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## **Gender-Aware Value Chain Development**

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Concern about the ability of the world's ecosystems to continue supporting human life on earth is resulting in a renewed attentiveness to agriculture. In 2008 three major publications reported on the need to focus policy attention on food and farming<sup>1</sup>. One finding of all three reports, supported by decades of research, is that developing gender-centred policies will ensure higher production and productivity in agriculture, and generate a large number of social benefits. With respect to value chains in particular, the fundamental premise is that paying attention to gender issues can increase production and productivity, speed up the adoption of innovations, raise household incomes, and ensure significant improvements to child health, nutrition and educational levels, thus contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Investing in women farmers, assisting them to move into off-farm income generation, and increasing their effective participation in value chain organisations, enhance the potential of value chain development to become an agent of sustainable social change<sup>2,3</sup>.

### **1 Value Chain Approaches to Development**

Given the enthusiasm with which governments and development partners are pursuing value chain approaches, it may seem surprising that no single definition of a value chain exists. This said, a classic definition is that value chains comprise the full range of activities required to bring a product or service from conception, through the different phases of production – which involve a combination of physical transformation, inputs by various service providers, delivery to the final

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

consumer, and disposal after use<sup>4</sup>. Value chains may be very short, with producers and consumers living within walking distance of each other (such as in many village chicken chains in Africa and Asia), a short drive away (as with farmers' markets in many European and North American countries), or much longer with produce being transferred between continents. Value chains are often distinguished by their means of governance (mechanisms of decision-making, power and control) as shown in Box 1<sup>5</sup>.

#### Box 1. Types of Value Chain according to Form of Governance

**Market-driven chains**, where there are no long-term relations between the actors and where the **market price** is the central governance mechanism. All actors, including the poor, compete in these markets without specific support aimed at facilitating market access and/or guidance from the buyers on quality, quantity or commitment.

**Relational chains**, where transactions occur in the framework of established relations and where the central governance mechanism is the **lead actor**. Three different types of relational chains have been identified: (i) buyer-driven chains, where a dominant buyer determines what is produced and sold; (ii) producer-driven chains, where farmers, usually through their organizations, constitute the lead actors; and (iii) intermediary-driven chains, where the key linkages are fostered by third parties, usually service providers or social entrepreneurs.

The premise underlying all work on value chains is that it is possible to devise cause and effect models of how value chains work. From thence, depending on the value chain selected and local situational factors, it should be possible to design and implement planned interventions to alleviate constraints and promote opportunities in a selected value chain. Such interventions are built upon *coordinated, systematic and systemic* methodologies and work with actors undertaking specific functions all along a chain, and actors with support functions, as opposed to strengthening one particular actor alone, or ameliorating a limited range of constraints.

This methodological clarity not only makes it easier to develop measures to overcome these constraints, it also enables clear pathways for integrating poor and discriminated-against people into value chains to be developed. The **economic case** for working towards gender equity in value chains lies in the understanding that the majority of agricultural production systems are structured by gender roles and responsibilities, and as a consequence, any attempt to intervene in value chains will affect gender relations in some way. This will inevitably have wider consequences for value chain effectiveness and efficiency. The **social justice case** for gender-sensitive value chain development is embedded in human rights discourses, and – critically – should be seen as complementary to the economic case (Box 2).

#### Box 2. The Social Justice Case for Gender-Sensitive Value Chain Development

**Enhancing Household Welfare.** Studies show that resources and incomes controlled by women are more likely to be used to improve family food consumption and welfare, reduce child malnutrition, and increase the overall well-being of the family<sup>6</sup>. Whilst value chain development can strengthen the ability of women to contribute to household welfare, innovative ways of ensuring men share this responsibility are important. Reproductive work is unequally distributed between women and men, with women taking on the bulk of reproductive work in many societies. This hampers their ability to participate in business activities.

**Respecting the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Decent Work Agenda.** Women and men make up the labour force in many agricultural value chains, as farm managers, wage workers,

and unpaid family workers. Despite women's significant participation, the terms and conditions of their work are often unjust and unfavorable, with limited and unequal rewards for their inputs. Value chain development needs to uphold the principles of dignified 'decent work' which includes creating permanent jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, and promoting dialogue.

**Eliminating Discriminatory Beliefs and Practices.** Gender inequalities in value chains often result from discriminatory beliefs and practices that restrict women's full participation, and the terms and conditions of their participation. Men and women are entitled to enjoy their human rights and live free from any discrimination that reduces their access to education, skills, and employment opportunities for which they are qualified. Gender-sensitive value chain development is likely to require the creation of equity measures.

## 2 Challenges and Obstacles

There are many challenges to gender-sensitive value chain development. Low incomes, lack of control over the benefits from participation in value chains, and gender discrimination in access to credit and training can reinforce a cycle whereby women are unable or unwilling to invest their time or money into improving production and productivity, leading to poorer product quality and quantity. When value chain interventions do not capture gender issues, gender disparities in workloads and incomes may increase, with knock-on effects for human development indicators. Women may also be directly excluded from the benefits of development interventions. In Uganda, women in the fruit and vegetable trade lost out as markets were developed in Kampala and for export. In Côte d'Ivoire, government regulations on cooperatives in the cocoa industry made participation by women's groups very difficult, resulting in their marginalisation<sup>7</sup>. This section examines some of the constraints in more detail.

1. Buyer-led horticultural chains typically exhibit strong gender segmentation by occupation, type of activity, and level of participation in the chain. Women's work is often arbitrarily assumed to be of lower value, and men typically occupy permanent and management positions. In the value-chain for thornless artichokes in Peru, for example, men and women cluster in different occupations, undertake distinct activities in the fields and processing plants, and work different hours with different degrees of security. Gender wage gaps are evident throughout the chain<sup>8</sup>.
2. In smallholder farming, women are typically concentrated as producers at the bottom of the chain. They can find it difficult to take on more profitable roles as buyers, sellers and processors for a number of reasons. Women's unpaid household maintenance roles consume considerable time, resulting in little time for processing and marketing their produce. Women-owned off-farm businesses frequently face more constraints, including less capital and collateral, and receive fewer services and support, than businesses owned by men<sup>9</sup>. In some countries, cultural norms may inhibit women's participation at higher levels. In Bangladesh, for example, restrictions on the mobility of women mean that few women enter the market place as vendors or as purchasers, and they rarely act as middlemen.
3. Women in many countries exhibit low levels of human capital. Their lack of literacy and numeracy skills can prevent them from developing effective negotiation skills with value chain actors, or using modern communication technologies to support decision-making.
4. Programmes aiming to integrate women into value chains generally pre-suppose a certain level of resources and capabilities that enable them to take on the risks inherent with engaging with value chains and entrepreneurship. However, men are generally much more able to engage in

risk taking, and are able to grow their businesses, due to their ability to build and command capital. This ability is critically linked to the superior position of men in relation to the ownership and deployment of productive assets, such as land and machinery, and their ability to make major expenditure decisions. Women within male-headed households generally depend on their ability to maintain relations with male kin to secure access to productive assets. Their decision-making capacity over the use of those assets is demonstrably low in many cases. Female-headed households may well be able to take autonomous decisions, but they frequently lack sufficient assets for truly viable livelihoods.

5. Programme outcomes are frequently biased in advance against women by assuming *a priori* homogeneity of interests within or between households. Extension and business support systems continue to direct a greater proportion of technical assistance and extension services to men, even for tasks and crops that women manage, in the assumption that information will be shared. As a consequence, information about new techniques and upgrading may not flow to the right person. This can result in decreased volume and product quality and poorer returns to the work of both women and men in value chains.
6. Gender issues remain to be fully incorporated into technology development. For instance, research shows that women and men frequently have distinct varietal preferences. This is due to their different roles and responsibilities within households, in farming, and in value chains. In Zambia's Northern Province a government-developed groundnut variety, MGV4, was widely introduced yet failed catastrophically because it is very oily and hard to pound, and produces an unpleasant-tasting relish. It was assumed that the large-sized nut would be easy to grind for groundnut oil, but due to a lack of consultation with women the multiple uses of groundnuts had not been considered, nor had, incidentally, the lack of processing facilities and a ready market for oil<sup>10</sup>.
7. In many smallholder farming systems, agricultural production and marketing is sex-sequential, with women and men taking on specific roles at particular points. The separation of tasks by gender may mean that neither men nor women possess a complete understanding of the whole value chain and of how the roles and responsibilities of different actors intersect and interact at different stages. If not acknowledged and worked with, this can hamper value chain effectiveness.
8. Household gender relations profoundly affect the intra-household distribution of income. Amartya Sen shows in his essay *Co-operative Conflicts*<sup>11</sup> that women and men may collaborate to bring wealth into the family, but that the division of the wealth often becomes a source of conflict. In many cases, wealth is not divided according to the share brought in by each household member. Rather, division is determined by relative power. In most cases, due to social norms that privilege men, men hold more power than women and thus wield more control over assets and expenditure. A PLAN International study carried out in Zambia showed that gender-based violence, in which women suffered high levels of battery, increased markedly after harvesting and marketing due to marital conflicts over how to divide income<sup>12</sup>. When women do not receive rewards commensurate with their knowledge and their effort this can reduce their willingness to invest their time and energy into improving production and processing practices. In turn, this endangers the constant supply of quality materials necessary for a functioning value chain. A study carried out in Uganda on the organic export sector found that whilst the labour of women smallholders was central to the production of export crops, they had little incentive to increase their labour because it is unpaid<sup>13</sup>.
9. Since women are often responsible for household food production, there may be little scope for increasing the amount of labour time which they can put into production for crops sold into value chains without a decrease in the amount of time spent on food production. In cases where women are relatively more involved in subsistence production and men are more

involved with cash crops, or if women lose their access rights to land as it is converted from traditional to modern cash crops, household food security and nutrition may decline despite a rise in income.

### 3 Good Practices and Innovations

Development actors wishing to promote women in value chains need to select value chains that have strong market development potential and are able to achieve women's economic empowerment and leadership.

In every chain, the likelihood of 'male takeover' is high once a certain level of profitability is reached. Ensuring that women develop and maintain a presence across the chain will require the development and application of instruments designed to (a) deepen women's ownership of assets, including special programmes for female-headed households, (b) strengthen women's voice in household decision-making over expenditure and assets, and (c) develop the capacity of rural producer organisations to represent women's interests in the market. Soft investments should include women's literacy programmes, entrepreneurship training to enable competitiveness, and redesigning rural producer organisations to ensure they are inclusive of women, including poor women, and are market-orientated. A variety of value-adding strategies, ranging from enabling women to become crop specialists to assisting with product processing should be developed. Hard investments are equally vital. These include ensuring that physical infrastructure, such as processing and storage facilities, means of product transportation, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and the facilities at retail and wholesale markets meet women's needs<sup>14</sup>.

The whole field of promoting gender-aware approaches to value chain development is quite new and thus in many cases methodologies are still under development or remain to be rolled out on a large scale. This said, a great deal is happening. A very useful approach is provided by the Greater Access to Trade Expansion (GATE) approach promoted by USAID. Annex 1 provides a short overview of the methodology presented in *Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains: a Handbook*. Another valuable source of information is the lively online discussion platform [http://genderinvaluechains.ning.com/?xg\\_source=msg\\_mes\\_network](http://genderinvaluechains.ning.com/?xg_source=msg_mes_network) which presents value chain tools, discussion threads, papers, and details of events focusing gender and value chains. To date, nine regional 'AgriProfocus Hubs' have been set up, in Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia.

In this paper, two case studies of value chain interventions that have helped to improve the position of women are presented. They offer specific mechanisms to overcome some of the gender-based constraints to women's effective participation. They have been selected because they offer experiences from two different continents and thus help to illustrate the necessity for specificity, as well as the potential for mutual learning. The case studies are (i) the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach in the Ugandan coffee chain, which has been implemented by OxfamNovib through a small grant from IFAD, and (ii) the Microfinance and Technical Support Project (MTFSP) in Bangladesh, which is supported by IFAD.

To help the reader assess the two value chains, it is noted that a gender-sensitive approach to value chain analysis works to (i) understand women's and men's roles and relationships in the chain (ii) examine gender differentials in access to, and control over, key productive assets necessary for participation in the chain, and (iii) analyse how gender power relations affect economic rents among actors throughout the chain. As a consequence of these analyses, interventions should

provide gender-differentiated opportunities to enable women and men to participate equitably in the chain. This can be done by designing measures to overcome the underlying causes of gender-based constraints in the value chain, through devising equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, and through including women and men in defining the issues and the solutions<sup>15</sup>.

### **3.1 The Coffee Value Chain in Uganda: the Gender Action Learning System (GALS)**

In Uganda, an innovative community-led methodology has been implemented for promoting gender equality in the coffee value-chain<sup>16</sup>. The GALS value-chain process consists of several phases: (i) preliminary mapping of the selected value chain, (ii) action-research with different stakeholder groups, and (iii) identification of win-win strategies through multi-stakeholder workshops. To enable illiterate women and men to analyse and critically reflect on their livelihoods, to identify challenges and opportunities at different nodes of the value-chain, and to plan for future, simple diagramming tools are used. A team of well-trained field-workers facilitates the process, while at the same time a peer-learning structure is built to ensure community ownership of the methodology.

Domestic violence, lack of property rights, and the inability to control income from the sale of coffee are some of the most critical issues that have been addressed by poor women producers who have been involved in the GALS. Women are heavily involved in coffee cultivation and processing (around 90% of coffee farmers), along with food crop production and household-related tasks. Whilst many men own the land and take the main decisions regarding production, they provide little labour input. A significant number of women are involved in barter trading. They take a small amount of coffee which they sell to traders in the market to buy fish or cooking oil, either from their own stocks or on behalf of neighbours. Before the project, intra-household conflicts reduced the quality of coffee because both women and men were picking and selling unripe beans in order to sell them before their partner managed to do so. Many men were retaining the profits for personal use, including for alcohol consumption which is a recognized problem in the area. Middlemen were dissatisfied because they could not guarantee good quality coffee to final buyers.

The GALS project has brought about significant changes in gender relations, particularly with regards to land ownership and the gender division of labour. Some women report that their husbands are now contributing more to farming activities and household-related tasks. Important changes have been documented in households known to have exhibited strong gender inequalities and high incidences of domestic violence. Some women now exert major control over household assets and income. Joint and better management of household resources is increasing. There has been an improvement of the quality of coffee, which in turn has led to increased income and improved trust between different value-chain actors.

Local markets for coffee are gradually expanding in the area. Some households have started experimenting with local roasting, grinding and packaging and selling to local buyers. Coffee traders continue to be interested in the process and are planning to form an alliance with producers aimed at improving the quality and price of coffee. Gender equality issues have been addressed at all levels of the value-chain and improvement in gender relations is noticeably contributing to strengthening the efficiency of the whole chain.

### **3.2 The poultry value-chain in Bangladesh: Microfinance and Technical Support Project (MTFSP)**

The MTFSP is an IFAD-supported project, which started in 2004<sup>17</sup>. The project's goal is the improved livelihoods and food security of moderately poor and very poor households and the empowerment of women, through the promotion of sustainable income-generating activities and livestock technologies.

Under the MFTSP, IFAD has supported the development of women-centred value chains at the village level. In the MFTSP approach for the poultry value chain, the activities of a single woman in backyard poultry production are disaggregated into a set of clearly distinguishable activities. Actors are created for each activity and specialized training delivered to each: model poultry breeders, mini hatchery owners, chick rearers and poultry keepers. Value has been added through (a) commercializing the transactions between each node, and (b) improving the genetic material, thus raising overall income levels for each actor.

In this way, a female income stream has been generated for the household. This raises overall household income in households where every Taka (basic unit of Bangladesh currency) counts. Consensus exists that although social norms dictate that men are responsible for supporting the family economically, poverty levels have meant that women are frequently seen as a burden – literally an extra mouth to feed. Assisting women to earn monies has brought about more equitable roles and relations in the household, recognition of women's contribution to the household economy, and generally an important increase in the status of women, both within the household and indeed within the village.

Apart from the final interface with the market, the transactor between value chain actors is female. Mini-hatchery owners buy fertile eggs from other project participants who run small parent farms in confined production conditions. The parent lines are Fayoumi females and Rhode Island Red males. After hatching, the mini-hatchery sells day-old Sonali chicks to chick rearing units. After 8 weeks the chick rearers sell the young birds to another category of project participants, poultry keepers, who keep poultry for egg production and for sale to the market.

The MFTSP has been successful in targeting women because it has created a value chain that is geographically limited. It trains women to be specialized actors at well-defined nodes in the chain, and adds value by upgrading and managing gene flow. The level of technology is appropriate. The mini-hatcheries are easy to build and manage, and yet are sophisticated in design. Further success factors include the fact that the project specifically set out to reach women and the most poor, and it has benefited from committed staff both within government departments, and in the implementing organizations.

## **4 Recommendations**

### **4.1 Government**

- Legislation should explicitly prohibit gender discrimination, and contain statements of gender equality in relation to women's self-employment. Due to widespread discrimination, affirmative action laws providing fiscal and other incentives for women entrepreneurs should be formulated and adopted. Procedures for doing business need to be eased. Simplifying registration and licensing requirements will enable both women and men to come into compliance and formalise their businesses quickly, thus improving tax revenues.

- ❑ A key step in addressing gender-based constraints in agricultural value chains is to improve the quality and availability of gender-disaggregated data and analysis. This is essential to improve targeting and investments. Creating, monitoring, and evaluating effective gender-aware policies and programmes depend on data being available at different levels. Relevant data can be produced for specific projects that aim to track specific monitoring indicators. Such data need to be sustainably generated and to be consistent and congruent with the national statistical system's broader data collection activities. These systems typically generate indicators to be tracked over time and are usually representative at both sub-national and national levels. Achieving this goal will require orienting survey instruments to capture gender-disaggregated data at the household member level across all modules in the instruments. For instance, it is critical that male-headed households be disaggregated since the roles of women, and their needs, within those households are currently invisible. However, women in such households may provide the bulk of agricultural labour and have the most important capacity development needs.
- ❑ Since gender is a cross-cutting issue a portfolio of interventions aimed at tackling different aspects of gender inequality in agricultural value chains are needed. To achieve this, Ministries of Agriculture need to work in tandem with other ministries, such as the Ministries of Water, Livestock, Energy, Health, Education, Roads, and Land.

#### **4.2 Other Actors**

- ❑ Institutions working with value chains need dedicated budgets for gender mainstreaming. Gender focal points need training, time, and individual accountability for gender outcomes to be built into their job descriptions. This needs to be complemented by organisational accountability for gender outcomes. Top leadership commitment to gender issues is vital in the ministries of agriculture and livestock, as well as NGO and civil society projects and programmes.
- ❑ The participation and influence of rural women in producer organisations, service providers, business organizations, and in policy-making bodies should be strongly promoted at all levels. This can be achieved by developing women's leadership skills and through quota schemes in mixed gender organisations. Women-only groups also need support.
- ❑ Strategies which specifically address the needs of women participants across selected value chains are needed to complement mainstreaming strategies. Female-headed households require a different approach than programmes for women in male-headed households due to differences in decision-making capacity, control over income, and access to assets.
- ❑ Special programmes are needed to promote women's access to capital to enable them to develop and enlarge their businesses. Women need assistance in building secure assets, for example in livestock, land and machinery. Land titling and other activities to ensure secure land tenure must be made gender-aware and be designed to ensure secure land tenure and increase access to women in both statutory and customary land tenure systems. Strategies to enable women to access the inputs and services needed to develop their businesses are critical.



## 5 Annex 1

The Greater Access to Trade Expansion (GATE) project supported by USAID had as one outcome a toolkit for gender-sensitive work in value chains, brought together in *Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains: a Handbook*. The Handbook presents their “Integrating Gender Issues into Agricultural Value Chains” (INGIA-VC) approach. It was developed to bring together concepts from different technical areas in development, specifically gender, agriculture, microenterprise development, and value chains. Written by gender practitioners, it provides readers with an understanding of agricultural value chains from a gender perspective. The Handbook helps practitioners become familiar with: (i) How gender issues affect agricultural value chains, (ii) A process for analyzing gender issues in agricultural value chains, and (iii) Strategies for addressing gender issues in agricultural value chains. A table summarizing the INGIA-VC approach is provided below (with slight alterations made by the author of this paper to aid comprehension since the table is out of context). The aim is to provide readers with an overview of this comprehensive methodology for possible follow-up.

Phase	Uses / source	Task	To help practitioners
Phase One. Mapping Gender Roles and Relations along the Value Chain.	Existing national/ regional background and project documents, surveys and survey analyses.	Organise gender-related information.	Organise data on gender roles and responsibilities using Gender Dimensions Framework.
	Data on sex-segmentation in the selected value chain.	Organisational map of the value chain.	Understand sex-segmented character of the value chain.
	Other gender-related information.	INGIA-VC interview guide.	Collect data on factors that shape outcomes for women and men in value chains.
	Supplementary field interviews.	Organising gender related information.	Identify areas of gender inequalities as a guide to identifying gender-based constraints.
Phase Two. From Gender Inequalities to Gender-based Constraints.	Phase One Worksheet. Organising gender-related information.	From observed inequalities to gender-based constraint statements.	Identify areas of gender inequalities as a guide to identifying gender-based constraints.
Phase Three. Assessing the Consequences of Gender-based Constraints.	Gender-based constraint statements.	Assessing the consequences of gender-based constraints.	Thinking through the implications of a particular gender-based constraint at different levels and assess the constraints that will lead to win-win outcomes through their removal.
Phase Four. Taking Action to Remove Gender-based Constraints.	Phase Two Worksheet. From observed inequalities to gender-based constraint statements.	Developing indicators to measure success.	Develop indicators to measure success of actions to remove gender-based constraints.
Phase Five. Measuring the Success of Actions.	Actions from Phase Four.	Developing indicators to measure success.	Develop indicators to measure success of actions to remove gender-based constraints.
	Indicators and targets from M&E systems and from Phase Five worksheet: Developing indicators to measure success.	Plotting success diagrams.	Illustrate advancement towards gender equality outcomes.

## 6 Acknowledgements

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## 7 Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook (<http://worldbank.org/genderinag>); The World Development Report: Agriculture for Development. The World Bank. Washington, DC. 2007; International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development ([www.agassessment.org](http://www.agassessment.org)).

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<sup>16</sup> The project was financed with an IFAD grant and implemented by Oxfam Novib. This case study is based on research by Ambra Gallina during an IFAD grant Mission to Uganda in 2010.

<sup>17</sup> The Bangladesh study is taken from a forthcoming paper by Farnworth, C.R. and Gallina, A. on behalf of IFAD on the theme of Gender and Value Chains. Both authors were members of an IFAD study mission to Bangladesh (2008) to evaluate this and other agricultural value chains.