



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



# Developing **gender-sensitive** value chains

*A guiding framework*







Developing  
**gender-sensitive**  
value chains

*A guiding framework*

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# Abstract

The purpose of this publication (part of the FAO series on sustainable food value chain development) is to facilitate the systematic integration of gender equality dimensions into value chain development programmes and projects. It raises awareness on gender inequalities and discusses the importance of addressing these dimensions in value chain development, while also building a common approach for work on gender-sensitive value chain development. It achieves this by bringing together key concepts from value chain development and gender and by providing concrete guiding principles for the integration of gender concerns into value chain development projects and programmes. This conceptual framework has a companion publication, *Developing gender-sensitive value chains: Guidelines for practitioners*, which provides specific tools to support practitioners in designing, implementing and monitoring gender-sensitive value chain programmes.



# List of acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FMM	Multipartner Programme Support Mechanism
GBCs	gender-based constraints
GSVC	gender-sensitive value chain
SFVC	sustainable food value chain
SFVCD	sustainable food value chain development
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VC	value chain
WEE	women's economic empowerment



# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction: gender, value chains and sustainability



## Introduction

In recent years, trade liberalization, globalization, technological advancement and other major trends have brought important changes to agricultural and food systems. These changes have yielded positive results, such as opening up new markets and creating successful linkages between producers and markets. However, they have also created new challenges for rural actors in gaining access to and benefitting from local, national and global markets (FAO, 2013c). Women in particular experience more difficulties compared to men in accessing productive resources, and in participating in and benefitting equally from agrifood value chains. Women make up 43 percent of the agricultural labour force and are profoundly involved in the production of food and cash crops worldwide, as well as in fishery, forestry and livestock. This “gender gap” represents a missed opportunity to secure sustainable development for the agricultural sector as well as improved food security and nutrition for all (FAO, 2011).

It is the role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to make sure that current processes of growth and commercialization in the agricultural sector do not lead to further disempowerment of women and girls, and contribute instead to the sustainable development of agrifood systems. The inclusiveness of agricultural food systems depends on the extent to which they allow the most vulnerable groups (such as smallholders, small enterprises, and women- and youth-run enterprises) to have access to the resources and services they need, and to participate in and earn a living wage<sup>1</sup> from their activities. Working towards inclusiveness, social justice and gender equality in agrifood systems entails addressing all levels of the value chain, from the individual producer to the end market, and coming to a comprehensive understanding of the issues and constraints that lead to the exclusion and marginalization of stakeholders along the chain.

Over the last decade, the value chain (VC) has established itself as one of the main paradigms in development thinking and practice and is now recognized as a key concept in the development of sustainable food systems. Given the large amount of heterogeneous practices and publications that accompanied the rise of the VC paradigm, FAO responded to the growing need for a unified conceptual framework and practical guidance grounded in science by inaugurating a series of handbooks in 2014 on sustainable food value chain development (SFVCD) (FAO, 2014a).

**The purpose of this framework and its companion publication, *Developing gender-sensitive value chains: Guidelines for practitioners*, is to contribute to this series of handbooks in order to ensure that gender equality dimensions are more systematically integrated into programmes and projects, so that women and men can benefit more equally from VC development interventions and subsequent improvements in VC performance.**

<sup>1</sup> Oxfam defines a living wage as “one which for a full-time working week (without overtime) would be enough to meet a family’s basic needs and allowing a small amount for discretionary spending” (Oxfam, 2006).

## SUSTAINABILITY: THE CASE FOR INTEGRATING GENDER INTO VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

**Gender equality and the development of sustainable value chains are interdependent goals.** Major comparative studies have already established that improvements in gender equality and economic growth can be mutually reinforcing, while gender inequalities tend to be costly and inefficient (World Bank, 2001; World Bank, IFAD and FAO, 2009). Closing the “gender gap” in agriculture can result in major production gains: the FAO report on *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011* determined that women’s yields could grow by 20–30 percent if the gender gap in accessing agricultural inputs were closed, an increase that could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5–4 percent, which could in turn reduce the number of food insecure people in the world by 12–17 percent (FAO, 2011). Within this context, integrating gender considerations into the development of agrifood value chains is not only necessary from a human rights perspective; it is also a prerequisite to ensuring sustainable growth in areas of intervention.

According to UNDP *Human Development Report 2011*, “[i]nequitable development can never be sustainable human development”. The report makes the point that thinking about promoting sustainability as separate from addressing social inequalities in policy-making is not only counter to the basic principles of development, it is also a fundamentally flawed practice (UNDP, 2011). Gender dynamics are inextricably bound up with the value chain development cycle: value chain efficiency is highly dependent on strong linkages and positive collaboration among actors, and women are important stakeholders all along value chains, though they are often invisible or overlooked.

**Gender relations are a primary component of the social and economic context that shapes VC functioning at all levels,** determining factors ranging from the types of jobs that are available to men and women, to differences in remuneration and the qualitative nature of individuals’ productive roles in the VC (e.g. time use, adoption of labour-saving technologies, and participation in decision-making). **Gender relations are also deeply affected by the economic shifts inherent in VC improvement.** For example, depending on the nature of the intervention and of the specific value chain, expanding women’s productive participation may lead to an increase *or a decrease* in their access to and control over income (Rubin and Manfre, 2014). Similarly, changes in men’s productive roles and earning capacity may also lead to shifts in the balance of decision-making power at household and community levels. Finally, it is worth noting that gender considerations are relevant to issues of environmental sustainability in value chains. Women are usually responsible for the collection of food, fuel and water, as well as the production of subsistence crops in the household division of labour, but they also tend to have less access to key technologies and information (such as irrigation or training on drought mitigation tech-

ENHANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN VALUE CHAINS CONTRIBUTES TO:

- » VALUE CHAIN EFFICIENCY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
- » SOCIAL JUSTICE
- » POVERTY ALLEVIATION
- » IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION FOR ALL



## Introduction

niques) that can increase their resilience in the face of environmental changes. They are therefore disproportionately affected by shifts in natural resource availability, but also ideally positioned to act as agents of change in relation to natural resource management (UN WomenWatch).

For all of these reasons, gender fits seamlessly into the SFVCD framework's triple bottom line approach to sustainability (combining economic, social and environmental aspects), which defines a sustainable food value chain as:

*“ [t]he full range of farms and firms and their successive coordinated value-adding activities that produce particular raw agricultural materials and transform them into particular food products that are sold to final consumers and disposed of after use, in a manner that is profitable throughout, has broad-based benefits for society and does not permanently deplete natural resources (FAO, 2014a).<sup>2</sup> ”*

The SFVCD Guiding Principles state that a holistic approach is necessary to identify the interlinked causes at the root of VC underperformance. Gender dynamics are key to this process. Men and women working in food VCs experience different challenges and have access to different resources: not taking these variations into account would seriously limit the relevance of analysis conducted in the first two phases in the VC development cycle (measuring performance and understanding performance), and most likely hinder the process of selecting the appropriate upgrading activities and multilateral partnerships involved in the third phase (improving performance). On the other hand, a truly holistic understanding of target group characteristics would both suggest ways to tap into the potential of each relevant social category and help to ensure inclusive and sustainable VC development.

### WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS DOCUMENT

Despite the many advantages of addressing social inequality, gender dimensions often remain overlooked in agricultural development programmes. Value chain development practitioners may find it challenging to mainstream gender within their work, either because they underestimate or are unaware of the relevance of gender dynamics to value chains, or because they need technical support in translating gender equality objectives into concrete actions in the implementation of programmes.

<sup>2</sup> The definition here is mainly a variation on and expansion of the definition by Kaplinsky and Morris (2000).

This FAO framework on gender-sensitive value chains aims to respond to this gap and provide technical support to VC practitioners and decision-makers in developing sustainable and gender-sensitive agrifood value chains. In particular, this publication intends to:

- » Raise awareness and discuss the relevance and benefits of addressing gender equality dimensions in VC development;
- » Build a common approach to work on gender-sensitive value chain development;
- » Provide concrete guiding principles for the integration of gender concerns into value chain development projects and programmes (the framework is complemented by the *Guidelines for practitioners* that provide specific tools to support practitioners in designing, implementing and monitoring gender-sensitive value chain programmes).

The remaining chapters of this publication will discuss:

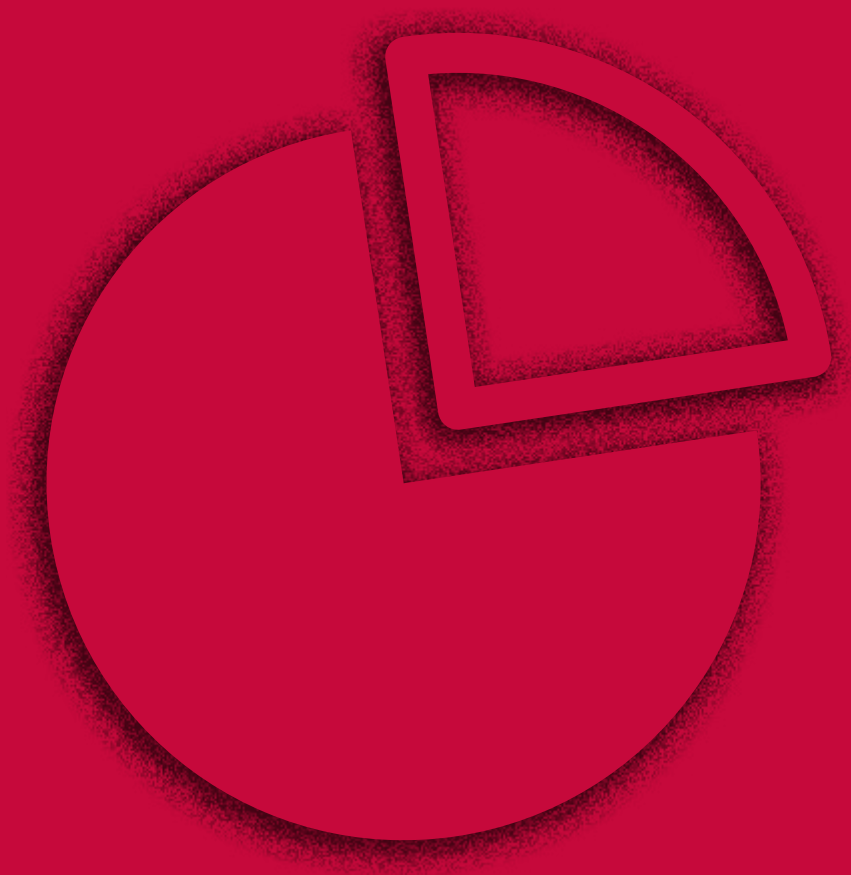
- » **Existing FAO work** on gender and value chain development, highlighting areas of strength as well as gaps to be addressed;
- » **Key concepts** in sustainable value chain development as well as in gender equality and women's economic empowerment;
- » **The FAO framework** on gender-sensitive VC development, which brings all of these concepts together in order to enhance the potential effectiveness of future VC interventions.





## C H A P T E R 2

# FAO work on gender and value chains



**FAO's work  
on gender and  
value chains**

This chapter discusses FAO approaches and areas of focus in gender-sensitive value chain development. It starts from FAO's institutional context and comparative advantage and subsequently analyses the Organization's existing work on gender-sensitive value chain development. In addition, the chapter identifies the gaps in the Organization's work on gender-sensitive value chain development and suggests that a more unified and coordinated approach is needed in order to scale up and enhance the impact of the Organization's work. The FAO Sustainable Food Value Chain (SFVC) Framework offers entry points for gender-sensitive value chain development by stating that interventions need to be targeted where the most impact can be attained. Gender gaps in value chain development are wide; however, if they are analysed and addressed properly, structural and systemic change may be achieved. By doing so the sustainability of the value chain is greatly enhanced, fulfilling one of the primary aims of the SFVC framework.

**FAO INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT**

FAO has adopted value chain development as an efficient method to foster sustainable growth of the agriculture sector and contribute to the eradication of hunger and rural poverty. The SFVCD handbook provides a clear overall framework for the implementation of this approach. As mentioned earlier, the framework integrates social as well as economic and environmental sustainability concerns; however, it lacks detailed guidance on gender dimensions.

The FAO Policy on Gender Equality, which is in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), calls on the entire Organization to incorporate efforts to achieve gender equality in its technical work. It also recognizes that achieving this goal is not only a matter of reducing the gap between men and women in access to productive resources, but also of ensuring that women and men have the ability to influence programme and policy decision-making (voice), and ensuring that rural women and men can take up economic opportunities to improve their individual and household well-being (agency) (FAO, 2013a).

**THE FAO COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE IN RELATION TO  
GENDER-SENSITIVE VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT**

FAO has a large sphere of influence due to its broad, global mandate related to the world's food and agricultural systems, as well as its neutral position as an organization governed by a conference consisting of 194 Member States. The Organization promotes international policy formulation and subsequently supports Member States in translating international agreements into national policies. As part of this role, FAO can help build enabling environments conducive to the creation of inclusive and sustainable value chains within food and agricultural systems. Specifically because gender equality can be politically

sensitive, international lobbying can be very effective in setting the preconditions for a level playing field. FAO's field presence ensures that the Organization has the infrastructure to reach impact; and by working through partners such as national governments and the private sector, it stimulates structural and systemic change. The Organization's wide-ranging expertise covering all aspects of value chain development, combined with its vast track record in gender equality in rural development, paves the way for major contributions in the areas of women's empowerment and efficient value chain development to combat rural poverty and world hunger.

### **GENDER-SENSITIVE VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT WITHIN FAO**

In its work on gender equality in agricultural development, the primary focus of FAO has been to decrease the gender gap between men and women in accessing productive resources (FAO, 2011). This priority comes to the fore in policy papers as well as in the specific topics addressed in working papers on gender equality and rural development. From 2010 onwards FAO started publishing work specifically on gender equality and value chains. These publications served different audiences and purposes. Four types of categories can broadly be discerned: (i) policy or conceptual papers; (ii) good practice reports; (iii) programme reports/case studies and value chain assessments; and (iv) tools for the field and databases with disaggregated data (e.g. differences between men and women in access to land). Some clearly apply value chain approaches, while others focus on broader agricultural development goals. For a list of relevant publications, please see Annex 1.

A number of major themes have been explored in these materials. First, almost all of the publications emphasize the **importance of robust gender analysis to planning and implementing effective value chain interventions**. Some identify the specific types of gender-based constraints women face and the ways in which women's roles can be hidden in a given value chain or type of value chain, highlighting also the economic losses incurred due to gender-blind policies and interventions (FAO, 2013b, 2015c; Hill and Vigneri, 2011). Other publications also document the dangers of using standardized, one-size-fits-all approaches (i.e. no gender or contextual analysis) or of basing VC interventions on unsound gender analysis (Coles and Mitchell, 2011). The **necessity of understanding social, cultural and political factors in areas of intervention** is another major recurring theme. Contextual understanding is essential to getting at the root causes that determine differing degrees of participation and benefit among value chain actors, and therefore to taking effective measures to bridge any gaps in access to resources.

From a methodological standpoint, a number of FAO publications have illustrated the usefulness of certain key levels of analysis in bringing forth potentially hidden social constraints. For example, making a distinction between demand- and supply-side interventions involving technological innovation

## FAO's work on gender and value chains

and/or rural advisory services can help to explain why uptake or benefits are low among a given group of stakeholders such as women, and therefore pave the way for corrective action (e.g. engaging with the actual end-users of a technology or service during its development or formulation) (Ragasa *et al.*, 2014). The **intrahousehold level represents another major analytical gap in VC and agricultural development interventions**. This level is crucial to understanding key dynamics at the root of gender-based constraints, such as women's time poverty or their inability to access certain assets and services. It also suggests household and family-oriented services as a potential strategic point of entry for VC interventions: activities carried out at this level have the double benefit of overcoming barriers to reach women while also involving men, thus increasing the likelihood of the intervention's sustainability (Coles and Mitchell, 2011; FAO, 2015b; Grassi, Landberg and Huyer, 2015).

### STRENGTHENING FAO DELIVERY ON GENDER-SENSITIVE VALUE CHAIN (GSVC) DEVELOPMENT

There are three major aspects of the Organization's work that require some improvement in order to deliver more efficiently on GSVC development. First, many FAO projects and programmes are designed to improve agricultural productivity by focusing on increasing smallholders' access to productive resources and markets. This strategy may in some cases be valid, but it is important to note that this kind of intervention is distinct from value chain development (though it is frequently mislabelled as such). While portions of a value chain (or commodity subsector) may be selected in this kind of programme, a focus on the production node/level remains the starting point, with a sound value chain analysis not necessarily being the foundation upon which the intervention is built. This means that linkages with other nodes and players in the value chain and overall market system are not addressed, which effectively hampers the possibility of bringing about systemic and structural change.

Similarly, many programmes mistakenly equate targeting women with working toward gender equality. Faced with the challenge of designing a gender-sensitive intervention, practitioners who have difficulty working with gender concepts or sociocultural analysis may ignore these dimensions, or opt instead to target existing women's groups or value chains in which women already have a large role. While these may be valid strategies in some contexts, interventions that are not grounded in sound gender analysis may risk doing more harm than good.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these issues stem from the fact that information on gender in value chains is limited. Topics that bear further investigation include (but are not limited to) linkages between gender equality and large agricultural investments; gender in small and medium enterprises; opportunities for women in formal employment; and strategies for strength-



BOX 1

### Gender- and women-targeted programmes

**Gender-aware:** programmes that seek to understand the differences between men and women and how gender may affect programming. Gender concerns are integrated into some aspects of the programme life cycle such as market research, and participation targets between men and women are established and monitored. Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is not a key objective of the programme.

**Gender mainstreaming:** programmes that explicitly integrate women's economic empowerment into all aspects of the programme cycle. Examples include: conducting gender-responsive market research; gender-responsive sector and intervention selection; identifying key entry points for women in targeted value chains; strategies for enhancing women's participation and leadership; and gender-responsive results measurement systems. Interventions aim to facilitate change for female and male beneficiaries. WEE is one of the key objectives of the programme.

**Women-targeted:** programmes that are designed to economically empower women. Interventions aim to facilitate change for female beneficiaries. WEE is the key objective of the programme.

Source:  
Markel, 2014.

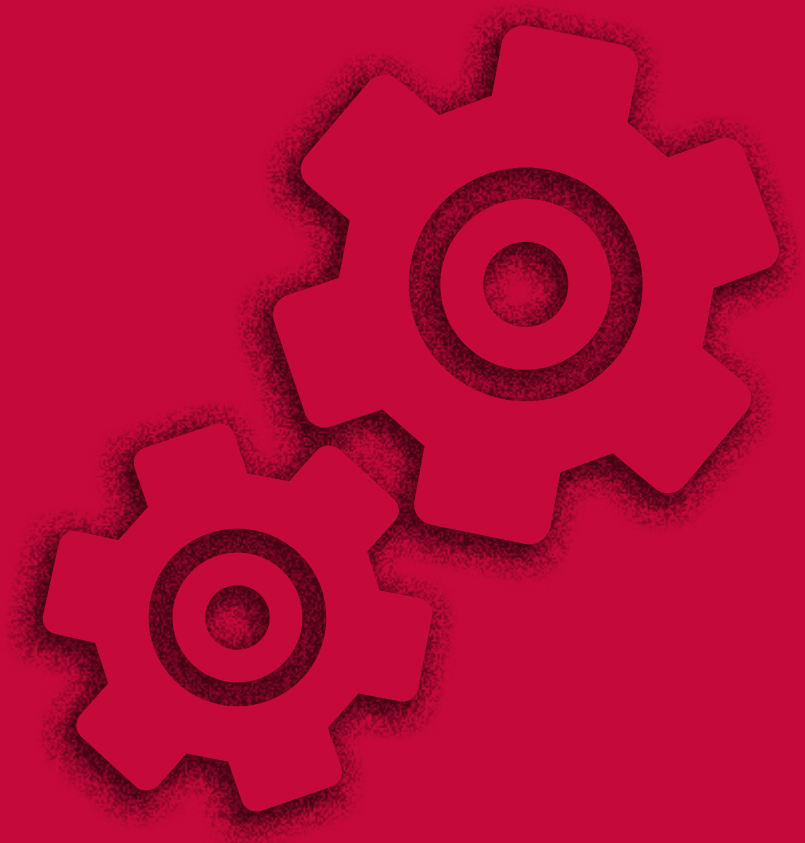
ening women entrepreneurs. While a number of studies have already greatly contributed to our understanding of gender issues in value chain development, it is necessary to develop a greater number of accessible knowledge and training materials unified under an organization-wide approach in order to increase the overall gender sensitivity and sustainability of programming.

The FAO framework on gender-sensitive VC development and the accompanying *Guidelines for practitioners* were developed in order to provide a way forward for filling these gaps and comprehensively addressing gender equality concerns in the Organization's technical and normative work on agrifood value chains.



C H A P T E R 3

# Key concepts for gender-sensitive value chain development



This chapter reviews the main concepts that are essential to promoting sustainable and gender-sensitive value chains. It begins by describing key elements of the sustainable food value chain (SFVC) approach, as these make up the foundation of the framework presented in this document. It then continues by defining the primary aspects of women's economic empowerment (WEE) within the context of agrifood value chain development. WEE is key to achieving gender equality, and an understanding of these concepts is necessary in order to successfully integrate gender concerns in value chain development. These two sets of concepts represent the basis of two disciplines that normally have difficulty communicating effectively with each other. As we will see in the following chapter, the value added of the Gender-Sensitive Value Chain (GSVC) Framework lies precisely in providing a map for their integration in theory and practice.

Key concepts for gender-sensitive value chain development

### SUSTAINABLE FOOD VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS<sup>3</sup>

The SFVC development approach is built around the idea that ensuring the sustainability of VC development interventions requires a degree of analysis



BOX 2

#### Phases of the SFVC development cycle

- » The first phase, **measuring performance**, assesses a VC in terms of the economic, social and environmental outcomes it delivers relative to its potential (*Principles 1, 2 and 3*).
- » The second phase, **understanding performance**, exposes the root causes of underperformance by taking into account how VC stakeholders and their activities are linked to each other and to their economic, social and natural environment in a system (Principle 4); how these linkages drive the behaviour of individual stakeholders in terms of their commercial behaviour (Principle 5); and how value determination in end markets drives the dynamics of the system (*Principle 6*).
- » The third phase, **improving performance**, follows a logical sequence of deriving a core VC development strategy based on the analysis conducted in phase two and the vision stakeholders have agreed on (Principle 7), and on selecting upgrading activities and multilateral partnerships that can realistically achieve the scale of impact envisioned (*Principles 8, 9 and 10*).

Source:  
FAO, 2014a.

<sup>3</sup> All concepts in this subsection are taken from FAO (2014a).



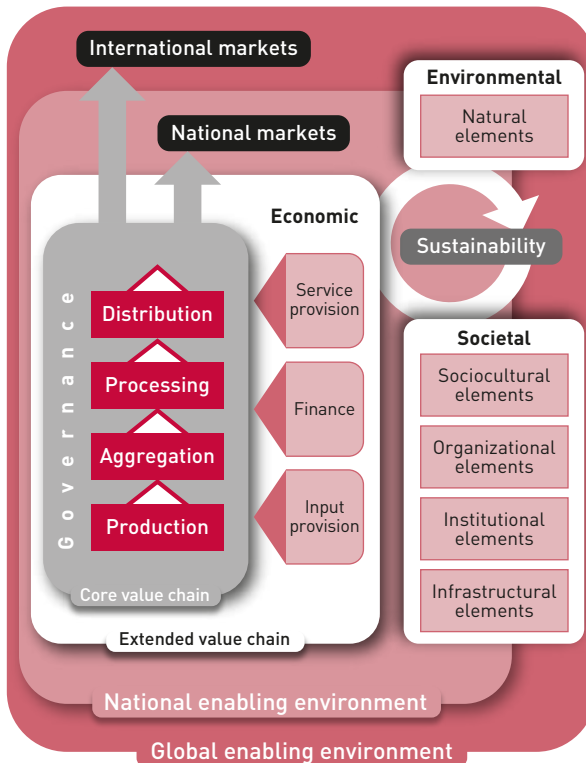
that goes deeper than the identification of superficial constraints (which are often merely symptoms of a problem), and focuses instead on understanding the **interlinked root causes** for value chain underperformance. This is based upon the understanding that a value chain does not operate in isolation but rather is part of a system, and therefore solutions for underperformance may lie somewhere else in the system, and not necessarily in the core chain. The approach is captured by ten interrelated principles, all of which fall into three phases of a continuous development cycle (see Box 2 above).

### The Sustainable Food Value Chain Framework

The Sustainable Food Value Chain Framework (see Figure 1) breaks down the analysis of agrifood systems into four levels. At the centre is the **core VC**, which relates to the VC actors – that is, those who produce or procure from

FIGURE 1

#### The Sustainable Food Value Chain Framework



Source: FAO, 2014a.

the upstream level, add value to the product, and then sell it on to the next level. The functions of production, aggregation, processing and distribution are the major nodes of the core VC, and efficiency at this level is critically dependent upon the chain's governance structure, i.e. the nature of the linkages between actors along each of these nodes as well as within the overall chain.

The next level of the framework is the **extended VC**, which includes business development support providers who facilitate the value creation process by providing physical inputs (e.g. seeds or packaging materials), non-financial services (e.g. field spraying, transport or market research) or financial services (e.g. loans).

Finally, the last two levels are the **national and global enabling environments**, which determine the conditions under which value chain actors and support providers operate. These levels are crucial in that consumers' purchases in national and international markets will ultimately determine the value of agrifood products.

It is also worth noting that national and global enabling environments are shaped both by societal elements (i.e. sociocultural, institutional, organizational and infrastructural elements) and natural elements (i.e. soils, air, water, biodiversity and other natural resources), all of which interact with, and therefore affect, the economic viability of the value chain. These levels of analysis in the SFVC framework thus help to highlight the **interdependence of economic, social and environmental dimensions in value chain functioning and sustainability**.

## GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT CONCEPTS

Worldwide, gender-based inequalities remain prevalent and persistent, especially in rural areas. Rural women in particular tend to be at a disadvantage in relation to men in their ability to access productive resources and accumulate human capital in order to advance economically. They often lack the power and agency necessary to benefit from and have control over economic activities, as well as participate and be represented in rural institutions, organizations and public life. For this reason, women's economic empowerment (WEE) is frequently adopted as a key strategy for achieving gender equality and FAO's overall goals of poverty reduction and improved food security.

While numerous definitions of women's economic empowerment exist, most of these tend to cluster around the two interrelated dimensions discussed above: **access to productive resources** (which represents the opportunity for *economic advancement* for women working in agrifood systems) and **power**

Key concepts for  
gender-sensitive  
value chain  
development

CHAPTER 3

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BOX 3

### Understanding gender and women's empowerment

**Gender:** socially constructed roles, behaviours and characteristics that a given society considers appropriate for males and females. These roles and characteristics are acquired through socialization processes: people are born female or male, but learn to be women or men. Unlike sex, which is biological, gender attitudes can change and develop over time (FAO, 2014b).

**Gender vs women:** Women are a category of people; gender is the socially constructed difference between women and men. This results in certain power relations and dynamics, causing inequality in people's capacity to make choices. As women often lag behind in this respect, many development interventions focus on the empowerment of women (FAO, 2014c, 2011).

**Women's empowerment:** Empowerment can be defined as "a process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire the ability to do so" (Kabeer, 1999). In relation to women and value chains, empowerment is about changing gender relations in order to enhance women's ability to shape their lives (Laven *et al.*, 2009).

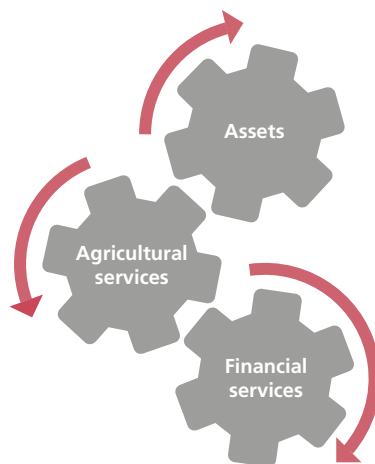
**and agency.**<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the following section is to outline and define the main concepts relevant to women's economic empowerment and sustainable VC development.

#### Access to productive resources

The concept of access to productive resources is central to understanding rural women and men's opportunities for economic advancement. Necessary resources can be grouped into three main categories of relevance along all nodes of the core and extended VC: 1) assets, 2) agricultural services and 3) financial services (see Figure 2). Access to these resources is greatly determined by the national and global enabling environment, including sociocultural norms, policy frameworks and household dynamics. The following sections will provide a brief description of where a "gender gap" exists with regards to access to productive resources.

<sup>4</sup> The WEE concepts described in this subsection are based upon those found in DCED (2014) and ICRW (2011). They have been slightly adapted to reflect the specific context in which FAO operates.

FIGURE 2

**Components of access to productive resources**

Key concepts for  
gender-sensitive  
value chain  
development

**1. Access to assets**

On average, women have less access to productive assets than men (FAO, 2011). In rural contexts, assets are essential to agricultural livelihoods, but they also constitute an important method of accumulating and storing wealth in order to improve resilience against shocks such as economic crisis or illness, making them key to economic empowerment.

*Land*

Land is the most important asset for households that depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Access to and control over land is strongly correlated with wealth, status and power in many areas as well as with the possibility of accessing other resources and services. Women are consistently less likely to own or operate land and less likely to have access to rented land. The land they do have access to is often of poorer quality and divided into smaller sized plots (FAO, 2011).

*Equipment*

The use of equipment and machinery can greatly improve the efficiency and quality of agrifood VCs, especially at the production and processing nodes. Furthermore, farmers with more land and tools are more likely to adopt other technologies, supporting evidence that highlights the existence of complementarities among agricultural inputs (FAO, 2011). For women, adoption of labour-saving equipment can greatly help to reduce the burden of work, thus freeing up time for other activities. However, while use of mechanical equipment among smallholders tends to be low for both males and females, a large gap exists between male-headed and female-headed households (FAO, 2011).

*Networks*

Social capital is key to gaining access to markets and resources. Women's social capital is often smaller and more informal than that of men. Whereas women's social capital is often mainly based on family and neighbours, men's social networks tend to be more formal and include co-workers and other business contacts (Kim and Sherraden, 2014). As a consequence, women are less likely to receive economic benefits from their networks, whereas men are more likely to be well inserted in larger, male-dominated networks (Kim and Sherraden, 2014). Participation in cooperatives and business associations can enable women to reach more scale in their enterprises and have greater influence on decision-making in a particular agricultural sector. The strengthening of rural women's organizations and networks can therefore serve as a multidimensional tool for promoting women's empowerment (FAO, 2013a).

*2. Access to agricultural services*

Women tend to have less access to key agricultural services that can lead to substantial yield increases (FAO, 2011). Given that many of these services are interrelated, improvements in access to one type can often result in increased access to other types of services, thus multiplying gains.

*Training and information*

Generally there is a bias towards designing this type of service for male farmers and processors, based on the flawed perception that men are farmers or entrepreneurs and women are not, or the assumption that male farmers will inform the female members of their households on matters concerning their productive activities. Women may also face practical limitations (such as mobility and time constraints) or lower educational levels, which may prevent them from attending trainings.

*Technology*

In addition to limited access to technology, women also tend to have a lower rate of technology adoption due to time constraints, educational disparities and greater risk aversion (FAO, 2011). Aside from enhancing the efficiency of agricultural work, technology use can also greatly reduce the burden of work associated with women's reproductive roles, thus freeing up their time for other activities of their choice.<sup>5</sup>

*Inputs*

Overall, women have less access to agricultural inputs and are less likely than men to use modern inputs such as improved seed varieties, fertilizers, pest control measures and mechanical tools (FAO, 2011). This is partly because use of inputs depends on control over other assets such as land or social capital,

<sup>5</sup> The 2015 FAO publication *Running out of time: The reduction of women's work burden in agricultural production* highlights the significance of women's time constraints in hindering their productivity and introduces several labour-saving techniques.

but also because women tend to have less access to financial capital, which is required for the purchase of inputs.

### 3. Access to financial services

In order to upgrade a value chain, working capital is often required. Women generally have less access to financial services than men regardless of the node of the value chain in which they operate. Often women do not own land or houses, which are needed for collateral. Institutional barriers, such as the requirement of a male co-signer in order to open a bank account, can also prevent women from accessing loans and other financial services. Furthermore, sociocultural factors, such as expectations about women's role as homemakers, can place limits on women's mobility or the extent to which they are targeted by financial service providers.

### Power and agency

Power and agency are essential dimensions of women's economic empowerment. **Agency** refers to the ability to make autonomous choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes.<sup>6</sup> Control over resources and profits, or **power**, goes hand in hand with the ability to exercise agency. The extent to which any individual is able and willing to exercise power and agency is shaped in large part by the sociocultural and institutional context. This largely defines gender roles, which often combine with other aspects of socio-economic status (such as wealth status or ethnicity) to shape women's place in society. Individual and household dynamics (such as self-confidence or the distribution of decision-making power) constitute an additional sphere of influence that affects women's ability to exercise power and agency. All of these factors combine to form the root causes for women's lack of participation or inability to benefit equally from value chains in any given area of intervention. Power and agency are complex, multidimensional concepts and as such cannot be discussed in full here. However, three elements of particular relevance to women's ability to exercise power and agency in agrifood value chains have been selected and are discussed below (for an example of specific indicators measuring different dimensions of power and agency, please refer to Annex 2).

#### 1. Capabilities

Capabilities refer to an individual's level of knowledge, skills and experience, together with all other factors that influence that person's freedom to decide on his or her potential "beings and doings" (Robeyns, 2003). Women often have fewer capabilities relevant to participating in and benefitting from value chains. As we have seen above, they frequently receive less education and training than men and often have less experience participating in important market transactions. Furthermore, women who do have a chance to receive

<sup>6</sup> FAO expanded glossary, July 2015.

training or participate in markets may find themselves in an environment that has not been designed with their particular attributes and constraints in mind. This means that in all likelihood they will be unable to participate fully or reap the full benefit of access to these resources, and their potentially strategic knowledge and skill sets will not be encouraged or developed.

## 2. *Self-confidence*

As a result of prevailing sociocultural norms, women might lack the self-confidence necessary to exercise agency as participants in the value chain. Understanding and addressing this challenge requires taking into account the fact that social dynamics are often complex and require a holistic approach. Norms and values affect and are likely to be internalized by all of a given society's members, including those who are excluded or disadvantaged. Gender and other sociocultural roles have a major impact on the way in which individuals view themselves and consequently choose to act. Enabling environments in which women are not regarded as entrepreneurs or farmers are unlikely to encourage women to identify with or assert themselves in these roles, regardless of the actual nature of their productive activity. Similarly, women whose main contributions to agrifood VCs are invisible may be less likely to make their voices heard or participate actively in agrifood networks and organizations. Finally, it is important to remember that in environments where women face strict behavioural expectations and restrictions, behaviour is often regulated both from without *and* from within. Gender roles are not merely imposed upon women by society; they are also *enacted* by women themselves. In fact, in many contexts, women are the primary enforcers of gender norms and restrictions. This means that addressing women's self-esteem is complementary to "outside in" interventions such as improving access to productive resources, and it may in many cases be essential to achieving impact and long-term sustainability.

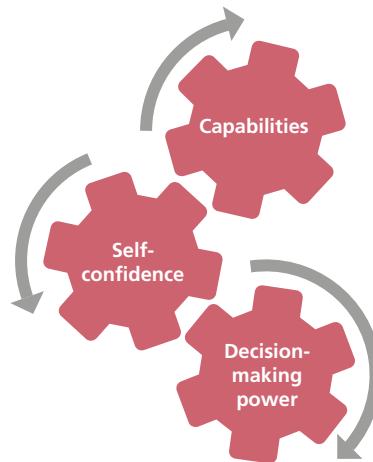
## 3. *Decision-making power*

Value chain functioning is shaped in large part by the economic decisions that stakeholders make. From deciding on which seed variety or technologies to adopt, to obtaining training or making a business connection, VC actors at all levels are constantly making decisions that in the aggregate will determine the overall efficiency of the value chain. As we have seen, women often do not have the power to make decisions about how to use their time or how to allocate their income and resources. They rarely have the opportunity to participate and make their voices heard in organizations and institutions which influence the functioning of the chains. These constraints effectively result in a hindrance not only to women's productive potential, but also to the qualitative contributions they can make, both to value chain functioning and to household well-being. Increasing women's decision-making power, on the other hand, creates immediate economic benefits and promotes long-term sustainability goals. If women benefit equitably as a result of their contribu-

tions to value chain functioning, they are likely to be more motivated to participate actively in VC upgrading activities. This will have a positive effect on the efficiency and economic sustainability of the value chain as a whole. Furthermore: “When women control additional income, they spend more of it than men do on food, health, clothing and education for their children. This has positive implications for immediate well-being as well as long-run human capital formation and economic growth through improved health, nutrition and education outcomes.” (FAO, 2011)

As depicted in Figure 3, the three aspects of power and agency are interrelated and can be part of a positive (virtuous) as well as negative (vicious) circle. For example, more capabilities can lead to more self-confidence and, possibly, to more decision-making power. Conversely, fewer capabilities can lead to less self-confidence and in turn to less decision-making power. Therefore, all three aspects should be analysed and taken into account when working on gender equality in value chain development.

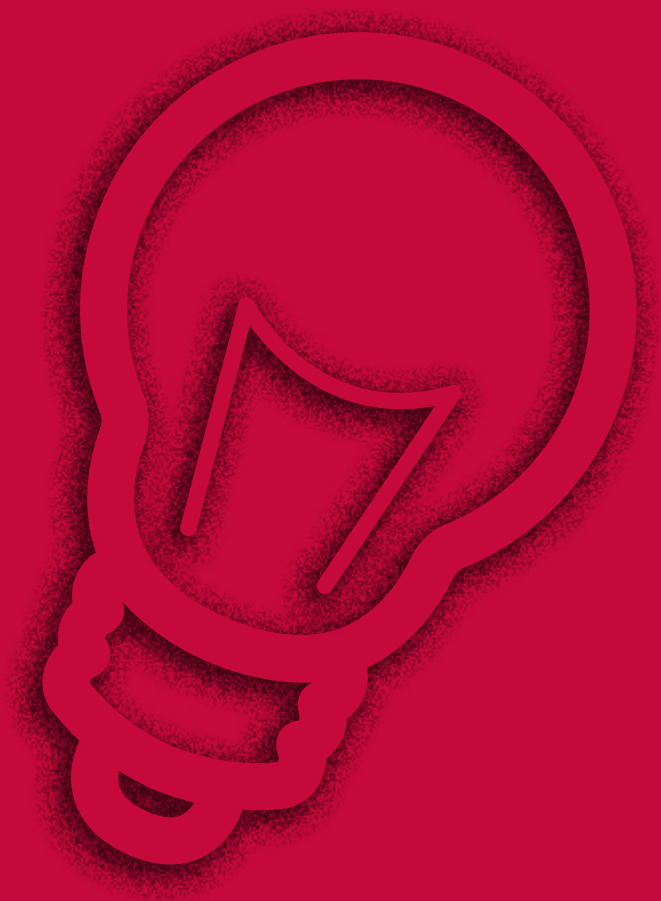
FIGURE 3

**Components of power and agency**



C H A P T E R 4

# FAO Gender-Sensitive Value Chain Framework





The FAO Gender-Sensitive Value Chain (GSVC) Framework is articulated around the key concepts discussed in the previous chapter. It is modelled after and builds upon the FAO Sustainable Food Value Chain (SFVC) Framework, with a specific focus on gender equality as an essential dimension of sustainability.

### A DEEPER LEVEL OF ANALYSIS: THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE HOUSEHOLD AT THE CORE OF THE FRAMEWORK

In addition to accounting for the levels of analysis presented in the SFVC framework (core and extended VC, national and global enabling environments), the GSVC framework features two additional levels: the **household and individual level**. Most value chain development approaches, including SFVC, stop at the household level. Yet, as we have seen in the previous chapter, gender inequalities often originate within the household, and individual agency and power might also depend on intrahousehold dynamics.

The GSVC framework puts the individual level at the core of the framework. This is an important choice, as it acknowledges the diversity of women and men as value chain actors with unique characteristics, abilities and aspirations. These elements are not only determined by gender, but also by ethnicity, social group, physical or mental disabilities and age, among other factors. By putting the individual at the heart of the framework, the approach avoids adopting “one-size-fits-it-all” solutions that overlook the differences and specificities of value chain actors.

The GSVC framework also highlights the importance of the household level. Each individual – woman or man – is part of a household in which specific dynamics and power relations are in place. Gender roles and responsibilities are assigned within the household and determine how and to what extent household members are involved in the value chain, as well as who makes decisions and controls the benefits of this participation.



BOX 4

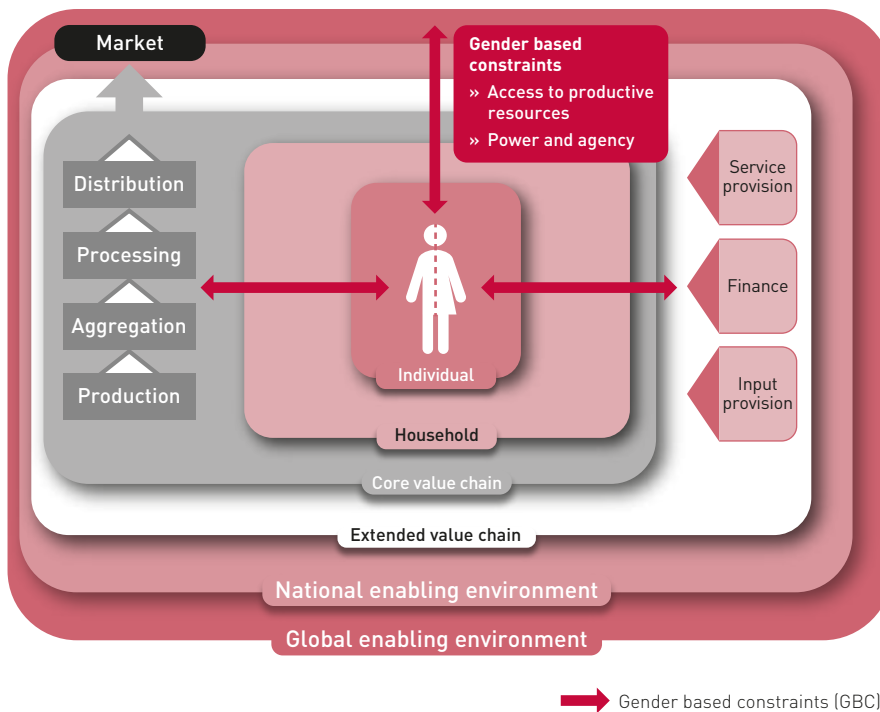
#### Individual and household levels defined

The **individual level** represents a person’s ability to make use of economic opportunities in a system. The **household** is considered as a system with different stakeholders, resource flows and power structures affecting participation and benefits from agricultural production.

Analysis that does not include the individual and household levels is unlikely to capture important factors affecting the nature of women's and men's participation in and benefits from value chains (see Annex 2 for an example of indicators that measure these levels). Taking these dimensions into account is essential to understanding why stakeholders do not take advantage of existing end-market opportunities. It is also key to selecting appropriate upgrading activities to improve VC performance.

FIGURE 4

### The FAO Gender-Sensitive Value Chain Framework



### GENDER-BASED CONSTRAINTS: AN UNDERLYING CAUSE OF VALUE CHAIN INEFFICIENCY

As discussed in previous chapters, the SFVC framework highlights the interplay of economic elements in the core and extended VC with environmental and societal elements present in national and global enabling environments, showing how the sustainability of the VC plays out along all three of these dimensions. The GSVVC framework complements the SFVC framework by bringing attention to the presence of gender-based constraints throughout the core and extended VC as well as in the national and global enabling environment.



**Gender-based constraints** (GBCs) can be defined as “restrictions on men’s or women’s access to resources or opportunities that are based on their gender roles or responsibilities” (USAID, 2009). Identifying and analysing GBCs enables the VC practitioner to understand and address the root causes underlying value chain inefficiencies related to gender inequalities and discrimination, thus enhancing the sustainability of interventions.

The bidirectional arrows in Figure 4 illustrate the way in which **GBCs can both hinder an individual’s ability to participate in the value chain as well as limit the benefits the individual is able to receive**. Significantly, the arrows always pass through the household level, since (as we have seen) this dimension largely determines who participates in and who benefits from a value chain.

It is also important to note that **GBCs can manifest as limitations on both the supply and the demand side**. For example, GBCs may limit women’s ability to access support services (demand side), but they may also undermine the ability of service providers to appropriately target or even reach female individuals (supply side).

The causes of gender-based constraints are often multiple and multidimensional. Addressing a constraint efficiently usually implies addressing multiple root causes at the same time. Working with gender-based constraints may require going beyond constraints related to accessing productive resources and simultaneously addressing aspects related to power and agency as well. For example, when faced with women’s lack of active participation in a producer organization, a VC practitioner might choose to address the symptom by raising the quota for membership of women. However, if the practitioner focuses instead on identifying and understanding the underlying constraints (e.g. lack of time, mobility or public speaking skills) that may be inhibiting women’s participation, it is far likelier that a more effective intervention will be implemented and stronger results will be achieved.

GBCs may appear at one level, but have underlying causes in another. Frequently, these causes lie at the individual and household level, since these are fundamental to determining access to productive resources and decision-making power. At the same time, the extended value chain and the enabling environment levels greatly influence the participation of women and men involved in different nodes of the chain, often creating or reinforcing GBCs. For this reason, it is important for value chain analysis to take into consideration all levels and how they relate to each other in facilitating or limiting women’s and men’s opportunities.

## A FIRST STEP TOWARDS IMPLEMENTING THE GSVC FRAMEWORK: GENDER-SENSITIVE VALUE CHAIN ANALYSIS

Mapping the value chain in a gender-sensitive manner is an important first step towards making women's work and participation in the value chain visible. Gender-sensitive value chain mapping follows the regular value chain analysis method: analysing each node of the chain and the relationship between the actors in and between the nodes. The key difference is that for each level of analysis, gender-sensitive indicators should be used and gender-disaggregated information collected on:

- » Participation in the chain;
- » Access to and control over productive resources;
- » Access to and control over benefits.

The aim of gender-sensitive VC analysis is to identify GBCs at every node of the chain. As we have seen, the predominant GBCs inhibiting value chain functioning tend to concern lack of **access to productive resources**. However, the ability to make use of economic opportunities is often the result of limitations to an individual's **power and agency**. Both of these dimensions must be understood in order to successfully identify the root causes of VC underperformance as it relates to gender.

Gender-sensitive analysis is fundamental to completing the first two phases of the VC development cycle (measuring performance and understanding performance) in a comprehensive manner and ensuring that all gender-based inequalities inhibiting VC effectiveness and undermining women's contribution are identified and understood. The division of labour in many agrifood contexts is both gendered and unequal, a reality that frequently results in women's activities being overlooked or underestimated in conventional "gender-blind" VC analyses.



BOX 5

### A gender-sensitive analysis of the cassava value chain in Côte d'Ivoire

When applied to a specific value chain, the GSVC approach can serve to both highlight areas in which GBCs may be hindering value chain efficiency and determine the extent to which participation in the chain is actually economically beneficial to the women involved. In the context of the FAO Multipartner Programme Support Mechanism (FMM), "Enabling women to benefit more equally from agrifood value chains", a gender-sensitive analysis of the cassava value chain was carried out in several districts and a number of GBCs were identified.

The cassava value chain in Côte d'Ivoire is almost exclusively managed by women, from production to processing and commercialization. Around 90 percent





BOX 5 (continued)

### **A gender-sensitive analysis of the cassava value chain in Côte d'Ivoire**

of processed cassava is processed by women. In this phase, where cassava is transformed into attiéké, women manage to capture a large share of the added value; yet this is still a very labour- and time-consuming task. The revenue women make through these activities is used for their households, or for community funds in the context of producers' groups or cooperatives. Cassava is an important crop, and can be considered as a safety capital similar to livestock. Thanks to the possibility of keeping the cassava tubers stored in the ground, households have a stockpile they can access in times of scarcity or need, thus reducing their economic vulnerability.

However, given the fact that women are responsible for household chores and child care, as well as other agricultural activities related to the cultivation of food crops near the house, women manage to prepare attiéké only once a week. The processing phase is rarely mechanized or coordinated, and women usually take care of their younger children as they peel and cut the cassava tubers. This considerably diminishes their productivity and has an impact on the efficiency of the chain. The underlying cause of this constraint is the fact that women carry a very heavy work burden. While they might have a say on cassava production and processing, they have little control over the time they allocate to household work, reproductive responsibilities and other productive activities. Women remain responsible for ensuring food and nutrition security for their households: this includes the cultivation of food crops as well as the daily preparation of meals. Moreover, the work burden of women involved in the cassava value chain is further increased by the support they provide to their husbands with harvesting of cash crops such as cashew nuts.

These constraints have an important impact on the cassava value chain. For instance, women do not have the time to properly invest in cassava production. They are often unable to harvest the cassava at times when market prices are more favourable, and harvest instead when school starts and household expenses are higher, thus receiving less money for their product. This issue also relates to women's limited access to networks that can provide market information. In general, cassava is considered as a crop that provides food and income security to households during arduous times, rather than as a crop offering much potential for profit. This limits ambitions to develop this value chain.

In order to improve the efficiency of the cassava VC and reduce women's work burden, FAO formulated a series of proposed interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of these constraints. These include:

- » Investment in better processing machinery and technology;
- » Creation of accessible and timely information systems for women;
- » Incorporation of household methodologies that aim at improving intra-household relationships and promoting joint decision-making;
- » Provision of business development services formulated specifically for women entrepreneurs;
- » Development of child care facilities (potentially in collaboration with cooperatives or other local institutions) for the women involved in cassava processing.

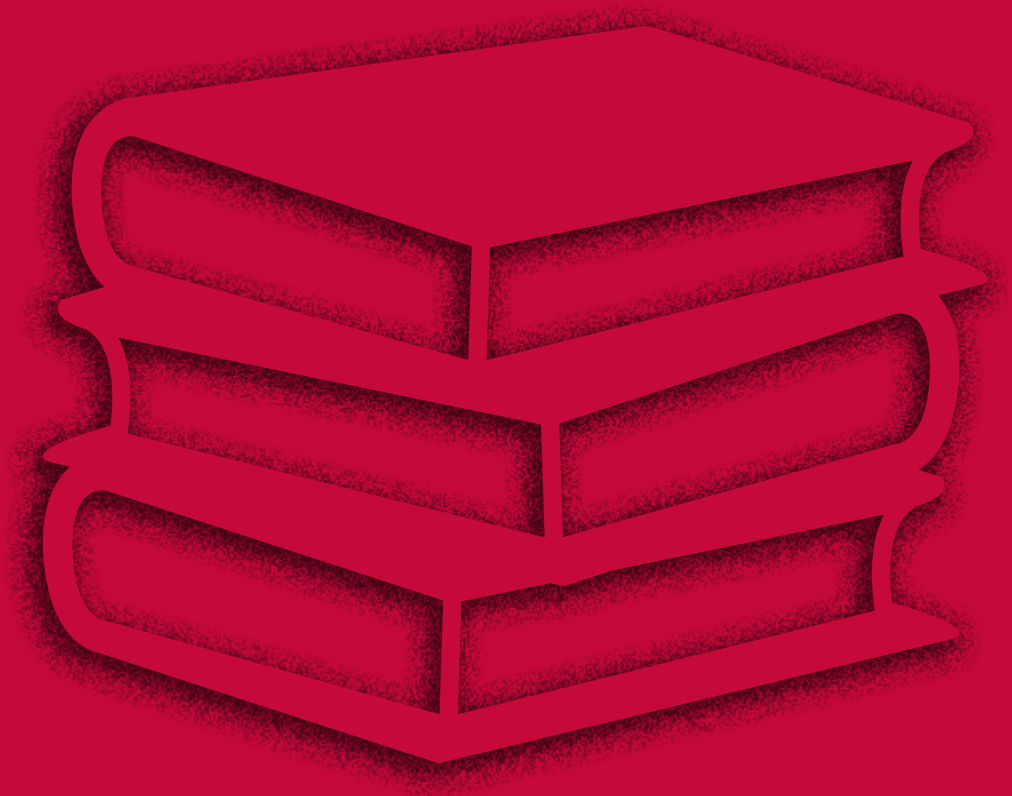
#### **FAO Gender-Sensitive Value Chain Framework**

This framework outlined an approach for successfully integrating gender into sustainable value chain development projects and programmes. It therefore focused primarily on theoretical and analytical aspects of gender-sensitive value chain development. For a discussion of specific methodologies and tools that can be used to implement the GSVC approach, please consult the framework's companion publication, *Developing gender-sensitive value chains: Guidelines for practitioners*.





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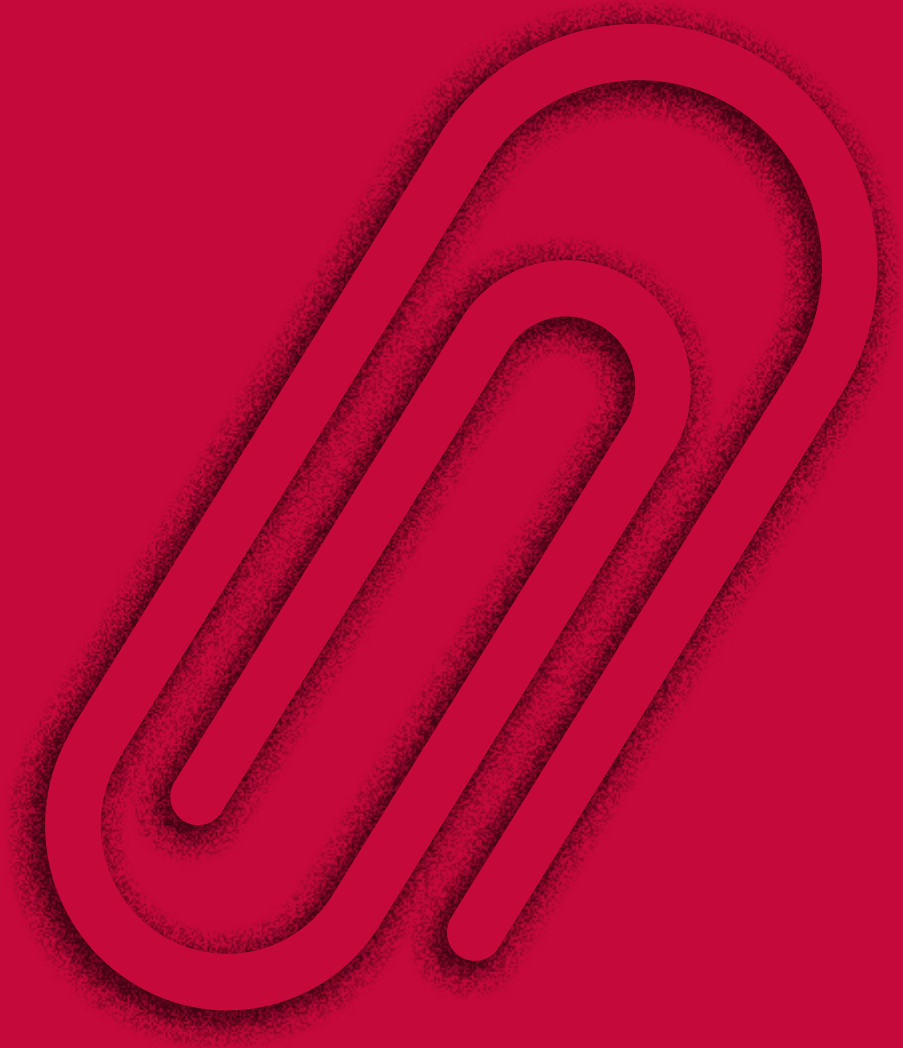


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# Annex





## ANNEX 1: FAO PUBLICATIONS ON GENDER, VALUE CHAINS AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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## ANNEX 2: POWER AND AGENCY INDICATORS

	Individual/household level	Community/institution level
<b>Control over assets</b>	Women's ownership of productive assets (land, animals, machinery)	Laws that protect women's property rights
	Women have their own source of income	Existing laws are enforced at the community level
	Share of household income provided by women	Women represented as owners of larger businesses and in business leadership
	Women have control over how to spend some cash or savings	Use of community resources in ways that benefit women (pumps, clinics, schools, etc.)
<b>Agency/ decision-making</b>	Proportion of women's income spent on herself and children	Women's participation in community groups/ associations/networks
	Women's involvement in major household decisions, i.e. large purchases (car, house, household appliance), agricultural decisions	Women's involvement in community decision-making
	Women's access to information and technology	Women have leadership roles in the community
<b>Autonomy and mobility</b>	Women's ability to visit friends, family, associates	Rates of abuse, assault, harassment against women in public spaces
	Women's ability to use public transportation/travel freely in public spaces	
	Women's use of media, phone, technology	



	Individual/household level	Community/institution level
<b>Self-confidence/ self-efficacy</b>	Psychological wellbeing	Community valuing of women's entitlement and inclusion
	Attitudes on own self-esteem	
	Articulateness and confidence in speaking with authorities	
<b>Gender norms</b>	Ability to negotiate sexual and reproductive decisions	Shifts in marriage and kinship systems
	Attitudes on women and work	Community acceptance of women working
	Attitudes on women and mobility	Community attitudes on women's sexual and reproductive roles women and work
	Attitudes on women and violence	Community attitudes on women and violence
<b>Gender roles/ responsibilities</b>	Number of hours spent in housework	Sex-disaggregated employment rates by sector
	Gender segregation of male and female work, ability to enter profitable jobs	Community attitudes on what work women should do
	Equity of domestic duty load	

Source: Golla et al., 2011.





# Developing **gender-sensitive** value chains

## *A guiding framework*

This publication is intended to help policy-makers and field practitioners to integrate gender equality dimensions more effectively and systematically in their interventions.

Bringing together key concepts from value chain development and gender in a coherent framework, this publication highlights how gender inequalities affect value chain performance, and identifies key entry points to analyze and tackle them so as to enhance the sustainability and inclusiveness of agrifood value chains in the long run.

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