

Working towards Zero Hunger by Empowering Women

Implications of Findings from the RBD VAM Gender & Markets Initiative

January 2017

The Zero Hunger Challenge (ZHC) emphasizes the importance of strengthening economic empowerment in support of the **Sustainable Development Goal to Double Small-Scale Producer Incomes and Productivity**. The increasing focus on resilient markets can bring important contributions to Sustainable Food Systems and Disaster Risk Reduction. Participation in market systems is not only a means for people to earn livelihoods, but also to exercise agency, maintain dignity, build social capital and increase self-worth. The VAM *Gender & Markets* Initiative of the WFP Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa (RBD) seeks to assess and enhance strategies for humanitarian and development programs to **increase the empowerment of vulnerable populations through market-based interventions**.

The first phase of the Initiative sought to sharpen the focus on women’s participation in markets and the impact of WFP interventions by piloting gender and market analysis tools. This briefing paper summarizes findings and recommendations from eight case studies (<https://resources.vam.wfp.org/node/103>) carried out across the region while highlighting ZHC-related linkages, significance and impact.

Barriers that impact women’s participation West-African markets	Deprivations resulting from gender-specific barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low ownership of assets and productive resources such as land (property rights) , capital, time-and labor-saving equipment, productive inputs, transport and storage; • Weak value/supply chain integration due to horizontal and vertical exclusion; • Responsibilities for unpaid house and care work, childbearing and –rearing; • Gender-specific protection risks; • Lack of agency beyond the household and small-scale production, low influence on business decisions; • Discriminatory regulatory frameworks, laws and regulations, absence of women-friendly market spaces and appropriate infrastructure to accommodate women’s needs (e.g. WASH). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confinement to low production and procurement of crops, small-scale marketing in marginal structures rather than aggregating and trading; • Business models tend to be more exposed to risk (for example, access to land and productive resources is often sporadic and hard to plan for); • Higher risks of food insufficiency during crises; • Overburdening from conflicts between household obligations with their economic activities. <p>Women’s multiple deprivations affect their households and communities (e.g. when the opportunity cost of economic out-migration is to take accompanying children out of school).</p>

NB Both women and men from vulnerable groups suffer from unequal participation in markets, though women tend to be disproportionately affected due to their normative roles and responsibilities.

Lessons learned

Lesson 1 Linking economic & social dimensions

- Equal access to & control over economic resources are **interdependent** with long-term changes in social norms, economic structures and political frameworks.

Lesson 2 Intersectionality

- **Complementarity and intersectionality** between interventions by WFP and its partners are critical success factors to securing women’s empowerment results and accelerating innovation.

Lesson 3 Increase stakeholder participation

- Partner-driven and inclusive approaches to country strategy planning and project cycle management **increase stakeholder participation and ownership**, thereby enhancing effectiveness and sustainability.

WFP Entry Points for ZHC and Empowerment

1. **Farm- and market-based organizations**, cooperatives and social enterprises drive agricultural and market transformation, improving access by pooling investments, securing more favorable marketing conditions, reducing risks and building social capital. Other benefits include increased agency and participation in decision making processes and heightened acceptance for women's advocacy and social organizing. In alignment with the ZHC approach of **multi-stakeholder policies and stewardship**, WFP must use its leverage to include and support these actors in a coherent and strategic manner.
2. During crises, **cash-based transfers** (CBT) can act as a buffer against selling productive assets and subsistence production, enhancing adaptation and resilience at household and community levels. External studies have concurred that CBT can increase women's decision-making power including women's choices in relation to marriage, family planning and engagement in sexual activity (Hagen-Zanker et al, Understanding the impact of cash transfers: The evidence, ODI, 2016). CBT programming is thus an important vector for WFP to **streamline empowerment objectives** as promoted within the ZHC framework.
3. **The enabling/disabling environment** (regulatory frameworks, norms governing behavior, environmental conditions, education & training, security conditions) has far-reaching implications for food security and the empowerment of both male and female smallholder farmers. In order to align with the ZHC focus on Disaster Risk Reduction and WFP'S Integrated Roadmap, WFP must expand its analyses beyond individual actors and value/supply chains and use its leverage with key governance influencers to **promote market environments that build the resilience and empowerment of vulnerable populations**.
4. **Empowerment is not automatic, but achieved through integrated approaches such as complementarity between interventions and actors, community-led decision-making processes, collaboration with the private sector and with finance actors, donor coordination and mutual learning.** To achieve ZHC-related goals in a sustainable manner, **WFP should improve overall accountability for transversal issues such as gender or climate rather than relegating responsibility to isolated focal points.**

Case Study Snapshot I - Lessons from P4P in Mali

In Mali, P4P resolves the two most critical problems for producers: it provides some support for the needed inputs, and guarantees sale above market price. Unfortunately, social and structural factors make women producers far less able to take advantage of P4P's benefits than men. Because women have less access to fertilizer, they purchase it on credit, and are therefore more likely to need to sell off a portion of their harvest during the intervening month. At the critical moments of clearing, planting, and harvest, men have first access to the oxen and ox carts, and women are obliged to wait until all men have finished, losing part of their intended harvest as a result (Boyer and Deubel, Gender, Markets and Women's Empowerment: Sahel region Case Studies in Mali, Niger and Chad, University of Florida and WFP 2016).

Case Study Snapshot II - Lessons from WFP in Niger

WFP's Cash for Assets (CFA) program in Niger stood out due to its synergetic approach. WFP's implementing partner organization, Kaydia, oversaw a school canteen, mill, garden and herd programs, coordinated health education campaigns with the health centres, and provided technical support in agriculture and conservation. It also offered cash transfers for the most vulnerable households during the lean season. The project thus addressed several issues at once, such as women's migration, out-of-school girls, vulnerability to food insecurity, social fragmentation and soil erosion. The effect was a powerful complementarity in programs, mutually reinforcing each other in such a way that they became an organic whole. This is a best practice example as it prevents negative impacts across programs in which one inadvertently undercuts the objectives of another, for example when a CFW program overburdens women, and therefore places their nutrition and/or that of their children at risk (Boyer and Deubel 2016).

Case Study Snapshot III - Lessons from Cameroon

A case study from Cameroon identified a number of barriers to women's participation in markets: Apart from having less access to capital and being excluded from traditional decision-making bodies, women struggle with maternity management (childbirth and breastfeeding during 6 months after birth), leading almost always to the suspension of their economic activities and having to bring young children to the market. Women also reported difficulties in reconciling domestic and commercial activities, with very little time for leisure and rest. In addition, the general poor water, hygiene and sanitation infrastructure in the food markets affects women in particular as the lack of toilets, the absence of running water and trash makes the proper management of menstrual hygiene and other natural needs often unsafe for women. The study highlighted the positive effects of gender-sensitive markets put in place by UN Women in two locations, allowing women to maintain their commercial activities in dignity. (Yossa, Gender and Markets and Value Chain Analysis in the North and Far-North Regions of Cameroon, WFP 2016).



A toddler naps on a bag of produce in Maroua market.

How can VAM contribute?

Strengthen **gender-sensitive assessment and PME tools** such as a gender accountability mechanism and a Women's Empowerment and Markets Index d to evaluate needs and impact

- beyond individuals (at household, community and whole markets levels)
- beyond projects (applying a synergetic and intersectional approach)
- not only in times of crises (analysing pre-crisis markets, value/supply chain risk factors, coping strategies, interpersonal networks, informal lending and savings mechanisms etc.).

Enhance mechanisms to aggregate, present and discuss empowerment-relevant data and facts both upstream (WFP HQ, governments) and downstream (local decision-making bodies, national partner organizations, communities), in order to achieve mutual learning, bottom-up responsiveness in program design and *transformational implementation* (ZHC).

In cooperation with WFP's Livelihoods and Resilience Unit, adapt and apply tools for mapping women's actual burdens and capacities (i.e. 2001 WFP Guide for Participatory Techniques and Tools, 2005 Guide for Integrating a Gender Perspective into Vulnerability Analysis).

In collaboration with other agencies, notably UNICEF and UNHCR, apply a vulnerability lens to targeting that addresses challenges of women and other vulnerable groups.

Deepen understanding of how people in fragile economies save, make investments and take risks to create a knowledge base for practical solutions to enhance financial inclusion.

Integration into WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021ⁱ

An Accountability Mechanism and Training Materials will be designed by the Gender and Markets Initiative in order to support the Country Strategic Plan integration with regards to 3 Strategic Results:

- **Strategic Result 3** – Smallholders have improved food security and nutrition through improved productivity and incomes (SDG Target 2.3)
- **Strategic Result 6** – Policies to support sustainable development are coherent (SDG Target 17.14)
- **Strategic Result 8** – Sharing of knowledge, expertise and technology, strengthen global partnership support to country efforts to achieve the SDGs (SDG Target 17.16).

Milestones for Phase II of the Gender and Markets Initiative

Stage 1 (December 2016-May 2017): In-depth Thematic Research

Planning and coordination of five studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification and recruitment of research teams - Consultations between responsible country offices, research teams and other WFP staff to finalize work plans 	December-January
Conduct research activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk review of thematic area, building on pilot study - Primary data collection to fill gaps, and testing of proposed indicators and questions - Analysis and final report, with recommendations and guidance 	February-May

Stage 2 (February-November 2017): Accountability and Capacity Development

Introduction and validation of accountability system based on WFP Gender Marker Scoring system	May-October
Development of resource and training package, based on Gender and markets initiative and phase 1 thematic research findings	June-August
Test training package in selected countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct training package in selected country offices (including key partners and humanitarian actors, and where relevant, social protection/welfare institutions) - Facilitate follow up discussions on success/appropriateness of training - Conduct additional partner consultations on materials 	August-October
Revise and finalize training package (and tools) accordingly	November
Validation and integration of training package into WFP guidance materials	November
Official launch of training package to all VAM staff and participating partners in country offices, and in e-learning version	December
Conduct training-of-trainer webinar with identified regional partners engaged in data management	November
Evaluation of all activities	December

For participation and further information please contact:
Mr Simon Renk (Regional Markets Advisor): simon.renk@wfp.org;
Ms Desiree Lwambo (VAM Gender Specialist): desiree.lwambo@wfp.org.

ⁱ <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/eb/wfp286743.pdf>