

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH INCLUSIVE AGRIBUSINESS

Aspirational issues and priorities for collaboration

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1 SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Within the context of promoting inclusive agribusiness models, the gender dimension is essential for three main reasons:

- **'Inclusive' opportunities are often demarcated along gender (and age) lines:** As one of the dimensions of inclusivity, it is necessary to identify and address the differing constraints, needs and priorities of rural women and men, as well as between younger and older women and men.
- **Feminization of agriculture as a feature of the rural transformation process¹:** The migration of men out of farming and into the non-farm sector is reinforcing women's major role as smallholders, wage laborers and value chain actors; hence it is increasingly urgent to understand the specific challenges facing rural women.
- **Issues of sustainability and longer-term productivity gains:** Many gender mainstreaming initiatives focus on the economic aspects of women's empowerment – such as ensuring they have access to inputs and technical advice, and have a voice in decision-making bodies – which contribute to short-term productivity gains. However, for benefits to be sustainable in the longer term, it is necessary to adopt a gender transformative approach which delves deeper to address the underlying causes of gender inequality.

¹ Slavchevska V., Kaaria S. and Taivalmaa S.L. (2016) Feminization of agriculture in the context of rural transformations: What is the evidence? World Bank Group Agriculture, Working Paper



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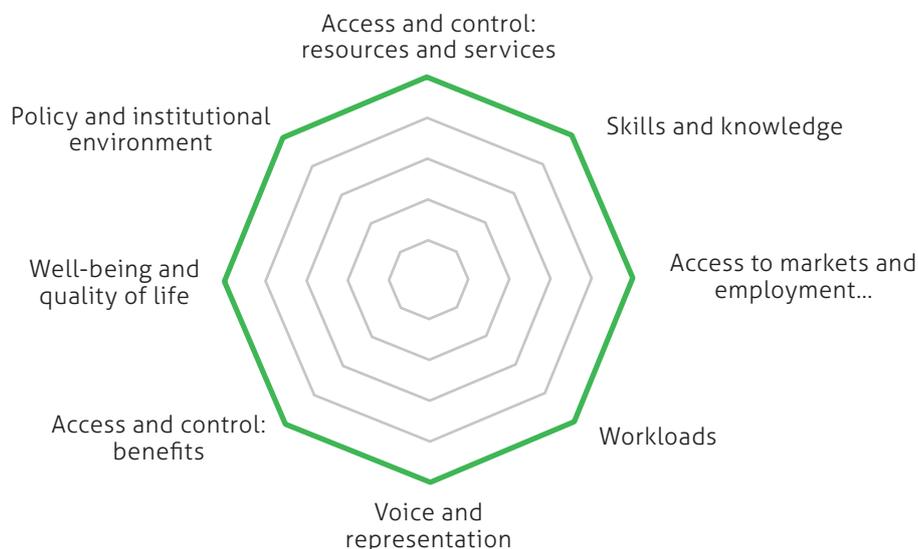
1.1 Addressing gender inequalities through agribusiness initiatives

Agribusiness development provides many opportunities to promote gender equality and women's empowerment across the seven principal domains of inequality (see Figure 1):

- **Access and control over resources and services:** These activities focus on enabling women to become more efficient in their on-farm or off-farm agri-business activities through accessing inputs, land tenure arrangements, asset ownership, extension services and financial services.
- **Skills and knowledge:** These activities develop and strengthen women's technical, business and entrepreneurship skills through training, events and access to information.
- **Access to markets and employment opportunities:** These activities create opportunities for women to deepen or broaden their engagement with the value chain.
- **Workloads:** These activities include labour-saving technologies and practices that reduce women's workload or change the traditional division of labour between women and men in various contexts i.e. home, farm, off-farm and the community, and including public infrastructure such as roads and water supplies.
- **Voice and representation:** These activities strengthen women's voice, participation and representation in decision-making in their household, income-generating groups, producer organizations, community bodies and stakeholder platforms.
- **Access and control over benefits:** These activities ensure women share in the benefits of their work, particularly income at the household level.
- **Well-being and quality of life:** These activities contribute to improving women's quality of life by working on norms and practices, changing behaviours, providing services and developing life skills.
- **Policy and institutional environment:** These activities engage in dialogue with government to create an enabling policy and institutional environment for gender equality and women's empowerment.

FIGURE 1

Domains of gender inequality



2 ASPIRATIONAL ISSUES FOR A COMMON AGENDA

- Make the case for monitoring gender equality in agribusiness initiatives.
- Continuously document and share the benefits of promoting gender equality in inclusive agribusiness for the rural space.

2.1 Gender transformative approaches

It is now widely recognized that to take significant steps towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, it is necessary to address the causes of gender inequality rather than merely treating the symptoms. That is one possible area of focus for an Alliance for Inclusive Agribusiness.

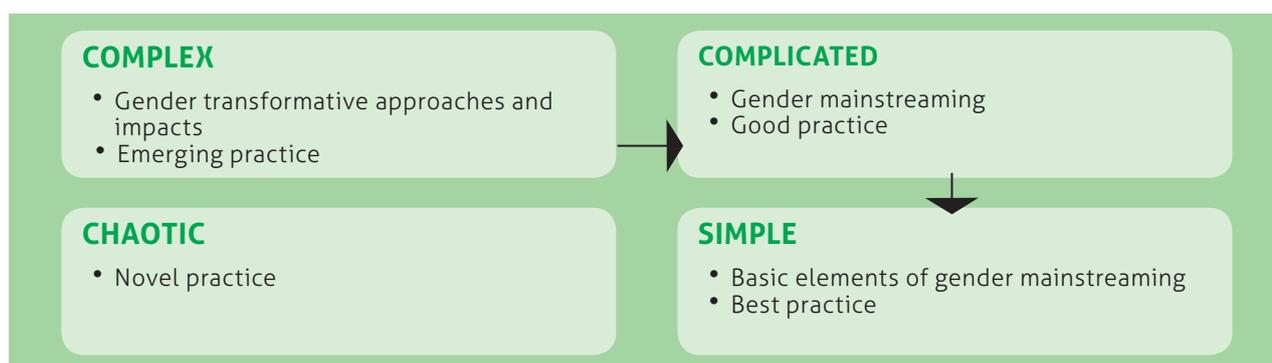
Activities to promote women's economic empowerment (WEE) may be grouped using the Cynefin framework (see Figure 2) in terms of whether they are:

- 'simple' best practices, and may be classified as basic elements of gender mainstreaming;
- 'complicated' good practices, addressing the symptoms of gender inequalities in a systematic manner (full gender mainstreaming);
- 'complex' emergent practices, tackling the underlying causes of gender inequalities and would be described as gender transformative approaches; and
- 'chaotic' novel practices, which may initially arise in a disorganized manner.

It should be noted that this classification depends on context: an activity that would be considered to be gender transformative in one cultural setting may be considered mainstream elsewhere.

FIGURE 2

Cynefin framework adapted for analysis of GEWE activities



3 POTENTIAL RESEARCH AND LEARNING QUESTIONS

3.1 Research questions

- What are the differing constraints, needs and priorities of rural women and men, as well as between younger and older women and men?
- What are the challenges and opportunities of applying gender transformative approaches to inclusive agribusiness initiatives?

3.2 Learning questions

- What are the specific challenges facing rural women that should be considered in inclusive agribusiness initiatives?
- What are the best practices for overcoming the underlying causes of gender inequality beyond women's economic empowerment (WEE)?

4 POTENTIAL PRIORITY AREAS

- Identify the main approaches used to address gender inequalities and promote WEE in agribusiness initiatives.
- Establish which approaches are most effective at delivering on WEE, including those which address the underlying causes/structural barriers to WEE.
- Identify key success factors and practical lessons from existing best practices on WEE in agribusiness.
- Propose focus areas and approaches for future donor engagement in agribusiness that are most likely to deliver on WEE and in particular gender transformative approaches on addressing structural barriers to WEE.

This paper is part of a set of six that explore the six themes covered in the design workshop “Towards a Global Research and Learning Agenda for Inclusive Agribusiness”. Over two days 40 senior practitioners looked at how to deepen understanding and improve practice through more structured collaboration. While the themes do not cover all that is important in inclusive agribusiness, they are part of the potential for structural and systemic change inherent in many initiatives.

Each paper aims to trigger thinking on what could be done through collective action. It does not provide a complete picture of the theme but indicates the bandwidth of possibilities that could be worked on. We hope it will help you think where working with others can make your work easier, more interesting or more useful. For more information or if you have ideas please get in touch with joost.guijt@wur.nl.

The workshop was a good example of the value of combining skills and resources, and came out of joint thinking, time and funding from Wageningen University & Research, Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, Food & Business Knowledge Platform and BEAM Exchange.

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This paper is part of a series of papers on inclusive agribusiness written for the “Towards a Global Research and Learning Agenda for Inclusive Agribusiness” workshop in March 2017. Read all the papers as well as a series of blogs on ‘What’s new in inclusive agribusiness’ here: <http://www.inclusivebusinesshub.org/inclusive-agribusiness/>