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Baseline of WFP and Mastercard Foundation project on Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholder Farmers and Young People in Rwanda 2022-2027

Baseline Report

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Executive Summary

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

1. This baseline study, commissioned by the World Food Programme Rwanda Country Office (WFP RWCO) and funded by the Mastercard Foundation, provides a situational analysis of the Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda (Shora Neza) programme at its initiation in March 2022. The five-year, \$15 million Shora Neza project is being implemented across all 30 districts of Rwanda. It works to promote the participation of youth and women in the agriculture sector through youth-led Farmer Service Centres (FSCs) and aims to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and agripreneurs by enhancing market access, boosting incomes, reducing post-harvest losses, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

2. The baseline study serves the dual objectives of accountability and learning. It establishes benchmarks to measure progress on performance indicators outlined in the logical framework for assessing whether the programme appropriately meets participants needs. It also aids learning for effective programme strategy and implementation. It will be used by the planned mid-term and final evaluations to assess relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of Shore Neza over its duration. Although the programme was initiated in March 2022, delays in initial implementation led to this baseline study being undertaken from June 2023 to July 2024.

INTENDED USERS

3. The primary users of the baseline study include the WFP RWCO, the WFP Regional Bureau in Nairobi (RBN), and the principal partner, Mastercard Foundation. RWCO will use the findings to inform decision-making on programme implementation, monitoring and partnerships. RBN, which provides technical guidance and oversight to the RWCO, is interested in the evidence base and learning from best practices to potentially replicate best practices in other countries.

4. Secondary users encompass other donors, partnering UN agencies, and national, provincial and local governmental agencies in Rwanda, who have an interest in ensuring that the programme's activities are aligned with national and local priorities and meet the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries: smallholder farmers and rural youth.

CONTEXT

5. Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in the African continent with high poverty levels. Its youthful population represents a significant opportunity for economic growth and development. Agriculture forms the backbone of Rwanda's economy, accounting for a third of GDP and employing three-quarters of its population.¹ Rwanda still faces significant challenges with food insecurity and malnutrition.² The access to land is the main limiting factor in Rwanda as up to 75 percent of the population own small plots less than 0.7ha in size, which leads to subsistence farming.

6. The Government of Rwanda is pursuing a policy of agriculture intensification and diversification to address these challenges. However, smallholder farmers, including a significant number of women and youth, continue to face barriers in accessing land, inputs, financing, markets, and knowledge. Farmers lack connections to local markets and struggle to meet quality standards required by buyers. Limited access to post-harvest equipment and services often lead to high losses. Women constitute 80 percent of the workforce in smallholder agriculture, playing a critical role in both domestic food production and market supply. However, only 45 percent of them can access crucial inputs like improved seeds and fertilizers, compared to 75 percent of men.³

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization. (2019). Rwanda at a glance.

² According to the 2022 Global Hunger Index, Rwanda has a level of hunger that is considered "serious," with a score of 27.2 out of 100.

³ Government of Rwanda, Gender Monitoring Office. (2017). Gender and Agriculture

7. The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change impacts have further exacerbated vulnerabilities, food insecurity and unemployment, especially for women and youth. Creating jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for the over 3.6 million youth is a government priority.⁴ However, the youth unemployment rate remains high at 25.6 percent, with disparities between young men at 22.3 percent and young women at 29.4 percent.⁵ Young people in Rwanda face various challenges including access to resources such as land and capital, negative attitudes towards low-skilled jobs, and a lack of training opportunities. However, there are also opportunities for youth empowerment (e.g., entrepreneurship), particularly in the agriculture sector.⁶

SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

8. The baseline study focuses on the entire Shora Neza programme, covering all four provinces and Kigali City. It is aimed at empowering smallholder farmers and youth by strengthening local agri-food systems in Rwanda, making them more efficient, sustainable and inclusive for youth and women. The primary approach for achieving this is through the enrolment of Farmer Service Centres (FSCs) which can be defined as youth-led micro enterprises that provide agricultural inputs and services. Through enhanced market linkages and the creation of FSCs, the programme will provide both youth employment opportunities and improve SHF practices and profits. The programme aims to engage 200,000 smallholder farmers, with at least 50 percent being women and 80 percent youth, and enrol 600 FSCs, with 60 percent of these FSCs operated by women and 80 percent by youth, throughout all 30 districts in Rwanda. At the time of the baseline study, 50 FSCs had been enrolled. The table below presents the objectives, key interventions and budget allocation for each component.

Shora Neza Programme Overview

Objectives	Key Interventions	Budget allocation
Grow smallholder farmer (SHF) profits, by providing linkages to commercial markets to sell surplus yields	Connecting SHFs to premium public and private markets for sales at national and regional levels Investing in youth-led Farmer Service Centres (FSCs), which are serving as 'one stop shops' for all smallholder agricultural needs	USD 2.79 million
Increase access to the knowledge and resources needed to improve post-harvest processes, therefore decreasing farming losses	Promoting a vibrant, youth-led market for post-harvest equipment and services, which in turn will enable smallholder farmers access to better, premium markets	USD 2.06 million
Expand on investments in agricultural value chains	Creating a Blended Finance Facility with a special focus on youth-led MSMEs.	USD 5.04 million

METHODOLOGY

9. The baseline study employed a mixed-methods approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative primary data from programme participants (Farmer Service Centres (FSCs) and Smallholder Farmers (SHF)) and key stakeholders. It adopted a theory-based, utilization-focused, participatory, and inclusive approach, engaging stakeholders in planning, data collection, analysis, and validation workshops. A longitudinal⁷ study design has been developed, with this baseline serving as the starting point for the periodic quantitative outcome data collection over the five-year

14 Key Informant Interviews
Surveys with 46 FSCs and 273 SHFs
15 Outcome Harvesting Interviews
10 FGDs (38 M & 28 F)
Network Analysis

⁴ Government of Rwanda, Part of Priority Area 1 in the National Strategy for Transformation 2017-2024

⁵ International Labour Organization. (2020). Rwanda: Youth Labour Markets and the School-to-Work

⁶ Government of Rwanda, Part of Priority Area 1 in the National Strategy for Transformation 2017-2024

⁷ A longitudinal study tracks the same group of people over time to see how they change and to identify causes and effects

programme lifecycle. The baseline study was able to survey 46 of the 50 registered FSCs (35 youth, 17 females).

10. Though the evaluation team had to overcome limitations in the FSC-provided SHF sampling list, such as outdated information and unequal gender representation, close collaboration with FSCs enabled obtaining an updated list and equal representation. Despite challenges from farmers' unavailability and entrepreneurs' scheduling conflicts, adjusting the evaluation timeline and accommodating alternative interview methods allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the programme.

FINDINGS

Relevance

11. Based on the evidence obtained through desk review and KIIs, the baseline study finds that the programme's design and approach demonstrate high relevance to the needs and priorities of agripreneurs and smallholder farmers in Rwanda, including those of youth and women. The programme's targeted approach, emphasis on capacity and skills development, and commitment to addressing gender-specific needs show a clear understanding of the challenges faced by these groups.

12. The programme is making significant efforts to target the right stakeholders and geographic areas, with the selection criteria being largely appropriate in its design. Criteria for selecting participating FSCs were developed in collaboration with the Government and other relevant stakeholders. The candidates were assessed to fulfil certain entrepreneurial profiles, showing potential for growth and ability to provide employment opportunities. Targeting youth and women, aligning with agricultural priorities, and emphasizing entrepreneurial potential are notable strengths. However, the selection process for FSCs faced some challenges due to reliance on predefined lists and limited candidate pools. The implementation also faced challenges in achieving the desired gender balance, resulting in a high dominance of male-led FSCs.

13. The programme's design and objectives demonstrate strong alignment with the needs, priorities, and policies of the Rwandan government, WFP, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). It directly contributes to Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), which prioritizes youth and employment and (given the prominence of the agriculture sector for the Rwandan economy) is directly linked to the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation (PSTA 4) by focusing on agricultural modernization, productivity, market access, and gender equality. However, the baseline study observed minimal WFP reporting on programme progress thus far which limits feedback loops for making identified improvements as the implementation is being carried out.

Coherence

14. Shora Neza demonstrates a high level of coherence and complementarity with the objectives and initiatives of UN agencies, NGOs, and private sector partners operating in the agriculture and youth development space in Rwanda. WFP has actively sought partnerships and participated in coordination mechanisms to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of efforts. However, WFP's efforts to seek partnerships and participate in coordination mechanisms have not fully translated into effective practice. There are gaps in developing systematic engagement strategies with private sector partners and in strengthening joint monitoring and follow-up on agreed action points.

15. There are significant synergies between this and other WFP interventions in Rwanda, particularly the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme. Shora Neza's focus on improving market access, reducing post-harvest losses, and enhancing the capacity of smallholder farmers and agripreneurs directly contributes to and benefits from HGSF by increasing the availability and quality of locally produced food commodities for school meals. The existing coordination mechanisms at national and sub-national levels have not fully facilitated more systematic linkages and explicit communication between programmes, which limits the potential to amplify overall impact.

Sustainability

16. The programme has given significant consideration to sustainability and has incorporated an appropriate range of strategies to help ensure the long-term impact of its interventions. Key elements of the sustainability strategy include:

- Designing capacity and skills development activities for SHFs and agripreneurs, with a long-term perspective, focusing on transferable and adaptable skills that will remain relevant in the evolving agriculture sector.
- Efforts to establish lasting networks and partnerships between SHFs, agripreneurs (with a focus on youth as a primary target), and other key stakeholders in the value chain. These connections are expected to provide ongoing support, knowledge sharing, and market access beyond the programme's duration.
- Targeting of existing entrepreneurs and actors with potential for growth in the agriculture value chains to create a sustainable network of service providers.
- Promotion of financial literacy and linkages to financial institutions to increase access to financial services and enhance financial management skills. The 'WFP Rwanda Bridge', a concessional loan facility specifically designed for Shora Neza participants is being created through the programme to 'unlock' private sector capital (in this case local bank) to prioritize loans to agri-MSMEs.
- Engagement of private sector partners to create lasting market linkages and commercial relationships.
- Alignment with, and potential integration into, existing government initiatives to ensure a conducive policy environment for sustaining benefits.

17. Data obtained from key stakeholders and the review of project documents revealed that Shora Neza lacks comprehensive risk analysis and contingency planning. Potential risks, such as competition, climate change, heavy rains, landslides, road destruction, and political tensions with neighbouring countries, could threaten the programme's long-term impact. The absence of detailed risk mapping and contingency strategies, coupled with insufficient development of strategic private-sector partnerships, highlights a critical gap in ensuring the sustainability of the programme's benefits.

Gender, Disability Inclusion, and Leave No One Behind (LNOB)

18. Findings reveal that while Shora Neza demonstrates a commitment to gender equality and aligns with national policies for transformative change, significant shortcomings remain. Although there are positive shifts in attitudes and opportunities for women's economic empowerment, challenges persist, particularly in rural areas. The approach to disability inclusion and other Leave No One Behind (LNOB) dimensions is acknowledged but lacks detailed strategies. There is a notable absence of disaggregated data collection, consultations with representative groups, and strategic qualitative monitoring, limiting the ability to tailor interventions effectively, assess impact, and measure genuine transformative change beyond participation numbers.

CONCLUSIONS

19. The programme demonstrates relevance, coherence, and commitment to sustainability in its design and implementation. Its targeted approach, alignment with national and international priorities, and focus on capacity building and partnerships have laid a solid foundation for achieving long-term impact. However, the programme must continue to refine its selection processes, strengthen coordination and synergies with other interventions, and proactively address potential risks and challenges to sustainability. The programme can maximize its potential to transform the lives of SHFs and agripreneurs in Rwanda by leveraging its strengths and learning and adapting from implementation experiences.

20. The baseline study found limited information on implementation progress. At the time of the baseline study, WFP and its implementing partners had limited mechanisms in place to demonstrate programme progress against plans. The baseline study found that after six months of implementation, systematic feedback processes were not yet established.

21. Despite the programme's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), with specific targets and strategies, there are gaps in mainstreaming disability inclusion and other Leave No One Behind (LNOB) dimensions. The implementation plans lack detailed strategies and targeted interventions for these aspects, leading to gaps in ensuring comprehensive inclusivity. While the programme demonstrates a commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), with specific targets and strategies in place, there is room for improvement in mainstreaming disability inclusion and other LNOB dimensions. The baseline study found no targets for persons with disabilities or explicit strategies for including other marginalized groups.

KEY LESSONS

- a. **FSC Targeting:** Initial reliance on predefined district lists and lack of gender analysis prevented the programme from meeting both entrepreneurship criteria and demographic targets (60% women, 80% youth), highlighting the need for diverse outreach methods, such as engaging youth and women's networks, to ensure a wider pool of qualified candidates.
- b. **SHF Targeting:** The baseline survey revealed a wide range of farm sizes among "smallholder farmers," including some engaged in large-scale farming, indicating that current classification criteria may be too broad, potentially including participants outside the programme's intended target group.
- c. **Regular Reporting:** The ET noted a lack of regular and systematic progress reporting which limited the programme's capacity for adaptive management at the time of the baseline study.
- d. **Holistic Support:** The programme's approach of targeting existing entrepreneurs in agriculture value chains built upon participants' existing knowledge and aspirations. Given this is a baseline, assessing the capacity again at mid-term and end-line will provide useful insights into the extent to which provided training and support address identified gaps over time.
- e. **Youth employment strategies benefit from a collaborative approach:** The programme's 'One plus one' mechanism demonstrated the value of fostering knowledge dissemination and creating employment opportunities and contributed to both economic empowerment and community resilience.

1. Introduction

1. This report presents the baseline study of the Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda (Shora Neza) programme. Shora Neza was initiated in March 2022 with 5-year, \$15 million funding from the Mastercard Foundation, aiming to boost smallholder farmer incomes, improve post-harvest quality, and stimulate agricultural investment via a Blended Finance Facility in all 30 districts across Rwanda's four provinces and Kigali City.

1.1. EVALUATION FEATURES

2. The WFP Rwanda Country Office (RWCO) is commissioning a series of linked evaluations for the Mastercard Foundation grant in support of Strategic Outcome 4 (Smallholder Agricultural Market Support) activities. This baseline study of Shora Neza will be followed by a midterm and an endline evaluation, the latter to be undertaken at the end of programme in 2027.

3. The main purpose of the evaluations, overall, is to assess the programme's performance critically and objectively for the purposes of accountability and learning, with a strong emphasis on accountability as the primary purpose of the baseline study. Accountability is prioritized as this is a baseline study, establishing the foundation for mid-term and end-line evaluations and progress tracking. In terms of accountability, the evaluations are to assess whether targeted participants have received services as expected, if the programme is on track to meet the stated goals, objectives, and targets in alignment with the results frameworks and Theory of Change (TOC) assumptions. In terms of learning, the evaluations are to ascertain the reasons why certain results occurred or did not occur to draw lessons, derive good practices, and provide pointers for learning. The evaluations are also to provide evidence-based findings to inform operational strategic decision-making. Given that the partnership between WFP and the Mastercard Foundation represents an important opportunity to expand WFP's work in supporting young people's engagement in the national food system, the results and lessons from the evaluations will be important for informing potential scalability.

4. The purpose of this baseline study was to measure key conditions or indicators at the beginning of the programme, which can then be used to monitor and evaluate its progress over a period of five years (from March 2022 through March 2027). The overall objective of the baseline study was to inform Shora Neza's implementation⁸ and assess the initial status of the programme by establishing the relevant context necessary for the mid-term and endline evaluations in accordance with WFP's Evaluation Policy (2022), between June and December 2023. Specifically, the baseline sought to:

- Confirm indicator selection and targets and establish baseline values for all performance indicators included in the programme document and logic framework.
- Provide the evidence-base to be used to revisit programme targets where relevant and review the results framework and the theory of change.
- Provide a situational analysis of the programme during the initial stages of interventions (focusing on the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, and sustainability) to inform programme implementation and provide important context necessary for the mid-term and final evaluations which will draw on the baseline data and expand analysis to assess the programme's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact.
- Assess the extent to which the programme design and activities are gender transformative and consider gender dynamics.

5. The primary users of this baseline study are the WFP Field and Country Offices in Rwanda, WFP field offices in Huye, Karongi, and Kirehe, the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa in Nairobi, WFP Headquarters, as well as the other seven countries implementing the Mastercard Foundation programme. RWCO is

⁸ WFP. (2022). Terms of Reference (ToR). Evaluation of WFP MasterCard Foundation project "Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda". Retrieved from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000148158/download/>

interested in learning from experience to inform decision-making, particularly for programme implementation and monitoring. Secondary users include donors such as the Mastercard Foundation, partnering UN agencies, and other partners, including Kuza Biashara. These stakeholders are interested in an established evidence base that can be reliably used as a benchmark to explain programme performance and to identify learning opportunities and best practices that could be replicated in other countries. The main interest of external stakeholders, including the Rwandan Government and key ministries, in the baseline study was to ensure that WFP's activities in the country are designed to be participatory and aligned with the priorities of the country, United Nations Country Team, and the ultimate participants of the programme.

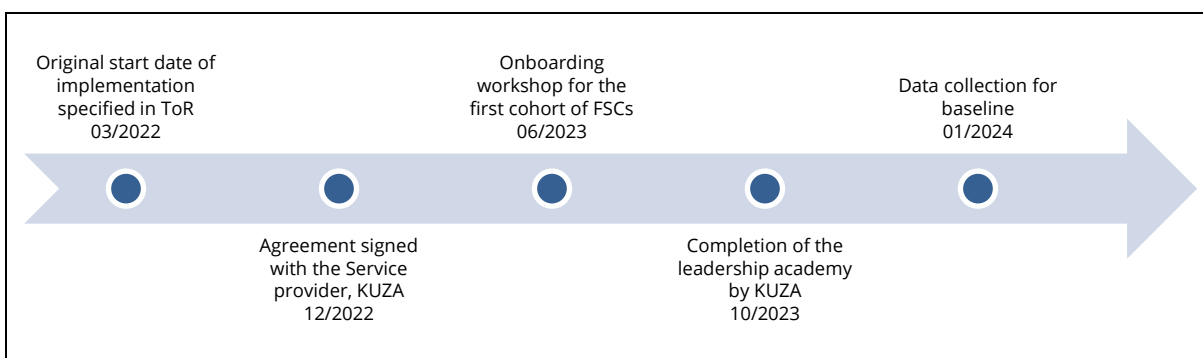
6. The baseline study, originally planned for September 2022 as per the Terms of Reference (ToR), was delayed due to several factors. Although the programme was initiated in March 2022, initial implementation delays led to this baseline study being undertaken from June 2023 to July 2024. The postponement was attributed to updates to the programme's TOC and indicators, as well as programmatic challenges such as staff turnover and prolonged onboarding of implementation partners. These factors contributed to the time lag between the initial ToR and the commencement of the baseline study.

7. Internally, the RWCO is accountable for the performance and results of Shora Neza and will use the baseline study findings for programme implementation and deciding on next steps regarding activities, approaches and partnerships. Whereas the field offices are interested in the findings and lessons to improve service delivery, including from information on the initial status, attitudes and challenges of participants that will help guide programme strategy and implementation for FSCs and their work with farmers. The Regional Bureau in Nairobi (RBN) oversees the RWCO and provides technical guidance and support. For an in-depth analysis of the stakeholders and interests of each stakeholder group, please refer to the detailed stakeholder analysis in [Annex 7](#).

8. In respect to scope, the baseline study covered all 30 districts in Rwanda where the programme has been launched, encompassing the four provinces and Kigali City. It includes an assessment of all the activities outlined within the programme and all types of participants from the beginning of the programme in March 2022.

9. This report presents the findings of the baseline study, in line with the onboarding of the first participants, and provides context for the programme, its objectives, and expected outcomes. To note, the programme implementation in terms of recruitment of participants began February 2023, with the finalization of recruitment of cooperating partners and the training of the first participant cohort by October 2023 (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Timeline of the Shora Neza Programme



Source: Own elaboration based on programme documents

1.2. CONTEXT

10. WFP annually serves more than 100 million people globally through emergency food assistance, nutritional support, and resilience-building interventions.⁹ WFP has carried out this work for over 60 years¹⁰,

⁹ WFP. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/>

¹⁰ WFP. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/history>

and today employs approximately 21,800 individuals who provide services in more than 120 countries.¹¹ In recognition of WFP's success in providing critically needed support on the frontlines of crises, the Programme was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020.¹² Over the last couple of years, the need for WFP assistance has consistently grown as the number of people experiencing acute hunger has swelled to more than 280 million.¹³ This has been due to the combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, surging prices of food, natural disasters, and conflicts.

Population dynamics, poverty, and economic growth

11. Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries on the African continent, with a population of 13.2 million in a country of 26,338 square kilometres.¹⁴ Among those living in the land-locked state, are over 135,000 asylum-seekers and refugees from bordering Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)¹⁵. In addition, Rwanda has a relatively young population, with 65.3 percent of its population under the age of 30 in 2022.¹⁶ Rwanda's youth is considered a significant opportunity for economic growth and development.¹⁷ The government has thus implemented policies to promote education and training, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities targeting youth, including initiatives like the Kigali Innovation City.¹⁸

12. Rwanda's vision to become an upper middle-income country by year 2035, and achieve a high-income status by 2050 respectively, motivates the country to build a strong record of policies that facilitate entrepreneurship, access to skills, technology and innovation. Entrepreneurship will be one of the key drivers in poverty eradication, helping social change, and promoting economic transformation.¹⁹

13. However, the recent pandemic-fuelled economic downturn and cycles of drought and flooding due to climate change, have led to the exacerbation of food insecurity among the country's most vulnerable populations, including women, youth, and people with disabilities.²⁰ This "perfect storm"²¹ of challenges has significantly affected countries including Rwanda, where nearly 40 percent of the nation's population lives below the poverty line (see Figure 2), and close to 20 percent experience food insecurity.²²

¹¹ WFP. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/stories/wfp-glance>

¹² WFP. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/videos/wfp-receives-nobel-peace-prize-media#:~:text=The percent202020 percent20Nobel percent20Peace percent20Prize,step percent20towards percent20peace percent20and percent20stability.>

¹³ WFP. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/stories/wfp-saving-lives-preventing-famine>

¹⁴ Government of Rwanda. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.rw/about>

¹⁵ WFP. Rwanda Annual Country Report 2023. Retrieved from https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000157752/download/?_ga=2.125979716.830107593.1713140840-677761535.1713140840

¹⁶ Government of Rwanda, Fifth Population and Housing Census. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/file/13787/download?token=gjLyRXT>

¹⁷ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. (2018). Poverty Profile Report 2016/17. Retrieved from <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/eicv-5-rwanda-poverty-profile-report-201617>

¹⁸ Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning Rwanda. (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.minecofin.gov.rw/news-detail/kigali-innovation-city-project-secures-us-20-million-to-finance-basic-infrastructure>

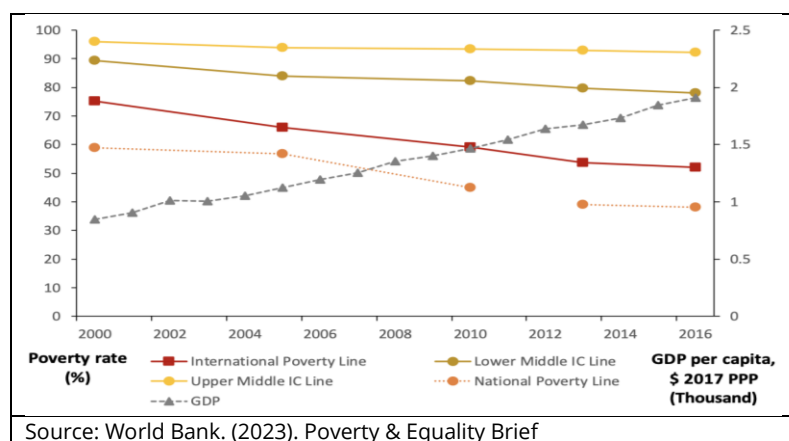
¹⁹ Government of Rwanda. (2020). Entrepreneurship Development Policy. Retrieved from https://www.minicom.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Minicom/Publications/Policies/Entrepreneurship_Development_Policy_-_EDP.pdf

²⁰ WFP Rwanda Country Brief July 2022. Retrieved from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000142189/download/>

²¹ WFP. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/news/fao-and-wfp-warn-looming-widespread-food-crisis-hunger-threatens-stability-dozens-countries>

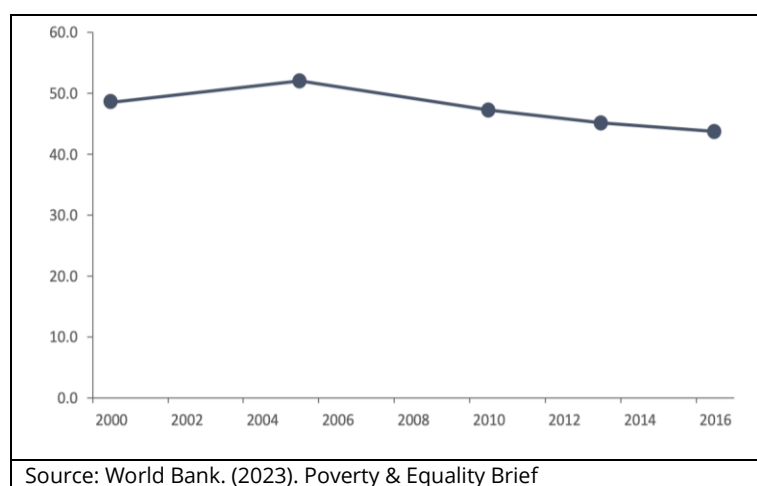
²² WFP Rwanda Country Brief September 2023. Retrieved from https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000153396/download/?_ga=2.69035283.362223762.1699297778-1046222341.1692189707

Figure 2. Poverty Headcount Rate, 2000-2016



14. According to World Bank figures (Figure 2), between 2000 and 2016, Rwanda achieved a substantial reduction in poverty. During this period, poverty rates declined from 59 percent to 38 percent as per the national poverty line, and similarly by the international poverty line standards, fell from 77.2 percent to 55.5 percent.

Figure 3. Gini Index, 2000-2016



15. Although the rate of poverty reduction has severely slowed down between 2010 and 2016 (as rates only fell from 53.5 percent in 2013 to 52 percent in 2016 owing to a slow rural-to-urban transition),²³ multidimensional poverty has continued to decrease. The multidimensional poverty rate was reported at 57.4 percent in 2016,²⁴ and reduced to 48.8 percent in 2020²⁵ according to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates. Even though inequality measured by the Gini index (

Figure 3) dropped from 52.0 percent in 2005 to 43.7 percent in 2016, Rwanda's Gini coefficient²⁶ ranks as the second highest among nations classified as low-income, revealing significant economic disparity amongst people.²⁷ Alongside the observed slowdown in poverty reduction, Rwanda's GDP per capita growth rate also fell from 8.3 percent in 2021 to 5.7 percent in 2022 and is expected to fall to 4.5 percent by the end of 2023.²⁸ Rwanda's efforts to reduce poverty may face additional challenges due to a growing population and escalating climate-related threats, which are poised to disproportionately impact youth. The youth in Rwanda, particularly those from 16 to 30 years old, who represent 26.6 percent of the population, face a high unemployment rate of 18.7 percent and 60 percent underemployment in the labour market. The

²³ World Bank. (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ UNDP. (2023). Briefing note for countries on the 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Index. Retrieved from <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MPI/RWA.pdf>

²⁶ The Gini coefficient is a poverty indicator used to measure income inequality in a country. The Gini coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 representing perfect equality and 1 representing perfect inequality.

²⁷ World Bank. (2023). Poverty & Equity Brief Rwanda. Retrieved from https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_RWA.pdf

²⁸ World Bank. (2023). Macro Poverty Outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/macro-poverty-outlook/mpo_ssa

vulnerability of this demographic is further exacerbated by their significant presence in the climate-vulnerable agricultural sector as they make up over 60 percent of the agricultural labour force.²⁹

Food security, nutrition and agricultural productivity

16. Agriculture is the backbone of the Rwandan economy, accounting for around 33 percent of the country's GDP and employing over 75 percent of the population.³⁰ However, despite the country's efforts to improve food security, Rwanda still faces challenges in this area. According to the 2022 Global Hunger Index, Rwanda has a level of hunger that is considered "serious," with a score of 27.2 out of 100.³¹ Malnutrition remains a significant challenge in Rwanda, with high incidence of stunting, wasting, and underweight among children under five years old.³² The Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) 2022 report highlights that stunting affects 33 percent of children under five, with the highest prevalence in rural areas than urban areas (36 percent versus 20 percent).³³ The main cause of food insecurity and malnutrition in Rwanda is limited consumption of nutritionally diverse foods, especially for children under five years and women aged 15-49 years old.³⁴

17. The Government of Rwanda has made significant efforts to address food insecurity and malnutrition, including the PSTA 4, which anticipated average annual agriculture growth of 10 percent through 2023 and a reduction in the percentage of food-insecure households to 10 percent by 2023/2024.³⁵ However, challenges persist, including limited access to inputs and markets, low agricultural productivity, and poor infrastructure. In recent years, Rwanda has experienced frequent droughts and erratic rainfall patterns, leading to crop failures and food shortages. The COVID-19 pandemic also significantly affected Rwanda's food system; exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and affecting access to food and income for smallholder farmers.³⁶

Key Definition: Smallholder farmer

Individuals or households who own or operate small plots of land (less than a hectare) for agricultural production and typically cultivate crops or raise livestock primarily for subsistence or local markets rather than for large-scale commercial purposes. Smallholder farmers in Rwanda play a crucial role in the country's agricultural sector, contributing significantly to food security, rural livelihoods, and economic development. They may face various challenges, including limited access to inputs, markets, finance, and technology, as well as vulnerability to climate change and environmental degradation.

18. The main limiting production factor in Rwanda is access to land; farm plot sizes are small, and up to 75 percent of the population own less than 0.7ha, meaning agriculture is still dominated by subsistence farming. To address these challenges, the Government of Rwanda is pursuing a policy of intensification and diversification, with the MINAGRI coordinating activities across the agriculture sector and leading on

²⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Rural youth employment and agri-food systems in Rwanda. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org/3/ca717en/CA717EN.pdf>

³⁰ FAO. (2019). Rwanda at a glance. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org/rwanda/our-office-in-rwanda/rwanda-at-a-glance/en/>

³¹ Global Hunger Index. (2022). (GHI) Rwanda - peer-reviewed annual publication designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at the global, regional, and country levels. Retrieved from <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/rwanda.html>

³² WFP. Countries - Rwanda. Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/countries/rwanda>

³³ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. (2021). Demographic and Health Survey 2019-2020. Retrieved from <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR370/FR370.pdf>

³⁴ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. (2022). Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis - 2022 Report. Retrieved from <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/comprehensive-food-security-and-vulnerability-analysis2022>

³⁵ Government of Rwanda, Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation 4 (PSTA4) 2018-2024. Retrieved from https://www.minagri.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Minagri/Publications/Policies_and_strategies/PSTA4_Rwanda_Strategic_Plan_for_Agriculture_Transformation_2018.pdf

³⁶ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. (2022). Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis - 2022 Report.

planning and strategies.³⁷ Even though Rwanda is relatively small in terms of geographical area (24,264 square kilometres), smallholder farmers are unable to reach local commercial markets which remain ‘invisible’ to them largely because their produce often does not meet the necessary quality standards.³⁸ Smallholder farmers also lack the knowledge related to post-harvest management (PHM), storage and quality assurance requirements of processors such as the levels of aflatoxin,³⁹ affecting their economic well-being through post-harvest losses (PHL).⁴⁰

Gender equality, women’s empowerment, and inclusion

19. Women constitute a significant 80 percent of the workforce in smallholder agriculture, playing a critical role in both domestic food production and market supply.⁴¹ Legal reforms such as the Succession Law of 1999, the 2004 Land Policy, and the 2013 Land Law have empowered women with equal inheritance and land rights. Nonetheless, traditional patriarchal structures, cultural and gender norms continue to pose challenges, especially in controlling valuable, productive assets.⁴² Under communal property marital systems, women have the right to shared ownership of assets and are the first to inherit in case their spouse dies. However, women still face obstacles due to societal imbalances and norms, affecting their access to financial and extension services.⁴³ This not only hinders their individual economic progress and well-being but also has a detrimental impact on overall national productivity.⁴⁴ Furthermore, female farmers are particularly susceptible to climate-related risks and land degradation, mostly due to limited access to agricultural resources.

20. The Gender Monitoring Office’s report from March 2017 indicates that women face limitations in accessing essential agricultural resources such as credit, fertilizers, and land. The report underscores that women are notably underrepresented in securing agricultural credits and loans, and they also have limited access to crucial farming inputs like fertilizers and improved seeds. Specifically, the data reveals that 18 percent of men had access to seeds, compared to just 8 percent of women. Similarly, 75 percent of men had access to inorganic fertilizers, whereas only 45 percent of women did.⁴⁵

21. Moreover, gender inequalities persist in agricultural produce sales, with males generally being responsible for selling both small-scale and large-scale crops. These economic dynamics limit women’s control over household income derived from agricultural activities, despite agriculture being the primary income source for female-headed households. Even though there has been some policy focus to address these issues—such as Rwanda Vision 2050, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS II, 2013-2018), and the PSTA 3—persistent gaps in gender equality within the agriculture sector still remain.⁴⁶

22. Rwanda has made significant progress in promoting GEWE, ranking as one of the top-performing African countries in this area, with a gender inequality index of 0.804. This progress is attributed to the country’s gender-sensitive laws, including the liberal constitution, which mandates that women should occupy 30 percent of seats and representation in decision-making bodies. Rwanda’s representation of women in parliament has witnessed significant progress, increasing from 26 percent in 2002 to

³⁷ UNDP. (2023). Policy Brief: Situational Analysis - Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Agricultural Actions in Rwanda. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-02/Situational_percent20Analysis_percent20Final_percent20ver_0.pdf

³⁸ WFP. (2022). ToR: Evaluation of the WFP MasterCard Foundation project “Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda”

³⁹ In maize, aflatoxin—a carcinogenic toxin from molds—can develop in improperly stored grain, compromising safety and marketability. <https://www.ifc.org/en/stories/2023/rwanda-grain-markets>

⁴⁰ WFP. (2022). ToR: Evaluation of the WFP MasterCard Foundation project “Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda”

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Stern, E., & Mirembe, J. (2017). Intersectionalities of formality of marital status and women’s risk and protective factors for intimate partner violence in Rwanda. *Agenda*, 31(1), 116-127.

⁴³ Government of Rwanda, Gender Monitoring Office. (2017). Gender and Agriculture. Retrieved from https://gmo.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/profiles/Gender_Profile_in_Agriculture_GMO_March_2017.pdf

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

approximately 61 percent in 2017, making it one of the leading countries globally in terms of women's political participation.

23. Rwanda has demonstrated a robust political commitment to furthering gender equality, securing a ninth-place global ranking and the top position in Africa as per the Global Gender Gap Report 2020. Aligned with its Vision 2020 framework, the country is an active participant in international gender equality treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Following the 2018 national elections, Rwanda achieved one of the highest levels of female political representation worldwide at 62 percent. However, despite these advancements, gaps remain in harmonizing food and nutrition security policies to cater to the distinct needs of different genders and age groups, particularly women of reproductive age and individuals with disabilities.⁴⁷

24. Rwanda's programmatic and policy initiatives are also designed to empower and support persons with disabilities. Since Rwanda approved the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2008, the country has put in place laws, and policies fostering the rights of persons with disabilities. Rwanda has made efforts to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities. The country adopted a National Policy on Disability in 2019, which aims to promote the rights of people with disabilities and increase their participation in social, economic, and political life.⁴⁸ Similarly, in 2022, a Multistakeholder Disability Platform was launched to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities. The platform focuses on bringing together representatives from the disability community, government, civil society, and the private sector to address barriers in health, education, employment, and justice.⁴⁹ Negative beliefs, stereotypes, and attitudes directed to people with disability are legally prohibited, however, there is still low progress in the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in political and social economic aspects.⁵⁰

Youth development (including education, employment, empowerment)

25. Rwanda has made significant progress in increasing access to education, with net attendance rate (NAR) for primary and secondary of 89.3 percent (88.4% M & 90.3% F) and 22.3 percent (18.8% M & 25.8% F), respectively.⁵¹ Despite some progress in increasing access to education at primary and secondary level, there are still significant disparities in enrolment at higher education level compared to primary education. The quality of education also remains a challenge, with a high drop-out rate and a shortage of qualified teachers.⁵² Early marriage and teen pregnancy are significant factors contributing to drop-out rates among girls. In 2019, Rwanda launched the NST1, which includes a focus on increasing access to education and reducing gender disparities.

26. Furthermore, the education system does not always prepare students adequately for the job market, with a mismatch between the skills taught and the skills needed by employers. While youth (16-30 years) constitute 27.1 percent (3.6 million) of the total population of Rwanda, the youth unemployment rate is high, estimated at approximately 25.6 percent, with gender disparity evident: 22.3 percent for males and 29.4 percent for females. The formal job market is limited and most young people, particularly young women, are employed in the informal sector, which is characterized by low wages and lack of job security or

⁴⁷ WFP. (2022). ToR: Evaluation of the WFP MasterCard Foundation project "Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda"

⁴⁸ Government of Rwanda. (2021). National Policy on Disability and Inclusion and Four-Year Strategic Plan (2021-2024). Retrieved from https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/rwanda_national_policy_on_disability_and_inclusion_final.pdf.

⁴⁹ UNDP. (2022). Cost-of-living crisis annual report. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/UNDP_percent202023_percent20Final_percent20Web_percent20version.pdf

⁵⁰ Government of Rwanda. (2021). National Policy on Disability and Inclusion and Four-Year Strategic Plan (2021-2024).

⁵¹ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. (2022). 5th Rwanda Population and Housing Census (PHC). Retrieved from https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/main_indicators_2022

⁵² World Bank. (2019). Report. Rwanda-Quality-Basic-Education-for-Human-Capital development project. Retrieved from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/184411564797693303/pdf/Rwanda-Quality-Basic-Education-for-Human-Capital-Development-Project.pdf>

benefits.⁵³ The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the unemployment situation, with many young people losing their jobs or struggling to find work. Moreover, young women are disproportionately taking on high-risk work in the informal sector, which typically pays less.⁵⁴ Concurrently, the pandemic has increased the burden of unpaid care work for women, further impacting their economic participation and exacerbating existing inequalities.⁵⁵

27. Young people in Rwanda face various challenges including access to resources such as land and capital, negative attitudes towards low-skilled jobs, and a lack of training opportunities. However, there are also opportunities for youth empowerment, particularly in the agriculture sector. The Government has recognized the potential of the sector to create jobs and promote economic growth and has implemented various initiatives to support youth involvement in agriculture, including the establishment of youth-led agricultural cooperatives.⁵⁶ For example, initiatives such as the National Employment Programme (NEP)⁵⁷ and YouthConnect⁵⁸ provide skills training, access to finance, and support youth entrepreneurship, including in the agriculture sector. Similarly, the Rwandan Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF) serves as a platform that brings together various youth organizations, individual youth farmers, and entrepreneurs engaged in crop production, livestock, agro-processing, and other agro-services.⁵⁹

28. While the country is making changes, such as the Entrepreneurship Development Policy (EDP), that are expected to provide a long-term framework to support private sector entrepreneurs, there are still challenges the country faces. These include low levels of human resource development. The country seeks to develop skilled labour including accountants, lawyers, technicians, tradespeople, and other skilled professionals who may bolster the ideas of innovative entrepreneurs.⁶⁰

WFP's Initiatives in Agriculture and Market Access in Rwanda

29. In alignment with Rwanda's NST1 (2017-2024) and the UN's Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2018-2024), WFP has been instrumental in strengthening the agriculture sector in Rwanda. According to the WFP Rwanda Annual Report 2022, WFP provided targeted capacity-building to 127,409 smallholder farmers, 47 percent of whom were women, with a focus on enhancing production, reducing PHL, and improving market access.⁶¹

30. In Rwanda, WFP coordinates the Joint Programme for Rural Women's Economic Empowerment in collaboration with FAO, IFAD, and UN-Women. The organization also participates in a UNDP-led programme aimed at enhancing cross-border trade and food security. WFP implements several interconnected sub-activities to support smallholder farmers, aimed at improving market access, financial accessibility, and reducing PHL along entire value chains. WFP Rwanda also chairs the maize value chain platform with Rwanda's Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) and the Private Sector Federation.⁶²

⁵³ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2020). Rwanda: Youth Labour Markets and the School-to-Work Transition. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_760578.pdf

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ UNWOMEN. (2022). Baseline Survey on Unpaid Care Work Status among Women and Men in 8 Districts of Rwanda. Retrieved from <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/05/baseline-survey-on-unpaid-care-work-status-among-women-and-men-in-8-districts-of-rwanda>; UNWOMEN (2020) Increasing resilience of vulnerable women to the socio-economic impact of COVID19 crisis in Rwanda. Retrieved from <https://rwanda.un.org/en/45440-increasing-resilience-vulnerable-women-socio-economic-impact-covid19-crisis-rwanda>; Global Network of Women Peacebuilder. Rwanda Country Update 2021. Retrieved from <https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/Rwanda-COVID-19-Profile.pdf>

⁵⁶ USAID. (2019). Feed the Future. Youth in Extension and Advisory Services: Rwanda. Retrieved from https://agrilinks.org/sites/default/files/dlec_youth_in_extension_and_advisory_services_-_rwanda.pdf

⁵⁷ Rwandan government initiative for youth job creation and skills development

⁵⁸ A collaborative platform by the Government of Rwanda and UNDP for youth empowerment in employability, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement <https://youth.gov/collaboration-profiles/youthconnect/about>

⁵⁹ FAO, MINAGRI, ILO, IFAD, & CIRAD. (2020). Rural youth employment and agri-food systems in Rwanda: A rapid context analysis. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org/3/ca7717en/CA7717EN.pdf>

⁶⁰ Government of USA. (2022). Rwanda-Country Commercial Guide. <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/rwanda-market-challenges#:~:text=Low%20level%20of%20human%20resource,and%20limited%20local%20capital%20markets>

⁶¹ WFP Rwanda Annual Country Report 2022

⁶² WFP Rwanda Annual Country Report 2022

31. WFP's support for smallholder farmers includes several interconnected sub-activities, implemented in a harmonized and coordinated food-systems approach. These activities address various weaknesses such as market access, access to finance, and PHL along entire value chains. Additionally, WFP has piloted digital initiatives like the "Farm 2 Go application" and "SheCan", a crowd-funded digital financial platform designed to collect aggregate data at the individual farmer level and promote savings groups among rural women. Furthermore, WFP hosts the Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA), a public-private partnership aimed at optimizing market functionality for farmers. This initiative serves as a sustainable model for other key programmes, including the home-grown school feeding programme.⁶³

External actors' work on empowering smallholder farmers

32. Several other development partners and organizations are working in Rwanda to empower smallholder farmers and improve outcomes within the food systems in place in the country. For example, the World Resources Institute is leading the implementation of the Circular Food Systems for Rwanda project in collaboration with the government of Rwanda.⁶⁴ The project focuses on providing technical support to SMEs, encouraging policy changes and stakeholder engagement to create a more circular and sustainable food system in Rwanda.⁶⁵ The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has also played an important role in supporting local authorities in improving outcomes for smallholder farmers and strengthening the local food systems. FAO has worked on numerous projects to support the smallholder farming community and youth employed in the agricultural sector including a project on "increasing water productivity for nutrition-sensitive *agriculture* and improved *food* security and nutrition."⁶⁶ The World Bank created an Umbrella Multi-Donor Trust Fund called Food Systems 2030 to help countries improve their food systems and work towards sustainable development goals, especially those related to poverty and hunger by 2030.⁶⁷

Humanitarian protection

33. Rwanda is host to approximately 135,000 refugees fleeing from repressive conditions, inter-ethnic conflicts, armed assaults, and natural disasters in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. Among these, 24.4 percent are women aged between 18 and 59, while 15 percent are children under the age of five. The majority, around 91 percent of these refugees are accommodated in five camps located across the nation—Mahama, Kiziba, Kigeme, Nyabiheke, and Mugombwa camps. The remaining estimated 10 percent reside in urban areas outside of these camps.⁶⁸ According to UNHCR, Rwanda's policies have allowed integration of refugees into national systems in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. For instance, they have equal access to services like health and education, facilitated by refugee ID cards. The Refugee Response Plan also aligns with UN frameworks, RWCO-led by UNHCR and Rwanda's Ministry of Emergency Management, with 17 partners in 2023.

34. A study conducted in 2019 suggests that, contrary to common assumptions, host communities living in close proximity to refugees does not lead to conflict and social tensions. Instead, positive interactions, shared cultural backgrounds, and continued support from international organizations and NGOs contribute to fostering cooperation and minimizing social tensions between the host community and refugees. This dynamic is also supported by Rwanda's refugee policies, which grant the right to work and freedom of movement, thereby facilitating daily interactions and economic integration within these communities.⁶⁹ It must be mentioned here that self-reliance and livelihoods are a priority for the Government of Rwanda as well as WFP and UNHCR.⁷⁰

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

⁶³ WFP. Rwanda Annual Country Report 2022

⁶⁴ World Resources Institute. January 25, 2022. Circular Food Systems for Rwanda. Retrieved from <https://www.wri.org/initiatives/circular-food-systems-rwanda>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization. (n.d.). *Rwanda*. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org/in-action/water-for-nutrition/country-activities/rwanda/en>

⁶⁷ World Bank. (n.d.). Food Systems 2030 Overview. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/food-systems-2030/overview>.

⁶⁸ UNHCR Data Portal (n.d.), Country – Rwanda. Retrieved from [unhcr.org](https://data.unhcr.org/)

⁶⁹ Faith, V., Bilgili, Ö., Loschmann, C. et al. (2019). How do refugees affect social life in host communities? The case of Congolese refugees in Rwanda.

⁷⁰ Ibid; WFP. (2018). Rwanda Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023

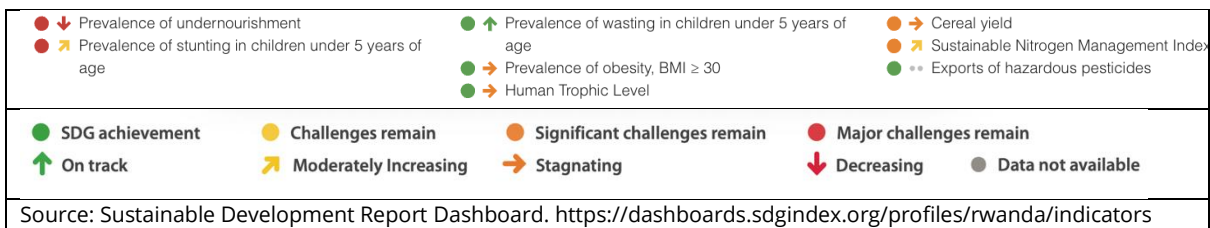
35. Even though Rwanda was able to work effectively towards SDGs 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 16, several challenges, such as decreasing cereal yields, affect its performance on SDG 2 indicators.⁷¹ As showcased in Figure 4, prevalence of undernourishment grew from 2008 after having fallen in the years before that. Access to food is limited by several factors such as seasonal variations in yields, fluctuating commodity prices and low purchasing power of the people due to socio-economic inequality.⁷²

Figure 4. Prevalence of undernourishment (percent)



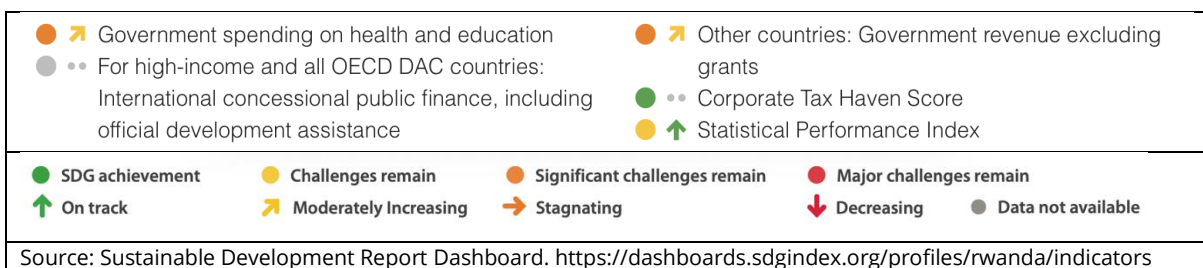
36. Figure 5 below highlights Rwanda’s progress on different indicators related to SDG 2, Zero Hunger, as of 2023. It shows that while prevalence of undernourishment and prevalence of stunting in children under five years of age has worsened in the recent years, Rwanda saw improvements in prevalence of wasting in children under five and prevalence of obesity.

Figure 5. SDG 2 Progress



37. According to the Rwanda Voluntary National Review 2023, the country is actively engaged in partnerships to achieve SDG 17. This includes participating in the South-South Cooperation through the Rwanda Cooperation Initiative, which facilitates the sharing of experiences with other countries. Additional efforts include the Rwanda Green Fund for sustainable projects, strengthening Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), and mobilizing domestic resources. Figure 6 below shows the status of indicators under SDG17 in Rwanda.

Figure 6. SDG 17 Progress



⁷¹ WFP. (2022). ToR: Evaluation of the WFP MasterCard Foundation project “Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda”

⁷² Ibid.

1.3. SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

38. This chapter develops in detail the subject of this decentralized baseline study, the components of the programme, planned activities that will be assessed for the baseline and subsequent evaluations, as well as a description of the programme's results framework and theory of change (TOC). The evaluations focus on the 5-year (2022-2027) Shora Neza programme which was initiated in March 2022 with USD 15 million in funding from the Mastercard Foundation. The programme is aimed at empowering smallholder farmers and young people by strengthening local agri-food systems in Rwanda, making them more efficient, sustainable and inclusive for young people, particularly young women. By doing so, WFP focuses on overcoming the challenges that prevent effective engagement of youth and women in the national food system. The programme objectives, key interventions, and budgets allocation at the time of the baseline study are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Shora Neza Programme Overview

Objectives	Key Interventions	Budget allocation
Grow smallholder farmer (SHF) profits, by providing linkages to commercial markets to sell surplus yields	Connecting SHFs to premium public and private markets for sales at national and regional levels Investing in youth-led Farmer Service Centers (FSCs), which serve as 'one stop shops' for all smallholder agricultural needs	USD 2.79 million
Increase access to the knowledge and resources needed to improve post-harvest processes, therefore decreasing farming losses	Promoting a vibrant, youth-led market for post-harvest (PH) equipment and services, which in turn will enable smallholder farmers access to better, premium markets	USD 2.06 million
Expand on investments in agricultural value chains	Creating a Blended Finance Facility with a special focus on youth enterprises (MSMEs).	USD 5.12 million

39. The programme builds on previous WFP initiatives aimed at better linking smallholder farmers, youth and women to agriculture value chains and formal financial services. It was informed by a comprehensive market assessment for small-scale post-harvest (PH) equipment targeting smallholder farmers, which identified opportunities to engage MSMEs, especially women and youth-driven entities, in meeting the growing demand. WFP has advocated for mainstreaming a private-sector based approach in the government's revised post-harvest strategy to enable these groups to participate and benefit.

40. Two gender studies, one on financial services for women and the other a gender-based value chain analysis, further shaped the programme design. They highlighted the challenges rural women face in accessing formal finance at the individual level for PH equipment, despite previous WFP interventions demonstrating the benefits of improved post-harvest practices and storage technologies. Building on this, the programme was to work with micro-finance institutions and Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) to develop tailored financial products suitable for smallholder farmers, particularly rural women.

41. The Mastercard Foundation's Rwanda agricultural sector diagnostic study provided additional rationale and validation. It outlined barriers, enabling factors and recommendations to increase youth participation, noting that educated Rwandan youth with less access to land are well-positioned to provide value chain services to smallholders. Leveraging the strong community integration of Farmer Service Centres (FSCs), the programme envisioned to orchestrate events showcasing successful women agripreneurs and dispelling misconceptions about youth in agriculture, while accounting for social and cultural contexts to avoid exacerbating gender inequalities. Provisions were to be made to ensure women's participation in training and capacity building, exploring childcare options.

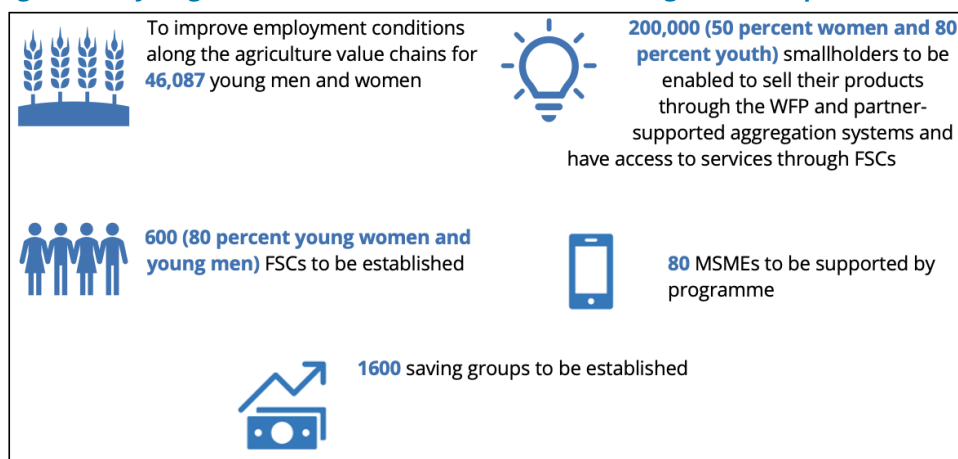
42. Shora Neza is being implemented in the four provinces of Rwanda and Kigali City, comprising all 30 districts in the country. As of now, the programme is in its preliminary stage of implementation, focusing on establishing foundational partnerships and capacity-building activities. A service provider, Kuza Biashara, was initially contracted to work with an initial cohort of 50 FSCs. Kuza Biashara's role was to undertake field registration of smallholder farmers and provide capacity-building efforts for these FSCs, utilizing 15 pre-recorded courses on various entrepreneurship topics. At the time of the baseline data collection period, Kuza Biashara had completed their assigned task and two other local implementing partners, Good Neighbors and DUHAMIC, have continued with FSC support. See [Annex 7](#) for a detailed list of key partners and stakeholders.

Key Definitions: Farmer Service

Centres: FSCs, are youth-led micro to small-scale agri-entrepreneurs. Driven by a commercial mindset, they provide a diverse array of services to rural communities, acting as intermediaries between farmers and other essential stakeholders including facilitating access to inputs, assisting with post-harvest activities, marketing agricultural products, and adding value to produce.

43. The summary of overall programme participants to be reached is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Key original deliverables of the Shora Neza Programme as per the Shora Neza Logframe



Source: Own elaboration based on MCF Shora Neza Logframe

44. Shora Neza aims to ensure that at least 50 percent of programme participants are women and 80 percent are youth; and that a minimum of 600 youth-led enterprises participate, with 60 percent of these supporting women and 80 percent youth, while considering their different needs, through strengthened, interlinked, and efficient agricultural value chains. It should be noted that the Shora Neza programme does not include any transfers, such as cash, vouchers, or in-kind assistance (e.g., seeds), as part of its interventions.

45. During the first year of implementation, close consultations with, and systematic guidance from, the Pan African Office of Mastercard Foundation emphasized the importance of promoting youth employment. As a result of these discussions, the WFP Programme Coordination Team recommended that WFP country offices progressively reorient the focus of their interventions to achieving youth employment outcomes (especially for young women) and guided the COs in adjusting their targeting strategies, redesigning activities, and operationalizing measurement of youth jobs. Accordingly, these consultations also helped revise the TOC (see more below) and results chain. The monitoring package of Mastercard Foundation was published September 2023 to guide teams on the monitoring framework of the project, which was shared November 2023 with the ET for mainstreaming into data collection tools. Based on the available documents and interviews, these are the primary changes identified at this stage; a more comprehensive assessment of programme design changes and implementation progress will be conducted during the mid-term evaluation.

Theory of Change (TOC)

46. Shora Neza is aimed at creating sustainable agricultural value chains that empower young people and smallholder farmers in Rwanda. The TOC for the programme has undergone multiple rounds of reviews

with members of the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) and the Pan African Office of Mastercard Foundation (see Figure 8). In line with the Africa Works Strategy of the Foundation, the revised TOC agreed in January 2023 is presented in this report. It is structured in a logical sequence that shows the output leading to immediate outcomes, which in turn leads to intermediate outcomes that ultimately result in young men and women having improved employment conditions along the agricultural value chains, which the programme measures as access to jobs and increased incomes.

47. The evaluation team did not review or revise the TOC as it was already in an approved form following multiple reviews, and it was used as-is for the purposes of this baseline study. However, based on a preliminary analysis, the TOC appears to be well-structured and reasonable in its proposed chain of outcomes leading to the ultimate goals of improved youth employment and incomes in Rwanda's agricultural sector.

48. The TOC depicts four intermediate results pertaining to enhancing agricultural productivity, improving the business performance of youth-led micro-enterprises, increasing access to finance, and creating an enabling environment for youth employment in the agricultural sector in Rwanda. The programme begins by empowering young men and women at the **individual** level with enhanced capacity and knowledge to implement good agricultural practices (GAP) that reduce PHL and improve their livelihoods by generating an income, in cash or in-kind. Building individual capacities also includes direct provision of grants for equipment of inputs, allowing the individual to strengthen its asset base.

49. This approach is intended to lead to increased revenues at the **enterprise-level** from the sale of quality crops and services, which will enable young people to invest in their businesses and create more employment opportunities for themselves and others. Support to enterprises includes all those actions susceptible to strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity and promote growth of the venture, including business advisory services, technical advice, grants to strengthen the asset base, etc.

50. Additionally, the programme aims to create a **conducive environment** that supports youth-led micro-enterprises and enterprises along agricultural value chains, providing them with access to affordable financing, capacity-building opportunities, and appropriate financial products and services. These were further divided into actions that provide or improve participants' access to products and services, actions that promote synergies with other national stakeholders and programmes and actions that encourage synergies between different WFP programmes, such as school meals or Local and Regional Food Procurement Policy. Through these activities, the programme aims to create efficient linkages among actors and enablers within the agricultural value chain, promoting institutional and **system-wide changes** that foster a favourable environment **for youth employment**.

51. Based on this TOC and the extensive consultations between participating WFP COs and the Mastercard Foundation in defining globally agreed outcomes, indicators and measurement strategies, 'Youth in work' has been identified as the main mandatory indicator at outcome level that should be reported by all Country Offices, using the same methodology and approach. 'Youth in work' is defined as the sum of new and improved jobs, according to the following guidelines:

- **Improved employment:** Employed youth who experienced an improvement in their current work, as defined by increased income and/or improved working conditions.
- **Work:** sum of *wage employment* and *self-employment*.
 - Wage employment includes part time, seasonal, or full-time employment within an organization. Wage employment resulting from project support commences once an individual is observed to secure income generated through wage employment.
 - Self-employment includes part-time or full-time employment in a person's own enterprise or on a freelance basis. Self-employment resulting from project support commences once an individual is observed to secure income generated through self-employment.
- Mastercard Foundation expects work to be '**dignified and fulfilling**', meeting at least one marker in addition to the mandatory one "reliable among", among: reputable work, respect in workplace and sense of purpose.

52. These definitions have been considered, contextualized and carried through into the evaluation approach and tools, providing an opportunity to be further iterated on and integrated into the WFP RWCO annual outcome monitoring efforts.

Gender and equity dimensions

53. According to the ToR,⁷³ two studies conducted in 2019 under the United Nations' Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP RWEE) offer valuable learning evidence for the programme. The gender-based value chain analysis (VCA) conducted as part of the JP RWEE study on beans revealed that existing agricultural policies, strategies, and programme documents often overlook the differences in resources, roles, and constraints faced by men and women in the beans value chain. These findings underscore the need for gender-transformative interventions within the value chain to promote systems level changes which support gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the long-term.

54. In line with this, the programme intends to conduct a gender assessment to complement the Foundation's Rwanda diagnostic study which focused on youth, ensuring interventions address the distinct needs and priorities of young women. A rapid gender analysis to understand the specific needs and challenges, particularly among young women was in its final phase at the time of the baseline study.⁷⁴ The programme also aims to create mentorship opportunities specifically for young women, fostering a pipeline of women entrepreneurs. Additionally, community events will be organized to showcase the programme, generate interest, and promote the launch of FSCs within the local community. These events aim to dispel misconceptions about youth in agriculture, enhance understanding of the sector, and highlight successful women agripreneurs. Such interventions will account for the social and cultural contexts in which these food systems operate to not exacerbate existing gender inequalities.

55. The ToR⁷⁵ also highlights that agriculture is seen as a vulnerable and low-performing sector, which adversely affects the attractiveness to young Rwandans of a career in traditional farming. Access to commercial finance remains a significant barrier, particularly for youth. The project aims to increase youth employment through different roles within agricultural value chains, including as farmers, aggregators, and service providers through Farmer Service Centres.

56. Furthermore, the programme will establish strategic partnerships with initiatives to promote youth employment, including discussions with a USAID-funded project. These partnerships will particularly focus on inclusivity by ensuring that capacity building materials and tools for employment enhancement make considerations for groups more at risk of marginalization, such as people with disabilities. The ToR⁷⁶ states that WFP will engage with networks representing the interests of Rwandan women and people living with disabilities (PLWD) to ensure project activities contribute to advancing their inclusion and empowerment, suggesting the project aims to address the exclusion and lack of empowerment faced by people with disabilities in agriculture.

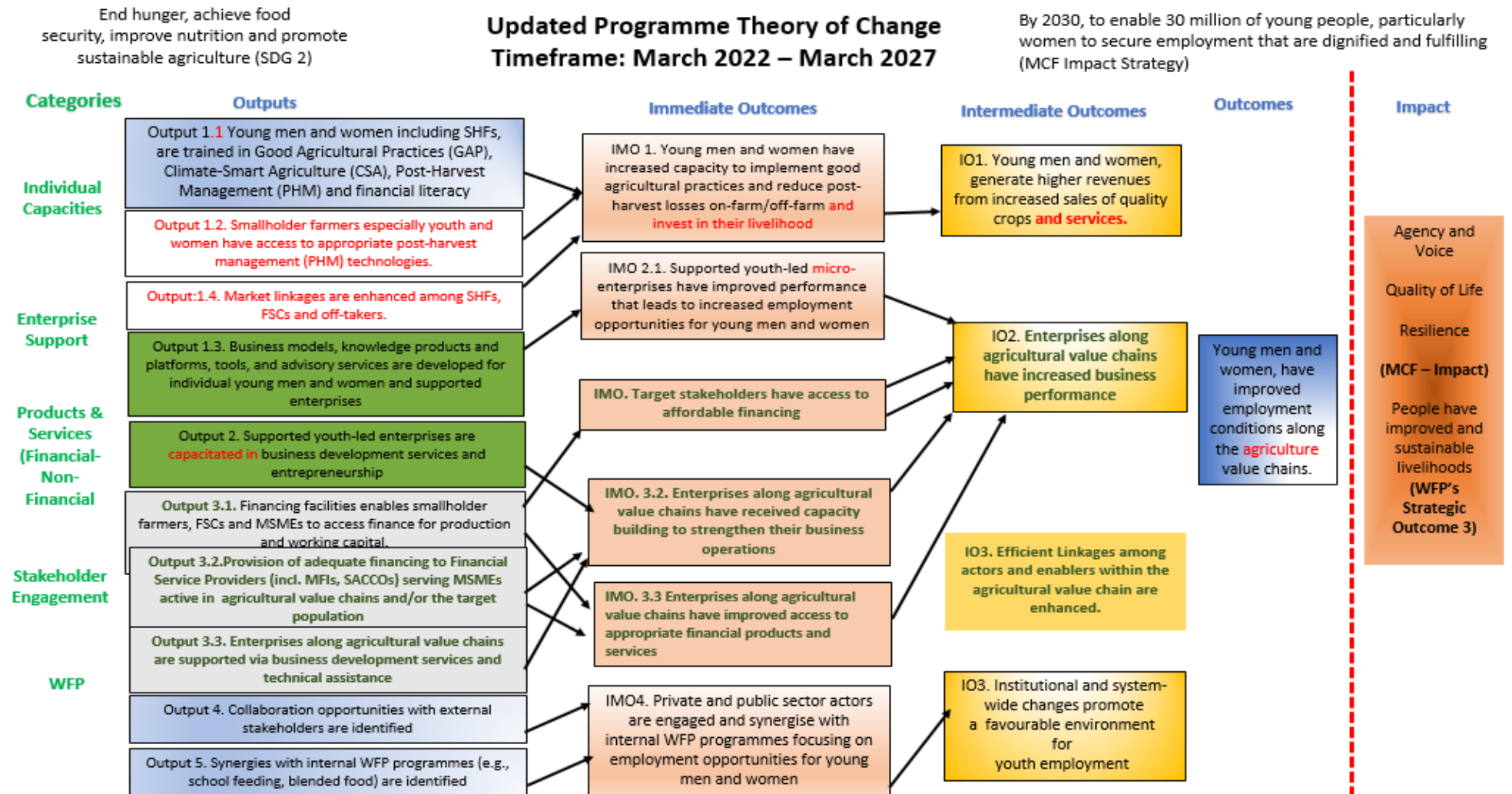
⁷³ World Food Programme. (2022). ToR: Evaluation of WFP Mastercard Foundation project "Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda".

⁷⁴ KII Respondent.

⁷⁵ World Food Programme. (2022). ToR: Rwanda, Evaluation of WFP Mastercard Foundation project "Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda".

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Figure 8. Rwanda Mastercard Foundation Programme Theory of Change



*Annex 5 contains risks and assumptions

1.4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

57. This baseline study takes a formative approach and offers an overview of the situation at the beginning of the Shora Neza programme, which serves as the foundation for monitoring outputs and outcomes, as well as mid-term evaluation to assess progress towards the intended results, and final evaluation to measure the ultimate impact by the end of the programme in March 2027. By further developing the results framework and fine-tuning the evaluation questions and indicators to measure outcomes outlined in the TOC, the baseline establishes starting points for each of the outcome indicators to enable monitoring and future evaluations, while also seeking to address broader inquiries about the programme's overall effect on rightsholders.

58. The sample frame for this baseline study included 300 smallholder farmers (women and men) and all 50 micro-entrepreneur FSCs (women, men, and youth) enrolled in the first batch of the Shora Neza programme. These target groups were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the programme's initial reach and impact on the key beneficiaries. The baseline study focused on assessing Shora Neza's influence on these two primary target groups, smallholder farmers and FSCs, to gauge its effectiveness in achieving its objectives.

59. The baseline study applied a participatory and gender lens to assess whether the programme design and activities are gender transformative and consider gender dynamics, intersecting identities, and whether participatory processes are utilized to transform roles, norms, and inequalities. In addition to collecting and presenting sex-disaggregated data, the disaggregated data from quantitative means was triangulated against qualitative stories of change on GEWE gathered through participatory methods initiated in this baseline phase and will be compared with data collected during the subsequent mid-term and final evaluations. A primary tool for this was adapting elements of the UN Women Rapid Assessment Tool to Evaluate GEWE Results.⁷⁷ The triangulation of data and gender-sensitive analysis facilitated the identification of gaps and recommendations specific to women, men, or female and male youth. As such, the baseline study findings draw clear perspectives related to the different targeted groups, including people with disabilities. Differential results, gender inequalities and specific gender vulnerabilities and concerns were also considered and are described in the baseline findings.

Methodology

60. The baseline study utilized a mixed-methods approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative primary data which was obtained from Shora Neza participants including FSCs and small holder farmers (SHFs), as well as key internal and external stakeholders of the programme in a cross-sectional study design. The baseline study also took a theory-based, utilization-focused, participatory, and inclusive approach. Based on the **TOC and the logic framework** of the programme, all the performance indicators which have been operationalized to measure outcomes of the programme were measured in the baseline study to determine the benchmarks for assessing success. To address the futuristic component of the baseline, a longitudinal study design was developed with the baseline study as the starting point for collecting periodic quantitative outcome data on FSCs, smallholder farmers and enterprise owners for the five-year life cycle of Shera Neza.

61. The evaluation team engaged with the WFP Rwanda team from the start of the programme to facilitate joint learning processes and produce recommendations for immediate action. Stakeholders were engaged in planning, data collection, analysis, and validation workshops, ensuring diverse perspectives were considered. This approach dictated that all primary intended users of the evaluation were clearly identified and directly engaged from the beginning to ensure participation throughout. This was facilitated through regular discussions with the RWCO programme teams and ongoing sharing, and review of documents provided by the donor and Cos participating in the same Mastercard Foundation framework.

⁷⁷ Please see the tool and guidance in Annex 6. While it was designed for humanitarian settings, the tool and questions themselves are applicable in the context of Rwanda and because women's economic empowerment is an underlying outcome of the programme due to its focus on targeting women and youth with a primary goal of job creation and increased incomes.

62. The questions in Table 2 were utilized to guide the baseline process. The criteria assessed during this baseline study are numbered and highlighted in bold. Given that this is a baseline study and forward-looking stage rather than the final evaluation stage, some of the evaluation questions from the ToR have been edited to use future tense. Additionally, new evaluation questions focused on gender, disability inclusion, and LNOB have been added to deepen the analysis in these areas.

Table 2. Evaluation Criteria and Main Questions for the Baseline Study

Evaluation Questions (Questions addressed at baseline phase in bold)	Evaluation Criteria
<p>1.1. To what extent are the programme’s strategic design, objectives, and implementation addressing the identified needs and priorities of agripreneurs and smallholder farmers, especially youth and women?</p> <p>1.2. To what extent does the programme target the right stakeholders and the geographic areas? How appropriate were the criteria used for such selection?</p> <p>1.3. To what extent is the programme design and objectives aligned with the needs, priorities, and policies of the government (e.g., NST1/PSTAs), WFP, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and other UN agencies, including related to gender equality in agriculture?</p>	Relevance
<p>2.1. To what extent will WFP’s intervention be coherent with the programmatic objectives and policies of other partners operating within the same context? (e.g., market access, post-harvest loss reduction, access to finance, nutrition-sensitive agriculture)? (External coherence)</p> <p>2.2. To what extent are there synergies between the programme and other WFP interventions? How well are these activities harmonized with other WFP interventions, including female-targeted interventions? (Internal coherence)</p>	Coherence
<p>To what extent has WFP’s facilitation role been successful in linking agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers (especially women and youth) to formal food system actors for increased employment opportunities? To what extent these new jobs represent 'improved' opportunities in terms of longevity, dignifying, formality, etc.? What factors influences the achievement or non-achievement of results including for various targeted sub-groups?</p> <p>Market access: To what extent and how has the programme increased smallholder farmers’ incomes and access to premium markets through agri-entrepreneur-led Farmer Service Centres? What factors influences the achievement or non-achievement of results including for various targeted sub-groups?</p> <p>Post-harvest management: To what extent has the programme improved youth and women engagement in the provision of post-harvest management services (capacity, technology)? What factors influences the achievement or non-achievement of results including for various targeted sub-groups?</p> <p>Access to finance: To what extent and how has the programme supported the inclusion of smallholder farmers and agri- entrepreneurs, including youth and women, in formal food system financing? Has the programme been successful in fostering innovation in the sector? What factors influences the achievement or non-achievement of results including for various targeted sub-groups?</p>	Effectiveness

Was the intervention implemented in a timely way?	
Is the programme cost-effective and cost-efficient in the use of resources for achieving results?	Efficiency
3.1. To what extent will the implementation of the intervention consider and implement a sustainability strategy, such as the capacity building of smallholder farmers, agripreneurs, and other partners, such as private sectors involved in food systems, and communities?	Sustainability
To what extent will intervention benefits continue after WFP's work cease?	
Did the intervention contribute to long-term intended results? What, if any, unintended positive/negative results have been realized?	
To what extent was the programme able to address agricultural financing gaps, reducing of post-harvest losses, enhancing nutrition-sensitive agriculture and enhancing market access opportunities effectively?	
What effects, intended and unintended, has the programme had on food systems approaches and strategies in the country, especially for the empowerment of women and youth?	Impact
Were there any differences, including any differential results across groups, especially for youth and women? Why and how? What enabling or disabling factors were are present?	
Has the project made any difference to GEWE relations? If yes, how and why? If not, why not? Were there any other gender-specific and transformative impacts? Did the intervention influence gender transformative context?	
4.1. To what extent are gender equality, disability inclusion, and the principles of leaving no one behind (LNOB) mainstreamed within the programme design?	Gender, Disability Inclusion, and LNOB

63. Overall, the triangulated approach described in the evaluation matrix was developed to address the objectives of the baseline study. It details various lines of inquiry with their respective data collection methods and tools ([Annex 4](#)). While this baseline study only assessed the programme on the relevance, coherence and sustainability criteria, all six evaluation criteria (with the addition of effectiveness, efficiency and impact) will be applied during the mid-term and end-line evaluations. Put differently, this baseline provides the essential contextual background required for future assessments of the programme. While the primary focus of the baseline study was to capture the current state, subsequent evaluations will measure changes relative to this baseline across all evaluation criteria. To enable longitudinal analysis, the baseline data has been organized to allow comparisons with data across midterm and endline evaluations. An additional evaluation question (beyond the evaluation matrix criteria) on gender, disability inclusion and LNOB has been added for this baseline study to deepen this aspect of the analysis

64. In the inception phase, the evaluation team further developed the stakeholder mapping, analysed the latest TOC and Logical Framework, streamlined the evaluation questions, and developed an evaluation matrix to guide the longitudinal study in consultation with the WFP RWCO, Evaluation Committee and ERG. The baseline study's use of mixed-methods included inception-phase document review and ongoing review of monitoring reports, key informant interviews (KII), and focus group discussions (FGDs) with internal WFP stakeholders and external stakeholders, including primary smallholder farmers.

65. **Participatory Ranking Methodology (PRM)** was used among FSCs and small-holder farmers to respond to evaluation questions under relevance, primarily, to what extent the programme's strategic design, objectives and its implementation addresses the needs and priorities of agripreneurs and smallholder farmers, especially youth and women. PRM generated both quantitative and qualitative data

within FGDs conducted at baseline. Specific questions designed for PRM were integrated within the FGD tool ([Annex 6](#)).

66. Secondly, **network analysis** was integrated into surveys to assess four aspects: market access, PHM, access to finance, and relationships with the top five sellers and buyers. For market access, the network analysis maps the relationships between respondents and supporting entities. For PHM, data was collected to identify stakeholders who offer capacity-building support and technology adoption, as well as assessing the frequency and strength of these connections. Regarding access to finance, the network analysis determines which stakeholders provide financial support— including through loans, grants, or innovative financing models—and assesses the regularity and quality of interactions with them. Whereas for relationships with the top five sellers and buyers, the network analysis gauges the frequency and strength of interactions with these key players in the market. Data for these analyses was gathered within the survey tool. Network analysis interpretation was conducted using the Python programming language with the NetworkX library. The evaluation team also employed a **participatory method**⁷⁸ to gather qualitative data on various outcomes, assumptions and possible impacts defined within the TOC (including unintended), which will allow to assess effectiveness and impact at midterm and endline. This involved sampling and following an initial group of 15 youth participants from the first cohort of onboarded FSCs (including both females and males) to collect baseline narratives that will serve as a data source for **Outcome Harvesting** activities at the planned midterm and endline evaluations.

67. The Outcome Harvesting approach was adapted for this baseline activity by focusing on collecting participants' initial experiences, expectations, and aspirations related to the programme, rather than actual changes or outcomes. These narratives, collected at the start of the programme, will aid in the determination of anticipated and unanticipated impacts pertaining to gender equality, women's empowerment, and youth economic development and inclusion (such as agency and voice and quality of life) as well as overarching learning questions – such as what the outcome of 'improved employment conditions' looks like for them. Preliminary findings based on these baseline narratives are included in the [Annex 14](#) and will be used to assess effectiveness and impact at the midterm and endline evaluations.

68. Enumerators were trained in culturally appropriate interactions with indigenous communities to ensure inclusive representation. Surveys and interviews were conducted in the participants' local remote areas, reducing the travel burden. Additionally, the team collaborated with FSCs to identify and engage diverse participants, including those from hard-to-reach groups.

69. The evaluation team ensured that vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, and other socially marginalized individuals were included in its sample selection, especially amongst smallholder farmers.

Mainstreaming of gender equality and inclusion in the evaluation design

70. As noted earlier, the evaluation team ensured incorporation of gender in all aspects of the baseline study from data collection and analysis to reporting. The baseline study applied a participatory lens to assess whether the programme considered gender dynamics and intersecting identities and whether participatory processes were utilized to transform roles, norms, and inequalities. Specific questions were included in data collection instruments to gather information on women's inclusion in markets and decision-making, as well as access to resources, such as time and income, adapting elements of the UN's Women Rapid Assessment Tool to Evaluate GEWE Results. Additionally, FGDs were held separately with men and women to capture their diverse perspectives and ensure respect for cultural customs and local safety considerations. In order to identify observed changes for broader issues related to GEWE that go beyond numerical equality, evaluators coded and analysed qualitative data using a gender lens. Aside from looking for differential results across men and women, evaluators also looked for unintended consequences of the intervention on populations at higher risk of marginalization, such as persons with disabilities. Finally, the evaluation teams assessed the extent to which gender equality, disability inclusion, and the principles of leaving no one behind (LNOB) mainstreamed within the programme design ([See Finding 8](#)).

⁷⁸ The participatory method at this stage focused on gathering baseline data on the participants' current situations and expectations, rather than measuring outcomes. Outcome Harvesting will be fully utilized in the midterm and endline stages to assess changes and impacts. See Annex 14 for baseline narratives.

71. The evaluation team collaborated with FSCs to involve participants from diverse social backgrounds in the baseline study. While disaggregating data by ethnicity was not feasible within the Rwandan sociocultural context, the enumerators made concerted efforts to include individuals from different social groups in the baseline sample, taking into account cultural sensitivities.

Data collection methods

Quantitative and qualitative survey

72. The quantitative data collection included surveys with existing smallholder farmers, FSCs, and young innovators⁷⁹ in the agriculture sector. The survey for smallholder farmers was household-based, and a multistage sampling technique was utilized to ensure a representative selection of female-headed households and other subgroups. The survey collected baseline data on core outcome-level indicators, initiating the measurement of programme effectiveness. Additionally, qualitative data were collected from respondents during the survey to enable Network Analysis of stakeholders' access to knowledge, agro-services, and innovations.

73. The evaluation team implemented a pipeline or 'step-wedged' approach, considering the staggered entry of planned indirect and direct participants (200,000 smallholder farmers and 600 micro-entrepreneurs) into the programme. This approach meant recognizing that participants began their participation at different points in time, as the programme was rolled out in stages.

74. To ensure comprehensive coverage, the evaluation team surveyed all 50 FSCs as the first cohort was relatively smaller. However, given the large number of smallholder farmers (200,000)⁸⁰, a stratified random sample was utilized. Six (6) smallholder-farmers were randomly selected per each FSC, meaning 300 surveys were expected to be completed for this group (273 were completed). The distribution was proportional across the provinces based on the distribution of first phase FSCs.

75. The sampling frame for smallholder-farmers, provided by WFP, was stratified by age, dividing them into youths (≤ 35 years) and non-youths (>35 years). A systematic random sampling technique was then used to select 10 percent of non-youth female farmers and 10 percent non-youth male farmers from the study communities. The remaining sample was composed of 40 percent female youth and 40 percent male youth farmers, ensuring the inclusion of 80 percent of youth and 50 percent of female respondents in the baseline study. Additionally, the survey methodology aimed to identify farmers who are heads of households and to include both female and male respondents. This approach was intended to help ensure gender representation in the sample and that the perspectives of women were adequately represented.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

76. Qualitative data collection involved FGDs with smallholder farmers, utilizing PRM guidelines, and KIIs with World Food Programme (WFP) staff, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Rwanda Development Organization (RDO), DUHAMIC, Good Neighbors, Mastercard Foundation, and Kuza Biashara. This qualitative data provided essential context for the programme. Concurrently, quantitative data collection was undertaken to establish benchmarks for all the outcome-level results of the programme in Rwanda, as previously detailed.

77. For the qualitative data collection, 14 KIIs (8 internal and 6 external, 29% female) were conducted among key stakeholders. To determine the sample, participants with in-depth knowledge of the programme were purposively selected for KIIs to ensure the collection of quality information for synthesis and triangulation. Interviews helped collect data on needs, networks and the current situation related to outcome areas, and helped gather initial insights on how the design of the programme facilitates its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact.

78. Also, 10 FGDs were conducted among smallholder farmers and FSCs. Two sessions were conducted per province, one for females and one for males (facilitated by persons of same sex), and 8 to 10 FGD participants were identified and purposively included in the FGD sessions across the five provinces. FGDs played a crucial role in gathering qualitative data to complement the quantitative analysis from surveys,

⁷⁹ Although the programme was designed to support 75 innovators, its implementation had not commenced at the time of the baseline study. As a result, the stakeholder group of innovators was excluded from the baseline study.

⁸⁰ Shora Neza targets a total of 200,000 (indirect participants) by the end of the project.

providing valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of farmers as well as agri-entrepreneurs involved in the evaluated activities.

79. In the FGDs, discussants were asked to describe the main changes in their lives over a specified recall period. They were prompted to identify the primary drivers of these changes and to whom or what they attribute any changes. Although this was a baseline study with limited programmatic activities having occurred, this line of questioning helped to expand and reinforce the network analysis. It provided insights into key actors in the value chain and contextual factors influencing programme outcomes. Most of the questions were open-ended, but some required respondents to rank their greatest needs, aiding in better measurement of the programme’s relevance through the participatory ranking methodology. Additionally, FGDs provided insights into how gender roles, gender relations, community norms and beliefs affect implementation and results. The data collection tools are presented in [Annex 6: Data collection tools](#). How each tool was applied to answer the evaluation questions is included [in Annex 4: Evaluation matrix](#).

80. The evaluation team collaborated with FSCs to identify participants from various groups, including underrepresented ones. Similarly, interview locations and timing were adjusted to accommodate different schedules and mobility needs.

81. Quality Assurance (QA) Mechanisms were employed to facilitate the management of qualitative and quantitative data which included data editing, and cleaning in line with predefined criteria. For instance, outliers were identified and addressed during field work and responses were pre-coded to minimize the process of data cleaning and editing. In addition, data triangulation from multiple sources were performed to verify any evidence emanating from the baseline study to minimize or eliminate misleading results from the baseline study.

Figure 9. Stakeholders engaged by data collection method

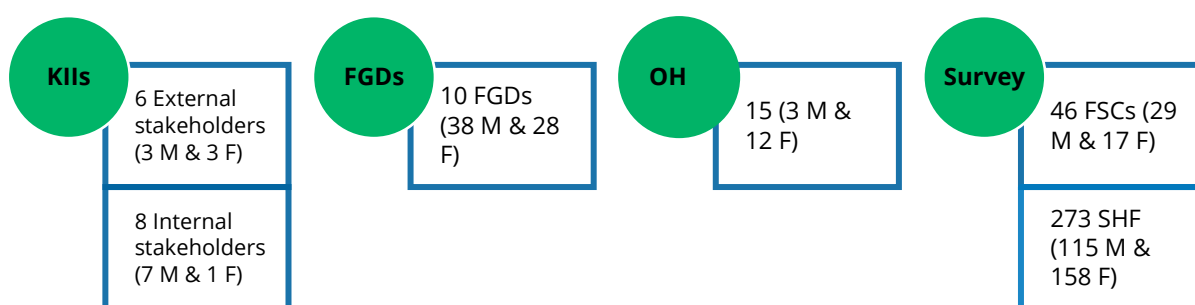


Table 3. Breakdown summary of respondents

Locations	Survey (FSCs)	# Youth	# Female	Survey (SHF)	# Y	# F	FGDs	#F	Outcome Harvesting	#F
Northern Province	7	6	4	47	27	29	8	8	3	3
Southern Province	9	8	3	55	17	34	8	0	3	3
Eastern Province	12	11	2	68	38	34	8	0	3	1
Western Province	17	9	7	94	44	54	6	0	5	5
Kigali City	1	1	1	9	3	7	8	20	1	1
TOTAL	46	35	17	273	129	158	38	28	15	12

82. QA processes were systematically applied during the baseline study as applied by the evaluation team. The system adhered to the standards of utility, credibility, independence, efficacy, transparency, and ethics throughout the evaluation process.

83. Evaluation team members had the primary responsibility for the quality assurance process, ensuring rigorous data collection, analysis, and synthesis, supported by data triangulation to verify evaluation evidence to minimize misleading results from the baseline study. Everyone involved in the baseline study, including enumerators, received training on ethical protocols and good practices for data collection. A designated ET member conducted a daily virtual data audit of field data as they were uploaded on the cloud server and reported any issue to the field supervisors for immediate correction by field personnel. The data collectors responsible for such errors revisited the site and corrected any issues before leaving the site. Additionally, supervisors randomly selected at least 2 respondents from surveyed locations and conducted backchecks to ensure that accurate data were collected by data collectors. The baseline study utilized the DE's integrated Quality Assurance (QA) system which was monitored by the Team Leader. QA Mechanisms were also extended to data management which included data editing and cleaning in line with predefined criteria.

Data analysis and reporting

84. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques were applied to examine the data. This involved conducting content analysis and descriptive statistics. Content analysis was used to convert information from the documents and data from interview notes into categorized qualitative data according to the evaluation matrix. To achieve this, a codebook was developed, closely aligned with the evaluation matrix to allow the ET to answer evaluation questions, as well as to extract lessons, good practices, and recommendations. The ET used NVivo for coding the data. For quantitative data, statistical analysis was conducted to generate descriptive statistics from the survey.

85. Triangulation of data from different sources was conducted throughout to ensure the reliability and quality of information from multiple sources to arrive at credible, reliable, and unbiased findings. The ET utilized a mix of primary and secondary sources of data to ensure that each finding is based on several lines of inquiry and data sources.

86. Other key disaggregation in the baseline study included gender, age group, and province of the smallholder farmers and FSCs. The baseline study was mainly explanatory. Using SPSS, chi-square tests were conducted in cross-tabulations to examine the significance of associations between outcomes variables of interest and gender, age group and province of respondents. Network analysis, focusing on the interdependence of smallholder farmers and FSCs, was performed using Python's Network X library. Both qualitative and quantitative data collected from multiple sources were then triangulated to validate the evidence obtained from the baseline study.

87. The baseline study includes a detailed gender analysis, which documented differences in experiences and perspectives. This analysis provided insights into how activities could be adapted to further mainstream gender equality and inclusion elements into programme activities, in alignment with WFP's corporate commitments and standards. The report also includes recommendations on how gender considerations could inform future programming. Additionally, the report documents the results of network analysis, which helps to understand the interrelatedness of diverse stakeholder groups in the agri-market system domain, such as the differential impacts of market systems on women, youth, and non-youths.

88. Though the focus of the baseline study was on gender and youth however, non-youths and other social groups such as persons with disabilities were purposively sampled for participation in the FGD sessions. The evaluation team ensured gender equality and inclusion were considered in all aspects of the baseline study, including data collection, analysis, and reporting. Specific questions were included in data collection instruments to gather information on GEWE. For identifying broader equity-related issues that go beyond numerical equality, evaluators coded and analysed qualitative data for specific indicators. The ET coded and analysed qualitative data using a gender lens to identify observed changes for broader equity and issues related to gender, youth, and other vulnerable groups. Examples of such issues included barriers to access to the programme for women or young people, and unintended consequences of the intervention on marginalized populations such as people with disabilities, indigenous groups, or those living in poverty. The ET also looked for differential results across relevant groups and geographic areas to ensure that the programme was reaching its intended participants in an equitable manner.

Ethical Considerations

89. As part of the WFP decentralized evaluation process, the baseline study conforms with WFP and UNEG ethical standards and norms. Based on the baseline study's inclusion criteria, no ethical safeguards for children were required because all respondents were youths 18 to 35 years of age and non-youths 36 years and above. All other essential ethical considerations were otherwise adhered to at all stages of the evaluation cycle. Interviews with female respondents were conducted by female enumerators, ensuring cultural appropriateness and facilitating open communication. Other considerations included: ensuring informed consent; protecting the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants; ensuring cultural sensitivity; respecting the autonomy of participants; ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups); and ensuring that the evaluation process did no harm to participants or their communities.

Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

90. The sampling list of small-holder farmers (SHFs) provided by FSCs to WFP included farmers with significant variation in production scales, despite all being categorized as SHFs. This heterogeneity within the SHF category may have affected the analysis of smallholder farmers' revenues and practices. The analysis was disaggregated into FSCs and SHFs categories, but the wide range of farm sizes within the SHF group could impact the interpretation of results.

91. The FSC-provided list was not up-to-date, with some smallholder farmers having changed their residence. Additionally, the list had unequal representation of men and women, leading to fewer women in the sample. To address this, the evaluation team collaborated with FSC to obtain the most recent and accurate farmer list, ensuring equal gender representation, and considered oversampling women to achieve a more balanced sample.

92. The sample list contained inaccuracies such as misspelled names, nicknames, and missing contact information, making it challenging for enumerators to confirm participant identities during interviews. To overcome this, the evaluation team relied on multiple identifiers, such as phone numbers and IDs, to verify participant identities and worked closely with FSC to improve the accuracy and completeness of the sample list.

93. In several sectors, a significant number of farmers from the initial sample list were unavailable for interviews due to reasons such as the harvest season and lack of contact information, necessitating repeated random sampling to meet the sample size requirement. To address this, the evaluation team planned the evaluation timeline to minimize conflicts with peak farming seasons and collaborated with FSCs to obtain accurate and up-to-date contact information for farmers to facilitate scheduling interviews.

94. Some FSCs were unavailable for interviews due to workload, travel abroad, scheduling conflicts, or business closures, requiring efforts to reschedule interviews for comprehensive representation. To mitigate this, the evaluation team allocated sufficient time and resources to accommodate the schedules of FSC entrepreneurs and considered alternative interview methods, such as phone or video interviews, to increase participation rates.

95. It should be noted that all 50 FSCs enrolled at the time of the baseline study were sampled; however, 4 dropped out due to their unavailability. As described in the methodology, a staged design was adopted to sample additional FSCs at mid-term and endline stages. Additionally, significant variations were found within the FSC and SHF samples regarding annual agricultural yield, affecting the averages. This is due to outliers, as some participants classified as small-holder farmers were engaged in large-scale farming. To mitigate this challenge, the baseline study findings also present boxplots showing the distribution of yields. For these boxplots, we used a statistical method to identify and remove extreme values that could skew the results.

96. The assessment of 50 FSCs out of the total 600 FSCs to be enrolled in the Shora Neza programme will not negatively impact the conclusions drawn at mid-term review or end-line evaluation. The baseline study employs a stepped-wedge design, where the FSCs selected at baseline will be reassessed at both mid-term and final evaluation stages. Additionally, the sample will be expanded at mid-term to ensure adequate representation for the final evaluation. This approach maintains the validity and representativeness of the evaluation process throughout the programme cycle, allowing for robust conclusions at each stage.

Evaluability Assessment: Relevance of Evaluation Questions and Usability of Baseline Data

97. The evaluation team conducted an evaluability assessment during the inception phase. This assessment addressed the relevance and feasibility of the evaluation questions. The evaluation questions were found to be well-aligned with the purpose of the baseline study and were feasible given the programme design, data availability, and resources. The baseline study focused on relevance, coherence, and sustainability criteria, laying the groundwork for subsequent assessments. While some indicators in the logframe were found to be output-focused, the evaluation team adjusted data collection tools to gather additional outcome-level data. This approach ensures the evaluation can effectively assess the achievement of results within their respective outcomes. For a more detailed discussion of the methodology and how it addresses the evaluation questions and indicators, please refer to [Annex 3](#).

98. The quality and internal validity of the baseline data are high given all the measures put in place to achieve good and reliable reference data for the Shora Neza programme. Overall, the baseline data can be used as a benchmark to determine the cause direction of the programme at mid-term review and its success at the end of project evaluation.

2. Baseline findings

2.1. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

99. This section provides a snapshot of the socio-demographic characteristics of our respondents, including agripreneurs and smallholder farmers associated with the Shora Neza programme. Table 4 showcases information related to respondent socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, geographic education level, marital status, household size, and information on the heads of households.

100. As outlined in Table 4, the study included 319 respondents, comprising 46 FSCs and 273 SHFs. The sample had a slightly higher proportion of females (54.5%) compared to males (45.5 percent). Slightly more youth (51.4 percent) aged 18-35 compared to non-youth (48.6 percent) aged 36 and above were included in the baseline survey. Most respondents were married (73.7 percent), and 73.4 percent of households were headed by males. Although gender representation was close to equal across the total number of respondents, the planned 50 percent female-headed household target was not met due to limitations in the sampling frame for the baseline study which was skewed in favour of beneficiaries coming from male headed households. This will be addressed in subsequent evaluations using multi-stage sampling technique per protocol. The average household size was 5.13 ± 2.18 persons. In terms of educational attainment, the largest proportion of respondents (46.4 percent) had completed primary education, followed by those with secondary education (30.1 percent). The respondents were distributed across five provinces, with the highest representation from the Western province (34.8 percent) and the lowest from Kigali (3.1 percent).

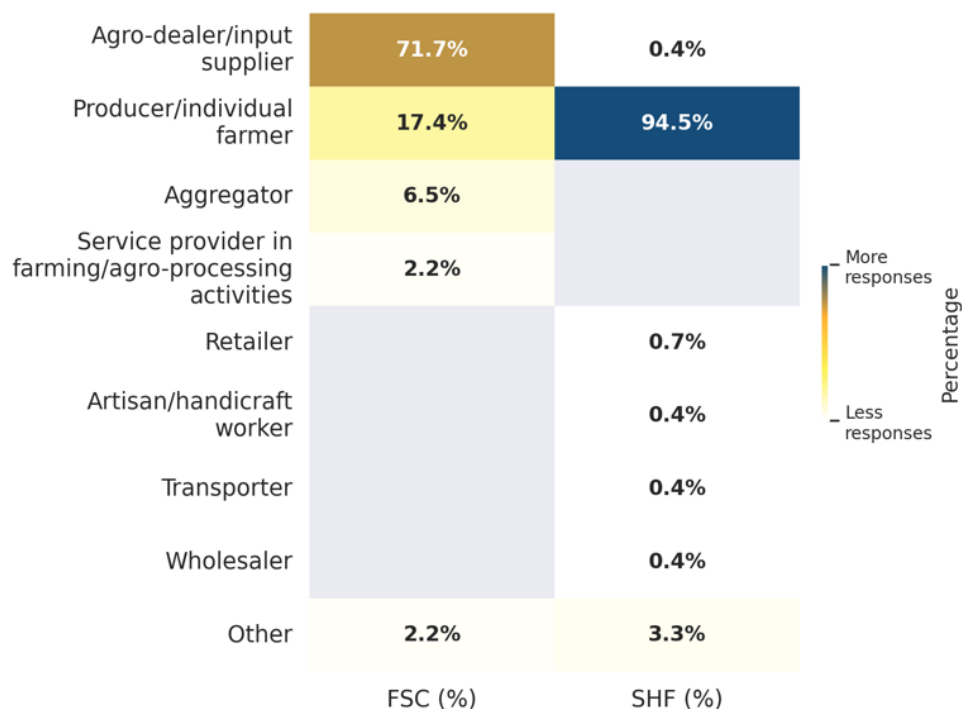
Table 4. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	N	Percent
Gender of respondents		
Male	145	45.5
Female	174	54.5
Age Group		
18-24	23	7.2
25-35	141	44.2
36 and above	155	48.6
Category of respondents		
FSC	46	14.4
SHF	273	85.6
Marital Status		
Single	71	22.3
Married	235	73.7
Divorced/Separated	1	0.3
Widowed	12	3.8
Gender of head of HH		
Male	243	76.2
Female	76	23.8
Average number of persons in the HHs		
Number in HHs	-	5.13 ± 2.18
Educational attainment		
No Form of Education	35	11
Primary Education	146	45.8
Secondary Education	98	30.7
Technical Education	5	1.6
Bachelor's Degree	25	7.8
Other	10	3.1
Province		

Eastern	80	25.1
Kigali	10	3.1
Northern	54	16.9
Southern	64	20.1
Western	111	34.8

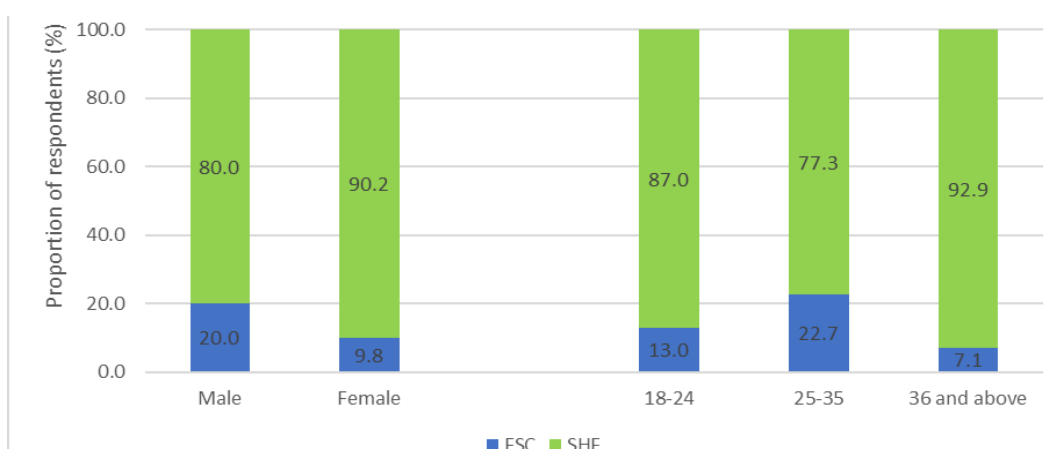
101. As shown in Figure 10 below, the majority of FSC respondents are employed as Agro-dealer/Input suppliers, constituting 71.7 percent of the group, with Producer/Individual farmers making up 17.4 percent. SHF are mainly engaged as Producer/Individual farmers, accounting for 94.1 percent of respondents in that category, with other occupations such as Retailer and Artisan/Handicraft worker being rare.

Figure 10. Percentage distribution of respondents' major activities by category



102. Similarly, non-youths (92.9 percent) were more involved in farming compared to youths in the age brackets 18-24 (87.0 percent) and 25-35 (77.3 percent). However, the youths as indicated above (13.0 percent and 22.7 percent respectively) were more involved in operating FSCs compared to non-youths (7.1 percent).

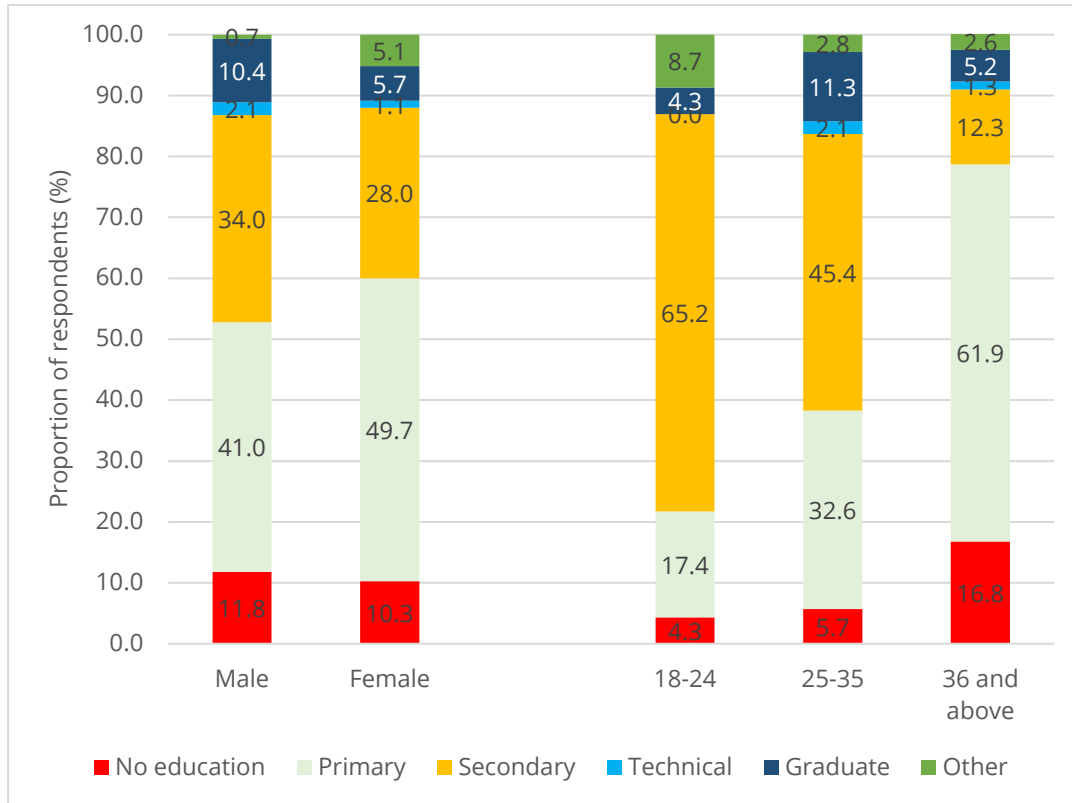
Figure 11. Percentage distribution of respondents' category by gender and age group



103. Further analysis of respondents' level of educational attainment suggests that a slightly higher proportion of males (11.8 %) compared to females (10.3%) had no form of formal education. However, more

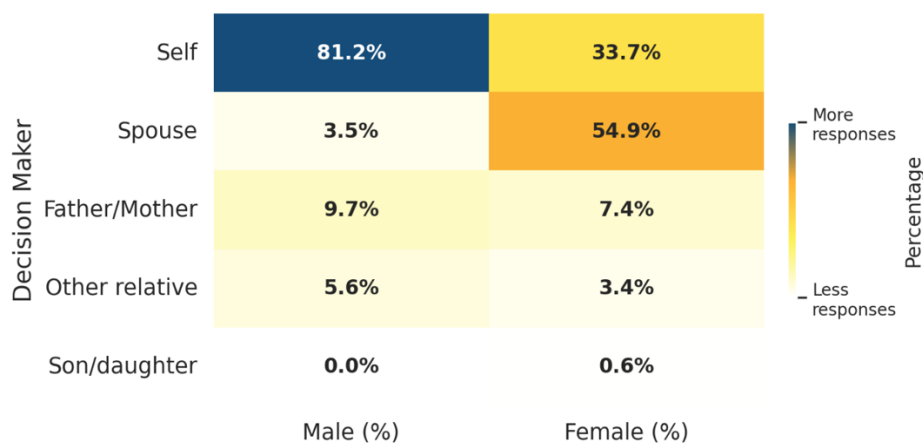
females (49.7%) than males (41.0%) had attained primary level education, while more males (34.0%) than females (28.0%) had attained secondary level education. Furthermore, a lower proportion of youths had no form of education compared to non-youths (16.8 %), with only 4.3 percent and 5.7 percent of youths in the age brackets 18-24 and 25-35 years, respectively, having no education. More youths (65.2% and 45.4%) attained a secondary level of education in the age brackets 18-24 and 25-35 years, respectively, compared to non-youths (12.3%).

Figure 12. Percentage distribution of respondents' educational attainment by gender and age group



104. As shown in the Figure 13 below, most male respondents (81.2%) identified themselves as the primary decision maker of the household, whereas 33.7 percent of female respondents indicated they were the household decision maker. This is aligned with the proportion of male headed households represented in the sample.

Figure 13. Decision making by gender



2.2. SURVEY FINDINGS

105. This section presents an overview of the key indicators from the Mastercard Foundation Shora Neza results framework at baseline, discussing their values and significance. The findings are organized around four results areas: (i) Result Area 1 – Individual Capacities & the Enabling Environment, which explores the capacities of individuals and the supportive environment; (ii) Result Area 2 – Products and Services, focusing on the programme's offerings; (iii) Result Area 3 – Enterprise Performance, assessing the performance of the enterprises involved; and (iv) Result Area 4 – Employment Conditions, examining the opportunities for growth and development within the programme.

106. As per the programme's objectives, one of the key goals is to empower agripreneurs and smallholder farmers, with a specific focus on engaging youth and women. To achieve this goal, the programme has set explicit selection criteria to ensure the participation of individuals from resource-poor backgrounds and vulnerable communities. As a result, most of the respondents come from rural areas predominantly involved with the agriculture sector.

RESULT AREA 1 – INDIVIDUAL CAPACITIES & THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Output 1.1: Smallholder farmers are capacitated to improve production and Post-Harvest Management (PHM)	Indicator. Proportions/Number of individuals receiving capacity-strengthening support on Agriculture/ GAP	Baseline: 38.1%
Output 1.2: Smallholder farmers, especially youth and women, have access to appropriate Post-Harvest Management (PHM) technologies	Indicator. Proportion of SHFs who are accessing PHM technologies and capacity strengthening	Baseline: 16.3%

107. Figure 14 below presents the percentage breakdown of respondents in the baseline survey according to their access to and use of new technology, as well as their participation in capacity building activities on GAP to manage PHL. Overall, 55.8 percent of respondents had attended training in agriculture, 38.1 percent had received training on agriculture and GAP, 34.4 percent had received inputs/start-up kits for farming, 32.6 percent had adopted the use of new technology, while 16.3 percent had received training on accessing and using new technology to manage PHL. Results suggest that a higher percentage of males (40.5 percent) compared to females (36.3 percent) received training on agriculture/GAP. This gender disparity in favour of male respondents was also observed in the proportion of respondents who adopted the use of new agricultural technology (38.8 percent vs 28.0 percent), those who received inputs/start-up kits (37.9 percent vs 31.8 percent), and those who received training on accessing and using new technology to manage PHL (23.1 percent vs 11.3 percent). Furthermore, the proportion of respondents who received training on accessing and using new technology was very limited or non-existent in Kigali and the Southern provinces. Also, 4.4 percent of SHFs included in the baseline survey reported accessing services through FSCs.

Figure 14. Percentage distribution of respondents according to access and use of new technology and capacity strengthening on GAP

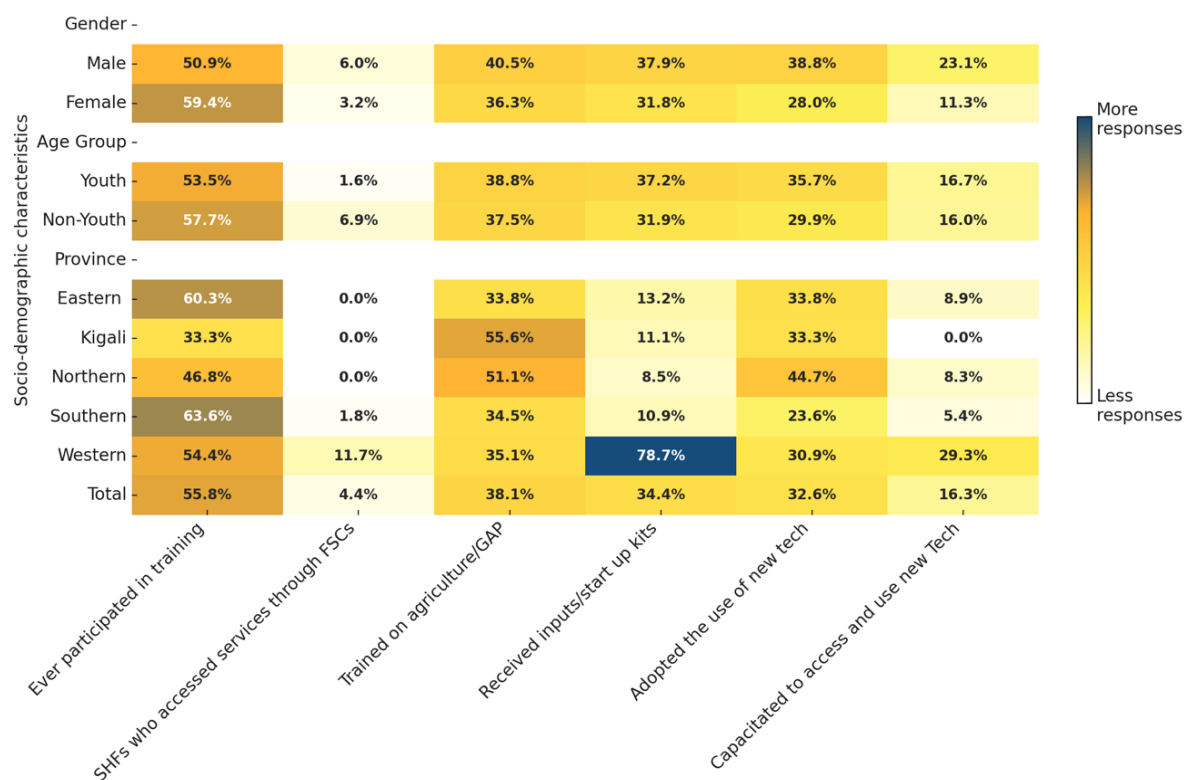
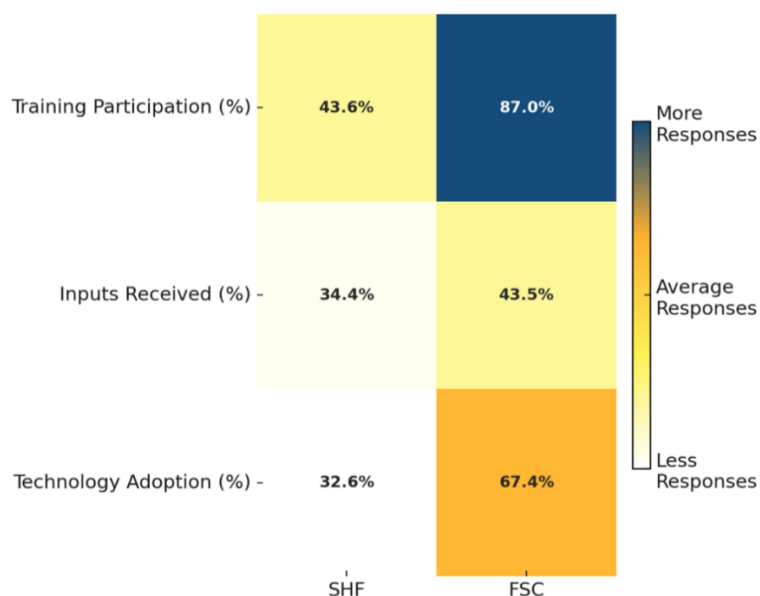


Figure 15 below highlights the trends between SHFs and FSCs, revealing distinct differences in their engagement with training, technology adoption, and access to inputs. FSC respondents indicated higher participation rates in training programs, with 86.9 percent participation compared to 43.6 percent among SHFs. This trend is mirrored in technology adoption, where 67.4 percent of FSC respondents indicated adopting new technologies, almost doubling the adoption rate of SHFs at 32.6 percent. Similarly, a higher percentage of FSC respondents indicated receiving inputs or start-up kits (43.5 %) than their SHF counterparts (34.4%).

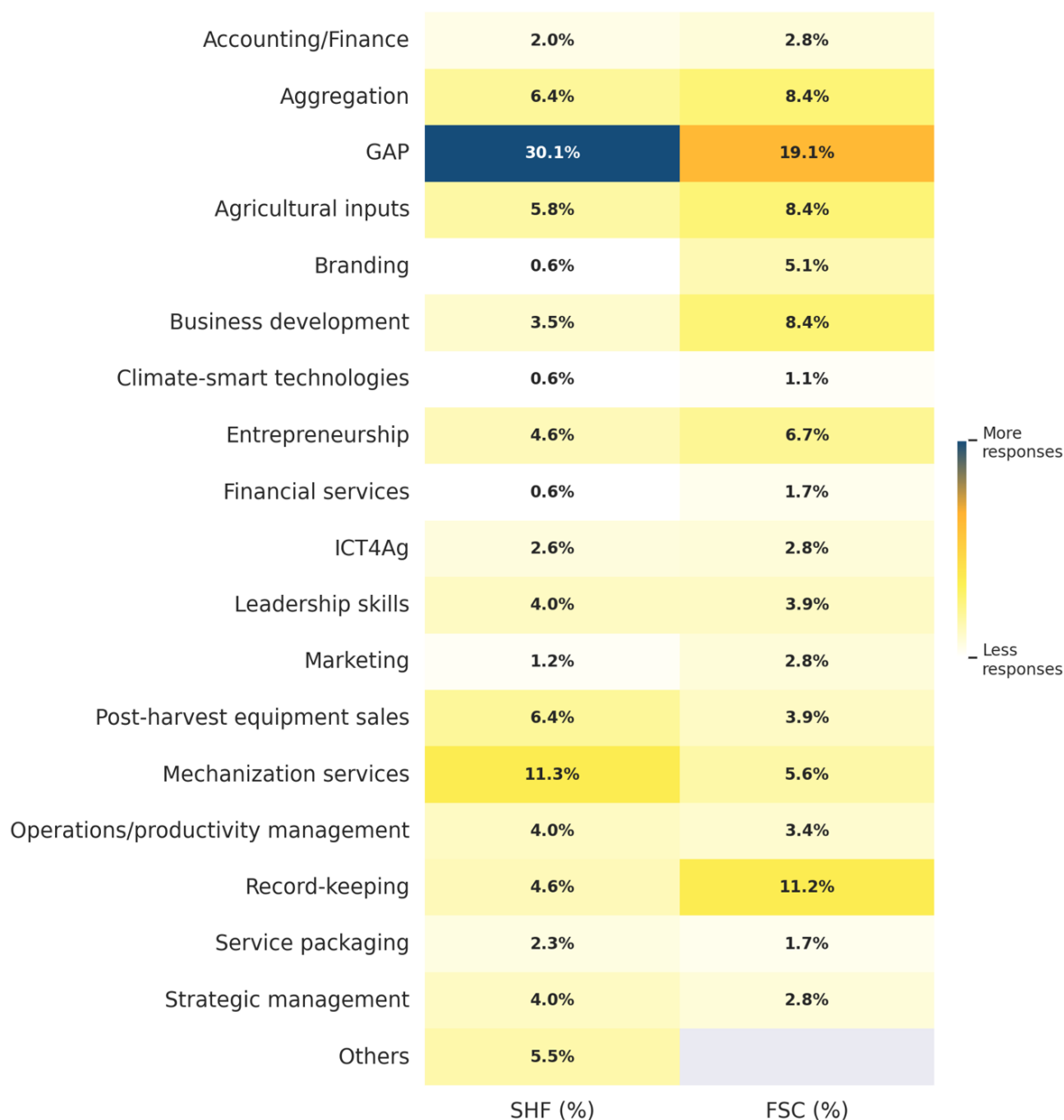
Figure 15. SHF and FSC distribution by training and technology Adoption



108. As shown in Figure 16, survey results reveal differences in the training received by smallholder farmers and FSCs across various agricultural and business management areas. A higher proportion of SHFs (30.1%) reported receiving training on GAP compared to FSCs (19.1%). In contrast, a larger percentage of FSCs (11.2%) indicated receiving training on record-keeping practices compared to SHFs (4.6%).

109. The data also show that a greater share of FSCs received training on aggregation services (8.4 %vs 6.4%for SHFs), entrepreneurship (6.7%vs 4.6%for SHFs), and mechanization (5.6%vs 11.3%for SHFs). The "Others" category had 5.5 percent of responses from SHFs, but no corresponding data was provided for FSCs.

Figure 16. Trainings received by SHFs and FSCs

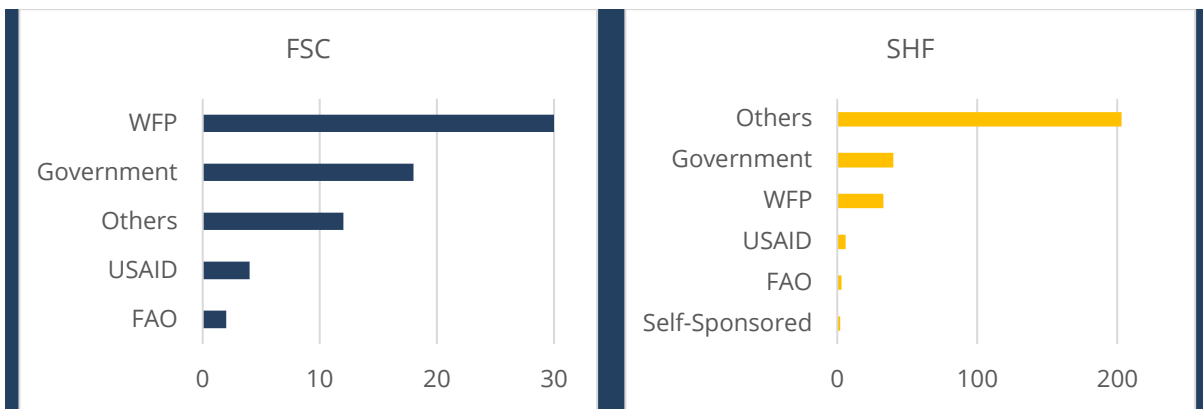


110. Figure 17 below presents data on who trained the FSCs and Smallholder Farmers (SHFs). For FSCs, the primary training providers were WFP, followed by the government and others. USAID and FAO played a smaller role in training FSCs.

111. In contrast, SHFs predominantly received training through a variety of different sources, with a significant number also being trained by others including NGOs and individuals. The government, WFP,

USAID, and FAO contributed to training SHFs, but to a lesser extent compared to other sources. It will be interesting to see if SHFs report being trained by FSCs as the project progresses.

Figure 17. Training providers



112. The figures and infographics below show the network analysis of various forms of assistance provided to respondents in three key areas: market access, PHM, and access to finance. Across all three areas, a significant portion of the respondents, nearly half, indicated that they received no external help in reaching new markets, improving PHM practices, or accessing finance.

Figure 18. Percentage of respondents (Male vs Female) indicating not receiving any help or support

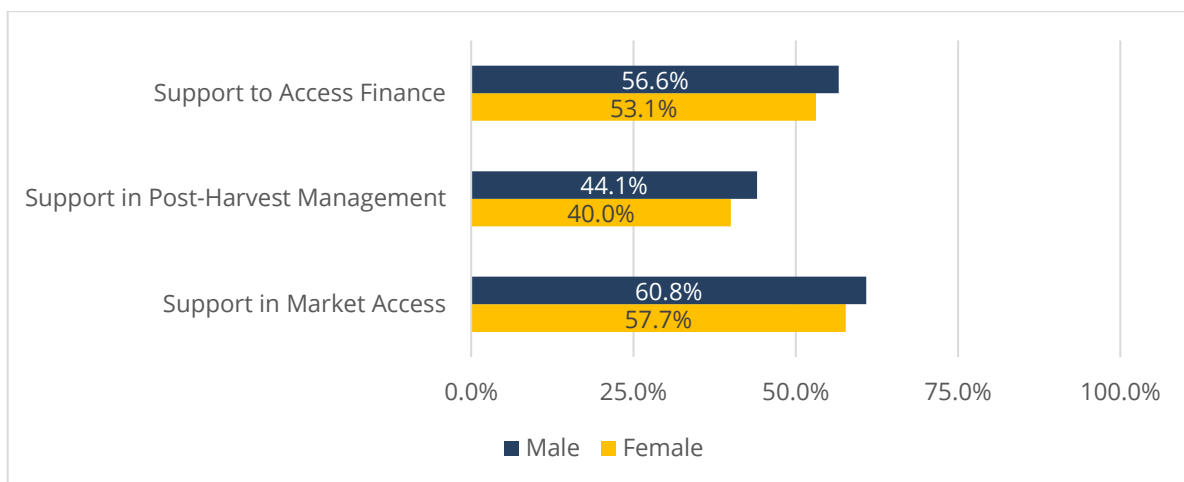
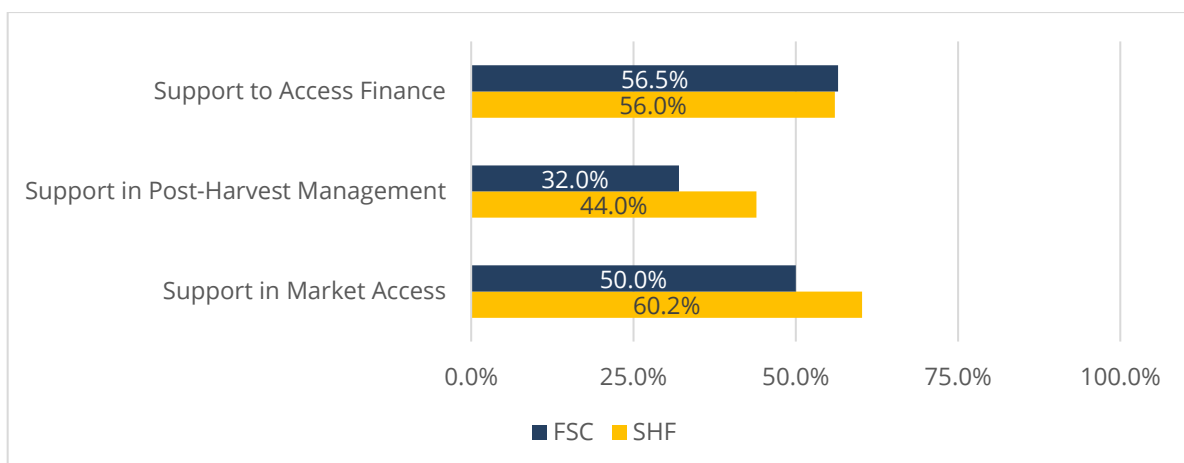


Figure 19. Percentage of respondents (SHF vs FSC) indicating not receiving any help or support

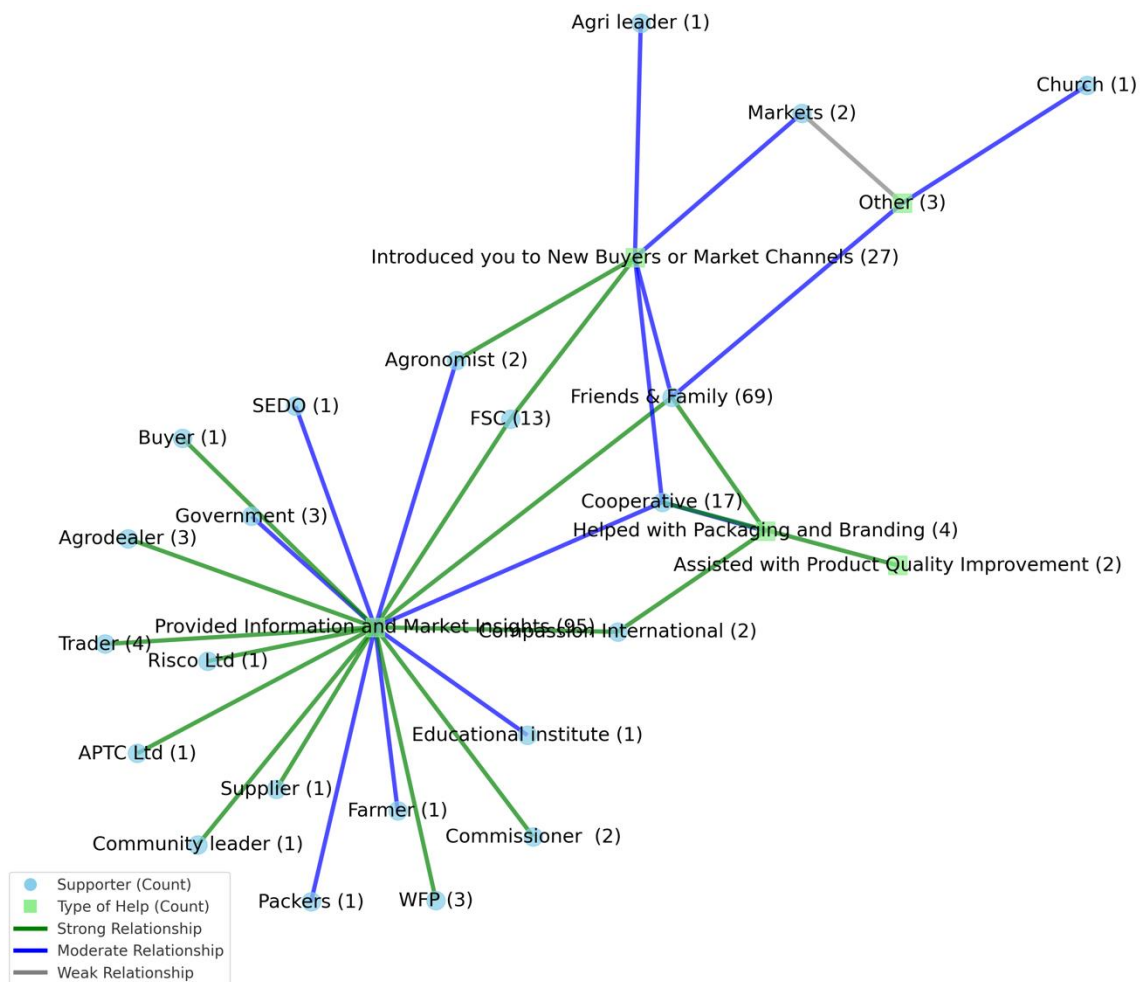


113. The remaining respondents have received assistance in several key areas, as illustrated in the network. These areas include 'Market Insights', 'Packaging & Branding', 'Introduced Buyers', 'Quality Improvement'. The network analysis visual also shows count of respondents.

114. The network analysis visuals below show web of relationships supporting SHFs in three key areas: market access, PHM, and accessing finance. Each diagram maps out the diverse stakeholders and types of support involved, highlighting the interconnected nature of these agricultural support systems. The network maps identify key contributors, common pathways of support, and the relative importance of different actors in each area. This analysis provides valuable insights into the ecosystem of support available to smallholder farmers and the channels through which various forms of assistance are delivered. The strength of relationships is indicated by line colours: green for strong, blue for moderate, and grey for weak connections. Additional network analysis maps by respondent type, gender, and age groups are presented in [Annex 17](#).

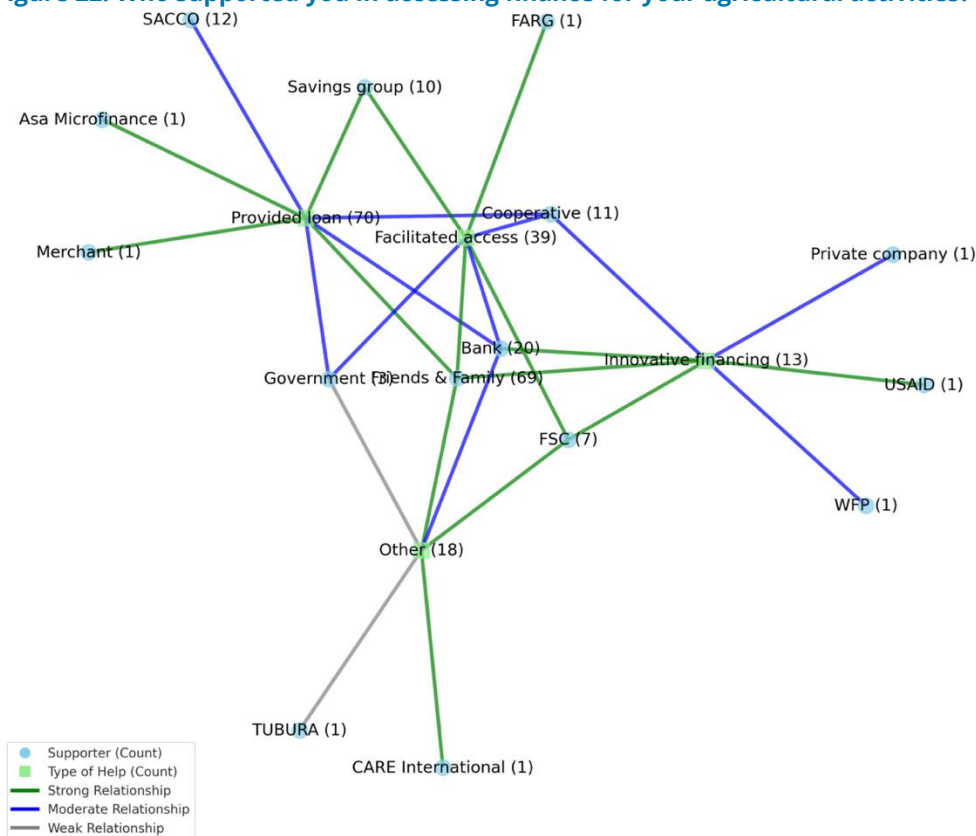
115. As shown in the figure below, the most frequently cited type of assistance was providing information on market insights, indicated by 95 respondents. The second most common form of support was introductions to new buyers or market channels, mentioned by 27 respondents.

Figure 20. Who helped you reach new markets or sell your products to new customers?



116. Responding to the question "Who supported you in improving your post-harvest management practices?", survey participants cited capacity-building support as the most commonly reported form of assistance (123 respondents), followed by other (53 respondents), and technology adoption (11 respondents).

Figure 22. Who supported you in accessing finance for your agricultural activities?



RESULT AREA 2 – PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Output 3.1.1: Financing facilities enable smallholder farmers, FSCs, and MSMEs to access finance for production and working capital.	Indicator. Proportion of smallholder farmers organized into savings groups.	Baseline: 7 percent indicated that they were members of a savings group.
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118. Figure 23 presents insights on the access to financing facilities for production and working capital for SHFs and FSCs in the baseline survey. It shows that 38.8 percent of SHFs had accessed loans/credit from formal financial institutions, compared to 69.6 percent of FSCs. More female respondents (76.5 percent) compared to male respondents (65.5 percent) had accessed loans/credit from formal financial institutions in the FSC category. In contrast, more male respondents (42.6 percent) than females (36.1 percent) had accessed loans from formal institutions amongst SHFs. Overall, it was observed that 7 percent of SHFs were registered in the saving groups supported by WFP.

119. Moreover, 39.8 percent of youth SHF respondents were reported to had accessed formal financing loans/credit compared to 38.1 percent of non-youth respondents. In contrast, higher percentage of youth FSC respondents (61.8 percent) and non-youth respondents (91.7 percent) had accessed loans from formal institutions. However, the percentage distribution within FSC respondents still indicates a lower percentage of youth FSCs accessing formal loans/credit compared to non-youth counterparts.

Figure 23. Percentage distribution of respondents accessing loan/credit services

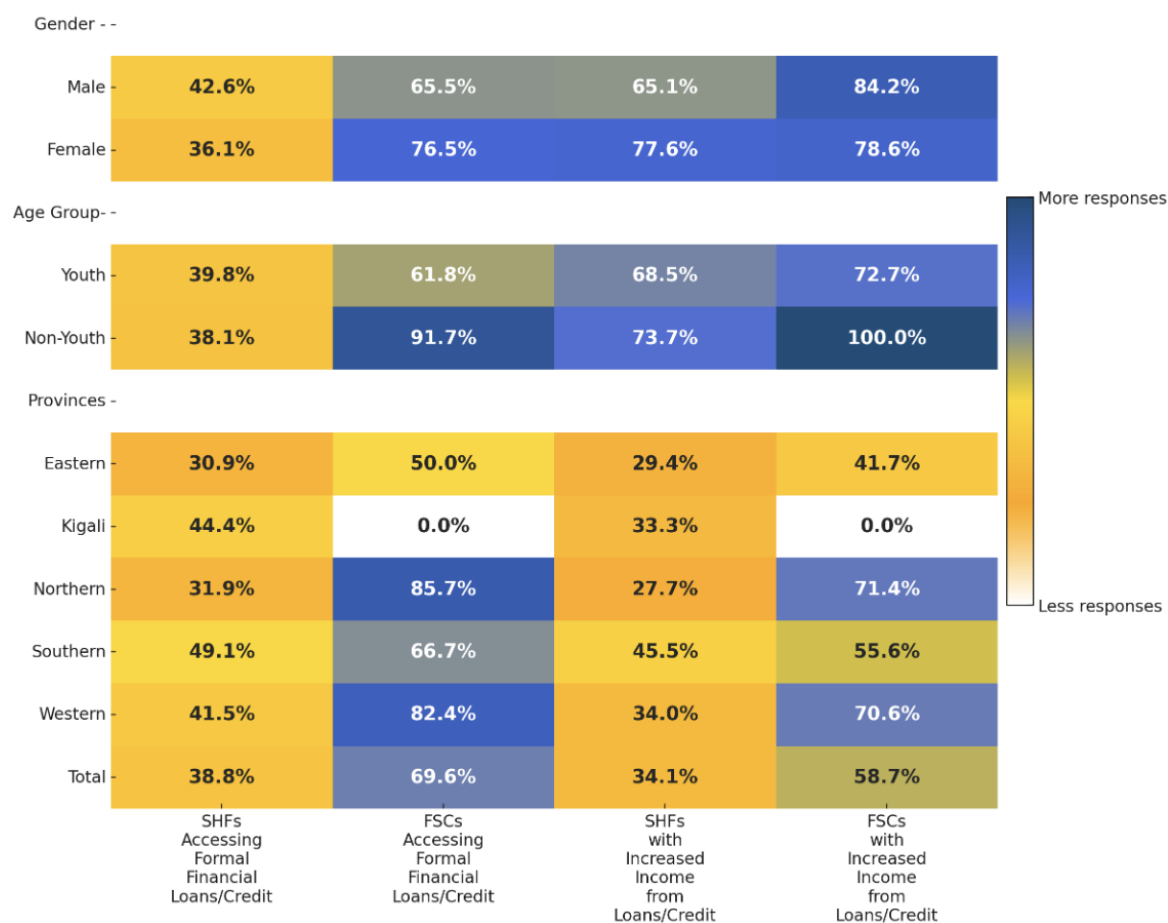
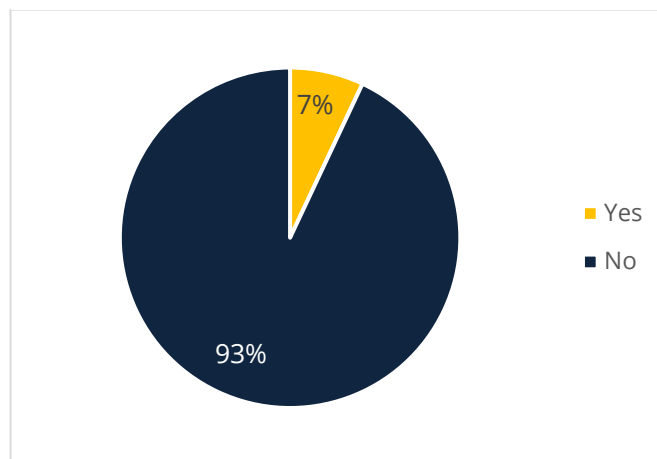


Figure 24. SHFs part of WFP-supported Savings Groups



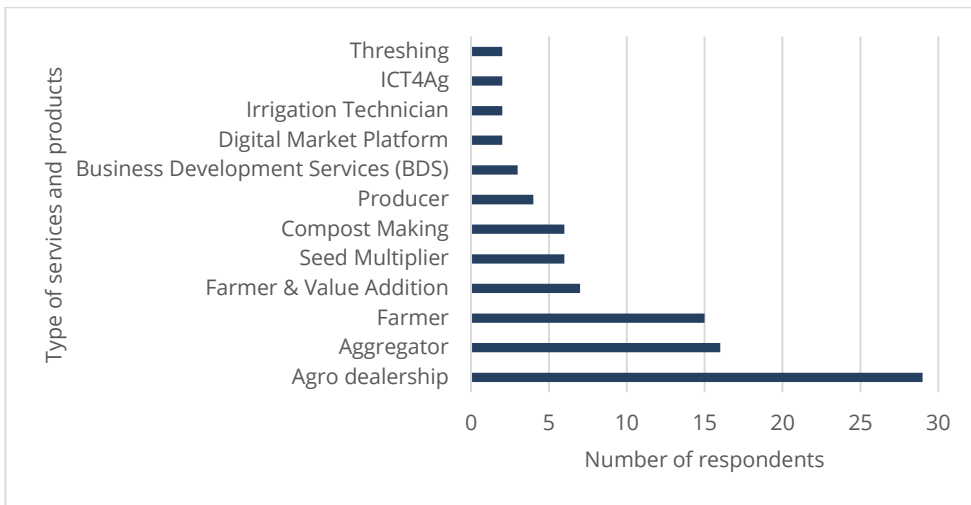
120. The results presented in Figure 23 suggest that it is likely that female agribusiness owners are more likely to be able to access credit than female farmers. While SHFs, in general, confront cultural norms and other hurdles females face in access formal loans, their FSC counterparts may benefit more from national and international development policies aimed at removing such barriers and increasing female representation as business operators. Furthermore, data reveals that access to financial services by FSCs is optimal in the Northern Province (85.7 percent), average in the Eastern Province (50.0 percent) but highly limited in the Kigali Province. Overall, the total access of this category of respondents is 71.7 percent at the time of the baseline survey. As shown in Figure 24, for WFP-supported Savings Groups, only 7 percent of SHFs indicated to be members of savings groups, while the vast majority 93 percent are not part of these groups.

RESULT AREA 3 – ENTERPRISE PERFORMANCE

Output 3.3: Enterprises along agricultural value chains are supported via business development services and technical assistance	Indicator 1. Number of FSCs established annually	Baseline: 50⁸¹ FSCs enrolled at baseline
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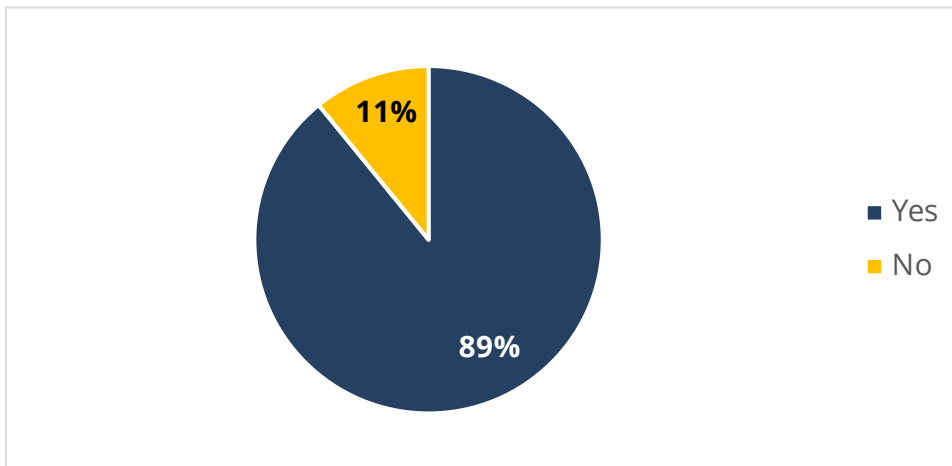
121. As shown in Figure 25, FSCs engage in a variety of business activities, with agro-dealerships being the most common (29 FSCs), followed by aggregation (16 FSCs) and farmer services (15 FSCs). Other notable activities include value addition, seed multiplication, compost making, and general agricultural production. A smaller number of FSCs offer specialized services such as Business Development Services, digital market platforms, irrigation technician services, ICT4Ag, and threshing.

Figure 25. Services or products offered through FSCs.



Overall, findings suggest that the majority (89 percent) of FSCs in the baseline were providing services at the time of the survey, see Figure 26.

Figure 26. The proportion of FSCs providing services and products at the time of the survey.

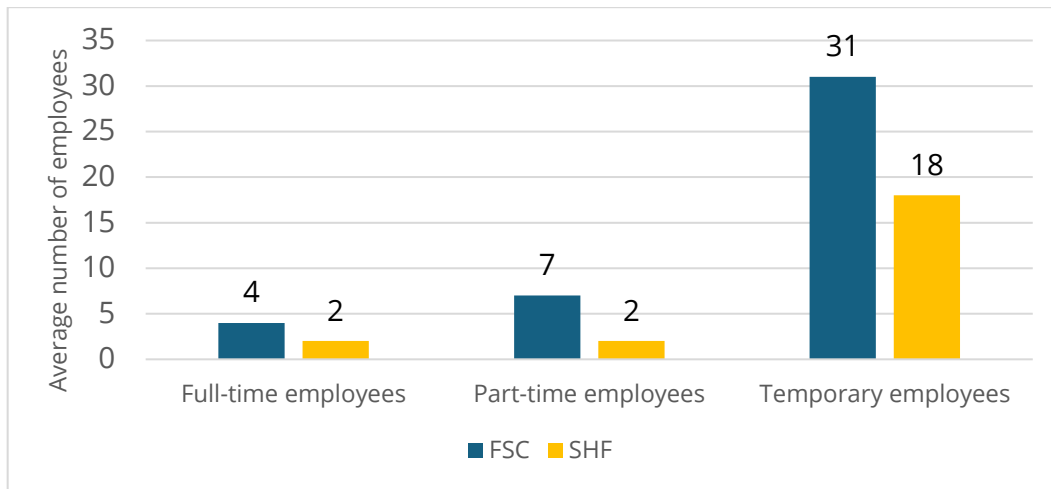


122. According to the data (Figure 27), FSCs employ a mix of full-time, part-time, and temporary employees. On average, FSCs employ 4 full-time employees, 7 part-time employees, and 31 temporary employees. In contrast, the data shows that SHFs employ an average of 2 full-time employees, 2 part-time employees, and 18 temporary employees. These numbers suggest that both FSCs and SHFs rely heavily on

⁸¹ To note, 50 FSCs were enrolled at baseline; however, 46 were surveyed due to dropouts.

temporary workers, possibly due to the seasonal nature of agricultural work or the need for flexibility in their workforce.

Figure 27. Average number of hired employees by respondent type



123. As shown in Figure 28 below, the survey data revealed patterns in respondents' revenue generation throughout the year. The darker blue bars and higher numbers indicate months more frequently reported as high or low revenue periods. July emerged as the top revenue month with 74 responses, while April was most commonly cited as the lowest revenue month (73 responses). This finding suggests that businesses may experience a slowdown in economic activity during some months, which needs to be further investigated in provision of support to them. Furthermore, the survey results highlighted that July and January also experienced relatively lower revenue compared to other months, following the lowest revenue month of April. This observation indicates that businesses may encounter a more extended period of reduced economic activity, spanning from April to July and then again in January.

Figure 28. Monthly revenue fluctuations experienced by respondents

Most revenue months		Least revenue months	
July	74	April	73
September	68	July	54
March	66	January	51
December	64	May	48
February	61	March	46
August	60	June	45
January	47	November	42
June	44	December	42
October	44	February	41
April	40	August	40
November	35	September	31
May	31	October	25

Figure 29. Monthly revenue fluctuations experienced by SHF respondents (%)

	Most Revenue Months		Least Revenue Months
July	13.2%	April	15.4%
December	11%	July	10.2%
September	10.6%	January	9.7%
March	10.6%	May	9.5%
August	10.6%	March	9.2%
February	10.2%	February	8.3%
June	8.2%	November	8.3%
January	7.8%	December	7.8%
October	6.6%	August	7.8%
April	6.2%	June	7.3%
November	5.4%	September	6.4%
May	5.4%	October	5.0%

Figure 30. Monthly revenue fluctuations experienced by FSC respondents (%)

	Most Revenue Months		Least Revenue Months
September	14.4%	June	14%
March	12.5%	July	11%
October	10.6%	May	11%
February	9.6%	January	10%
April	8.7%	April	8%
December	8.7%	December	8%
July	7.7%	March	7%
November	7.7%	August	7%
August	6.7%	February	6%
January	5.8%	November	6%
May	4.8%	September	4%
June	2.9%	October	3%

124. Figure 31 below presents the average yield in metric tons (MT) for various categories in the previous year. The overall average yield across all categories was 45 MT.

125. However, there are significant variations among the different groups. FSCs reported an average yield of 34 MT (Median: 0.85 MT), while smallholder farmers (SHFs) achieved a higher average yield of 47 MT (Median: 0.40 MT). Youth farmers in the 18-24 age range had the highest average yield at 505 MT (Median: 0.30 MT), while those in the 25-35 age range reported an average yield of 18 MT (Median: 0.70 MT). Non-youth farmers had the lowest average yield at 2.2 MT (Median: 0.40 MT). When considering gender, male farmers had an average yield of 88 MT (Median: 1.00 MT), which is substantially higher than the average yield of 8.5 MT (Median: 0.30 MT) reported by female farmers. It should be noted that the average values for across all groups are higher due to the presence of some outliers. To provide a balanced view, median values were also calculated (see Figure 32), as they provide a more accurate representation of the central tendency by minimizing the impact of extreme values.

Figure 31. Average yield last harvest year (MT)

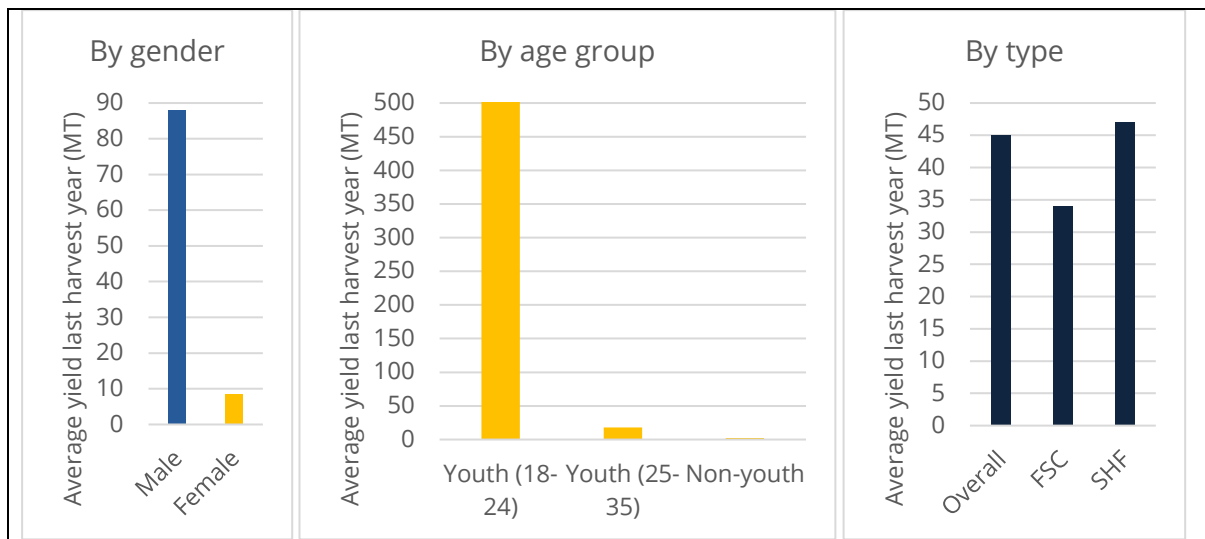
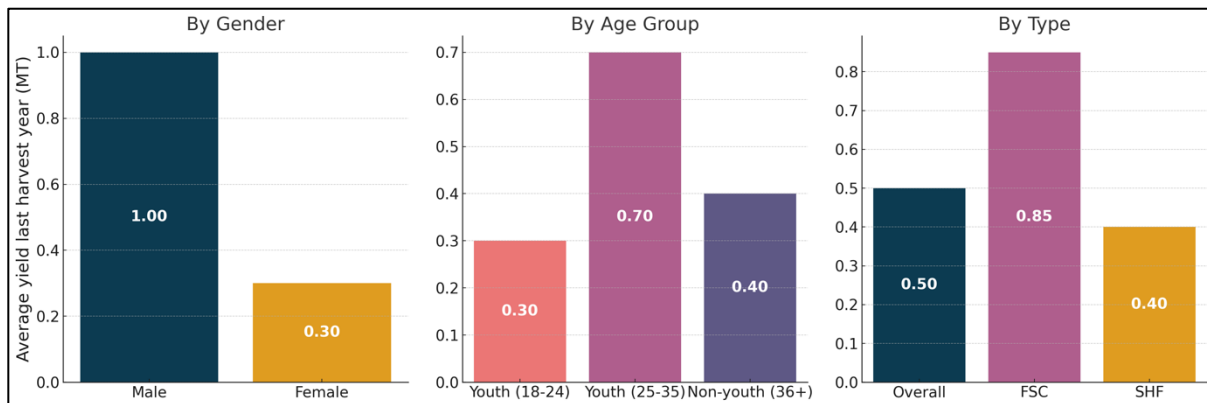


Figure 32. Median yield last harvest year (MT)



126. Figure 33 below presents average sales revenue data, in Rwandan Francs (RWF). The overall average sales revenue is 2,770,397 RWF. FSC members have the highest average sales revenue at 14,273,719 RWF, while SHF members have an average sales revenue of 883,132 RWF. Youth in the 18-24 age range have an average sales revenue of 934,500 RWF, while youth in the 25-35 age bracket report 4,391,858 RWF. Non-youth have an average sales revenue of 1,983,015 RWF. Males have an average sales revenue of 4,962,842 RWF, and females report an average of 1,027,006 RWF.

127. FSCs consistently generate higher average annual sales revenue compared to SHFs across all age categories. Youth aged 18-24 within the FSC category have an average sales revenue of 793,333 RWF compared to 517,728 RWF earned by youth aged 18-24 within the SHF category. Youth in the 25-35 age bracket reported an average sales revenue of 1,260,800 RWF compared to 569,010 RWF for the same age bracket in the SHF category. Moreover, non-youth SHFs have an average sales revenue of 605,358 which is significantly lower than non-youth FSCs who reported an average sales revenue of 1,783,367.

Figure 33. Average annual sales revenue (RWF) for SHFs and FSCs

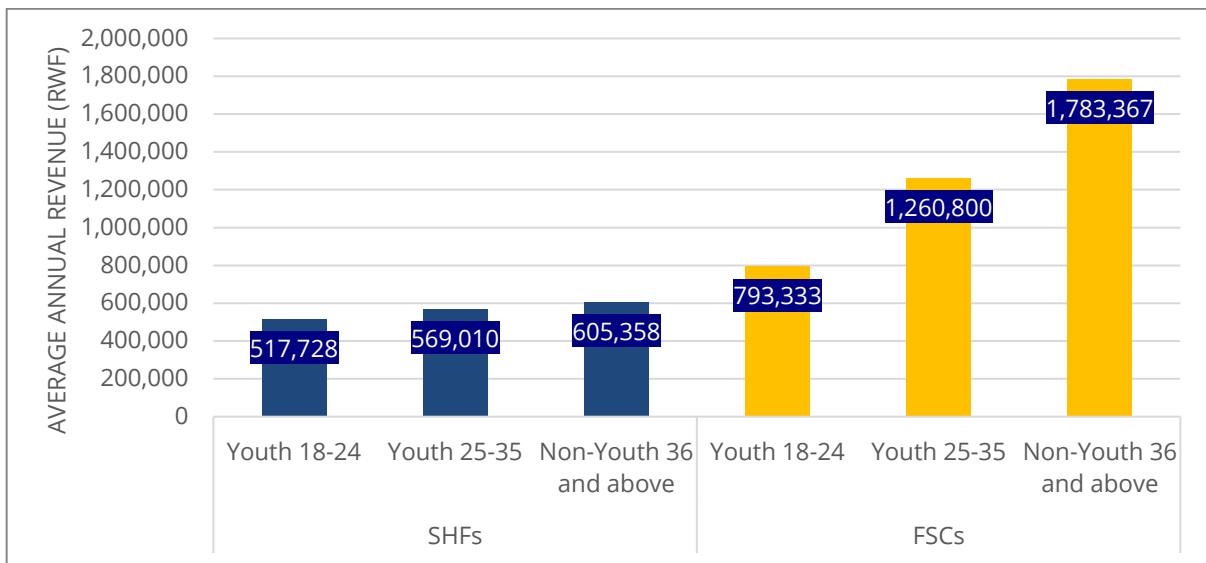
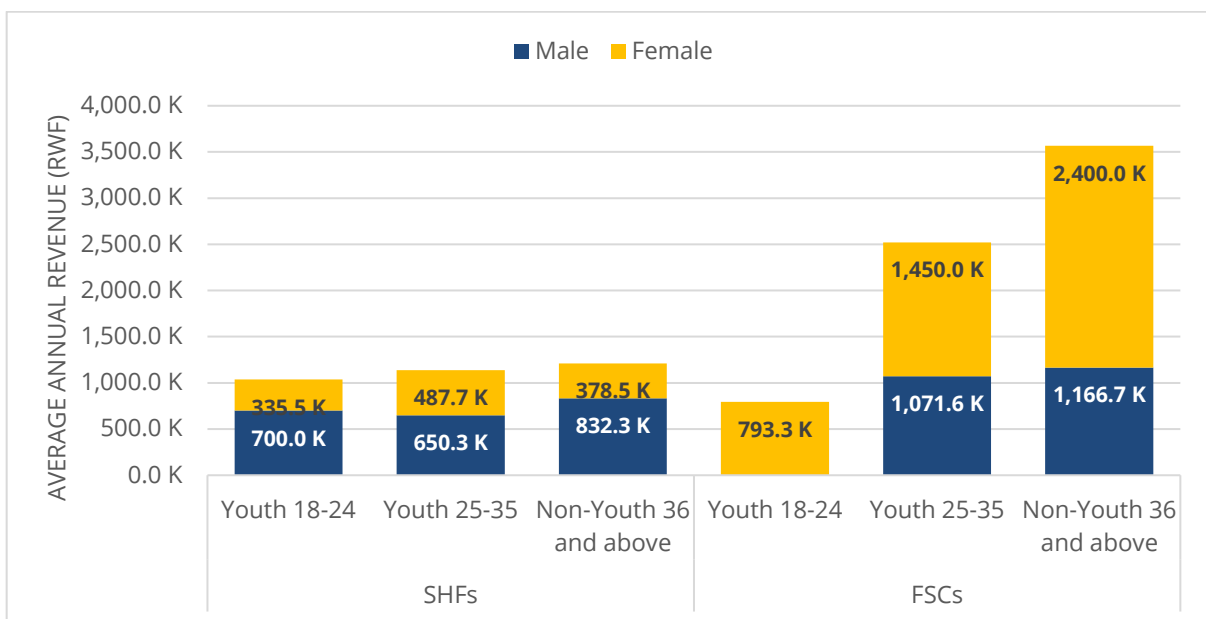


Figure 34. Annual average sales revenue (K RWF) for SHFs and FSCs by gender



128. Figure 34 further demonstrates the bifurcation of this data based on gender. For youth in the 18-24 age range, female FSC members have an average revenue of 793,333 RWF, while male SHF members earned an average revenue of 700,000 RWF and female SHF members earned an average revenue worth 335,455 RWF. Among youth in the 25-35 age range, female FSC members have an average revenue worth 1,450,000 RWF and male FSC members have an average revenue of 1,071,600 RWF. In the same youth category, male SHF members reported an average annual revenue of 650,333 RWF and female SHF members earned an average revenue worth 487,686 RWF. In the non-youth category (36 and above), female FSC members reported an average revenue of 2,400,000 RWF compared to 1,166,733 by male FSC members. In the same age category, male SHFs have an average revenue of 832,261 compared to 378,455 for female SHFs. The demographic that reported the lowest average annual revenue was female SHFs in the 18-24 youth category.

129. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the data distribution, boxplots were created to display the range and median values for each group, see figures 34 and 35 below. The presence of higher values (outliers) within each group significantly influenced the mean values, pushing them to be very high. By presenting the boxplots, a more balanced view of the data can be achieved, considering the impact of outliers on the overall analysis.

130. For the box plots below, outliers were identified and removed using the Interquartile Range (IQR) method, a robust statistical technique for dealing with skewed distributions. Values falling below $Q1 - 1.5 \times IQR$ and above $Q3 + 1.5 \times IQR$ were classified as outliers and excluded from the analysis to ensure reliable and representative insights.

131. The box plots show that the median value for SHF average annual revenue is 300K RWF, whereas for FSCs, the median average annual revenue is 2,400K RWF which further illustrates the disparity between the average annual revenues of SHFs and FSCs.

Figure 35. SHF Average annual revenue (K RWF)

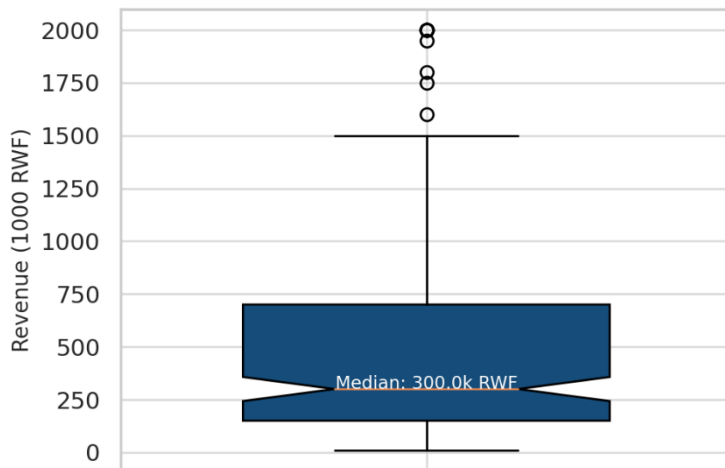
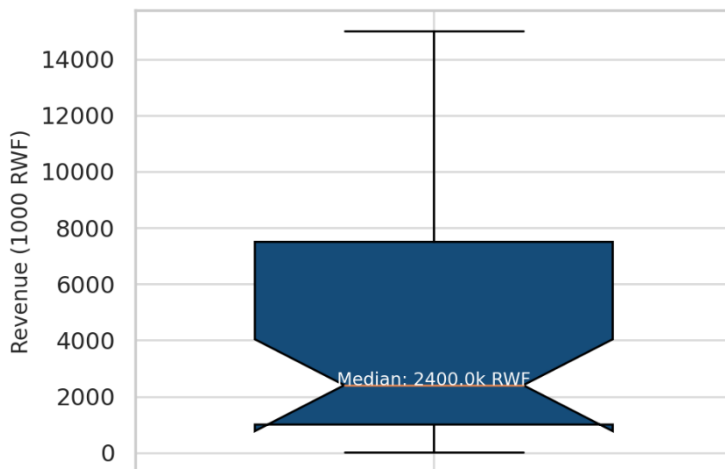
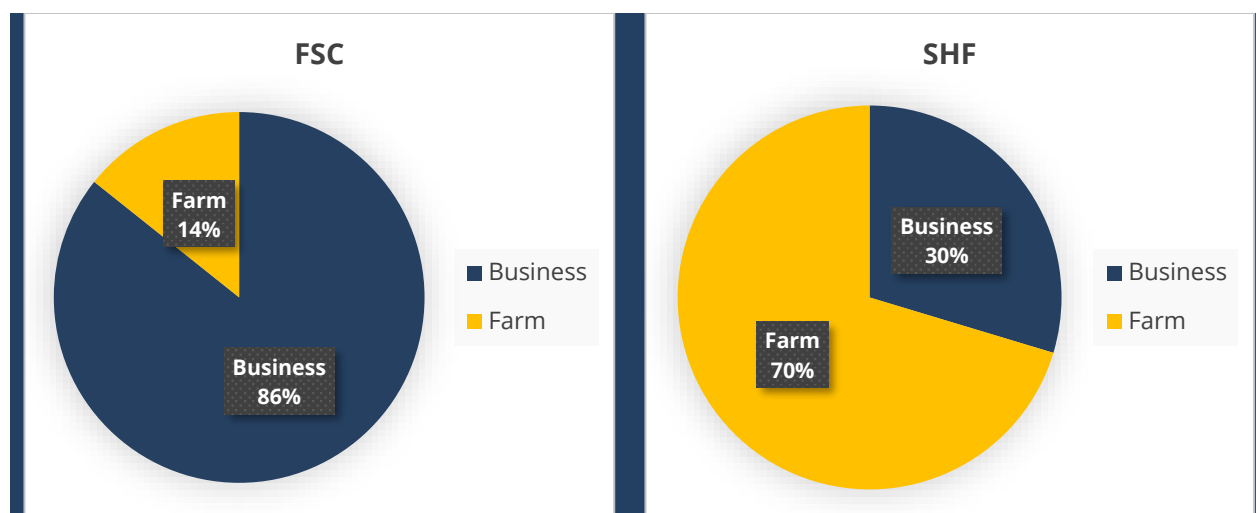


Figure 36. FSC Average annual revenue (K RWF)



132. As per the survey results (Figure 37), among FSC respondents, 86 percent reported Business as their main source of income, while only 14 percent indicated Farm as their primary source. In contrast, most of Smallholder farmers (70%) reported Farm as their main source of income, with the remaining 30 percent indicating Business as their primary source.

Figure 37. Sources of revenue



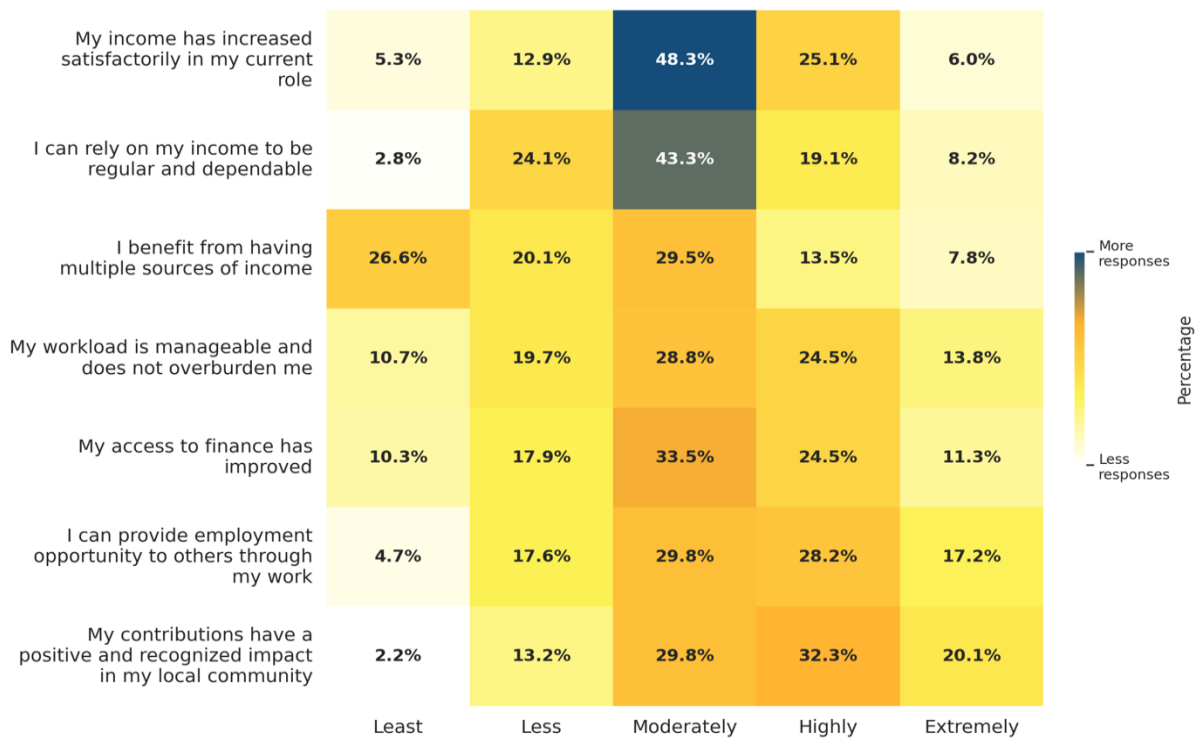
RESULT AREA 4- EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Young men and women have improved employment conditions along the agriculture value chains

Dignified and fulfilling work status.

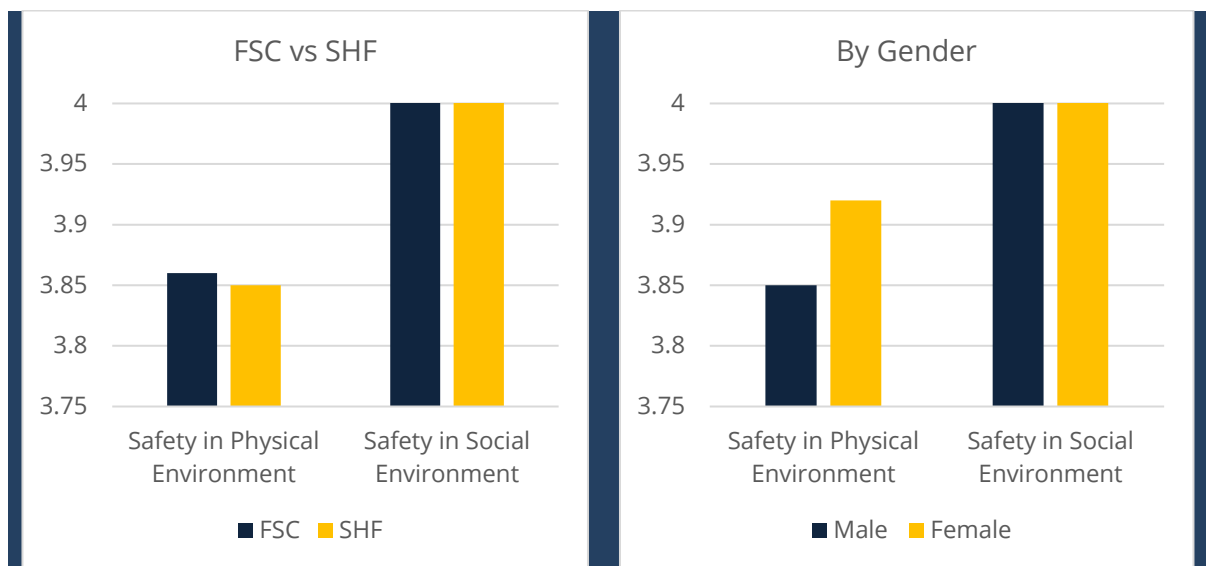
133. Figure 38 showcases respondents' job satisfaction ratings. The results suggest that 33.5 percent of respondents believed that their job was moderately dignifying because of their access to finance and 48.3 percent of respondents believed that they were in moderately fulfilling and dignifying jobs because their income had increased satisfactorily in their current roles. Respondents (43.3%) who could rely on their income to be regular and dependable were also of the opinion that they were in moderately dignifying and fulfilling jobs, however, 24.1 percent believed that their jobs were less dignifying and fulfilling though the income was regular and dependable. Of note is the proportion of those who were engaged in multiple jobs for income, as this has the highest responses in the "less" and "Least" categories. While 56.7 percent believed that their jobs were either least or less dignified and fulfilling 29.5 percent believed that their jobs were moderately dignified and fulfilling. Furthermore, 58.0 percent of respondents opined that their jobs were moderately or highly dignified and fulfilling because they could provide employment opportunities to others through their work. Similarly, 62.0 percent of respondents believed that their jobs were moderately or highly dignified and fulfilling because their contributions have a positive and recognized impact on their local community.

Figure 38. Percentage distribution of respondents according to their job satisfaction rating



134. As shown in Figure 39 below, there are no significant differences in participants' perception of job safety by respondent type (SHF vs FSC). However, female respondents ranked slightly higher in safety in the physical environment.

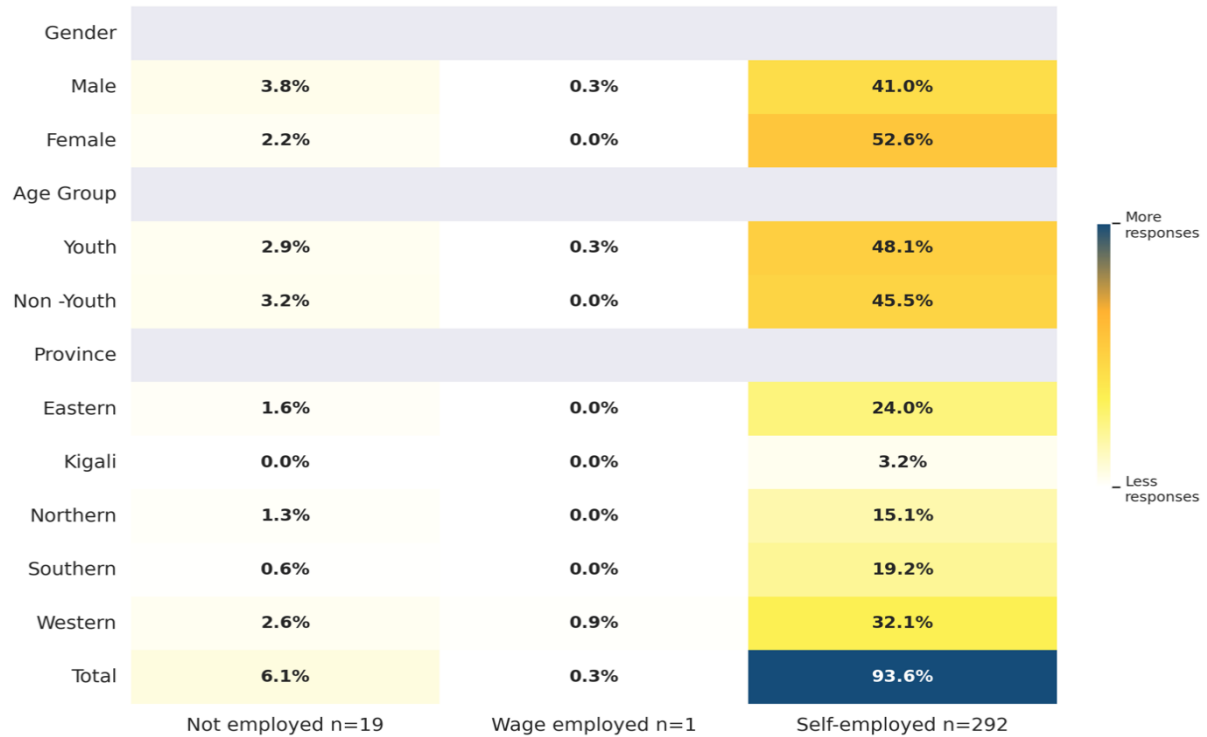
Figure 39. Survey participants' perception of job safety



135. Figure 40 below presents the distribution of respondents according to their employment status across agriculture value chains in the baseline survey. Overall, 93.6 percent (292) of respondents reported that they were self-employed while only 0.3 percent (1) reported been in wage employment and 6.1 percent (19) were not employed at the time of the survey. Analysis suggest that more females (52.6 percent) compared to males (41.3) were employed, similarly, a higher proportion of youths (48.1 percent) were

employed compared to non-youths in the survey. The majority of those employed (32.1 percent) reside in the Western province.

Figure 40. Youth and non-youth participants in work across agriculture value chains



2.3. FINDINGS BY CRITERIA

RELEVANCE

1. HOW RELEVANT IS THE PROGRAMME TO THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF ITS STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING AGRI-PRENEURS, SMALLHOLDER FARMERS, YOUTH, WOMEN, GOVERNMENT, WFP, AND OTHER UN AGENCIES?

1.1. To what extent are the programme’s strategic design, objectives and implementation addressing the needs and priorities of agri- entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers, especially youth and women?

Finding 1: Shora Neza demonstrates high relevance to the needs and priorities of agri-preneurs and smallholder farmers, with a strong focus on youth and women. The programme's targeted approach, emphasis on capacity building and skills development, and commitment to addressing gender-specific needs and barriers show a clear understanding of the challenges faced by these groups. However, while the programme is on track to meet its youth targets, efforts to engage female agri-preneurs or FSCs and ensure gender equality in programme participation and outcomes not clearly demonstrated.

136. Based on the desk review, survey findings, and KIIs, the baseline study found that the programme’s strategic design, objectives, and implementation are addressing the needs and priorities of agri-preneurs and smallholder farmers, particularly youth and women, to a significant extent.

137. According to KIIs, the programme conducted community consultations and consulted with local authorities during the design phase, to understand the challenges and barriers faced by youth and women. Youth-focused dialogues on attractive value chains and discussions with women about their specific challenges were held to customize the intervention to their needs. For example, consultations with the

Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF) provided valuable insights on established initiatives engaging youth in agriculture, the barriers they face, and existing national youth registries⁸². The programme plans to leverage this information to guide youth-centred interventions, particularly the nationwide launch of the FSC model.

“We reached out to local authorities to discuss the needs and priorities of these groups, particularly addressing gender barriers and challenges in accessing resources. We organized youth dialogues focused on value chains attractive to young people and held meetings with women to discuss their specific needs and challenges.” KII respondent

138. Furthermore, the programme recognizes the importance of addressing gender-specific needs and barriers. To complement the findings of the diagnostic study and project assumptions, the programme planned to conduct a gender assessment to ensure interventions respond to the different needs, priorities, and interests of youth, especially young women.⁸³ This assessment will build on the findings of the Foundation's study, which highlights barriers and enabling factors for young women, and will help shape the programme's interventions to better address issues affecting young women's participation in formal employment.⁸⁴

139. The programme's focus on promoting savings groups and working with organizations that collaborate with local financial institutions (MFIs and SACCOs) to improve financial products and services available to smallholder farmers, especially youth and women⁸⁵, demonstrates its relevance in addressing the specific needs of women in the agricultural sector. The ongoing pilot project to extend concessional micro-loans to mainly women's groups⁸⁶ further highlights the programme's commitment to empowering women and addressing the barriers they face.

140. The Shora Neza programme supports motivated youth in the agriculture sector by placing a strong emphasis on capacity building and skills development for agripreneurs and smallholder farmers. This includes training in modern agricultural techniques, entrepreneurship, and access to finance.⁸⁷ Survey respondents, including FSC owners and smallholder farmers, have highlighted the importance of equipping participants with knowledge and abilities for self-reliance and sustainability. The programme's plan to develop an incubation programme for existing agro-dealers to improve service provision to farmers and the creation of a youth-led PHHS equipment distribution network demonstrate the programme's commitment to addressing the specific needs and barriers faced by youth in the agricultural sector.⁸⁸

141. A major challenge for the sector's inclusive growth is the skills gap in agriculture. The 2016 Seasonal Agricultural Survey (SAS) notes that, in Rwanda, 66 percent of agricultural operators had attended primary level education, 26 percent had no education, 6.6 percent attended secondary level education and only 1.4 percent had attended tertiary level education. However, beyond formal education, farmers lack a range of agronomic and “farming as a business” skills to optimize land and cropping practices and to make well-informed investment choices for greater production and/or profitability.⁸⁹ Addressing this gap is integral to the Shora Neza programme.

142. In terms of programme reporting, the evaluation team noted a lack of available documentation on programme progress. According to the Mastercard Foundation-WFP Partnership Monitoring Package, there should be two reports produced per year covering programme progress, implementation and output-level indicators.⁹⁰ At the time of the baseline study, any reporting on progress achieved with Shora Neza

⁸² WFP. (2022). Mastercard Foundation Shora Neza Programme Proposal Readjustment

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ A rapid gender analysis was being finalized at the time baseline data-collection.

⁸⁵ WFP. (2021). Mastercard Foundation Shora Neza Programme Proposal

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ WFP. (2021). Mastercard Foundation Shora Neza Programme Proposal

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Government of Rwanda, MINAGRI. (2018). Seasonal Agricultural Survey Report – 2016. Retrieved from:

<https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/seasonal-agricultural-survey-report-2016>

⁹⁰ WFP. (2023). Mastercard Foundation-WFP Partnership Monitoring Package

programming was still pending.⁹¹ This lack of progress information was also noted by KII as one respondent indicated that the Shora Neza programme has not been assessed for the last two years and there is need for a joint monitoring framework to ensure effective feedback loops. They also noted that reporting process could be more efficient as a long time passed before any reporting took place and lengthy time is needed to integrate feedback from different levels (Country office, regional, HQ levels).⁹²

143. While the programme is on track to meet its youth and female targets, it is less clear what actions have been taken to promote female participation in the FSC programme and meet the needs of both male and female stakeholders. The results of the rapid gender analysis were yet to be integrated into project design as of March 2023. Furthermore, the proposal readjustment mentions that provisions would be made to enhance women's participation for example by providing childcare during FSC training, but this was not included in the implementation planning documents.⁹³

1.2. To what extent does the programme target the right stakeholders and the geographic areas? How appropriate were the criteria used for such selection?

Finding 2: Shora Neza has made significant efforts to target the right stakeholders and geographic areas, with the selection criteria for FSCs aligning directly with the programmes expected participants (particularly focusing on engaging youth and women). This engagement focus, aligning with agricultural priorities, and emphasizing entrepreneurial potential are notable strengths. However, the selection process for FSCs faced some challenges due to reliance on predefined lists and limited candidate pools.

144. Triangulated evidence from interviews and document review showed that the programme has made significant efforts to target the right stakeholders and geographic areas, with the selection criteria being largely appropriate. However, as showcased below, the baseline study found that there are some areas where improvements could be made to enhance the programme's effectiveness and impact.

145. One of the key strengths of the programme's targeting approach is its focus on engaging youth and women in the agricultural sector. Given that the Agriculture Sector Diagnostics Study identified youth as a demographic with great potential to contribute in developing agriculture value changes and gender in agriculture studies have shown that female youth are highly educated but continue to face barriers in the workforce, the evaluation team determines that the target participants (200,000 SHFs with 50 percent being women and 80 percent youth, and 600 FSCs, with 60 percent of these FSCs operated by women and 80 percent by youth, throughout all 30 districts in Rwanda) the project aims to support is highly relevant. This strategic targeting demonstrates a clear recognition of the importance of empowering these groups and addressing their unique needs and challenges. By prioritizing youth and women, the programme aims to promote economic inclusion, gender equality, and the development of a new generation of agripreneurs.

146. The participants targeted by the programme are members of the FSC network and existing cooperatives that received support from FtMA.⁹⁴ This target allocation demonstrates a strong focus on engaging youth and women in the project. The baseline survey findings suggest that Shora Neza is on track to meet its youth coverage targets for both FSCs (76.09 percent youth respondents vs. 80 percent target) and SHFs (47.25 percent youth respondents vs. 80 percent target). However, the gender distribution among FSC survey respondents (63.04 percent male, 36.96 percent female) indicates a need for increased efforts to engage female agripreneurs. Among SHF respondents, the gender distribution (57.88 percent female, 42.12 percent male) is closer to programme target of 50 percent women. This close alignment with the gender target, along with the programme's progress towards meeting the youth engagement targets, demonstrates its relevance in addressing the needs and priorities identified through stakeholder consultations and needs assessments conducted during the design phase.

⁹¹ As the monitoring package was only established in September of 2023, it is likely that these reporting requirements were not yet in place at the time of the baseline study.

⁹² KII Respondent

⁹³ WFP. FSC Targeting and Participation Plan; SOP for FSC onboarding

⁹⁴ WFP. (2022). ToR: Evaluation of the WFP MasterCard Foundation project "Strengthening Food Systems to Empower Smallholders Farmers and Young People in Rwanda"

147. The FSC selection process specifically targets youth between 18-35 years to address their needs related to market access and resources.⁹⁵ The FSC model serves as an entry point for youth micro-entrepreneurs, providing them with opportunities to engage in agricultural value chains and access essential services. This approach is particularly relevant given that Rwandan youth, who make up approximately 60 percent⁹⁶ of the population, face high unemployment rates (18.7 percent) and underemployment (60 percent) in the labour market, with their vulnerability further exacerbated by their significant presence (over 60 percent) in the climate-vulnerable agricultural sector.⁹⁷ The youth unemployment rate stands at 23 percent, and of those that are employed, about 60 percent are in jobs typically defined as low productivity, including subsistence agriculture, retail, and construction. The mismatch between labour market needs and available skills is one of the main causes of widespread unemployment, especially among young people⁹⁸. For example, one of the internal key respondents highlighted that some youth who have graduated from fields such as veterinary medicine or agriculture have a strong desire to contribute to increasing production and participating in livestock agriculture but are unable to do so due to a lack of entrepreneurial skills:

"Many of them [youth] have graduated but lack formal training in entrepreneurship or how to identify and seize opportunities. They lack capacity building in this regard". KII respondent

148. Assessment of the FSC selection tool shows that the programme's strategic design, objectives and implementation are well-aligned to address the needs and priorities of agripreneurs and smallholder farmers, with a particular focus on youth and women. The tool's emphasis on community connectedness, including the candidate's involvement with farmers' and women's groups, and their track record of mobilizing and serving local farmers, ensures that selected FSCs will be well-positioned to engage and support the programme's target participants. The prioritization of younger candidates also aligns with the programme's youth focus.⁹⁹

149. Moreover, the assessment of candidates' business skills, entrepreneurial mindset, and vision for agribusiness innovation demonstrates the programme's commitment to identifying and empowering agripreneurs who can drive transformative change in the sector. The assessment of organizational capabilities, physical assets, and financial capacity provides a comprehensive view of each candidate's readiness and potential to successfully establish and operate an FSC that meets farmers' needs for agricultural inputs, equipment, and services.¹⁰⁰

150. To ensure the right participants were targeted as participant FSCs, WFP drew on its experience with existing private sector MSME networks through the FtMA to identify potential FSCs who could benefit from the incubation programme. To maximize impact and ensure that the needs and priorities for these stakeholders were being met, the team also worked to map existing initiatives and potential revenue streams for FSCs and leverage existing initiatives without duplication.¹⁰¹ The programme also has criteria in place to ensure the selection of FSCs prioritizes youth and most excluded groups like women, refugees and people with disabilities.¹⁰² According to KII respondents, the programme has sought to identify individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset and a strong desire to contribute to agricultural development. As one KII respondent explained, "FSCs act as intermediaries, ensuring quality and consistency of the supply chain, from training farmers to storing and packaging products as per international standards."

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Government of Rwanda, Fifth Population and Housing Census. (2022). Retrieved from [https://www.statistics.gov.rw/datasource/fifth-population-and-housing-census-2022#:~:text=RPHC5 percent20 percent3A percent20Main percent20indicator percent20report&text=The percent20analysis percent20of percent20the percent20fifth,2.3 percent25 percent20between percent202012 percent20and percent202022.](https://www.statistics.gov.rw/datasource/fifth-population-and-housing-census-2022#:~:text=RPHC5%20percent20Main%20indicator%20report&text=The%20analysis%20of%20the%20fifth,2.3%20between%202012%20and%202022.)

⁹⁷ FAO. (2020). Rural youth employment and agri-food systems in Rwanda. Retrieved from <https://www.fao.org/3/ca7717en/CA7717EN.pdf>

⁹⁸ ILO. Rwanda Country profile. <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>; AfDB. (2022). Rwanda - Country Strategy Paper 2022-2026.

⁹⁹ WFP Shora Neza FSC Screening Tool

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ WFP. Targeting and Participation Plan

¹⁰² KII Respondent

151. Evidence from KIIs demonstrates efforts to promote a positive entrepreneurial mindset with the first cohort of 50 FSCs. As one respondent explained, "We fostered a mindset of cooperation among participants, encouraging them not to view each other as competitors but as collaborators. This approach created employment opportunities and business growth within the cohort. For instance, entrepreneurs from different regions connected, like those from the North specializing in Irish potato seedling production connecting with interested parties from the South. This led to mutual business growth and job creation. "

152. According to key stakeholders, the approach to selecting FSCs was based on a collaborative effort involving WFP, local authorities, and NGO partners to identify potential participants who have demonstrated initiative and innovative ideas. The selection process included the development of a profiling system to capture relevant information about potential FSCs, field visits, and assessments of their capabilities and alignment with the programme's objectives. This comprehensive approach was adopted to ensure that the selected FSCs have the necessary capacity and potential to serve as effective intermediaries between the programme and smallholder farmers.

"For the selection, we gathered data from local authorities and utilized the network of NGO partners. We worked together to design a profiling system to capture various information about the participants. The assessments covered different aspects of their backgrounds, ensuring the selection process was comprehensive and included field visits, questioning, and adapting to the responses received." KII respondent

153. Profiles considered as potential FSCs included (but not limited to) lead farmers in the FtMA; Farmer Field School (FFS) facilitators; Individual buyers; young traders; Input dealers; Participants of the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP RWEE); and SMART project beneficiaries.¹⁰³

154. However, stakeholders did mention some challenges in the selection of FSCs. According to key stakeholders, the programme initially relied on a predefined list of individuals provided by the district, which may have limited the pool of potential candidates. Further, the criteria of including a certain number of women and youth also made the potential candidates limited. As one of the stakeholders explained, "You can go in one district and fail to find a young lady engaged in agriculture." This demonstrates the importance of investigating the causes of barriers preventing women's participation in the agri-businesses sector and opportunities for circumventing them. This will be discussed further in the conclusions and recommendations sections below.

155. While the criteria for selecting FSCs was clearly documented and described in the KIIs, the baseline study did not find clear criteria for which small holder farms to include as participants. Survey data showed that FSCs served a wide range of clients including some well-off farmers and some with non-farming businesses. This demonstrates that more precise criteria for targeting SHFs may be required.

156. Geographically, the Shora Neza programme covers all thirty districts of Rwanda with emphasis on including FSC's in far-to-reach areas. As one KII respondent indicated, "Apart from functionality, we sought to engage those in far to reach areas and prioritize women and youth. We wanted to empower FSCs that were actively supporting farmers."

157. According to key stakeholders, the programme has faced some challenges in geographic coverage due to external factors. As mentioned by a key respondent, "We had a challenge where some of the areas were affected by flooding and the FSC had to shift from one area to another." While these challenges are beyond the programme's control, it highlights the need for contingency planning and flexibility in the selection of geographic areas.

1.3 To what extent is the programme design and objectives aligned with the needs, priorities, and policies of the government (e.g., NST1/PSTAs), WFP, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and other UN agencies, including related to gender equality in agriculture?

¹⁰³ WFP. FSC Targeting and Participation Plan

Finding 3: The programme's design and objectives demonstrate strong alignment with the needs, priorities, and policies of the Rwandan government, WFP, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and other UN agencies. The programme directly contributes to Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) and the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation (PSTA IV) by focusing on agricultural modernization, productivity, market access, and gender equality. It aligns with WFP's strategic objectives, the UNSDCF's priorities, and complements the work of other UN agencies in promoting sustainable agricultural development and women's empowerment in Rwanda.

158. Triangulated evidence from interviews and desk review showcases that the programme's design and objectives demonstrate strong alignment with the needs, priorities, and policies of the Rwandan government, WFP, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and other UN agencies, including those related to gender equality in agriculture.

Alignment with Government Priorities

159. The baseline study found triangulated evidence from KIIs and desk reviews that the programme directly contributes to Rwanda's NST1 Priority Area 6 under the Economic Transformation Pillar, which focuses on modernizing and increasing productivity of agriculture for small-holder farmers. Shora Neza's activities align closely with several key agriculture and livestock development objectives specified under NST1, such as promoting agricultural mechanization, enhancing farmers' access to improved seeds, increasing average productivity of key crops, improving post-harvest handling and storage, adding value to produce through processing, and scaling up production of high-value crops¹⁰⁴.

160. The programme also furthers NST1 objectives around job creation, export promotion, and establishing Rwanda as a knowledge-based economy. By generating skilled employment opportunities in the agriculture sector, Shora Neza contributes to the NST1's goal of creating 1.5 million new decent and productive jobs. From a social transformation perspective, Shora Neza's positive community impacts are consistent with NST1 Priority Area 5, which focuses on uplifting and modernizing rural households¹⁰⁵.

161. The programme is also consistent with PSTA 4 which builds on the progress made under PSTA 3 and aims to further transform Rwanda's agriculture sector into a value-generating and market-oriented sector that significantly contributes to national economic growth and prosperity. The plan focuses on four strategic priority areas: (1) innovation and extension, (2) productivity and resilience, (3) inclusive markets and value addition, and (4) enabling environment and responsive institutions¹⁰⁶.

162. Shora Neza's objectives and activities are in close harmony with the PSTA 4's strategic priorities. Firstly, the programme's emphasis on capacity building, training, and mentorship for agripreneurs and FSCs aligns with PSTA 4's focus on innovation and extension. By equipping these actors with the knowledge, skills, and tools to adopt improved agricultural practices and technologies, the programme contributes to the modernization and professionalization of the sector. The programme's efforts to reduce PHL, improve product quality, and enhance market access for smallholder farmers align with PSTA 4's priority on inclusive markets and value addition. By supporting FSCs to provide aggregation, storage, and processing services, and by connecting them with private sector partners and markets, the programme also helps create more efficient, competitive, and inclusive value chains.

163. The programme's promotion of sustainable agricultural practices through focus on GAP, is in line with PSTA 4's focus on productivity and resilience. By building the capacity of farmers and FSCs in these areas, Shora Neza contributes to increasing agricultural productivity, improving food security, and enhancing the resilience of farming systems to climate change and other shocks.

164. Similarly, the partnerships and collaboration with government institutions, NGOs, and private sector actors demonstrate alignment with PSTA 4's emphasis on creating an enabling environment and responsive institutions. By actively participating in sector working groups, engaging with local authorities, and leveraging

¹⁰⁴ Government of Rwanda. National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) 2017–2024. Retrieved from https://vision2050.minecofin.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/NST1/NST1.pdf

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Government of Rwanda. (2018). Rwanda's Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation phase 4 (PSTA)

the expertise and resources of partners, the programme helps strengthen the institutional and policy framework for agricultural transformation. Shora Neza also aligns with and contributes towards the impact-level results and high-level national targets outlined in the PSTA 4 results framework, including (i) increased wealth contribution through increased agricultural production, (ii) increased wealth contribution, (iii) improved food security and nutrition, and (iv) increased resilience.

165. Based on desk review, the baseline study found that the programme is also aligned with the results areas outlined in the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) results framework. The table below shows the strength of alignment based on the desk review.

Table 5. Alignment of Shora Neza programme with CAADP results framework

Results Area	Strength of alignment
1.1. Wealth creation	Strong
1.2. Food and nutrition security	Strong
1.3. Economic opportunities, poverty eradication and shared prosperity	Strong
1.4. Resilience and sustainability	Moderate
2.1. Increased agriculture production and productivity	Strong
2.2. Increased intra-African regional trade and better functioning of national & regional markets	Moderate
2.3. Expanded local agro-industry and value chain development inclusive of women and youth	Strong
2.4. Increased resilience of livelihoods and improved management of risks in the agriculture sector	Strong
2.5. Improved management of natural resources for sustainable agriculture	Moderate
3.1 Effective and inclusive policy design and implementation processes	Low
3.2 Effective and accountable institutions including assessing implementation of policies and commitments	Low
3.3 Strengthened capacity for evidence-based planning, implementation & review	Low
3.4 Improved multi-sectorial coordination, partnerships and mutual accountability in sectors related to agriculture	Moderate
3.5 Increased public and private investments in agriculture	Strong
3.6 Increased capacity to generate, analyse and use data, information, knowledge and innovations	Moderate

Alignment with WFP Objectives

166. Desk review and interviews indicate that the programme is well-aligned with WFP's mandate and strategic objectives, particularly towards its 'changing lives' agenda. It contributes to WFP's primary goal of providing assistance to alleviate hunger and achieve food security by investing in the agricultural sector and supporting smallholder farmers and agripreneurs. The programme's focus on capacity building, market access, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices aligns with WFP's strategic objectives of ending hunger, improving nutrition, and achieving food security.

167. Furthermore, the programme's emphasis on GEWE is in line with WFP's commitment to gender mainstreaming and promoting gender-transformative approaches in its interventions. The programme's targeted efforts to empower women in the agricultural sector align with WFP's gender policy and its goal of promoting GEWE.

168. Based on a review of the WFP Rwanda Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for 2019-2024, the programme appears to be consistent with WFP's strategic objectives and focus areas in Rwanda. It directly contributes to WFP's efforts to boost smallholder production and market access under Strategic Outcome 4, while also complementing resilience-building, capacity strengthening, and gender equality goals that are prioritized in the CSP. Shora Neza will continue contributing to WFP's 2G CSP, particularly under Strategic Outcome 3, which states 'by 2029, WFP's focus is on enhancing and sustaining food systems for smallholder farmers,

rural households, and vulnerable groups, including women, youth, people with disabilities, and camp-based refugees. This involves improving natural resources, boosting resilience to shocks, and ensuring access to nutritious, safe, and sustainable diets.

Table 6. Alignment of Shora Neza programme with WFP Rwanda CSP

WFP CSP Element	Alignment with Shora Neza
Strategic Outcome 1: Refugees and returnees have access to adequate and nutritious food at all times	Partially aligned. Shora Neza does not directly target refugees and returnees. However, the CSP notes plans to facilitate livelihoods and self-reliance of refugees by supporting productive asset creation and the enabling environment for their integration into national development and social protection programmes.
Strategic Outcome 2: Vulnerable populations have improved access to adequate and nutritious food all year	Strongly aligned. Shora Neza aims to improve resilience of vulnerable smallholder farmers, especially youth and women, through improved market access, post-harvest management, and access to finance. The CSP plans to expand national social protection programmes to build resilience. Additionally, the Shora Neza programme plans on linking smallholder farmers to supply WFP's school feeding programme. This directly aligns with the CSP's plan under Strategic Outcome 2 to support home-grown school feeding those benefits both school children and smallholder farmers.
Strategic Outcome 3: Children under 5, adolescents, and pregnant and nursing women and girls have improved access to nutritious foods and services	Partially aligned. While nutrition is not a central focus, Shora Neza plans some nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities and targets improved dietary diversity of smallholder farmers. The CSP focuses on strengthening government capacity to improve nutrition of these target groups.
Strategic Outcome 4: Smallholder farmers, especially women, have increased marketable surplus and access to agricultural markets	Strongly aligned. This is a core objective of Shora Neza - to increase marketable surplus and access to markets for smallholder farmers, especially youth and women, through capacity building, reduced post-harvest losses, access to finance, etc. The approaches align with the CSP.
Focus area: Crisis response	Not aligned. Shora Neza does not focus on crisis response.
Focus area: Resilience building	Strongly aligned. Building resilience of smallholder farmers and food-insecure communities is central to Shora Neza's approach, including through the market linkages, access to finance, and capacity building interventions. The alignment with school feeding further supports community resilience by strengthening local procurement.
Focus area: Root causes	Aligned. Shora Neza addresses underlying constraints smallholder farmers face related to access to markets, post-harvest management, access to finance as root causes of food insecurity and low incomes. The CSP addresses root causes through SO3 and SO4.
Target groups: Refugees, returnees, vulnerable populations, children under 5, adolescents, pregnant/nursing women, smallholder farmers	Partially aligned. Shora Neza does not target refugees/returnees or nutrition support to children and women. However, it targets vulnerable smallholder populations, especially youth and women. Geographic coverage across all 30 districts of Rwanda aligns with WFP's national scope. Shora Neza's focus on vulnerable smallholder farmers, with emphasis on youth and women, aligns closely with the CSP's resilience-building efforts targeting smallholders under Strategic Outcome 2 and Strategic Outcome 4. The linkage with school feeding further aligns the target groups, as the CSP aims to support smallholders through HGSF procurement.
Modalities: In-kind food, CBT, capacity strengthening, asset creation, school feeding	Partially aligned. Shora Neza does not provide direct food/CBT but focuses on capacity strengthening, building productive assets and access to finance. School feeding is also planned via Shora Neza through connecting farmers to schools.

Partners: Government ministries, UN agencies, NGOs, private sector	<p>Strongly aligned. The partnership approach detailed for Shora Neza in the original proposal is well aligned with the CSP. Specific alignments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private sector: Engaging agri-entrepreneurs, off-takers, processors, agro-dealers, financial institutions, and others as partners and participants of the blended finance facility aligns with WFP's private sector engagement approach. - Youth and women's networks: Partnering with RYAF, YEAN, NWC to provide training and equipment and promote inclusion aligns with WFP's focus on youth and gender. - Government: Plans to partner with MINAGRI, MINICOM, MINICT and linking to MINEDUC for school feeding align with WFP's government partnership priorities. - Academia: Leveraging partnerships for studies, training, and technology development aligns with the CSP.
Cross-cutting: equality, empowerment	<p>Strongly aligned. Shora Neza has a strong focus on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, as evidenced by the emphasis on women smallholder farmers and the planned partnership with the National Women's Council. This aligns with the CSP's aim to mainstream gender, promote equitable participation and decision-making, and use gender analyses to tailor interventions.</p>

Alignment with UNSDCF

169. Triangulated evidence from interviews and desk review showed that the programme's design and objectives are well-aligned with the UNSDCF's priorities and goals. The UNSDCF emphasizes the importance of promoting inclusive economic growth, creating decent jobs, and enhancing agricultural productivity, which are key focus areas of the Shora Neza programme. Moreover, the UNSDCF prioritizes GEWE as cross-cutting issues. The programme's specific targets for women's participation and its efforts to address gender-specific challenges in the agricultural sector contribute to the UNSDCF's goal of promoting GEWE. It is worth noting that a new UNSDCF is currently under development. Given the programme's strong alignment with the current UNSDCF's priorities and the enduring importance of inclusive economic growth, decent job creation, agricultural productivity, and gender equality, it is anticipated that the Shora Neza programme will continue to be well-aligned with the forthcoming UNSDCF's goals and objectives.

Alignment with Other UN Agencies

170. Shora Neza complements and aligns with the objectives and priorities of other UN agencies operating in Rwanda. The programme's focus on promoting sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing market access greatly resonates with the work of the FAO. Similarly, the programme's emphasis on women's economic empowerment and gender equality is in alignment with the priorities of UN Women. The programme also furthers the objectives of the UNDP, which focuses on promoting sustainable development, reducing poverty, and building resilience.

171. Overall, the programme design and objectives demonstrate a strong alignment with the needs, priorities, and policies of the Rwandan government, WFP, the UNSDCF, and other UN agencies. The programme's focus on agricultural transformation, youth and women's empowerment, and gender equality in agriculture is well-aligned with the strategic priorities of these stakeholders. By working in collaboration with government entities, UN agencies, and other partners, the programme aims to contribute to the achievement of national development goals and the United Nations' sustainable development agenda in Rwanda.

COHERENCE

HOW WELL DOES WFP'S INTERVENTION INTEGRATE WITH BOTH EXTERNAL PARTNERS' OBJECTIVES AND INTERNAL WFP INITIATIVES, PARTICULARLY IN AREAS LIKE MARKET ACCESS, POST-HARVEST LOSS REDUCTION, ACCESS TO FINANCE, AND GENDER-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES?

2.1 To what extent was WFP's intervention coherent with the programmatic objectives and policies of other partners operating within the same context? (e.g., market access, post-harvest loss reduction, and access to finance, nutrition-sensitive agriculture)?

Finding 4: The programme demonstrates a high level of coherence and complementarity with the objectives and initiatives of UN agencies, NGOs, and private sector partners operating in the agriculture and youth development space in Rwanda. WFP has actively sought partnerships and participated in coordination mechanisms to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of efforts. However, there is room for improvement in translating coordination efforts into practice, developing more systematic engagement strategies with private sector partners, and strengthening joint monitoring and follow-up on agreed action points.

Coherence with UN Agency Programmes

172. Evidence from KIIs and desk review demonstrates that the programme has been designed and implemented in close collaboration with several key UN partners to ensure complementarity and synergy across the focus areas of market access, post-harvest loss reduction, access to finance, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

173. One of the most prominent examples of coherence is WFP's partnership with UNCDF on the Blended Finance Facility component. As the programme proposal notes, UNCDF has been identified as the prospective implementing partner for this facility, which aims to extend concessional financing to agro-entrepreneurs to support the programme's objectives. By leveraging UNCDF's expertise in financial inclusion and SME development, WFP ensures that the facility is designed and delivered in a manner that is consistent with UNCDF's programmatic approach and avoids duplication of efforts. The agreement between WFP and UNCDF, formalizing their partnership and ensuring ongoing coordination, was signed in November 2023. However, at the time of this report, the Blended Finance Facility was not operational. According to key stakeholders, along with delays in signing agreements, another factor is the need to provide more time for FSCs to be enrolled in the programme and have their capacity built so they can appropriately benefit from the facility.

174. The Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE), which involves UN Women, FAO, and IFAD also aligns closely with programme's objectives of promoting women's access to finance and business development services. By participating in this project, WFP can ensure that its interventions targeting women agripreneurs are coordinated with and contribute to the collective efforts of the UN system in Rwanda.

175. The programme proposal also notes that WFP participates actively in the UN Country Team and various technical working groups to ensure alignment of Shora Neza interventions with broader UN programming frameworks. These coordination mechanisms provide a platform for joint planning, information sharing, and identification of opportunities for collaboration with other UN agencies working on agriculture, food security, and livelihood development. However, the KIIs suggest that the translation of these coordination efforts into practice could be strengthened, the existence of these forums is an important foundation for promoting coherence.

176. In addition to its UN partnerships, WFP has actively sought to align the programme with the objectives and activities of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) operating in the agriculture and youth development space in Rwanda. The programme documents and KIIs highlight several examples of how WFP is working with these partners to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication of efforts.

177. At the field level, WFP has engaged local NGOs such as Good Neighbors International and DUHAMIC Adri as implementing partners (also called CPs: Cooperating Partners) for Shora Neza. These organizations have a strong presence in the targeted communities and bring valuable expertise in farmer mobilization, capacity building, and post-harvest handling. By collaborating with these NGOs, WFP ensures that the intervention is built on existing community structures and relationships, rather than creating parallel systems.

178. The KIIs provided further evidence of how the programme aligns with the programmatic objectives of its NGO partners.

"The programme that is designed to improve smallholder farmers and agriculture value chain actors in general align with [our] policies and objectives." Implementing partner respondent

179. Another key NGO partnership is with the RYAF, which serves as a platform for engaging youth in the agriculture sector. As noted in the proposal, WFP has established regular consultation meetings with RYAF to gather youth perspectives on the design and implementation of Shora Neza interventions. This collaboration helps ensure that the programme is responsive to the needs and priorities of young agripreneurs, who are a key target group. The KIIs also reveal that RYAF has provided valuable support in mobilizing and selecting youth participants for the FSC model – a core component of Shora Neza. Working closely with youth-led organizations, WFP ensures alignment of the programme with the aspirations and capacities of young people in the agriculture sector.

180. At the district level, WFP also engages with the Joint Action Development Forums (JADF). These forums provide a space for local government, NGOs, and community representatives to jointly plan and coordinate development interventions, including those related to agriculture and youth empowerment. The KIIs confirmed that WFP is an active participant in the JADFs, using these platforms to share information about Shora Neza activities, identify potential synergies with other partners, and minimize duplication of efforts.

"WFP participates in coordination mechanisms like the working groups and the JADFs, and partners with several NGOs and organizations such as Good Neighbors and BAHO" KII respondent

181. WFP's engagement in multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms such as JADF not only ensures alignment of Shora Neza with other similar programmes, but is also a way of contributing to a more coherent and effective agri development ecosystem in Rwanda.

182. However, the KIIs also suggest that there is room for improvement in terms of translating coordination efforts into practice. One of the key stakeholders noted that while the JADFs and other forums provide a platform for information sharing and planning, the actual implementation of decisions to remove duplication and optimize synergies remains a work in progress.

Coherence with Private Sector Initiatives

183. The evaluation team assessed the coherence of Shora Neza with private sector initiatives primarily in terms of programme design, based on all available desk review and KIIs.

184. In terms of collaborating with the private sector entities, the programme's adoption of a 'demand-driven approach' to engaging the private sector ensures that Shora Neza interventions are aligned with the real needs and priorities of agribusinesses. For example, the proposal notes the programme's potential engagement with Kenya Seeds Rwanda, a subsidiary of Kenya Seeds Company, explaining that Kenya Seeds Rwanda has agreed to provide input stocks to Shora Neza-supported agro-dealers (FSCs) and will offer commissions based on aggregated demand. By creating commercial incentives for private companies to expand their reach and services to smallholder farmers, Shora Neza can contribute to a more dynamic and competitive input market that benefits both farmers and businesses.

185. KII respondents also underscored the importance of engaging with industry associations and business networks to promote coherence and sustainability of Shora Neza interventions. One of the respondents noted:

"Shora Neza actors need to connect with private sector actors through the Private Sector Federation to build their capacity so they can continue operating after WFP eventually exits the programme. This will ensure the investments are sustainable." KII respondent

186. However, KIIs also revealed some challenges and limitations in terms of private sector engagement. While WFP has made efforts to involve the private sector in Shora Neza, the engagement has been somewhat

ad hoc and transactional, rather than strategic and long-term. This points to the need for more systematic and proactive outreach to private sector partners, as well as the development of clear value propositions and engagement strategies that align with their commercial interests and objectives.

187. Key issues identified by informants as contributing to the delays in engaging with the private sector include:

- The programme involves a unique approach for WFP, diverging from its conventional work by focusing more on value chain and private sector collaboration.
- The initial private sector firm engaged faced difficulties in adapting their approach to the local context and lacked resources to implement the mentorship and coaching programme.
- Changes in key programme staff.
- Significant time was required to develop MOUs and agreements with both the government and private sector partners due to lengthy processes and procedures.

For example, one of the key respondents noted that “The vetting process was time-consuming and critical, given the *programme's* unique nature, which diverges from WFP's conventional work by focusing more on value chain and private sector collaboration. Fortunately, by November, we onboarded two NGO partners that aligned well with our profile requirements, and subsequently, the project began to move in the right direction”.

188. These factors have cumulatively resulted in the programme falling behind its original timeline. However, with the onboarding of new partners more experienced in the local context, there are promising signs of accelerated implementation moving forward.

189. Given that the programme is implemented in close collaboration with other agencies (UNDCF) and operate within the realm of the private sector (developing FSCs and financing MSMEs), the importance of coherence and coordination with these sectors is clearly demonstrated. However, at the baseline stage there is little information available on actual activities happening in collaboration with the private sector.

2.2 To what extent are there synergies between the project and other WFP interventions? How well are these activities harmonized with other WFP interventions, including female-targeted interventions?

Finding 5: There are significant synergies between the programme and other WFP interventions in Rwanda, particularly the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme. Shora Neza's focus on improving market access, reducing post-harvest losses, and enhancing the capacity of smallholder farmers and agripreneurs directly contributes to and benefits from HGSF by increasing the availability and quality of locally produced food commodities for school meals. WFP has established various coordination mechanisms at national and sub-national levels to promote synergy and harmonization between Shora Neza and other interventions. However, key informants note a lack of systematic linkages and explicit communication between programmes.

190. One of the most notable areas of synergy between Shora Neza and other WFP interventions in Rwanda is the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme. As demonstrated in the project proposal and the KIIs, WFP has been implementing HGSF in partnership with the Government of Rwanda to provide nutritious meals to school children while supporting local smallholder farmers and stimulating agricultural production.

191. Shora Neza, with its focus on improving market access, reducing PHL, and enhancing the capacity of smallholder farmers and agripreneurs, has the potential to directly contribute to and benefit from the HGSF programme. By increasing the availability and quality of locally produced food commodities, Shora Neza can help ensure a more reliable and diverse supply of ingredients for school meals. At the same time, HGSF presents a significant and stable market opportunity for the smallholder farmers and farmer organizations supported by Shora Neza, providing a predictable source of demand and income.

192. The synergies between the two programmes are already being realized in practice. One of the KII respondent indicated:

"The school feeding programme operates at the national level. Through that, we work with the district and identify smallholder farmers that have different crops like beans, horticulture produce, vegetables and fruits. WFP participates with the Ministry of Trade to link those farmers to the schools near where the farmers are located." KII respondent

193. WFP intends to create market linkages between Shora Neza farmers and the HGSP programme, leveraging the organization's existing relationships with government partners and schools. By facilitating these linkages, WFP aims to enhance the impact of both programmes and promote a more integrated and efficient approach to local food system development.

194. The programme proposal further highlights the potential for Shora Neza to contribute to HGSP through the FSC model. The FSCs, which are a core component of Shora Neza, are designed to serve as aggregation points and service hubs for smallholder farmers, providing them with access to inputs, training, and market information. The proposal notes that, "There is potential for FSCs to intermediate in the procurement of local commodities between smallholder farmers (supply) and schools (demand)." This suggests that WFP is actively exploring ways to leverage the FSC network to streamline the supply chain for the HGSP programme, creating a more direct and efficient link between producers and consumers. Moreover, WFP's support for post-harvest handling and storage practices through Shora Neza can further strengthen the linkages with HGSP.

195. This linkage is further supported by another area the programme focuses on: 'reducing PHL and improving the quality of crops'. By reducing PHL and improving the quality of crops, Shora Neza can help to ensure that more of the food produced by smallholder farmers is available for consumption and sale, including to schools participating in the HGSP programme. This can contribute to improved food safety, nutrition, and value for money in school meals, while also increasing the incomes and resilience of local farmers.

196. However, it is important to note that fully realizing these synergies may require further efforts to systematically link Shora Neza farmers with schools across all intervention areas.

197. While the programme demonstrates a high level of coherence and complementarity, with clear potential for mutual reinforcement and synergistic impact with HGSP, continued efforts to systematically link the two initiatives and leverage their respective strengths and networks can help to further strengthen this coherence and maximize the benefits for participating farmers, schools, and communities.

198. Opportunities to further strengthen the coherence between Shora Neza and the HGSP programme include leveraging the data, insights, and networks generated through the use of FSCs. For example, data on crop surplus (availability), quality, and prices collected through the FSCs could be used to inform menu planning and procurement decisions for school meals. Similarly, the relationships and trust established with farmers through the HGSP programme could be leveraged to mobilize participants and support for Shora Neza interventions.

Coordination Mechanisms for Synergy and Harmonization

199. To promote synergy and harmonization between Shora Neza and other WFP interventions in Rwanda, the project has established various coordination mechanisms at the national and sub-national levels. As per KIIs, these mechanisms aim to facilitate information sharing, joint planning, and collaboration among WFP staff and partners involved in different activities.

200. At the national level, WFP participates in the UN Country Team and various technical working groups as a means of aligning Shora Neza with broader UN programming frameworks and identifying opportunities for collaboration with other agencies. According to KIIs, WFP has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). WFP has signed one with USAID CNFA. Another partnership agreement is being developed with the Ministry of Youth.

201. At the sub-national level, WFP engages in district-level JADFs to coordinate with local government and NGO partners on community engagement, farmer mobilization, and implementation of post-harvest equipment and services. These forums provide a platform for WFP to share information about Shora Neza activities and identify potential synergies with other interventions in the district.

202. The KIIs showcase the importance of these coordination mechanisms for promoting synergy and harmonization. Stakeholders interviewed highlighted WFP's participation in sector working groups and JADFs, noting that *"the various partnerships create synergies and avoid duplication."* However, the interviews also suggest that there is room for improvement in terms of translating coordination efforts into practice. One interviewee acknowledged that *"implementing what comes out of it to remove duplication and build synergies is another thing we can look into differently,"* suggesting a need for more systematic follow-up and joint monitoring of agreed action points.

203. While there are some synergies between Shora Neza and other WFP interventions, HGSP represents the most important market opportunity for Shora Neza farmers and agripreneurs. Also, WFP's existing SAMS projects provide a foundation of knowledge, relationships, and best practices that Shora Neza can build upon to achieve greater impact.

204. The project's focus on GEWE is also well-aligned with WFP's broader efforts to mainstream gender in its programming in Rwanda. By targeting women agripreneurs and promoting their leadership and participation in all aspects of the project, Shora Neza can contribute to transformative change for women in the agriculture sector and beyond.

205. While there are examples of successful linkages and collaboration, it is not always clear how systematically these are being pursued across all project areas. Increased explicit communication and coordination between Shora Neza and other WFP programmes, as well as more systematic follow-up and joint monitoring of agreed action points will help ensure that synergies are maximized, duplication of efforts is minimized, and the overall impact of WFP's interventions in Rwanda is amplified.

SUSTAINABILITY

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE PROGRAMME'S IMPACTS, INCLUDING CAPACITY STRENGTHENING AND GEWE RELATIONS, LIKELY TO CONTINUE BEYOND THE LIFETIME OF THE PROGRAMME, AND WHAT FACTORS UNDERLIE THIS SUSTAINABILITY?

3.1. To what extent did the intervention implementation consider and implement a sustainability strategy, such as capacity building of smallholder farmers, agripreneurs, and other partners, such as private sectors involved into food systems, and communities?

Finding 6: The programme has given significant consideration to sustainability and has incorporated an appropriate range of strategies to help ensure the long-term impact of its interventions. Key elements of the sustainability strategy include:

- Emphasis on capacity building and skills development for SHFs and agripreneurs, particularly youth and women, to enable them to continue thriving after the programme ends.
- Targeting of existing entrepreneurs and actors in the agriculture value chains to create a sustainable network of service providers.
- Promotion of financial literacy and linkages to financial institutions to increase access to financial services and enhance financial management skills.
- Engagement of private sector partners to create lasting market linkages and commercial relationships.
- Alignment with and potential integration into existing government initiatives to ensure a conducive policy environment for sustaining benefits.

Finding 7: While the programme has taken significant steps to ensure sustainability, there are potential risks and challenges that could hinder the long-term impact of its interventions. These include competition, climate change, heavy rains, landslides, destruction of roads, and political tensions in neighboring countries. Currently, there is a lack of strategic and long-term private sector partnerships.

206. Based on desk reviews and KIIs, the baseline study finds that the programme has given significant consideration to sustainability and has incorporated an appropriate range of strategies to help ensure the long-term impact of its interventions.

Capacity Building of Smallholder Farmers and Agripreneurs

207. One of the core pillars of the programme's sustainability strategy is its emphasis on capacity building and skills development for smallholder farmers and agripreneurs (FSCs), particularly youth and women, with a long-term perspective. The programme focuses on equipping participants with transferable and adaptable skills that will remain relevant in the evolving agriculture sector, ensuring the sustainability of its impact beyond the implementation period. This includes a range of topics, such as farming as a business, financial management, governance, and climate-smart agricultural practices, which provide participants with a strong foundation of knowledge and skills that can be applied in various contexts.

208. The programme's focus on capacity building as a means of ensuring sustainability was also echoed by key informants. As per the KIIs, Shora Neza's focus on equipping participants with the necessary knowledge and tools to succeed in the agriculture sector is seen as crucial for enabling them to continue thriving even after the programme ends.

"When I say capacity strengthening -- I mean from policy, systems and partnerships to training -- targeting carefully the institution that will carry this forward." KII respondent

209. Similarly, the programme is working to establish lasting networks and partnerships between smallholder farmers, agripreneurs (with a focus on youth as a primary target), and other key stakeholders in the value chain. These connections are expected to provide ongoing support, knowledge sharing, and market access beyond the programme's duration. By facilitating the formation of these networks and partnerships, the programme aims to create a self-sustaining ecosystem that can continue to thrive and adapt to future challenges.

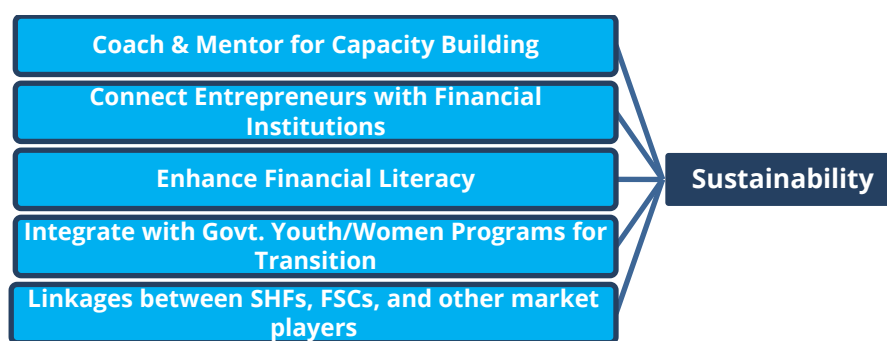
"Furthermore, we introduced the 'One plus one' mechanism, where each entrepreneur was expected to bring in one additional person—whether a family member, an employee, or a trainee—to learn and potentially work within the project. This model helped in disseminating knowledge and skills broadly, contributing to both economic empowerment and community resilience." KII respondent

210. Moreover, the programme's targeting of existing entrepreneurs and actors in the agriculture value chains is another strategic decision that contributes to sustainability. As noted by one stakeholder, "One aspect of the project is that it targets existing entrepreneurs and actors in the agriculture value chains." However small but existing is an advantage because the project will be supporting people who already have knowledge about the sector, those who already have the required mindset, and this will serve lifting them in already what they aspire to do; this means that the participants themselves will be able sustain what they will achieve during their learning from the Shora Neza programme".

211. Guided by the findings of the Agriculture Sector Diagnostics Study commissioned by the Mastercard Foundation, the programme places a strong emphasis on youth entrepreneurship and the provision of services. The proposal outlines that "the RWCO will initially prioritize young agro-dealers in the first cohort of FSCs. Development of the incubation programme will be designed to equip existing agro-dealers with the skills needed to improve service provision to farmers". By targeting and nurturing existing agro-dealers and entrepreneurs, Shora Neza strives to establish a sustainable network of service providers who can continue to support smallholder farmers after the project's conclusion.

"A unique aspect of the programme was its emphasis on creating employment opportunities. Each participant was encouraged to hire at least one additional youth from their community, fostering both economic growth and social cohesion. This approach not only facilitated employment but also promoted collaboration rather than competition among participants." KII respondent

Figure 41. Main pillars of Shora Neza sustainability



Promotion of Financial Literacy and Linkages

212. Another key element of Shora Neza's sustainability strategy is its focus on promoting financial literacy and linking participants to financial institutions.

213. The programme proposal outlines the plans to "promote the formalization of savings groups linked to individual farmers and groups, including linking them to formal financial institutions" and "engage through advocacy and partnerships with previously assessed and identified financial institutions (including Micro-finance local institutions, SACCOs and commercial banks) to design and promote specialized financial products (savings, loans, insurance) appropriate for women and youth involved in agricultural value chains." These efforts to increase access to financial services and enhance financial management skills are expected to enable participants to sustain and grow their businesses even after the programme concludes.

214. To support individuals in access to savings groups, WFP is working with key partners including local financial institutions (MFIs and SACCOs) for continually improving the types of financial products and services available to smallholder farmers, especially youth and women. This tailored approach to financial inclusion, coupled with the capacity building efforts, aims to create a sustainable ecosystem of financially literate and empowered agripreneurs.

Engagement of Private Sector Partners

215. The programme engages private sector partners including "existing off-takers, buyers, agro-processors, agro-dealers, financial institutions, PHM companies, fintechs, innovation incubators/accelerators among others."¹⁰⁷ By engaging these partners and aligning the programme's objectives with their interests, WFP aims to create lasting market linkages and commercial relationships that can sustain the benefits for smallholder farmers and agripreneurs.

216. The programme proposal provides specific examples of private sector engagement, such as the partnership with Kenya Seeds Rwanda, "a subsidiary of Kenya Seeds Company that offers inputs stocks to FSCs participants and will be providing commissions based on aggregated demands." Such collaborations demonstrate the programme's intentions to leverage private sector expertise and resources to enhance the sustainability of its interventions.

217. However, the KIIs suggest that private sector engagement has been somewhat ad hoc and transactional, with room for more strategic and long-term partnerships. This indicates a need for more systematic and proactive outreach to private sector partners to fully harness their potential for sustainable impact.

Alignment with Government Initiatives

218. A critical aspect of the Shora Neza's sustainability strategy is its alignment with and potential integration into existing government initiatives. As noted in the proposal, "government partnership is a priority for WFP to ensure knowledge and technology transfer as well as project ownership and sustainability." Desk review and interviews further emphasized the programme's coherence with

¹⁰⁷ WFP. (2021). Mastercard Foundation Shora Neza Programme Proposal

government policies and plans, such as the Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 4 and draft PSTA 5) and the National Youth Policy and National Strategy for Youth Employment.

"The plan is for key achievements and lessons learned from implementation to be absorbed into ongoing government initiatives." KII respondent

219. Moreover, the programme's collaboration with government entities, such as the MINAGRI, Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM), and Ministry of Youth and Culture (MYCULTURE), as well as its participation in sector working groups and district-level JADFs, demonstrates a commitment to policy coherence and coordination. By working closely with the government and aligning with its priorities, the programme appears to be well positioned to meet its aim of creating a conducive policy environment for sustaining the benefits achieved.

Challenges

220. While the programme has taken significant steps to ensure sustainability, the KIIs also acknowledge potential risks and challenges that could hinder the long-term impact of its interventions. As one of the KII respondents noted, *"Competition is an external factor which we need to consider. Climate change, when working on food systems, can be an external factor that hinders achievement."* Similarly, another stakeholder mentioned that *"some of the challenges will be heavy rains, landslides, destruction of roads which can impact the transportation of commodities. Political tensions around our neighbouring countries, if not addressed well, can also hinder."*

221. Overall, the baseline study finds that the programme has given substantial consideration to sustainability and has implemented various strategies to ensure the long-term impact of its interventions. The programme's emphasis on capacity building, targeting of existing entrepreneurs, promotion of financial literacy and linkages, engagement of private sector partners, alignment with government initiatives, and community empowerment all contribute to creating a strong foundation for sustained benefits.

222. However, the KIIs also reveal some areas for improvement, such as the need for more strategic and long-term private sector partnerships and the importance of addressing external risks and challenges that could hinder sustainability. As Shora Neza continues to evolve and adapt, it will be crucial to monitor and assess the effectiveness of its sustainability strategies, learn from implementation experiences, and make necessary adjustments to maximize long-term impact.

223. By empowering smallholder farmers, agri-preneurs, private sector partners, and communities with the knowledge, skills, and resources to drive lasting change, the programme has laid the groundwork for continued impact beyond its lifespan. Continued efforts to strengthen these sustainability strategies, coupled with adaptive management and learning, will be key to ensuring that the programme's benefits are sustained and amplified over time.

GENDER, DISABILITY INCLUSION, AND LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND (LNOB):

4.1. To what extent are gender equality, disability inclusion, and the principles of leaving no one behind (LNOB) mainstreamed within the programme design?

Finding 8: Shora Neza demonstrates a strong commitment to gender equality, with a gender-responsive approach that aligns with national policies and aims for transformative change. While positive shifts in attitudes and opportunities for women's economic empowerment are reported, challenges persist, particularly in rural areas. Disability inclusion and other LNOB dimensions are acknowledged but lack detailed strategies, suggesting room for deeper integration and more comprehensive targeting. Disaggregated data collection, consultations with representative groups, and qualitative monitoring will be crucial to tailor interventions, assess impact, and measure genuine transformative change beyond participation numbers.

224. Desk review and KIIs showed that gender equality emerges to be thoughtfully integrated into the programme's design and implementation. The programme's gender-responsive approach aligns with the

Government of Rwanda policies and the concerted efforts of various NGOs to actively promote gender balance and women's empowerment.

225. Evidence from the KIIs indicate that the Shora Neza programme has made concerted efforts to mainstream GEWE in its design and current implementation. The programme's approach aligns with the Government of Rwanda's priorities and policies on gender equality. As stated by one key informant, "The Shora Neza *Programme* target beneficiaries include both men and women. However, the project acknowledges the need for women's empowerment, and that is why 60 percent of the beneficiaries are women, and youth in general. This shows the WFP's efforts to address gender inequalities and promoting women's economic inclusion within agriculture value chains."

226. The programme recognizes the existing gender norms and cultural barriers that hinder women's full participation and empowerment. Another key informant highlighted, "*There are some cultural settings that have been around that negatively affect women, socially, access to finance, etc. Luckily, the country has been putting efforts into mitigating such gender norms. The Shora Neza programme is also expected to positively challenge that, working side by side with these efforts by the Rwanda government.*" The programme plans to work closely with local stakeholders, including parents and community members, to build trust and confidence among women participants and advocate for changes in gender norms.

227. Capacity building for women agri-entrepreneurs is a key component of the programme, aiming to enhance their skills and engagement across agricultural value chains. As noted by a key informant, "*Women need to be engaged in modern agriculture and economic farming in general so that they can take part in developing their families. It is therefore important to note the efforts WFP is doing in considering these needs of youth and women. The programme's focus on modernizing agriculture, improving access to finance, and strengthening market linkages is expected to create opportunities for women's economic empowerment*".

228. KIIs also highlighted the programme's adoption of a gender transformative approach, which aimed to address the root causes of inequalities. This involves increasing women's participation in numbers and enhancing their confidence, agency, and ability to claim the benefits of their contributions. As one KII respondent explained:

"[The] approach includes changing the mindset of male youth, teaching them to recognize and support women's leadership and contributions. This approach isn't limited to leadership; it extends to financial literacy and other skills training, ensuring they are gender-sensitive." KII respondent

229. However, one key informant also pointed out that, "*As much as we have intentionality around inclusion, targeting youth and marginalized groups, we don't have data yet on the effectiveness of that model because it hasn't been fully tested.*" This underscores the need for robust monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the effectiveness of the programme's inclusion strategies and make necessary adjustments.

230. The programme proposal dedicates an entire section to gender responsiveness, outlining specific measures such as favouring women in FSC recruitment, providing capacity development to enable women's roles across agricultural value chains, equally targeting women and men in the innovation facility, and empowering women smallholder farmers in household decision-making and nutrition. The proposal asserts that "all capacity building activities would include a module on gender equality and women's leadership." The programme proposal (and more recent readjustment) also included concrete approaches for maximizing women's participation in FSC incubation processes including providing childcare at training events and mentorship opportunities targeting young women to bolster a pipeline of young women entrepreneurs overcome gender barriers and stereotypes. However, elaboration of these approaches was lacking in the subsequent implementation documents (FSC targeting and Participation plan, SOP for FSC onboarding).

231. Current implementation plans also appear to lack detailed strategies for disability inclusion and other LNOB dimensions. While there are some references to including refugees and persons with disabilities in the selection criteria for FSCs, it is unclear how their specific needs will be addressed. One key informant said, "*For farmer service centre selection, it must be intentional about onboarding youth-majority FSCs. A secondary measure was embedding inclusion of the most excluded groups like women, refugees, and people with disabilities into the selection criteria.*" Despite this intention, there is limited evidence of concrete plans or targeted interventions to ensure the meaningful participation and empowerment of these groups.

232. The programme also aligns with Rwanda's national gender policy on women's economic empowerment and access to finance in agriculture. The Revised National Gender Policy 2021 of Rwanda outlines eight priority areas for advancing GEWE.¹⁰⁸ The programme resonates with several of these priority areas, particularly in promoting women's economic empowerment, challenging traditional gender norms, fostering women's leadership and decision-making, and contributing to a conducive policy environment for gender equality.

233. Shora Neza's interventions directly support priority area 2 on accelerating women's economic empowerment through measures such as empowering women smallholder farmers, enabling women's roles across agricultural value chains, and promoting women's access to resources and opportunities in agriculture. The programme's gender transformative approach aligns with priority area 4's focus on addressing persistent cultural norms and stereotypes. Furthermore, the programme's emphasis on favouring women in FSC recruitment, providing capacity development for women's leadership in agriculture, and empowering women in household decision-making strongly aligns with priority area 6 on promoting women's participation in leadership and decision-making positions. The programme also aligns with priority areas 1, 3, and 7 by engendering agricultural sector initiatives, indirectly promoting gender equality in education through capacity-building and increasing knowledge on gender equality among participants. However, priority area 5, focusing on men's and boys' engagement, presents an opportunity for the programme to strengthen its alignment by explicitly incorporating strategies to engage men and boys as partners in promoting gender equality.

234. Overall, Shora Neza's gender-responsive approach and interventions are well-aligned with most of the policy's priority areas, contributing to advancing GEWE in Rwanda, particularly in the agricultural sector. Continued exploration of opportunities to deepen men and boys' engagement could further enhance the programme's impact.

235. However, key respondents acknowledge potential negative unintended outcomes, such as family conflicts when women start earning money, and the need to empower women without exacerbating problems. For example, one of the KII respondent noted, *"There's often an expectation that the male head of the household controls the finances. Our project aims to empower women without causing harm or exacerbating existing problems. We're mindful of these dynamics and strive to prevent unintended negative outcomes"*.

236. In terms of disability inclusion, the programme proposal highlights plan to expand inclusion over time to persons with disabilities and engage with representative organizations like the National Union of Disabilities Organizations of Rwanda (NUDOR). However, concrete strategies for making interventions accessible to persons with different disabilities are lacking. The proposal also expresses an overarching aim to support marginalized groups, in line with LNOB principles. Youth are a key focus, with plans for "Community engagement events" that will "dispel common misconceptions about youth in agriculture." KII respondents also highlighted the importance of youth dialogues in gaining insights into the project's qualitative aspects. However, other LNOB dimensions such as poverty, ethnicity, migratory status, and geographic location are not explicitly mentioned.

"A common statement that we use is 'Go Rural,' 'Go Far,' and 'Go Women.' We want to empower them. The best participants are really good to work with, but we would love to engage those that are really in far, hard-to-reach areas, especially youth and women in those particular areas. So that was one of the criteria." KII respondent

237. Overall, gender equality is substantively mainstreamed throughout the programme, with a thoughtful gender-responsive approach that aligns with national policies and aims for transformative change. However concrete plans for how to implement gender responsive programming was lacking. Key respondents recognize the challenges that persist, particularly in rural areas, and emphasize the need for sustained efforts to fully shift deeply ingrained traditional gender norms. While disability inclusion is acknowledged in the programme proposal, it also lacks detailed strategies and interventions.

¹⁰⁸Government of Rwanda. (2021). Revised National Gender Policy. Retrieved from: <https://www.migeprof.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=19753&token=950f76b103a1c3c084ab60920ab01dbc936a4303>

3. Conclusions and lessons

3.1. CONCLUSIONS

238. Based on the findings presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the programme's relevance, coherence, and sustainability:

239. Overall, the programme has demonstrated a strong commitment to relevance, coherence, and sustainability, which are critical factors for achieving lasting impact in the agriculture sector and promoting inclusive growth in Rwanda. While there are areas for improvement, the programme's strategic design, alignment with stakeholder priorities, and focus on capacity building and empowerment provide a solid foundation for success. By continuing to refine its approach, strengthen partnerships, and adapt to evolving challenges and opportunities, the programme has the potential to drive transformative change and contribute to the long-term well-being of agripreneurs, smallholder farmers, youth, and women in Rwanda.

240. **Conclusion 1:** The Shora Neza programme demonstrates a high level of relevance to the needs and priorities of its key stakeholders in Rwanda, including agripreneurs (FSCs), smallholder farmers, youth, women, the government, WFP, and other UN agencies. The programme's targeted approach, emphasis on capacity building and skills development, and commitment to addressing gender-specific needs and barriers showcase its dedication to creating sustainable solutions that promote inclusive growth in Rwanda's agricultural sector.

241. **Conclusion 2:** The baseline study concludes that the emphasis on entrepreneurial potential and a proactive attitude is crucial for the programme's success, as it ensures that the selected participants are motivated and capable of driving change in their communities. However, identifying young women engaged in agriculture presented challenges, highlighting the complexity of achieving gender balance among participants.

242. **Conclusion 3:** The programme has made commendable efforts to target the relevant stakeholders and geographic areas, with the selection criteria being largely appropriate. The programme's emphasis on youth and women, its alignment with key agricultural priorities, and its focus on entrepreneurial potential are notable strengths. However, planning for the integration of harder-to-reach groups, including women, differently abled individuals, and people from remote communities, was not explicitly documented.

243. **Conclusion 4:** The programme's strategic design, objectives, and implementation are well-aligned with national development strategies, such as NST1 and PSTA 4, and contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) goals. By targeting the right participants and geographic areas, and utilizing appropriate selection criteria, the programme is well-positioned to effectively address challenges faced by youth and women in the Rwanda agricultural sector.

244. **Conclusion 5:** In terms of programme reporting processes, a lack of information on programme progress indicates the need for more robust monitoring and reporting systems in place that will require the WFP team and implementing partners to show the programme is progressing as planned and enable feedback mechanisms for making changes where inefficiencies or any shifts in project participant needs are identified.

245. **Conclusion 6:** The programme exhibits a high degree of coherence with the programmatic objectives and policies of external partners, including UN agencies, NGOs, and private sector entities operating within the same context. The programme has actively sought to align its interventions with the priorities and activities of these partners, particularly in areas such as market access, post-harvest loss reduction, access to finance, and gender-focused activities. Moreover, the programme has established synergies with other WFP interventions, most notably the HGSF programme, leveraging complementarities and creating mutually reinforcing impacts. However, there remains room for improvement in translating coordination efforts into practice and systematically pursuing linkages across all project areas.

246. **Conclusion 6:** The programme has considered sustainability and has implemented various strategies to ensure the long-term impact of its interventions. The programme's emphasis on capacity building, targeting of existing entrepreneurs, promotion of financial literacy and linkages, engagement of private sector partners, alignment with government initiatives, and community empowerment all contribute

to creating a strong foundation for sustained benefits. While initial steps have been taken to engage private sector partners, these relationships could be more strategic and long-term to ensure long-term impact and amplification of the programme's benefits.

247. **Conclusion 7:** Gender equality is substantively mainstreamed throughout the programme, with a thoughtful gender-responsive approach that aligns with national policies and aims for transformative change. Challenges persist, particularly in rural areas, and emphasize the need for sustained efforts to fully shift deeply ingrained traditional gender norms. Disability inclusion and other LNOB dimensions are acknowledged but lack detailed strategies for their implementation.

3.2. KEY LESSONS

Key lessons drawn from the baseline study include:

248. **FSC Targeting:** Flexible participant sourcing strategies are crucial for achieving demographic targets. The programme's initial reliance on predefined district lists for FSC candidates proved insufficient to meet both entrepreneurship criteria and demographic targets (60% women, 80% youth). This experience highlighted the need for diverse outreach methods, such as engaging youth and women's networks, to ensure a wider pool of qualified candidates. Also, the rapid gender analysis was only being conducted in 2023 rather than during the project design phase which limited the project's ability to identify the different circumstances and needs of males and females when targeting potential FSCs.

249. **SHF Targeting:** Precise participants targeting criteria are essential for reaching intended participants. The baseline survey revealed a wide range of farm sizes among "smallholder farmers," including some engaged in large-scale farming. This indicates that current classification criteria of SHFs may be too broad, potentially including participants outside the programme's intended target group.

250. **Regular Reporting:** A lack of regular and systematic progress reporting limits the programme's capacity for adaptive management. Despite the Mastercard Foundation-WFP Partnership Monitoring Package requiring bi-annual reports, the evaluation team noted a lack of available documentation on programme progress. The lack of disaggregated data and strategic qualitative monitoring points to gaps in assessing and understanding programme impact, emphasizing the importance of effective tracking and feedback processes.

251. **Holistic Support:** The FSC model's effectiveness relies on comprehensive support. The programme's approach of targeting existing entrepreneurs in agriculture value chains proved advantageous, as it built upon participants' existing knowledge and aspirations. Given this is a baseline, assessing the capacity again at mid-term and end-line will provide useful insights into the extent to which provided training and support address identified gaps over time.

252. **Youth employment strategies benefit from a collaborative approach:** The programme's 'One plus one' mechanism, encouraging each entrepreneur to involve an additional person in learning and potentially working within the project, demonstrated the value of fostering knowledge dissemination and creating employment opportunities. This approach contributed to both economic empowerment and community resilience.

Annexes

Annex 1. Summary Terms of Reference

Subject and scope of the evaluation

The subject of the evaluation is the 5-year (2022-2027) Mastercard Foundation-funded “Strengthening food systems to empower smallholder farmers and young people” project, locally known as Shora Neza, that aims to expand the scope of engagement of WFP in Rwanda. By addressing the financing gap, reducing post-harvest losses and enhancing nutrition-sensitive agriculture and market access opportunities, WFP will be better positioned to confront the challenges preventing effective youth and women engagement in the national food system. This project relies heavily on multi-stakeholder engagement; while partners are still subject to confirmation, WFP will continue working with local NGOs, such as Rwanda Development Organization (RDO) and Rwanda Rural Rehabilitation Initiative (RWARRI). Continued collaboration with government ministries, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) is also a priority. However, WFP will also harness new partnerships with local youth forums and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) to meet project-specific objectives related to youth engagement and access to finance, respectively.

Funded by the Mastercard Foundation, this programme was approved and commenced in March 2022, for a period of 5 years. Total funding allocation of USD 15 million will be distributed among country implementing partners for the different activities, no direct cash transfers will happen towards beneficiaries nor other private external stakeholders. This programme aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase smallholder farmer incomes by connecting them to premium public and private markets for sales at national and regional levels (USD 2.79 million allocated);
- Improved quality and reduced post-harvest losses through the promotion of a vibrant, youth-led market for post-harvest (PH) equipment and services, which in turn will enable smallholder farmers access to better, premium markets (USD 2.06 million allocated) million; and
- Increased investment in agricultural value chains through the creation of a Blended Finance Facility with a special focus on youth led MSMEs (USD 5.12 million allocated).

The target groups for these evaluations are smallholder farmers (women and men) reached through the project, the micro entrepreneurs leading FSCs (women, men and youth) and other value chain actors reached by the project in addition to sex-disaggregated data, the information collected should include a GEWE Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) analysis. The evaluation findings should draw clear perspectives related to the different targeted groups, including people with disabilities. Gender inequalities and specific gender vulnerabilities and concerns will be considered as gender issues and gender dimensions will need to be clearly stated.

Objectives and users of the evaluation

Evaluations serve the dual objectives of accountability and learning.

- **Accountability** – The evaluation will assess and report on the performance and results of the Mastercard Foundation-funded project “Strengthening food systems to empower smallholder farmers and young people.” For accountability, the evaluations will assess whether targeted beneficiaries have received services as expected, if the programme is on track to meet the stated goals, objectives and targets, and aligned with the results frameworks and Theory of Change (ToC) assumptions.
- **Learning** – The evaluation will determine the reasons why certain results occurred or did not occur to draw lessons, derive good practices and provide pointers for learning. The evaluations will also provide evidence-based findings to inform operational and strategic decision-making. Findings will be actively disseminated, and lessons will be incorporated into relevant lesson-sharing systems.

In accordance with WFP’s Evaluation policy (2022), the baseline will inform project implementation and provide relevant context necessary for the mid-term and endline evaluation. The mid-term evaluation will: assess the project’s relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, impact and sustainability; collect performance indicator data for strategic objectives and higher-level results; assess whether the project is on track to meet the results and targets; review the results frameworks and theory of change; and identify any necessary mid-course corrections and operational lessons. The final evaluation will build upon the baseline and mid-term evaluations to assess the project’s success and impact as stated in the project document.

Table 7. Key evaluation questions

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent are the programme’s strategic design, objectives and implementation addressing the needs and priorities of agri- entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers, especially youth and women? 2. To what extent is the programme design and objectives aligned with the needs, priorities, and policies of the government (e.g., NST1/PSTAs), WFP, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and other UN agencies? 	Relevance
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To what extent was WFP’s intervention coherent with the programmatic objectives and policies of other partners operating within the same context? (e.g., market access, post- harvest loss reduction, and access to finance, nutrition-sensitive agriculture)? 4. To what extent are there synergies between the project and other WFP interventions? How well are these activities harmonized with other WFP interventions? 	Coherence
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To what extent has WFP’s facilitation role been successful in linking agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers (especially women and youth) to formal food system actors for increased employment opportunities? To what extent these new jobs represent ‘improved’ opportunities in terms of longevity, dignifying, formality, etc.? 6. Market access: To what extent and how has the programme increased smallholder farmers’ incomes and access to premium markets through agri-entrepreneur-led Farmer Service Centres? 7. Post-harvest management: To what extent has the programme improved youth and women engagement in the provision of post-harvest management services (capacity, technology)? 	Effectiveness

<p>8. Access to finance: To what extent and how has the programme supported the inclusion of smallholder farmers and agri- entrepreneurs, including youth and women, in formal food system financing? Has the programme been successful in fostering innovation in the sector?</p>	
<p>9. To what extent was the programme cost-effective and cost- efficient and what factors influencing the efficiency in achieving stated objectives?</p> <p>9.1 Was the intervention implemented in a timely way?</p> <p>9.2 Is the programme cost-effective in the use of resources for achieving results?</p> <p>9.3 Is the programme cost-efficient?</p>	<p>Efficiency</p>
<p>10. To what extent did the intervention implementation consider and implement a sustainability strategy, such as capacity building of smallholder farmers, agri-preneurs, and other partners, such as private sectors involved into food systems, and communities?</p> <p>11. To what extent will intervention benefits continue after WFP's work cease?</p> <p>12. Has the project made any difference to GEWE relations?</p>	<p>Sustainability</p>
<p>13. Did the intervention contribute to long-term intended results? What, if any, unintended positive/negative results have been realized?</p> <p>13.1 To what extent was the programme able to address agricultural financing gaps, reducing of post-harvest losses, enhancing nutrition-sensitive agriculture and enhancing market access opportunities effectively?</p> <p>14. What effects, intended and unintended, has the programme had on food systems approaches and strategies in the country, especially for the empowerment of women and youth?</p> <p>15. Were there any differences, including any differential results across groups, especially for youth and women? Why and how? What enabling or disabling factors are present?</p> <p>16. Were there any gender-specific and transformative impacts? Did the intervention influence gender transformative context?</p> <p>17. Did the programme have any effects (intended and unintended) on participants' lives, particularly for smallholder farmers, youth, and women?</p>	<p>Impact</p>

Methodology and ethical considerations

The evaluation team, in consultation with key stakeholders, will develop an appropriate evaluation design, sampling strategy and methodological approach at inception phase for the baseline and final evaluations, within the context of the overall Mastercard Foundation evaluation framework, with a clear evaluation matrix.

The baseline will focus on gathering data against the results framework indicators while the mid-term and endline evaluation should take a holistic perspective of the context and current situation related to project objectives and evaluation questions.

The methodology will take a theory-based approach based on the results framework. This will ensure that the baselines for all the indicators contained in the results framework are obtained and progress measured during mid-term review and the final evaluation. The methodology will consider inclusion and measurement

of relevant project -specific nutrition and gender equality indicators. This will be discussed and agreed on with the Evaluation Committee (EC) at inception phase.

The evaluation team will be required to review the Theory of Change for the programme. The methodology should allow for testing whether assumptions made held true and assess the different causal pathways.

The methodology will be designed by the evaluation team during the inception phase. It should:

- Employ the relevant evaluation criteria above.
- Use mixed methods (quantitative, qualitative, participatory etc.) to ensure triangulation of information through a variety of means.
- Use innovative and participatory approaches, including youth participation into the evaluation processes, is highly encouraged, such as innovative participatory photography and digital storytelling, especially by youth to participate in the course of the project by contributing to the evaluations and learnings, will be considered an asset.
- Apply an evaluation matrix geared towards addressing the key evaluation questions considering the data availability challenges, the budget and timing constraints.
- Ensure through the use of mixed methods that women, girls, men and boys, people with disability from different stakeholders' groups participate and that their different voices are heard and used.
- Triangulation of information from different methods and sources to enhance the reliability of findings is required. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be used to collect data and information.
- The methodology and action of the evaluation team will be guided by the international humanitarian principles.

The evaluation must conform to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines for evaluation. Accordingly, the selected evaluation firm is responsible for safeguarding and ensuring ethics at all stages of the evaluation process. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of respondents, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups) and ensuring that the evaluation results do no harm to respondents or their communities.

Roles and responsibilities

The document describes the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the evaluation process, as follows:

WFP Rwanda Country Office (Deputy Country Director): Oversees the evaluation, selects and approves evaluation team and documents, ensures independence and impartiality, organizes debriefings, and oversees dissemination and follow-up.

Evaluation Manager (EM): Manages all phases of the evaluation process, including drafting ToR, selecting the evaluation team, managing budget, ensuring quality, and providing necessary logistical support.

Internal Evaluation Committee (EC): Ensures independence and impartiality of the evaluation by approving key evaluation components and maintains distance from influence by programme implementers.

Evaluation Reference Group (ERG): Acts as an advisory body, reviewing draft evaluation products, and ensuring relevance, impartiality, and credibility of the evaluation process.

Regional Bureau: Advises, participates, and provides comments on the evaluation process and supports the implementation of recommendations.

Relevant WFP Headquarters divisions: Engages in discussions regarding WFP strategies, policies, or systems in their area of responsibility and comments on evaluation documents as required.

Other Stakeholders (National Government, NGOs, UN agencies): Collaborates by providing essential documents and information, and some may be invited to be part of the ERG.

Office of Evaluation (OEV): Oversees WFP's decentralized evaluation function, sets norms and standards, manages quality support service, and provides help desk function, ensuring adherence to UNEG ethical guidelines.

Communication

The Evaluation Manager, in consultation with the Evaluation Committee and support from the Regional Evaluation Officer, will develop a communication and learning plan, during the Inception phase, that will outline processes and channels of communication and learning activities. The Communication and Learning Plan should include a GEWE responsive dissemination strategy, indicating how findings including GEWE will be disseminated and how stakeholders interested or affected by GEWE issues will be engaged. This communication and learning plan with clear timelines will be elaborated at inception in consultation with the evaluation team to ensure that the results of this evaluation reach the relevant people and are used to inform decision making. Where appropriate the communication and learning plan should have a sufficient budget.

To ensure a smooth and efficient process and enhance the learning from this evaluation, the evaluation team should place emphasis on transparent and open communication with key stakeholders including beneficiaries. These will be achieved by ensuring a clear agreement on channels and frequency of communication with and between key stakeholders.

As part of the international standards for evaluation, WFP requires that all evaluations are made publicly available. Following the approval of the final baseline report, a stakeholder workshop will be conducted through which the evaluation findings and recommendations will be presented, and way forward will be discussed. The report will be published in WFP websites.

Timing for evaluation exercises.

- Baseline study: August 2022
- Mid-Term Evaluation: November 2024
- Endline Evaluation: November 2026

Link to ToR:

https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000148158/download/?_ga=2.10101107.776738407.1682483842-1571151410.1678364297

Annex 2. Timeline

This annex presents the detailed timeline for the evaluation, from inception to report writing and dissemination. Additional deliverables agreed with EM have been added to the timeline

Table 8. Timeline

Phase 2- Inception		Date
EM/TL	Brief core team / Meeting with SO4 Team / Receipt of documents	4-May
ET	Desk review of key documents	8-12 May
ET	Draft inception report	27 June
EM/TL	Quality assurance of draft IR by EM, REO, and ERG using QC, share draft IR with quality support service (DEQS) and organize follow-up call with DEQS	28 July - 27 September
ET	Review draft IR based on feedback and share second draft	10 October
EM/TL	2 nd round of feedback by ERG and DEQAS	11 - 19 October
ET	Review draft IR based on feedback received and submit final revised IR	8 November
Phase 3- Data Collection		
EM	Briefing evaluation team and training enumerators	3 - 5 Jan
ET	Data collection	7 - 25 Jan
ET	Data analysis	1 - 10 March
ET	Debriefing	4 March
Phase 4 - Reporting		
ET	Draft baseline report	20 - 30 March
EM	Quality assurance of draft ER by EM and REO using QC, share draft IR with quality support service (DEQS) and organize follow-up call with DEQS	30 March - 6 April
ET	Review draft ER based on feedback received and submit final revised ER	8 - 12 April
EM	DEQAS and ERG revision	12 - 19 April
EM	Consolidate comments received	20 April
ET	Review draft ER based on feedback received and submit revised ER	20 - 27 April
EM	Review final revised ER and submit to ERG	27 April - 4 May
EM	ERG provides feedback	5 May
ET	Review draft ER based on feedback received and submit revised ER	6 - 13 May
EC Chair	Approve final baseline report and share with key stakeholders for information	21 Oct

Annex 3. Methodology

This section describes in more detail the methodological approach carried out, which was informed by an evaluability assessment. The section also describes the evaluation framework and evaluation questions, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical approach and risks mitigation strategies deployed.

Evaluability Assessment

Evaluability refers to the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible manner. Evaluability assessment calls for the early review of a proposed evaluation to ascertain whether its objectives are adequately defined and its results verifiable.¹⁰⁹ The DFID Working Paper on Evaluability Assessment¹¹⁰ identified these dimensions of evaluability:

- i. Evaluability in principle, focusing on the project design and theory of change.
- ii. Evaluability in practice, given the availability of relevant data and the capacity of management systems able to provide it.
- iii. Utility and practicality of an evaluation, given the views and availability of relevant stakeholders.

Desk review and inception interviews indicated that most elements of the Shora Neza programme are evaluable as data can be obtained to answer the main evaluation questions. While this is the first phase of the evaluation, some OECD/DAC evaluation criteria such as Relevance, Coherence, and Sustainability were assessed upfront to ensure they were built into the programme design. Specifically, the baseline study assessed the programme's **design**, and the extent to which it addressed the **needs** of agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers, as well as the **priorities** of the government and other United Nations (UN) agencies as part of the sustainable development cooperation framework (Relevance). It also began to understand the other works being done by the private sector and other development organizations on market access, post-harvest loss reduction, access to finance and nutrition-sensitive agriculture (Coherence), in addition to benchmarking outcome-level indicators which were used to determine the course direction of the programme at the mid-term and the overall achievement of the programme at endline evaluation. The ET relied on the well-articulated ToC, the programme logframe and the indicator reference sheet provided by WFP to conduct the baseline study.

Table 9. Evaluability checklist

		Yes	No	Challenges/Opportunities
Results Framework				
1	Is the results framework or theory of change clearly defined?	✓		It is noteworthy that a Theory of Change (ToC) framework exists for Shora Neza, which presented opportunity for the evaluation team to assess it and validate its assumptions.
2	Are the indicators clearly stated in the results framework?		✓	An identified challenge is that certain indicators in the logframe focus on outputs and activities rather than outcomes. To address this concern, the evaluation team has made adjustments to the survey, Key Informant Interview (KII), and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) protocols. This modification is done to ensure the collection of additional outcome-level data, allowing for an effective assessment of the extent to which the results within their respective outcomes

¹⁰⁹ DAC-OECD, "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management" (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010).

¹¹⁰ Rick Davies, "Planning Evaluability Assessments: A Synthesis of the Literature with Recommendations" (Cambridge: Department of International Development, 2013).

				have been achieved. Additionally, the recently received Mastercard Foundation-WFP Partnership Monitoring Package outlines definitions for relevant indicators, which will be instrumental in aligning the baseline data collection tools with the annual reporting methodology.
Key Evaluation Stakeholders				
3	Is the planned evaluation relevant and useful to key stakeholders?	✓		Inception phase interviews indicate that all stakeholders to date are interested and engaged in the evaluation process.
4	Are the stakeholders committed to supporting the evaluation?		✓	All stakeholders have indicated their commitment to supporting the evaluation, including country office teams. However, given the longitudinal nature, it is possible there will be a rotation in key staff supporting the evaluation, and possible deprioritizing or institutional knowledge loss as a result. The LTA with DefEdge (DE) will however complement institutional memory in case of staff turnover.
Key evaluation questions				
5	Are the evaluation questions feasible given the: (1) programme design, (2) data availability, and (3) resources available?	✓		<p>Primarily, the evaluation has identified data sources to substantiate the addressing of the EQs. However, during the baseline study, the study will focus only on the criteria of relevance, coherence, and sustainability.</p> <p>These criteria were selected in review of the ToR and in consultation with the WFP Rwanda Country Office and the evaluation manager. Given the programme's nascent stage and the absence of a control group for comparative analysis, these criteria were deemed most suitable for baseline assessment. The focus on these criteria is guided by specific methodological considerations. For example, assessing relevance at this stage is feasible because it assesses the programme's alignment with the needs of the target population and local or national priorities. This will be accomplished through document reviews and initial stakeholder consultations, without waiting for programme outcomes. Similarly, coherence will be assessed by evaluating how well the programme complements other interventions and policies within the same context. For sustainability, the baseline study will investigate the existence of an exit strategy through key informant interviews and desk reviews. This approach lays the groundwork for subsequent midterm and endline evaluations that will incorporate additional criteria such as efficiency, effectiveness, and impact. However, effectiveness is assessed to a limited extent given baseline values will be generated for key indicators.</p>
6	Are the evaluation questions of interest to key stakeholders?	✓		An opportunity is that the EQs are well aligned with the interests of key stakeholders.
Data				
7	Is there sufficient data collected to answer the evaluation questions?		✓	Given the baseline nature of this assessment, it presents the evaluation team with a unique opportunity to establish a foundational reference point and subsequently track changes over the course of the intervention's timeline.
8	Was such data collected at baseline and consistently collected at various intervals?		✓	As this is a baseline study, the evaluation team has the opportunity to establish a baseline and longitudinally track similar cohorts of FSCs throughout the duration of the intervention. This approach will enable the team to consistently collect data at various intervals, as

				described in the methodology.
9	Is there sufficient data disaggregation (e.g., age, sex, disability, ethnicity, migratory status, and geographic location where relevant)?	✓		Since this is the baseline, the evaluation team has a valuable opportunity to collect data with appropriate disaggregation by age, sex, disability, and geographic location. The disaggregated data collected at baseline will help assess differential results during the mid-term and endline evaluations.
10	If data, particularly baseline data, is not available, are there plans or means available to collect and disaggregate the data?	✓		As noted above, the ET will take the opportunity to establish baseline for the target population.
Risk Identification and Analysis				
11	Will physical, political, social, economic, and organizational factors allow for an effective conduct and use of evaluation as envisaged?	✓		An opportunity is that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be over and there are no travel restrictions in Rwanda.
Evaluation Timeline				
12	Is there sufficient time for the evaluation?	✓		Given the long-term and staged nature of the evaluation, there is sufficient time for the evaluation to observe and measure outcome-level changes.

Source: Format adapted from UNDP Evaluation Guidelines (2018 Update).

The proposed plan ensured a representative sample across participant types and considers the resource and time constraints. Additionally, it integrated the pipeline or "step-wedged" design. The random assignment of entry time to the five-year programme allows for phased implementation to cover the targeted eligible population. This design enables systematic comparisons of outcomes between groups that join the programme at different stages, serving as a comparison group.

Table 10. Sample size determination for the baseline

Province	KII w/ partners and staff	FGD sessions	Practical sample size for surveys	
			FSCs	Smallholder farmers
Kigali	6	2	3	18
Eastern	1	2	12	72
Northern	1	2	8	48
Western	1	2	17	102
Southern	1	2	10	60
Total	10	10	50	300

* Although the Shora Neza programme aims to support 75 innovators, its implementation has not yet commenced. Consequently, the stakeholder group of innovators will be excluded from the baseline study

but will be incorporated into the sample for both the mid-term and endline evaluations after discussions with WFP Rwanda CO.

A similar sampling strategy will be carried out at mid-term and endline, though the number of FSCs will grow slightly in order to ensure previously surveyed FSCs are followed up on.

Exclusion criteria

Potential participants who have not, or are unable to, provide consent were ineligible to participate in the evaluation. Enterprise owners and smallholder farmers were included as either FSCs or Smallholder farmers, not both at the same time. Only those who are 18 to 35 years of age were considered as youths, while those who are 36 years and older were considered as non-youths.

Sampling and selection of FSCs

For a period of 5 years, 50 - 100 FSCs in the beans, maize, rice, sorghum, fruit trees, cassava, vegetables, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, soy, mushroom, sugarcane, chillies, dairy and other agricultural products' value chain in Rwanda will be recruited and enrolled by implementing partners (Kuza Biashara), composed of four enrolments as outlined in Table 11. Profiles considered as potential FSCs include, but are not limited to:

- Lead farmers;
- Farmer Field School (FFS) facilitators;
- Individual buyers;
- Young traders;
- Input dealers;
- Participants of the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP RWEE); and
- SMART project¹¹¹ beneficiaries

Table 11 Staged onboarding of FSCs into programme activities

Cohort	Number of FSCs	Timeline ¹¹²
1	50	April 2023
2	150	September 2023
3	200	June 2024
4	200	June 2025
<i>Total number of trained/graduated FSCs by year 5 = 600</i>		

FSCs were sampled for the longitudinal study, which will be conducted at three points in time: baseline (2023), mid-term (2025), and end-term (2027). At baseline, sampling was purposive, and all recruited FSCs were surveyed. In subsequent stages, the plan is to randomly sample 50 FSCs as the population grows, resulting in a total sample of 150 sampled FSCs by the end of the programme.

During the baseline study, data was collected from study participants using a pre-designed and standardized form, which was digitized and administered on tablets by the data collection team. The collected data was uploaded to a secured cloud server, accessible only to the Evaluation Team (ET). Substantial and rigorous

¹¹¹ Smart Project is a resilience intervention that rehabilitates over 1,000 hectares of land, provides solar-powered schemes in drought-prone areas, irrigation canals in the marshlands and provides communities with greenhouses, seeds conditioning facilities and maize drying shades.

¹¹² This project timeline is about 2- 3 months behind schedule, based on the first onboarding.

efforts were made to maintain consistency in data processing, management, and analysis across the provinces.

Sampling and selection of smallholder farmers

The evaluation team employed a stratified random sampling technique. The primary source for the sample population was a comprehensive list of smallholder farmers provided by the World Food Programme (WFP). From this database, the evaluation team randomly selected farmers across the 30 districts to ensure an unbiased and representative sample for the survey. This approach guaranteed each small-holder farmer on the WFP list had an equal chance of being selected, capturing diversity in attributes like location, age, farm size, and gender.

Utilizing the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) approach, sample sizes were allocated across the provinces. The number of farmers selected from each province was determined based on the ratio of FSCs enrolled in that province. This ensured that provinces with a higher number of FSCs received a proportionally larger sample size. The sampling strategy also ensured that 80 percent of youths and 50 percent of females were represented in the surveys in line with the gender inclusion strategy of the programme. Subsequent to stratification, systematic random sampling was employed to finalize the selection of eligible participants.

Data on knowledge of market systems, pricing, and service access was collected from smallholder farmers across the five provinces as part of the survey. Similar data was also collected from WFP personnel during KII sessions. This helped to provide an understanding of the structure and interconnectedness of beneficiaries of the Shora Neza programme. The data was coded, managed, and analysed using SPSS and Python for quantitative analysis and Gephi for Network analysis.

Using a NetworkX library of Python, a network analysis was conducted to map market power and relationships among various actors. This tool helped understand the linkages and networks facilitated by Shora Neza. Specific questions were included in the survey tools to understand how goods and services flowed in the relevant agricultural supply chains. This helped to identify key players and relationships within the programme and its wider context and provided a clear understanding of how resources and information flowed through the food system. By conducting network analysis at baseline, the evaluation team established a reference point for the network structure and relationships which was used to compare changes over time in subsequent evaluations. For outcome-level results related to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as youth economic development and inclusion, a participatory method was used to sample and follow a cohort of youth participants.

3.3.1 Develop and standardize data collection tools

Quantitative questionnaire: A tool was developed to capture all the data used to estimate relevant indicators in the evaluation survey. The tool was used to elicit responses from respondents on their socio-demographic characteristics, farming practices, value chain business operations, micro-enterprises, youth in dignified and fulfilling work, improvement in livelihood, and institutional and systems changes. The survey tool was administered to smallholder farmers, FSCs, Innovators, and Business owners. The ET regularly accessed the FSC screening tool used to recruit participants for each cohort and programme monitoring/output data to extract and record periodic data from cohorts enrolled in the longitudinal study. This data included time of enrolment into the Shora Neza programme, socio-demographic characteristics, date and size of loan accessed, time of accessing starter packs, seedlings and other services, as well as self-assessment of community connectedness, business skills, assets and other due diligence from the screening. The questionnaire was translated into an appropriate local language and back translated to ensure accuracy. The translated tool was digitized and used for the data collectors' training and tool pre-test. All eligible data collectors were fluent in both the local language and English, which was used to communicate with the ET/supervisors.

Qualitative interview guide: Key Informant Interview (KIIs) guides were used to guide the collection of qualitative data from WFP staff, implementing partners (e.g., Kuza Biashara), partner NGOs, and relevant government stakeholders. FGD protocols were designed to help guide discussions among selected smallholder farmers.

3.3.2 Data collection and management

Once the sampling frame for each district was validated, data collection for the survey was implemented. Data was collected by a team of 10 trained enumerators using standardized questionnaires in an appropriate local language. Data from the respondents was entered directly into tablets using the approved survey software, which was pre-programmed. The Deputy Team Leader travelled to Rwanda for training and quality assurance during the first week of data collection. In all settings, data was collected in a way that maximized respondents' consent and confidentiality.

In close consultation with WFP, the Evaluation Team carried out all data management activities, including data cleaning, which was integrated into the collection software in advance. Additionally, data was checked for errors in logic (e.g., interview date before birth date). Thereafter, the data was cleaned and saved as the working database for the generation of results from the survey.

In evaluating food systems in Rwanda, and consistent with the WFP Gender Policy 2022, it is critical to assess the extent to which the interventions have been attuned to the varied needs and priorities of all individuals, including smallholder farmers, women, and youth. This includes assessing the contribution to equitable access to agricultural resources, addressing gender inequalities, and fostering the economic empowerment of women, youth, and marginalized groups. As this is a baseline study, it lays the groundwork for monitoring and measuring gender-related results throughout the programme.

The evaluation also analyses how the programme has considered the specific needs and barriers faced by women and young people within Rwanda's agricultural sector. This includes evaluating whether women and youth have equal opportunities in accessing agricultural markets, financial resources, and participation in decision-making. It also involves investigating whether the interventions have laid the foundations for enhancing women's and youth's control over resources, and economic empowerment, as well as addressing gender-based constraints in the agricultural sector.

The baseline study also assessed the extent to which the programme has effectively targeted individuals most vulnerable to marginalization, such as people with disabilities, and those in more remote areas. This involved evaluating whether the programme's initial stages have set the right conditions for reducing disparities and enhancing the livelihoods of these groups within the context of Rwanda's smallholder farming.

As such, this baseline study incorporated data collection and reporting that is disaggregated by sex, age, and other relevant factors. This information was triangulated against qualitative stories of change gathered through participatory methods initiated in the baseline phase and intended to be carried through to subsequent mid-term and final evaluations. The evaluation questions were specifically formulated to assess how gender perspectives and the inclusion of marginalized groups have been considered in the programme's design, early implementation, and information dissemination. This approach contributes towards comprehensive understanding of how the programme is poised to strengthen food systems in Rwanda, with a special emphasis on empowering smallholder farmers and young people, and on promoting gender equality and social inclusion.

Annex 4. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Matrix mapping data sources and methods of data collection to the baseline, mid-term and end-line evaluation questions.

Table 12. Evaluation Matrix

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
RELEVANCE: How relevant is the programme to the needs and priorities of its stakeholders, including agri-entrepreneurs, smallholder farmers, youth, women, government, WFP, and other UN agencies?			Baseline, Mid-term, Endline		
1.1 To what extent are the programme's strategic design, objectives and implementation addressing the needs and priorities of agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers, especially youth and women?	<p>Perceptions of participants on their prioritized needs at baseline</p> <p>The degree to which the programme addresses these identified needs of the programme participants (or is relevant), especially youth and women at baseline</p> <p>Inclusiveness of the consultation process at the design phase</p> <p>Extent to which design/implementation</p>	<p>Desk review of programme documents.</p> <p>Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with smallholder farmers (using PRM)</p> <p>Key Informant Interviews (KII) with agri-entrepreneurs, staff of WFP and other partners.</p>	<p>Programme documents and reports, FSCs, MSMEs, smallholder farmers, staff of WFP and other stakeholders (MINAGRI, UNCDF, NGOs, Cooperatives, RYAF, MINICYOUTH, MINICT).</p>	<p>Thematic analysis of qualitative data</p> <p>Quantitative analysis of rankings of greatest needs and priorities (Participatory ranking methodology (PRM))</p> <p>Triangulation and synthesis of findings from the different data sources.</p>	<p>High</p>

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
	was adjusted to take account of changes in context/needs and feedback over the programme period.				
1.2 To what extent does the programme target the right stakeholders and the geographic areas? How appropriate were the criteria used for such selection?	<p>Documentation of processes for identifying and integrating participant and other stakeholder needs into programme design and targeting</p> <p>The extent to which needs assessment and stakeholder mapping were adequate for targeting</p> <p>Evidence of common understanding of the need and prioritization of specific stakeholders and geographic areas by local and national stakeholders</p>	<p>Desk review of relevant stakeholder's documents and programme documents using a structured framework.</p> <p>KII with staff of WFP, UNCT, UN Agencies and relevant Government Ministries</p>	<p>Programme documents including Proposal and design, Contracts and Agreement, The National Strategy for Transformation (NST1 2017 - 2024), the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2018 - June 2024), and Rwanda WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP)</p> <p>Staff of WFP across levels, UN, senior government officials at national and provincial/district levels.</p>	<p>Narrative/thematic analysis of qualitative data</p> <p>Triangulation of findings from multiple sources</p>	High
1.3 To what extent is the programme design and objectives aligned with the needs, priorities, and policies of the	The degree of alignment of the objectives and indicators of the Shora Neza programme and	Desk review of relevant stakeholder's documents and programme documents using a structured framework.	Programme documents including Proposal and design, Contracts and Agreement, The National Strategy for	Narrative/thematic analysis of qualitative data	High

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
government (e.g., NST1/PSTAs), WFP, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and other UN agencies, including related to gender equality in agriculture?	priorities and objectives of the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1 2017 - 2024), the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2018 - June 2024), and Rwanda WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP)	KII with staff of WFP, UNCT, UN Agencies and relevant Government Ministries	Transformation (NST1 2017 - 2024), the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2018 - June 2024), and Rwanda WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP) Staff of WFP across levels, UN, senior government officials at national and provincial/district levels.	Triangulation of findings from multiple sources	
COHERENCE: How well does WFP's intervention integrate with both external partners' objectives and internal WFP initiatives, particularly in areas like market access, post-harvest loss reduction, access to finance, and gender-focused activities?					
2.1 To what extent was WFP's intervention coherent with the programmatic objectives and policies of other partners operating within the same context? (e.g., market access, post-harvest loss reduction, and access to finance, nutrition-sensitive agriculture)?	Evidence that programme objectives/outcomes complement the objectives/outcomes of initiatives undertaken by other development partners operating in the same context Extent to which different external actors express/have similar views on roles, comparative	Desk review of programme documents using a structured template. KII with relevant Partners in the same context and Staff of WFP. Survey of FSCs, MSMEs, Innovators, and smallholder farmers	Programme documents including programme documents, strategic plans, and reports from WFP and other partners; Staff of WFP, other partner organizations, and government officials Programme beneficiaries such as smallholder farmers, FSCs etc.	Narrative/thematic analysis of qualitative data. Descriptive analysis of quantitative data on elements of agri-system from secondary and/primary sources. Network analysis	High

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
	advantages and opportunities for collaboration			Triangulation of findings from multiple sources.	
2.2 To what extent are there synergies between the project and other WFP interventions? How well are these activities harmonized with other WFP interventions, including female-targeted interventions?	Evidence of quality coordination, communication, monitoring and information exchange (or in contrast, duplication) in the work of WFP Extent to which different internal actors express/have similar views on roles, comparative advantages and opportunities for collaboration	Desk review programme documents using a structured framework. KII with staff of WFP.	Data from document reviews, including programme documents, strategic plans, activity reports from WFP; KII with staff of WFP.	Narrative/thematic analysis of qualitative data Network analysis Synthesis and triangulation of findings from multiple sources.	High
EFFECTIVENESS: How effective has WFP been in facilitating improved livelihoods and market participation for agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers, especially women and youth, across key areas such as employment quality, market access, post-harvest management, and financial inclusion?				Mid-term, Endline	
3.1 To what extent has WFP's facilitation role been successful in linking agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers (especially women and youth) to formal food	Number and proportion of agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers (disaggregated by gender and age) linked to formal food system	Survey of programme beneficiaries. Cohort study. KII with staff of WFP, FSCs and relevant stakeholders.	Surveys of agri-entrepreneurs/FSCs and smallholder farmers, interviews with WFP representatives, other stakeholders, and formal food system actors, focus	Narrative/thematic analysis of qualitative data Descriptive analysis of survey and cohort study data.	Medium

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
<p>system actors for increased employment opportunities? To what extent these new jobs represent 'improved' opportunities in terms of longevity, dignifying, formality, etc.? What factors influences the achievement or non-achievement of results including for various targeted sub-groups?</p>	<p>actors through WFP's facilitation</p> <p>Number of youths in work, across targeted agricultural value chains through WFP's facilitation (disaggregated by gender and age)</p> <p>Perceptions of smallholder farmers and agri-entrepreneurs on how well WFP facilitated linkages to formal food system actors</p> <p>Example cases documenting successful and unsuccessful linkages facilitated by WFP</p> <p>Assessment of the 'improved' nature of new employment opportunities in terms of longevity, dignity, formality, income (changes in amount,</p>	<p>Desk Review of programmatic reports.</p> <p>FGDs with smallholder farmers</p> <p>Participant storytelling</p>	<p>group discussions with beneficiaries</p>	<p>T-test to compare the difference in means of jobs generated due to programme intervention and those generated otherwise. Chi-square-test to establish association between programme outcome and the factors driving change in course direction.</p> <p>Network analysis</p> <p>Outcome harvesting</p> <p>Triangulation of findings from multiple sources will be performed.</p>	

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
	<p>regularity or sources), reduction in workloads etc.</p> <p>Number and percentage of those linkage opportunities representing improved, dignified, formal and longer-term jobs</p>				
<p>3.2 Market access: To what extent and how has the programme increased smallholder farmers' incomes and access to premium markets through agri-entrepreneur-led Farmer Service Centres? What factors influences the achievement or non-achievement of results including for various targeted sub-groups?</p>	<p>Change in smallholder farmers' incomes since engagement with Farmer Service Centres (disaggregated by gender and age)</p> <p>Number and proportion of smallholder farmers accessing premium markets through agri-entrepreneur-led Farmer Service Centres (disaggregated by gender and age)</p> <p>Perceptions of smallholder farmers on whether and how the programme increased</p>	<p>Survey of programme beneficiaries. Cohort study.</p> <p>KII with staff of WFP, FSCs and relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Desk Review of programmatic reports.</p> <p>FGDs with smallholder farmers</p> <p>Participant storytelling</p>	<p>Surveys of agri-entrepreneurs/FSCs and smallholder farmers, interviews with WFP representatives, other stakeholders, and formal food system actors, focus group discussions with beneficiaries</p>	<p>Narrative/thematic analysis of qualitative data</p> <p>Descriptive analysis of survey and cohort study data.</p> <p>T-test to compare the difference in means of income generated due to programme intervention and those generated otherwise. Chi-square-test to establish association between programme outcomes and the</p>	<p>Medium</p>

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
	their incomes and market access through Farmer Service Centres			<p>factors driving change in course direction.</p> <p>Network analysis of market players</p> <p>Outcome harvesting</p> <p>Triangulation of findings from multiple sources will be performed.</p>	
<p>3.3 Post-harvest management: To what extent has the programme improved youth and women engagement in the provision of post-harvest management services (capacity, technology)? What factors influences the achievement or non-achievement of results including for various targeted sub-groups?</p>	<p>Number and percentage of youth and women reporting increased skills and capacities in post-harvest services after participating in the programme</p> <p>Number and proportion of youth and women engaged in post-harvest management services after programme implementation (e.g. examples of increasing type and</p>	<p>Survey of programme beneficiaries. Cohort study.</p> <p>KII with staff of WFP, FSCs and relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Desk Review of programmatic reports.</p> <p>FGDs with smallholder farmer</p> <p>Participant storytelling</p>	<p>Surveys of agri-entrepreneurs/FSCs and smallholder farmers, interviews with WFP representatives, other stakeholders, and formal food system actors, focus group discussions with beneficiaries</p>	<p>Narrative/thematic analysis of qualitative-data</p> <p>Descriptive analysis of survey and cohort study data.</p> <p>T-test to compare the difference in means of post-harvest losses generated due to programme intervention and those generated otherwise. Chi-square-test to</p>	

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
	<p>number of services offered)</p> <p>Increase in capacity and use of technology in post-harvest management services among youth and women (e.g. adopting new practices or technologies)</p> <p>Stakeholder perceptions on the effectiveness of the programme in enhancing youth and women engagement in post-harvest management services</p>			<p>establish association between programme outcome and the factors driving change in course direction.</p> <p>Network analysis of key operators in post-harvest management services.</p> <p>Outcome harvesting</p> <p>Triangulation of findings from multiple sources will be performed.</p>	
<p>3.4 Access to finance: To what extent and how has the programme supported the inclusion of smallholder farmers and agri- entrepreneurs, including youth and women, in formal food system financing? Has the programme been</p>	<p>Number and proportion of smallholder farmers and agri-entrepreneurs accessing formal financing after programme implementation, disaggregated by</p>	<p>Survey of programme beneficiaries. Cohort study.</p> <p>KII with staff of WFP, FSCs and relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Desk Review of programmatic reports.</p>	<p>Surveys of agri-entrepreneurs/FSCs and smallholder farmers, interviews with WFP representatives, other stakeholders, and formal food system actors, focus group discussions with beneficiaries</p>	<p>Narrative/thematic analysis of qualitative data</p> <p>Descriptive analysis of survey and cohort study data.</p> <p>T-test to compare the difference in</p>	

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
<p>successful in fostering innovation in the sector? What factors influences the achievement or non-achievement of results including for various targeted sub-groups?</p>	<p>gender, age and other relevant characteristics</p> <p>Amount / volume of financing disbursed to targeted groups</p> <p>Number of new agri-businesses established, or existing businesses expanded</p> <p>Number and type of innovative financial products or services introduced or scaled up in the sector as a result of the programme</p> <p>Perceptions of smallholder farmers and agri-entrepreneurs on how the programme supported their inclusion in formal food system financing</p>	<p>FGDs with smallholder farmers</p> <p>Participant storytelling</p>		<p>means of jobs generated due to programme intervention and those generated otherwise. Chi-square-test to establish association between programme outcome and the factors driving change in course direction.</p> <p>Outcome harvesting</p> <p>Triangulation of findings from multiple sources will be performed.</p>	
EFFICIENCY: To what extent was the programme cost-effective and cost- efficient and what factors influencing the efficiency in achieving stated objectives?				Mid-term, Endline	
4.1 Was the intervention implemented in a timely way?	Percentage of programme activities completed within the planned timeframe	KII with staff of WFP, FSCs and relevant stakeholders.	Programme documents, strategic plans, and reports from WFP; interviews with WFP	Thematic analysis of qualitative data and triangulation of findings to	Medium

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
	<p>Evidence of adherence to programme implementation schedule</p> <p>Timeliness of response to emerging needs or challenges during implementation.</p> <p>Compliance with established timelines for reporting and monitoring activities</p> <p>Evidence of timely adjustments or adaptations made to the programme in response to changing circumstances.</p>	<p>Desk Review of programmatic reports.</p> <p>FGDs with smallholder farmers</p>	<p>representatives, programme stakeholders, and government officials and small holder farmers.</p>	<p>validate the findings.</p>	

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
4.2 Is the programme cost-effective and cost-efficient in the use of resources for achieving results?	<p>Evidence of adherence to agreed implementation budget</p> <p>Expenditure against budget/funds allocated for various activities</p> <p>Evidence of cost-effectiveness (counterfactual scenarios)</p> <p>Evidence of cost reduction strategies (e.g., actual outputs exceed planned, higher outcome levels compared with planned outcome levels, etc.)</p>	<p>M&E routine cost data.</p> <p>KII with staff of WFP, FSCs and relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Desk Review of programmatic reports.</p>	<p>Quarterly and annual M&E reports</p> <p>Staff of WFP across levels, UN, senior government officials at national and provincial/district levels.</p> <p>Programme documents, strategic plans, and reports from WFP; interviews with WFP representatives, programme stakeholders, and government officials and small holder farmers.</p>	<p>Financial statement analysis</p> <p>Cost-effectiveness analysis</p> <p>Counterfactual analysis</p> <p>Triangulation of findings from multiple sources will be performed.</p>	Low
SUSTAINABILITY: To what extent are the programme's impacts, including capacity strengthening and GEWE relations, likely to continue beyond the lifetime of the programme, and what factors underlie this sustainability?				Baseline, Mid-term, Endline	
5.1 To what extent did the intervention consider and implement a sustainability strategy, such as capacity building of smallholder farmers, agripreneurs, and other	<p>Presence of an exit or long-term planning and sustainability strategy</p> <p>Examples of steps taken to develop and/or reinforce the operating capacities</p>	<p>Key Informant Interviews with key stakeholders</p> <p>Desk Review programme documents</p> <p>FGDs with smallholder farmers</p>	<p>Programme documents, and reports from WFP; interviews with WFP representatives, programme stakeholders, and government officials</p>	<p>Thematic analysis of qualitative data and triangulation of findings to validate the findings.</p>	High

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
partners, such as private sectors involved into food systems, and communities?	across levels (national, district and/or community stakeholders and private sector) during implementation				
5.2 To what extent will intervention benefits (e.g., sustainable employment in agri-value chains) continue after WFP's work cease?	Examples of key enablers and barriers (both internal and external) towards sustainability of activities and outcomes	Key Informant Interviews with key stakeholders Desk Review of programme documents FGDs with smallholder farmers	Programme documents, and programme reports from WFP; interviews with WFP representatives, programme stakeholders, beneficiaries, and government officials.	Thematic analysis of qualitative data and triangulation of findings to validate the findings.	High
Moved EQ 5.3 on gender norms to merge with impact EQ 6.4					
IMPACT: To what extent has the programme achieved its intended and unintended outcomes, especially in agriculture, gender dynamics, and among specific groups like youth and women?				Mid-term, Endline	
6.1 Did the intervention contribute to long-term intended results? What, if any, unintended positive/negative results have been realized?	Evidence of sustained positive/negative intended results on Smallholder Farmers, MSMEs, FSCs, Innovators, Youth, and Women over time [ToC impacts include agency and voice, quality of life and resilience]	Desk review of documents, KIIs with stakeholders and FGDs with beneficiaries Participant storytelling	Staff of WFP and other key stakeholders. Smallholder Farmers, FSCs, MSMEs, Innovators, cooperatives	Thematic analysis of qualitative data and triangulation of findings from multiple sources to validate the findings. Outcome harvesting	High

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
	Examples of significant positive or negative unintended effects which have been generated				
<p>6.2 To what extent was the programme able to address agricultural financing gaps, reducing of post-harvest losses, enhancing nutrition-sensitive agriculture and enhancing market access opportunities effectively?</p> <p>What effects, intended and unintended, has the programme had on food systems approaches and strategies in the country, especially for the empowerment of women and youth?</p>	<p>Number and proportion of beneficiaries reporting enhanced economic well-being due to access to financing</p> <p>Number and proportion of beneficiaries reporting reduced post-harvest losses</p> <p>Number and proportion of beneficiaries Reporting Increased Nutrition-sensitive Practices</p> <p>Number and proportion of Beneficiaries Reporting Enhanced Market Access</p> <p>Percentage of Women</p>	<p>Surveys of beneficiaries</p> <p>Key Informant Interviews with key beneficiaries</p> <p>Desk Review of programme documents and reports</p> <p>FGDs with smallholder farmers</p>	<p>Staff of WFP and other key stakeholders. Smallholder Farmers, FSCs, MSMEs, Innovators, cooperatives</p>	<p>Thematic analysis of qualitative data, descriptive analysis of quantitative data and triangulation of findings from multiple sources to validate the findings.</p>	High

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
	<p>and Youth in Leadership Roles in Agriculture</p> <p>Number of Gender-sensitive and Youth-inclusive Policies Advocated or Implemented</p> <p>Examples of intended and unintended effects of the programme on inclusive national food systems</p>				
6.3 Were there any differences, including any differential results across groups, especially for youth and women? Why and how? What enabling or disabling factors were present?	<p>Evidence of differential results</p> <p>Factors that facilitated or hindered the achievement of these results</p>	<p>Surveys of beneficiaries</p> <p>Key Informant Interviews with key stakeholders</p> <p>Desk Review of programme documents</p> <p>FGDs with smallholder farmers</p>	<p>Staff of WFP and other key stakeholders. Smallholder Farmers, FSCs, MSMEs, Innovators, cooperatives</p>	<p>Thematic analysis of qualitative data and perform inferential analysis with the quantitative data as well as triangulate the findings from multiple sources to validate the findings.</p>	High
6.4 Has the project made any difference to	<p>Evidence of change in attitudes, norms, or</p>	<p>Surveys of beneficiaries</p>	<p>Staff of WFP and other key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Thematic analysis of qualitative data</p>	Medium

Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods	Data sources	Methods of analysis	Expected data availability/reliability
<p>GEWE relations? If yes, how and why? If not, why not? [previously 5.3] Were there any other gender-specific and transformative impacts? Did the intervention influence gender transformative context?</p>	<p>practices across levels (individual, household, community, systems) (disaggregated by gender and age)</p> <p>Evidence of gender-specific and transformative impacts</p> <p>Factors hindering or facilitating progress and results related to GEWE and gender-transformative results</p>	<p>Key Informant Interviews</p> <p>Desk Review of programme documents</p> <p>FGDs with smallholder farmers</p> <p>Participant storytelling</p>	<p>Smallholder Farmers, FSCs, MSMEs, Innovators, cooperatives</p>	<p>and triangulation of findings from multiple sources to validate the findings (considering the JP on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security definition of gender transformation and gender transformative approaches as an analytical framework)</p> <p>Outcome harvesting</p>	

† Only relevance, coherence and sustainability criteria will be assessed at baseline study, all six criteria will be assessed at mid-term and final evaluations.

Annex 5. Theory of Change Assumptions

Table 13. ToC Assumptions

<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to appropriate commitment (availability, accessibility, affordability)• Awareness of the added value of PH• Capacity: Assuming that farmers have the right capacity and understanding of how equipment works; operational understanding• Equipment is user-friendly and consider the needs of women• Suppliers maintain equipment and facilitate capacity-building/support• The right machinery is on the market and available locally; private sector support• FSCs have the right technical knowledge of equipment use; technical skills of when to use what and when <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mismanagement of equipment• Lack of maintenance of equipment• The supplier can maintain the agri-preneur; but will this cascade model work?• Lack of understanding: Added value of PH• Target groups: Farmers themselves• We see machinery extended to the most organized/high profile coops. This is a risk because SHFs are excluded. A minimum output/professionalism is required.• Low return of investment and high investment costs.
<p>Outcome 2</p>

Assumptions:

- Access to the right quality and quantity of inputs
- Direct link between having the right inputs and the right yield; assuming the climate cooperates!
- Farmers have access to the right support and financing
- Farmers understand the value of their produce and can identify the right market

Risks:

- Changes to the subsidy system
- Climate change
- Side-selling limits availability
- Point of aggregation: produce might exist but if the infrastructure does not, this is problematic
- Volume doesn't meet pickup requirements
- Quality and control processes
- One youth being the centre of everything: multi-faceted knowledge

Outcome 3**Assumptions:**

- Employment opportunities appropriate for women and youth; high interest translates over
- Digital solutions will be well received
- Private sector is engaged in PH equipment
- Private sector investment
- The model goes beyond FSCs.
- We assume these will be viable business entities

Risks:

- FSC mismanagement: Governance and financial management
- Choosing the wrong people to be FSCs

- Low interest in the private sector in supporting and working with FSCs
- Low return on investment from FSCs
- Low interest from youth that facilitates dropouts
- Low productivity from SHFs due to climate change and climate variability.
- FSCs are too scattered

Outcome 4

Assumptions:

- Interest in loans and working capital for business growth
- Limitations as a result of traditional beliefs
- Limitations due to physical constraints
- Limitations as a result of financial literacy
- Limitation of customized financial products for agribusinesses

Risks:

- Loan defaulting by borrowers
- Climate is unstable
- Mismanagement of funds in savings groups
- Limited insurance coverage across the value chain
- Local manufacturing means lots of standards...
- Approaches are not inclusive and did not consider the needs of everyone

Annex 6. Data Collection tools



BASELINE STUDY OF WFP MASTERCARD FOUNDATION: STRENGTHENING FOOD SYSTEMS TO EMPOWER SMALLHOLDER FARMERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN RWANDA

Province and Districts: ✓ Tick as Applies

01. Eastern Province <input type="checkbox"/>	02. Kigali Province <input type="checkbox"/>	03. Northern Province <input type="checkbox"/>	04. Southern Province <input type="checkbox"/>	05. Western Province <input type="checkbox"/>
1. Bugesera <input type="checkbox"/>	8. Gasabo <input type="checkbox"/>	11. Burera <input type="checkbox"/>	16. Gisagara <input type="checkbox"/>	24. Karongi <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Gatsibo <input type="checkbox"/>	9. Kicukiro <input type="checkbox"/>	12. Gakenke <input type="checkbox"/>	17. Huye <input type="checkbox"/>	25. Ngororero <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Kayonza <input type="checkbox"/>	10. Nyarugenge <input type="checkbox"/>	13. Gicumbi <input type="checkbox"/>	18. Kamonyi <input type="checkbox"/>	26. Nyabihu <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Kirehe <input type="checkbox"/>		14. Musanze <input type="checkbox"/>	19. Muhanga <input type="checkbox"/>	27. Nyamasheke <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Ngoma <input type="checkbox"/>		15. Rulindo <input type="checkbox"/>	20. Nyamagabe <input type="checkbox"/>	28. Rubavu <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Nyagatare <input type="checkbox"/>			21. Nyanza <input type="checkbox"/>	29. Rusizi <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Rwamagana <input type="checkbox"/>			22. Nyaruguru <input type="checkbox"/>	30. Rutsiro <input type="checkbox"/>
			23. Ruhango <input type="checkbox"/>	

Identifier:

Province Code	District Code	Number Assigned

Interviewer Name: _____

Interview Start time: _____ EAT

Interview End time: _____ EAT

Consent Form

Introduction and informed consent

Introduction: Good day. My name is I am here to conduct an interview/discussion with you on the Baseline Evaluation of the World Food Programme (WFP) Shora Neza Programme in Rwanda. This study is like a starting point to see how the project does over time. What we learn can help us do better in the future. The findings from the evaluation will also provide the opportunity to relevant organizations for Institutional learning.

I'd like to hear what you think about farming in your area. The discussion will take about 30 minutes or less. You can stop anytime, but it would be great if you stay for the whole chat. This will really help young farmers, the World Food Programme, and others involved in farming. Your name won't be used, and what you say will remain confidential.

If you require further information or clarification on this evaluation, you could kindly reach out to, Mr. Eric Tuyisenge, or Ms. Sonia Rugwiro at [phone number] or [phone number] respectively. The numbers are also available on WhatsApp.

Do you give your consent for this interview and are you willing to participate in the study? Yes/No (Please continue the interview if yes, else discontinue right away.)

Identification

S/N	Questions	Responses (Circle Number of chosen responses)	Skip Instructions
A.	Category of respondent	1. FSC 2. Smallholder farmers (SHF) 3. Others Specify _____	
B.	Indicate enrolment cohort, if Q1=1	1. First cohort 2. Second cohort 3. Third cohort 4. Fourth cohort	For FSC only
C.	Date of Interview	MM/DD/YYYY	
D.	District	Code list	
E.	Sector	Code list	
F.	Cell	Code list	
G.	Village	Code list	

Module I. Socio-Demographic Profile

S/N	Questions	Responses (Circle Number of chosen responses)	Skip Instructions
1.	Age of Respondent	<i>Numeric</i>	
2.	Gender of Respondent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male 2. Female 3. Prefer not to say 	
3.	Highest Level of Education completed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No formal education 2. Primary school diploma completed 3. High school graduate, secondary or equivalent completed 4. Technical certificate/diploma completed 5. Bachelor's degree completed 6. Higher-level degree completed 7. Other, please specify: 	
4.	Marital Status	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Single 2. Married 3. Divorced/separated 4. Widow/widower 	
5.	What is the total number of people in your household, including yourself?	_____	
6.	Number of children if any?	_____	Record the number of Living children
7.	Who would you identify as the primary decision-maker in the household, especially related to finance and livelihoods?	Self Spouse Son/daughter Sister/brother Niece/nephew Grandchild Father/Mother Uncle/Aunt Other non-relative Other relative (please explain)	

		Refused to answer	
8.	Does this head of household identify as male or female?	Male Female	

Module II. Employment

9.	What is your main occupation currently (circle only one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producer/individual farmer • Agro-dealer/input supplier • Artisan/handicraft worker • Agriculture or non-agriculture equipment & material producer/manufacturer • Agent/broker • Transporter • Processor • Aggregator • Wholesaler • Retailer • Administrative worker • Service provider in farming/agro-processing activities (e.g. planting, spraying, wedding, threshing, winnowing etc.) • Domestic worker (paid) • Family farm worker (paid) • Casual labour (unskilled) • Currently engaged in non-compensated domestic or family farm work • No work at moment of registration • Other 	
10.	Relationship with enterprise/farmer-based organization (FBO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner of enterprise • Employee of enterprise • Leader/manager of FBO/cooperative • Member of FBO/cooperative • Not affiliated to any FBO/not part of an enterprise 	
11.	Work status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-employed • Wage employed • Daily worker • No work at moment 	
12.	Work frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal • Continuous • No work at moment 	
13.	On average, how many days per week do you work in your current job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 days • 3-4 days • 5 or more days 	

14.	On average, how many hours do you work each day in your current job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - Less than 4 hours • - 4 to 8 hours • - More than 8 hours 	
15.	If business owner, What is your current position in the business	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sole owner 2. Co-owner 3. Partner 4. Employee/worker 	
16.	If business owner, What kind of business/enterprise do you operate or are engaged in?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism 2. Agriculture/value chain 3. Creative Industry (Fashion Design/Barbing/crafts/blogging /photography etc) 4. Real Estate 5. Transportation 6. Internet and computer services 7. APP Developer 8. Home appliances trade 9. Mobile phone start ups 10. Hotel/Recreation 11. Event planning& management 12. Waste Management & Recycling <p>Others specify _____</p>	
17.	How long you have been engaged in that particular occupation?	_____	
18.	Are you currently involved in any agricultural farming?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 	If No skip to Q28
19.	What type of farming are you engaged in?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grains farming 2. Vegetable farming 3. Fruit farming 4. Horticulture /floriculture farming 5. Animal husbandry/livestock 6. Tea/coffee farming <p>Others specify _____</p>	Multiple answers allowed
20.	How long have you been engaged in farming?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less than one year 2. 1-3 years 3. 4-6 years 4. 7 years and more 	

21.	<p>On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating 'not at all' and 5 indicating 'to a great extent,' how would you rate the following aspects of your job in terms of dignity and fulfilment?</p> <p>1. My income has increased satisfactorily in my current role.</p> <p>2. I can rely on my income to be regular and dependable.</p> <p>3. I benefit from having multiple sources of income.</p> <p>4. My workload is manageable and does not overburden me.</p> <p>5. My access to finance has improved, enhancing my reputation as a dependable individual in the local market.</p> <p>6. I am capable of providing employment opportunities to others through my work.</p> <p>7. My contributions have a positive and recognized impact in my local community.</p>	<p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p> <p>5.</p> <p>6.</p> <p>7.</p>	
22.	<p>How would you rate the safety of your work's physical environment, including protection from chemicals and machinery accidents?</p>	<p>1 - Very safe</p> <p>2 - Somewhat safe</p> <p>3 - Neutral</p> <p>4 - Somewhat unsafe</p> <p>5 - Very unsafe</p>	
23.	<p>How would you rate the safety of your work's social environment, considering the risk of verbal abuse and sexual harassment?</p>	<p>1 - Very safe</p> <p>2 - Neutral</p> <p>4 - Somewhat unsafe</p> <p>5 - Very unsafe</p>	
24.	<p>What kind of improvements would you like to see in your work conditions and income in the future?</p> <p>(Open ended)</p>		
25.	<p>What constraints are currently preventing you from improving your livelihood?</p> <p>(Open ended)</p>		

26.	What kind of skills training or support would be most helpful for improving your work opportunities? (Open ended)		
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Module III: Capacity building / training and skills (giving or receiving trainings/services)

27.	Please select the option that best describes your main profession / last engagement:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farmer 2. Lead farmer 3. Farmer Field School (FFS) facilitator 4. Individual buyer 5. Young trader 6. Input dealer 7. Participant of the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP RWEE) 8. Former SMART project beneficiary 9. Business owner 10. Other (Please specify) _____ 	
28.	Are you currently enrolled as a Farmer Service Centre (FSC)?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. YES / NO 	
29.	If FSC, ask What services or products do you offer through your FSC? (Select multiple)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aggregator 2. Agro dealership 3. Compost Making 4. Digital Market Platform 5. Farmer 6. Farmer & Value Addition 7. Irrigation Technician 8. Seed Multiplier 9. Producer 10. Business Development Services (BDS) 11. ICT4Ag 12. _____ Threshing 13. Others, _____ specify 14. Not started offering services/products yet 	
30.	Is your FSC providing services to smallholder farmers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 	

31.	If yes, how many Small Holder Farmers are registered with your FSC?	_____ Enter Direct	
32.	The gender of the SHF registered with you	1. Male _____ 2. Female _____	
33.	If FSC, what types of training services do you provide smallholder farmers registered with you?	1. Innovative farming skills (e.g. grafting) 2. Harvesting practices 3. Reduction of post-harvest losses 4. Access to Markets 5. Access to financial loans and services 6. Leadership skills 7. Negotiation skills Others specify _____	Multiple responses allowed
34.	Have you received any capacity building in the past?	1. Yes 2. No	
35.	If yes, what were you trained on?	1. Agriculture farming / Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) 2. Record-keeping 3. ICT4Ag (Information and Communication Technology for Agriculture) 4. Business development 5. Branding 6. Service packaging 7. Marketing 8. Entrepreneurship 9. Aggregation 10. Marketing and sales of post-harvest equipment (tarpaulins, hermetic bags) 11. Agricultural inputs 12. Mechanization services 13. Climate-smart technologies 14. Financial services 15. Entrepreneurship 16. Leadership skills 17. Operations/productivity management	

		18. Strategic management 19. Accounting/Finance 20. Marketing 21. Others specify_____	
36.	If received training on agriculture farming, Have you received training on any of these good agricultural practices through your FSC?	1. Innovative farming skills (e.g., grafting) 2. Harvesting practices 3. Reduction of post-harvest losses 4. Access to Markets 5. Access to financial loans and services 6. Leadership skills 7. Negotiation skills 8. Others Specify_____	Multiple selection allowed
37.	If trained by whom (organization)?	1. Self-Sponsored 2. WFP/Mastercard Foundation 3. Rwanda Government 4. USAID 5. Food & agricultural Organization (FAO) 6. Other Partners 7. Others Specify _____	
38.	Have you been able to adopt the use of improved technologies and inputs in farming in your farm practice?	1. Yes 2. No	
39.	Have you ever received any inputs /start up kits as support for your farming	1. Yes 2. No	If No Skip to Q64
40.	Who provided the input/start-up kits?	1. _____	

Module IV: Job creation:

41.	How many permanent, FULL-TIME employees do you currently employ, including yourself and/or a member of your family? Full-time employees are		
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	contracted/regular, working 40 hours or more per week.		
42.	How many permanent, PART-TIME employees do you currently employ, including yourself and/or a member of your family? Part-time employees are contracted/regular, working less than 32 hours per week.		
43.	How many TEMPORARY employees ("casual workers") do you employ, on average, in one year? These workers may be seasonal, daily, or short-term. Temporary/casual/seasonal workers are not regular employees, but rather are given work on a needs basis.		
44.	For what purpose do you employ temporary employees? Please explain the typical nature of their employment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSMEs 2. FSC (including any employment category within that) 3. Agriculture <p>If they do not employ any temporary employees. Please enter '0' in the box and skip this question.</p>	
45.	How many of your employees are male/female, including yourself?	Male Female	
46.	No. of <u>NEW</u> jobs created through your FSC/enterprise/business <u>in the last 6 months?</u>	<p style="text-align: center;">_____ Enter Direct</p>	
47.	Gender of persons employed in the new jobs' creation in the <u>last 6 months?</u>	<p>_____ Male</p> <p>_____ Female</p> <p>_____ with disability (if any)</p>	Indicate Number

Module V: Sales revenue and take-home income;

48.	Do you keep records of your business operations and sales on a monthly basis? Records can be written or digital.	Yes No	
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49.	What was your average annual sales revenue last year (2022)? (in Rwandan francs) If you do not know, please try to make the most accurate estimate.	Amount: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ RWF	
50.	How much sales revenue on average did you generate last month (August 2023)? (in Rwandan francs)	Amount: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ RWF	
51.	What was the source?	Enterprise Farm Business	
52.	Does your revenue have strong seasonal fluctuations? (i.e. large changes in revenue depending on the season)	Yes, strongly fluctuating Yes, somewhat fluctuating Neutral No, somewhat stable No, very stable	
53.	What are the seasons with the most and least revenue streams? Please indicate the specific months (e.g. September) separated by commas if there are multiple months per category (e.g. September, October)	<i>Most revenue streams</i> ____ <i>Least revenue streams</i> ____	
54.	What was the total combined income for all members of your household in the last year (2022)? (in Rwandan francs) If you do not know, please try to make the most accurate estimate.	Amount: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ RWF	
55.	What was your household's total take home cash income last month (August) (from sales and other sources)? (in Rwandan francs)	Amount: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ RWF	
56.	What are the three main sources of income for your household from agricultural activities in the last 12 months? Please select three sources.	a) _____ (Crop Production) b) _____ (Livestock Production) c) _____ (Others, specify)	
57.	What is the total income from each source of household mentioned above?	a) _____ (Crop production) b) _____ (Livestock production) c) _____ (others, specify)	

58.	What percentage does each income source contribute to your household's total income in the last 12 months? (Enter the percentages)	- First source contribution: _ % - Second source contribution: _ % - Third source contribution: _ %	
59.	How much income do you make from Agric farming in a year?	_____ Enter Direct	
60.	What was your total cash income from non-farm activities in the past month? (in Rwandan francs)	Amount: _____ RWF	
61.	What are the three main sources of income for your household from non-farm activities in the last 12 months? Please select three sources.	a) _____ (Skilled Labor) b) _____ (Petty Trade) c) _____ (Other, specify)	
62.	What is the approximate percentage contribution of each income source to your household's total non-farm income in the last 12 months? Please provide the percentage for each selected source.	a) _____ % b) _____ % c) _____ %	
63.	Overall, how would you rate the change in your household's income from agricultural and non-farm activities compared to the previous year?	a) Increased significantly b) Increased moderately c) Stayed the same d) Decreased moderately e) Decreased significantly	
64.	What is the quantity in Kg of harvest did you record during the last harvest season?	_____ Enter direct	
65.	What is the quantity of good/excellent harvest recorded during the last harvest season?	_____ enter direct	
66.	Which crop(s) did you cultivate in Season A and B this year?	1. CROP A: 2. CROP B:	
67.	What is the quantity in Kg of harvest did you record during the last harvest season?	CROP A: CROP B: _____ Enter direct	

68.	Out of a 100kg bag of [CROP A & CROP B], how much did you lose after harvesting, drying, sorting, shelling and cleaning?(Could you estimate how much (in kg) you lost on your last harvest after drying, sorting, shelling and cleaning?)OR:	CROP A: _____Enter direct CROP B: _____Enter direct	
69.	What 3 most important pieces of information/capacity building did SHF access from you on Post Harvest Loss in the last 6 months? For FSCs only	1. Harvesting 2. Pre-harvest drying 3. Transport 4. Post-harvest drying 5. Threshing 6. Equipment 7. Storage 8. Processing 9. Marketing Others specify _____	Multiple responses allowed
70.	How do your post-harvest losses compare to the previous season's harvest after receiving training on PHHS? Specifically, did they feel or observe an increase or decrease compared to the previous year?	1. Substantially Improved 2. Moderately Improved 3. No Significant Change 4. Moderately Reduced 5. Substantially Reduced	

Module VI: Access to loan:

71.	Do you access financial loans/credit and services from formal financial institutions?	1. Yes 2. No	If No Skip to Q64
72.	If yes, how much loan/credit did you receive?	1. _____ Enter Direct	
73.	From whom was this last loan/credit taken out?	1. Bank 2. Rural fund, MFI 3. Innovation Facility (WFP) 4. NGO 5. Supplier 6. Cooperative 7. Other household	

		8. Tontine/association 9. Usurer 10. Other (please specify)	
74.	How often is this credit repaid?	1. Week 2. Month 3. Quarter 4. Semester 5. Year 6. In one go 7. Not specified	
75.	List the formal financial institutions you have accessed financial services from in the last 6 months ?	1. _____Enter direct	
76.	What was the primary use of this last loan/credit?	11. Education 12. Health 13. Household equipment (car, appliance, etc.) 14. Acquisition of land; Construction, repair of houses 15. Starting a business, company 16. Financing an existing business (equipment, raw materials) 17. Agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer, feed, etc.) 18. Household consumption 19. Events/ Holidays 20. Other (please specify)	
77.	Has this loan/credit helped increase your annual income from your business enterprise/ agriculture activity since receiving it?	Yes No	
78.	Have you been a member of any savings group supported by WFP?	Yes No	
79.	If yes, please rate the extent to which your participation in the WFP-supported savings group has positively affected your financial well-being and overall resilience	1. Substantial Impact 2. Significant Impact 3. Moderate Impact 4. Low Impact 5. Very Minimal Impact	

80.	<p>Only for MSMEs, Innovators:</p> <p>Have you received any loan/credit funds for your FSC or MSME through the project facilities or innovation facility? If yes, could you please provide the total amount of funds received through the facility?</p>	<p>_____ Amount (Innovation Facility)</p> <p>_____ Amount (Project Facilities)</p>	
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Module VII: Network Analysis:

Market Access:			
81.	How many suppliers do you currently have?		
82.	How many transporters do you currently work with, if any?		
83.	What types of transporters (or transportation methods) do you work with, if any?	Manpower (including people who transport items by foot) Bicycle Motorbike Car Large trucks (including freight trucks) Other, please specify:	
84.	Is/are there any other relevant actor(s) that you work with in the value chain of your business? If no, indicate 'no'; If yes, please explain further.		
85.	Who helped you reach new markets or sell your products to new customers? Please provide their names.		
86.	How did these individuals or organizations help you? Choose the option(s) that best apply:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provided Information and Market Insights 2. Assisted with Product Quality Improvement 3. Helped with Packaging and Branding 4. Introduced you to New Buyers or Market Channels 	

		5. Other (please specify):	
87.	How often do you interact with these market access supporters?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily 2. Weekly 3. Monthly 4. Occasionally 5. Rarely 	
88.	How would you describe the strength of your relationship with them? -	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weak 2. Moderate 3. Strong 	
Post-harvest Management:			
89.	Who supported you in improving your post-harvest management practices? Please provide their names.		
90.	How did they support you? Choose the option(s) that best apply:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity-building support 2. Technology adoption 3. Other (please specify): 	
91.	How often do you interact with these stakeholders for post-harvest management?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily 2. Weekly 3. Monthly 4. Occasionally 5. Rarely 	
92.	How would you describe the strength of your relationship with them?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weak 2. Moderate 3. Strong 	

Access to Finance:			
93.	Who supported you in accessing finance for your agricultural activities? Please provide their names.		
94.	How did they support you? Choose the option(s) that best apply:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provided loan or credit facilities 2. Facilitated access to grants or funding 3. Introduced innovative financing model 4. Other (please specify): 	
95.	How often do you interact with these stakeholders who supported your access to finance?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily 2. Weekly 3. Monthly 4. Occasionally 5. Rarely 	
96.	How would you describe the strength of your relationship with them?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weak 2. Moderate 3. Strong 	
Top 5 Sellers and Top 5 Buyers:			
97.	Who are the top individuals or organizations you sell your products to? (If you are a buyer, who are your top suppliers?)		
98.	How often do you interact with these top sellers/buyers? Choose the option(s) that best apply:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily 2. Weekly 3. Monthly 4. Occasionally 5. Rarely 	
99.	How would you describe the strength of your relationship with each of them?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not familiar 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Casual 3. Good 4. Very strong 	
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Module VIII: Disability Status

100.	Do you consider yourself to have any disability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 	
101.	Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No difficulty 2. Some difficulty 3. A lot of difficulty 4. Cannot do at all 	
102.	Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid(s)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No difficulty 2. Some difficulty 3. A lot of difficulty 4. Cannot do at all 	
103.	Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No difficulty 2. Some difficulty 3. A lot of difficulty 4. Cannot do at all 	
104.	Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No difficulty 2. Some difficulty 3. A lot of difficulty 4. Cannot do at all 	
105.	Do you have difficulty with self-care, such as washing all over or dressing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No difficulty 2. Some difficulty 3. A lot of difficulty 4. Cannot do at all 	
106.	Using your usual language, do you have difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No difficulty 	

	communicating, for example understanding or being understood?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Some difficulty 3. A lot of difficulty 4. Cannot do at all 	
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Thank you for your time.

Key Informant Interview Guide

Guidance

- The following discussion guide will be used to guide interviews with WFP staff, Cooperative/FSCs, UNCDF, RYAFMINAGRI, MINICYOUTH, MINICT and other relevant government officials in terms of their responsibility or familiarity with aspects of the programme.
- Mention that the interview is voluntary and that the information provided will be kept confidential. Data will be triangulated, and information cannot be traced back to individuals. Data will not be attributable.
- Mention that the interviewee will not be referred to and that their name will not be provided in the report (only the organization and the gender of the respondent will be given). They can decline to participate or answer any question, at any time.
- Ask if they (The interviewee) have any questions about the process, and at the end of the interview, ask the interviewee if they have anything to add or share.

Interviewee name	
Function / title	
Organization	
Stakeholder Type	
Gender	
Date of interview	
Location (City)	
Team members present	
Mode of interview	

The table below outlines the questions designated for the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) during the baseline (BL), midterm (MT), and end-line (EL) evaluations. The KIIs for the baseline study will only assess relevance, coherence and sustainability criteria and evaluation questions.

Of note, to ensure that the KII questions are well connected with the evaluation questions, the ET has included in this guide several of the main and sub-evaluation questions. The responses will provide several findings and contextual information that will help to verify the findings of the baseline study.

Interview Questions	PHASE		
	BL	MT	EL
I. Background Information			
What is your current role in relation to the Shora Neza programme? How long have you been involved with the programme?	*	*	*
How does your role support and interact with the Shora Neza programme's objectives, especially regarding agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers?	*	*	*
II. RELEVANCE:	BL	MT	EL
What was the process taken for the selection of FCSs and MSMEs?	*	*	*
To what extent were the needs and priorities of agri-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers, especially youth and women considered when designing the intervention?	*	*	*
How well does the Shora Neza programme align with the national development plans or frameworks such as the government's National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) and the Strategic Plans for the Transformation of Agriculture (PSTAs)? Were there consultations with government stakeholders during the programme's design phase to ensure alignment with national priorities?	*	*	*
To what extent is the Shora Neza programme aligned with relevant agricultural and agri-entrepreneurial activities and WFP's country strategic plan and objectives?	*	*	*
III. COHERENCE:	BL	MT	EL
How well does the Shora Neza programme align with the objectives and policies of other partners, especially concerning market access, post-harvest loss reduction, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture?	*	*	*
Are there specific WFP interventions that closely relate or overlap with the Shora Neza programme, and if so, how are they harmonized?	*	*	*
Can you provide an example where the Shora Neza programme has either complemented or diverged from initiatives of other partners or WFP interventions?		*	*
How does the Shora Neza programme collaborate or align with initiatives from other UN agencies?		*	*
Are there joint activities, shared resources, or collaborative strategies with other UN agencies to ensure synergy and avoid duplication of efforts?		*	*
IV. EFFECTIVENESS:	BL	MT	EL

What challenges, if any, have been encountered during the implementation of the Shora Neza programme? How have these challenges impacted the programme's objectives?		*	*
Were there any factors, including gender-related or other inequities, that had an impact on the implementation of the activities? How were these factors taken into account and addressed by the programme?		*	*
How have the Shora Neza programme's activities contributed to building the capacity of participants, especially in terms of skills, knowledge, and capabilities?		*	*
What positive impacts have been observed for women and marginalized groups because of their participation in the capacity-building initiatives within the agri value chain activities and youth employment interventions? Are there any challenges or barriers that have hindered their participation or progress?		*	*
To what extent are you satisfied with the results of the Shora Neza programme?		*	*
How significant are the contributions of the outputs to the planned outcomes, or how likely are they to contribute to the desired outcomes?		*	*
To what extent has the intervention contributed to improved employment conditions along the agriculture value chain in Rwanda?		*	*
How has the intervention contributed towards institution and system wide changes to promote a more conducive environment for youth employment?		*	*
What measures have been taken to enhance the capacity and skills of small-holder farmers, MSMEs, innovators, ensuring their effective engagement and benefit in agricultural activities and value chains?		*	*
Has there been an increase in market linkages and collaborations among FSCs, small-holder farmers and other market actors as a result of the intervention?			*
To what extent have the Shora Neza programme activities led to increased market efficiency, competitiveness, and profitability for small-holder farmers in target areas?			*
To what extent has the intervention enhanced the capacity and knowledge of small-holder farmers and MSME leaders in understanding local markets and agriculture value chains?			*
To what extent has the Shora Neza programme facilitated the inclusion and empowerment of youth women, marginalized groups, and small-scale entrepreneurs in the local market ecosystem?			
How is the Shora Neza programme preparing to potentially collaborate with government institutional buyers, especially concerning School Feeding in the future?		*	*

V. EFFICIENCY:	BL	MT	EL
Are there monitoring mechanisms in place to regularly assess the cost-effectiveness of the Shora Neza programme and make necessary adjustments?		*	*
VI. IMPACT:	BL	MT	EL
Could you provide insights into the specific ways in which small-holder farmers, MSMEs, and innovators have been impacted by Shora Neza programme? Have there been any observable changes in their operations, livelihoods, or the sustainability of their businesses/livelihoods as a result?			*
In your view, how effectively has the Shora Neza programme addressed the challenges of agricultural financing gaps and post-harvest losses?			*
Can you highlight any positive or negative (intended or unintended) outcomes experienced by small-holder farmers, MSMEs, and innovators due to their engagement with WFP's intervention?			*
How have the WFP interventions addressed gender inequalities and promoted women's economic empowerment within the targeted agriculture value chains?			*
To what extent did the programs affect gender norms, power relations, and women's access to resources and economic opportunities?			*
Have you observed any differential results across groups, especially for youth, women and other vulnerable groups? Why and how? What enabling or disabling factors are present?			*
VII. SUSTAINABILITY:	BL	MT	EL
Has WFP developed an exit plan/strategy for the Shora Neza programme? and how does it ensure the sustainability of the achieved benefits after the programme concludes?	*	*	*
How are the local communities and stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the exit plan and knowledge transfer strategy, and what mechanisms are in place to ensure effective knowledge transfer regarding agriculture value chain interventions?		*	*
To what extent do you believe that the outcomes and impacts of the interventions will continue to be sustained after the termination of the intervention? What are the key factors that enable or hinder the sustainability of these results?		*	*
Are there any potential risks or vulnerabilities that could undermine the sustainability of the interventions' results, particularly in relation to economic, social, or political factors?		*	*

Have there been any partnerships or collaborations established with local institutions, organizations, or government entities to support the continuation and integration of the interventions into existing systems or policies?		*	*
To what extent did the Shora Neza programme contribute towards improving the resilience and business expansion of selected MSMEs and innovators?		*	*

FGD Template (FSCs and Farmers)

Enumerator Instructions: Before starting the discussion, review the list of questions and identify those highlighted as priority. Depending on the time available and the pace of the discussion, ensure that these priority questions are covered first or emphasized. If time starts running short, skip ahead to these questions to make sure they are included in the conversation.¹¹³

Section A. INFO

A1	FGD participation type	FSC / Farmer
A2	Name of district/market	
A3	Name of the interviewer	
A4	Date of FGD (dd/mm/yyyy)	
A5	Start time of FGD (hh:mm)	

Enumerator: Please collect the age and gender of each participant, as well as the nature of their farming livelihood in terms of whether it is household farm or they are labourers on a farm owned by someone else.

#	Age	Gender	Nature of livelihood (Household Farm or Labourer)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

¹¹³ Priority questions will be highlighted by the relevant data collection supervisor during the data collection phase.

9			
10			

During this interview I will write down your answers. Later these notes will be typed onto a computer. We will not use the information in any way that will enable others to identify you as its source. We hope your answers will help outside organizations make things better for you and others here. There are no right or wrong answers. Your feedback will help me better understand your unique perspective and the challenges or opportunities you have encountered. Shall we begin?

Section B. Nature of livelihood and market access

<p>B1. Please tell us about the types of produce grown by your household. What types of crops did your household farm grow in the last 12 months? Does what you grow change seasonally?</p> <p>Ask participants to rank these crops by importance, considering factors such as yield, market value, nutritional value.</p> <p>Rank crops by importance on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = most important and 5 = least important.</p>	Crop	Rank
<p>B2. In the past 12 months, have there been any significant changes in what types of crops you grow? Please explain when and why these changes happened. Do you see the change as positive or negative? Why is the change significant to you?</p> <p>Ask FGD participants to rank these changes by their positive or negative impact on their household.</p>		
<p>B3. When was the most recent harvest completed? Indicate number of responses per option, if different per farmer.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>In the last 3 months</p> <p>4+ months ago</p> <p>Don't know</p>	
<p>B4. Could you describe a bit further the nature of your farm? How large is the plot of land? And which proportion of the land do you cultivate, harvest and sell to markets? Similarly, which proportion do you keep for your own consumption, if any?</p>		

Ask participants to indicate portion they use for household consumption	
B5. In the past 12 months, have there been any significant changes in the size of your land plot and/or the proportion which you cultivate, harvest and sell to markets? When and why have these changes happened?	
B6. Where do you typically sell your products? Is it to an institutional market/buyer? Or do you sell directly to other households through small local markets?	
B6.1 Do you have any market connections that contribute to facilitating your interactions with buyers?	
B7. In the past 12 months, have there been any significant changes in your primary buyers and who you sell your products to? When and why have these changes happened? Do you see the change as positive or negative?	
B8. How far do you travel to bring your products to market? B8.1 Ask participants to indicate whether they find the travel easy or difficult on scale of 5?	B8. Indicate distance in Kms. B8.1 Very Easy Easy Neutral Difficult Very Difficult
B9. In the past 12 months, have there been any significant changes in the distance or frequency you have to travel to sell your products/harvests? When and why have these changes happened? Do you see the change as positive or negative?	
B10. What are the top three challenges that limit women and youth's engagement in agricultural opportunities? Provide reasons for the ranking.	1.____ 2.____ 3.____

Section C: Employment and Income Generation

C1. Besides yourself and other members of your household, do you currently engage any community members as full-time or part-time employees or casual labourers? Please describe.	
C2. In the past 12 months, have there been any significant changes in the number of community members engaged as workers on your farm? When and why have these changes happened?	

<p>C3. In the past 12 months, have there been any significant changes in the nature of employment offered? When and why have these changes happened? Have these changes been positive or negative? What constitutes decent or good work, in your view?</p>	
<p>Do you think there are enough opportunities for young people and women for decent employment along agriculture value chain? Can you provide any examples?</p>	
<p>Have you noticed any changes in opportunities for young people and women in the agricultural value chain? What specifically caught your attention?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No Observable Change 2. Slight Improvement 3. Moderate Improvement 4. Significant Improvement
<p>C4. Given your current context and situation, what is your dream job? Can you describe what would do every day in this job on day-to-day basis? Any specific things you need to make happen to make this dream a reality?</p>	
<p>C5. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 represents 'Strongly Agree', please rate the following statements about your current employment/work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My income has increased satisfactorily in my current role. 2. I can rely on my income to be regular and dependable. 3. I benefit from having multiple sources of income. 4. My workload is manageable and does not overburden me. 5. My access to finance has improved, enhancing my reputation as a dependable individual in the local market. 6. I am capable of providing employment opportunities to others through my work. 7. My contributions have a positive and recognized impact in my local community. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am content with my current employment/work. 2. My work allows me to maintain my dignity and self-respect. 3. I feel valued for the tasks I undertake. 4. I have the necessary resources and support to carry out my work effectively. 5. My work provides me with opportunities for learning and improvement. 	

<p>6. My current employment adequately meets my financial needs.</p> <p>7. I am satisfied with the benefits and compensation I receive from my employment.</p> <p>8. The income from my current employment allows me to cover essential household expenses.</p> <p>9. I have a sense of financial security through my current employment.</p> <p>10. My current employment allows me to do savings and future planning</p>	
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Section D: Availability, Quality, and Resilience of Supply Chain

<p>D1. Please, can you share how the demand for your farm products on the local market has changed? Do you feel that things are different compared to one year ago?</p> <p>1) Have certain of your products increased in demand? Can you explain why this change has happened?</p> <p>2) Are there certain products you struggle to produce enough of to meet the market demand?</p>	
<p>D2. Overall, how has the demand for your products changed over the past 12 months? Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.</p>	<p>Improved</p> <p>Got worse</p> <p>No change</p> <p>Not sure</p>
<p>D3. When and why have these changes happened? Do you see the change as positive or negative? Why is the change significant to you?</p>	
<p>D4. Please, can you share how quality of your farm products has changed? Do you feel that expectations surrounding quality are different compared to 12 months ago?</p>	
<p>D5. Overall, how have expectations surrounding the quality of products changed over the past 12 months? Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.</p>	<p>Increased</p> <p>Decreased</p> <p>No change</p> <p>Not sure</p>
<p>D6. When and why have these changes happened? Do you see the change as positive or negative? Why is the change significant to you?</p>	
<p>D7. Please tell me if there has been a change in the ability of your farm to meet the demand of the local markets over the past two years. If so, how?</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been a change in the number of local markets or retailers your farm relies on? If so, how and why? • Have you developed new relationships or partnerships with retailers, wholesalers, cooperatives, etc., that have helped you regularly meet demand? • Have there been changes in your ability to cope with risks or setbacks, such as crop failures, market price fluctuations, or unexpected costs? 	
<p>D8. Overall, how has the ability of your farm to meet demand changed over the past two years? Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.</p>	<p>Improved Got worse No change Not sure</p>
<p>D9. When and why have these changes happened? Do you see the change as positive or negative? Why is the change significant to you?</p>	

Section E. Price

<p>E1. Has there been a change in the price of products on the local market compared to that of neighbouring markets since last year?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have your prices changed in the last 12 months? • Has there been a change in the selling price of certain products in the past 12 months? • Have all farmers been changed prices for this product, or is it specific to your area? Could you elaborate? • What do you think has led to this change? 	
<p>E2. Overall, how have your prices changed in the last 12 months? Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.</p>	<p>Increased Decreased No change Not sure</p>
<p>E3. Why is the change significant for you? How has it impacted you?</p>	

Section G: Access and Protection

<p>G1. Please tell me how access to markets has changed over the last two years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have there been changes in terms of markets connectivity to main roads (increasing/decreasing people's access to it)? • Has there been an improvement/decline in the security situation around the market where you sell in the last two years? 	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the community level, have there been changes in the type of person that can or cannot access markets (people with disabilities, women etc...? What are differences in access? When and why have these changes happened? 	
G2. Overall, please tell me how your sense of security and protection in farming has changed over the last two years? Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.	Improved Got worst No change Not sure
G3. Why is the change significant for you? How has it impacted you?	

Section H. Community Relationships

<p>H1. Please tell me how your relationships between people in this community have changed over the last two years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have there been any changes in the way people in the community work together? Have there been any changes in the way people in the community learn new things or how new ideas are shared? At the community level, have any changes been made or are planned to be made to improve the wellbeing of the community? When and why have these changes happened? 	
H2. Overall, how do you think the way the community works together has changed over the past two years? Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.	Improved Got worst No change Not sure
H3. Why is the change significant for you? How has it impacted you?	

Section I. Overall Wellbeing

I1. When considering the overall health and happiness of your household, including physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects, how do you think your household's wellbeing has changed in the past two years? Would you say it has gotten better, gotten worse, stayed the same, or are you not sure?	
I2. What is the main reason for this? Are there specific things you can think of that have happened to improve/reduce your feeling of wellbeing?	
I3. Overall, how confident do you feel about the future?	

I4. Please explain your answer. Has anything in the last two years changed the way you feel about the future?	
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Section J. External Relationships

<p>J1. Please list the most important organizations inside or outside of your community that have affected your life in the last 12 months. For example: community groups, savings groups, NGOs, religious groups or government representatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you been involved with these groups, organizations or other actors in the community, and what difference has this made to you? • Please rank in order of importance to you the organizations you have listed, starting with the one you value most? Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between. 	
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Organizations/Groups	Activity that has impacted your household	Rank in terms of influence and impact

Section K. Gender

<p>K1. Leadership and participation: In your community, do women and girl feel that their inputs are taken into consideration? <i>Please explain – why or why not. Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.</i></p>	Yes/Mostly/Partly/No/Not Rated
<p>K2. Leadership and participation: How satisfied are women with their level of influence over community and/or programme related decision making? <i>Please explain – why or why not. Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.</i></p>	Very Satisfied/Satisfied/Unsatisfied/Not at all satisfied
<p>K3. Leadership and participation: Has women’s participation been inclusive in the community and in programme design? (i.e. elderly women, women with disabilities, women from FHHs, transgender women, women from minority communities, different citizenship status'). <i>Please explain – why or why not. Discuss as a group to reach</i></p>	Yes/Mostly/Partly/No/Not Rated

consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.	
K4. Safety: Do women report feeling safe walking alone and/or accessing services and programmes in this community? <i>Please explain – why or why not. Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.</i>	Yes/Mostly/Partly/No/Not Rated
K5. Economic well-being: How satisfied are women with available services and trainings related to their livelihoods and farming, etc? <i>Please explain – why or why not. Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between.</i>	Very satisfied/Satisfied/Unsatisfied/Very unsatisfied)
K6. Economic well-being: How safe do women and girls feel going to the market or accessing financial institutions? <i>Please explain – why or why not. Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between</i>	Very safe/Mostly safe/Unsafe/I would not go because I do not feel safe enough
K5. Economic well-being: Within the household, who decides how to spend the money? <i>Please explain – why or why not. Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between</i>	I have control/My partner has control/We share control
K6. Within the household, who decide how to use the productive assets? <i>Please explain – why or why not. Discuss as a group to reach consensus on one option. If split, indicate which options the group were split between</i>	I have control/My partner has control/We share control
K7. Time use: Considering your daily routine, please rank your top tasks, encompassing both agricultural work and unpaid care responsibilities, according to the amount of time each task usually demands.	

Section L: Notes and Observations

Please don't forget to thank the FGD participants for their participation and invite them to ask you any questions they have. Note down what these are, and if they prompt issues relevant to the research that you would like to share. Please also note down any observations you have about the respondent and the interview process (e.g. were they relaxed, were there distractions, or do you think their answers were influenced by other people present at the interview?) Please note whether protection issues were raised requiring a referral to the helplines provided.

L1. QUESTIONS ASKED BY RESPONDENT:

L2: OTHER OBSERVATIONS

A5b	End time of interview (hh:mm)	
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Annex 7. Detailed Stakeholder Analysis

The following table includes a deeper stakeholder analysis built on the related ToR section.

Table 14. Detailed Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholders	Interest in the evaluation	Involvement in the evaluation	Key Stakeholders
Internal (WFP) stakeholders			
WFP Country Office (RWCO) in Rwanda	Responsible for the planning and implementation of WFP interventions at country level. The country office has a direct stake in the evaluation and interest in learning from experience to inform decision-making. It is also called upon to account internally as well as to its beneficiaries and partners for performance and results of this project. The country office will be involved in using evaluation findings for programme implementation and/or in deciding on the next programme and partnerships.	<p>Focal point for operation/liaison for evaluation fieldwork</p> <p>Participants in the Evaluation Committee and Evaluation Reference Group, which includes participation in several phased findings validation discussions</p> <p>Respondents of qualitative data collection, including inception interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation Manager • Smallholder Agricultural Market Support Unit (SAMS) • Social Protection and Resilience Unit • Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) • Vulnerability Analysis Mapping (VAM) Unit • External Partnerships and Communications (EPC) Unit • Supply Chain (SC) Unit • Nutrition
WFP field offices in Huye, Karongi and Kirehe	Responsible for the operations implementation in close coordination with the SO4 team. WFP Rwanda field offices have a stake in ensuring planned activities are implemented timely and efficiently and in collecting the data for monitoring in a regular manner. They also have an interest in the findings and lessons coming from the evaluations as they will inform on how	<p>Liaison with stakeholders at decentralized levels and direct beneficiaries</p> <p>Respondents of qualitative data collection</p> <p>Though not member to the evaluation committee, suggest participation in several phased findings validation discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Field Offices • Field teams

	to serve beneficiaries more efficiently directly from an operational perspective.		
Regional Bureau (RB) for Eastern Africa, Nairobi	Responsible for both oversight of COs and technical guidance and support, the RB management has an interest in an independent/impartial account of the operational performance as well as in learning from the evaluation findings to apply this learning and potential replication to other country offices. The Regional Evaluation Officers supports CO/RB management to ensure quality, credible and useful decentralized evaluations.	Responsible for both oversight of COs and technical guidance and support The regional evaluation officers support country office/regional bureau management to ensure quality, credible and useful decentralized evaluations Respondents for inception interviews Participants in the Evaluation Committee and Evaluation Reference Group, which includes participation in several phased findings validation discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Systems Unit Evaluation Unit • Private Partnerships & Fundraising (PPF) Division • Programme Unit
WFP HQ	WFP headquarters divisions are responsible for issuing and overseeing the rollout of normative guidance on corporate programme themes, activities, and modalities, as well as of overarching corporate policies and strategies. They also have an interest in the lessons that emerge from evaluations, as many may have relevance beyond the geographical area of focus. Relevant headquarters units should be consulted from the planning phase to ensure that key policy, strategic and programmatic considerations are understood from the onset of the evaluation. They may use the evaluation for wider organizational learning and accountability.	Relevant headquarters units should be consulted from the planning phase to ensure that key policy, strategic and programmatic considerations are understood from the onset of the evaluation Participants in the Evaluation Reference Group, which includes participation in several phased findings validation discussions Respondents for inception interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food System and Smallholder Farmers Support (PROR-F) Unit • Private Partnerships & Fundraising (PPF) Division. • Mastercard Foundation Programme Governance and Coordination Structures, including • Programme Steering Committee (PSC); Programme Coordination Team (CT)

WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV)	The Office of Evaluation has a stake in It may use the evaluation findings, as appropriate, to feed into centralized evaluations, evaluation syntheses or other learning products.	OEV's role in the evaluation is ensuring that decentralized evaluations deliver quality, credible and useful evaluations respecting provisions for impartiality as well as roles and accountabilities of various decentralized evaluation stakeholders as identified in the evaluation policy.	No interviews will be conducted.
WFP Executive Board (EB)	The Executive Board provides final oversight of WFP programmes and guidance to programmes. The WFP governing body has an interest in being informed about the effectiveness of WFP programmes. This evaluation will not be presented to the Executive Board.	Findings may feed into thematic and/or regional syntheses and corporate learning processes.	No interviews will be conducted.
External stakeholders			
Beneficiaries	<p>As the ultimate recipients of project interventions, beneficiaries have a stake in WFP determining whether they are appropriate and effective. Smallholder farmers and leaders of agricultural MSMEs, particularly youth and women, can benefit from the findings as it will outline a potential additional marketing avenue for them to access higher value markets, and thus enhance incomes. The level of participation in the evaluation of women, men, boys and girls from different groups will be determined and their respective perspectives will be sought.</p> <p>Women are primary stakeholders in the programme, with specific evaluation questions aimed at understanding the programme's impact on their empowerment and any gender-specific transformative impacts. The ToR also</p>	Primary respondents of quantitative and qualitative data collection	Smallholder farmers, men, women, youth, individual micro, small and medium entrepreneurs and members of cooperatives/farmers service centres

	<p>acknowledges potential risks, such as the lack of inclusivity in interventions and limitations due to a lack of financial literacy, which could particularly affect women.</p> <p>Youth also encounter significant barriers, primarily in accessing markets and financial services. These challenges are often due to their 'invisibility' in commercial markets and the rigid requirements for agricultural loans. Like women, youth are primary stakeholders, and the evaluation aims to assess the impact of the intervention on their empowerment and engagement in post-harvest management services. Risks such as a lack of inclusivity and limitations in financial literacy are acknowledged in the ToC assumptions, indicating that the programme is aware of the potential pitfalls in effectively engaging youth.</p> <p>Participant Stakeholder Interests in Evaluation by Gender and Age Group:</p> <p>Men: Male participants are invested in the evaluation to determine whether the interventions are appropriate and effective. As smallholder farmers and leaders in agricultural MSMEs, their feedback is crucial for aligning the project with their economic needs and expectations.</p> <p>Women: Female participants have a similar stake in the evaluation. They are particularly interested in gauging the project's effectiveness in raising women's awareness about reducing post-</p>		
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	<p>harvest losses and enhancing cost and quality management. Since one of the programme's objectives is to meet the specific needs of women, their participation in the evaluation will focus on understanding the impact on social norms that might restrict their engagement in agricultural and market activities.</p> <p>Male Youth: Male youth have an interest in determining the appropriateness and effectiveness of the interventions, especially those targeting youth-specific needs. They also seek to ensure that their voices are heard and their requirements are considered. Their involvement in the evaluation will aim to assess how well the programme fulfils their expectations related to income and market access.</p> <p>Female Youth: Similarly, female youth have a stake in the evaluations. They are particularly interested in evaluating the programme's impact on social norms that limit their involvement in agricultural and market activities. They may also benefit from the programme's focus on digital solutions and improved employment opportunities along the value chain. The extent of their participation in the evaluation will be deliberately measured to capture their unique perspectives and needs.</p>		
Government of Rwanda	The Government has a direct interest in knowing whether WFP activities in the country are aligned with its priorities, harmonized with the action of other partners, and meet the expected results.	Respondents of qualitative data collection.	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM), Ministry of Information Communication Technology (MINICT), Ministry

	The project will also link with government institutional buyers for food commodities for School Feeding. Government partnership is a priority for WFP to ensure knowledge and technology transfer as well as project ownership, alignment, and sustainability.	Participants in the Evaluation Reference Group, which includes participation in several phased findings validation discussions	of Youth (MINIYOUTH), Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), Ministry of Local Government (MNALOC), Rwanda Youth in Agriculture Forum (RYAF), District-level government offices
United Nations country team (UNCT)	The harmonized action of the UNCT should contribute to the realization of the government developmental objectives. It has therefore an interest in ensuring that WFP programmes are effective in contributing to the United Nations concerted efforts. Various agencies are also direct partners of WFP at policy and activity level. (see table below for description of activities)	Respondents of qualitative data collection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF - Chief of WASH • FAO
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	NGOs are WFP partners for the implementation of some activities while at the same time having their own interventions. The results of the evaluation might affect future implementation modalities, strategic orientations, and partnerships. They will be involved in using evaluation findings for programme implementation.	Respondents of qualitative data collection	Rwarri, RDO, Cordaid
Principal Partner Mastercard Foundation	Mastercard Foundation have an interest in knowing whether their funds have been spent efficiently and if WFP work has been effective and contributed to their own strategies and programmes. This partnership aligns with Mastercard Foundation's "Young Africa Works strategy" and addresses the areas of support identified in the Mastercard Foundation Rwanda's agricultural sector diagnostic study	Respondents of qualitative data collection Participants in the Evaluation Reference Group, which includes participation in several phased findings validation discussions	

	including market access, post-harvest management and access to finance.		
Private Companies and Other Partners	Private sector organizations include the primary beneficiaries of the blended finance facility (i.e., Agri-MSMEs to be identified as part of the project), as well as existing off-takers, buyers, agro-processors, agro-dealers, financial institutions, PHM (Post Harvest Management) companies, fintech, innovation incubators/accelerators, insurers among others. Given the project's strong emphasis on youth engagement, existing networks working with the youth will be involved to establish a framework for the provision of training and access to equipment, linked to post-harvest equipment suppliers and manufacturers. WFP will engage with networks representing the interests of Rwandan women and people living with disabilities (PLWD) to ensure project activities contribute to advancing their inclusion and empowerment.	Respondents of qualitative data collection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuza Biashara • Good Neighbors • DUHAMIC-ADRI

Annex 8. Evaluation Field Mission Schedule

The following high-level schedule is considered for the field data collection in Rwanda

Table 15. Field Mission Schedule

Days	Location	Activity	# of respondents covered	Responsible Team Member
3 days	Kigali	Enumerator Training	N/A	Sarang Mangi, Jean Claude Turatsinze, Eric Tusiyege
2 days	Kigali	Survey, KIIs, and FGDs	6 key respondents, 2 FGDs (6 respondents/FGD), 25 survey respondents	Sarang Mangi, Jean Claude Turatsinze, Eric Tusiyege
3 days	Eastern	Survey, KIIs, and FGDs	1 key respondent, 2 FGDs (6 respondents/FGD), 88 survey respondents	Jean Claude Turatsinze
1 day	[Travel]			
3 days	Northern	Survey, KIIs, and FGDs	1 key respondent, 2 FGDs (6 respondents/FGD), 60 survey respondents	
3 days	Western	Survey, KIIs, and FGDs	1 key respondent, 2 FGDs (6 respondents/FGD), 123 survey respondents	Eric Tuisenge
1 day	[Travel]			
3 days	Southern	Survey, KIIs, and FGDs	1 key respondent, 2 FGDs (6 respondents/FGD), 74 survey respondents	

Annex 9. Communication and Knowledge Management plan

Table 16. Communication Management Plan

When <i>Evaluation phase</i>	What- <i>Communication product/ information</i>	To whom- <i>Target group or individuals / position</i>	What level <i>Organizational level of communication</i>	From whom <i>Lead commissioning office staff with name/position</i>	How (in what way) <i>Communication means</i>	Why-Purpose <i>of communication</i>
Planning	Tentative time and scope of evaluation	Commissioning office staff	VAM/M&E programme staff	& Commissioning office management	During the annual performance planning session	To ensure evaluation is reflected in work plans for the office as well as PACE for involved staff including the evaluation manager
Inception	Draft Inception report	Key stakeholders through the Evaluation Commissioning office management, and External Reference Group members including programme staff	Management, technical and operational level	Evaluation manager on behalf of the evaluation committee	Email	To get comments
	Final Inception Report	Key stakeholders through the Evaluation Commissioning office management and External Reference Group members including programme staff	Management, technical and operational level	Evaluation manager	Email	Inform the relevant staff of the detailed plan for the baseline study, including critical dates and milestones; sites to be visited; stakeholders to be engaged, etc.

Data collection	Debriefing workshop and PowerPoint	Commissioning office management and External Reference Group members including programme staff	Strategic and operation/technical levels	Team leader via EM to forward to the relevant staff	Email	Allow reflection on the preliminary findings
Data Analysis and Reporting	Draft baseline report	Key stakeholders through the Evaluation Committee commissioning office management and External Reference Group members including programme staff	Management and technical levels	Evaluation manager, on behalf of the evaluation committee	Email	Request for comments on the draft baseline report
	Final baseline report	Key stakeholders through the Evaluation reference Evaluation Committee commissioning office management and External Reference Group members including programme staff Global WFP	All levels Users of WFPgo	Evaluation manager on behalf of the evaluation committee	Email	Informing internal stakeholders of the final main product from the evaluation Making the report available publicly
Dissemination & Follow-up	Draft management response to the evaluation recommendations	-CO Programme and M&E staff Senior Regional Programme Adviser	Management and technical level	Evaluation manager, on behalf of the evaluation committee	Email and face-to-face/virtual session	Communicate the suggested actions on recommendations and elicit comments Discuss the commissioning office's action to address the evaluation recommendations
	Final management Response	Staff in the commissioning office Global WFP	All levels Users of WFPgo	Evaluation manager	Email, plus shared folders Posting report and MR on WFPgo	Ensure that all relevant staff are informed on the commitments made on taking actions Make baseline report accessible across WFP

	2-page brief and PowerPoint	Key stakeholders through the Evaluation reference Evaluation Committee commissioning office management and External Reference Group members including programme staff, partners, Government and donors	All levels	Evaluation Team	Presentation	Presentation of main findings and conclusions for dissemination purpose
	Stakeholder workshop	Key stakeholders through the Evaluation reference Evaluation Committee commissioning office management and External Reference Group members including programme staff, partners, Government and donors	All levels	Evaluation Team	Workshop, meeting	Presentation of main findings and conclusions for dissemination purpose

Annex 10. List of people interviewed

Inception phase - overview key informant interviews

Institution	M	F
WFP CO	2	4

Data collection phase - overview key informant interviews

Institution	M	F
WFP CO	4	1
WFP Field Offices	3	0
RDO		1
Ministry of Trade and Industry		1
DUHAMIC	1	
Good Neighbors	1	
Mastercard Foundation	1	
Kuza Biashara		1
Total	10	4

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Annex 12. Mastercard Foundation Programme Logframe

Table 17. Programme Logframe

Mastercard Foundation Programme Logframe: Rwanda								
Results	Indicator	Baseline (n=319)	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Total target	Measurement Strategy & Survey Question
Long-term Outcome: Young men and women have improved employment conditions along the agriculture value chains	Indicator 1. Number of youths in work, across targeted agricultural value chains	Proportion in work (FSC & SHF): <i>Youth (18-35): 48.4%</i> <i>Non-youth: 45.5%</i> <i>Male:41.3%</i> <i>Female 52.6%</i>	3,700	13,792	13,456	15,138	46,087	Desk review, Survey <i>To note, the indicator is asking for numbers as opposed to proportions which will be difficult to calculate if not gathering data from the full population</i>
Intermediate Outcome 1: Young men and women generate higher revenues from increased sales of quality crops and services	Indicator 1. Value of smallholder sales through WFP and partner-supported aggregation systems (USD million)	Survey collected annual average sales revenue in RWF of previous year, as well as sales revenue in last month Average annual: RWF 2,770,397 <i>FSC: RWF 14,273,719</i> <i>SHF: RWF 883,132</i> <i>Youth (18-24): 934,500</i> <i>Youth (25-35): 4,391,868</i>	1.8	3.7	7.4	11.1	24	Desk review of WFP KPIs, Survey <i>To note, this indicator is from WFP's corporate indicators, so the project team should cross-check whether this is being consistently measured (what is current value), and whether it can be disaggregated for only this project</i>

		<i>Non-youth: 1,983,015</i> <i>Male: RWF 4,962,842</i> <i>Female: RWF 1,027,006</i>						
	Indicator 2. Volume of smallholder sales through WFP and partner-supported aggregation systems (Metric Tons MT)	Survey collected annual average yield and per season Average yield last year: MT 45 <i>FSC: MT 34</i> <i>SHF: MT 47</i> <i>Youth (18-24): MT 505</i> <i>Youth (25-35): MT 18</i> <i>Non-youth: MT 2.2</i> <i>Male: MT 88</i> <i>Female: MT 8.5</i>	5,347	10,693	21,386	32,080	69,506	Desk review, Survey <i>Please see note above on corporate indicators.</i>
Intermediate Outcome 2: Enterprises along agricultural value chains have increased business performance	Indicator 1. Number of MSMEs supported by project	<i>Youth</i> <i>Non-youth</i> <i>Male</i> <i>Female</i> <i>50 FSCs enrolled at baseline</i>	5	55	25	0	85	Desk review, Survey To note, the indicator is process-based and does not measure the 'performance' of enterprises
	Indicator 2. Percentage of functional FSCs by the end of the project	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This indicator will be assessed at</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	80%	Desk review and survey

		<i>endline evaluation.</i>						
Intermediate Outcome 3: Institutional and system-wide changes promote a favourable environment for youth employment	Indicator 1. Number of national coordination mechanisms and learning events conducted	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This indicator will be assessed at endline evaluation.</i>	1	1	1	1	5	Desk review
Immediate Outcome 1.1: Smallholder farmers have increased capacity to implement Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and reduce Post-Harvest Losses (PHL) on and off-farm.	Indicators 1. Proportion/Number of smallholder farmers accessing services through FSCs	<i>Baseline value = 4.4% Youth=1.6% Non-youth=6.9% Male=6.0% Female=3.2%</i>	66,000	132,000	198,000	198,000	198,000	Survey
	Indicator 2. Average percentage post-harvest losses at storage level as reported by smallholder farmers	<i>CROP A: 15.30% CROP B: 33.86%</i>	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Survey
	Indicator 3. The proportion of smallholder farmers who have adopted and are using improved technologies and equipment	<i>Baseline value =16.7% Youth=16.7% Non-youth=16.0% Male=23.1% Female=11.3%</i>	TBD	25%	45%	65%	65%	Survey
	Indicator 4. Percentage of FSCs, MSMEs, and entrepreneurs reporting increased revenues	<i>Baseline value =60.9% Youth=64.3% Non-youth=35.7% Male=57.1% Female=42.9%</i>	N/A	30%	60%	90%	90%	Survey
Immediate Outcome 2.1: Supported youth-led FSCs and MSMEs have	Indicator 1. Number of generated revenue	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This</i>	2	3	4	6	6	Survey

improved business performance leading to increased employment opportunities for young men and women	streams (average per operating FSCs)	<i>indicator will be assessed at mid-term and endline evaluation.</i>							
Immediate Outcome 3.1: Enterprises along agricultural value chains have improved access to appropriate financial products and services	Indicator 1. Proportion/ Number of FSCs and MSMEs who are accessing and utilizing formal financial institutions	<i>Baseline value =48.7% Youth=48.0% Non-youth=49.3% Male =55.3% Female =43.8%</i>	TBD	50	140	270	270		Survey
Outputs related to individual capacities (1)									
Output 1.1: Smallholder farmers are capacitated to improve production and Post-Harvest Management (PHM)	Indicator 1. Proportions/Number of individuals receiving capacity-strengthening support on Agriculture/ GAP	<i>Baseline value =38.1% Youth =38.8% Non-youth=37.5% Male=40.5% Female=36.3%</i>	33,000	66,000	99,000	198,000	198,000		Survey
Output 1.2: Smallholder farmers, especially youth and women, have access to appropriate Post-Harvest Management (PHM) technologies	Indicator 1. Proportion/Number of SHFs who are accessing Post-Harvest Management (PHM) technologies	<i>Baseline value 16.3% Youth =16.7% Non-youth =16.0% Male =23.1% Female =11.3%</i>	NA	33,000	66,000	99,000	99,000		Survey
Output 1.3: Market linkages are enhanced among SHFs, FSCs, and off-takers	Indicator 1. Number of value chain players linked to SHFs through FSCs	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This indicator will be assessed at mid-term and endline evaluation.</i>	25	35	45	50	50		Survey
Activities related to individual capacities (1)									
Activity 1.1: Training of young women and men on GAP, PHHS, Financial Literacy and Conservation Agriculture									
Activity 1.2: Link PHHS equipment suppliers/manufacturers to cooperatives and SHFs									

Activity 1.3: Build the capacity of smallholder farmers on improved PHM practices through tailored training and extension services in partnership with private sector equipment suppliers									
Outputs related to enterprise support (2)									
Output 2.1: Business models, knowledge products and platforms, tools, and advisory services are developed for young women and men and supported by FSCs	Indicator 1. Number of knowledge products produced	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This indicator will be assessed at mid-term and endline evaluation.</i>	15	0	0	0	15	Desk review, KIIs	
	Indicator 2. Number of business starter kits distributed to FSCs during the reporting period	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This indicator will be assessed at mid-term and endline evaluation.</i>	200	200	200	0	600	Desk Review	
Output 2.2 Supported youth-led farmer service centres are capacitated in business development services and entrepreneurship	Indicator 1. Number of FSCs established annually	<i>50 FSCs enrolled at baseline</i>	200	200	200	0	600	Desk Review	
	Indicator 1. Percentage of FSCs trained in entrepreneurship skills	<i>Baseline value 6.7%</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Desk Review, Survey	
Activities related to enterprise support (2)									
Activity 2.1: Provision of digital tools and equipment for FSCs									
Activity 2.2: Training FSCs in business development and entrepreneurship									
Activity 2.3: Facilitation of Linkages between FSCs and Market Actors									
Activity 2.4: Develop and disseminate knowledge products (e.g. case studies, best practices, policy briefs)									
Outputs related to products and services (3)									
Output 3.1.1: Financing facilities enable smallholder farmers, FSCs, and MSMEs to access finance for production and working capital.	Indicator 1. Number of smallholder farmers organized into saving groups	<i>Baseline value 7%</i>	20,000	40,000	60,000	80,000	80,000	Desk review	
	Indicator 2. Number of organized and operating	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This</i>	400	800	1,200	1,600	1,600	Desk review	

	saving groups established	<i>indicator will be assessed at mid-term and endline evaluation.</i>						
	Indicator 3: Value of saving mobilized through supported saving groups	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This indicator will be assessed at mid-term and endline evaluation.</i>	TBD					
	Indicator 4: Number of MSMEs and FSCs receiving financing through project facilities	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This indicator will be assessed at mid-term and endline evaluation.</i>	2	29	29	25	85	Desk review, Survey
	Indicator 5: Amount (Value of funds) provided to youth-led entrepreneurs (FSCs and MSMEs) through the innovation facility	<i>At baseline, no data available for this indicator. This indicator will be assessed at mid-term and endline evaluation.</i>	400,000	900,000	900,000	100,000	2,300,000	Desk review, Survey
Output 3.3: Enterprises along agricultural value chains are supported via business development services and technical assistance	<i>Same indicators above on FSCs</i>							
Activities related to products and services (3)								
Activity 3.1. Establishments of saving groups								
Activity 3.2. Establishment of innovation facility								
Activity 3.3. Establishment of formal linkages between cooperative savings group and financial institutions (cross-cutting activity)								
Activity 3.4. Provision of concessional funding to enterprises along the agricultural value chain								

Outputs related to system-level changes - other WFP initiatives and/or other stakeholders (4)								
Output 4. Collaboration opportunities with external stakeholders/other WFP initiatives are identified	Indicator 2. Number of partnership agreements (MoUs) signed with external stakeholders	1	2	5	5	5	5	Desk review, KIIs with duty bearers
Activities related to system-level changes (4)								
Activity 4.1: Organize B2B sessions to link demand and supply for nutritious foods								
Activity 4.2: Conduct annual stakeholders' meetings/consultations								
Activity 4.3: Facilitate community awareness events to showcase young entrepreneurs, especially young women								

Annex 13. Mapping of findings, conclusions and recommendations

Table 18. Mapping of findings, conclusions and recommendations

Recommendation <i>[in numerical order]</i>	Conclusions <i>[by number(s) of conclusion]</i>	Findings <i>[by number of finding]</i>
Recommendation 1: Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Gender Quality Strategy to Promote Women’s Empowerment	Conclusion 5	Findings 1, 2 & 8
Recommendation 2: Strengthen Donor Reporting and Coordination Practices	Conclusion 2	Findings 4 & 8
Recommendation 3: Strengthen the Role of FSCs in Facilitating Linkages between SHFs and HGSF Programme	Conclusion 3	Finding 5
Recommendation 4: Enhance Private Sector Engagement and Partnerships for Sustainable Impact	Conclusion 4	Finding 7
Recommendation 5: Anticipate and proactively manage risks to sustainability to ensure the long-term success and impact of the Shora Neza programme.	Conclusions 2 & 4	Finding 7

Annex 14. Participatory Outcome Harvesting Findings

Introduction

The evaluation team engaged a diverse group of 15 youth participants (including both females and males) from the first cohort of onboarded FSCs via journalism-style outcome harvesting interviews. The respondents represent a wide age range, come from various regions, and are involved in different aspects of the agricultural sector.

The narratives collected provide valuable insights into the everyday lived experiences of young FSC participants and help capture the programme from their perspective. The findings highlight both positive changes and ongoing challenges faced by youth in Rwanda's agricultural communities, shedding light on anticipated and unanticipated impacts pertaining to gender equality, women's empowerment, and youth economic development and inclusion.

Moreover, the narratives explore what "improved employment conditions" look like for the respondents, aligning with the overarching learning questions. The participatory method and outcome harvesting approach used allowed the evaluation team to gather data on various outcomes, assumptions, and possible impacts, which will enable an assessment of effectiveness and impact at midterm and endline.

Personal Aspirations and Challenges

The respondents' personal goals and aspirations reflect a strong drive to succeed and improve their lives and livelihoods through agriculture. According to a 29-year-old respondent from Rubavu district, "I want to expand my business by doubling the capital in next two years. Secondly, I want to increase to be able to have a house with modern equipment so that I can efficiently and effectively do post-harvest." A 38-year-old respondent from Nyamasheke district echoed this, stating, "My main goal is to expand the land from 60 acres to 100 acres. To collect harvest from farmers in the village."

Education and skills development emerge as another key aspiration for many respondents. A 29-year-old respondent aspires to improve her knowledge and skills in modern farming practices: "In terms of education, I an enthusiast learner, I want to educate myself on certain practices that improve agriculture production, markets, and sustainable farming."

However, respondents also identified range of significant challenges and barriers that can hinder the realization of these aspirations. Access to finance and capital is a critical constraint. As a 33-year-old respondent from Musanze district explained, "One of the challenges is finding the vehicles to transport our products to different areas. I have also realized that we travel long distances to go to bigger towns where we purchase the inputs. Also, we lack trainings to equip us with knowledge about the use of agricultural inputs. Our capital is smaller which makes us earn small profit."

Other common challenges cited by respondents include limited access to markets, infrastructure, and key agricultural inputs and equipment. In the words of a 29-year-old agro-dealer from Rubavu district, "The challenges we face are lack of stakeholders and big players in agriculture. We face lack of connections and markets. The opportunities are found more in different regions due to the availability of key players. There is also inefficient use of resources, inadequate systems in place to correct and improve the practices of agriculture. Financial resources allocation is also still low in farming sector."

Gender

The interviews reveal a complex and evolving landscape when it comes to gender norms and attitudes in Rwanda's agricultural communities. On the one hand, respondents acknowledge significant progress in recent years towards greater gender equality and women's empowerment, driven in large part by government policies and initiatives. A 29-year-old farmer from Musanze district shared, "Yes, generally there is a positive attitude that people are adopting when it comes to gender norms. The efforts of the government

are helping some people to change but mostly those who are educated are easy to change, those who did not go to school are still holding onto the traditional norms."

However, respondents also recognize that deep-seated traditional norms and attitudes around gender roles and responsibilities persist, particularly in rural areas. According to a 43-year-old agro-dealer from Rubavu district, "In our community, women were perceived to remain at home so that they can do the household activities and men were perceived to go out and engage in economic activities. There are no women who used to be able to engage in income generating activities. This and other traditional norms are being challenged which ensured the shifts in the mind-set. However, in general there are still challenges mostly in rural areas where such norms are still valid."

For many of the women interviewed, these shifts have had tangible, positive impacts on their own lives and economic activities. A 29-year-old respondent from Rubavu district shared, "They have impacted me to have confidence. To start a business is not any easy thing because there is a challenge of finding capital. Thus, I got support from my family." A 27-year-old agro-dealer added, "They have impacted me positively because these shifts inspire me that I am capable, and I can do business. Also, it has made people, mostly women, to engage in sustainable farming and they are coming to buy inputs from my agro-dealing business."

However, some respondents, like a 22-year-old agro-dealer from Gatsibo district, cautioned that there is still a long way to go to fully shift mind sets and achieve true gender equality: "There are slight changes even though it is a journey because traditionally most men and women in rural areas are still holding to gender norms that are considered traditional. For example, some young girls in rural areas are not confident to start their own businesses. Men still think that only women have to stay at home and to the home duties."

Youth Employment Environment

The challenges facing youth in Rwanda's agricultural communities emerge as a major theme across the interviews. Respondents consistently point to high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment, driven by a range of factors including limited economic opportunities, lack of access to resources and support, and skill gaps.

According to a young agro-dealer from Gatsibo district, "Mostly in private companies, to find a job, it requires having a bit of connections nowadays, even if there are examples of companies that provide jobs in a proper way, but in general it is hard to find a job for youth without having a friend or connections. The young people need to learn how to make meaningful connections, if they happen to be, but also companies need to adhere to proper way of giving jobs. The government does all possible but there is a high volume of young people who complete high school education and are not being employed, some try to engage in retailing of products but it is a small number."

Skills gaps and lack of access to quality education and training opportunities also emerge as major challenges. A 38-year-old respondent noted, "One of the biggest causes is the lack of quality education which can build skills desired for today's labour market. Also, the mind-set of youth is not enabled to think creatively and be able to engage in less paying activities but with an aim to develop such businesses into high paying ones."

Overall, the interviews suggest that achieving sustainable livelihoods for youth in Rwanda's agricultural communities will require a multi-faceted approach that addresses the various barriers and challenges they face. A 29-year-old agro-dealer summarized, "Sustainable livelihoods in our communities are something that is new because the rural areas are still developing. Young people in general do not live a sustainable life. They can get daily food, pay rent, and acquire basic education but the quality and sustainability is still a challenge."

Agency and Voice

The interviews reveal a complex picture when it comes to agency and voice among respondents, with many reporting increased confidence and ability to make decisions and express their views, while also acknowledging ongoing limitations and challenges.

On a positive note, several respondents point to their increased economic empowerment as a key driver of greater agency and control over their lives. A 29-year-old respondent from Rubavu district shared,

"Somewhat I can control my life and the direction I want to achieve. I am not yet where I want to be economically because my business is still small and it is the one that gives me income."

Respondents also reported feeling more comfortable expressing their views and opinions, often as a result of their increased confidence and exposure through their work. A 29-year-old respondent from Musanze district noted, "Yes, there are shifts happening. Before my husband used to provide ideas, and again take conclusions, but now we share, and I also participate in offering how I feel so that I can also share my knowledge."

However, respondents also highlighted the many factors that continue to limit their agency and voice, particularly for women and youth. A 29-year-old agro-dealer from Rubavu district admitted, "Yes, being engaged in working with different people in farming sector has enabled me to develop my capacity to share ideas with people in my communities. There are limited platforms where we can learn from current past, current, and future trends so that we are equipped with accurate information. Societal norms also are still challenges where people do not engage the culture of speaking out and power dynamics that prioritized older voices over young ones."

Quality of Life

Discussions around quality of life reveal a nuanced picture, with respondents acknowledging both improvements in recent years and persistent challenges that continue to impact their wellbeing and ability to thrive.

For many, quality of life is closely tied to the ability to meet basic needs and achieve a level of financial stability and security. According to a 38-year-old respondent from Nyamasheke district, "For me, I have life because I have no disability, I also have a business that earns me income. The challenge is that I don't have savings that can sustain the future ... In my community young people do not have quality of life because most of them lag behind in development. There is hope because you can see that the young people are putting energy to work."

A 29-year-old respondent from Rubavu district described quality of life as "when an individual gets everything they need," but acknowledged, "I am hoping to have quality livelihoods in the future." Access to quality healthcare, education, housing, and infrastructure were commonly cited as key components of a good quality of life.

Many respondents reported improvements in their own quality of life compared to a few years ago, often tied to increased income and opportunities through their work. A 29-year-old farmer from Musanze district shared, "Today I have quality life compared to previous years. There are changes that happened. Key factors of quality of life include, no lack of food, having a shelter, being able to get health services, and taking children to school."

However, respondents also painted a challenging picture for youth in particular, with limited access to quality opportunities and resources. As a 29-year-old agro-dealer from Rubavu district said, "For youth in our community, a few number of them have quality of life. However, our biggest obstacles are the lack of quality education which is the backbone of development. Some people still do things they did in traditional life, not that it is their choice but because the lack of opportunities and resources to introduce them to the modern ways of achieving great results and quality life. Young people are trying because the government is supportive but also there are limited resources to support a big number."

Resilience

The concept of resilience – the ability to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses – emerges as a crucial but complex issue in the lives and livelihoods of respondents.

On the one hand, many respondents demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of significant challenges and adversity. A 29-year-old respondent from Rubavu district shared, "The capacity to bounce [back] is not enough. When I look to where I am, I thank God for the fact that I am earning some income but because of

the challenges of building sustaining business - like use of small capital, lack of markets, prices that are high at the period of buying seeds, and they fall when harvesting - I can say that I still need to work hard so that I can also achieve more."

However, respondents also acknowledge the limits of their resilience, and the ongoing vulnerability and precarity they face in the absence of more robust and reliable safety nets. A 38-year-old respondent from Nyamasheke district admitted, "No, I am not resilient in the way that I wish. I can solve the challenges that fit my level, but some challenges and obstacles are a bit hard when it comes to my capabilities."

Education and skills development are also highlighted as important enablers of resilience. A 29-year-old farmer from Musanze district explained, "The capacity to bounce[back] is not enough but I can try. For example, if my business fails, I can use my few savings, and since I was trained, I know where I can get support like asking for loans in the banks, saving groups etc. Yes, the capacity of today is better than previous years, but I am still responding to basic needs. No savings."

Ultimately, the interviews suggest that building true resilience will require a sustained and collaborative effort across sectors and stakeholders. As a 38-year-old respondent stated, "There are big challenges that as a young person who is new in the farming sector cannot overcome. However, the support we are getting in terms of capacity building, financial access enabling environment can help us bounce back from the challenges. It all starts with the resilience and stability of our work."

Table 19. Sentiment table based on outcome harvesting interviews

Area	Positive	Neutral/Same	Negative
Gender	9	4	2
Youth Employment Environment	2	1	12
Agency and Voice	6	5	4
Quality of Life	4	7	4
Resilience	3	6	6

Annex 15. Recommendations

Table 20. Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Short/ medium/ long-term	Responsibility (one lead office/entity)	Other contributing entities	Priority : High/ medium	By when
	<p>Recommendation 1: Develop and implement a comprehensive gender equality and LNOB strategy to promote women’s empowerment and inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline gender-sensitive data collection in collaboration with implementation partners to identify barriers and enablers for female participation in FSCs, and design targeted interventions to address these factors, such as gender-sensitive training and mentorship programs, access to finance tailored to women's specific needs and constraints, and initiatives to promote work-life balance and support for family responsibilities. Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) targets for increasing female representation in FSCs at all levels, including leadership positions. Regularly monitor progress towards these targets and adjust strategies as needed. Engage with women's organizations, networks, and key stakeholders to identify potential female agri-preneurs, promote FSC opportunities among their members, seek input and feedback on the design and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programs, and collaborate on outreach and awareness-raising initiatives to challenge gender stereotypes and promote women's participation in the agriculture sector. Identify pathways for strengthening men and boys’ engagement as partners in promoting gender equality Develop and implement a comprehensive gender mainstreaming strategy across all aspects of FSC operations, including reviewing and updating existing policies, manuals, and guidelines to ensure they are gender-responsive, providing gender sensitivity training for all staff, management, and key stakeholders, and establishing 	<p><u>Medium-term</u></p>	<p><u>WFP RWCO</u></p>	<p><u>DUHAMIC Adri, Good Neighbors International</u></p>	<p><u>High</u></p>	<p><u>6-12 Months</u></p>

	<p>a dedicated gender focal point or unit to oversee the implementation of the gender strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an inclusion strategy for the programme including the documentation of concrete approaches for increasing participation of differently abled people and those from more isolated communities. Mainstream these approaches into project implementation documents and assign responsibility for follow up to a member of the team. Provide in-house capacity strengthening on disability inclusion and the intersectionality of LNOB concepts where needed. 					
	<p>Recommendation 2: Strengthen donor reporting and coordination practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a robust, centralized system for tracking and monitoring decisions, action points, and commitments made in coordination forums such as JADFs. Assign clear roles and responsibilities to each participating organization to ensure accountability and follow-through on agreed-upon actions. Regularly update and share progress with all stakeholders to maintain transparency and facilitate effective collaboration. Create standardized, joint monitoring and evaluation frameworks that align with donor reporting requirements and enable participating organizations to assess progress towards shared objectives, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate the impact of coordinated efforts. Ensure that these frameworks are flexible enough to accommodate the unique needs and priorities of each organization while still promoting comparability and consistency in reporting. Organize regular joint field visits and learning events that bring together staff from different organizations and donors to observe implementation challenges and successes firsthand, foster knowledge sharing and best practices, and identify opportunities for increased synergy and coordination. Document key insights and recommendations from these events and share them with all relevant stakeholders to inform future planning and decision-making. Establish a clear feedback loop that captures lessons learned, best practices, and challenges from field-level implementation and systematically incorporates them into future planning, decision-making, and donor reporting processes. Regularly solicit input and feedback from field staff, participants, and local partners to ensure that coordination efforts remain responsive to on-the-ground realities and priorities. Strengthen donor engagement and communication by providing regular, comprehensive updates on the progress and impact of coordinated efforts, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. Proactively seek donor input and guidance on priorities, expectations, and reporting requirements to ensure that coordination efforts remain aligned with donor interests and objectives. 	<p><u>Medium-term</u></p>	<p><u>WFP RWCO</u></p>	<p><u>DUHAMIC. Good Neighbors</u></p>	<p><u>High</u></p>	<p><u>12 Months</u></p>

<p>Recommendation 3: Strengthen the role of FSCs in facilitating linkages between SHFs and HGSF programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a data-sharing protocol that enables FSCs to collect and share information on SHF crop availability, quality, and prices with HGSF programme planners and procurement officers. This will help inform menu planning and sourcing decisions while ensuring that HGSF programs can effectively support and integrate SHFs into their supply chains. Develop a capacity-building programme for SHFs, delivered through FSCs, that focuses on enhancing their ability to meet HGSF programme requirements. This may include training on quality standards, post-harvest handling, and procurement processes, as well as support in obtaining necessary certifications and accessing storage facilities. FSCs should serve as a key resource and support system for SHFs looking to participate in HGSF programs. Foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing between FSCs, SHFs, and HGSF programme staff through joint workshops, field visits, and regular communication channels. These activities should aim to build a shared understanding of HGSF programme requirements, identify challenges and opportunities for SHF participation, and facilitate direct linkages between SHFs and HGSF procurement officers. Continuously monitor and assess the effectiveness of FSC interventions in facilitating SHF linkages to HGSF programs, using clear performance indicators and feedback mechanisms. Regularly adapt and improve the approach based on lessons learned and evolving needs, ensuring that FSCs remain a relevant and valuable support system for SHFs in accessing HGSF and other market opportunities. 	<p><u>Medium-term</u></p>	<p><u>WFP RWCO</u></p>	<p><u>DUHAMIC, Good Neighbors</u></p>	<p><u>Medium</u></p>	<p><u>12 Months</u></p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Enhance private sector engagement and partnerships for sustainable impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key priorities and opportunities for collaboration between FSCs and private sector entities by conducting a thorough mapping and analysis of private sector actors operating in relevant industries and geographic areas, including agribusinesses, financial service providers, technology companies, and other key stakeholders. Prioritize outreach and engagement efforts based on factors such as alignment of interests, track record of social responsibility, and potential for sustainable, scalable impact. Establish formal, long-term partnership agreements with selected private sector actors, clearly outlining shared objectives, roles and responsibilities, and expectations 	<p><u>Medium-term</u></p>	<p><u>WFP RWCO</u></p>	<p><u>DUHAMIC, Good Neighbors, UNCDF</u></p>	<p><u>Medium</u></p>	<p><u>12-18 Months</u></p>

	<p>for communication, reporting, and collaboration. These agreements should be flexible enough to accommodate evolving needs and priorities while also providing a clear framework for accountability and performance monitoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and pursue opportunities for private sector partners to contribute to the development and strengthening of FSC infrastructure, such as investment in storage facilities, processing equipment, and digital platforms. Encourage partners to provide technical assistance, training, and mentorship to FSC staff and affiliated farmers, focusing on areas such as quality control, value addition, and market access. • Collaborate with private sector partners to explore and develop innovative market linkages and value addition services that benefit both farmers and buyers, such as contract farming arrangements, collective marketing schemes, and access to premium markets for high-quality, sustainably produced crops. Encourage partners to adopt inclusive business models that prioritize the participation and empowerment of small-scale farmers, women, and youth. • Establish regular communication and reporting channels with private sector partners to monitor progress, share lessons learned, and identify opportunities for continuous improvement and adaptation. Encourage open dialogue and feedback to ensure that partnerships remain responsive to the needs and priorities of all stakeholders, including farmers, FSC staff, and local communities. • Develop a clear exit strategy and sustainability plan for each partnership, outlining how the benefits and impacts will be sustained beyond the initial project period. This may include capacity-building for local actors, institutionalization of best practices, and the development of self-sustaining business models that can continue to generate value for all stakeholders over the long term. 					
	<p>Recommendation 5: Anticipate and proactively manage risks to sustainability to ensure the long-term success and impact of the Shora Neza programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder involvement: Continue to engage a wide range of stakeholders, including participants, local partners, government agencies, and subject matter experts, in the risk assessment process. Their insights and perspectives will help identify a comprehensive set of risks and develop practical mitigation strategies. • Prioritization: Prioritize the identified risks based on their likelihood and potential impact on the programme's objectives. This will help focus efforts on the most critical risks. • Integration with existing processes: Ensure that the risk mitigation strategy and crisis management plan are integrated into the programme's ongoing operations, decision-making processes, and monitoring and evaluation framework. 	<p><u>Medium-term</u></p>	<p><u>WFP RWCO</u></p>	<p><u>DUHAMIC, Good Neighbors</u></p>	<p><u>Medium</u></p>	<p><u>12-18 Months</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge management: Document and share lessons learned from managing risks and responding to crises with relevant stakeholders, including other development programs and partners. This will contribute to the broader knowledge base on risk management in agricultural development initiatives.					
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Annex 16. List of external key actors working on agriculture and market access¹¹⁴

Table 21. External key actors

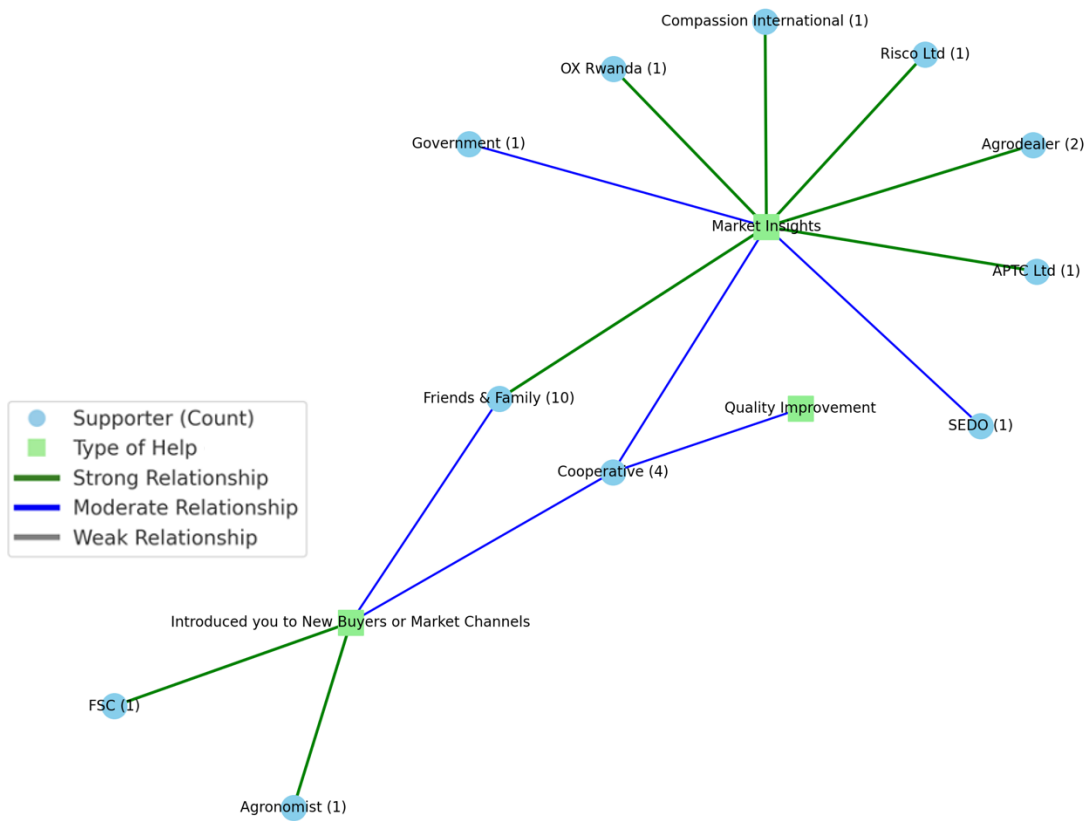
External Actor	Type
Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA)	NGO
Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS)	NGO
One Acre Fund	NGO
World Vision International (WVI)	NGO
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	NGO
Africare	NGO
Land O' Lakes	NGO
Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM)	Government
Ministry of Information Communication Technology (MINICT)	Government
Ministry of Youth (MINIYOUTH)	Government
Ministry of Education (MINEDUC)	Government
National Agricultural Export Board (NAEB)	Government
Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI)	Government
Ministry of Environment (MoE)	Government
Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB)	Government
Rwanda Standards Board (RSB)	Government
Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF)	Government
Rwanda Development Board (RDB)	Government
Agricultural Information and Communication Center (CICA)	Government
Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC)	Government
Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA)	Government
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	United Nations
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)	Donor
USAID	Donor
IFAD	Donor
Clinton Development Initiative	Donor
University of Rwanda-College of Agriculture, Animal Sciences and Veterinary Medicine (UR-CAAVM)	Education
Catholic Institute of Kabgayi	Education
University of Kibungo-Faculty of Agriculture and Rural Development	Education

¹¹⁴ FAO. (n.d.). Project list - FAO in Rwanda.

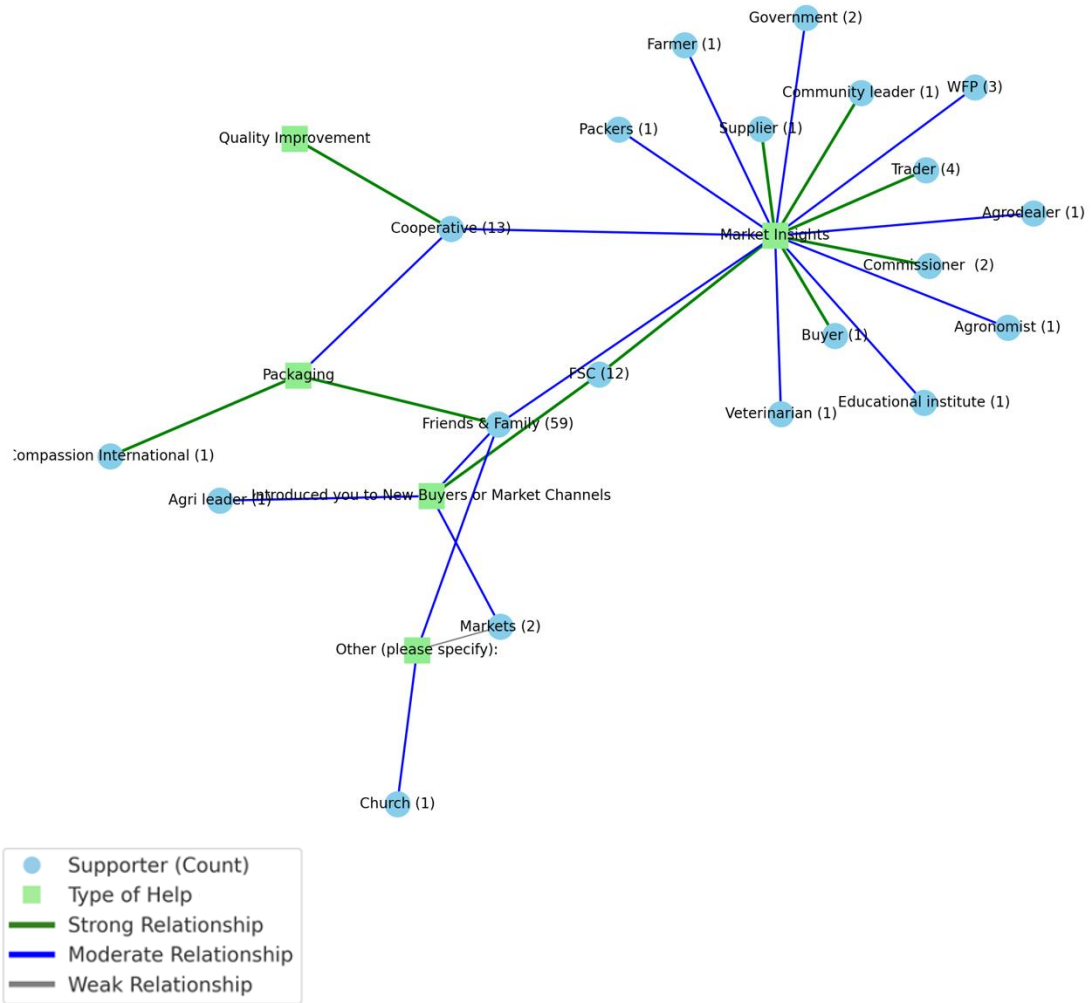
<https://www.fao.org/rwanda/programmes-and-projects/project-list/en/>; USAID (2021). Feed the Future Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) Final Report. USAID, June 2021. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XSV1.pdf.

Annex 17. Network Analysis Maps

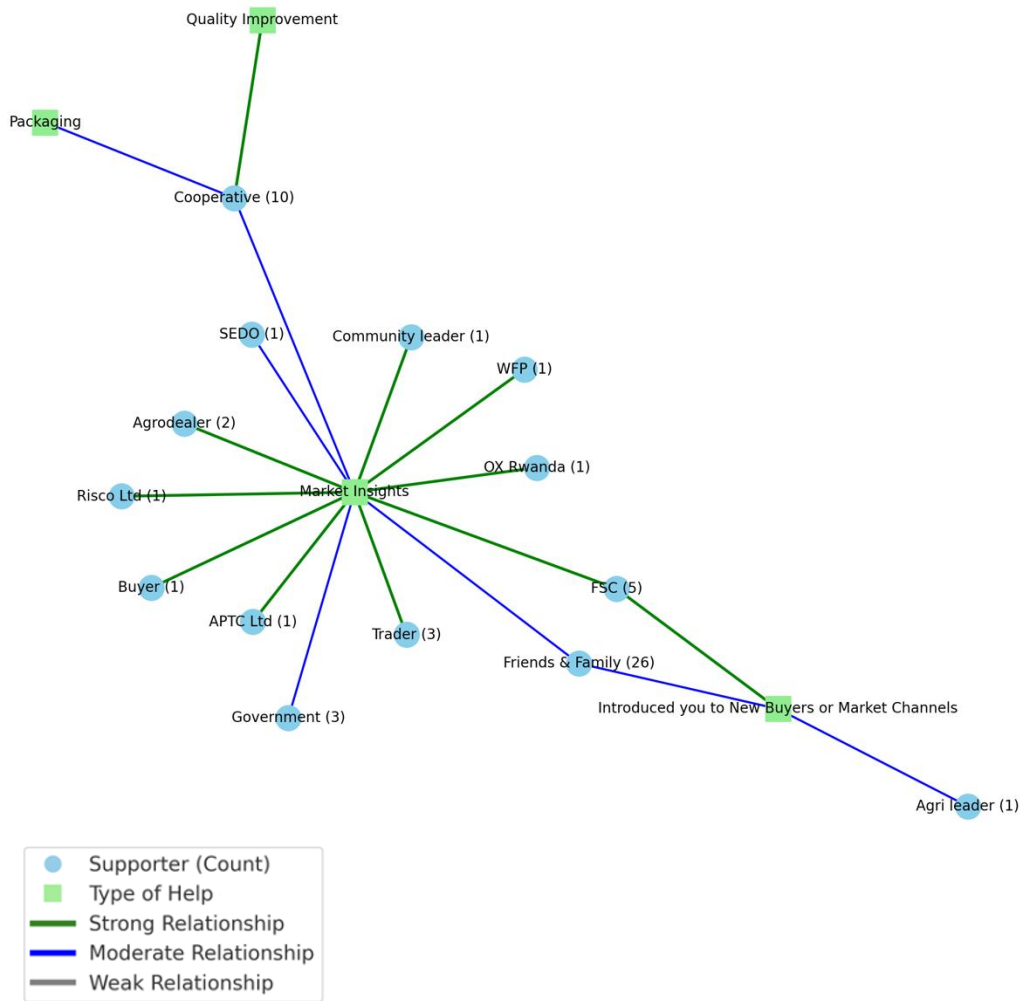
Market Access Network Analysis - FSC



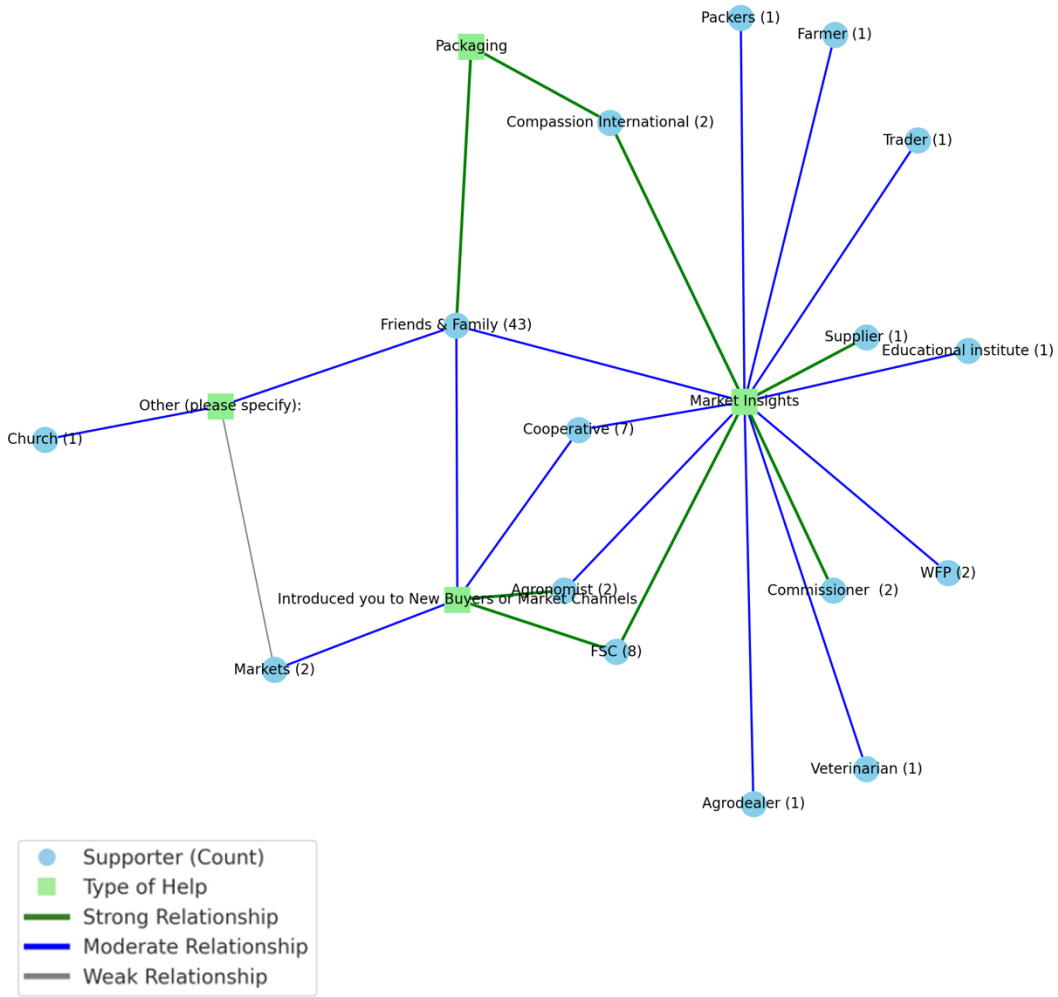
Market Access Network Analysis - Smallholder farmers (SHF)



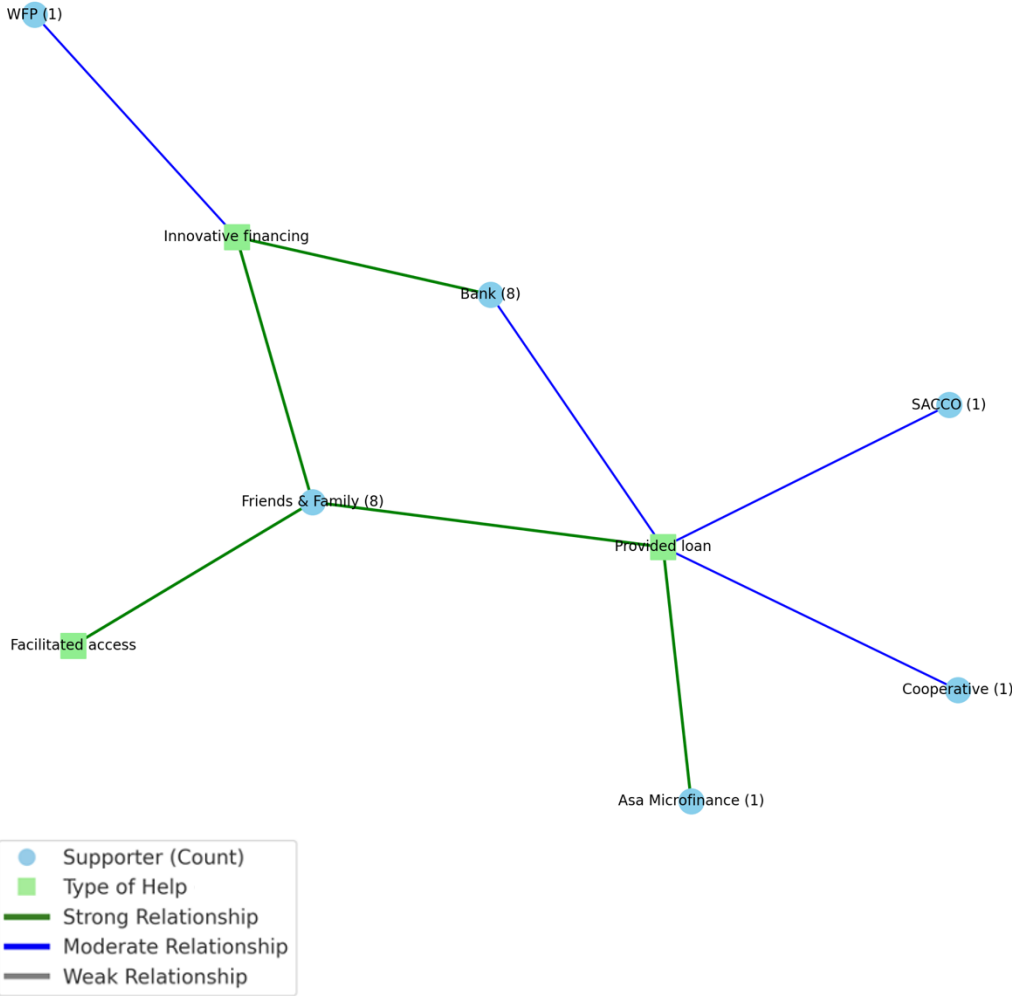
Market Access Network Analysis - Male



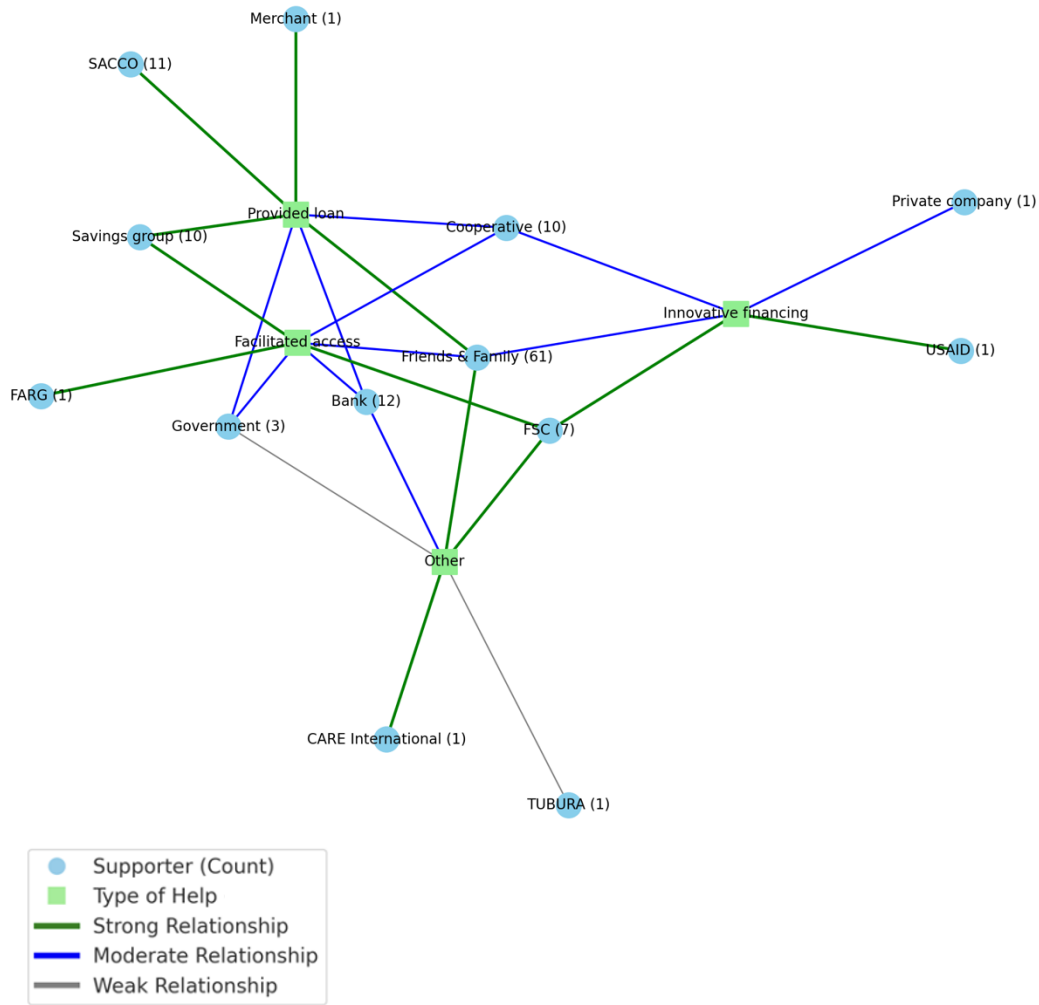
Market Access Network Analysis - Female



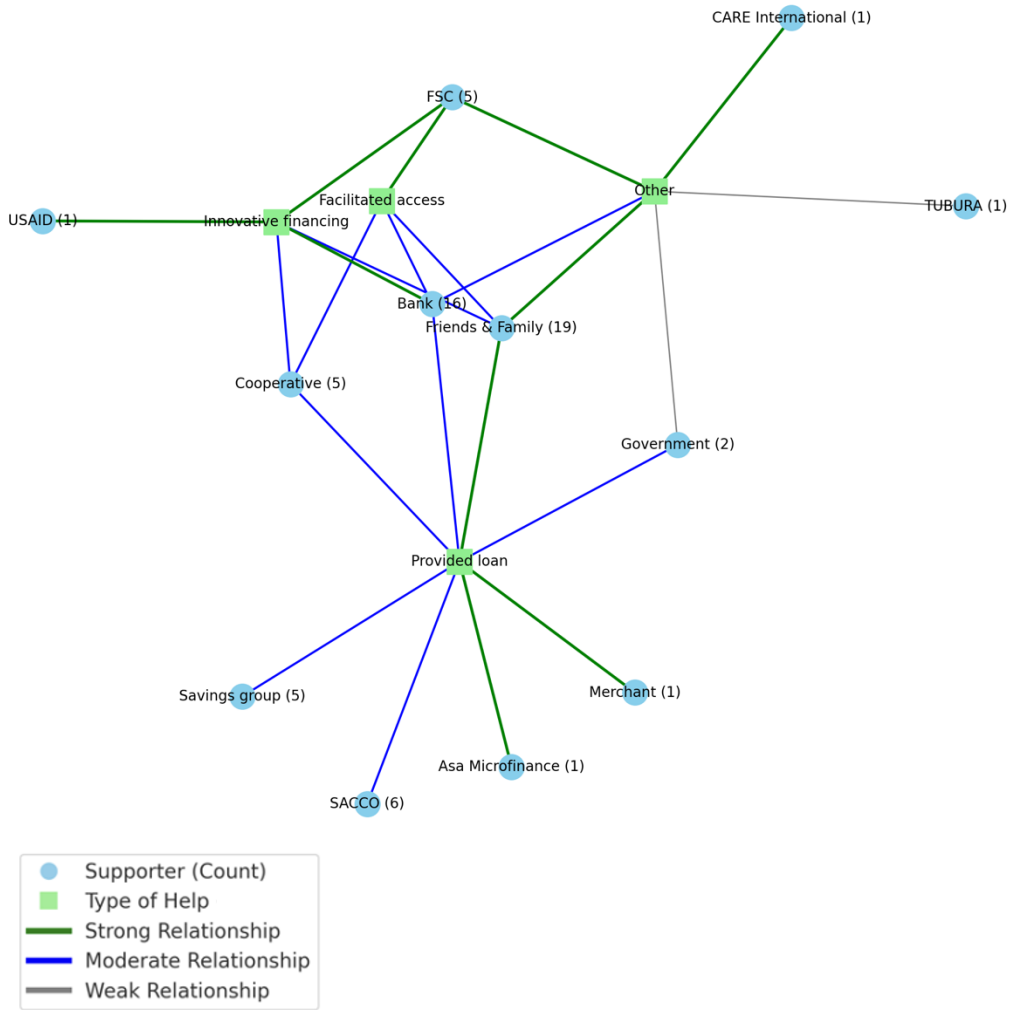
Finance Network Analysis - FSC



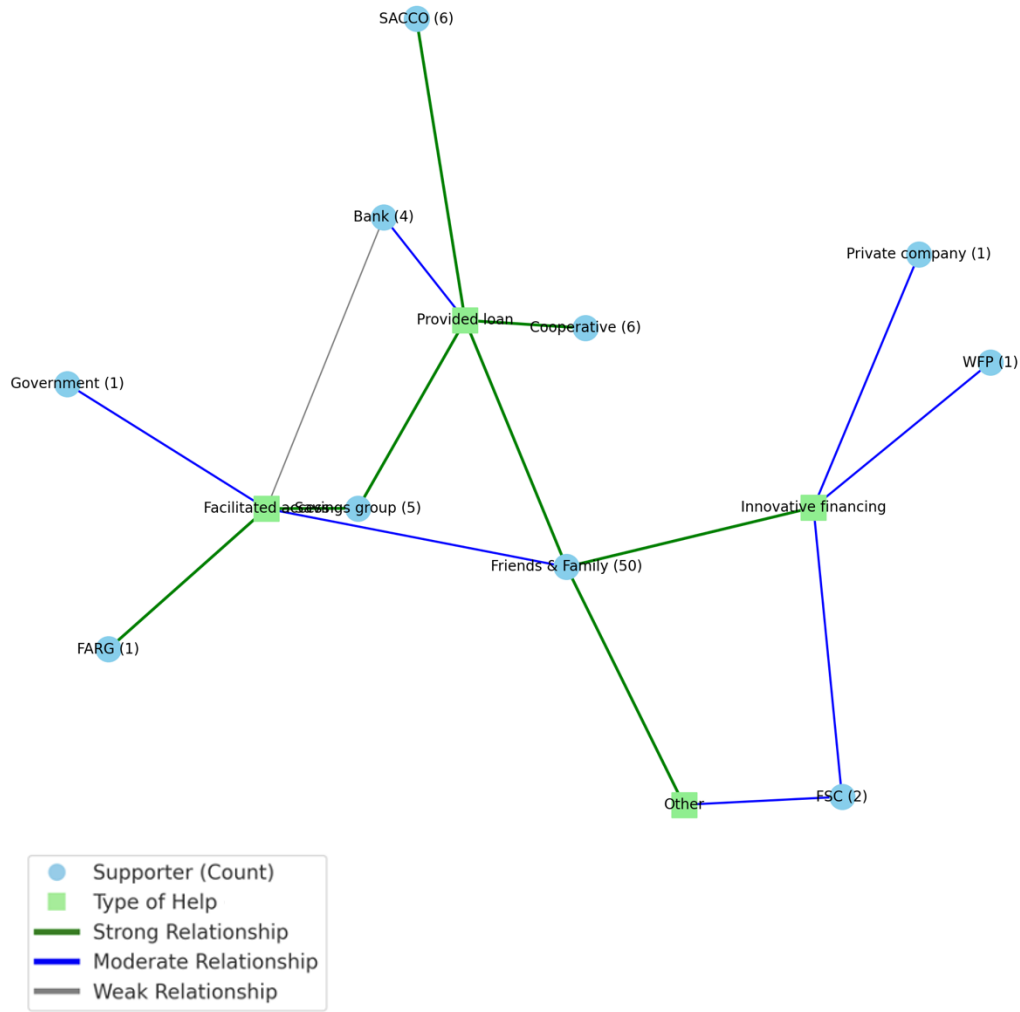
Finance Network Analysis - Smallholder farmers (SHF)



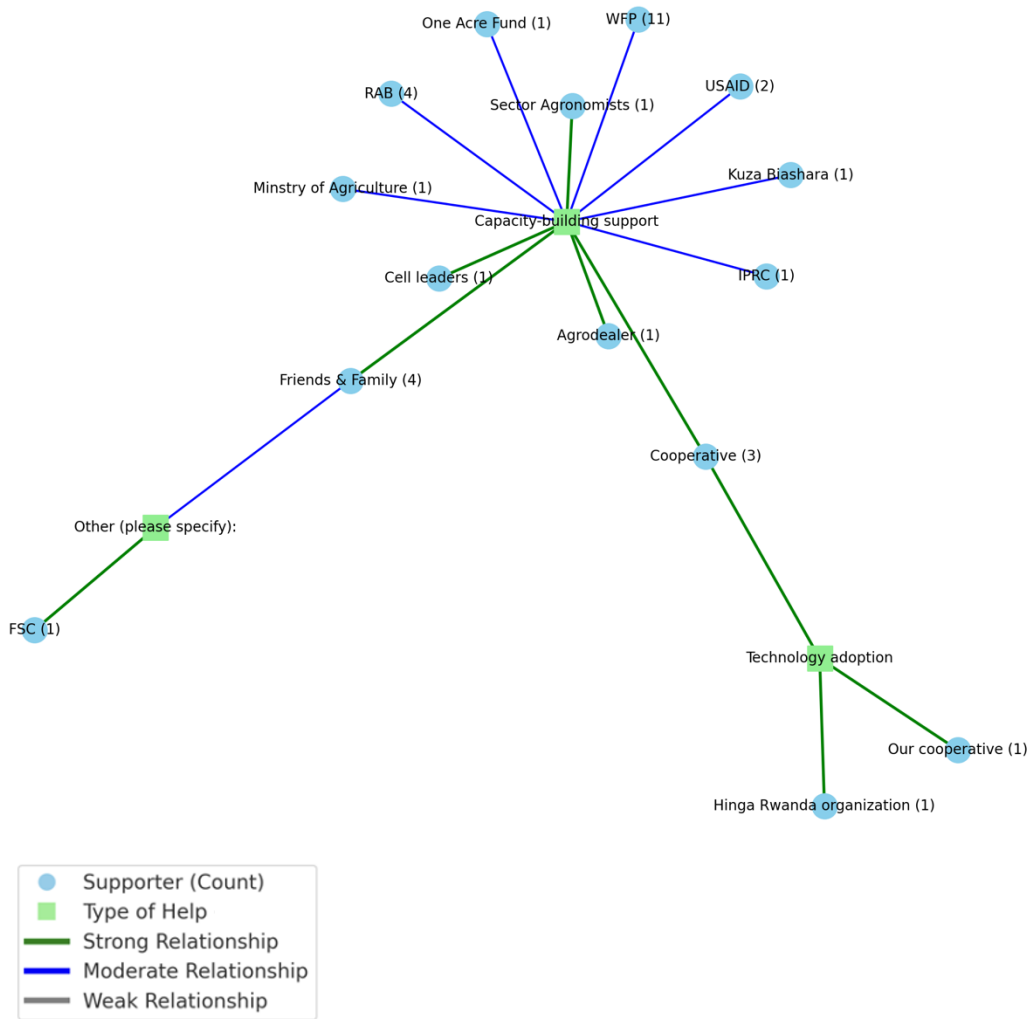
Finance Network Analysis - Male



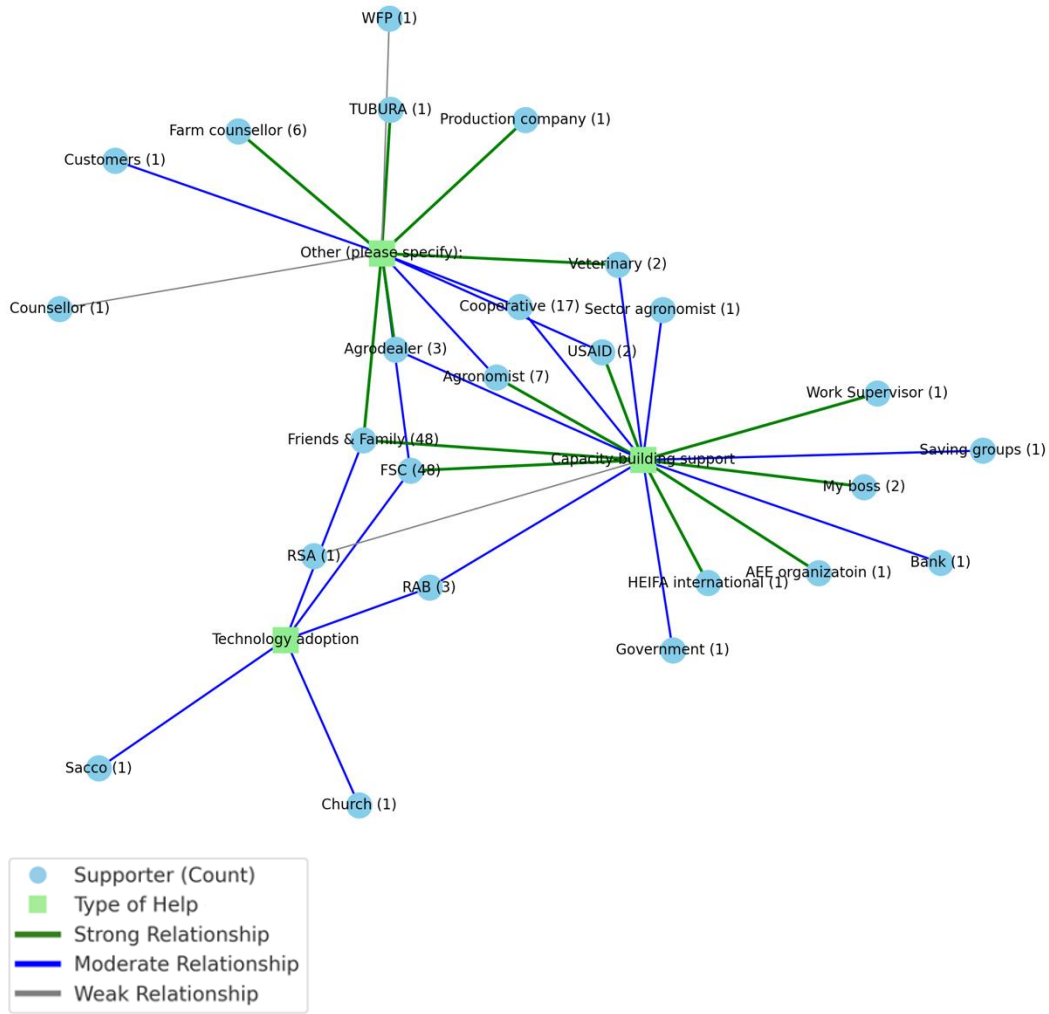
Finance Network Analysis - Female



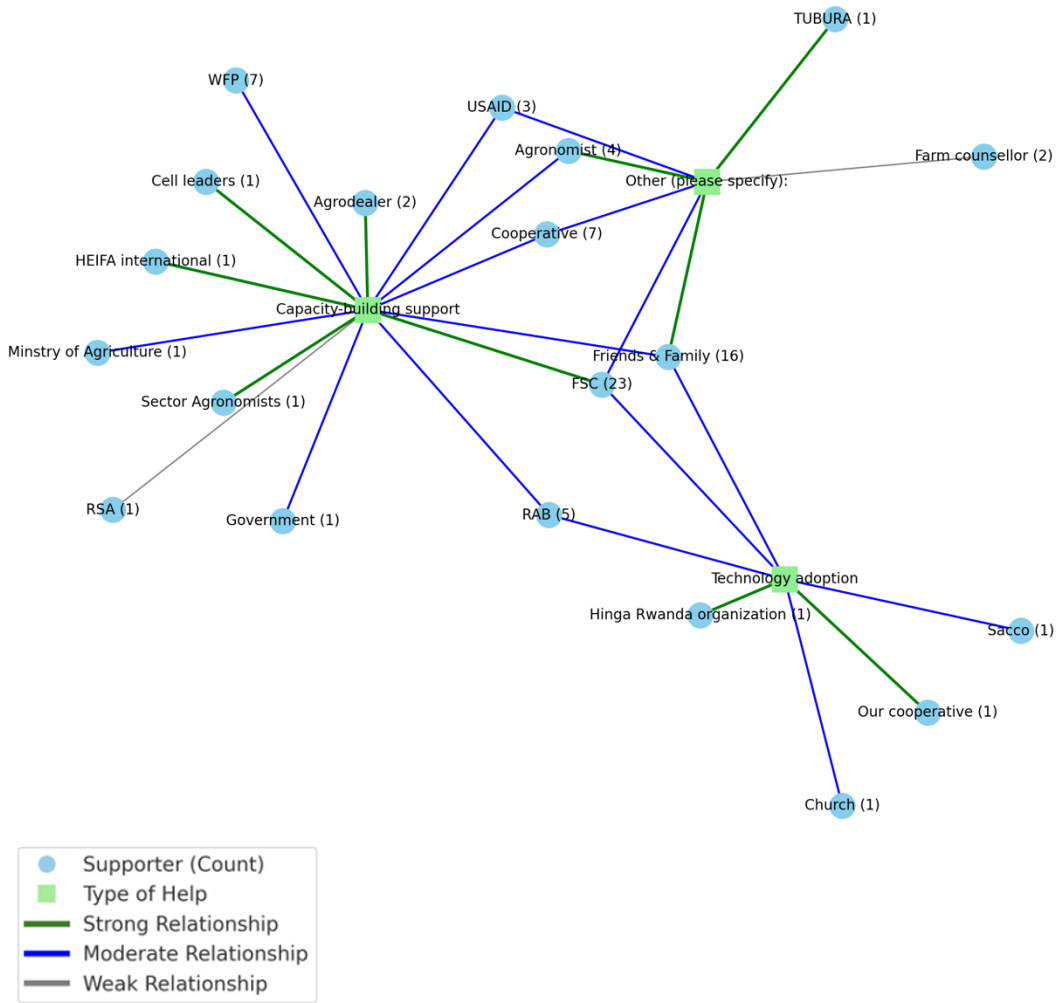
Post-Harvest Management Network Analysis - FSC



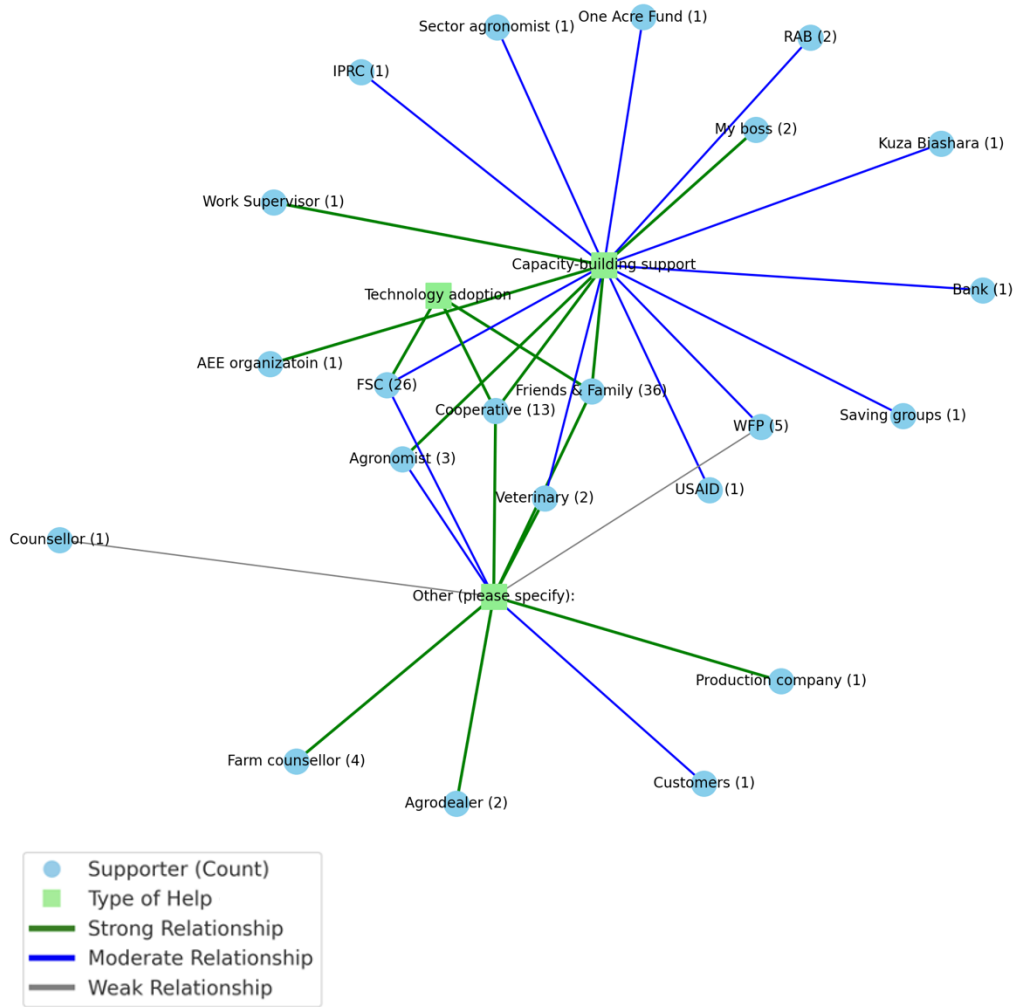
Post-Harvest Management Network Analysis - Smallholder farmers (SHF)



Post-Harvest Management Network Analysis - Male



Post-Harvest Management Network Analysis - Female



Annex 18. Acronyms

B2B	Business-to-Business
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CO	Country Office
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DCD	Deputy Country Director
DEQAS	Decentralised Evaluation Quality Assurance System
EB	Executive Board
EC	Evaluation Committee
EM	Evaluation Manager
EQAS	Evaluation Quality Assurance System
ER	Evaluation Report
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSC	Farmer Service Centre
FtMA	Farm to Market Alliance
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HGSF	Home Grown School Feeding
IR	Inception Report
JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
KII	Key Informant Interview
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCF	Mastercard Foundation
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
mVAM	Mobile Vulnerability Analysis Mapping

NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisation
NST1	National Strategy for Transformation
OEV	Office of Evaluation
P4P	Purchase for Progress
PHL	Post-Harvest Losses
PHM	Post-Harvest Management
PHQA	Post-Hoc Quality Assessment
PLWD	People Living with Disabilities
PSTA	Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation
QS	Quality Support
RB	Regional Bureau
RBN	Regional Bureau in Nairobi
RDO	Rwanda Development Organization
RWARRI	Rwanda Rural Rehabilitation Initiative
RWCO	Rwanda Country Office (used interchangeably with CO)
RWF	Rwandan Franc
RYAF	Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum
SACCOs	Savings and Credit Cooperative Society
SAMS	Smallholder Agricultural Market Support
SHF	Smallholder Farmers
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WFP	World Food Programme

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