

Scoping Study of Gender-responsive Agricultural Services for Rural Poverty Reduction in Africa

A Synthesis Report



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A Synthesis Report

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About FARA

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) is the apex continental organization responsible for coordinating and advocating for agricultural research-for-development. (AR4D). It serves as the entry point for agricultural research initiatives designed to have a continental reach or a sub-continental reach spanning more than one sub-region.

FARA serves as the technical arm of the African Union Commission (AUC) on matters concerning agricultural science, technology and innovation. FARA has provided a continental forum for stakeholders in AR4D to shape the vision and agenda for the sub-sector and to mobilise themselves to respond to key continent-wide development frameworks, notably the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

FARA's vision: Reduced poverty in Africa as a result of sustainable broad-based agricultural growth and improved livelihoods, particularly of smallholder and pastoral enterprises.

FARA's mission: Creation of broad-based improvements in agricultural productivity, competitiveness and markets by continental-level strengthening of capacity for agricultural innovation.

FARA's value proposition: Strengthening Africa's capacity for innovation and transformation by visioning its strategic direction, integrating its capacities for change and creating an enabling policy environment for implementation.

FARA's strategic direction is derived from and aligned to the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa (S3A), which is, in turn, designed to support the realisation of the CAADP vision. FARA's programme is organised around three strategic priorities, namely:

- Visioning Africa's agricultural transformation with foresight, strategic analysis and partnerships to enable Africa to determine the future of its agriculture, with proactive approaches to exploit opportunities in agribusiness, trade and markets, taking the best advantage of emerging sciences, technologies and risk mitigation and using the combined strengths of public and private stakeholders.
- Integrating capacities for change by making the different actors aware of each other's capacities and contributions, connecting institutions and matching capacity supply to demand to create consolidated, high-capacity and effective African agricultural innovation systems that can use relative institutional collaborative advantages to mutual benefit while also strengthening their own human and institutional capacities.
- Enabling environment for implementation, initially through evidence-based advocacy, communication and widespread stakeholder awareness and engagement and to generate enabling policies, and then ensure that they get the stakeholder support required for the sustainable implementation of programmes for African agricultural innovation.

Key to this is the delivery of three important results, which respond to the strategic priorities expressed by FARA's clients. These are:

Key Result 1: Stakeholders empowered to determine how the sector should be transformed and undertake collective actions in a gender-sensitive manner

Key Result 2: Strengthened and integrated continental capacity that responds to stakeholder

demands within the agricultural innovation system in a gender-sensitive manner

Key Result 3: Enabling environment for increased AR4D investment and implementation of agricultural innovation systems in a gender-sensitive manner

FARA's development partners are the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)/ Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), the Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission (EC), the Consultative Group in International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Governments of the Netherlands and Italy, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid) and the World Bank.





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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFAAS	African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services	SMS	short message service
AGP	Agricultural Growth Program (Ethiopia)	UAC	Université d'Abomey-Calavi
Agri-SME	agricultural small and medium enterprise	VSL	village savings and loan
ASWAP	Agriculture Sector Wide Approach	WFRG	women farmer research group
CIG	common interest group	WIAD	Women in Agricultural
COS Sis	Convergence des Sciences		Development Directorate (Ghana)
CISANET	Civil Society Agriculture Network (Malawi)	WOUGNET	Women of Uganda Network
DAES	Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Ghana)	YIAP	Youth and Agriculture Project (Ghana)
ENGINE	Empowering New Generations with Improved Nutrition and Economic Opportunities (Ethiopia)		
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa		
FBO	farmer-based organisation		
FRG	farmer research group		
FSA	Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques		
GADS	Gender and Agricultural Development Strategy (Ghana)		
GALS	Gender Action Learning System (Malawi)		
GDP	gross domestic product		
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services		
GHA	Gender, HIV and AIDS Household Approach (Malawi)		
GRRAS	gender-responsive rural advisory services		
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan (Ethiopia)		
IG	innovation group		
LC3	Local Council 3		
MGDS II	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II		
MMPA	Malawi Milk Producers Association		
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture (Ethiopia)		
MoFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Ghana)		
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (Ethiopia)		
NASFAM	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi		
NGO	non-governmental organisation		
NRGP	Northern Rural Growth Programme (Ghana)		
OBEPAB	Organization Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique		
OFSP	orange-fleshed sweet potato		
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (Ethiopia)		
PPAAO	Projet de Productivité Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest		
RAS	Rural Advisory Services		
SG 2000	Sasakawa Global 2000		

Executive Summary

This report synthesizes findings from seven country scoping studies on gender-responsive approaches to rural advisory services (RAS) in Africa. The studies, which were conducted in seven countries (Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Sudan, and Uganda), were meant to identify existing policies, programmes, approaches, and tools into which gender considerations had been injected, and then to provide them as RAS to farmers, with specific focus on women and youth. The goal was to propose a road map for mainstreaming RAS to promote sustainable agriculture in Africa. The scoping studies relied on desk reviews and key informant interviews.

The scoping studies revealed that all seven countries have gender-responsive national development and agricultural sector policies and strategies. Malawi, Uganda, and Nigeria have national gender policies too. However, most of these policies and strategies have not been operationalised. Specific plans of action within government documentation for addressing gender disparities within the smallholder agricultural sub-sector are lacking. Gender in most sub-Saharan African countries seems to be stuck on the tables where policies are formulated. There is need to breathe life into the policies so that they get translated into measurable actions amongst smallholder farming communities.

Alone among the seven countries, Sudan did not have any gender-responsive national policies, strategies, or programmes.

The scoping studies further identified a number of innovative programmes and projects that governments and civil society organisations have put in place to ensure gender-responsive provision of RAS. Innovations

identified in the country reports included programmes such as Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan 2011–2015 that consciously enhances participation of women, men, and youth by explicitly stating that 30% of the beneficiaries of agricultural extension services must be women. Similarly, Ethiopia's Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty aimed at deliberately reaching out to 100% of women in female-headed households and 30% of women in male-headed households as beneficiaries of agricultural extension services. Further, Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Programme clearly stated that of the total common interest groups that were planned to be established, 32% were for women only, 34% were for youths only, and 34% were mixed. Similarly, of the innovation groups that were planned, 40% were for women only, 40% were for youths only, and 20% were mixed. Such conscious planning ensures participation of all.

Participation of women and youths was further enhanced by gender-responsive technologies and innovations that reduced drudgery while simultaneously enhancing productivity along the agricultural value chain. An example is Ghana's Youth in Agriculture Project (YIAP) concept of the block farm that reduced drudgery through provision of credit, of subsidised and interest-free tractor services to youth farmers to plough the land. Drudgery is one of the key turn-offs for youths in agriculture. The agribusiness component of the project trained youth in agricultural processing and marketing. Simple processing equipment was provided on credit as well. Youth farmers could pay off the services received on credit after selling their produce was guaranteed by the Buffer Stock Company established by Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture, although they also had the option of other markets of their choice. For the working capital, youthful farmers who were weaned off the project were introduced to appropriate institutions for financial

support. YIAP implementation mechanisms could be adopted for promoting and up-scaling gender-responsive technologies that reduce drudgery while simultaneously enhancing productivity along the agricultural value chain.

Other gender-responsive technologies and innovations that reduced drudgery while simultaneously enhancing productivity along the agricultural value chain include the Projet de Productivité Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest (PPAAO) rice project in Benin that introduced the rice parboiling technology and the electric sorter which not only reduced women's labour time in processing rice but also added value to paddy rice before it was marketed. Improved production and processing technologies had increased women's incomes and improved food and nutrition security of their households. These technologies could be promoted and up-scaled too.

Other innovations were identified in the scoping studies that enhanced participation of women and youths in agricultural small and medium enterprises (agri-SMEs). An example is Ghana's YIAP, one of whose objectives is to convince youths that farming is good business. YIAP has an agri-business component that trains youth in processing and marketing smallholder agricultural products and in offering consultancy services in agriculture.

Another such innovation is Ghana's Northern Rural Growth Programme (NRGP), which works with the rural poor to undertake income-generating agricultural projects and supports marketing of their products in southern Ghana and abroad. NRGp is driven by the value chain approach in four commodity windows:

- industrial crops (maize, soya, sorghum)
- fruits and vegetables (papaya, okra, chilli)
- women's crops (shea, sesame, moringa)
- animals (guinea fowl, small ruminants)

In each of these commodity windows, the programme intends to develop efficient, transparent, and sustainable contractual business relationships between and amongst the value chain actors and service providers. The critical actors in these chains are the farmers, input dealers, agricultural mechanization service providers, aggregators/buyers, agro-processors/industries, and consumers. Other essential service providers that support the process are financial institutions and technical service providers. The key achievements of the NRGPs include increasing women's access to land and other productive resources which has enabled some participants to triple their incomes as a result of direct linkages to international markets. Through the activities of the programme, women are now represented in district-level value chain committees and strongly articulate their concerns.

In addition to reduced drudgery and enhanced participation of women and youths in agri-SMEs, other innovations took aim at including the excluded. A key example is the village savings and loan (VSL) model for Malawi and Ghana that fosters financial inclusion. Most rural farmers are excluded from formal financial institutions. VSL models are not only self-sustaining in that they generate their own financial resources without getting encumbered by external borrowing; they also empower the rural poor, particularly women, to build their own financial bases in addition to enabling them to adopt savings skills and practices.

In Benin, the principle of inclusion was demonstrated by promoting the production of organic cotton on small plots of land, to which most women have access. Due to this inclusion, organic cotton production increased women's participation from 2% before inclusion to 40% afterward.

Integration of health and nutrition into agricultural value chains is another innovation that focuses on

addressing the challenges women face in meeting their culturally apportioned responsibilities into gender-responsive rural advisory services (GRRAS). An Ethiopian project, Empowering New Generations with Improved Nutrition and Economic Opportunities (ENGINE), is a good example that integrates health and nutrition into agricultural value chains, from which lessons can be learnt for up and out scaling. The project is unique in that it is implemented jointly by two government ministries (Agriculture and Health) and targets poor farmers faced with food and nutritional insecurity. The main interventions focus on agricultural production, especially vegetable production, rearing of shoats, training in nutrition and proper feeding practices, and fostering a savings culture through introduction to saving through formal banks to promote proper management of financial resources at household level. The approach has exhibited considerable improvement in agricultural production, household nutrition, and income in Ethiopia.

Uganda's project on developing and disseminating bio-fortified crops is another project that integrates health and nutrition from which more lessons could be learned. The project aims at improving nutrition among young children with vitamin A and among women of child-bearing age with iron. It promotes growth and utilisation of bio-fortified crops like the orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) and iron-rich beans. It also trains farmers in the agronomy and seed systems of the two crops as well as nutrition education. The project, which targets farmer groups (over 70% of whom are women), has improved the nutrition knowledge of female farmers and enabled them to improve their leadership skills and raise their incomes from the sale of fresh tubers, beans, and various products made from OFSP flour.

The scoping studies further noted that male domination often limits participation and inclusion

of women and youths. GRRAS should therefore not be content with heightened participation and inclusion only but should inculcate empowerment goals. A good example of empowerment potential of GRRAS is CARE Malawi's Empowerment Framework, which stresses the structural dimensions of empowerment. The framework aims at enabling women and youths to become conscious of their internalised subordination and exclusion, and to ultimately overcome them. The framework also emphasises changing the structural environment within which women and youths operate to become more responsive to their needs and interests.

Another empowering innovation identified in the scoping studies is Malawi's holistic Gender, HIV and AIDS Household Approach that sensitises all productive members of the household to practice egalitarian gender and power relations that ensure more equitable access to and control over resources, assets, and benefits in order to improve the livelihoods of all household members whilst simultaneously addressing HIV issues.

Still another empowering innovation is integration of functional literacy programmes in RAS that not only plays a key role in improving women's access to and utilisation of RAS, but also fosters self-awareness and awareness of the social environment, both of which are prerequisites for empowerment.

Cultivation of female farmers' leadership skills by the Women of Uganda Network project is yet another innovation that resulted in the empowerment of some women to the extent of contesting with men in the male-dominated mainstream politics and actually defeating them. In Uganda, one chairperson of a women farmers' group was elected chairperson of Local Council 3 (LC3), a local government position with both political and administrative oversight powers.

Transforming the unequal gender status quo within sub-Saharan Africa smallholder agriculture should be the ultimate goal of GRRAS. For it is within the smallholder agricultural sub-sector that gender inequalities are most entrenched, reproduced, justified, and legitimised through interlinked discriminatory household management and farming norms and practices. GRRAS therefore has considerable scope for addressing gender inequalities within the context of improving smallholder agricultural livelihoods. Examples of transformational GRRAS identified by the scoping studies include the male championship model used by Malawi's Mponela AIDS Information and Counselling Centre and CARE Malawi. The model recognises male custodianship of culture and customs in every society and the influence men have on decision making at household and community levels.

The model organises men into groups and awakens their consciousness to internalized gender bias. The men are guided to question the basis and legitimacy of their long-held conceptions, and in a transformatory manner begins to change them. The male championship model engages men to work towards modifying cultural norms, leading by example. Men help their spouses to participate in high-profit economic activities, jointly making decisions regarding household management, family planning and community leadership. The model has played a major role in the dramatic reduction in violence against women where it has been implemented.

The farmer research group (FRG) model in Ethiopia that includes both husbands and wives in extension projects places greater emphasis on more equitable intra-household gender relations. Project results indicate that husband participants in the project develop confidence in their wives by shedding off the gender stereotypes that denigrate women. In turn,

women gain confidence to try out new technologies, registering high productivity and earning additional income by selling produce. Some women even took the next step and opened their own accounts in banks. The FGR approach has been widely adopted in Ethiopia as it has allowed not only farmers but also non-farm men and women to question the unequal gender status quo. This is an example of transformational best practice whereby there are noticeable changes in gender relations, women's empowerment, changes in men's attitudes towards their wives, improved productivity, and greater earnings and savings. GRRAS should aim at such holistic outcomes. This is quite simply a wonderful best practice that should be recommended for up and out scaling throughout Africa.

In Benin, the convergence de sciences (COS Sis) neem production project was so transformational that women not only extended the neem production skills they acquired within Benin but also abroad. They went further to negotiate with the mayor of a municipality to acquire land for establishment of their own neem plantations. This is evidence of an innovation that activates women's groups to circumvent traditional constraints by engaging those in control of land. The Women Rice Producers' project, again in Benin, was so transformative that some women participants got themselves registered onto the electoral registers so that they could get elected to participate more actively in the management of their communities. Other groups of women rice farmers negotiated with the local authorities for larger pieces of land for higher rice production and to reduce dependence on their spouses. Lessons can be drawn from these projects for adoption into other RAS projects in Africa.

Evident from the foregoing is that for GRRAS to be realised, it is imperative that national gender

policies and strategies be operationalised. This requires conviction on the part of policy makers and implementers about the significance of pursuing gender equality goals. Technical expertise for designing and promoting GRRAS exists in some universities and amongst international NGOs, who could equip national governments and agricultural institutions with the requisite skills. There are also a host of key innovations that have helped to improve the productivity of women and youths and best practices of gender-responsive approaches to RAS that could be scaled up and out for promotion of GRRAS to reduce poverty and gender inequalities in smallholder agriculture in Africa.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

During November 2014, the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) commissioned seven country scoping studies on gender-responsive approaches to rural advisory services (RAS) in Africa. The studies were conducted in Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Sudan, and Uganda. The aim was to collect secondary data on existing policies, programmes, approaches, and tools embedded with gender-responsive characteristics in their provision of RAS to farmers, with specific focus on women and youth.

The three specific objectives of the scoping studies:

1. To identify key innovations that have helped to improve the productivity of women and youth with a view to scaling up and out for use by other farmers and RAS providers
2. To identify and document the best practices of gender-responsive approaches to RAS in the selected countries that can be shared and scaled up in other countries in order to improve the access of women and youth to RAS and promote poverty reduction
3. To determine the drivers, challenges, or constraints that may facilitate or hinder scaling up and out gender-responsive RAS practices in Africa.

In addition, the scoping studies were tasked to propose a road map for mainstreaming gender-sensitive approaches, tools, and practices into RAS with a view to promoting sustainable agriculture in Africa, taking into consideration the following:

- The gender responsiveness of existing

continental, national and organizational/institutional agricultural policies

- The capacities needed to ensure that policies and programmes are gender-responsive at all levels, including transformation of agricultural institutions to be accountable for gender equality as part of their sustainable development strategies
- Ways of promoting and up-scaling gender-responsive technologies and innovations for reducing drudgery and enhancing productivity along the agricultural value chain
- Promoting and facilitating agricultural small and medium enterprises (agri-SMEs) that empower women and youth
- Integration of health and nutrition into the agricultural value chain

The scoping studies relied on desk reviews of continental, national, and local documentation on innovative gender-responsive policies, best practices and challenges. Some studies (Malawi, Nigeria, Sudan) held consultative meetings with selected institutions. The Malawi study team also held a validation workshop to verify and update the data collected. Data was thematically analysed along the key variables in the specific objectives mentioned above.

An overall validation workshop was held in Kampala, Uganda, at the Speke Resort, Munyonyo, from 30 March to 2 April 2015, where consultants from the Benin, Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda studies presented their draft reports and received comments from peers, FARA and AFAAS staff, and staff from country and regional organisations involved in gender, agriculture, and advisory work.

This report presents a synthesis of the seven country studies.

1.2 The gender context

Smallholder agriculture, the dominant form of livelihood in most sub-Saharan African countries, is practiced both for household food security and for deriving income. Smallholder agriculture informally employs the bulk of the populations in each of the seven countries in this study, contributes between 22% and 38% of the countries' gross domestic products (GDPs), and accounts substantially for their export earnings.

Smallholder agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa is informally organised within and around the household; relying overwhelmingly on household labour and cultivating less than 2 hectares of household or communally owned land using rudimentary tools (hand hoe, axe, and panga). A variety of crops are cultivated and various animals are reared. By and large, farmers rely on indigenous planting and stocking materials, and production varies widely for both household consumption and income. Agricultural knowledge, skills, and practices are informally passed on from generation to generation through socialization processes alongside other social and economic skills (the productive, reproductive, household maintenance, etc.) that are deemed essential for societal existence and continuity in general and for raising children (Manyire 2013). Smallholder agriculture is therefore but one of the many life skills and practices that characterise rural life.

Smallholder agriculture is also conducted as an extension of the obligations, roles, and responsibilities of different household members in ensuring household nutrition, food security, earning income and enhancing social and economic status within both households and communities. In many traditional communities, responsibilities for household nutrition and food security are assigned to females due to their

nurturing and caretaker roles within households. Responsibilities for earning income are assigned to males due to their prescribed role as heads of households (actual or assumed). Males are also generally responsible for responding to obligations for meeting household non-food goods and services or goods that cannot be produced within households.

Sub-Saharan smallholder agriculture exhibits distinct roles, rights, and responsibilities of household members in agricultural production, exchange, and consumption. Access to land, labour, and income are socio-culturally defined, with men, as heads of households, making the broad management decisions of land allocation, labour organisation, cropping/animal rearing patterns, and income expenditure. Men also provide labour for certain crops and at certain stages of the production cycle such as land preparation. Women's labour obligations in food crop production, household management, and child rearing are also socio-culturally determined. Depending on age, gender, and whether school-going or not, children too have defined roles in smallholder households.

It is due to the distinct structuring of sub-Saharan African smallholder agriculture along gender lines that there are women's fields and men's fields, food crops and cash crops, women's livestock and men's livestock, and food-crops-turned-cash-crops in many smallholder communities.

Women's fields and livestock (small animals) and food crops are largely for household nutrition and food security, although in parts of West Africa, women may in addition cultivate other separate fields purposely for earning their own income. However, this income is also spent mostly on household food.

Men's fields, cash crops, and livestock (large

animals) are mainly for income earning. Although income earned by men could theoretically be used for nutrition and food security purposes, this is not always the case. Men's income is often spent on both essential household goods and services and non-essential men's 'wants' such as alcohol, tobacco, and additional wives/partners. In addition, when food crops attract ready markets and turn into cash crops, women's control over them declines with men often taking over their control, such as the case of French beans in western Kenya (Dolan 2001) and milk and other dairy products in Uganda (Kapampara 1999).

Commercialisation of food crops/animals reduces women's ability to ensure household nutrition and food security, resulting in malnutrition and stunted growth amongst children. A classic example is Western region, Uganda's food basket, which ironically has the highest rates (45%) of stunted growth amongst children in the country (FANTA-2 2010). This is because most of the quality food (milk, matoke, ghee, beans, meat, etc.) is sold, but the income derived is not necessarily used for ensuring household nutrition and food security.

This unfortunate status quo is rarely questioned even by women themselves because earning income bestows higher social status than looking after nutrition and food security. Even governmental and non-governmental agricultural development policies, programmes, and projects have fallen prey to the higher social status associated with income and emphasise improved household incomes in their poverty reduction efforts. Emphasis is on commercialisation of agriculture, enhancing household incomes, value addition for higher incomes, prosperity for all, and so on.

The same is true for RAS, often regarded as engines for agriculture-led poverty reduction efforts. GFRAS

(2012) defines extension or RAS as all the different activities that provide the information and services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in rural settings to assist them in developing their own technical, organisational, and management skills and practices so as to improve their livelihoods and well-being. It recognises the diversity of actors (public, private, civil society) in extension and advisory provision. RAS usually targets production for markets, commercially oriented farmers, or farmers of food crops that have ready regional or cross-border markets. RAS targets are often older male farmers, who in response allocate more household labour, fertile land, high-yield varieties and time to the production for the market at the expense of production for household self-provisioning nutrition and food security.

The sacrificing of household nutrition and food security by development agencies, RAS, and the farmers themselves at the altar of income earning compromises the health status of household members, for food is the best medicine. Nutrition heightens the body's immunity to disease and improves the body's capacity to recuperate when infected. Conversely, poor nutrition affects the brain development of children aged below 2 years, increases vulnerability of children and adults to infections, and subsequently, heightens physical weakness amongst household members. As a result, productive labour hours are lost directly by the physically weak and indirectly by those caring for the weak. Dependency ratios of the weak to the non-weak also increase, which ultimately increases poverty within households because the few resources available from the non-weak are shared by the weak.

It is therefore evident that the nutrition and food security (women's responsibilities) and income earning (men's responsibilities) functions of smallholder agriculture are both of significance in rural livelihoods.

The latter is accorded higher status, priority and resources not only amongst farmers and RAS, but also within governmental and non-governmental agricultural policies, programmes, and projects. Gender is at the heart of this paradox; masculinity is accorded higher status than femininity, including the assumed or actual masculine and feminine functions of smallholder agriculture. Thus, gender is not only a fundamental principle governing the social organisation of smallholder agriculture and its benefits, it also consciously or sub consciously informs the formulation of governmental and non-governmental policies targeting smallholder agriculture.

RAS therefore has considerable scope for addressing gender inequalities within the context of improving smallholder agricultural livelihoods. For RAS acts as the link between agricultural organisations, including governments, and smallholder farmers. Simultaneously, it is within the smallholder agricultural sub-sector that gender inequalities are most entrenched, reproduced, justified, and legitimised through interlinked household management and farming norms and practices.

1.3 Gender-responsive rural advisory services

For RAS to address the inequalities, it must become gender-responsive. Gender-responsive rural advisory services (GRRAS) are defined as extension and advisory services that are specifically designed and implemented to effectively address the needs (practical and strategic), interests, and concerns affecting men, women, male and female youth farmers in rural areas (GFRAS 2012). Gender responsiveness implies that gender equality is adopted as one of the core guiding principles of RAS. GFRAS (2013) defines gender equality in RAS as ‘policies, institutional set ups and practices that increase women’s agency and position with regard to sustainable livelihood.’ Such services would by necessity put into consideration

the complex socio-cultural aspects of the target communities and other relevant institutions, including the implementing extension organisations, in order to deliver gender-equitable agricultural extension that empowers women (GIZ 2013). Ultimately, GRRAS must aim at transforming the gender status quo within sub-Saharan African smallholder agriculture through placing equal emphasis on the nutrition/food security and income functions, enhancing the participation of males and females in both functions, meeting gender-peculiar needs, circumventing gender-peculiar constraints, and including both males and females in the information, services, and innovations that RAS promotes. It is within this concept of smallholder agriculture and gender-responsive RAS that this synthesis report is written.

1.4 Organisation of the report

The report is divided into seven sections.

Section one introduces the background and objectives of the scoping studies from which the synthesis report is derived and the social contexts within which smallholder agriculture is practiced in sub-Saharan Africa.

Section two presents the gender-responsive policies, programmes, approaches, and tools providing RAS to farmers, specifically to women and youths.

Section three identifies key innovations in the seven countries that have helped to improve the productivity of women and youths that could be scaled up and out for use by other farmers and RAS providers.

Section four documents the identified best practices of gender-responsive approaches to RAS in the seven

countries that can be shared and scaled up in other countries in order to improve the access of women and youths to RAS and to promote poverty reduction.

Section five determines the drivers, challenges, or constraints that may facilitate or hinder scaling up and out of gender-responsive RAS practices in Africa.

Section six proposes a road map for mainstreaming gender-sensitive approaches, tools, and practices into RAS with a view to promoting sustainable agriculture in Africa. Section seven concludes the synthesis report.



Section 2: Gender-responsive policies, programmes, approaches, and tools

2.1 Introduction

The seven country scoping studies revealed a series of both governmental and non-governmental organisational agricultural policies, programmes, approaches, and tools that are providing RAS, especially to women and youths. Whereas some governmental efforts are contained within national development plans or strategies, others are embedded within policies or frameworks. Similar efforts are implemented by NGOs.

2.2 Gender-responsive national development plans and/or strategies

2.2.1 Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II, 2012–2017

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDS II) is the country's overall policy framework for development. Its main goal is to create wealth through sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development as a means of achieving poverty reduction (Malindi 2015). Agriculture and food security are among the priorities of MGDS II. Gender is also prioritised as one of the cross-cutting issues affecting development with such themes as increased meaningful participation of all gender groups in decision making, wealth creation and poverty reduction, reduced gender-based violence at all levels, and enhanced gender mainstreaming across all sectors. Each of these themes has been prioritised for action within the strategy implementation period. All sectors are expected to be guided by the MGDS II when developing their sectoral gender policies/strategies and action plans. Malindi (2014),

however, decries that the MGDS II does not clearly specify actions to address gender disparities in particular sectors, notably including agriculture.

2.2.2 Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan, 2011–2015

Ethiopia is implementing a 5-year development plan that is gender-conscious. Empowering women and youths and ensuring that they benefit is one of the strategic pillars of the current 5-year Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), 2011–2015. The main objective for addressing gender within the GTP is to ensure women's active participation in the country's economic and social development as well as in the political process to ensure that women equally benefit from the outcomes (MoFED 2010). The GTP also aims at women constituting 30% of the beneficiaries of the agricultural extension service (Belay 2015).

The GTP monitoring report for the 2012/13 Ethiopian financial year indicated that although the target for promoting female-headed enterprise development was 600,000, a total of 723,275 women was reached, a 21% excess of the planned target. About 900,000 women benefited from self-help groups, while 4.2 million benefited from agricultural packages. During the same period, 4.1 million women were provided with savings and credit services, about 46% higher than the planned target. In the fiscal year under review, 729,671 women received training in management and business livelihood skills (Belay 2015).

2.2.3 Ethiopia's Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty

Ethiopia's Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) states that agricultural extension services should take into account the challenges faced by rural women. PASDEP targeted

100% of female-headed households and 30% of women in male-headed households as beneficiaries of agricultural extension services. The following activities were planned for implementation (Belay 2015):

- Provision of extension training to professionals to reach both women in female-headed families and those in male-headed households and evaluating the quality of the training
- Assistance to rural women to engage in activities such as small-scale animal husbandry and vegetable production
- Priority to rural women to benefit from credit and savings projects
- Organisation of rural women to undertake value-adding activities to agricultural products, thereby enabling them to benefit from the income generated from such products
- Preparation of projects which particularly benefit rural women
- Mainstreaming gender in agricultural extension implementation plans and monitoring and evaluating the plans from a gender perspective
- Pilot projects and farmers' festivals on lands owned by women to ensure women's participation in the projects and festivals
- Awards to exemplary women farmers

According to MoFED (2010), results of PASDEP include women acquiring agricultural extension packages, women gaining decision-making positions within local committees and other public bodies, women owning micro-enterprises and other income-generating projects and ensuring relatively equal rights in resource ownership like farm lands. To ensure that equal benefits accrue to wives and husbands, land utilisation certificates were issued by regional governments bearing both wives' and husbands' names.

The key challenge observed during the implementation of PASDEP was the limited implementation

capacity. There were capacity constraints among leaders and public servants at all administrative levels from the federal to *kebele* level. The limited capacity of women to assert their rights due to cultural barriers shows that the road to true equality is clearly a long one (MoFED 2010).

2.3 Gender-responsive national policies

2.3.1 National gender policies

The goal of the national gender policy of Malawi is to mainstream gender in the national development process to enhance participation of women and men, girls, and boys in sustainable and equitable development and poverty eradication (Malindi 2015). The policy states that gender inequalities still exist and are deeply rooted due to historic patriarchal values that have continuously subordinated women.

The goal of Nigeria's national gender policy, 2006, is to build a nation devoid of gender discrimination; to guarantee equal access to political, social, and economic wealth creation opportunities for both sexes; and to develop a culture that places a premium on the protection of all, including children. The policy reiterates that government shall promote the full participation of women, men, girls, and boys by involving both the public and private sectors as agents of development (Arokoyo and Auta 2015).

2.4 Gender-responsive agricultural sector policies

2.4.1 Malawi's Agriculture Sector Wide Approach framework

The Agriculture Sector-wide Approach (ASWAp) was set up by the government of Malawi as one way of implementing the agricultural activities in the MGDS II (Malindi 2015). The main guiding

policy framework for the agricultural sector, ASWAp focuses on three key areas, two key support services and two cross-cutting issues.

The focus areas are:

- Food security and risk management
- Commercial agriculture, agro-processing and market development
- Sustainable management of land and water

The key support services are:

- Technology generation and dissemination
- Institutional strengthening and capacity building

The cross-cutting issues are:

- HIV prevention and AIDS impact mitigation
- Gender equity and empowerment

ASWAp recognises the important role that gender plays in the agriculture sector and provides an opportunity for resource mobilisation, coordination and monitoring of gender mainstreaming in various agricultural activities. However, despite being strong in stipulating how gender issues will be addressed, most of the ASWAp indicators and targets in the various focus areas and support services are still not responsive to gender (Malindi 2015).

2.4.2 Agriculture sector gender HIV and AIDS strategy

The Agriculture Sector Gender HIV and AIDS Strategy of Malawi has three main strategic pillars:

- Quality participation of women and other vulnerable gender categories in ASWAp focus areas and key support services
- Gender-, HIV-, and AIDS-responsive technology generation and dissemination
- Effective coordination, capacity building,

and resource mobilisation (Malindi 2015)

The strategy focuses on women, female-headed households, orphans and vulnerable children, child-headed households, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, seasonal/mobile workers, and the elderly. The strategy clearly spells out strategic actions that need to be implemented in order to reduce the gender disparities in the various sub-sectors of the agricultural sector. However, publicity of the strategy seems to be limited despite having been launched. Reports indicate that awareness of the strategy among various stakeholders is too limited for holistic action to be taken (Malindi 2015).

2.4.3 Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Program

Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Program (AGP) was initiated in 2010 with the goal of enhancing agricultural productivity and access to markets for key crop and livestock products in 84 woredas (administration districts) in four states: Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. The programme was planned to address 1.9 million households in 2,116 *kebeles* throughout the programme life span (2010–2015). Enhanced participation of women and youth is a key objective of the programme (Belay 2015). An independent gender mainstreaming focal person from the Women's Affairs Department of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) is assigned to oversee and facilitate the integration of gender in all the projects under the AGP; agricultural production and commercialization, small-scale rural infrastructure development and management, programme management, institutional arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation. The following are the main approaches and procedures followed within AGP to ensure mainstreaming of gender in the various projects:

- Approaching women in separate groups

so that their needs and voices can be heard in selection of sub-projects

- Capacity development for integrating women and youth issues
- Enhancing women and youth leadership skills through iterative training
- Ensuring that subject matter specialists effectively serve women and youth beneficiaries at the project pilot woreda level through frequent follow-up and feedback
- Empowering women and youth through common interest groups and innovation groups that have reported success stories in empowering women (Belay 2015)

2.4.4 Ghana's Northern Rural Growth Programme

The Northern Rural Growth Programme (NRGP) is implemented in the three regions of northern Ghana (Upper West, Upper East, and Northern) and five districts of the Brong Ahafo region (Quaye 2015). NRGF supports the production of crops grown by women, particularly shea (the nuts used in producing shea butter which is utilised widely in the cosmetics industry). It also seeks to include women in the male-dominated commodity chains. The programme works with poor rural people to develop income-generating agricultural activities to supplement subsistence farming, which currently predominates in northern Ghana. NRGF also supports the process through which the resulting commodities are marketed in southern Ghana and abroad. The NRGF's activities are mostly women centred with about two-thirds of the 45,000 project participants being women. The key achievement of the programme is that it has increased women's access to land and other productive resources. Some participants have been able to triple their incomes as a result of direct links to the international market. Through the activities

of the programme, women are now represented on the district level value chain committees and strongly articulate the concerns of women (Quaye 2015).

NRGF is an 8-year integrated pro-poor socio-economic development programme driven by the value chain approach in four commodity windows:

- Industrial crops: maize, soya, sorghum
- Fruits and vegetables: papaya, okra, chilli
- Women's crops: shea, sesame, moringa
- Animals: Guinea fowl: small ruminants (Quaye 2015)

The industrial crops commodity window was selected based on its market potential, financial viability, high coverage (potential to be grown in nearly all areas of northern Ghana), and low risk (farmers' familiarity with the production technology). In each of these chains, the programme is to develop efficient, transparent, and sustainable contractual business relationships between and amongst the value chain actors and service providers. The objective is to transform the structure and dynamics of the production and marketing of each of these crops. This should eventually lead to efficiency, increased productivity, and transformation of the agricultural sector. The critical actors in these chains are the farmers, input dealers, agricultural mechanization service providers, aggregators/buyers, agro-processors/industries, and consumers. Other essential service providers that support the process are financial institutions and technical service providers. The overall goal is achieving sustainable agriculture, rural livelihoods, and food security for the rural poor, particularly those on marginal lands, rural women, and the vulnerable groups of northern Ghana through the commodity value chain approach. Project components cover provision of irrigation and market infrastructure, access to finance and establishing viable farmer-based organisations (FBOs). This project

acknowledges that addressing the gender disparities in the country requires agricultural growth and creation of marketing and processing opportunities for women. NRGF won the International Fund for Agricultural Development Gender Award in 2013 (Quaye 2015).

Good practices and lessons learnt

Essential to the success of NRGF is the organisation and support to farmers, especially women, not only as efficient producers but also as fully knowledgeable and active stakeholders in the value chain. The programme organises, strengthens, and links men and women farmers to markets and other actors in the value chain. According to the programme implementers, it has succeeded because of the use of various innovative approaches, including the sensitisation of traditional leaders and district assemblies about the importance of women's participation and empowerment in leadership, social, and economic activities. Poor rural women in the project participating communities were assisted to form groups to raise sheep and goats. The women were introduced to better animal feeding and shelter systems. They also learned how to keep accounts and records of their businesses. Improved breeds of sheep and goats were imported from neighbouring Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire and availed to women at an exchange ratio of one improved to two local breeds (Quaye 2015). The programme also successfully pioneered the concept of women extension volunteers.

2.4.5 Ghana's Gender and Agricultural Development Strategy

Ghana's Gender and Agricultural Development Strategy (GADS) seeks to promote sustainable agricultural development through promotion of gender responsiveness in MoFA programmes and activities

(Quaye 2015). It aims at addressing the gender blindness within the Ghana Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Development Strategy. GADS further recognizes potentials of youths and persons with disabilities in agriculture as well as their significance to the accelerated agricultural growth programme. However, the impact of GADS on gender, youths and PWDs is not visible. Gender inequalities with regard to control of resources remain, and agriculture remains unattractive to youths and persons with disabilities. In addition, there is no gender policy within the MoFA to support GADS. Yet, to integrate gender into MoFA, there is the need for a gender policy framework that would support GADS for effective implementation. Gender should be at the core of all actions and activities of departments, institutions, agencies and directorates in MoFA (Quaye 2015).

2.4.6 Ghana's Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services

The Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES) aims at improving farm production and income, farmer household livelihoods, and nutrition of the rural population (Quaye 2015). MOFA has decentralized agricultural extension services to district assemblies, while the regional and national administrations focus on policy, planning, coordination, technical backstopping, monitoring and evaluation (Okorley 2007). The decentralisation of agricultural extension services in Ghana is intended to effectively engage and involve stakeholders to promote pluralism and integration of agriculture into rural development. Currently, a wide range of agricultural extension approaches (unified extension, commodity-based, and participatory approaches) are used in Ghana, including farmer field schools, on-farm demonstrations, training and farm visits, and e-extension (ICT-based), which provides online advice to farmers

through mobile phones and community-based radio stations. However, while women constitute 22% of senior management staff, only 3% of field level extension workers are female (Quaye 2015).

2.4.7 Ghana's Women in Agricultural Development Programme

The Women in Agricultural Development Directorate (WIAD) is one of the seven technical directorates of MoFA. The objective of WIAD is to develop effective policies and programmes that promote delivery of improved technologies and information on agricultural production and post-production processes in an environmentally sustainable manner (Quaye 2015).

Key functions are to promote:

- Improved nutrition interventions: bio-fortification, food fortification, food enrichment, nutrition education regarding food production, post production, and food consumption
- Value addition to agricultural produce: food processing and preservation
- Food safety along the agricultural value chain (e.g. safe production and handling of exotic vegetables, cottage level processing, etc.)
- Resource management (farm, home, processing sites)
- Gender mainstreaming of all agricultural policies, programmes and projects

WIAD has four units:

1. Nutrition
2. Food safety
3. Value addition
4. Gender/livelihoods

WIAD is supposed to ensure provision of technical backstopping to regional and district staff for effective

transfer of appropriate technologies to farm families in crop, livestock and fish production, processing, utilisation and marketing through regional officers and other stakeholders. In addition, WIAD collaborates with various institutions, including research, projects, and MoFA directorates in supporting dissemination and capacity-building efforts in regions and districts. Monitoring and evaluation of implemented programmes within regions and districts are key responsibilities of WIAD. Some achievements of WIAD include gender trigger targets that promote at least one priority gender-related programme in line with GADS objectives incorporated in annual work plans. Some gender trigger targets are:

- The Animal Production Directorate has a gender-sensitive plan and budget for the cockerel project, extending improved extension services and credit to both male and female farmers.
- The Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services has improved access to extension services and credit for both male and female farmers. Also, a manual was developed and distributed to FBOs to meet the needs of both male and female farmers.
- The Statistics Research and Information Directorate planned and budgeted to engender their data collection tools, train the enumerators, and establish a gendered functional databank.
- The Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate conducted activities to improve extension delivery to meet men and women farmers through development of training materials for farmers and exporters on marketing quality standards. The directorate also trained men and women farmers and exporters on the safe use and handling of pesticides.
- The Agricultural Engineering Services Directorate implemented activities to reduce post-harvest losses of grains and increase the incomes of processors and traders (especially women)

- through the use of super grain bags for storage.
- The Veterinary Services Directorate improved extension and communication services through training men and women livestock farmers to reduce poultry and animal diseases (Quaye 2015).

2.4.8 Nigeria's Women in Agriculture Policy

The Women in Agriculture policy is a component of the agricultural development projects responsible for grassroots extension and advisory services in all the States of Nigeria (Arokoyo and Auta 2015). The overall goal of WIA policy is to integrate women into the total agricultural development of the nation through integrating women into the ADP system to enable them have equal access to agriculture inputs, credit, and extension services. The premise of this policy is that a successful integration of women into the ADP system will significantly increase their productivity, raise their incomes, improve their quality of life and make significant contribution towards the total agricultural development of the nation (Quaye 2015).

2.5 Gender-responsive agricultural policies of NGOs

2.5.1 Malawi's social inclusion policy of Self Help Africa

Self Help Africa's social inclusion policy aims at ensuring that gender equality and empowerment of women are attained and that women's rights are upheld (Malindi 2015). This is done through ensuring that women have equal access to opportunities and control over agricultural production resources such as land, credit, extension services, farm implements, and inputs, without discrimination. The policy focus is on women in both male- and female-headed households (Malindi 2015).

2.5.2 CARE Malawi's Women Empowerment Framework

The Women Empowerment Framework of CARE Malawi states that to achieve sustainable changes, it is important to address the structural (normative), relational, and agency dimensions of empowerment (Malindi 2015). The framework involves analysis at three levels:

- The agency level that involves analysis of the aspirations, resources, actions, and achievements of the women themselves as individuals
- The broader social structures that condition women's choices and chances that include routines, patterns of relationships, interactions, and conventions that lead to behavior that is taken for granted. Structure also includes institutions that establish agreed-upon meanings, accepted as normal forms of domination, which legitimise the social order.
- Empowerment of women focuses on relationships and platforms through which women negotiate their needs and rights with other social actors, including men (Malindi 2015).

2.5.3 NASFAM gender policy

The gender policy of the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM) provides clear guidelines for addressing gender within NASFAM activities. The policy focuses on addressing issues of participation, leadership, and equal access to services and benefits by both men and women in NASFAM (NASFAM 2002). However, the policy was formulated in 2002 and has demonstrated inability to address emerging issues like targeting the youth in its activities. There is need to revise the policy for it to reflect the current issues as regards gender-responsive RAS (Malindi 2015).

2.6 Gender-responsive approaches, processes, and tools

The government of Malawi recognises that mere presence of policies/strategies, projects and programmes is not adequate to ensure gender mainstreaming. In view of this, the government and stakeholders have developed and adapted various approaches, processes, and tools that include the following.

2.6.1 Gender-responsive sectoral approaches

The Malawi Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development is implementing the Gender, HIV and AIDS Household Approach (GHA), an extension approach that empowers all productive members of the household to have better gender and power relations that enable equitable access to and control over resources, assets, and benefits in order to improve the livelihood of all household members whilst simultaneously addressing HIV issues (Government of Malawi 2012). To ensure successful implementation of the approach, the following principles are followed:

- Regular and consistent individual household visits by extension workers
- Involvement of all productive household members
- Guidance by extension workers in the implementation of the approach
- Accountability of the household in the implementation of the action plan
- Coordination with other disciplines and stakeholders
- Extension workers well trained on the approach (Government of Malawi 2010)

Implementation of the approach has led to improved power relations at household level and has facilitated increased participation of women

and productive members of the household, including the youth in decision making. It has also led to improved access to and control over resources, assets, and benefits (Malindi 2015).

2.6.2 NASFAM's Gender Action Learning System

NASFAM is implementing the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) premised on the same principles as those of the household approach (Malindi 2015). The same impacts have been indicated though the focus for NASFAM has been on the groundnut and soya value chains, while the focus of household approach has been on the rice and maize value chains. However, implementation of the approach is faced with a number of challenges such as non-availability of some household members, especially school-going youths, longer time taken to implement the household needs assessment tools, inadequate sharing of the approach amongst participating and non-participating households, and minimal involvement of other stakeholders (Government of Malawi 2014). This has resulted into slow implementation of the approach as it demands some capacity to be built before the activities are implemented (Malindi 2015).

2.6.3 Gender-responsive processes and tools

In addition to policies/strategies, programmes/projects and approaches for ensuring successful implementation of gender-responsive RAS, there are gender-responsive tools and processes for mainstreaming gender into RAS. Some of the tools and processes ensure inclusion of men, women, and youths in all extension services.

2.6.4 Decision-making scoring scale

This is an assessment tool used by Malawi's Self Help Africa to ensure that gender, especially equality in decision making, is addressed right

from the onset of various programmes. This tool helps to identify the existing gender concerns in various communities so that special measures are taken to address them (Malindi 2015).

2.6.5 Gender-responsive needs assessment tools

Proper identification of gender inequalities requires the use of appropriate tools and methods. Malindi (2015) revealed that different actors in Malawi use different tools to identify the needs of various gender groups in communities. MoFA uses gender-responsive appraisal tools, NASFAM employs gender audits, GALS has developed a methodology, and CARE Malawi uses gender dialogue tools to determine gender-based needs. All these tools aim at engaging communities in participatory and self-reflective processes that facilitate identification and understanding of the gender concerns affecting them. The processes enable communities to draw appropriate actions that address the concerns. However, there is inadequate capacity amongst staff to adequately facilitate these processes (Malindi 2015).

2.6.7 Gender monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of policy and programme implementation is crucial to understanding the impact of the policies and programmes on males and females. In a study conducted by Sigman et al. (2014) in Malawi, it was noted that data is getting gender-disaggregated since most donors require gender-disaggregated data in their reporting formats. Although gender-disaggregated data is being collected, more gender-specific indicators are less likely to be collected (Malindi 2015). For example, some programmes are monitoring women's participation in household decision-making. Similar initiatives are being implemented by CARE Malawi, where the project is using the community scorecard process to monitor accountability of

service providers to the recipients of services. This model helps communities to engage service providers with regard to accounting for interventions that were planned for implementation. This even applies to services that target the marginalised groups, including women (CARE 2013). In the public service, service charters have also been piloted in selected districts with the aim of making service providers accountable to farmers (Malindi 2015).

2.6.8 Reports and reporting

Production of reports is key to the provision of rural advisory services. The technical working group on cross-cutting issues of gender and HIV in Malawi is charged with the responsibility of collecting, collating, and writing reports based on agreed indicators. The consolidated reports are presented in joint sector review meetings convened every quarter to review progress within the sector. The TWG has ably fulfilled this mandate although the reports that have been produced do not fully show what the sector is doing due to inability of the various players to make inputs into the report. This could be attributed to inadequate coordination for the various players to provide their inputs (Malindi 2015).



Section 3: Key innovations

3.1 Introduction

Ngigi (2009) defines innovations as new methods, customs, practices, or devices used to perform new tasks or improve existing practices. According to GFRAS (2009), innovation is ‘an interactive process among a large number of actors through which knowledge generation, adaptation and use happens so as to solve a problem or meet a need.’ Ngigi (2009) notes that the Royal Tropical Institute adds a systemic dimension by defining an innovation system as a network of organisations, enterprises, and individuals that focuses on bringing new products, new processes, and new forms of organization into economic use, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behaviour and performance. The scoping studies revealed a number of innovative programmes and projects put in place by governments and civil society organisations to ensure that RAS is gender-responsive. The following are some of the innovations identified in the different country reports.

3.2 Ethiopia’s common interest groups and innovation groups

During the design of the AGP, 32% of the common interest groups (CIGs) that were in the planning stages were women, 34% of them were youths, and 34% were mixed. As regards the innovation groups (IGs), 40% were women, 40% youths, and 20% mixed. In addition, depending on the gender division of labour in the target woredas, 100% of female-headed households and 30% of women in male-headed households were targeted to participate and benefit from different forms of training and experience sharing. In order to support and make follow up, gender focal persons in each innovation platform were assigned at

federal and regional levels and at district agricultural and women’s affairs office levels (Belay 2015).

For purposes of integrating gender into programme activities, a guideline was developed and different orientation forums were organised at different administrative levels. Federal-level orientation forums involved 24 farmers, half of them females. At the regional level, 622 farmers participated of whom 201 were females. At woreda level, 3,942 participated, of whom 1,430 were females and 218 were youths. At kebele level, 1,999 farmers, of whom 869 were females, participated. The objective of the orientation was to create an understanding of how to incorporate gender in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme activities (Belay 2015).

3.2.1 Building capacity for integrating gender in AGP

In order to effectively integrate gender and youths into the AGP, a series of gender trainings were organised for agricultural staff at different administrative levels. At the regional level, 520 agricultural experts, of whom 181 were females, were trained; while at woreda level, 639 staff, of whom 265 were females, were trained (Belay 2015).

3.2.2 Periodic gender performance assessment

Periodic assessment of performance of gender was conducted to assess the participation of women and youths in CIGs and IGs, to identify challenges faced, and to suggest recommendations for addressing the challenges. As per the 2011/2012 monitoring report, 6,611 CIGs were established, consisting of a total of 97,554 members, of which 41% were females. Of the total CIGs established during the same year, 31% were women CIGs, 32% were youth CIGs, and 37% were mixed CIGs, with little variation from the targets. In general, a total of 1,496 IGs

were established, comprising of 23,024 members, of which 64% were females. More precisely, of the total established IGs, 35%, were women IGs, 38% were youth IGs, and 27% were mixed IGs (Belay 2015).

3.3 Malawi’s farm input subsidy programme

The Government of Malawi recognises that among the many challenges that women and youths face in the agricultural sector, none is more important than limited access to inputs such as seed and fertilizers (Malindi 2015). In view of this, the Government of Malawi started implementing the Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) during the 2005/06 agricultural season. FISP targets vulnerable smallholder farmers who have land but cannot afford to purchase inputs at market prices. The main objective of the programme is to raise the income of smallholder farmers through improvements in agricultural productivity and food security. During implementation of the programme, deliberate efforts are put in place to ensure that women and youth benefit. Implementation of the programme has contributed to increased use of improved seeds and fertilizer application in most female headed households’ fields leading to improved food security (Mapila and Makina 2011). However, the programme does not spell out mechanisms for ensuring that women especially those from male headed households are empowered to make decisions on the use of the inputs. There have been reports that women from male headed households do not have control over the use of the fertilizer coupons since the fertilizer is either diverted to tobacco fields or sold, hence, decreased farm produce (Chirwa et al 2011). The inputs that are diverted to tobacco fields do not bring the anticipated returns since the income realized is not equitably used within the household.

3.4 Nigeria’s electronic wallet innovation

The electronic wallet (e-wallet) innovation, an initiative of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Central Bank of Nigeria, was introduced in 2011 as part of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (Arokoyo and Auta 2015). The E-Wallet is an electronic platform designed to deliver farm-input subsidies to small-scale farmers through the use of mobile phones. The E-Wallet programme aims to lift 20 million smallholder farmers, notably women, out of subsistence production modes and poverty into self-sufficiency through market-led approaches to agricultural production, processing, and marketing. Currently, 50% of those registered in the platform are women (Arokoyo and Auta 2015).

The Farm Income Diversification Programme is a Government of Malawi programme implemented with financial support from the European Commission. The overall objective of the programme is to contribute to poverty reduction and improved livelihoods through the conservation of natural resources, diversification of agricultural production, and increased agribusiness (Malindi 2015). The design of the programme recognises the importance of mainstreaming gender, hence the inclusion of a social development component that addresses gender along with other cross-cutting issues. Some strides have been achieved in the mainstreaming of gender as shown from the FIDP phase 1 evaluation report that indicated progress as regards the participation of women in FIDP activities, where average gender balances of 44%, 45%, and 62% were achieved for the north, central, and southern regions, respectively (Government of Malawi 2012).

The project registered some impacts despite aggregating them at household or community levels. These included increased income levels for households and an increased asset base shown by the ownership of good houses, bicycles, radios, ox carts, wheelbarrows, and so on (Malindi 2015). In

addition, most households evidenced improved food security through increased numbers of meals and the quantity of grain stored in the granary. However, the results did not show how women and youths have either contributed to, or benefitted from, the project. In addition, women were also still lagging behind in decision-making positions (e.g. chairperson, secretary, treasurer) in the various groups due to low literacy and numeracy levels (Malindi 2015).

3.5 The integrated dairy interventions by Malawi Milk Producers Association

The Malawi Milk Producers Association (MMPA) is the apex body of all milk associations in the country and provides the main support and integrated system for the dairy value chains in Malawi. MMPA delivers services directly to 10,200 men and 6,800 women and indirectly through the affiliated associations with the mission of scaling up dairy production to alleviate poverty and increase nutritional diversity. It is currently providing the following services to dairy farmers:

- Artificial insemination
- Animal health support
- Technical advice to increase milk production, including making animal fodder and concentrates
- Advocacy for farmers' voices to be heard

MMPA's role is enhanced by being a member of Farmers Union of Malawi and the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET), both of which have similar advocacy roles (Malindi 2015).

MMPA is promoting production technologies for increased milk productivity, improved food, and nutrition security, targeting women mainly for milk culinary uses and school feeding for increased consumption of milk from 1 teaspoon per day

to 1 glass per day through national promotional campaigns. Some of the initiatives include introduction of Tanuvas grand supplement, an innovation adopted from India intended to intensify milk production regime to cross bred cows with an aim of reducing the price of milk. Milk is packed into 200-250 ml sachets that can easily be sold or used in school feeding programmes (Malindi 2015).

Through extension workers, MMPA organises milk farmers into big groups to ease provision of services and milk collection for marketing. Extension workers also involve lead farmers in organising and leading demonstrations. MMPA further innovatively integrates agricultural extension, nutrition, and nutrition education (Sigman et al. 2014). However, Malindi (2015) noted that capacity to reach out to more farmers, particularly women, is limited, due to few trained extension staff and assistant veterinary officers.

There is also the negative Act of Parliament that discourages broad use of milk mainly in rural areas which is taking too long to be repealed. The Act stipulates that milk can only be sold in pasteurized form, implying that only big companies and bulk milk groups that are near towns and have the required facilities can market milk. Further, this means that pasteurized milk can only be afforded by well-to-do (Malindi 2015).

3.6 Village savings and loans

Most poor and marginalised households in rural areas face challenges in accessing finances to support their livelihood goals. Studies have indicated that most of those lacking financial resources in Malawi are women (Malindi 2015). Of late, various organizations have started implementing the village savings and loans (VSL) model to foster financial inclusion since

few rural farmers have bank accounts. VSL, a self-managed programme that facilitates savings from farmers without external financial support, focuses on the rural poor by building up their financial assets and skills through savings. The model has helped the poor to diversify their activities by planting new crops and engaging in new income-generating activities. Various NGOs – CARE Malawi, World Vision International, Catholic Relief Services, Plan Malawi, and Self-Help Africa – have implemented the VSL model, focusing on women as a category of people that are poor and are financially excluded. Some organisations have started modifying the model to include training in adult literacy and business management so that the recipients effectively use the available resources. For example, Self Help Africa has reached 1,402 women with the VSL model who have so far saved 15 million Malawian kwacha (MWK) (USD 32,663), which is substantial enough to improve women's access to credit (Malindi 2015). Village Savings and Loan Associations are also being implemented by CARE International in Ghana (Quaye 2015).

3.7 The Enabling Rural Innovation Initiative

Malawi's Enabling Rural Innovation Initiative is an intervention developed by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). The initiative was driven by innovation systems concepts, which focus on a network of actors and organisations, linked by a common theme, with the aim of developing new technologies, methods, and forms of organisation for the end users of technology to tackle identified problems (World Bank 2006). The innovation, implemented in Kandutulu Community in Lilongwe, aimed at strengthening the capacity of resource-poor smallholders to access market opportunities (Mapila and Makina, 2011).

The initiative assisted farmers in establishing maize and

piggery enterprises. The maize enterprise addressed food security needs, while the piggery enterprise addressed income security needs. The initiative led to increased maize production among women farmers due to increased fertilizer application, itself arising from increased market returns which acted as incentives for households to reinvest in their farm enterprises. It was also observed that most of the women refrained from selling their fertilizer subsidy coupons, but instead used the fertilizer in their fields (Malindi 2015).

3.8 Integration of adult literacy skills

NASFAM implemented an initiative for integrating literacy skills within its conservation agriculture programme (Malindi 2015). The initiative benefited illiterate women. Of the 37,589 farmers who adopted conservation agriculture, 53% were women. NASFAM introduced the literacy skills programme in order to ensure that more women participate in the programme as lead farmers, since literacy is one of the basic requirements for a lead farmer in NASFAM. Similar initiatives have been implemented by Women in Agribusiness in the Sub-Saharan Africa Alliance, which introduced literacy classes in VSL, whilst Self Help Africa introduced the initiative in seed multiplication (Malindi 2015).

3.9 Farmer field and business school approach

The CARE Pathways Program focuses on improving women farmers' productivity and profitability by empowering women to fully engage in equitable agriculture systems (Malindi 2015). In Malawi, the initiative is targeting 12,000 poor women smallholders in Kasungu and Dowa districts. The programme is supporting the farmer field and business school approach. FFBS is a learn-by-doing approach through which

farmers meet regularly during a cropping cycle to experiment and learn about new production and marketing options. Although builds on farmer field schools, FFBS is unique in that it includes community approaches to visioning and planning, sustainable agriculture, market engagement, nutrition, gender, and performance monitoring. A typical FFBS is made up of 2 to 4 producer groups. Each of these groups consists of between 10 to 20 farmers engaged in soy and groundnut value chains. Each FFBS is led by a trained facilitator who helps each group develop a calendar, conducting the training and dialogue sessions at agreed intervals. As regards gender and women empowerment, FFBS integrates specific training modules to create awareness of workload burden/time use, access to, and ownership of resources, gender-based violence, and household decision making and power analysis (Malindi 2015).

3.10 Supporting women's aspirations through the male championship model

The male involvement concept is a model employed by the Mponela AIDS Information and Counseling Centre and CARE Malawi to implement the Women Empowerment Improving Resilience, Income and Food Security project. The model, dubbed Male Championship, recognises male custodianship of culture and customs in every society and the influence men have on decision making at household and community levels. The model mobilises men into groups of 15 to 30 members within each community. Each group elects a committee composed of a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and chief whip, among others. The group is then trained in basic gender skills, gender mainstreaming, gender-based violence, and shared responsibilities as a theory of change. MAICC has developed a Male Championship curriculum that fuses training materials from Bambo

Wachitsanzo (Model Man Concept) and Education for Life, a behaviour change programme (Malindi 2015).

In 2011, MAICC rolled out the model WERISE project on a pilot basis in Gawamadzi village in Dowa District. The project organised men into groups called Male Championship Clubs. These clubs discuss issues that promote aspirations of women to freely participate in decision making and economic activities. They engage other men to work towards modification of cultural norms, leading by example. Men help their spouses to participate in high-profit economic activities, jointly make decisions regarding household management, family planning, and community leadership. This development has seen drastic reduction of gender-based violence in the area, as women are treated with dignity (Malindi 2015).

Quaye (2015) reported a similar initiative in Ghana that empowered women through male gender champions, implemented under CARE Ghana's EQUAL and Pathways Initiatives.

3.11 Gender and access to ICT (radio and SMS)

There are at least 30 radio stations in Malawi, but the telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas is weak, resulting in limited range for any particular station. However, with about 64% of Malawians owning radio receivers, the potential for disseminating information is quite high (Malindi 2015). Approximately 75% of radio stations in Malawi have some level of farm programming. In most households, however, the man controls the radio, which greatly limits women's access to agricultural production or nutrition messages. To rectify this situation, there is a movement gaining traction in Malawi to promote equal access to ICT resources amongst all gender groups. At a meeting in early April 2014, this issue

was given priority and members discussed new approaches that might be used to help in promoting gender equality in accessing ICTs (Sigman et al. 2014).

Studies conducted by Sigman et al (2014) showed that access to ICT equipment, particularly cell phone short message service (SMS), is still a challenge. In 2011, 14% of the smallholder farmers in the programme managed by Agribusiness Systems International in collaboration with DAES had cell phones. As of 2014, about 29% had cell phones, a significant increase. However, often women do not get the SMS extension messages since they do not own or control the cell phones. And some men do not share information with spouses. Yet women, who make up 70% of the agricultural workforce, should be the key recipients and users of most of SMS extension messages (Malindi 2015).

3.12 Farm Radio International, Uganda

Farm Radio International is an international NGO with programmes in various countries, including Uganda. A demand-driven approach is used to determine radio extension messages. The starting point is to identify broad topics/areas to be aired based on demand. Community consultations are then made so that community-specific topics are identified. Once needs are identified, a multi-actor process is used to identify whatever capacity is available (Mangheni 2015). Broadcasting time is synchronised with women's daily activity calendar so that programmes are aired when women are free to listen.

In addition, through radio, women farmers can express themselves to local governments and extension services. Sometimes, women feel shy to express themselves when being interviewed by male broadcasters, so female journalism interns are used to interview them. Radio stations are

also encouraged to nominate women for training as broadcasters, although few women offer themselves for training (Mangheni 2015).

To increase women's access to radio, the project encouraged formation of listeners' clubs. These clubs were facilitated to own radio sets initially given free of charge but later on a cost-sharing basis after it was realised that the free sets were not valued by beneficiaries. Women are encouraged to be part of the club leadership with those who are literate encouraged to be secretaries of the clubs to record what the group has learned from listening to the programmes. Groups are mixed by sex to avoid limitations associated with women-only groups. The projects monitors progress closely and when gender issues are identified, for instance men denying women access to radios, the project tactfully sensitises communities about the negative aspects of such practices (Mangheni 2015).

Mobile phones are used to facilitate obtaining feedback from listeners. It was realised that call lines are often busy and women can call, fail to connect and give up due to their busy schedules. Men, on the other hand, can afford to keep calling until they get through. To address this problem, the project bought mobile phones dedicated to women only. However, it has now been realised that these lines have low volume and are not audible enough. Future plans are to improve audibility and also make those lines prepaid (Mangheni 2015).

3.13 Ethiopia's integration of agricultural and health extension services

Empowering New Generations with Improved Nutrition and Economic Opportunities (ENGINE) is a project supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), implemented jointly by two Ethiopian Ministries: Agriculture and Health. It is

implemented in four main regions (Amhara, SNNP, Oromia and Tigray) as well as at national level. The project mainly targets poorer farmers faced with food and nutritional insecurity. The main interventions focus on agricultural production, especially vegetable production, rearing of shoats, training in nutrition, proper feeding practices, and financial management (Belay 2015). Case studies indicate successes of the project especially in Arbisi kebele, Bure woreda in Amhara region. In this particular case study, the project established a women's group consisting of 30 nutritionally vulnerable women. The group was involved in diverse activities including:

- Agriculture (vegetable production, sheep and goats) where members were introduced to different vegetables, their production and preparation into food
- Training in nutrition and proper feeding practices
- Fostering a savings culture through introduction to saving with formal banks to promote proper management of financial resources at household level

The Farmers' Research Group project has been implemented in East Showa zone of the Oromia Region since 2004 by the Melkasa Agricultural Research Center of EIAR and Adame Tulu Agricultural Research Center of the Oromia Agricultural Research Institute (OARI), with financial assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The project adopted the FRG approach in which farmers participate actively in the development, verification, transfer, and adoption of improved agricultural technologies. The approach helps in developing and adapting appropriate agricultural technologies that meet farmers' need, refines available technologies to fit actual farmers' situations, and develops problem solving capacities amongst farmers. The approach promotes gender

equality and women empowerment through targeting women and men during every course of action and through promotion of women farmers groups (WFRGs).

Gender consideration is one of the cornerstones in FRG guidelines. FRG members include both husbands and wives which places greater emphasis on intra-household gender relations. FRG members are trained in production techniques and utilization of technologies, record keeping, FRG concepts and are encouraged to participate in gender sensitization workshops organized within their localities and aimed at improving existing gender relation. Both women and men FRG member are equally encouraged to actively participate in implementation, data collection, regular meetings, field days and exchange visits. Gender sensitization and integration of gender in the project cycle using different techniques of participatory approaches has benefited women FRG members by bringing about changes in overall women's livelihoods and gender relations, such as women's knowledge and skills, and improved confidence in trying out new technologies.

Similarly, husbands developed confidence in their wives. Some women registered high productivity and earned additional income by selling produce, which further improved their savings. Some women saved money in banks by themselves (Mangheni 2015). This is an example of best practice whereby there are noticeable changes in gender relations, women's empowerment, changes in men's attitudes towards their wives, improved productivity, earnings and savings. Gender-responsive RAS should aim at such holistic outcomes. The approach has been widely adopted in the country as it has allowed not only farmers but also women to innovate and question the unequal gender status quo. Many FRGs and WFRGs have evolved into businesslike

entities like Local Seed Businesses (Mangheni 2015). This is a wonderful best practice that is recommended for up and out scaling in Africa.

3.14 The COS Sis project in Benin

COS is a multi-institutional collaborative project implemented by several universities, including the Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques, Université d'Abomey-Calavi (FSA/UAC), the University of Ghana at Legon, and tertiary institutes in Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Netherlands (University of Wageningen) (Babadankpodji 2015). The project seeks to find natural alternatives to the synthetic pesticides used in cotton production. Participating cotton farmers experiment with alternative natural products such as extracts of neem (*Azadirachta indica*) or scham or caïlcédra. Neem extracts have been adopted by cotton farmers in Benin as an alternative to synthetic chemical pesticides (Babadankpodji 2015).

To ensure the supply of these extracts, male cotton farmers identified the more dynamic of their wives to participate in training for production of the extract. After training, these women trained other women and after few months, cotton farmers in the area had easy access to this vital input and obtained better yields of cotton. The production of neem extracts exceeded the needs of farmers. The women neem producers decided to popularise themselves by participating in fairs both in Benin and abroad. Besides popularizing themselves, this new activity has improved the income levels of neem oil producers and made them financially autonomous of their husbands. Implicitly, male spouses' approval of women's inclusion in the training and production of neem extracts was significant in women's gaining not only of marketable skills but also earning income (Babadankpodji 2015).

In addition, in order to sustain the supply of raw materials, women of the commune of Djidja initiated transplanting young trees from the nursery they had already put in place. The women of the commune of Kandi went further to negotiate acquisition of land with the mayor of the municipality for establishment of neem plantations. This is evidence of activation of women's agency to circumvent traditional constraints regarding lack of access to land by engaging those in control of land. The alternative pesticide transformed the lives of women of certain cotton-growing areas in Benin while maintaining a healthy environment and preserving life on Earth (Babadankpodji 2015). Lessons can be drawn from this project for adoption into other RAS projects in Africa.

3.15 Organic cotton production by women in OBEPAB

Organization Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique (OBEPAB) was formed in Benin to promote organic cotton production in order to reduce the use of synthetic chemical pesticides (Babadankpodji 2015). Due to its requirements, organic cotton is produced mainly on small plots of land. Women in Benin have small pieces of land. Thus, organic cotton is an innovation that has enabled women farmers to control their fields right from input supply to marketing and receipt of payment. In other words, organic cotton farming allows women to create an independent space; to have their own incomes and decide on the expenditure of the incomes. Organic cotton production has led to heightening women's participation there-in.

Initially, women accounted for only 2% of producers, but presently they represent about 40%. Evidently, the innovations entailed in organic cotton production in Benin respond to women's constraints through enabling production on small

pieces of land, easier access to inputs, ease of application of technologies, and direct control of their incomes (Babadankpodji 2015).

3.16 Women rice producers in the gender and wetland management project in Benin

This participatory research project funded by the International Development Research Centre and aimed at enhancing women's rights to access to natural resources through sustainable management of wetlands (Babadankpodji 2015). The project focuses on male and female rice farmers and traders whose capacity has been enhanced in production techniques, steaming techniques, management of financial resources, gender equality, access to credit, marketing techniques, and fisheries. The project has had notable outcomes that include increased yields amongst small rice producers. Other achievements along the value chain include providing small livestock for women and supplying inputs to youths; increased information to women and youths; greater participation in markets; enhanced incomes for women and youths; improved food and nutrition security in communities; reduced dependence of women on spouses and youths on their parents; enhanced bargaining capacities of women and youths; awakened consciousness of women to their rights to equitable access to natural resources; and so on.

This project has been responsible for transformative outcomes in that some women participants got registered onto the electoral registers so that they could get elected to participate more actively in the management of their communities. Other groups of women rice farmers negotiated with the local authorities for larger pieces of land for higher rice production and independence.

3.17 Projet de Productivité

Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest

Projet de Productivité Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest (Project of Agricultural Productivity in West Africa) (PPAAO) aims at increasing production of vegetables, animals and fish in Benin and 40% of the beneficiaries should be women (Babadankpodji 2015). In the rice value chain, PPAAO's provision of high-yield seeds, fertilizer, training in groups, and field visits to small producers has increased rice yields from 3 to 6 tons per hectare. With the rice parboiling technology that has been popularized by the project, and the purchase and use of the electric sorter, women add value to paddy rice before it is marketed. Improved production and processing technology have reduced women's labour time, increased their income and improved food and nutrition security of their households (Babadankpodji 2015).

In addition, the livestock component of the project has enabled women and youths to adopt the maradi, a redheaded goat breed that is more productive than local breeds. The rapidly increasing number in maradi goat herds has enabled women to increase their sales (number of goats sold by destocking) as well as income.

3.18 Uganda's farming as a family business project

Farming as a family business was a 1-year project implemented by Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) from July 2013 to June 2014 with funding from Danida. It was implemented in Luwero and Buikwe districts of central Uganda to enhance youth, men and women participation in profitable agricultural enterprises for improved food security and household incomes. Project records indicate that 3,000 women, 1,500 men, 1,000 female youth and 500 male youth were directly reached and the project led to an improvement in household harmony and gender relations. In addition, a savings culture

was inculcated, and marketing of crops improved, resulting in an increase in income (Mangheni 2015).

This project was innovative because it invested in holistic capacity development strategy targeted at all staff in the implementing organisation (extension staff, management), households (youth, men, women) and the community. Project staff trained community-based trainers (men and women) selected from within the farming communities, who in turn trained other farmers with backstopping from project trainers. This increased coverage, reduced costs and ensured that the expertise developed by the project remained within the community (Mangheni 2015).

The messages promoted by the project included sensitisation aimed at changing attitudes and skills development in gender-responsive extension methods. The messages consisted of the following:

- Sensitisation about gender issues in agriculture and the value of gender equity in promoting household food security and poverty reduction; moreover, the value of joint planning, equal participation of females and males, and equitable distribution of resources and benefits within households.
- Training in gender-responsive agricultural extension methods; moreover, entrepreneurship and agro-business skills, savings, and credit which culminated in establishment and strengthening of savings and credit schemes.
- A wide variety of communication and training methods/channels were used to reach the diverse audiences, including mass media, group discussions, and group training seminars. Farmers were initially trained as couples (husbands and wives) with youths in separate groups. There were also follow-up trainings and outreach to farmers at household level for development of shared household visions, joint household plans,

business plans, and marketing of farm produce.

- The wider community was reached through mass media, including radio and posters aimed at sensitising communities about the value of joint household planning and decision making in both English and the local language displayed in target households and public spaces such as farmer group meeting points, sub-county headquarters, police stations, and health centres (Mangheni 2015).
- There were special strategies targeting men so as to increase their participation. Upon observing that more women attended trainings compared to men, the trainers tried out innovative ways of encouraging men to attend (such as tactfully scheduling meetings on Sundays when men were more likely to be at home). This is because men, more so than women, control the productive resources within the households, and it was realised that the project was more likely to achieve the desired results when both men and women participate (SG 2000 Uganda 2013).
- Partnerships were established with the sub-county local governments whereby the sub-county community development officer served as a gender focal point person and assisted in gender sensitisation and community capacity development. In addition, partnerships were established with the police, an admittedly unconventional partner with extension services in Uganda. The role of the police involved guiding communities on security of their group savings and intervening where necessary in cases of breach of contract. They also assisted in handling cases of domestic violence identified by project beneficiaries following gender sensitisation messages (SG 2000 Uganda 2013).

3.19 Volunteer efforts for development concerns

A project entitled *Developing and disseminating*

bio-fortified crops in Uganda (2011–2016) aims at improving vitamin A among young children and iron nutrition among women of child-bearing age. It promotes growth and utilization of two important bio-fortified crops: the orange fleshed sweet potato and iron-rich beans. It also trains farmers in agronomy and seed systems of the two crops and utilisation/nutrition education which encompasses essential nutrition actions and value addition. The project targets farmer groups and over 70% of the group composition is women. Most project extension officers are males; however, they train community-based trainers called the community resource persons, 80% of whom are women. During trainings, women are encouraged to take lead positions in making presentations. The project has improved the nutrition knowledge of female farmers, nutrition status of participating families, and also enabled female farmers to improve their leadership skills as well as their incomes from sale of fresh tubers, beans and the products made from OFSP flour. Gender relations have also been reported to have improved.

Best practices

The project equips women with knowledge and skills for fulfilling their gender roles of household food and nutrition provisioning. It uses extension and communication methods suited to women's circumstances (i.e. low literacy levels, limited time, restricted mobility, low access to mass media channels such as radio, and women's preference for learning in groups for mutual support). The methods include participatory training to enhance learning, retention and practice; a variety of communication channels ranging from mass media to group and individual methods; radio programmes to supplement trainings. The use of radio was introduced through a partnership with Farm Radio International. Women were given radio sets so that they can listen in while

doing other chores separately or in groups, especially when the programme is aired during daytime. The project also holds community dialogues to obtain feedback from both male and female participants. The project further collects sex-disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation and when it was observed that most men do not attend trainings regularly, the trainers would at times specifically schedule trainings and community meetings that targeted men.

3.20 Women of Uganda Network

Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) implemented a project aimed at enhancing rural women's access to agricultural information in northern Uganda in the five districts of Apac, Kole, Oyam, Gulu, and Lira using ICTs. Women were able to access and use information on markets, agronomic practices, and other production techniques leading to improved agricultural production and knowledge of existing marketing opportunities.

Best practices

Women's agricultural production and productivity were improved through creation of links to service providers: district agriculture staff, the sub-county agriculture extension workers, the district advisory services through weekly talk show programmes on Radio Apac presented every Monday at 4:00 PM. The presenters included agricultural experts who offered technical advice and model farmers who shared their experiences with agricultural technologies. The timing of the talk shows was deemed appropriate by women farmers.

The project further provided resources to women farmers to supplement the radio talk shows, and these included mobile phones to farmer groups to enable them call back to ask pertinent questions and request technical backstopping, if required. The talk

shows were recorded on audio tapes which were later offered to farmer groups for future reference.

Furthermore, the project established the Kubere Information Centre to offer multi-dimensional information to farmers. The centre was stocked with relevant agricultural literature/reference materials. The project staff would use mobile phones to transmit relevant information sought by farmers groups through SMS messaging and return calls. The centre also facilitated exchange visits between farmers within the districts for purposes of shared learning on improved technologies and success stories.

In addition, farmers were linked to relevant service providers in the private sector within the districts, including Action for Sustainable Agriculture Initiative, Apac district agriculture network, and. ACDI trained farmers in selected agronomic practices, trained and equipped farmers with skills to extend acquired knowledge to other farmers on talk shows, and encouraged farmers to participate in other meetings to enhance their skills. ADN provided cassava varieties for multiplication, made field visits to offer technical backstopping to the adopters of their technologies, and provided additional support in inputs for cassava research.

The following achievements were reported by the beneficiaries.

- Female farmers were empowered and their abilities to speak in public spaces enhanced. They were able to articulate their agricultural problems with confidence in male-dominated audiences. This was not possible before the project.
- Through farmers' groups, female leadership skills were enhanced. Some female farmer group leaders contested with men in male-dominated mainstream politics and defeated

them. For example, one Chairperson of a women's group was elected chairperson LC3 as a result of the leadership skills she acquired.

- Farmers were organised into groups with clear leadership structures and are called WOUGNET farmers. The beneficiaries of these groups reported accessing NAADS technologies, sending children to good schools, accessing better marketing opportunities for agricultural produce, constructing commercial houses, attracting youths of both sexes into agricultural enterprises of their choice, improving productivity for crops and livestock (especially goats), and setting up stores for their produce to sell to community markets.
- The use of ICT-empowered communities to demand improved extension service delivery.

3.21 Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education

Between 1986 and 2003, Sasakawa Global 2000 worked with Ghana's MoFA through the Agricultural Extension Services Department, to establish the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education, which worked with MoFA, the University of Ghana Cape Coast, and Kwadaso Agricultural College to provide mid-career training to nearly 1,000 MoFA and NGO extension staff engaged in agricultural and rural development (Quaye 2015).

Training was also provided to more than 1 million farmers, resulting in improvement of yields of maize and several other staple food crops. Farmers planted about 145,000 production test plots throughout the country. Recommended PTP production packages included improved varieties, line and space planting and use of moderate amounts of chemical fertilizer. Average PTP maize yields (3–3.5 t/ha) were two to three times higher than the farmer's traditional yields (1.2 t/ha). Further, SG 2000 supported smallholder input delivery systems, particularly private agro-

dealers, to supply inputs to participating farmers in national crop demonstration programmes. Lines of credit were arranged with banks and major wholesale suppliers to purchase and package 'input kits' for sale to farmers. A triangular relationship was developed between the Ghana's Agricultural Development Bank, stockists, and farmers in crop demonstration programmes. ADB paid stockists for the delivery of approved inputs and farmers repaid ADB after harvest (Quaye 2015).

SG 2000 supported agro-processing by establishing a project with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in 1993 to develop and introduce improved tools and simple machines for agro-processing, which is mainly done by women. Most of the work focused on introducing improved agro-processing machinery and equipment for processing gari, fermented cassava flour.

The key outcomes of the SG 2000 programme was that maize production in Ghana increased 250% between 1986 and 2002, with nearly half of this increase coming from productivity (yield) gains. Importantly, productivity-led increases in production were also realised in rice, cassava, and sorghum. In addition, both male and female farmers built some 4,000 drying cribs, mainly in the southern regions of the country where post-harvest losses had been highest. These enabled farmers to more effectively store their extra grain and avoid having to sell at harvest time when prices are normally at their lowest (Quaye 2015).

SG 2000 Nigeria similarly worked with more than 3,000 extension agents and 3 million smallholder farmers in the diffusion of improved wheat, maize, rice, cowpea, soybean, groundnut, millet, sorghum, sesame, cotton, and cassava technologies (Arokoyo and Auta 2015). Its mode of operation was to establish, with innovative farmers, production-scale plots that demonstrated packages of improved technology (seed, fertilizer, crop

protection chemicals, improved crop management methods). In order not to exclude women, SG 2000 Nigeria established Women-Assisted Demonstrations, designed to specifically promote women farmers' extension services (Arokoyo and Auta 2015).

3.22 Ghana's Youth in Agriculture Project

Ghana, according to the United Nations and Commonwealth Secretariat, defines youth as 'persons within the age bracket of 15 and 35'. According to the 2010 Ghana Housing and Population Census, youths constitute about 35.1% of the population. Agriculture continues to be the highest contributor to Ghana's GDP and provides employment to 80% of the country's population. The Youth and Agriculture Project (YIAP) seeks to change the negative perceptions held by youths about agriculture – perceiving farmers as uneducated, unskilled, physical labourers with extremely low economic returns. Modern agriculture is more than tilling the soil and rearing animals. The sector today offers career opportunities in research, environment, financial management, engineering and other technical areas for youths to explore. Also YIAP is necessary since the farming population is ageing. The average age of farmers in Ghana is 55 years and life expectancy averages between 55 and 60 years (Quaye 2015).

The objectives of YIAD are as follows:

- Make youths regard farming as a business
- Generate appreciable income to meet farmers' domestic and personal needs
- Improve the standard of living of youths through improved income
- Motivate youths to stay in rural areas, as inputs will be delivered to their farms on credit and interest-free

- Produce sufficient food crops, meat, and fish using modern methods

YIAP has four components:

- Crops/block farms
- Livestock and poultry
- Fisheries/aquaculture
- Agribusiness

Under the block farm, state land or land acquired from chiefs or private individuals is ploughed and shared in blocks among young farmers under supervision of MoFA staff. Crops under YIAP include maize, sorghum, soybean, tomato, and onion. Other enterprises will later be included as the programme expands. YIAP provides farmers with tractor services and inputs at subsidised prices, all on credit and interest-free. Farmers may sell their produce to a Buffer Stock Company established by MoFA or to any customer of their choice. In the long run, young farmers in block farms are expected to evolve into big commercial farmers (Quaye 2015).

The livestock and poultry component of YIAP targets young unemployed men and women to engage in production of livestock, mainly pigs and poultry (broilers, layers, and guinea fowl). Beneficiary youths are given day-old chicks and provided with poultry shelter, feeds, drugs, and vaccines until they are weaned off the programme in about a year. Similarly, breeding sows and boars together with the other inputs are provided.

Each young farmer is encouraged to open a bank account as per policy of the programme. Since the production cycle of poultry, rabbits, and pigs allow multiple reproduction within a year, a young farmer stays in the programme for 2 years. It is expected that at the end of the second year, the

farmer would have gained enough knowledge and experience to be on his/her own.

The fisheries/aquaculture component of YIAP is driven by the demand for healthy fish and inadequate domestic fish production. Traditional capture fisheries are either fully exploited or near full exploitation and cannot meet the increasing demand for seafood. The youth are especially targeted to form the focal point of the project.

The agribusiness component involves training of the youth in processing, marketing, and consultancy in various areas of agricultural production. YIAP will be able to keep participants up to 1 year. After that, a young participant is weaned off the programme. To begin with, particularly for processors, simple processing equipment is provided on credit. To acquire working capital, young participants are introduced to appropriate financial institutions.

3.23 Women's Rights to Sustainable Livelihoods Project implemented by ActionAid Ghana

This project was conceived out of the recognition that smallholder women farmers are unable to participate fully in agricultural production and marketing or other socio-economic activities as a result of time spent on unpaid domestic work (cooking, cleaning, collecting water and firewood, caring for children and the sick, etc.). It has been estimated that women with children but also in waged work do 46 hours of housework weekly compared to 25 hours by men (Quaye 2015).

Moreover, given that the current direction of agricultural development is toward commercialisation, private sector investment and wealth creation, this may worsen the marginalisation of women and youth in accessing assets for agricultural production

and their rights to food security. The purpose of the Women's Rights to Sustainable Livelihoods Project in Ghana (also implemented in Rwanda) is to pilot practical solutions to reduce the burden of unpaid work women smallholder farmers face, increase their access to, and control over food and other resources and improve the environment in which they farm.

ActionAid helped to secure 80 acres of land in Upper East region for 256 smallholder women farmers as well as 130 acres for 360 women farmers in Northern region. These women had been denied access to land mostly for traditional and cultural reasons. They were compelled to use small parcels of land given by their husbands, or farm on their husbands' lands and they had no authority to decide what the produce is used for. Between 2012 and 2015, the project assisted 3,000 smallholder women farmers in northern Ghana to access land for agricultural production.

Strategic interventions of the project

Women were organized into groups of 30 members each, and the following key activities were conducted within the groups.

- Awareness and consciousness were raised through drawing daily activity calendars about the economic and social costs and benefits of unpaid care work undertaken by females within households. Men were involved in this activity to appreciate the significance and burdens of unpaid care work and support redistribution of the work within households.
- An understanding was fostered as to how men and women benefit differently from natural resources because of gender. This was done so as to gain evidence for advocacy and lobbying for social amenities that will reduce the burden

on women for unpaid care work. For example, pre-school centres are needed where women can leave their children in order to have more time to engage in farm production.

- Partnerships were formed not only with affected people but also with allies interested in addressing the problem of unpaid care work such as local NGOs, local unions, youth networks, and traditional authority and district assembly machineries who are the policy makers at community and district levels.
- Traditional leaders, elders and other community members were sensitised about rights to food and the need for women to own land for agricultural development.
- Women's groups, with the support of ActionAid Ghana, organised campaigns on land grabbing and signed tenancy agreements to secure their lands for consistent use which led to increased women's access to, and control over resources.

Good practices and lessons learnt

- Mobilising women smallholder farmers to assert their constitutional rights through advocacy.
- Enabling men to recognise the significance and burdens of unpaid care work and to start supporting women in doing unpaid work by sharing it.
- Enhancing women's skills to engage with community leaders and influence decision-making on matters related to unpaid care work and sustainable agriculture. This further enhanced women's participation in decision making within households and communities.
- Women smallholder farmers expressed their interests and were committed to change through fostering an understanding of the linkages and trade-offs among unpaid care work, food

security, and sustainable agriculture. This resulted in smallholder women farmers demanding tanks for rainwater harvesting, boreholes, and adequate participation in water user committees at community level in order to improve access

to water. They demanded child care centres in order to devote more time to work on their farms. The women further asked for support to access critical farming inputs such as land, improved seeds, extension services and fertilizer.



Section 4: Best practices

4.1 Introduction

GFRAS (2013) defines gender-responsive rural advisory services (GRRAS) as extension and advisory services designed and implemented in a way that effectively addresses the needs (both practical and strategic), interests, and concerns affecting men, women, and youth farmers in rural areas. Gender responsiveness implies that gender equality is adopted as one of the core guiding principles of RAS. GFRAS (2013) defines gender equality in RAS as ‘policies, institutional set-ups, and practices that increase women’s position with regard to sustainable livelihoods.’

GRRAS therefore ought to address the formal and informal exclusion and/or unfavourable inclusion of women and youths in the development process. Since the forms of exclusion and/or unfavourable inclusion are diverse, best practices for GRRAS follow a continuum, starting with participation, inclusion, empowerment, and ultimately, transformation of the gender status quo. It is in this context that we present best practices of gender-responsive approaches to RAS that can be shared and scaled up in other countries in order to improve the access of women and youths to RAS and thus promote poverty reduction.

4.2 Best practices of gender-responsive approaches to RAS

4.2.1 Participatory best practices

4.2.1.1 Ethiopia’s Growth and Transformation Plan, 2011–2015, and Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty

Traditional RAS is usually designed in a frame of farmers as older males who cultivate cash crops. Thus,

most traditional RAS documentation was gender-blind. Recently, political correctness required mention of gender mainstreaming and/or women and youths as cross-cutting issues within development policies, programmes, and projects. Since the purpose is more of political correctness rather than actually addressing gender inequalities, gender is often not addressed at all. To circumvent this impasse, it is important to explicitly state within development policy, programme, or project documentation the proportions of men, women and youths aimed at. This was the practice in the Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), 2011–2015, which explicitly stated that women will constitute 30% of the beneficiaries of agricultural extension services (Belay 2015). This ensures gender consciousness and promotes accountability to gender.

Another best practice is recognising that women are not a homogeneous group and planning for different groups of women. Ethiopia’s Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) exhibited this by deliberately reaching out to 100% of women in female-headed households and 30% of women in male-headed households as beneficiaries of agricultural extension services (Belay 2015).

Once the participation of women was assured, PASDEP monitoring reports indicated that women not only acquired agricultural extension packages but were also elected/appointed to decision-making positions within local committees and other public bodies in addition to becoming owners of micro-enterprises and other income-generating projects. PASDEP further ensured relative equal rights in resource ownership; for example, ensuring that equal benefits accrued to both wives and husbands by requiring that land utilisation certificates issued by regional governments bear both spouses’ names. Clearly, Ethiopia’s GTP and PASDEP are best practices that can be shared and scaled up in other countries.

4.2.1.2 Ethiopia’s WIGs and IGs

Another best practice for guaranteeing women and youth participation is exhibited in Ethiopia’s Agricultural Growth Programme (AGP). The programme clearly states that of the total common interest groups (CIGs) planned to be established, 32% were women only, 34% were for youths only, and 34% were mixed. Similarly, of the innovation groups (IGs) planned, 40% were women only, 40% were for youths only, and 20% were mixed. In addition, depending on the gender division of labour in the target *woredas*, 100% of female-headed households and 30% of women in male-headed households were targeted to participate and benefit from different forms of training and experience sharing. In order to make sure that gender did not evaporate, gender focal persons in each innovation platform were assigned at federal and regional levels as well as at district agricultural and women’s affairs office levels (Belay 2015).

4.2.1.3 Farm Radio International, Uganda

Farm Radio International (FRI) is another best practice that enhanced women’s participation in the demand for extension services in Uganda. The practice elicited women and men farmers’ extension interests through community consultations and broadcasting time. Conscious of women’s daily activity schedules, programmes were aired when women were free to listen in (Mangheni 2015). In addition, radio gave women farmers a platform to voice their concerns and interests to local governments and extension service providers, thereby guaranteeing their access to RAS.

4.2.1.4 Ghana’s YIAP

Ghana’s Youth and Agriculture Project (YIAP) seeks to heighten youth’s participation in agriculture by changing their negative perceptions about agriculture.

Young people often perceive farmers as uneducated, unskilled, physical labourers with extremely low economic returns. Such is not necessarily the case, and to prove it YIAP provides youths with land in block farms that is ploughed for free to reduce the drudgery that turns off the youths. Moreover, interest-free subsidised inputs are provided on credit. Youths may sell their produce to a Buffer Stock Company established by MoFA, or to any market of their choice (Quaye 2015). YIAP's success may not only attract youths into agriculture but may eventually produce some big commercial farmers in Ghana.

4.2.2 Inclusion

4.2.2.1 VSL in Malawi

Most poor and marginalised households residing in rural settings face challenges in accessing finances to support their livelihood goals. Studies have indicated that most of those lacking financial resources to support their livelihoods in Malawi are women (Malindi 2015). The village savings and loan (VSL) model fosters financial inclusion since most rural farmers are excluded from formal financial institutions. It is also a self-sustaining model that generates its own financial resources without getting encumbered by external borrowing. It further empowers the rural poor, particularly women, to build their own financial bases in addition to enabling them to adopt savings skills and practices. The model has helped the poor to diversify their activities by planting new crops and engaging in new income-generating activities in Malawi. VSL, which is also being implemented by CARE International in Ghana (Quaye 2015), is a best practice of inclusion that can be shared and scaled up in other countries.

4.2.2.2 PPAAO

Projet de Productivité Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest

/ Project for Agricultural Productivity in West Africa (PPAAO) in Benin estimates that 40% of its beneficiaries are women (Babadankpodji 2015). In the rice value chain, PPAAO's provision of high-yielding seeds, fertilizer, training in groups, and field visits to small producers has increased rice yields from 3 to 6 tons per hectare. With the rice parboiling technology popularized by the project, and the purchase and use of the electric sorter, women add value to paddy rice before it is marketed. Improved production and processing technology have reduced women's labour time, increased their income, and improved food and nutrition security of their households (Babadankpodji 2015). PPAAO is a best practice that combines production and processing technology to not only reduce women's processing labour time but also increase their income and improve food and nutrition security within households, a traditional women's role.

4.2.2.3 OBEPAB

Organization Béninoise pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique (OBEPAB) was formed in Benin to promote organic cotton production to reduce the use of synthetic chemical pesticides (Babadankpodji 2015). Organic cotton is produced mainly on small plots of land, and the women farmers of Benin have small pieces of land. The result of the OBEPAB initiative is that women's participation has been heightened from 2% before the project to 40% at present. The advantages of this project for its beneficiaries are that production is enabled on small pieces of land, access to inputs is easier, application of technologies is facilitated, and direct control of their incomes is assured (Babadankpodji 2015).

4.2.2.4 Farming as a Family Business project in Uganda

Farming as a Family Business project was implemented in Luwero and Buikwe districts of central Uganda

promoted the inclusion of families in profitable agricultural enterprises through improvement of household harmony and gender relations (Manheni 2015). The project's gender inclusion strategy was holistic and aimed at all its staff (extension and management), households (youth, men, and women) and communities. In addition to gender sensitisation aimed at changing cultural attitudes, the project addressed gender issues in agriculture and the value of gender equity in promoting household food security and poverty reduction and the value of joint planning, equal participation of females and males, and equitable distribution of resources and benefits within households. The project further sensitised farmers at household level about the development of shared household visions for the future, making joint household and business plans for the marketing of farm produce, thus facilitating inclusion of females within household decision making (Manheni 2015).

4.2.3 Best practices for empowerment

Women and youths may participate and be included by GRRAS, but on less favourable terms than those of men due to their subordination and exclusion. The structural environment within which women and youths operate may also be male-dominated. GRRAS should therefore not be content with heightened participation and inclusion – full empowerment for women and youths should be its ultimate goal.

4.2.3.1 CARE Malawi

The Women Empowerment Framework of CARE Malawi is an empowerment best practice that can be shared and scaled up in other countries so as to improve access of women to RAS and promote poverty reduction. The framework stresses the structural, relational, and agency dimensions of empowerment, all of which aim at enabling women and youths to

become conscious of their subordination and exclusion, to then question and ultimately shed them off, and ultimately to change the structural environment within which they operate (Malindi 2015).

4.2.3.2 GHA in Malawi

Another best practice of empowerment is the Holistic Gender, HIV and AIDS Household Approach (GHA) of Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development that empowers all productive members of the household to have better gender and power relations that enable access to and control over resources, assets, and benefits in order to improve the livelihoods of all household members whilst simultaneously addressing HIV issues (Government of Malawi 2012).

4.2.3.3 Integration of adult literacy skills in RAS programmes

Functional illiteracy is one of constraints contributing to women's subordination and exclusion in society. Thus, integrating functional literacy programmes in RAS would not only play a role in improving women's access to and utilisation of RAS, but also in fostering self awareness and awareness of their social environment, both of which are prerequisites for empowerment. NASFAM's integration of literacy skills within its conservation agriculture programme is a best practice of empowerment that can be shared and scaled up in other countries. In Malawi, this initiative enabled more women to participate in the conservation agriculture programme as lead farmers, since literacy is one of the basic requirements for one to be a lead farmer in NASFAM (Government of Malawi 2012).

4.2.3.4 Women of Uganda Network

Another empowerment best practice is the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) project aimed

at enhancing rural women's access to agricultural information via ICTs. Women were able to access and use information on markets, agronomic practices, and other production techniques which led to improved agricultural production and knowledge of existing marketing opportunities (Mangheni 2015). The project equipped women farmers with public speaking skills that enabled them to articulate their agricultural problems with confidence in male-dominated spaces and audiences. This was not possible before the project. The project further enhanced female farmers' leadership skills, whereby some female farmer group leaders contested with men in the male-dominated mainstream politics and defeated them. An example is one chairperson of a women's group who was elected chairperson of LC3 as the result of the leadership skills she had acquired (Mangheni 2015).

Transformation best practices

Transforming the unequal gender status quo within sub-Saharan Africa smallholder agriculture should be the ultimate goal of GRRAS. For it is within the smallholder agricultural sub-sector that gender inequalities are most entrenched, reproduced, justified, and legitimised through interlinked household management and farming norms and practices. GRRAS therefore has considerable scope for addressing gender inequalities within the context of improving smallholder agricultural livelihoods. Below are some transformational best practices that were identified by the country studies that can be shared and scaled up in other countries in order to improve access of women to RAS and promote poverty reduction.

4.2.3.5 The male championship model

The male championship model used by Mponela AIDS Information and Counseling Centre (MAICC) and CARE Malawi recognised male custodianship of culture and customs in every society and the influence men have

on decision making at household and community levels. The model organises men into groups of 15 to 30. The members are then trained in basic gender knowledge and skills, gender mainstreaming, gender-based violence, and shared responsibilities as a theory of change (Malindi 2015). These groups debate issues that promote aspirations of women to freely participate in decision making and economic activities. The groups engage fellow men to work towards modification of cultural norms by leading by example. Men help their spouses to participate in high-profit economic activities, jointly making decisions regarding household management, family planning, and community leadership. This development has been responsible for drastic reduction of gender-based violence in the area (Malindi 2015).

4.2.3.6 Ethiopia's Farmers' Research Group

In the empowering women farmers' innovation through the Farmers' Research Group (FRG) project, farmers participate actively in the development, verification, transfer, and adoption of improved agricultural technologies. The approach also promotes gender equality and women's empowerment by targeting both women and men and through promotion of women farmers' groups (WFRGs) (Belay 2015).

FRG members include both husbands and wives, thus emphasising intra-household gender relations. Gender sensitisation and integration of gender in the project cycle using different participatory approaches has benefited women FRG members to bring about change in overall women's livelihood and gender relations, such as confidence in trying out new technologies. Similarly, husbands develop confidence in their wives. Some women accomplish high productivity and earn additional income by selling produce, further improving their savings. Some women saved money in banks by themselves (Belay 2015).

Many FRGs and WFRGs have evolved into business entities such as local seed businesses (Belay 2015). The approach has been widely adopted in Ethiopia because it allows both farming and non-farming women to question the unequal gender status quo. This is an example of a transformation best practice whereby there are noticeable changes in gender relations, women's empowerment, change in men's attitudes towards their wives, and improved productivity. Gender-responsive RAS should aim at such holistic outcomes. This is a wonderful best practice recommended for up- and out-scaling throughout Africa.

4.2.3.7 *The COS Sis Project in Benin*

The COS Sis project seeks to find natural alternatives (such as neem extracts *Azadirachta indica*, scham, or caïlcédrat) to synthetic pesticides for use in cotton production (Babadankpodji 2015). To ensure the supply of these extracts, male cotton farmers asked the more dynamic of their wives to participate in training for production of the extracts. After training, women representatives of cotton farmers' wives trained other women and after few months, cotton farmers in the area had easy access to this vital input and obtained better yields of cotton. The women neem producers extended their newly acquired skills within both Benin and abroad. The new neem production skills have improved women producers' incomes and made them financially autonomous. Men's approval of women's inclusion in the training and production of neem extracts was significant because women gained marketable skills and also earned income (Babadankpodji 2015). Male support was therefore vital in achieving transformation in the gender status quo.

In addition, in order to sustain the supply of neem, women from the commune of Djidja initiated transplantation of young trees from the nursery they

had sown. The women of the commune of Kandi went further and negotiated acquisition of land with the mayor of the municipality for the establishment of additional neem plantations (Babadankpodji 2015). This is evidence of the deliberate circumvention of traditional constraints accounting for women's lack of access to land by engaging those in control of land for the benefit of women. Lessons can be drawn from this project for adoption into other RAS projects in Africa.

4.2.3.8 *Women rice producers in the gender and wetland management project in Benin*

This project aimed at enhancing women's rights to access natural resources through sustainable management of wetlands (Babadankpodji 2015). The project focused on strengthening the abilities of both male and female rice farmers and traders in production techniques, steaming techniques, management of financial resources, gender consciousness, access to credit, marketing skills, and fisheries management. The project increased rice yields among small producers, notably women and youths, improved segments along the value chain that are highly represented by women and youths (food production and processing), provided small livestock for women and supplies inputs to youths, increased information flow to women and youths, increased their participation in markets, enhanced their incomes, improved food and nutrition security within communities, reduced dependence of women on spouses and youths on their parents, enhanced bargaining capacities of women and youths, and awakened the consciousness of women to their rights to natural and political resources (Babadankpodji 2015).

This project has had transformative outcomes in that some women participants got registered onto the electoral registers so that they could get elected to participate more actively in the management of

their communities. Other groups of women rice farmers negotiated with the local authorities for larger pieces of land for higher rice production and to reduce dependence (Babadankpodji 2015).

4.2.3.9 *Women's Rights to Sustainable Livelihoods Project implemented by ActionAid Ghana*

This project was conceived out of the recognition of the burdens imposed on women by unpaid care work (Quaye 2015). The purpose of the project in Ghana (also implemented in Rwanda) was to pilot practical solutions to reduce the burden of unpaid work women smallholder farmers shoulder and to increase their control over food and other resources and improve the environment in which they farm (Quaye 2015).

In addition to securing some women's land rights, the project mobilised women smallholder farmers to assert their constitutional rights through advocacy. It further enabled men to recognise the significance and burdens of unpaid care work and to start sharing it. Furthermore, the project enhanced women's skills to engage with community leaders and influence decision-making on matters related to unpaid care work and sustainable agriculture. This resulted in smallholder women farmers demanding tanks for rainwater harvesting, boreholes and adequate participation in water user committees at community levels in order to improve access to water, the collection of which takes a lot of their time. They demanded child care centres in order to devote more time to work on their farms. The women further asked for support to access critical farming inputs such as land, improved seeds, extension services and fertilizer (Quaye 2015). Addressing the burdens imposed on women by unpaid care work is a key strategic and transformative best practice that GRRAS should up- and out-scale throughout Africa.



Section 5: Drivers and challenges

5.1 Drivers

Integration of gender within national development plans and strategies as well as agricultural sector development frameworks and policies are major drivers that will facilitate scaling up and scaling out of gender-responsive RAS practices in Africa. Donor insistence on mainstreaming gender within national development frameworks, policies, and strategies already accounts for much of the gender focus incorporated into national development documentation of the countries this scoping study covered. Unfortunately, donor insistence has not had much impact because many national governments only pay lip service to gender issues. Some officials even insist that it is a foreign concept. Another major driver is the number of NGOs (notably CARE, SG 2000, and ActionAid) that are gender-conscious and are spearheading GRRAS in their operations. NGOs are further influencing governments since they work in partnerships. However, NGOs are quite small compared to governments, not only in personnel but also in funding and logistics.

Growing interest of continent-wide organisations like FARA and AFAAS is another driver that will facilitate scaling up and out gender-responsive RAS practices in Africa. AFAAS is particularly suited to the task because it has forums in many countries in Africa.

Another driver that can facilitate scaling up and scaling out of gender-responsive RAS practices is the establishment of gender units. In Malawi, for example, the Department of Agriculture Extension Services (DAES) has a unit called the Agricultural Gender Roles Support Services which is charged with the responsibility of guiding the mainstreaming of gender and HIV/AIDS within the various departments

in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development. The unit has officers located in the national within the Agriculture Development Division and also at the district level (Malindi 2015). These officers build capacity of frontline extension staff in mainstreaming gender, HIV, and AIDS in agricultural policies, programmes, projects, and activities.

Ethiopia too has independent gender mainstreaming focal point persons from the Women's Affairs Department of MoA who are assigned to oversee and facilitate the integration of gender in all project components, such as agricultural production and commercialization, small-scale rural infrastructure development and management, programme management, and monitoring and evaluation (Belay 2015).

5.2 Challenges/constraints

Malindi (2014) listed several challenges/constraints that may hinder scaling up and out gender-responsive RAS practices in Malawi in particular, but which are also applicable to Africa in general. The challenges are categorized below.

5.2.1 Limited staff capacities

- Inadequate technical capacity among extension staff and farmers to mainstream gender in RAS
- Male dominance among extension staff and lead farmers that limit provision of RAS to women and youths

5.2.2 Policy-related challenges

- Inadequate commitment of staff to translate policy into practice
- Inability of policy makers to prioritise

gender and allocate requisite resources

- Inability of some policy documents to explicitly identify actions that can address the gender inequalities in agriculture
- Limited awareness in some of the policy/strategy documents amongst stakeholders that impedes undertaking of holistic actions
- Inability of staff to generate indicators of gender redress that could be monitored and/or evaluated
- Inadequate finances to fund gender initiatives

5.2.3 Challenges/constraints within approaches, processes and tools

- Limited documentation and sharing of various innovative approaches for use and scaling up and out by other stakeholders
- Women's limited control of radios and cell phones
- Inadequate gender disaggregation of data
- Inability to respond to behavioural conceptions and perceptions that deter progress in mainstreaming gender
- Limited capacity to consolidate sector-wide gender reports
- Multiple understandings of the concept gender and processes of gender mainstreaming leading to inconsistent implementation of gender-responsive RAS.

5.2.4 Programme- and project-related challenges/constraints

1. Low literacy levels among women farmers, resulting in limited representation of women in decision-making positions.
2. Limited women's participation in decision making (both at work place and community levels) because most positions are male dominated
3. Limited access to, control over, and

- ownership of agriculture assets and capital such as land, credit, inputs, and income
4. Women's agricultural labor overloads that are not remunerated commensurately from agricultural income earned
 5. The burdens and opportunity costs of women's unpaid care work
 6. Limited access of women to agricultural markets
 7. Lack of capital for women and youths to finance their enterprises
 8. Inability of women to use fertilizer coupons due to other competing basic requirements that prompt them to sell their fertilizer coupons
 9. Limited mechanisms for mainstreaming gender into extension service provision
 10. Limited documentation on successful mainstreaming of gender into extension service provision
 11. Limited promotion of gender-responsive extension service provision programmes and activities (Malindi 2015)

Section 6: Road map

6.1 Introduction

This proposed road map for mainstreaming gender-sensitive approaches, tools, and practices into RAS with a view to promoting sustainable agriculture in Africa builds on the identified key innovations that have helped improve the productivity of women and youths, the identified and documented best practices of gender-responsive approaches to RAS, and the identified drivers and challenges/constraints that may facilitate or hinder scaling up and out of gender-responsive RAS practices in Africa.

6.2 Getting off the policy table

The scoping studies revealed that Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Malawi have gender responsiveness built into their national development and agricultural sector policies. Malawi and Nigeria have specific national gender policies as well. Although they were not documented, Uganda has gender-responsive national development and agricultural sector policies, including the National Development Plan 2010/2011 and the Gender and Poverty Strategy of the National Agricultural Advisory Services 2014/2015.

However, most of these policies have not been operationalised. There is lack of specific actions that address gender disparities within the agricultural sector. Most policies further lack gender targets and indicators for monitoring and evaluating implementation of activities. In some countries like Malawi, awareness of strategies like the Agriculture Sector Gender HIV and AIDS Strategy is limited among various stakeholders, yet implementing the strategy requires the input of those stakeholders. Gender in most sub-Saharan African countries seems to be

stuck on the tables where policies are formulated. There is need to breathe life into the policies so that they get translated into impact-laden measurable actions among smallholder farming communities.

6.3 Breathing life into gender responsiveness

Gender is a subject of exclusion. That is the reason national gender-responsive policies, especially within the agricultural sector, are rarely operationalised. Most have remained lifeless because they were not formulated to be effective (whereby the participation of poor men and women leads to articulation of their interests so that they can influence institutional rules and practices). This lifelessness extends to the matter of impact (the making of decisions about resource use that leads to livelihood improvements in the material sense). Most of the policies, unfortunately, were formulated only for accountability ('See, we are gender sensitive!'), thus remaining perfunctory.

The technical capacities needed to ensure that policies and programmes are translated into measurable gender-responsive actions at the grassroots do exist in sub-Saharan African, especially in some universities and international NGOs such as CARE, ActionAid, and World Vision. What is lacking is conviction (political will) among national policymakers and implementers of the practical relevance of promoting gender equality in agricultural programmes and projects. For the policymakers and implementers are also products of the same environments into which the unequal gender status quo is reproduced, justified, legitimised, and entrenched.

Therefore, capacities needed to breathe life into gender-responsive policies are those for engaging policy makers and implementers into dialogue to build shared understanding of gender equality and

why it is important to pursue this goal, especially in RAS. Awakening their consciousness to gender, how it manifest itself, especially in the agricultural sector, and its costs not only to women's and girls' lives, but to also household livelihoods and to agricultural programme and project success would be a good starting point.

Worry about costs of translating into practice the gender-responsive policies could be put to rest by emphasising that no new funding is required in pursuing the goal of gender equality. Resources could be obtained from existing budgetary allocations through re-adjustments and re-allocations therein, and at higher effectiveness of outcomes. Introduction to the theory and practice of gender budgeting would allay policymakers' and implementers' unease about extra costs for promoting GRRAS.

Technical capabilities could also be sourced from universities and international NGOs to guide policymakers and implementers in designing actions for promoting gender equality in RAS at ideological, organisational, budgetary, and logistical levels. Agricultural institutions, including training institutions, need similar gender ideological re-orientation not only to build a shared understanding of gender equality and why it is important to pursue this goal but also to become accountable for gender equality as part of their routine day-to-day operations.

6.4 Promoting gender responsiveness, fighting drudgery

The scoping studies identified several gender-responsive technologies and innovations that reduced drudgery while simultaneously enhancing productivity along the agricultural value chain. These could be promoted and up-scaled. For example, Ghana's YIAP concept of the block farm reduced drudgery through provision of subsidised and interest-free

tractor services to youth farmers to plough the land on credit. Drudgery is one of the key turn-offs for youths in agriculture. The agribusiness component of the project trained youth in processing and marketing in various areas of agricultural production. Simple processing equipment was provided on credit too. Youth farmers are able to pay off the services received on credit after selling their produce, and a market is guaranteed by the Buffer Stock Company established by MoFA (even though they also had the option of other markets of their choice). For working capital, youth farmers weaned off the project were introduced to appropriate financial institutions for support. YIAP methods could be adopted for promoting and up-scaling gender-responsive technologies that reduce drudgery while simultaneously enhancing productivity along the agricultural value chain.

The PPAO rice project in Benin introduced the rice parboiling technology and the electric sorter, which not only reduced women's labour time in processing rice but also added value to paddy rice before it was marketed. Improved production and processing technology both increased women's income and improved food and nutrition security of their households. These technologies could be promoted and up-scaled amongst rice producers throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

6.5 Agri-SMEs to empower women and youth

The implementation mechanisms of Ghana's YIAP could be adopted to promote and facilitate agri-SMEs that empower women and youth in sub-Saharan Africa. One of the objectives of YIAD is to make youths understand farming as a business. YIAD therefore has an agri-business component that trains youth in processing, marketing, and offering consultancy services in various areas of the agricultural industry.

Another example is Ghana's Northern Rural Growth Programme (NRGP), which seeks to include women in the male-dominated commodity chains. The programme works with poor rural people to undertake income-generating agricultural projects, and supports marketing of their products in southern Ghana and abroad. The NRGP is driven by the value chain approach in four commodity windows: industrial crops (maize, soya, sorghum); fruits and vegetables (papaya, okra, chilli); women's crops (shea, sesame, moringa); and animals (guinea fowl, small ruminants). In each of these chains, the programme intends to develop efficient, transparent, and sustainable contractual business relationships between and among the value chain actors and service providers. The critical actors in these chains are the farmers, input dealers, agricultural mechanisation service providers, aggregators/buyers, agro-processors/industries, and consumers. Other essential service providers that support the process are financial institutions and technical service providers.

The key achievements of the programme include increasing women's access to land and other productive resources, enabling some participants to triple their incomes as a result of direct links to international markets. Through the activities of the programme, women are now represented at the district-level value chain committees where they strongly articulate their concerns.

Implementation mechanisms of Ethiopia's Empowering New Generations with Improved Nutrition and Economic Opportunities (ENGINE) project are other ways of promoting and facilitating agri-SMEs that empower women and youth. Adopting the farmers' research group (FRG) and women farmers research group (WFRG) approaches, the ENGINE project actively involves farmers in development, verification, transfer, and adoption of improved

agricultural technologies. The approach helps in developing and adapting appropriate agricultural technologies that meet farmers' needs, refines available technologies to fit actual farmers' situations, and develops problem-solving capacities among farmers. The approaches further promote gender equality and women's empowerment through involving both women and men in all the project's activities. Many FRGs and WFRGs have evolved into business entities such as local seed businesses.

6.6 Integration of health and nutrition into the value chain

Ethiopia's ENGINE project is again a good example that integrates health and nutrition into agricultural value chains, from which lessons can be learnt for up and out scaling. The project is implemented jointly by two Ethiopian government Ministries (Agriculture and Health) and targets poor farmers faced with food and nutritional insecurity. The main interventions focus on agricultural production, especially vegetable production, rearing of shoats, training in nutrition and proper feeding practices, and fostering a savings culture through introduction to saving through formal banks to promote proper management of financial resources at the household level. The approach has exhibited considerable improvement in agricultural production, household nutrition, and income.

Developing and disseminating bio-fortified crops in Uganda (2011–2016), is another project that integrates health and nutrition from which more lessons could be learned. The project aims at improving vitamin A among young children and iron nutrition among women of child-bearing age. The project promotes growth and utilisation of bio-fortified crops, namely the orange fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) and iron-rich beans. It also trains

farmers in agronomy and seed systems of the two crops and utilisation/nutrition education that includes essential nutrition actions (ENA) and value addition. The project targets farmer groups and over 70% of the group composition is female. Although most of the project extension officers are males, they train community-based trainers called community resource persons, 80% of whom are women. During trainings, women are encouraged to take lead positions in making presentations. The project has improved the nutrition knowledge of the female farmers, nutrition status of participating families, enabled female farmers to improve their leadership skills, and improved their incomes from sale of fresh tubers, beans and various products made from OFSP flour.

appropriate technologies to farm families in crop, livestock and fish production, processing, utilisation, and marketing through regional officers and other stakeholders. In addition, WIAD collaborates with various institutions including research, projects, and MoFA directorates in supporting dissemination and capacity-building efforts in regions and districts. Monitoring and evaluation of implemented programmes within regions and districts are also key responsibilities of WIAD.

6.7 Women in Agricultural Development Directorate of MoFA

The Women in Agricultural Development Directorate (WIAD) is one of the seven Technical Directorates of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) in Ghana. Its key functions include:

- Improved nutrition interventions, especially bio-fortification, food fortification, food enrichment, nutrition education regarding food production, post production and food consumption
- Value addition to agricultural produce such as food processing and preservation
- Food safety along the agricultural value chain (safe production and handling of exotic vegetables, cottage level processing, etc.)
- Resource management (farm, home, processing sites)
- Gender mainstreaming of all agricultural policies, programmes, and projects

WIAD ensures provision of technical backstopping to regional and district staff for effective transfer of

Section 7: Conclusions

With the exception of Sudan, the countries covered by the scoping studies that informed this synthesis report – Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda – have gender responsive national development and agricultural sector policies and strategies. In addition, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda have national gender policies too. However, most of these policies and strategies have not been operationalised. Gender in most sub-Saharan African countries is stuck on the tables where policies are formulated. There is need to breathe life into the policies so that they get translated into impact-laden measurable actions amongst smallholder farming communities.

Nonetheless, the scoping studies identified a number of innovative programmes and projects that governments and civil society organisations have put in place to promote gender-responsive provision of RAS. These innovations consciously enhance the participation of women, men, and youth. Participation of women and youths was further enhanced by gender-responsive technologies and innovations that reduced drudgery while simultaneously enhancing productivity along the agricultural value chain. In addition, other gender-responsive technologies and innovations that reduced drudgery while simultaneously enhancing productivity along the agricultural value chain were also identified. Further, innovations were identified in the scoping studies that enhanced participation of sub-Saharan African women and youths in agri-SMEs.

Besides innovations for planned participation of all, reducing drudgery and enhancing the participation of sub-Saharan African women and youths in agri-SMEs, other innovations focused on the inclusion of the excluded (and the unfavourably included). These included VSL models in Malawi and Ghana that foster

financial inclusion since most rural farmers, especially women, youths, and poor men, are excluded from formal financial institutions. Another innovation was the inclusion of women in the production of organic cotton on small plots of land, to which most women have access in Benin. Other innovations included those that integrated health and nutrition into agricultural value chains and those that developed and disseminated bio-fortified crops in Uganda.

The scoping studies further noted that participation and inclusion of women and youths is often practices on unfavourable terms compared to men due to the structural environment which is so male-dominated. Another barrier is the internalisation of the subordination and exclusion of women and youths to men. GRRAS should therefore not be content with heightened participation and inclusion only. GRRAS should further have empowerment goals. Good examples of empowerment potential of GRRAS included CARE Malawi's Empowerment Framework, Malawi's holistic Gender, HIV and AIDS Household Approach, integration of functional literacy programmes in RAS, and innovations such as those in Uganda that cultivated female farmers' leadership skills. As a result of cultivating female farmers' leadership skills, some female farmer group leaders became so empowered that they contested with men in the male-dominated mainstream politics and defeated the men.

Transforming the unequal gender status quo within sub-Saharan Africa smallholder agriculture should be the ultimate goal of GRRAS. For it is within the smallholder agricultural sub-sector that gender inequalities are most entrenched, reproduced, justified, and legitimised through interlinked discriminatory household management and farming norms and practices. GRRAS therefore has considerable scope for addressing gender inequalities within the context of

improving smallholder agricultural livelihoods. Best practices of transformational GRRAS identified by the scoping studies included the male championship model used by Malawi's Mponela AIDS Information and Counselling Centre and CARE Malawi, the FRG model in Ethiopia, the COS Sis neem production project in Benin, and the Women Rice Producers' project again in Benin that was so transformative that some women participants got registered onto the electoral registers so that they could get elected to participate more actively in the management of their communities. Other groups of women rice farmers also negotiated with the local authorities for larger pieces of land for higher rice production and to reduce dependence on spouses. Lessons can be drawn from these projects for adoption into other RAS projects in Africa.

In conclusion, for GRRAS to be realised, it is imperative that national gender responsive policies and strategies are operationalised. There are also a host of key innovations that have helped to improve the productivity of women and youth and best practices of gender-responsive approaches to RAS that could be scaled up and out for promotion of GRRAS to reduce poverty and gender inequalities in smallholder agriculture in Africa.

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