



# Closing the gender gap through agri-food value chain development (VCD)

## How EU development cooperation can help close the gender gap in VCD

In the EU's Gender Action Plan II (GAP II) 2016–2020, the European Union set itself an ambitious target to mainstream gender in 85 % of new EU initiatives across all sectors by 2020. GAP II implementation is mandatory for the EU and EU Member States and also contributes to the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, as well as several of the SDGs. The 2017 GAP II Annual Report found that the use of gender analysis in the formulation of all actions is increasing, but that there is the need for more clarity about concepts and simplification of procedures and methodologies that allow gender to be integrated meaningfully into the planning and design of new projects and actions.<sup>1</sup>

Hence the purpose of this Brief is to provide EU staff with an overview on how to incorporate a gender-responsive approach in the design, implementation and monitoring of value chain development projects. The Brief complements the guidance note *Because women matter: Designing interventions in food, nutrition and agriculture that allow women to change their lives*.<sup>2</sup> It also complements the EU's Value Chain Analysis for Development (VCA4D) methodology, which provides a detailed assessment of a value chain's operation and its impact on the main economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development; gender equality is one of the six domains of the social analysis.<sup>3</sup>

There are many excellent documents available which discuss how gender issues may be mainstreamed into value chain development (VCD) and a short bibliography is presented in Annex 1. This Brief differs from many other documents on gender and value chains and is original in that it, firstly, considers VCD from the needs of women—whether they be smallholder farmers, value chain entrepreneurs or employees in the agribusiness sector—and, secondly, places the design of gender-responsive VCD in the context of the project cycle, including aspects of programme management.



Economically independent women who engage in cross-border trade between Zambia and Malawi are role models for others.  
Photo: Clare Bishop

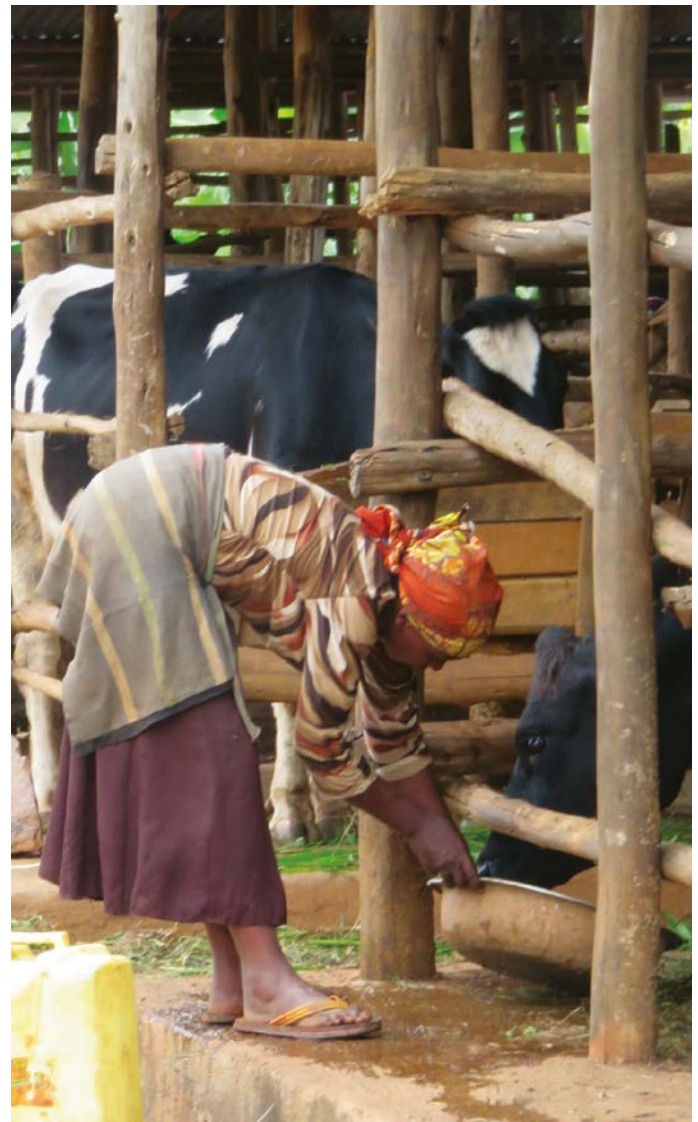
## Core messages

Smallholder farming systems are becoming increasingly integrated into value chains that serve local, national, regional and global markets. VCD is now a key strategy in the development agenda for promoting economic growth. VCD has been supported in approximately 14 % of EU projects and programmes contracted during the period 2014-2018.

**1. Promoting women's engagement in profitable VCD stimulates economic growth and sustainable development impacts.** Women are a significant economic resource in many countries, especially in settings where there is significant male outmigration resulting in the feminisation of the agricultural sector. They play a major role as smallholders, entrepreneurs, family and wage labourers, and value chain actors. These activities take place both in the rural economy and in artisanal processing and retailing businesses located in peri-urban and urban areas. However, the focus on the technical aspects to promote VCD often takes precedence and opportunities to promote the economic empowerment of women are overlooked. With millions of young people entering the workforce each year, it is relevant to pay specific attention to the challenges and priorities facing young rural women as their needs often become lost in the nexus of 'youth-rural-gender'.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence demonstrates that greater attention to identifying and addressing the differing constraints, needs and priorities of women and men in the design and delivery of VCD programmes improves productivity, reduces food losses along the value chain<sup>5</sup> and stimulates higher rates of economic growth.<sup>6</sup> In most cases, adopting gender-responsive approaches increases production, improves the quality and stability of supplies, reduces post-harvest losses, strengthens the supplier base, improves trust along the chain, develops new linkages and stimulates new markets.<sup>7</sup> In turn, this contributes to more significant and sustainable development impacts.

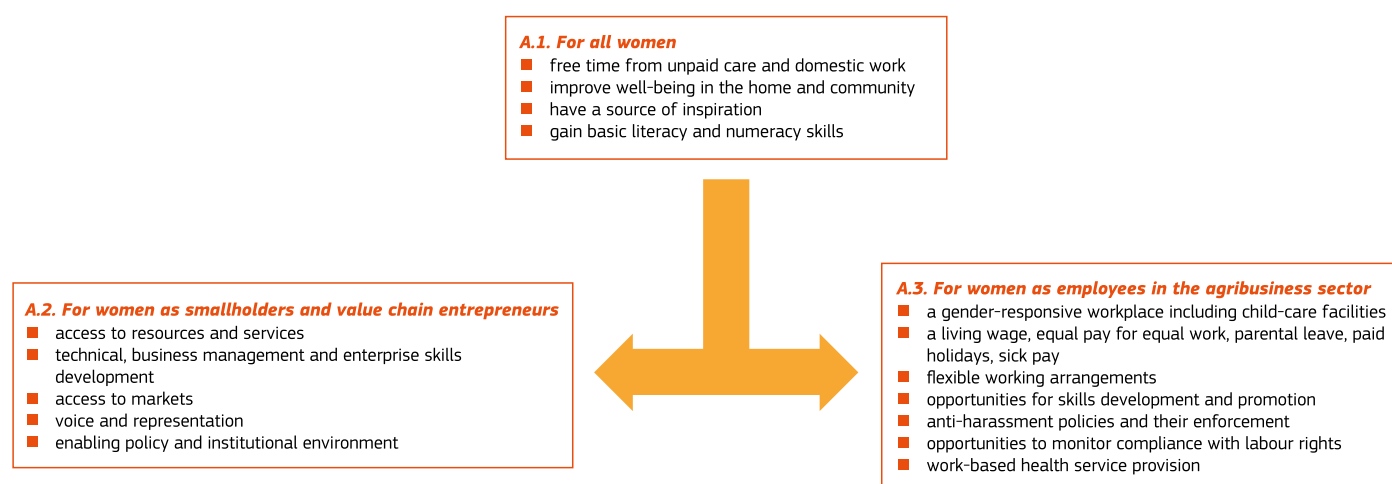
**2. Promoting gender transformative approaches not only improves the value chain, but also improves the well-being of women and their families.** There is growing recognition that standard approaches to addressing women's economic empowerment are not sufficient; more needs to be done—and to be done differently—to achieve lasting benefits to improve the quality of life for women and their families. Many gender mainstreaming initiatives focus on the economic aspects of women's empowerment, ensuring they have access to inputs and technical advice, and have a voice in decision-making bodies; these contribute to short-term productivity gains.<sup>8</sup> However, for benefits to be sustainable in the longer term, women want not only to be able to work productively, but they also need to be motivated by having a voice in how the income they generate is spent. They want the quality of their lives to be improved, to reduce the time they spend on unpaid domestic and care work, and to be free from gender-based violence. This involves using gender-transformative approaches to move beyond treating the symptoms of gender inequality, such as unequal access to resources and benefits, to addressing the underlying causes which are deeply rooted in gender norms, attitudes and behaviours,



Women in Rwanda are active in dairy value chains and benefit from training in improved livestock management.  
Photo: Clare Bishop

power relations and social institutions.<sup>9</sup> The EU DEVCO is actively promoting gender transformative approaches in the global arena.<sup>10</sup>

**3. Gender-responsive VCD contributes to the achievement of the EU's Gender Action Plan II (2016-2020) and delivering on the SDGs.** The EU recognises that increasing women's ownership over resources and their participation in society and the economy are not only a matter of social justice, but will also contribute to stronger and more inclusive economic growth that benefits society as a whole. The EU Gender Action Plan II 2016-2020 has three thematic priorities, one of which promotes economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women. Women's economic empowerment through VCD is relevant to several SDGs, in particular SDG2 on zero hunger, SDG5 on gender equality, SDG8 on decent work and economic growth, and SDG9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure.

**Figure 1: The three stages of initiating gender responsive planning in VCD**

## A. How to make VCD more gender responsive

The activities discussed below cover the breadth of initiatives to make VCD more gender responsive, from those which address the symptoms of gender inequality to those seeking more profound impacts through gender transformative approaches. They have been grouped into three: the first group is relevant to all women and lays the basis for their engagement in VCD either as smallholders and value chain entrepreneurs (discussed in the second group of activities) or as employees in the agribusiness sector (presented in the third group) (see Figure 1). It is important to recognise the heterogeneity of women within these categories, based on their socio-economic status, age, education, family life cycle, cultural setting, etc.

### A.1. For all women

To enable and motivate women to engage more fully in any form of economic activity, four basic requirements need to be addressed:

- **freeing women's time from unpaid care and domestic work:** a typical day for a woman, especially in rural areas, is characterised by long hours of physically demanding and repetitive unpaid care and domestic work, with many tasks interwoven with childcare responsibilities. Consequently, reducing the time women spend on this type of work is a prerequisite to improving their opportunities to participate in productive activities. Initiatives include investments in infrastructure (rural roads, renewable energy and potable water), labour-saving technologies (roof water harvesting, biogas and energy-saving stoves) and initiatives to redistribute these tasks more equally among household members.<sup>11</sup>
- **motivating women through improved well-being in the home and community:** as enterprises or activities that are traditionally in the women's domain shift from being undertaken on a subsistence basis to gain commercial status, they sometimes run the risk of male appropriation. To be motivated to spend more time and energy on economic activities, women need to be sure that they will retain control over the gains they make and have a voice in how the money they earn is spent. They need to enjoy more autonomy, such as the ability to use health services—including family planning—or be able to visit their family and friends when they choose.

They need to be respected and able to live free from domestic violence. Improved understanding and cooperation between household members can be facilitated through initiatives, such as the Gender Action Learning System (GALS)<sup>12</sup>, which enables household members to plan together and identify and address gender inequalities that play out at the household level. Changes in mindset enable women to access formal employment and daughters to complete secondary school and attend higher education courses. A supportive environment for positive behavioural change in the community can be developed by engaging with traditional leaders, community-based organisations and men's groups.<sup>13</sup>

- **having a source of inspiration:** women role models can play an instrumental role in bringing about attitude change in more traditional settings.<sup>14</sup> They can inspire both women and men to break away from restrictive norms and believe that other livelihood options are possible. Such role models include: ordinary women with success stories in agricultural activities, women as leaders of farmer or community groups; women in non-traditional leadership roles or running successful agribusinesses; women in the workplace as supervisors, managers or board members; and women in the formal sector working as extension agents, finance officers, vets and trainers, etc. Men can also act as champions of change in their community.
- **gaining basic literacy and numeracy skills:** a basic level of competency in literacy and numeracy increases women's opportunities to access information and generates confidence to interact with other value chain actors. In addition, a greater understanding of legal provisions—for example, regarding land tenure or domestic violence—enables women to exercise their rights. Adult learning can take place independently—often through adult literacy classes—or interwoven with other activities such as training on improved farming practices delivered through farmer field schools.

### A.2. For women as smallholders and value chain entrepreneurs

This section focuses on activities which enable women to improve the productivity of their existing activities or develop new on-farm or off-farm enterprises along the value chain.



### Access to resources and services:

- to be efficient as smallholders or entrepreneurs, women need timely access to quality **inputs** in appropriate quantities, distributed through convenient channels, such as grassroots organisations, cooperatives, local agro-dealers, pass-on schemes and out-grower arrangements. Outreach among women may be encouraged by providing financial incentives to rural agents who sell to women farmers, or working with women promoters to overcome socio-cultural norms which restrict women's mobility.
- women's access to **financial services** can be enhanced by widening eligible investments and introducing tailor-made products (savings, loans and insurance) relevant to women's enterprises, simplifying the application procedure, waiving collateral requirements for small loans, giving preferential access to women who qualify for start-up loans, supporting women to open bank accounts, and providing training in financial literacy. Specific attention needs to be paid to addressing the 'missing middle funding gap' for small and medium enterprises that struggle to access finance because they are too small for bank lending, but are too large for micro-finance.<sup>15</sup>
- women often experience weak security over their ability to use, manage and own **land**.<sup>16</sup> This is particularly important when large-scale agribusiness ventures involve land investments: women need to be well informed and included in decision-making processes<sup>17</sup>, especially regarding land acquisition<sup>18</sup> and negotiation for fair and equitable compensation for any loss of livelihood opportunities. They need to be able to fully express their views in participatory land-use planning activities between the community and the private sector.
- smallholder agriculture is characterised by labour-intensive tasks and the limited use of **improved technologies**, which compromise the productivity of the sector. This is especially true for tasks typically performed by women, who require climate-smart equipment and practices to reduce their workloads associated with production (such as drip irrigation) and improve the quality of processing (such as fish driers, lacto-freezers and solar driers).<sup>19</sup> Appropriate technologies can also reduce their dependence on men for performing specific tasks, such as power tillers for land preparation. Information and communication technologies can overcome women's restricted mobility and improve their access to information about markets, weather, suppliers, buyers, etc.

### Technical, business management and enterprise skills development:

strengthening women's technical and business skills is central to developing economically-viable and sustainable businesses and enabling them to compete in the market place. A distinction is drawn between strengthening women's technical skills in activities that they already perform and broadening their skills in new crop- and livestock-related enterprises along the value chain. In addition, women active in VCD also require sound business skills in record keeping, pricing, entrepreneurship, micro-enterprise management, negotiation skills for market engagement and, for some, specialised skills in certification and standards. Options include technical and vocational education and training, on-the-job training, coaching and mentoring. Networks of agribusiness women can build the confidence and

develop new business opportunities for women entrepreneurs, whilst high-performing business women trained as mentors can provide guidance and inspiration to others.

**Access to markets:** gaining access to markets is crucial for the smallholder sector to flourish. Physical access to markets is improved through farm-to-market roads, transport facilities, market structures, and processing and storage facilities. Attention needs to be paid to ensure transport networks are safe for women and that markets are gender-friendly (including lighting, washroom facilities, provision for childcare, etc.). Access to markets for specific products may be achieved by: repositioning women's crops which are traditionally used solely for home consumption into marketable produce; adding value through post-harvest processing and storage; introducing women to marketable crops and enterprises; creating new markets among consumers; gaining a market niche with compliance with health and safety legislation, Fairtrade certification, etc.; and establishing contractual arrangements between women producers and processors with buyers and aggregators. Sensitising men and local leaders can contribute to creating a supportive environment for women's engagement in markets.



Women in Lesotho develop their own businesses based on commercial poultry production.  
Photo: Clare Bishop



In Ethiopia, access to markets is improved through crop aggregation.  
Photo: Clare Bishop

**Voice and representation:** self-help groups, producer organisations and cooperatives play an integral role in the development of the agricultural sector. They assist with redressing the balance of power and strengthening the bargaining position of small value chain actors in the market place. Gender-responsive approaches include: promoting women's participation in women-only and mixed groups—both as members and leaders; providing training in group formation, organisational management and inclusive management for board members; establishing the legal status of groups; providing leadership training for women; and encouraging women to take on non-traditional executive positions. Women's active engagement in multi-stakeholder platforms ensures their voices are heard in wider forums.<sup>20</sup> Codes of conduct can ensure groups and their members address gender issues, in terms of management practices, member engagement and working conditions.

**Enabling policy and institutional environments:** in addition to ensuring there is an enabling policy environment for gender equality and women's empowerment—for example, strengthening women's access to resources and opportunities to participate in decision-making—it is also essential that the rights of women are respected and enforced. This requires engaging with decision-makers, strengthening the capacity of government employees and improving procedures to adopt and deliver gender equality approaches.

### A.3. For women as employees in the agribusiness sector

To create a workplace in which women as employees can enjoy decent work, they need:

- a gender-responsive workplace, with childcare facilities, safe and healthy working conditions, access for people with disabilities, appropriate workplace clothing, transportation and housing, if necessary;
- a living wage, equal pay for equal work, parental leave, paid holidays and sick pay, permanent contracts;

- flexible working arrangements to accommodate women's availability, offering flexible hours or part-time employment;
- opportunities for skills development and promotion;
- anti-harassment policies and their enforcement;
- opportunities to monitor compliance with labour rights, for example through employees' committees or unions; and
- work-based health service provision and a social fund for school fees and health care.

### B. Who to do it? Key stakeholders and agencies

Many different organisations can drive or contribute to this process of engagement for change through VCD, including:

- **government**, to create an enabling policy and institutional environment, with gender-responsive legislation which is enforced and staff skilled in identifying and addressing gender issues and promoting gender equality;
- **private sector** (employers, buyers, traders in both the large-scale commercial sector and in producer organisations), to create opportunities for gender-responsive market engagement, skills development, a decent work environment, and certification schemes along the value chain;
- **civil society**, to demand for gender-inclusive approaches and to increase understanding in communities about women's rights;
- **unions**, to protect and enhance the employment conditions of the workforce;
- **agencies** (auditors and certification bodies), to oversee certification and codes of conduct which promote and monitor the use of good practices in the private sector;
- **producer organisations and women's groups**, to promote economies of scale in input purchases, provision of services (advice, training and market information), produce aggregation and post-harvest facilities, and collective action for negotiation and representation;



- **multi-stakeholder platforms**, to support development along the whole value chain by creating an awareness and understanding of the priorities of individual actors and advocating for an enabling inclusive environment in which all may flourish;
- **project partners and service providers**, to ensure a commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment lies at the centre of project design and implementation;
- **traditional leaders and community-based organisations**—especially men's groups—to engage with men and boys, women and girls to shift negative cultural norms and create positive behaviour change; and
- **consumers**, to demand the promotion of gender equality and ethical trading along the value chain.



In Madagascar, access to markets is improved through attention to the quality of produce. Photo: Éric Penot, © CIRAD

### C. How to design and deliver gender-responsive VCD programmes

This section focuses on the programme management aspects of designing and delivering gender-responsive VCD programmes (see Figure 2).<sup>21</sup>

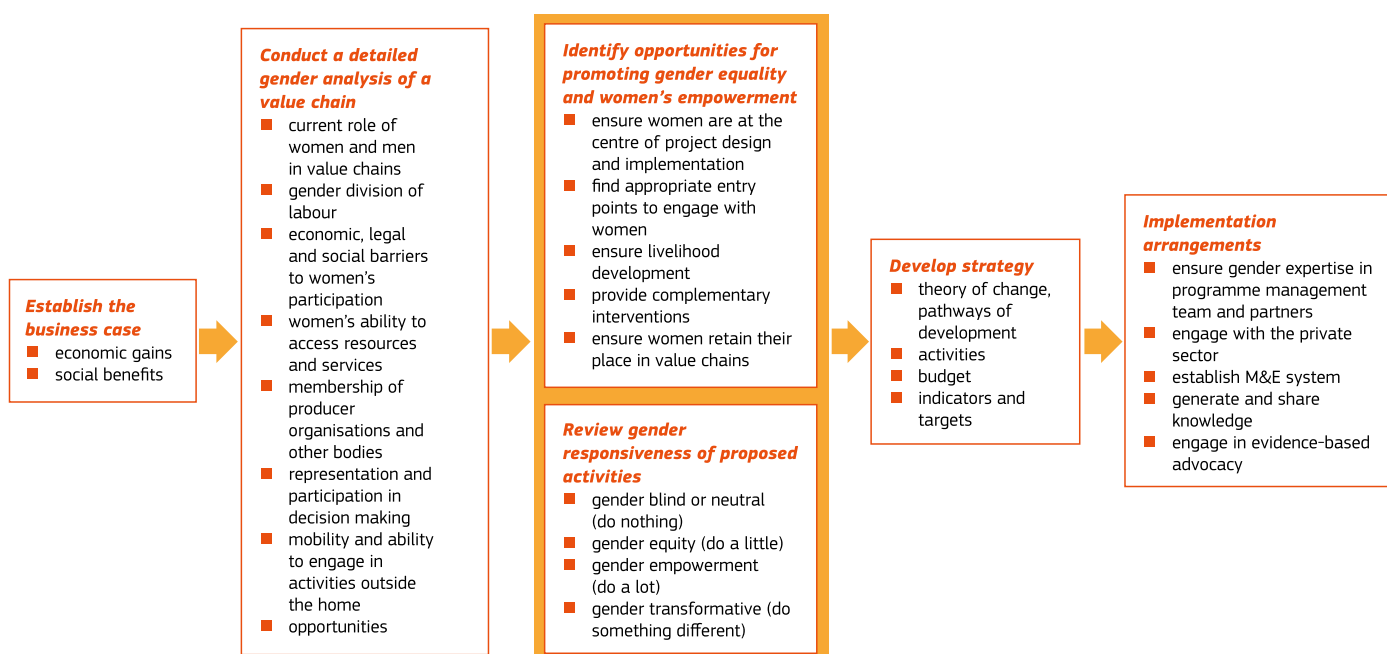
**Establishing the business case:**<sup>22</sup> ensuring gender-responsive programme design and delivery can be more challenging for VCD than other types of programmes because of the strong engagement with the private sector. Consequently, a crucial step is to establish the business case for promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment to be fundamental to the successful outcome and long-term sustainability of agribusiness initiatives. The business case covers the economic gains—derived from improved productivity and sustainability of quality supplies, and women as reliable business partners and sound re-payers of loans—as well as the social benefits of more inclusive processes. It can be an eye-opener for some to understand that gender inequalities are a major contributor to value chain inefficiencies.<sup>23</sup> Programmes need to work with dynamic and far-sighted staff, government, private sector partners and service providers who are willing to recognise the central role of women's economic empowerment in agribusiness and foster that understanding among others.

**Conducting a detailed gender analysis of the value chain:** detailed analysis<sup>24</sup> identifies the challenges and opportunities for women in the value chain including:

- the current role of women and men at different points along the value chain;
- the division of labour between women and men including both productive and unpaid care and domestic work;
- the economic, legal and social barriers to women's participation in agribusiness and enterprise development;
- women's ability to access resources and services;
- their membership of producer organisations and other bodies;
- their representation and participation in decision-making in economic and domestic spheres;
- their mobility and ability to engage in activities outside the home; and
- the identification of opportunities.

Participatory approaches during this analysis ensure greater engagement among value chain actors.<sup>25</sup> Findings from the EU's Value Chain Analysis for Development (VCA4D) studies are presented in the box on page 7.

**Figure 2: How to design and deliver gender-responsive VCD programmes**



## Findings from VCA4D studies

**Burkina Faso:** the mango value chain contributes to inclusive economic growth, but faces certain challenges including the difficulty of accepting women in traditionally male activities, such as growing mangoes, as well as in management positions in processing or packaging units.

**Cambodia:** women participate extensively in aquaculture activities, especially in the semi-intensive and small-cage production systems rather than intensive ponds and large-scale cage production. However, women are under-represented in leadership positions and decision-making processes in the fisheries policy.

**Cote d'Ivoire:** there is a strong presence of women at all stages of the cassava value chain, facilitated by their access to land (through inheritance, rental or donation), increasing roles in decision-making (at both household and community levels), speaking in public and leadership of associations. However, they are constrained by poor access to financial structures, high rates of illiteracy and a heavy domestic workload.

**Kenya:** the green beans value chain has the capacity to be socially sustainable. As a cash crop, the value chain offers opportunities for small-scale farming, small businesses and entrepreneurs. Women, in particular, benefit from employment opportunities as they carry out most of the tasks associated with production and processing, and make up the majority of the workforce (approximately 80 %). As a result, they gain a degree of financial independence from their involvement in the value chain. Returns from small-scale production benefit the local economy and are invested in children's education, health care, housing, small businesses and in the farm. Women are also represented in positions of responsibility. However, rights to land tenure and inheritance are currently unequal as new legislation is not yet being applied fully.

**Mali:** there are positive developments in terms of women's access to inputs and participation in decisions of farmers' organisations in the rice value chain. However, women are excluded from certain activities (transport and marketing), marginalised in economic decisions (production and marketing), have limited autonomy in deciding how to use household resources, and experience persistent poverty.

**Zambia:** women—probably those who are more powerful and better-off—are active as members and leaders of farmers' associations and cooperatives. However, women do not comprise the bulk of those employed by the sector—such as large farms, hatcheries, feed companies, etc.—and the smallholder sector is very male-dominated. Interestingly, the high level of egg consumption in relatively poor urban communities has opened up trading opportunities—with relatively low entry barriers—for younger men and women without formal employment. The egg value chain also employs educated/skilled youth and women to manage complex production tasks. However, the gender dynamics in married households regarding decisions over credit and crop sales negatively affect livelihoods and food security.

**Zimbabwe:** there is minor involvement of women in the beef value chain, with the exception of milk and manure. Extension services and policies focus on cattle, to the detriment of livestock owned by women (goats and poultry). A more gender-responsive approach would be to support small livestock, the acquisition of cattle by women, and women's participation in livestock committees.

Source: EU VCA4D <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/value-chain-analysis-for-development-vca4d->

## Identifying opportunities for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment:

- **ensure women are at the centre of project design and implementation:** all too often, gender considerations are retro-fitted into the project design, whereas identifying and addressing gender inequalities needs to happen from the outset.
- **find appropriate entry points to engage with women:** in cultural settings where women have limited freedom of movement and opportunities for market engagement, one of the biggest challenges is how to reach them. One approach, which is less likely to meet with resistance from men—and generate quick returns—is to start working with value chains that have a high rate of female participation (typically poultry, food crops, dairy or non-timber forest products). The challenge is then to ensure women do not become stuck in low value commodities or niches.
- **ensure livelihood development pathways:** VCD needs to provide women with opportunities to enhance their competitiveness in existing chains and to upgrade to the higher end of the value chain as sellers, wholesalers and processors. They also need to be able to move into non-traditional chains and operations. This requires support to develop: (i) enterprises from small-scale informal low value businesses to medium-sized agribusinesses with value addition; (ii) organisations from informal self-help groups through to legally-registered enterprises and cooperatives; and (iii) financial products ranging from informal savings and loans through group borrowing, to micro-lending and on to formal bank loans, savings and associated services, such as weather insurance.
- **provide complementary interventions:** most contexts require—and benefit from—complementary interventions, for example, underpinning access to financial services with training in financial literacy and business skills.

- **ensure women retain their place in the value chain:** projects and policies have to be attentive of changes in the value chain that can exclude women or undermine past efforts to promote women's engagement. For example, women can be excluded as a result of economic or environmental changes, such as: the opening of new and more profitable markets, export markets replacing local ones or price fluctuations; technical innovation towards more intensive practices; or natural resource scarcity.

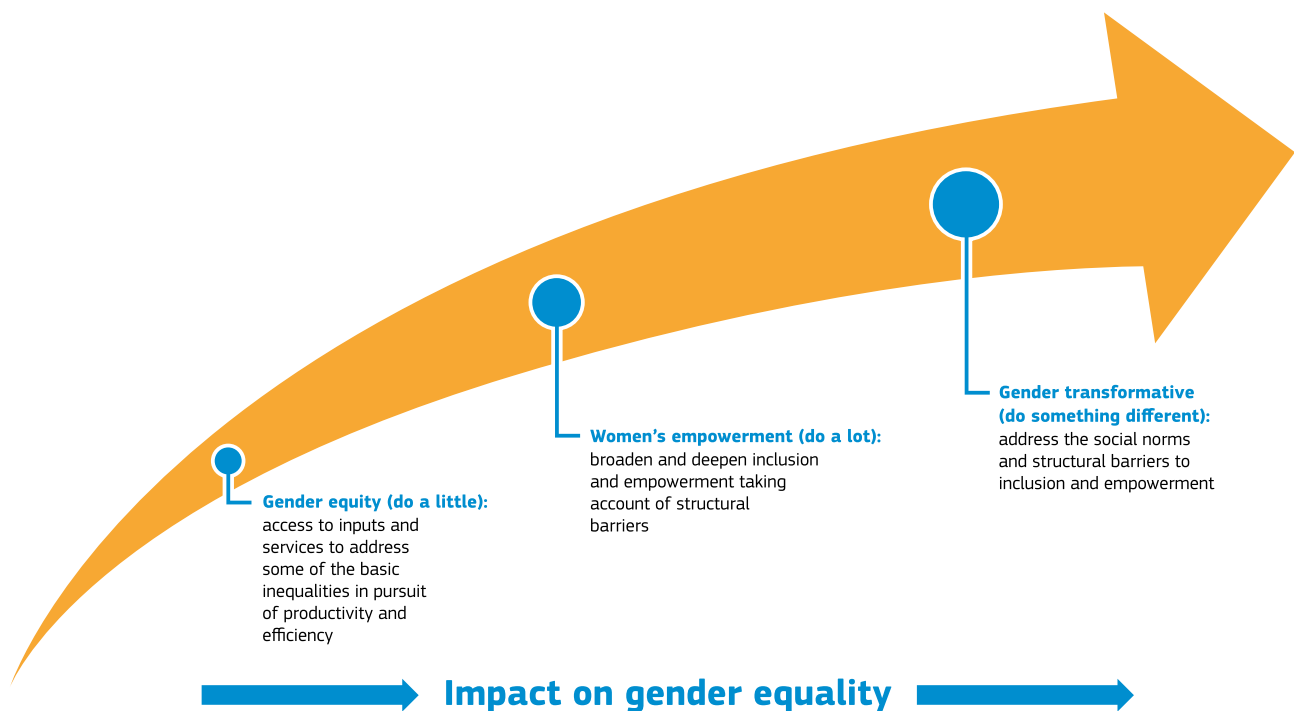
- **women's empowerment (do a lot):** activities specifically designed to broaden and deepen the inclusion and empowerment of women and girls by considering (but not seeking to change) structural barriers; and
- **gender transformative (do something different):** activities specifically designed to transform gendered power dynamics by addressing the social norms, practices, attitudes, beliefs and value systems that represent structural barriers to women's and girls' inclusion and empowerment.

**Reviewing the gender responsiveness of proposed activities:** a four-point rating system can be used to determine the level of gender responsiveness of individual project activities. Based on the findings, it may be possible to introduce additional activities to strengthen the gender dimension (see Figure 3). The four levels are:

- **gender blind or neutral (do nothing):** activities that do not include any specific interventions or mechanisms to promote women's inclusion or empowerment;
- **gender equity (do a little):** activities that promote access to inputs and services in order to address some of the basic (less complex) gender inequalities ('levelling the playing field') in the pursuit of productivity and efficiency;

**Examples of gender responsiveness of agribusiness initiatives:** examples of using this rating system in the context of specific activities within agribusiness initiatives are presented in Annex 2. Please note that the boundaries are to some extent fluid so that an activity which might be considered as promoting the empowerment of women in one context may be gender transformative in a different socio-cultural setting. Also note that "engaging men" is not necessarily enough for an intervention to be gender transformative—what matters is whether or not the aim is to question and change norms and power relations. This methodology was used to review the gender responsiveness of a selection of the EU-funded agribusiness projects (see box on page 7).

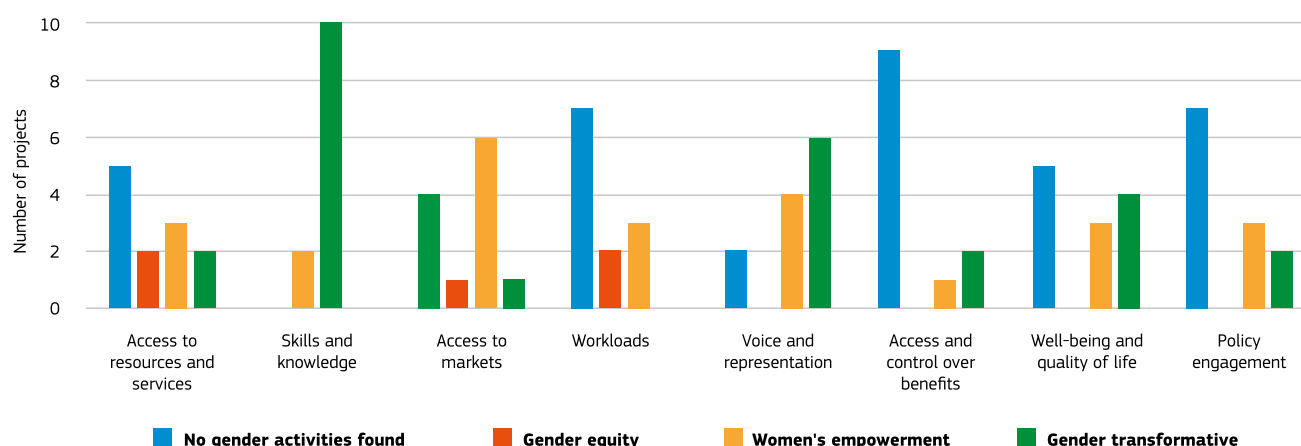
**Figure 3: Levels of gender responsiveness**



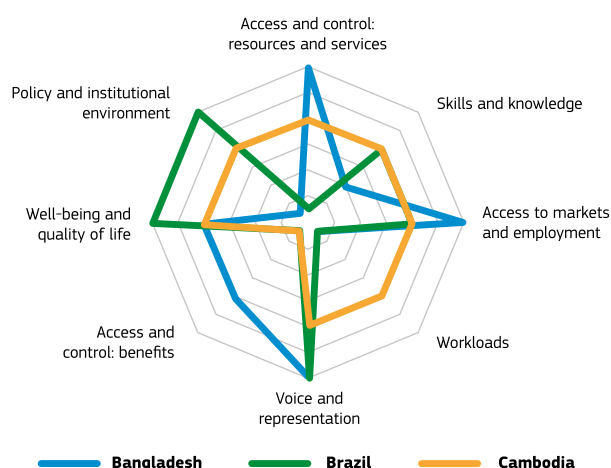


### Review of gender responsiveness of EU-funded agribusiness programmes

DEVCO used this methodology to review the gender responsiveness of 12 EU-funded agribusiness programmes in 2017. Most programme activities focused on improving women's access to resources and services, skills and knowledge, access to markets and employment opportunities, and voice and representation. Several worked on well-being: providing nutrition training, improving household dynamics and reducing violence against women. Very few worked on reducing women's workloads, strengthening their control over benefits or improving the policy and institutional environment. The findings demonstrated the importance of including gender equality as a goal from the outset of project design, building on a solid gender analysis to identify needs and a willingness to change, and setting clear targets and indicators.



Taking the results of three of the highest scoring programmes in the study (Bangladesh, Brazil and Cambodia) and plotting them on an octagon shows that these projects implemented their gender-related activities in very different ways. Cambodia targeted almost all domains whilst the others focused on a narrower range of domains. Brazil was strongest in transformative achievements (well-being and quality of life, policy and institutional environment, and voice and representation) where they targeted policies, violence against women and raised awareness about gender issues. Bangladesh was gender transformative in the areas of access to resources (helping women open a bank account), services and markets, but also addressed voice and representation, access to benefits and well-being.



**Bangladesh:** Ultra Poor Programme: Ujjibito

**Brazil:** Fortalecimento da autonomia economica de mulheres rurais no Brasil

**Cambodia:** Improving Food Security and Market Linkages

Source: Öhman, J. (2017) Gender analysis of EU agribusiness projects, European Commission

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/agriculture-and-rural-development/documents/gender-analysis-eu-agribusiness-projects-full-report>

**Developing a strategy:** a gender strategy sets out a coherent theory of change or pathways for women's empowerment, with gender equality at the centre of programme design based on the business case rather than a piecemeal response. Each programme component and activity should have a clear gender agenda, supported by budget allocations. Programme procedures, services, training, materials, the use of quotas and outreach need to be designed and delivered in a gender-sensitive manner to ensure women have full opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, programme activities.

**Identifying indicators and setting targets:** the relationship between various activities, outputs and outcomes in terms of what a programme will deliver from a gender perspective needs to be reflected in the intervention logic of the action document and logframe. Suggested indicators for measuring gender equality in agro-enterprises, markets and value chains are presented in the EU publications *Because women matter* and *Because results matter*.<sup>26</sup> Targets on women's participation are an essential, but not sufficient, condition to deliver on positive gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes. Targets need to be aspirational, but not unachievable in a given context; that is they should be beyond 'business as usual'. In most contexts, an aspirational target would mean that women should account for 40-50 % of beneficiaries. This ambition would need to be underpinned by actions to ensure that this substantive participation is not just a box-ticking exercise. Failure to make progress towards targets should trigger corrective actions, including drawing in additional gender expertise if required.



A decent working environment is crucial for women working in large-scale agribusinesses in Brazil.

Photo: Fabienne Ribeyre, © CIRAD

**Establishing the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system:** the monitoring system should track the more nuanced dimensions of women's empowerment, beyond merely counting the sex-disaggregated number of participants or beneficiaries of programme activities. It is important to recognise the qualitative aspects of the impacts on women's empowerment and well-being. This includes women's control over resources and benefits from the proceeds of their economic endeavours, as well as wider changes in gender norms and relations (such as workloads, decision-making, domestic violence). Good baseline surveys are essential for both setting targets and developing sound M&E systems. A recently-developed tool, the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI), can be used to measure changes in women's empowerment over the course of an agricultural development project and it identifies indicators of empowerment that a project could change (see box below). The WEAI for Value Chains (WEAI4VC) is currently being developed to measure empowerment across the value chain, based on pilot studies in Bangladesh and the Philippines.<sup>27</sup>

#### Pro-WEAI for measuring empowerment, agency and inclusion of women in the agriculture sector

This survey-based index helps agricultural developmental projects assess women's empowerment in a project setting, diagnose areas of women's disempowerment, design strategies to address deficiencies, and monitor project outcomes.

Pro-WEAI is composed of 12 indicators of women's empowerment in agriculture: autonomy in income, self-efficacy, attitudes about domestic violence, input in productive decisions, ownership of land and other assets, access to and decisions on credit, control over the use of income, work balance, visiting important locations, group membership, membership in influential groups and respect among household members. These indicators are organised into three domains: intrinsic agency (power within), instrumental agency (power to), and collective agency (power with).

The pro-WEAI includes optional add-on modules to look at women's empowerment in projects that focus on outcomes related to nutrition, health and livestock.

Source: Pro-WEAI  
<http://a4nh.cgiar.org/2018/04/27/introducing-pro-weai-a-tool-for-measuring-womens-empowerment-in-agricultural-development-projects/>

**Generating and sharing knowledge, and engaging in evidence-based advocacy:** good practices and lessons learnt about empowering women in VCD, including stories of successful women engaging with markets, should be shared with partners, practitioners and policymakers. Focused studies are useful for understanding specific constraints or barriers faced by women. Participation in specialist knowledge networks can ensure that programme learning is shared and that programmes are benefiting from exposure to good practices. Evidence from the field provides the basis for more informed discussions with policy makers.



**Ensuring gender expertise in the programme management team and partners:** gender expertise is required for designing and delivering the gender strategy, undertaking value chain studies, interacting with implementation partners and the private sector to strengthen their outreach among women, collecting and interpreting sex-disaggregated data, and contributing to knowledge management systems. The ability to deliver on the gender agenda is strengthened when all staff—in addition to a gender specialist—have capacity and are accountable for delivering on women's empowerment. Similarly, partners and service providers need an understanding of the benefits of, and the ability to, empower women through VCD; this may require additional capacity strengthening.

**Engaging with the private sector:** when programmes work through private sector intermediaries, the case for adopting a women's empowerment and gender equality perspective needs to be established on business grounds. Programmes can provide expert support and create opportunities for the private sector to engage directly with women, for example, through multi-stakeholder platforms. Private firms may recruit, train and mentor women intermediaries in order to improve their outreach to women farmers and entrepreneurs. If leading businesses mainstream gender in their operations, this can have a positive demonstration effect on others in the sector. Certification systems, such as Fairtrade, can provide leverage for the private sector to comply with ethical trading along the value chain and in the workplace. However, it is important to recognise that even when the private sector is committed to women's economic empowerment, it is often necessary for programmes

to assume responsibility for supporting the aspects where the business gains are not immediately evident. This could include additional capacity building for women to enable them to fully benefit from market engagement (such as literacy or numeracy classes) or activities to change behaviours which lie at the root of gender inequalities (such as community sensitisation or household methodologies). The public sector has a responsibility for the public goods elements of VCD, particularly roads and market infrastructure.

#### D. The EU's work on VCD

The EU DEVCO's Value Chain Analysis for Development<sup>28</sup> methodology examines value chains from functional, economic, social and environmental perspectives. To assess the social sustainability of a value chain, core questions in the social analysis address gender equality issues in relation to the inclusion or exclusion of women in economic activities, access to resources and services (including land, credit, extension services, inputs), participation in decision-making (regarding activities, organisation, income etc.), leadership and empowerment in collective processes, workloads and division of labour. The analysis draws on actual evidence and potential impacts of value chain activities on women in order to generate relevant knowledge to inform stakeholders and decision-makers. From 2019, it will also be possible to analyse the economic data from a gender perspective, such as income levels of women and men, and to compare the value added and the income distribution in sub-chains where women or men are dominant.



Women are empowered when they engage directly with consumers in Myanmar.  
Photo: Clare Bishop



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**Annex 2: Examples of agribusiness/value chain activities rated by their gender responsiveness**

<b>Domain of gender inequality</b>	<b>Initiatives to promote gender equity</b>	<b>Initiatives to promote women's empowerment</b>	<b>Gender transformative approaches</b>
I. Access to and control over resources and services	Providing access to inputs for existing enterprises	Providing a range of financial services and products which meet women's needs	Strengthening women's access to and ownership of land, which also enables them to access a wider range of financial services
II. Skills and knowledge	Technical training for existing crops/livestock, access to information	Training, coaching and mentoring services to develop women's technical skills for new crops/enterprises, farming as a business, entrepreneurship and negotiating skills	Supporting women as role models to break through barriers, demonstrate by example, change mindsets and provide inspiration to other women
III. Access to markets and employment opportunities	Creating employment opportunities for women in traditional roles, promoting access to infrastructure, storage, transport facilities	Creating employment opportunities for women in new roles, adding value to traditional and new products, establishing linkages and contracts with buyers, and developing new markets	Creating new spaces/opportunities/markets and support for women's economic engagement; sensitising men and boys, and religious and community leaders as strategies for expanding women's job opportunities
IV. Workloads	Introducing equipment to improve existing tasks, flexible work hours and part-time work	Introducing equipment to improve the productivity and quality of production; reduce domestic workloads; and ensure a safe and healthy working environment	Redistributing household tasks among household members or providing technologies which liberate women from traditional gender roles
V. Voice and representation	Strengthening grassroots organisations, producer groups and cooperatives, and promoting women's involvement in such groups	Ensuring legal recognition for organisations, training women as leaders and women holding leadership positions in producer organisations, and strengthening women's voice in improved governance structures for value chains	Encouraging and enabling women to lead in non-traditional executive positions and to gain a national voice through networking forums
VI. Decision-making in households, including access to and control over benefits	Strengthening women's access to benefits	Strengthening women's voice in the household, including decisions regarding the use of benefits	Adopting a household perspective for empowerment by engaging household members in analysing and addressing gender inequalities in roles, responsibilities, decision-making and sharing benefits; stimulating behaviour change through household methodologies, engaging champions of change at the community level and sensitising men about the importance and benefits of women's economic empowerment
VII. Well-being and quality of life	Nutrition training for women and girls	Reproductive health training for women and men	Developing women's self-confidence and independence through adult literacy classes and discussing social issues; engaging men in household nutrition and health (including family planning); developing women's and men's skills in conflict prevention/reducing violence; and, for employees, creating a social fund for school fees and health services, as well as providing paid holidays and sick pay
VIII. Policy engagement	Training policy staff on gender issues in agricultural sector	Establishing policy dialogue on gender inequalities in agricultural sector	Supporting government to develop gender-sensitive sectoral policies and budgets through capacity building and dialogue

Source: <http://donorplatform.org/publication-gender/womens-economic-empowerment-and-agribusiness-opportunities-for-the-gender-transformative-agenda.html>

## Endnotes

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