



## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT & FOOD SECURITY

### VAM GENDER AND MARKETS BRIEFING #9

#### EMPOWERING WOMEN IN WEST AFRICAN MARKETS CASE STUDY OF STREET FOOD VENDORS IN MAIDUGURI, NIGERIA

##### KEY MESSAGES:

- While men occupy positions further up the value chain as retailers of ingredients, women are only found as sellers of prepared foods. Women in Maiduguri tend to start a street food business due to economic hardship and a desire to feed their children, often after the loss of their husband's income.
- Women tend to cook and sell food alone, near their homes, and may use children to assist with cleaning or carrying food to sell in other areas. men are often supportive of their wives' businesses once they realize the benefit that it brings to the family.
- Street food businesses run by women tend to be smaller, less formal, have fewer employees, and require lower start-up capital than those run by men.

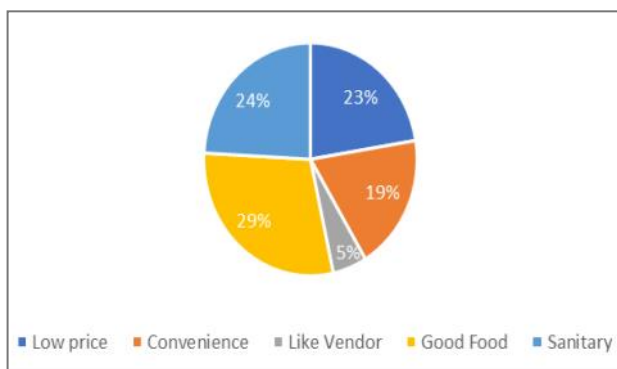
##### Existing challenges

All groups of people were identified as consuming street food, children and young single men were two groups highlighted in this study, and this underscores the importance of street food for the food security of these groups. Customers generally displayed a high level of loyalty to their preferred vendors, often purchasing one or more times per day. Customers express preference for quality, price, and hygiene, and often purchase on credit until they receive their paycheck.

Access to financing is a challenge for women due to economic conditions and social norms, and they commonly buy their ingredients on credit, which puts them at risk of default. Women's savings groups, locally called "adashe," were found to be an extremely important source of savings and peer support, however they have been largely disrupted by the current crisis. Other challenges to economic participation in street food markets faced by women include low levels of education, limited mobility, trouble obtaining firewood during certain seasons, thin profit margins, and low resilience to changes in market conditions. Youth have an essential role in street food businesses, often selling or "hawking" cooked food on behalf of women, which is vital to women's economic viability but also creates many protection risks for youth.

Although women were found to rarely question traditional gender roles in which they are primarily responsible for the household, this study also found that participation in street food markets leads to several opportunities for empowerment. Women expressed that generating income has allowed them to build positive relationships, to feel comfortable expressing themselves related to their business, and to feel the satisfaction of providing for their children. Although they often need permission from their husband to start a business, women display autonomy in making most business decisions after start-up.

GRAPH 1 : MOST PREFERRED QUALITIES IN A STREET FOOD VENDOR



In Nigeria, only 50% of the women over 18 are literate

16% of women pay fees related to their activities in comparison with 69% of men, indicating a higher level of formality and structure in the markets in which men operate

57% of the respondent run their businesses alone

TRAIN AND SUPPORT WOMEN'S GROUPS

SUPPORT MEN AND BOYS ALONG THE VALUE CHAIN

PROVIDE CAPITAL, CBT, INPUTS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUPPORT STREET FOOD VENDORS IN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES

ADDRESS AND REDUCE PROTECTION RISKS ESPECIALLY GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

## TAKING ACTION

The creation of women's groups by street food vendor facilitates the aggregation and training of professional groups that can develop voluntary savings and loan associations and can reach collective agreements with traders. They also help to reestablish trust and social capital among women. It also allow them to purchase collectively at a reduced price. The formation of these groups opens opportunities for training on hygiene food practices, nutrition, and on the use of ICT for reinforced social capital and household resilience.

There is an opportunity to launch a group of women interested in formalizing their business into association and managing a school feeding scheme.

Provision of capital emerges as one of the greatest needs for women as they struggle to raise capital while meeting their households needs and obligations. Infrastructures such as tables, covers, roofs are also needed during the rainy season to allow women to keep their businesses. Women are highly dependent on firewood and price fluctuation is a challenge. This represent a major intervention opportunity to provide women cooking stove and prevent them from health risks due to wood smoke while preventing from environmental risks.

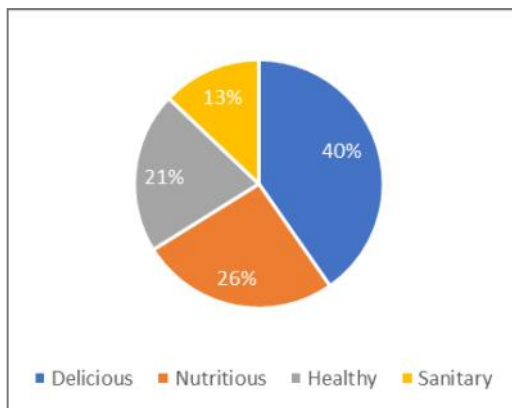
Cash based-transfers and voucher assistance could be used to support women's businesses providing direct support to the beneficiaries while supporting

the local street food economy and women sellers.

Protection risks remain especially for young girls participation in street food businesses. WFP is invited to facilitate participatory processes involving local and national authorities to further identify threats and solutions. Sensitization to communities can assist in recognizing and remunerating girl's work to roles where protection risks are lower. WFP is encouraged to create partnerships that increase health access to women and address other issues related to street vendors that are identified in the study.

Finally, support for men and boys along the value chains can help to address feelings of being overlooked during interventions. Educational and livelihoods opportunities are identified as major community needs in general.

GRAPH 2 : CUSTOMER PERCEIVED MEAL CHARACTERISTICS



### TO GO FURTHER :

Gender and Market Initiative: Empowering West African Women through Market-based Food Assistance : <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/node/106>

### FOR THE LATEST INFO ON NIGERIA:

<http://www1.wfp.org/countries/nigeria>

### SOURCE(S) :

WFP REPORT, 2017. Empowering Women in West African Markets Case Study of Street Food Vendors in Maiduguri, Nigeria.

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Photo page 1: WFP/Karolina Greda