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Tools and strategies for designing gender-sensitive policies for linking smallholder agricultural producers to regional markets

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Introduction

Though women constitute about 70% of the total workforce engaged in agricultural activities in Sub-Saharan Africa, they are often excluded from the decision-making processes and their needs are rarely reflected in local and national agricultural markets and trade programmes. Further, the women and youth are often excluded from business relations and have minimal control over access to factors of production such as land, seeds, fertilizer, credit and technology. There are gender disparities in access to agricultural markets in Africa. This impinges on their capacities to benefit fully from regional agricultural markets and interventions.

This policy brief outlines some tools and strategies for gender-sensitive policies to link women to markets in Africa. It explores women's participation in higher agricultural markets and identifies factors that limit women from accessing these markets. In response to these factors, it identifies a complementary conceptual perspective, supported by empirical evidence as the basis of identifying tools and strategies for addressing the limitations. The complementary conceptual perspective is itself derived from the mixed demand- and supply-side good governance, gendered value chain development, and building chain partnerships frameworks.

Current status of women in Africa

The current status of women in Africa is a situation of complete marginalization. They are excluded from decision making at different levels of society, and have marginalized access to resource, knowledge of and application of market quality standards. Further, they hardly participate in economics-based networks. The result is limited opportunity and ability to participate in higher and more remunerative agricultural markets in Africa. This is counter developmental.

Some of the causes of their marginalization or low participation are:

1. Existing traditional and cultural norms, and
2. Discriminatory laws and practices of inheritance and ownership to land.

Other causes are contextual and infrastructural limitations. These include poor transportation, lack of cold chain facilities, lack of facilities for staying overnight, lack of separate places of convenience for men and women at marketplaces and fear for physical security. They also include low mobility, low access to training, poor access to market information and distinct rights and obligations of men and women in the households, which affects the latter's scope to use opportunities to invest and take risks. In addition, there are human and social capital constraints. Among these are inability to comply with standards, inability to interpret market information, and lack of financial, human and social capital to develop required linkages with other actors and service providers.

The tools and strategies to address these multiple limitations are multi-faceted. They include good policies to address gender disparity, institutional reforms to promote women's participation in the decision-making process and give voice to women and to increase government effectiveness. Further, requirement is the need to build the human and social capacity of women to participate more effectively in decision-making and higher markets.

A conceptual perspective that combines three frameworks is identified to be suitable for identifying tools and strategies for policies to link women to agricultural markets in Africa.

These are:

1. The mixed demand- and supply-side good governance framework (World Bank/IFAD/FAO, 2009,
2. The gendered value chain development framework (World Bank/IFAD/FAO, 2009), and
3. The market interaction matrix framework for trading-up (KIT and IIRR, 2008).

Strengthening the policy-making processes and introducing public sector management reforms

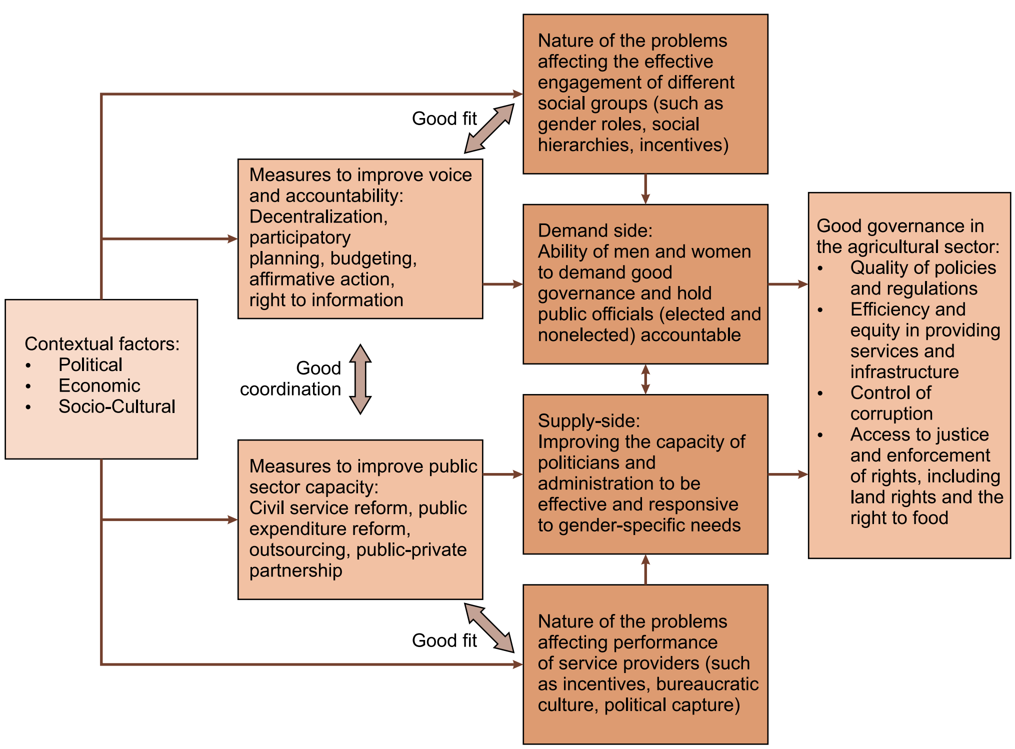
The good governance framework (Figure 1) provides the basis for tools and strategies that can strengthen women's voices and accountability in policy-making, and improve public sector capacity. In terms of policy interventions, the demand side of the good governance framework enables us to take into account challenges women face in making themselves heard and demanding accountability.

On the supply side, the good governance framework helps to identify interventions that would enable public sector reforms required to address the specific problems that prevent public agencies and others from performing their tasks effectively, in this case, especially with regard to women.

The requirements for strengthening gender in the policy-making processes, based on the demand side of the good governance framework include:

- Representation of women in political institutions
- Participation of women in political processes
- Gender-responsive budgeting
- Strengthening analytical support for women in political institutions
- Analysing the political economy of policy making and strengthening the capacity for policy change management.

Figure 1: The mixed demand- and supply-side framework for strategies to improve governance (Source: World Bank/IFAD/FAO, 2009)



There are a number of tools and strategies that are suitable for addressing the requirements of the demand side policy process of good governance.

These include:

1. Supporting the activities of women participating in elections at different hierarchical levels of society, such as the household, local community and national levels.
2. Training women in their roles and accountabilities in political institutions. One of the strategies for this is strengthening elected women's capacity to serve effectively in parliamentary committees. The other strategy is to ensure that there is continuous availability of well-qualified women for senior positions in public and private organizations in each African country. The latter can be achieved through emphasis on women's education, with incentives and scholarships for women in especially science and technology.
3. Capacity building towards gender-responsive budgeting. One of the strategies for this would be training to enable women in legislature and other decision-making bodies conduct relevant analysis of agricultural expenditure and undertake gender analysis of budgets. This requires strengthening the women's machinery to have an effective voice in the analytical support for gender analysis and gender impact assessments.
4. Another tool is to ensure that women in decision-making bodies such as the legislature and advocacy organizations can analyse the political economy of policy making and policies for change management. The strategy for this tool is to strengthen the capacity of women policy makers and advocacy NGOs to be able to analyse the political economy of specific policy processes.

Public sector management reforms to ensure gender-sensitive policies

The supply side of the good governance framework enables us to identify a number of tools and strategies public sector management reforms to ensure gender-sensitive policies.

These are:

1. Establishment of national and sub-national machineries for promoting gender equality. This may take one of the following three forms:
    - Unit located in the country's president's office (South Africa and Zambia),
    - Fully fledged ministries responsible for gender and women (Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Ghana),
    - Departments or units within bigger structures (Botswana and Swaziland).

Each country may choose the form that it finds most appropriate. Whatever the case, the national and local women's machineries so established should have clear mandates, roles and responsibilities. The mandate and roles should include facilitation, coordination, monitoring, and exchange and sharing of experiences, information and best practices among stakeholders. Further, it must also develop the competencies of the stakeholders to enable them influence policies, programmes and projects, as well as lobby for increased means to address the gender equity agenda.

2. The approach to integrating gender into operationalizing public management reforms should be holistic. Therefore, in designing mainstream agricultural programmes, it is important to reach both men and women, and to mainstream gender into policies, programmes and projects and not just identifiable units. In addition, gender mainstreaming should be discussed in all units, including technical divisions, administrative human resources and financial divisions.
3. The machinery for gender equality must be provided with high quality technical support on gender analysis. The strategies include training and support of the national and decentralized staff of the gender machinery and MDAs to be able to build in gender monitoring and evaluation of current activities, quantify existing gender gaps and build in strategies and instruments to address these. To ensure these happen, a specific budget allocation to facilitate missions, networks and training should be provided.
4. Encourage ministries and other government agencies to introduce quotas to improve gender balance among technical and managerial staff. The strategies to achieve this will include linking gender targets to economic incentives for public sector organizations; this way gender becomes a principle of excellence in public sector management.
5. Identification of donor programmes, as well as donor projects to be implemented in partnership with national governments as entry points for more affective support to enhance linking of women to agricultural markets. The strategies would be identifying, building and supporting national women's machinery, gender units and poverty reduction strategies, national economic planning, budget processes and agricultural sector programmes.
6. Another tool is to develop effective gender accountability mechanisms – through the introduction of gender perspectives and gender equity indicators in budgeting processes at all levels of government.
7. Creation of synergies between the women's machineries and strategic actors, such as parliament, professional organizations, academic institutions and media.
8. Finally, another tool that the women's machinery can use includes assisting in the effective coordination and collaboration among different types of women machineries and gender units through joint meetings and planning.

Tools and strategies to contribute directly to reforms in the way agricultural activities are organized to enhance women's links to markets

Based on a gendered value chain development and trading up perspectives, a number of tools and strategies which contribute directly to reforms in the way agricultural activities are organized to enhance women's links to markets are identifiable.

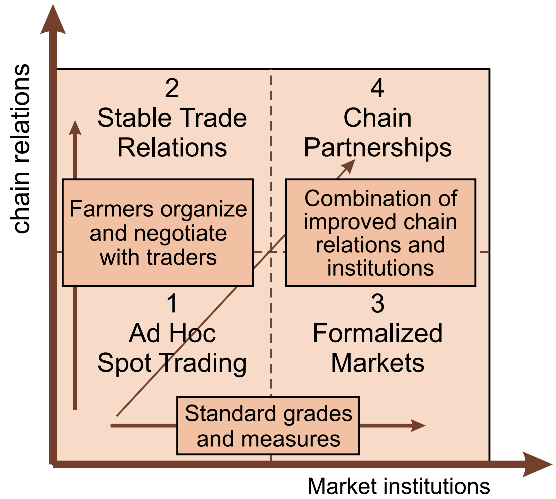
The gendered value chain development framework provides us with tools and strategies to address the constraints and challenges in taking advantage of opportunities in the agricultural markets. This is because it focuses on the full range of activities (functions and service provision in value chains), and thereby provides us with opportunities to link women to higher markets.

The tools and strategies derived from the gendered value chain development approach include:

1. Identifying and understanding opportunities and constraints along chains which can benefit women and also meets economic, social and environmental sustainability criteria.
2. Understanding vertical and horizontal linkages between the actors, especially women in the selected value chain(s)
3. Understand the relationships embedded in the linkages and considering incentives for upgrading of chain in favour of women
4. Identifying suitable areas for capacity development and developing programmes for women entrepreneurs using the following strategies:
   - Entrepreneurial skill programmes
   - Basic literacy and numeracy
   - Confidence building
   - Risk management
5. Developing capacity for collective action and market linkages using the following strategies:
   - Promoting women's representation in Rural Peoples' Organizations (RPOs)
   - Developing RPO networks
   - Supporting women in developing chain partnerships

As a complement to the gendered value chain development, chain partnerships that are based on the market interaction/trading up framework for market improvement could be developed (Figure 2).

The measures to improve market trading involve two equally important components in order to achieve chain partnership (See Figure 2).



Movements in the market interactions matrix

Figure 2 Market interaction matrix framework for market improvement.

This will involve two aspects, namely:

(i) Building stronger chain relationships, and

(ii) Building stronger market institutions.

The tools and strategies for building stronger chain relations include:

1. Organizing the chain actors;
2. Creating awareness among the actors and service providers regarding each other's importance;
3. Ensuring there is specialization in certain roles and services to enhance efficiency;
4. Coordination of the chain by a chain facilitator or service provider; and
5. Moving towards chain partnership (combination of improving chain relations and market institutions).

The tools and strategies for building stronger market institution include:

1. Standardization of quality, weights and other measures in the trade/marketing of commodities;
2. Development of market information system to help in decision-making;
3. Provision of financial services to keep trade going;
4. Provision of business support services such as transport, research and development, and utilities for the industry; and
5. Use of policy leverage such as participation in sectoral policies, trade tariff development, etc.

Role of different stakeholders to ensure gender-sensitive policies

The stakeholders critical in ensuring that the tools and strategies for gender-sensitive policies link women to markets include:

- Farmer organizations
- Trader organizations
- Local authorities
- National governments and donors
- Donors and NGOs

The roles expected to be played by these different stakeholders are as follows:

1. *The role of farmer organizations*

Farmers' organizations are critical because a well-functioning one promotes market-oriented farming systems to produce agricultural products that meet consumer demand, based on the understanding that consumers are an important part of the value chain. Such organizations would not seek to control the entire value chain, but would rather focus on efficiency and effectiveness in input acquisition, production and meeting market requirements. They will seek to work with travelling traders, wholesalers and retailers to ensure that the whole chain works efficiently and becomes more competitive.

2. The role of trader organizations

Traders tend to have a bad image, especially as stereotypically they are seen as wanting to exploit farmers. Traders' associations can improve their public image by setting clear standards, rules and regulations for their members, and encouraging transparency and fair trade ethics. Further, they can improve their business by taking a more active role in the value chain by building long-term relationships with farmers through sharing information on market developments and setting quality standards and using calibrated weights and measures in their transactions.

3. The role of local authorities

Local authorities such as district assemblies, chiefs and others can promote conditions for women to be linked to higher and more stable markets by ensuring good management and facilities in marketplaces. In addition, they can introduce standard grades, weights and measures and get other actors to be involved in the decentralized management of the marketplace. Further, they can mediate and facilitate coordination of the various stakeholders in the market.

4. The role of national governments and donors

National governments and donors would be expected to provide or facilitate the provision of public goods such as good roads, rural infrastructure and telecommunications. The provision of appropriate macro-economic policies, such as trade policies, price policies, competition policy and consumer protection among others, are important for ensuring improved linkages to markets. National governments are also expected to ensure rational taxes, deregulation, decentralizing issuing of licenses, in other words, create an enabling business environment.

5. The role of donor agencies and NGOs

There needs to be a mind change among NGOs and donor agencies working with farmers and traders. They should see traders as potential partners not enemies of farmers, and support them to generate spin-off benefits for other chain actors, including farmers. They should strengthen trader associations through capacity building and managerial support, especially for women farmers and traders not well integrated into the product market, and use subsidies to support the capacity building of women in areas of training and technical assistance.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIRR	International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute of Netherlands
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
RPO	Rural People's Organization
UN	United Nations

About FARA

FARA is the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, the apex organization bringing together and forming coalitions of major stakeholders in agricultural research and development in Africa.

FARA is the technical arm of the African Union Commission (AUC) on rural economy and agricultural development and the lead agency of the AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to implement the fourth pillar of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), involving agricultural research, technology dissemination and uptake.

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 supporting Africa's sub-regional organizations (SROs) in strengthening capacity for agricultural innovation.

FARA's Value Proposition: to provide a strategic platform to foster continental and global networking that reinforces the capacities of Africa's national agricultural research systems and sub-regional organizations.

FARA will make this contribution by achieving its *Specific Objective* of sustainable improvements to broad-based agricultural productivity, competitiveness and markets.

Key to this is the delivery of five *Results,* which respond to the priorities expressed by FARA's clients. These are:

1. Establishment of appropriate institutional and organizational arrangements for regional agricultural research and development.
2. Broad-based stakeholders provided access to the knowledge and technology necessary for innovation.
3. Development of strategic decision-making options for policy, institutions and markets.
4. Development of human and institutional capacity for innovation.
5. Support provided for platforms for agricultural innovation.

FARA will deliver these results by supporting the SROs through these Networking Support Functions (NSFs):

NSF1/3. Advocacy and policy

NSF2. Access to knowledge and technologies

NSF4. Capacity strengthening

NSF5. Partnerships and strategic alliances

FARA's donors are the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission (EC), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Syngenta Foundation, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the World Bank and the Governments of Italy and the Netherlands.

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