COURSE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS AND DEVELOPMENT

Gender and Markets: Empowering Women in West African Markets

WFP VAM Markets Analysis – West Africa Regional Office (RBD)

Final report, 23 May 2017

MAY 2017

DATE AND VENUE

The training took place on 9-12 May 2017 at the Novotel in Dakar, Senegal.

PARTICIPANTS

The training was organized by Mr. Simon Renk of the **World Food Programme** West African Regional Office. The instructor was Associate Professor Olivier Walther of the **University of Southern Denmark**. The training was open to researchers, policy-makers and practitioners involved in collecting, structuring and analyzing data related to development policies in West Africa. Nine participants from the World Food Programme (WFP), the **Food and Agriculture Organization** (FAO), the Permanent Interstate **Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel** (CILSS) and **the Famine Early Warning Systems Network** (FEWS-NET) attended.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS :

- Sylla Mohamed – FAO
- Renk Simon—WFP RBD
- Diop Amadou—FEWS NET
- Giuffrida Valerio—WFP HQ
- Bagoa Brice—WFP SEN

- Amewuame Mawuli—CILLS
- Tockert Matthieu—WFP RBD
- Olander William—WFP RBD
- Walther Olivier—University of Southern Denmark

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this 4-day training was to provide an intensive introduction to the field of Social Network Analysis (SNA), a fast growing field of research whose main interest is in the links between actors. Over the last decades, SNA has evolved from a relatively peripheral area of research to a formalized body of theories, concepts, and methods that help visualize the social ties between people and measure the ways in which their interactions produce network structure.

The training introduced the humanitarian and development participants to the main concepts of, methodologies used by and software recently developed for SNA and discussed how SNA could be applied to a range of development issues, with a particular focus on gender analysis (linked to the USAID funded regional gender/markets initiative), food security, trade and market analysis in West Africa. This training was the first to be organized in Africa, where SNA has thus far rarely been used.

The specific learning objectives of the workshop were to:

ENSURE that participants completed the course with an understanding of social network analysis, particularly social ties between the different market stakeholders (differentiated by women and men) within West African trade.

TRAIN participants in the methods and techniques of SNA, enabling them to integrate SNA into their work in food security and market analysis and programming

PROVIDE WFP RBD and partners with documentation that informs them of the relevance and proposed use of SNA in their operational and strategic work

LEVERAGE WFP and expert participants experience as inputs for dynamic exchange of ideas and context building.

STRENGTHEN partnerships and collaboration with the University of Southern Denmark, the OECD and Chatman House as well as with CILSS, FEWS NET, FAO and ACF.

LEARNING

The training was divided into three main parts.

CONCEPTS AND THEORIES. The first part discussed the fundamental concepts and theoretical areas developed by SNA over the last decades, including centrality, embeddedness, social capital, and brokerage. A number of concrete African examples were used to illustrate how a more relational approach could be applied to understand food security, gender roles, trade and market structure.

METHODOLOGY. The second part of the training discussed some of the main methodological challenges related to network data. The course introduced participants to data collection, study design, and surveys, and helped them compare network analysis with other approaches, such as econometrics. Empirical data collected by the instructor in West Africa allowed the participants to actively engage with quantitative reasoning. Participants were also encouraged to bring their own data on food security, market analysis or gender analysis to the workshop and discuss the limitations of the datasets currently used within their respective organizations.

SOFTWARE. In the third part of the training, the participants learned how to use UCINET, a widely used network program and examined how a formal approach of networks could contribute to better understand social, economic, and political structures. Several exercises allowed the participants to describe the main characteristics of social networks, analyze the centrality of individual actors and organizations, calculate whether networks were fragmented by gender or nationality, and how social networks could be spatialized.

PROGRAM

A few adjustments had to be made to the initial program. On Thursday morning, Dr Olivier Walther presented the new book "Cross-border Co-operation and Policy Networks in West Africa" recently published by the OECD Sahel and West Africa Club (OECD/SWAC 2017) to larger group of humanitarian and development practitioners. The book uses SNA to visualize the formal and informal relationships between actors involved in cross-border policy networks. External participants from the World Food Programme, the German Embassy in Nigeria, and local consultancy companies attended the book launch.

Day 1 (Tuesday)
* Introduction to social networks
* Centrality
* Study designs and surveys
* Introduction to UCINET

Day 2 (Wednesday)
* Summary of day 1 and discussion on food security implications
* Networks in economics
* Brokerage and embeddedness
* Large-scale traders networks in West Africa
* Workshop

Day 3 (Thursday)
* Summary of day 2: potential research questions…
* Cross-border cooperation and policy networks in West Africa
* Workshop
* Group discussion

Day 4 (Friday)
* Small traders and economic performance in West Africa
* Spatializing social networks in West Africa
* Workshop
* Meeting with Regional Director, M. Abdou Dieng

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The training has demonstrated that **SNA** can be used as a scientific tool, a policy tool and an empowerment tool by the regional and supranational organizations involved in food security, gender and market analysis, policies and humanitarian/development activities in West Africa. This analysis approach can also directly contribute to the overall **SDG2** (Zero Hunger Challenge) discourse.

ANALYSIS. Thus far, most of the data collected in West Africa focus on the attributes of the individuals or households (age, income, poverty, etc.) rather than on their relationships. By considering the ties that bind social actors as its primary unit of analysis, SNA can highlight structural constraints and opportunities between men and women or beneficiaries of food programs and traders that remain largely unknown. Using a relational approach such as SNA can help researchers understand why some households are more resilient to food insecurity than others. One of the key factors of the resilience of a household is indeed the network to which they have access. In times of crisis, well connected individuals or households should have a better access to information and resources than isolated actors, and avoid being marginalized. SNA can help measuring and assessing how resilient each individual or household is, which is something not covered by the current state of the resilience analysis.

POLICY. The ability to study both the individual autonomy of social actors and their structural constraints makes SNA an analytical tool to inform development policies and programs. A relational approach such as SNA can be used to explain how policy actors address local, national and regional food security issues, and whether such policy network could be improved by the addition of new actors or the creation of new ties between organizations.

EMPOWERMENT/GENDER ANALYSIS. Formal approaches to the mapping of social ties only provide information of where individuals, actors or institutions are located in relation to others, offering a descriptive depiction that reaches its limit when seeking to convey the complexity of networks or the dynamics of marginalization and exclusion. SNA highlights what makes central actors structurally important and what marginalizes other actors, thereby pointing up pathways towards empowerment of vulnerable groups (these can include women, youth, people with handicap or disease, people who are discriminated against on the grounds of their religion, origin, ethnicity or sexual orientation and people living in poverty, as well as any institutions or bodies representing these groups).

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The workshop has demonstrated that SNA calls for different kind of datasets than the one that VAM usually collects. Instead of collecting extensive data on the attributes of the individuals or households, SNA relies on a combination of attributes and relations between social actors. Existing datasets established by WFP and other regional organizations can rarely been used as such and data must be collected in a new manner. Because sampling a population in which the actual connections between actors are unknown is impossible, SNA also relies on snowballing techniques that require to reach at least 80% of a given population. This makes SNA an intensive (and often time-consuming) approach.

The workshop has led the participants to formulate a number of new research questions that might be answered with SNA. In terms of FOOD SECURITY, SNA could be applied to understand why certain households are more secure than others, whether differences in social capital explain why certain individuals or households are better nourished and how the main beneficiaries of the World Food Programme are connected to local traders. SNA could also be used to understand how social networks influence the selection committees that ultimately decide who should receive food aid, how traders and farmers adapt to WFP food contracts over time, and whether local and regional markets are increasingly integrated within supply chains.

GENDER ISSUES can be addressed within each of the above questions, or as a separate variable. For example, SNA could be used to map and understand to what extent trade networks and value chains are patterned by gender. This question is at the heart of the new program of the Sahel and West Africa Club at the OECD coordinated by the instructor of the workshop. (SWAC/OECD. 2017)

Participants have also observed that SNA could be usefully applied to understand the structure and potential bottlenecks of the food policy field in West Africa. A structural analysis could map and analyze how the numerous policy actors involved in food policies are interconnected across the region, and with external donors.

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