Technical Note on

# Applying Gender-Responsive Value-Chain Analysis in EAS

## Applying Gender-Responsive Value-chain Analysis in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

### Introduction

The most recent shifts in agricultural extension and advisory services (EAS) parallel the growing complexity of the global food system. A diversity of actors, from smallholder farmers to multinational food corporations, each with different needs, objectives, strengths and weaknesses now operate in the sector. Not only do they each have their own concerns, they may work in different ways with different partners, increasing the challenges of coordinating the different elements of domestic and internationally-oriented agricultural value chains. Women, who are estimated to comprise about 43% of the agricultural labor force in developing country agriculture (FAO 2011: 5), are among this group of new and newly recognized actors in these networks. Managing the global food system must contend with demands for efficiency and sustainability while at the same time encouraging greater equity in access and participation.

The value chain construct has emerged as a popular approach because it provides an analytical tool to address these challenges and to shape implementation of agricultural programming. Value chain analysis is used to clarify market relationships, coordinate the delivery of inputs, improve information flows, and monitor the quantity and quality of products.

As value chains have gained in popularity as an organizing framework for coordinating agricultural market relationships, questions have emerged about whether the framework would deliver not only on commercial goals but also poverty reduction and equity goals. Building on decades of gender analysis on agriculture, economic growth and enterprise development, practitioners and researchers set forth to identify the opportunities and challenges of value chain analysis to advance gender equality within the agriculture sector.

This technical note provides a summary of the key lessons emerging from this literature and seeks to answer the question: "How can agricultural extension and advisory services be developed to meet the needs of the current complex and dynamic agricultural landscape using a gender-responsive value chain approach?"

### Key gender and value chain issues for extension

Three assumptions guide much of the gender and value chain literature:

1. **Value chains are embedded in a social context** and the functions and operations of the chain actors cannot be isolated from the gender roles and relations in the larger society. This assumption is rooted in the concept of the "gendered economy" which states that the operation of economic systems themselves (e.g., who takes what jobs) is a reflection of gender relations (Elson 1999).
2. **Value chain operations, in turn, influence gender roles and relations**. Qualitative research has shown that increasing women's participation in market-oriented production can either increase or decrease their access to and control over income, depending upon the character of their involvement and the specific characteristics of the chain (Hamilton et al. 2002; Dolan and Sorby 2003; Coles and Mitchell 2011).
3. **Gender equity and value chain competitiveness are mutually supportive goals.** Large-scale comparative studies have demonstrated that greater gender equality and economic growth can go hand in hand and that gender inequalities are costly and inefficient (World Bank 2001; World Bank, IFAD, and FAO 2009).

**Value chains** are understood to consist of the linked set of activities and enterprises that bring a product from conception to its consumers through to its disposal. **Value chain analysis** involves collecting information about firms and market connections to identify strengths or weaknesses in the coordination of these activities and to examine the power and position of firms in relationship to other actors in the chain. The goal is to identify how firms can improve their performance by reducing costs or enhancing the distinctiveness of their products or services (or both), a process known as upgrading (see box, p.2).

In **gender and value chain analysis,** these goals of enhancing competitiveness and performance are examined with explicit attention to the different roles and opportunities for men and women along the chain and the focus on real or potential barriers and opportunities for women and for men that may be shaped by custom, law, and institutional structure. A gender analysis first examines and describes the different types and extent of men's and women's *participation* in value chain activities. A second task involves considering how both men's and women's positions in the value chain can be improved without sacrificing competitiveness. In this context, the firm can be a household, a producer association, or a business engaged at some level in the value chain. Finally, the gender analysis should also point to ways that men and women can improve the *benefits* they accrue from participating in the chain.

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## Determinants of value chain participation

Women and men enter value chains as wage workers, farm managers, unpaid family workers, and entrepreneurs. Their opportunities are shaped by their physical, financial and human assets of which access to land and other productive assets (e.g., land, credit, extension, inputs) are key enabling factors. Human capital endowments and social beliefs and norms can also expand or limit the character and extent of men's and women's involvement.

Women's formal participation in contract farming is mixed. Research by Masakure and Henson (2005) found that in Zimbabwe, 61 percent of contract farmers in vegetables were women, while Dolan (2001) found that women made up only 10 percent of the farmers in the fresh fruit and vegetable sectors in Kenya. Women's engagement is also constrained by lack of access to land and to credit. It is well-documented that women's control over and ownership of land lags behind men's that their own plots are typically smaller and of poorer quality. Both customary and private property regimes tend to privilege men's land holdings (FAO 2011: 46). Since access to land often facilitates access to other inputs, producer associations, and contract farming opportunities, a lack of formal ownership of land by women results in inequities in the system. And while women have benefitted from microfinance programs, barriers remain in accessing formal credit markets and the larger loans needed to support large-scale commercial production and processing (FAO 2011: 51).

Social norms that define "a farmer" also influence how men and women participate in value chains. In many societies the head of household, whether a man or a woman, is still defined as the primary farmer and as the only appropriate recipient of contracts and agricultural extension. Others in the household are seen to be only "helping," rather than producers in their own right. For example, in Honduras, Colverson (1995) found that women described their agricultural activities as simply "helping their husbands" despite their contributions to the production and harvesting of cash crops. As a result women are underserved as clients of extension services in their own right. They may be targeted for home economics activities while ignoring their substantial contributions to market-oriented production.

**Palm Oil Processing, Sierra Leone**

## Factors that facilitate improved value-chain performance

"Upgrading" refers to the process of making "better products… more efficiently, or [moving] into more skilled activities (Pietrobelli and Rabelloti 2006: 1). Relative to men, women have fewer of the resources needed to upgrade, such as labor, information, training, credit, and membership in horizontal associations, such that women are not well-positioned to maintain and improve their performance in value chains.

**Box: Upgrading**

Four different types of upgrading are discussed in the literature on value chains. Each type might involve different sets of constraints and opportunities for women or men:

*Process upgrading*, which aims to increase the efficiency of production processes, resulting in reduced unit costs. Process upgrading can involve improved organization of the production process or improved technology.

*Product upgrading*, which improves in the quality of a product or variety that increases its value to consumers.

*Functional upgrading*, which refers to entry into a new, higher value -added function in the value chain that moves the value chain actors and/or the overall value chain closer to the final consumer and positions it to receive a higher unit price for the product.

*Channel upgrading*, which refers to entry into a marketing channel that leads to a new end market in the value chain, for example, from the domestic to the export market for the same product (Humphrey and Schmitz 2001; Bolwig et al 2008:17).

## Access to the benefits of value chain participation

Men and women stand to benefit in a number of ways from participation in value chains through employment, wages or other income, and empowerment, all of which can accrue to an individual or a household. Accessing these benefits is determined by the type of participation (e.g., as a wage worker or unpaid family worker), and the gender dynamics and power relations at multiple levels of the value chain that determine who gains, and how these benefits are accessed and distributed. As Coles and Mitchell (2011) highlight, gendered patterns of benefit distribution are such that participation in the value chain does not always translate into gains, such as in the case in Kenya where women provided 72 percent of the labor but obtained only 38 percent of the income from their work (Dolan 2001). At the same time, non-participation does not equate to a lack of benefit. What matters is not simply the level of income derived from value chain activities, but a combination of factors related to the perception of ownership or management of a particular commodity, the scheduling of payment, and the point of entry into the chain.

## Approaches and tools

Over the past three years, numerous analytical tools have emerged to help practitioners, whether those working with development organizations or with the private sector (or both) to understand and address gender issues in value chains. They try to translate the analytical approaches and learning into action-oriented interventions, providing field practitioners with some tools they can use while working with different actors along the chain. While key messages often overlap, the manuals do not always target the same actor in the value chain. None of them take on the issues of agricultural extension specifically, but embed it in the discussion of input and service delivery. The three approaches highlighted here were funded by three different institutions: the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), USAID, and Oxfam/NOVIB (supported by IFAD). They present approaches to addressing gender in value chain development from the perspective of the private sector (BMGF), development practitioners (USAID) and the community (Oxfam/NOVIB).

Improving opportunities for women in smallholder-based supply chains: Business case and practical guidance for international food companies prepared for the BMGF targets the private sector, particularly the firms at the helm of buyer-driven chains (Chan 2010). The arguments put forth emphasize the business case for "engendering" value chains suggesting that women's critical role in the production and processing of raw materials into different food items makes them important stakeholders in their supply chain. The authors highlight a number of different ways the private sector can reach women farmers through their extension programs such as ensuring that women and well as men are invited to training sessions, an appropriate proportion of women trainers are used and training methods are appropriate for women as well as men.

Promoting gender equitable opportunities in agricultural value chains: A handbook prepared for USAID under the Greater Access to Trade Expansion (GATE) project targets NGOs and private sector firms who are developing value chain activities. It presents a methodology for program implementers to promote gender-equitable opportunities in the design, implementation, and monitoring of USAID value chain programs. The tool aims to ensure that USAID partners, and the field staff of these organizations, increase their understanding of the role of gender and women's economic empowerment in their program activities and build their capacity to undertake more gender-sensitive programming (Figure 1). A companion tool, "Gender and pro-poor value chain analysis" was designed for conducting a gender and pro-poor economic analysis of value chains.

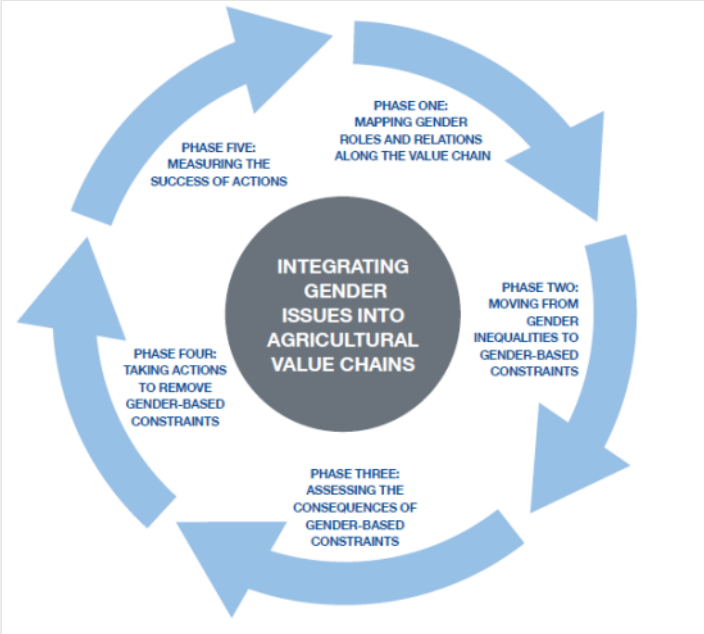
At the community level, the Gender in Action Learning System (Oxfam NOVIB) methodology building on work by Linda Mayoux (Mayoux and Mackie 2009) is a participatory, community-driven method aimed at empowering men and women as economic, social and political actors. The program works with men and women to communicate their visions for improved gender relations and livelihoods, raising awareness among institutions, and develop collective action for change. Household behaviors, for example to alcoholism and domestic violence, are discussed alongside production constraints with the hope that behavior change in the household will improve economic empowerment and well-being.

## Recommendations

Practical lessons that can be drawn from the gender and value chain literature and applied to agricultural EAS include:

- Ensuring that extension agents are familiar with the different ways that men and women participate in agricultural value chains;
- Providing gender training to extension agents to improve their abilities to work with men and women farmers;
- Designing extension and advisory materials in ways that are accessible to both men and women of varying educational levels and inclusive of relevant content;
- Supporting the substantive participation of women in mixed-sex producer and trade associations, including in leadership positions; and,
- Providing information about opportunities for women to find credit, gain access to land, and formalize rights to land and other productive inputs.

**Figure 1: Integrating Gender into Agricultural Value Chains (INGIA-VC)**




Source: Rubin, Manfre, and Nichols Barrett. 2009: 61-62.

**Phase One** helps researchers/ practitioners/ businesses collect data on the factors that shape outcomes for men and women in value chains, collect and organize the data on gender roles and responsibilities using the Gender Dimensions Framework, and understand the sex-segmented character of the value chain.

**Phase Two** assists in identifying areas of gender inequalities as a guide to identifying gender-based constraints.

**Phase Three** guides in thinking through the consequences of the constraint for value chain development.

**Phase Four** develops appropriate actions to reduce or remove the most critical constraints

**Phase Five** develops indicators to measure success of actions to remove gender-based constraints and progress towards achieving gender equality outcomes.

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Burton Swanson (p.1, upper right hand corner, Ethiopia, 2010) , Andrea Bohn (p.1, Dominican Republic, 2009), Paul McNamara (p.2, Sierra Leone, 2010), Brent Simpson (p. 4)

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The material presented in this note builds on work conducted by Cristina Manfre and Deborah Rubin under several USAID and IFPRI–funded activities, and is presented in greater details in Rubin and Manfre (forthcoming) and Rubin, Manfre, and Nichols Barrett (2009).

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