of decline is improbable. Second, the growth measures are retrospective self-assessments by respondents who keep no written records, and are therefore impressions rather than measurements. Third, a respondent describing her own business to a researcher has an evident reason to present it favourably, and the effect of that is to compress responses toward the upper end of the scale.

Fourth, and most tellingly, the self-rated indicators are internally inconsistent with the concrete actions reported alongside them. Eighty-five per cent of respondents rated the number of persons assisting as having increased, yet the mean number of paid workers across the sample is 0.63 and only two respondents opened a second stall. Both statements cannot describe the same reality. The concrete-action data at Table 4.21 should therefore be given greater weight than the self-rated scales, and the conclusion drawn in this chapter rests on the former.

The practical consequence is that the association between the barrier index and the growth index (r = 0.14, p = 0.277) should not be read as evidence that barriers do not affect growth. Where a dependent variable has been compressed into the top third of its range by reporting bias, the statistical relationship between it and anything else is attenuated by construction. The absence of a significant correlation here is a finding about the measure, not about the world.

**Trading Days Lost**

Respondents reported missing a mean of 0.48 trading days in a typical week, with 56.7% missing none and 40.0% missing one. Days were lost predominantly to household obligations, illness in the family and travel to purchase stock. Although the mean appears small, a trader missing one day in seven forgoes approximately fourteen per cent of her trading time, and for a business operating on daily turnover and thin margins that proportion is not trivial. The figure is somewhat higher among traders in second-hand clothing (0.53) than among vegetable traders (0.43), consistent with the higher severity they accord to home and childcare demands.

**Absorption of Business Money by the Household**

Table 21: Frequency with which business money is used for household needs

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | 4 | 1 | 5 | 8.3 |
| Rarely | 7 | 3 | 10 | 16.7 |
| Sometimes | 11 | 14 | 25 | 41.7 |
| Often | 6 | 10 | 16 | 26.7 |
| Very often | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6.7 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** Three-quarters of respondents (75.0%) use business money for household needs at least sometimes, and a third (33.3%) do so often or very often. Only 8.3% never do so. The practice is more common among traders in second-hand clothing (40.0% often or very often, against 26.7% of vegetable traders), consistent with their heavier dependency load. This is the mechanism by which working capital leaks out of the enterprise, and it operates continuously rather than in crises. A capital injection into a business whose cash reserve is simultaneously the household's cash reserve will be partly absorbed by the household, which is precisely the finding reported in the evaluation literature at 2.2.3 and explains why capital alone has so often disappointed.

**Control Over Business Money**

Table 22: Who decides how business money is used

| Category | Vegetables (n=30) | Second-hand clothes (n=30) | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I decide alone | 18 | 19 | 37 | 61.7 |
| I decide with husband/partner | 10 | 10 | 20 | 33.3 |
| Someone else decides | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5.0 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 60 | 100.0 |

**Interpretation:** The majority of respondents (61.7%) decide alone how business money is used, a third (33.3%) decide jointly with a husband or partner, and only three respondents (5.0%) reported that someone else decides. On Kabeer's framework this is an encouraging finding: agency over the disposal of earnings is, for most of these women, present. The constraint at the agency stage in Chilenje operates less through another person's control of the money than through the competing claim of the household upon it, documented at 4.5.8. The distinction is important for policy: a trader who controls her money but must feed her family from it is in a different position from one whose earnings are taken by someone else, and the remedies differ accordingly.

**6. Data Interpretation: Coping Strategies (Objective Three)**

**Use and Reported Effectiveness of the Twelve Strategies**

Respondents indicated which of twelve strategies they use and, for each used, rated its effectiveness from 1 (does not help) to 3 (helps a lot).

Table 23: Coping strategies: use and reported effectiveness

| Strategy | Users (n) | Users (%) | Mean effectiveness (1–3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Buy smaller quantities of stock | 42 | 70.0 | 2.07 |
| Join a chilimba or village banking group | 34 | 56.7 | 2.24 |
| Reduce prices to attract customers | 30 | 50.0 | 2.00 |
| Draw on own savings | 30 | 50.0 | 2.47 |
| Switch to cheaper or different goods | 24 | 40.0 | 2.21 |
| Ask a family member to mind the stall | 24 | 40.0 | 2.25 |
| Borrow from a friend or relative | 22 | 36.7 | 2.45 |
| Pool transport with other traders | 16 | 26.7 | 2.44 |
| Sell on credit to regular customers | 16 | 26.7 | 2.25 |
| Take other work alongside trading | 11 | 18.3 | 2.27 |
| Borrow from a moneylender (kaloba) | 10 | 16.7 | 2.00 |
| Borrow from a bank or microfinance institution | 8 | 13.3 | 2.25 |

**Interpretation:** Buying smaller quantities of stock is the most widely used strategy (70.0%) and is rated among the least effective (2.07). Joining a chilimba is the second

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

most widely used (56.7%) and is rated more highly (2.24). The three strategies rated most effective by those who use them are drawing on own savings (2.47), borrowing from a friend or relative (2.45) and pooling transport with other traders (2.44). The two lowest effectiveness ratings attach to reducing prices (2.00) and borrowing from a moneylender (2.00).

**The Gap Between Use and Effectiveness**

The most instructive feature of Table 4.22 is the inverse relationship at the top of it. The strategy used by the largest number of traders — buying smaller quantities — is among the strategies they rate least effective. This is not a contradiction but a description of constraint.

Buying less is what a trader does when she has no money, not what she does because it works. It is universally available, costs nothing to adopt, and shrinks the business: a trader who buys less sells less, earns less and can buy less again the following week.

The same logic applies to price reduction (50.0% use, effectiveness 2.00) and to borrowing from a moneylender (16.7% use, effectiveness 2.00). Traders resort to all three not because they expect them to help but because the alternatives are closed. The three strategies rated most effective all require something the trader may not have: accumulated savings, a relative with money to lend, or other traders travelling to the same wholesale point at the same time. Effectiveness and availability run in opposite directions, and a programme wishing to help should attend to the top of the effectiveness column rather than the top of the usage column.

**Chilimba as the Central Financial Institution of the Market**

The evidence on rotating savings is consistent across four separate items. Chilimba financed 31.7% of these businesses at start-up, more than any other source (Table 4.8). Sixty-five per cent of respondents currently belong to a savings group (Table 4.12). Fifty-seven per cent use chilimba as an active coping strategy and rate it 2.24 for effectiveness (Table 4.22). Contributions reported range from K20 weekly to K300 monthly, and payouts are applied principally to buying stock (12 respondents) and school fees (12), with equipment and household needs accounting for the remainder.

Set against this, 13.3% have ever borrowed from a bank or microfinance institution. The informal rotating system reaches roughly five times as many traders as the formal system does, without collateral, without documentation and without registration. It supplies precisely what the formal system withholds. Its limitation is one of scale rather than of design: a group can distribute only what its members contribute, and a payout arrives when the rotation reaches the member rather than when she needs it. The policy implication drawn at 5.3 is that these groups should be treated as the channel through which capital reaches this market rather than as an informal arrangement to be superseded.

**Coping Strategies Compared Between the Trades**

Table 4.24: Coping strategies compared between the two trades (percentage using)

| Strategy | Vegetables (%) | Second-hand (%) | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Buy smaller quantities of stock | 76.7 | 63.3 | +13.3 |
| Join a chilimba or village banking group | 43.3 | 70.0 | -26.7 |
| Reduce prices to attract customers | 53.3 | 46.7 | +6.7 |
| Draw on own savings | 50.0 | 50.0 | +0.0 |
| Switch to cheaper or different goods | 46.7 | 33.3 | +13.3 |
| Ask a family member to mind the stall | 43.3 | 36.7 | +6.7 |
| Borrow from a friend or relative | 33.3 | 40.0 | -6.7 |
| Pool transport with other traders | 26.7 | 26.7 | +0.0 |
| Sell on credit to regular customers | 26.7 | 26.7 | +0.0 |
| Take other work alongside trading | 20.0 | 16.7 | +3.3 |
| Borrow from a moneylender (kaloba) | 16.7 | 16.7 | +0.0 |
| Borrow from a bank or microfinance institution | 6.7 | 20.0 | -13.3 |

**Interpretation:** Two differences stand out. Chilimba membership is markedly more common among traders in second-hand clothing (70.0% against 43.3%; $\chi^2 = 3.33$, $p = 0.068$), which follows directly from the capital structure of the trade: a trader who must assemble K3,000 for a bale needs a mechanism for accumulating a lump sum, whereas a vegetable trader needing K600 twice a week needs a flow. Conversely, buying smaller quantities is more common among vegetable traders (76.7% against 63.3%), since the divisibility of fresh produce permits it in a way the purchase of a bale does not. Borrowing from a formal institution, though rare in both groups, is three times as common among salaula traders (20.0% against 6.7%), again reflecting the lumpiness of their requirement.

**Family Labour and Selling on Credit**

Two further strategies deserve comment because they carry hidden costs. Two-fifths of respondents (40.0%) rely on a family member to mind the stall, rated 2.25 for effectiveness. This resolves the conflict between trading hours and household obligations, but it does so by transferring unpaid labour from one household member to another — most often a daughter — and the cost falls outside the enterprise where no accounting system records it.

Just over a quarter (26.7%) sell on credit to regular customers, rated 2.25. Selling on credit retains customers in a market where purchasing power is low, and 31.7% of respondents rated low customer purchasing power a serious problem. But it converts stock into a receivable from a customer who is, by definition, short of money, and it therefore transfers the trader's working-capital shortage forward in time rather than resolving it. One respondent's open comment — that customers often buy on credit — was offered in the context of explaining why cash was short at the point of restocking.

**7. Data Interpretation: The Traders' Own Priorities**
**Weighted Ranking of Stated Priorities**

Each respondent nominated her first, second and third most pressing difficulty. Three points were assigned to a first priority, two to a second and one to a third, and the totals summed across the sample.

Table 25: Barriers ranked by the traders' own weighted priority

| Barrier | Ranked first (n) | Veg | SHC | Weighted score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Insufficient money to buy stock | 7 | 2 | 5 | 56 |
| No access to a bank or microfinance loan | 8 | 6 | 2 | 50 |
| No collateral | 9 | 3 | 6 | 41 |
| Spoilage or damage of stock | 7 | 7 | 0 | 34 |
| Competition from other traders | 8 | 5 | 3 | 32 |
| No safe storage | 2 | 2 | 0 | 27 |
| Home and childcare demands | 4 | 0 | 4 | 26 |
| Trading space | 2 | 1 | 1 | 23 |
| Low purchasing power of customers | 3 | 0 | 3 | 20 |
| Limited business training | 2 | 1 | 1 | 17 |
| Limited market information | 4 | 0 | 4 | 16 |
| Cost and difficulty of transport | 3 | 2 | 1 | 13 |
| Poor record keeping | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |

**Interpretation:** The weighted ranking reproduces the severity ranking at its head and at its foot. The three finance barriers occupy the top three positions with scores of 56, 50 and 41, and poor record keeping occupies the last position with a score of 5. The correspondence between two independently administered measures — a graded severity scale and a forced choice — substantially strengthens the confidence that can be placed in both.

**Divergence Between the Trades in First Priority**

Although the aggregate ranking is dominated by finance, the first priorities of the two groups differ in an instructive way. Among vegetable traders the single most frequently nominated first priority is spoilage or damage of stock (7 of 30), followed by lack of a bank or microfinance loan (6) and competition (5). Among traders in second-hand clothing it is lack of collateral (6 of 30), followed by insufficient stock money (5), with home and childcare demands and limited market information tied at four each. No vegetable trader nominated home and childcare demands as her first priority, and no salaula trader nominated spoilage.

The pattern is coherent. The vegetable trader's most urgent problem is that her capital is physically perishing; the salaula trader's is that she cannot assemble enough capital in the first place. Both are capital problems, but they occur at different points in the cycle and call for different instruments — storage and shelter in the first case, a lump sum without security in the second.

**Where Severity and Priority Diverge**

Two barriers are placed noticeably higher in the forced ranking than their severity score alone would suggest, and one noticeably lower. Competition is ranked fifth by weighted priority (32 points, with 8 respondents placing it first) but only seventh by mean severity. Absence of safe storage ranks fourth by severity but sixth by priority, with only two respondents placing it first. Limited market information ranks twelfth by severity but eleventh by priority, with four respondents placing it first — all of them traders in second-hand clothing.

The divergences are explicable. Competition is experienced acutely on any given day even though its average severity is moderate, and a forced ranking captures salience as well as magnitude. Storage, by contrast, is a chronic condition that traders have adapted to; it scores highly on severity because it genuinely is serious, but few nominate it first because it does not present itself as a daily crisis. The market-information result is confined to the salaula trade, where a trader purchasing a sealed bale must judge quality and demand in advance and has no means of doing so.

**Form of Support Considered Most Useful**

Table 26: Form of support considered most useful

| Form of support | Vegetables | Second-hand | Total (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Affordable working capital loans without collateral | 8 | 7 | 15 | 25.0 |
| Lower trading-space fees and better trading spaces | 6 | 6 | 12 | 20.0 |
| Affordable transport to wholesale markets | 8 | 2 | 10 | 16.7 |
| Market information and supplier linkages | 5 | 5 | 10 | 16.7 |
| Better storage facilities | 3 | 5 | 8 | 13.3 |
| Business and bookkeeping training | 0 | 5 | 5 | 8.3 |

**Interpretation:** A quarter of respondents (25.0%) identified affordable working-capital loans without collateral as the most useful form of support — the option

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

most closely matched to the barrier they rank first. Lower trading-space fees and better trading spaces follow at 20.0%, then affordable transport and market information at 16.7% each, and better storage at 13.3%. Business and bookkeeping training attracted 8.3%, the lowest of the six options, and notably not one vegetable trader selected it. The ranking the traders give to forms of support corresponds closely to the ranking they give to their difficulties, which indicates that the responses are internally coherent rather than arbitrary.

**Association Between Savings Group Membership and Reported Growth**

Members of savings groups reported a lower mean growth index than non-members (3.85 against 4.13; $t = -2.23$, $p = 0.031$). The result is statistically significant but should not be read as evidence that chilimba membership impedes growth. The more plausible explanation is selection: women join a rotating savings group because they lack access to capital by other means, so that membership marks prior constraint rather than causing subsequent stagnation.

Given the reporting limitations of the growth index set out at 4.5.6, and the cross-sectional design, no causal inference of any kind can properly be drawn from this comparison, and it is reported here for completeness rather than as a finding.

**Summary of the Analysis**

The analysis establishes four things. First, the binding constraint in Chilenje is capital, in three connected forms — its insufficiency, the inaccessibility of credit and the absence of security — and this holds equally in both trades. Second, the physical conditions of the market convert that shortage into a recurring loss for vegetable traders, through spoilage and the absence of storage, at a rate of roughly K64 per week. Third, the constraints commonly addressed by training programmes are those the traders themselves rank last. Fourth, the traders have devised a working informal financial institution in chilimba which reaches five times as many of them as the formal system does, and which is limited by scale rather than by design.

**8. Photographic Record of Trading Conditions**

The plates below were taken at the trading points during data collection, with permission recorded in accordance with the protocol at 3.13.12. They document the physical conditions referred to in the analysis above and are logged at Appendix G. Persons appearing in the plates did so with specific consent.

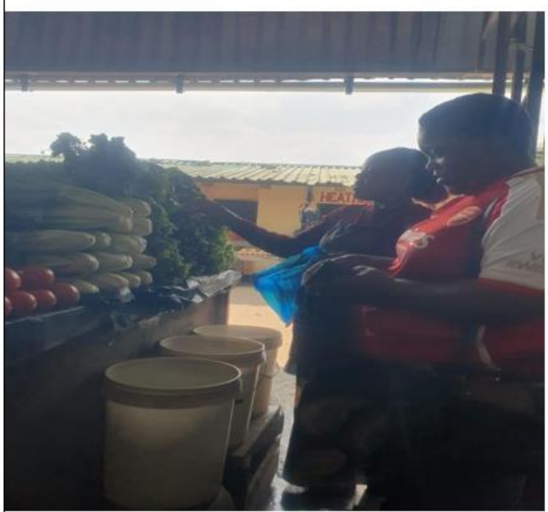
**General Layout of the Trading Area**


*Photograph of the market entrance and general trading area, referred to at 3.11.3*

Plate 1: General layout of the trading area at Chilenje Market

The plate shows the entrance to Chilenje Market and the arrangement of trading positions described at 3.11.3. The covered structure is visible behind, with tables and umbrella-shaded stands occupying the apron in front of it and produce displayed at ground level. The distinction between sheltered and unsheltered positions, which underlies the storage and spoilage findings at 4.4.3, is apparent in the layout itself.

**A Vegetable Trading Position**



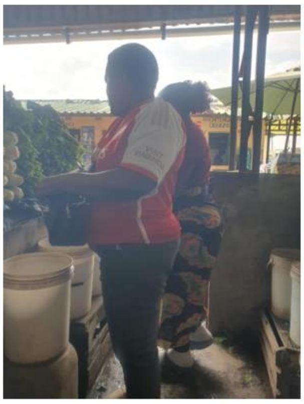
*Photograph of a covered vegetable stall with produce displayed on a raised counter*

Plate 2: A vegetable trading position under shelter, showing display and stock-holding

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

The plate shows leafy greens, rape and tomatoes displayed on a raised concrete counter under a metal roof, with plastic containers beneath used to hold and transport stock. The stall is one of the better-equipped vegetable positions observed. Even here, however, there is no cold storage and no lockable space: the produce visible is the whole of the trader's capital, exposed to ambient temperature throughout the day. This is the physical circumstance that produces the K64 mean weekly loss reported at 4.5.2.

**Purchase at a Vegetable Position**



*Photograph of a transaction at a vegetable stall*

Plate 3: Purchase of vegetables at a trading position during data collection

The plate records an ordinary transaction and illustrates the unit in which this trade operates. Produce is sold in small quantities assembled at the point of sale, which is what permits the divisibility discussed at 4.6.4 and which explains why buying smaller quantities is available to vegetable traders as a coping strategy in a way it is not to traders purchasing a sealed bale.

**A Second-Hand Clothing Stand**

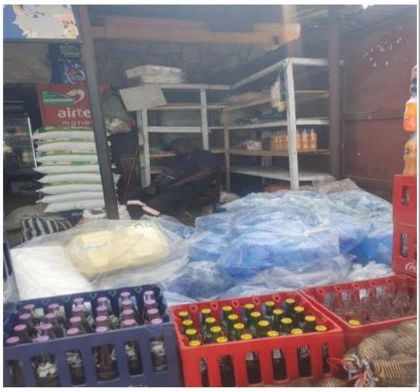
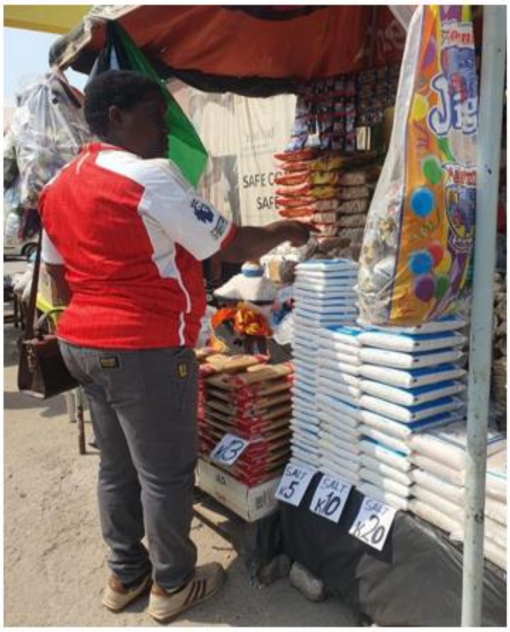


Plate 4: A second-hand clothing stand showing method of display

The plate shows garments displayed on overhead rails and in piles, which is the standard method of display in the salaula trade. The stock visible represents the residue of a bale purchased as a single lot at a mean outlay of K3,082 (Table 4.11). Because the contents of a bale cannot be inspected before purchase, the whole of that sum is committed against an unverified assortment — the risk structure described at 2.2.21 and the reason traders in this trade rank market information higher than vegetable traders do (4.7.3).

**Unit-Breaking as a Pricing Strategy**



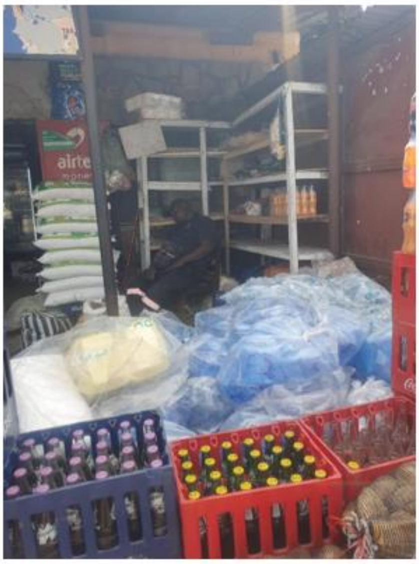

*Photograph of a staples display with handwritten price cards at three price points*

Plate 5: Unit-breaking as a pricing strategy: salt and staples offered at K5, K10 and K20

The plate documents a coping strategy in operation and is among the more informative images in the record. Handwritten cards offer the same commodity at three price points, so that a customer with five kwacha and a customer with twenty are both served from the same stock. Reducing prices was reported by 50.0% of respondents (Table 4.22); what the plate shows is the more sophisticated adjacent practice of breaking bulk into affordable units without reducing the margin on the commodity itself. It is a direct response to the low customer purchasing power rated a serious problem by 31.7% of respondents, and it is precisely the kind of accumulated practical knowledge identified at 2.4.5 as absent from the written record.

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

### Storage and Stock-Holding at a Fixed Position



*Photograph of a fixed trading position showing bagged staples, crates and stacked stock*

Plate 6: Storage and stock-holding at a fixed trading position

The plate shows a fixed position holding bagged staples, bottled goods in crates and stacked stock, together with a mobile-money agent sign. Two features bear on the analysis. First, the volume of stock held is possible only because the position is enclosed and can be secured, which is the resource that 48.3% of respondents identified as lacking (Table 4.13). Second, the mobile-money signage illustrates the finding at 4.3.6 that transaction infrastructure has reached this market thoroughly while credit has not: the same trading position that can receive and send money electronically has no route by which that transaction history might be converted into a loan.

## V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

### 1. Summary of Findings

This section states the principal findings of the study. Each is reported with the evidence on which it rests and with the qualifications that evidence requires.

### Capital, Not Competence, Is the Binding Constraint

The three finance-related barriers occupy the first three positions on both measures of bindingness used in this study. On the severity scale they rank first, second and third with means of 3.72, 3.70 and 3.58, and between 58.3% and 63.3% of respondents rated each as serious or very serious. On the forced ranking they occupy the same three positions with weighted scores of 56, 50 and 41. That two independently administered measures produce the same ordering is the strongest single result in the dataset.

The three barriers describe one mechanism in three stages: the trader lacks money for stock, cannot borrow because lending turns on security, and cannot offer security because she owns no asset a lender accepts. Only 13.3% of respondents have ever borrowed from a bank or microfinance institution, and 85.0% operate unregistered businesses. The constraint is not that these women do not know how to run a business — they have done so for an average of 8.6 years — but that there exists no route by which a demonstrably viable enterprise can convert its trading record into capital.

### The Credit Gap Is as Much a Gap of Confidence as of Underwriting

More than half the respondents (53.3%) have never applied for a loan. Among the forty-three who were refused or did not apply, absence of collateral is the largest single reason (30.2%), but a comparable proportion gave reasons describing self-exclusion: 16.3% were afraid of repayment, 23.3% judged their business or income too small, and 14.0% did not know where to apply.

This is a material finding for policy because refusal and self-exclusion call for different remedies. Roughly two-fifths of the reasons given describe traders who excluded themselves before any lender assessed them, which means a part of the credit gap in this market could be closed by information and by product terms that are legible to the applicant, without any change to underwriting standards at all.

### Physical Conditions Convert a Shortage of Capital into a Recurring Loss of It

Vegetable traders reported a mean weekly loss of K64 through spoilage and damage, against K10 for traders in second-hand clothing ($t = 8.31$, $p < 0.001$), and 46.7% of them lose stock often or very often against 10.0% of salaula traders ($\chi^2 = 16.35$, $p = 0.003$).

Against a mean stock purchase of K641, a weekly loss of K64 is a standing deduction of roughly five to ten per cent from the working capital the trader identifies as her most serious problem. The cause is physical and is visible in the market itself: Table 4.7 shows that vegetable traders are concentrated in the tables, stands and roadside positions offering least shelter, while traders in the non-perishable commodity predominate in the covered stalls. The commodity most vulnerable to exposure is being sold from the positions most exposed. This is a finding about market infrastructure, and it is remediable by the local authority.

### The Two Trades Face the Same Constraint in Opposite Forms

Of thirteen barriers, only three differ significantly between the trades. Spoilage ($d = 1.27$) and absence of storage ($d =$

0.65) press harder on vegetable traders; home and childcare demands (d = −0.68) press harder on traders in second-hand clothing. The three finance barriers show no significant difference whatever: capital shortage is felt with equal severity in both trades.

What differs is the shape of the requirement. Vegetable traders spend a mean of K641 per purchase and half buy at least twice a week; salaula traders spend a mean of K3,082 and 60.0% buy only fortnightly. The difference is very large ($t = -12.08$, $p < 0.001$) and the two distributions do not overlap. One trade needs a small sum in continuous flow; the other needs a large sum at intervals and must survive the period during which it is immobilised in a bale. A single working-capital product cannot serve both, which is a conclusion that could not have been reached without the paired comparison this study was designed to make.

**Record Keeping and Training Are Ranked Last by the Traders Themselves**

Poor record keeping ranks thirteenth of thirteen on severity (2.63), with only 15.0% rating it serious. It ranks last on the weighted priority score with 5 points against 56 for insufficient stock money. Limited business training ranks ninth on severity. Only 8.3% of respondents nominated business and bookkeeping training as the most useful form of support, and not one vegetable trader did so.

The result is consistent across four separate items and cannot be an artefact of any one of them. It does not establish that these traders keep good records; the evidence suggests most keep none. It establishes that they do not experience the absence of records as what holds their businesses back. Given that nearly two-thirds have completed senior secondary education or beyond, and that they have traded for an average of 8.6 years in a competitive market, their judgement on this point deserves weight. Training is nonetheless among the commonest interventions extended to traders of this kind.

**Chilimba Is the Functioning Financial Institution of This Market**

Rotating savings financed 31.7% of these businesses at start-up, more than any other source; 65.0% of respondents currently belong to a savings group; 56.7% use chilimba as an active coping strategy and rate it 2.24 out of 3 for effectiveness. Contributions range from K20 weekly to K300 monthly, and payouts go principally to stock and to school fees.

The formal system, by comparison, reaches 13.3%. The informal rotating system therefore reaches roughly five times as many traders, without collateral, documentation or registration, and supplies precisely what the formal system withholds. Its limitation is scale rather than design: a group can distribute only what its members contribute, and a payout arrives when the rotation reaches the member rather than when she needs it. Membership is significantly more common among salaula traders (70.0% against 43.3%), which follows from their need to assemble lump sums.

**The Most-Used Coping Strategies Are Among the Least Effective**

Buying smaller quantities of stock is used by 70.0% of respondents and rated 2.07 for effectiveness — the most widely used strategy and among the least effective. Reducing prices (50.0% use) and borrowing from a moneylender (16.7% use) are both rated 2.00. The three strategies rated most effective are drawing on own savings (2.47), borrowing from a friend or relative (2.45) and pooling transport (2.44).

Availability and effectiveness run in opposite directions. Buying less is what a trader does when she has no money, not what she does because it works, and it shrinks the business: she buys less, sells less, earns less and can buy less again. The strategies that work require something she may not have — accumulated savings, a relative with money, or other traders going the same way on the same morning.

**Working Capital Leaks Continuously into the Household**

Three-quarters of respondents (75.0%) use business money for household needs at least sometimes and 33.3% do so often or very often. More than half (56.7%) are the principal income earner in their household and a further 20.0% contribute equally, so that for more than three-quarters of the sample the business is the primary support of a household rather than supplementary income.

Significantly, this operates through the competing claim of the household rather than through another person's control: 61.7% of respondents decide alone how business money is used and only 5.0% reported that someone else decides. On Kabeer's framework, agency over disposal is largely present; what is absent is any separation between the enterprise's reserve and the household's. This explains directly why capital injections to enterprises of this kind have so often disappointed in the evaluation literature.

**The Traders Want to Grow and Are Not Managing It**

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (71.7%) state that they wish to grow the business bigger over the next two years, and 76.7% describe it as currently growing. Yet only 30.0% began buying in larger quantities over the preceding two years, only two respondents in sixty opened a second stall, and 15.0% closed the business at some point and restarted it. The commonest concrete actions were adding a line of goods (43.3%) and buying equipment (38.3%) — adjustments within an existing operation rather than expansions of it.

International Journal for Novel Research in Economics , Finance and Management
www.ijnrefm.com
ISSN:3048-7722
Volume 4, Issue 5, Sep-Oct-2026, PP: 01-50

The gap between stated intention and observed action is the clearest statement of the problem. It also bears on the argument, noted at 2.1.6, that women's trading may be oriented toward stability rather than accumulation. In Chilenje that argument does not hold for the majority: these women want expansion and are not achieving it.

**A Finding About the Measures Themselves**

The self-rated growth indicators in this study are unreliable and are reported as such. Not one respondent reported a decline in sales or in trading space; 85.0% rated the number of persons assisting as having increased, while the mean number of paid workers across the sample is 0.63 and only two respondents opened a second stall. Both cannot be true.

The consequence is that the observed correlation between the barrier index and the growth index ($r = 0.14$, $p = 0.277$) must not be read as evidence that barriers do not affect growth. A dependent variable compressed into the top third of its range by reporting bias will show attenuated relationships with everything by construction. This is a finding about the instrument, and it carries a methodological recommendation recorded at 5.4.2: in populations that keep no written accounts, retrospective self-rated growth scales should be supplemented or replaced by checklists of concrete, verifiable actions.

## 2. Conclusion

This study set out to assess the barriers to growth among women-owned businesses in Chilenje, to examine their effects, and to establish the strategies traders use in response. On the evidence of sixty structured interviews, twelve in-depth interviews, four key informant interviews and structured observation at the trading points, the following conclusion is drawn.

The constraint that binds women-owned businesses in Chilenje is the absence of usable working capital on terms that an unsecured, unregistered trader can meet. This conclusion rests on the convergence of two independently administered measures, on the pattern of loan applications and refusals, and on the traders' own statement of what support would help them most. It holds equally in both trades examined, which differ from one another in almost every other respect.

The constraint is compounded, not caused, by the physical conditions of the market. For the vegetable trade in particular, the absence of shelter and secure storage converts a shortage of capital into a continuous loss of it, at a rate equivalent to a tenth of a stock purchase every week. A trader in this position is not merely short of capital; she is losing the capital she has, and no amount of financial education will prevent tomatoes from spoiling on an unshaded table.

Against this, the constraints most commonly addressed by enterprise support programmes — deficits in record keeping and in business skills — are those the traders rank last of thirteen, on every measure this study applied. The women concerned have completed secondary education in nearly two-thirds of cases and have traded for an average of nearly nine years. It is difficult to sustain the position that their principal difficulty is that nobody has taught them to keep a ledger.

The study also finds that these traders have not been passive. They have constructed, without assistance, a financial institution that reaches five times as many of them as the formal sector does, that requires no collateral and no documentation, and that they rate as more effective than borrowing from a moneylender or reducing prices. Chilimba works. Its limitation is that a rotating group can only distribute what its members put in, and its members are, by definition, short of money.

The practical implication follows directly. Support directed at this market should not begin by teaching these women to run businesses they have run for a decade. It should begin by addressing the shortage of capital in the two distinct forms in which it presents itself — a small recurrent flow for the vegetable trade and a periodic lump sum for the salaula trade — by delivering it through the informal channel the traders already trust rather than around it, and by removing the physical conditions that consume working capital at the point of sale. Where a trader's enterprise loses five to ten per cent of its stock value every week to the absence of a roof, investment in the roof is an intervention in her working capital, and it is within the competence of a single local authority to make.

Table 5.1 states the verdict for each of the principal constraints examined.

Table 27: Final research verdict

| Component | Status in Chilenje | Priority action |
|---|---|---|
| Working capital | Binding constraint; ranked first on both measures | Collateral-free working-capital products matched to the two purchase cycles |
| Component | Status in Chilenje | Priority action |
| Access to formal credit | Reaches 13.3% of traders; 53.3% have never applied | Simplify terms and publicise them; address self-exclusion as well as underwriting |
| Collateral | Absolute gate; largest single reason for refusal | Accept group guarantee and trading history in place of asset security |
| Storage and shelter | Absent for most vegetable traders; K64 weekly loss | Covered and secured storage at the produce end of the market |
| Trading space | 71.7% pay; least shelter where stock is most perishable | Reallocate covered positions by commodity perishability |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Household claim on capital | 75.0% use business money for household needs | Savings products that separate enterprise reserve from household cash |
| Chilimba | Reaches 65.0%; rated effective; limited by scale | Recognise as delivery channel; match or on-lend to established groups |
| Business skills and records | Ranked last of thirteen by the traders themselves | De-prioritise standalone training; bundle only where traders request it |

## 3. Recommendations

The recommendations below are directed at named actors and are confined to matters within the competence of those actors.

### To Financial Service Providers

- Design two distinct working-capital products rather than one. The vegetable trade requires a small revolving facility of the order of K500 to K1,000 with frequent repayment matched to a two- or three-day purchase cycle. The salaula trade requires a lump sum of the order of K3,000 to K5,000 with repayment over the weeks during which a bale is sold down.
- Substitute group guarantee, savings-group standing or documented trading history for asset collateral. Absence of collateral is the largest single reason for exclusion in this market, and it screens out traders whose enterprises are demonstrably viable.
- Address self-exclusion directly. Since roughly two-fifths of non-borrowers excluded themselves rather than being refused, publish eligibility criteria and indicative terms in plain language at the market itself, in the languages of trade.
- Use mobile-money transaction history, which 85.0% of these traders generate, as a basis for assessment. The infrastructure to observe their turnover already exists; it is simply not connected to any lending decision.

### To the Lusaka City Council

- Invest in covered and secured storage at the produce end of the market. The measurable return is the K64 mean weekly loss reported by vegetable traders, which over a year and across the produce traders of the market is a substantial and recurring destruction of working capital.
- Review the allocation of covered positions by reference to the perishability of the commodity sold. At present the traders whose stock is most vulnerable occupy the positions offering least shelter, which is an allocation that could be improved at no capital cost.
- Publish the basis on which trading-space fees are levied. Lower fees and better spaces were the second most requested form of support (20.0%), and transparency about what is charged and for what is a precondition of any negotiation over it.
- Improve drainage and surface conditions in the unsheltered trading areas, which bear directly on the hours during which trade is possible and on the rate at which stock is lost.

### To the Ministry Responsible for Enterprise Development and the Zambia Development Agency

- Rebalance support away from standalone business training toward working capital and market infrastructure. The evidence of this study is that training addresses the constraint the intended beneficiaries rank last of thirteen.
- Remove registration as a condition of participation in support programmes, or provide for registration as part of the support rather than as a prerequisite. Eighty-five per cent of these enterprises are unregistered and would be excluded by such a condition.
- Where training is provided, bundle it with capital and tailor it to the specific trade. The evaluation literature reviewed at 2.2.4 is consistent on this point and the present findings are consistent with it.

### To Constituency Development Fund Committees

- Treat market infrastructure — storage, shelter, drainage — as enterprise support rather than as general public works. For a vegetable trader, a roof is working capital.
- Where capital is disbursed, consider matching or on-lending to established chilimba groups rather than to individuals. The groups already perform screening and enforcement that a committee cannot, and they reach five times as many traders as formal lenders do.

### To the Chilenje Market Committee

- Use the figures in this report in representations to the Council concerning storage, shelter and fees. A quantified weekly loss is a different kind of argument from a general complaint.
- Extend the traders' association, which presently reaches only 33.3% of respondents, since collective organisation is the precondition of negotiating on levies, conditions and transport.
- Facilitate transport pooling, which is rated among the three most effective strategies by those who use it (2.44) but is used by only 26.7%, apparently for want of coordination rather than for want of willingness.

### To the Women Traders

- Maintain and extend chilimba participation, which is the most effective capital mechanism presently available in this market and which the evidence of this study supports.
- Where possible, hold the enterprise reserve separately from household cash, even informally through a distinct mobile-money wallet. The finding at 5.1.8 is that leakage is continuous rather than occasional, and

even a nominal separation raises the threshold at which it occurs.

- Approach transport pooling and joint purchasing collectively, since both strategies are rated effective and both require coordination that no individual trader can supply alone.

## 4. Areas for Further Research

### Longitudinal Measurement of Enterprise Growth

This study measured growth by retrospective self-assessment, which section 5.1.10 shows to be unreliable in this population. A panel study following the same traders over two or three years and recording stock purchases and takings prospectively would establish what this design could not.

### Instrument Development for Low-Record Populations

The failure of the self-rated growth scales in this study points to a methodological question of general interest: how enterprise growth should be measured among owners who keep no written accounts. Checklists of concrete, verifiable actions performed better here than rating scales, and the comparison deserves systematic testing.

### A Comparison Including Male Traders

Because the population was defined as women, this study cannot establish which constraints are specific to women and which affect all small traders. A study including men trading the same commodities in the same market would settle the question that Chapter Two identifies as frequently blurred.

### Evaluation of a Chilimba-Linked Credit Product

The central practical recommendation of this study — that capital be delivered through rotating savings groups rather than around them — is a hypothesis that has not been tested in this setting. A pilot with a randomised or phased design would establish whether the approach delivers what the present evidence suggests it might.

### The Economics of Market Storage

This study quantified the loss attributable to the absence of storage but not the cost of providing it. A costed appraisal setting the capital and running cost of covered secured storage against the aggregate losses of the traders who would use it would convert the recommendation at 5.3.2 into a decision-ready proposal.

### The Household Boundary and Enterprise Capital

The finding that leakage to the household operates through competing claims rather than through loss of control merits closer examination, including of whether products that separate enterprise from household balances alter the rate at which it occurs.

### Replication in Other Township Markets

The instrument developed here is reproduced in full and may be applied without modification elsewhere. Replication in three or four contrasting Lusaka markets would establish how far the configuration found in Chilenje is general and how far it is local.

## REFERENCES

1. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.
2. Buvinic, M., & O'Donnell, M. (2019). Gender matters in economic empowerment interventions: A research review. The World Bank Research Observer, 34(2), 309–346.
3. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
4. FinMark Trust. (2025). FinScope Zambia: Financial inclusion survey report. FinMark Trust.
5. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. (2025). GEM 2024/2025 women's entrepreneurship report: Navigating challenges, driving change. Global Entrepreneurship Research Association.
6. Guma, P. K. (2015). Business in the urban informal economy: Barriers to women's entrepreneurship in Uganda. Journal of African Business, 16(3), 305–321.
7. Hansen, K. T. (2000). Salaula: The world of secondhand clothing and Zambia. University of Chicago Press.
8. Hansen, K. T. (2004). Helping or hindering? Controversies around the international second-hand clothing trade. Anthropology Today, 20(4), 3–9.
9. International Labour Organization. (2003). Zambian women entrepreneurs: Going for growth. International Labour Office.
10. International Labour Organization. (2024). The impact of care responsibilities on women's labour force participation (ILO Statistical Brief). International Labour Office.
11. International Organization for Migration. (2022). Rapid situation and needs assessment of informal cross-border traders at the Chirundu, Mwami, Mchinji, Beitbridge and Musina border posts during the COVID-19 pandemic. IOM.
12. International Trade Centre. (2023). Unlocking finance in Zambia: A woman entrepreneur's guide. International Trade Centre.
13. Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. Development and Change, 30(3), 435–464.
14. Kinyanjui, M. N. (2014). Women and the informal economy in urban Africa: From the margins to the centre. Zed Books and The Nordic Africa Institute.

15. Kothari, C. R. (2004). Research methodology: Methods and techniques (2nd ed.). New Age International.
16. Mukulu, J., & Qutieshat, A. (2021). Brief review of informal financial services typologies in Zambia: Investing in sustainable savings groups. Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies, 3(11), 54–61.
17. Mwango, M., Kaliba, M., Chirwa, M., & Guarín, A. (2019). Informal food markets in Zambia: Perspectives from vendors, consumers and policymakers in Lusaka and Kitwe. International Institute for Environment and Development.
18. Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). Research methods for business students (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
19. Takaza, S. C., & Chitereka, C. (2022). An investigation into the livelihoods strategies of informal women traders in Zimbabwe. Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 11(1), 1–22.
20. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2019). Borderline: Women in informal cross-border trade in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. UNCTAD.
21. UN Women. (2024). Facts and figures: Economic empowerment. UN Women.
22. We-Fi. (2025). Supporting women entrepreneurs in developing countries: What works? Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative.
23. World Bank. (2017). The Global Findex database 2017: Measuring financial inclusion and the fintech revolution. World Bank.
24. World Bank. (2021). Access to finance and capacity building of women-led small and medium enterprises in Zambia. World Bank.
25. World Bank. (2025). The Global Findex database 2025: Connectivity and financial inclusion in the digital economy. World Bank.
26. Yamane, T. (1967). Statistics: An introductory analysis (2nd ed.). Harper and Row.
27. Zambia Development Agency. (2020). Micro, small and medium enterprise survey report. Zambia Development Agency.