

Gender transformation in the African Cashew value chain

Findings from the African Cashew initiative's qualitative gender survey conducted in Ghana and Burkina Faso

- Production -

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1. Introduction: Gender in rural development and agricultural value chains

Following the phrase “the African farmer and her husband” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2001: 10), the literature holistically agrees on women’s essential role in agriculture, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (African Development Bank 201; FAO 2011; OECD 2006; World Bank 2007; World Bank et al. 2009) and suggests implementing organizations to take gender-specific constraints in agricultural production and marketing into account.

Being mostly subsistence and small scale farmers, women produce two thirds of the world’s food and provide the majority of labor particularly for staple food crops; therefore women play an indispensable role in food security (World Bank 2007). Due to male migration, early death, separation and divorce there is a steady rise of female-headed households and many of these women are left behind without social capital and without effective decision-making power in communities.

Women in general and female household heads especially experience several other hardships in their engagement in agriculture¹. They lack access to land, credit, information and other resources, often as a result of unequal social and cultural beliefs and male-favored policies in statutory and customary law. Furthermore, women in rural communities are not able to find employment and – if they do – experience lower wages and other unequal treatment (FAO 2002; USAID 2009; World Bank 2007). In addition, women in rural environments face many constraints with regards to attending school and are less educated than men or women living in urban areas (World Bank 2007).

In the household, women carry out demanding unpaid domestic activities such as preparing food, sewing, cleaning and child- and relative-care as well as carrying water and finding firewood. In addition to these severe challenges women are moreover often not involved in decision-making and have no bargaining power so that they might not have control over ‘their’ income and share of the household revenues. Various research carried out concludes that this is counterproductive since it is evident that women spend money more usefully and sustainably than men and invest for example in food supply and children’s education (Visvanathan & Yoder 2011). Time allocation studies demonstrate that women work more

¹ Here, it is important to mention that a generalization cannot be made. The following information derives from research in multiple contexts and shows the challenges women often – but not always – face. Gender power

hours than men, have higher burdens and are therefore not able to attend community or organizational meetings (Sen & Ostlin 2011; USAID 2009). Besides, since women organizations lack organization and leadership skills, participation and empowerment is not facilitated for achieving greater gender equality.

Coles & Mitchell (2011) argue that the aforementioned existing inequalities are likely to be reinforced in agricultural value chains. Here, women do the hardest and time-consuming tasks on the farm and the household while men negotiate with traders and buyers, take over management and leadership roles and control the markets and mechanization (see also Duggan 2011). Again, the results are male domination, exclusion and discrimination of women and unequal power relationships. Moreover, as Mayoux & Mackie (2007) point out, women and men are mostly involved at different stages of the value chain and those areas where women contribute such as running the household are often less visible and ignored in analysis and development.

As examined in different research projects and outlined in the gender strategies of multilateral, donor and implementing agencies, investing in women's empowerment in rural contexts and agriculture does not only consider women's rights and creates greater gender equity but does also lead to economic and agricultural growth and higher productivity levels. The aim of this research is to examine if these general findings from the academic and institutional literature hold true for the cashew sector and to what extent. This will be done after a short overview about the African Cashew initiative (ACi), the initiator of this survey, and how it approaches gender in its intervention.

2. The African Cashew initiative (ACi) and its approach to gender

The *African Cashew initiative (ACi)* organizes and supports cashew producers and processors in five project countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Mozambique). It is expected that within four years (2009 to 2013), 5,500 new jobs – 70% of them for women – will be created in cashew processing and that 150,000 small-scale cashew producers will generate USD 15 million additional income per year. Including the producers' family

members, the targeted number of beneficiaries amounts to 1.2 million rural poor and therefore highly contributes to sustainably reducing poverty.

Gender is an important component of the African Cashew initiative with one of its main aim being to promote employment opportunities mostly for women in the processing sector and ensuring women’s equal representation and participation along the African cashew value chain through mainstreaming activities. This is facilitated mainly through the involvement of women in trainings on good agricultural practices in cashew farming. Moreover, since public and private partners are part of ACi, these sectors have a strong interest in gender as promoting women’s talents and capabilities has a positive relation to a strengthened competitiveness and increased profitability of the cashew value chain.

The cashew industry traditionally relies on the participation of both women and men in production. Women’s involvement in farming is therefore not a new development and investment in the cashew sector offers simultaneously an excellent starting point for an intervention to achieve women’s empowerment and greater levels of gender equality.



Picture 1: ACi training situation (Ghana)

With regards to quantitative figures, successes can already be seen: The latest rate states that currently 27% of the participants in farmer trainings are women surpassing the realistically set target of 20% - a strong success given the circumstances of prevailing male-domination in agriculture and the remarkably high total number of over 64,800 female farmers who have undergone trainings so far.

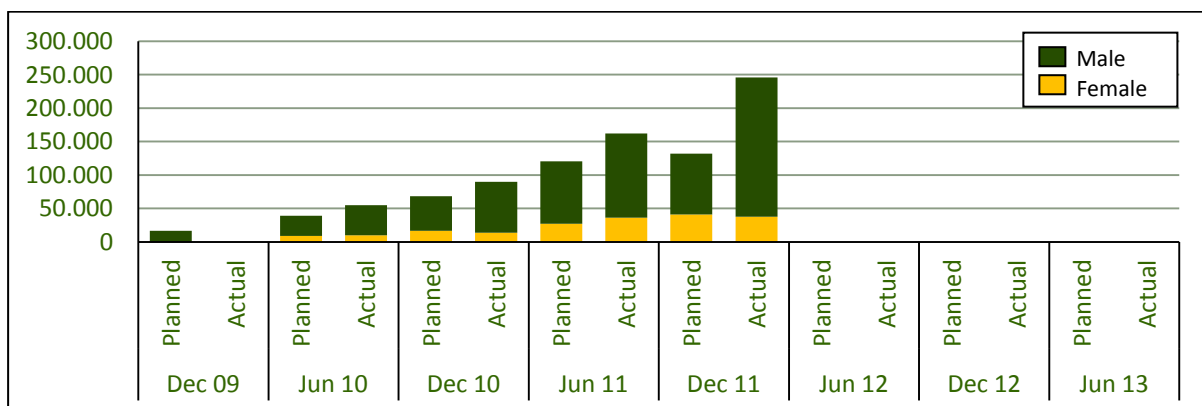


Fig.1: Farmers trained (all project countries)

Besides considering sex-disaggregated data and mainstreaming gender within all project interventions, ACi moreover implements specific activities especially targeting women for income-diversification such as beekeeping or nursery management (innovative tools and approaches) and has various other instruments ensuring that gender holds a vital place in the project (see Fig. 2).

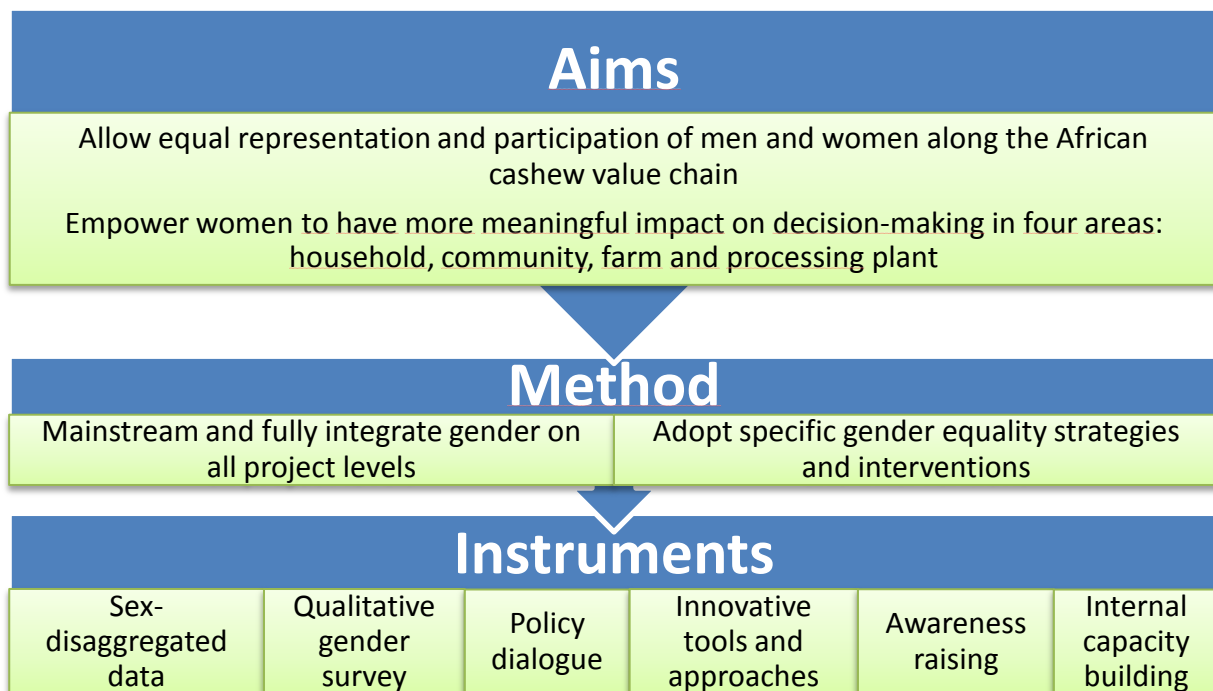


Fig. 2: ACi's gender approach

The gender survey is – as also illustrated in Fig. 2 – part of this approach and its findings will be analyzed in the sections below. The study was initiated to add a qualitative sphere to the consideration of sex-disaggregated data not only to verify successes, identify areas for improvement and give recommendations on follow-up action but also importantly to include beneficiaries and listen to their perception of the initiative.

3. Qualitative gender survey: An overview

The research was conducted by ACi's gender team with the support of the respective country staff in Ghana's Brong-Ahafo² region as well as in three regions of Burkina Faso (Cascades, Hauts-Bassins, and Sud-Ouest) in five communities in each country in order to verify findings which might be particular in a certain region.



Picture 2: Interview with female farmer (Burkina Faso)

For this purpose, semi-structured interviews have been designed to address and discuss topics and questions which may not be covered by a pre-elaborated questionnaire. As a result, the interview has a flexible and open character. The questionnaire has been conducted with overall 65 farmers (34 in Ghana, 31 in Burkina Faso), thereof 44 women.

Ghana and Burkina Faso were chosen since the countries represent a very different socio-cultural context and population structure which has led to different results and allows multiple starting points for comparison, up-scale best practices and overcome limitations.

Mainly female cashew farmers involved who received ACi trainings have been interviewed but, to verify and compare, male farmers, women who have not attended trainings as well as extension agents were among the respondents.



Picture 3: Interview with male farmer (Burkina Faso)

The main objectives of the research were to:

- Examine the current situation of men and women³ in the cashew sector
- Analyze ACi's intervention on three environments: household, farm and community

² It is important to note that regional differences apply and the findings from the regions visited might not apply to other areas of Ghana respectively Burkina Faso. Furthermore, findings cannot be generalized and are different depending on the individual and the household

³ The term gender applies both to men and women, in the context of rural development in Sub-Saharan Africa, women are the primary target group since they face more disadvantages.

Therefore, these two main hypotheses will be analyzed:

1. Women are empowered, have a higher self-esteem and have more meaningful impact on decision-making in the household, community as well as in farmer-based organizations (FBOs)
2. Women and families spend their increased income preferably on children's education, health, food supply etc. improving the well-being of household members, and reducing rural poverty

The following sections present findings from the production side. A similar survey has been done examining the situation in cashew-processing factories and is also available from ACi. If not stated differently, findings apply to both countries when same or similar answers, statements or reasons have been given. As the analysis will show however, significant differences have been identified between Ghana and Burkina Faso. Since the number of persons asked is limited and not all questions have always been asked – ensuring the flexible character of interviews – the study will not work with numbers and figures to verify findings but with statements from people and words like often, sometimes, few, many etc. to give tendencies. In addition, it has to be noted that women cannot be evaluated as a homogeneous group as there are major differences not only between genders but also according to ethnicities, class, age etc.

4. Gender-related findings

The following chapter will explore the findings related to gender – the principal subject of the survey. Most questions of the questionnaire aim to examine the relation between men and women as well as to explore where women in the cashew value chain are located.

Finding 1: Cashew farming offers considerable benefits for women

In rural Ghana and Burkina Faso, employment opportunities are rare and residents, especially women, are generally less educated than inhabitants of urban areas. Cashew farming therefore provides an essential and often the only income source. Almost all of the

interviewed farmers report an income increase in the last years – as a result of cashew farming, specifically due to:

- Higher farm gate prices for cashew nuts
- Increased yields and better quality of the production through the application of the good agricultural practices learnt in ACi-trainings (see Finding 7; e.g. pruning, thinning, spraying, harvesting)
- More revenues through group selling
- Expansion of cashew farm
- Recognizing the value of cashew farming: farmers have neglected this crop before



Picture 4: Women working on cashew farm (Ghana)

Cashew is a tree crop with a long life span and does not have to be planted or sown every year. It therefore gives farmers a stable income source complementing small subsistence crops (yam, maize, groundnuts, millet etc.). The harvest of these food crops is more likely to fail in yearly campaigns, e.g. due to natural hazards. Following statements illustrate farmers' preference for cashew:

"I am more interested in cashew than in any other crop since it contributes the most money"
(Woman, Ghana)

"Cashew is profitable. We are growing it to improve our living conditions" (Woman, Burkina Faso)

In comparison to other crops, cashew farming is relatively uncomplicated and with little inputs yields can be significantly increased. This particularly benefits women as cashew cultivation does not require many machines and tractor services – assets that are usually controlled by men in rural Sub-Saharan Africa. Hence, it is not surprising that all farmers interviewed want to continue with cashew production as well as expand and invest in it more in the future.

"Yes I believe cashew farming is a good employment opportunity considering the fact that I never attended school. Therefore I cannot do any white collar job except farming" (Woman, Ghana)

"Yes, I want to work much more in cashew production to reduce our financial problems"
(Woman, Burkina Faso)

“Cashew holds a long term prospect as a family legacy” (Man, Ghana)

Differences Ghana – Burkina Faso

In Ghana, women considerably participate in cashew production and have their own cashew farms (also see Finding 3). Therefore, cashew cultivation directly benefits women and provides a crucial and independent income source also for marginalized female-headed households, e.g. when men migrate or when women take over the farms of their dead husbands. Conversely, in Burkina Faso, women do not have access to land and particularly do not grow cash crops. After the death of the husbands, the wife mostly ‘devolve’ to the family of the husband’s brother, continue living with him and do not have access to the husband’s cashew farm.

Finding 2: Women do not face discrimination for being involved in cashew production

Women are traditionally involved in cashew production and in rural communities in both countries, farming is the principal employment. It is considered a respectful task if women are engaged in farm work and men usually appreciate the help of their wives. On the contrary, women might even be criticized for being at home and not helping their husbands.

“Most people are engaged in farming in this area, so it is normal. If you don’t do anything that is when people will call you a lazy woman” (Woman, Ghana)

“The people think that it is good to work on the farm. It is a liberation” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Farm work has the potential to contribute to women’s empowerment: Female farmers gain respect, have access to social networks and are more involved in the community life. Moreover, women ‘come out of their shells’ and are as a result more emancipated and liberated from only doing housework all day.

Limitations

In some areas and within some ethnic groups in Burkina Faso women are still perceived to stay at the house and not to engage in farm work. Their engagement in farming is mostly perceived as negative by other women who argue that women should stay at home and take

care of their children. These perceptions and values are however changing and female farmers are not actually bothered by these and do not stop the work they are doing because of other people's statements.

"The people say that I make myself tired and I get nothing out of it but I continue to go since it is better than doing housework all day" (Woman, Burkina Faso)

"In the beginning the people thought that it is not a very valued work but when they realized that I gain money, they became silent. It is always like that, they first see that the work is tiring and without future but when they see the profitability they like it" (Woman, Burkina Faso)

In Burkina Faso however only married women can work on the cashew farms since unmarried women do not have access to land. The question also arises if Burkinabé men are open and would accept that their wives also engage in other tasks than just the nut collection (see Finding 4).

Finding 3: In Ghana women have access to land and resources and grow their own cashew, in Burkina Faso cashew is a men's crop

In Ghana, women have – however to a lower extent– access to land and cultivate cashew on their own plots independently. They acquire it through three options: matrilineal inheritance, purchase communal land from the village chief for a certain period (rarely) or through user rights when the husband gives a share of his land to his wife.

Women also play an important role in the joint family cultivation of cashew farms with sharing burdens. If women work on their husband's farms, mostly the men who decide what to use the land for. However, the wives are usually consulted in the decision.

"My husband is a cashew farmer. I help him on his farm" (Woman, Ghana)

"Me and my wife, it is the same thing" (Man, Ghana)

Regarding resources and agricultural assets, women rarely use machines such as chainsaws for pruning or tools for spraying.

"Access to agricultural assets is limited. It is always the men that end up getting these assets and inputs" (Woman, Ghana)

However, women do not actually want to work with the machines since they perceive the work as too heavy. When it comes to doing these tasks on their own plots they sometimes do it by themselves but often hire labor or ask their husbands for assistance.

“He has his own cashew farm but he helps me in the weeding and clearing of my farm”
(Woman, Ghana)

With regards to agricultural inputs, women have equal access to grafted seedlings. Due to their involvement in ACi-established nursery groups, women can use the high-quality seedlings they grow in the nurseries on their own farms or sell them to other farmers (see also Finding 7).

In Burkina Faso, mainly through the prevalent patrilineal system, men are always the owner of the land and women have no saying in how to use it.

“My husband handles that. I cannot decide” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“The land belongs to the men so we use it for what we want without asking the women for their opinion. Also the women always have to ask for our permission before using the farm because the women do not have their own land” (Man, Burkina Faso)

“I cannot decide on the use of the land because my husband is the owner and he guides us towards a good utilization of the land” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Often, cashew is cultivated on communal land given to farmers by community chiefs. Yet, the farmers of this land has full control over it and can use it for what they want, the only representative land title remains in the hand of the community. At all times the community chiefs give the land to the men who then inherit it to their sons. Women are not considered as farmers in traditionally male-dominated leadership circles and cannot pay the small contribution (money or goods) necessary to acquire the land. Since women do not have their own land, they also do not have any access to agricultural resources and inputs as well are not involved in nurseries. Generally, also male farmers do not have access to many inputs and assets and do not often possess spraying machines or chainsaws as in Ghana.

“The children are our agricultural assets” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

If women engage in farm work they only grow vegetables (groundnuts, beans, tomatoes, onions etc.) in small acreage given to them by their husbands who do not allow their women to use their land for cash crops such as cashew. Even for growing these vegetables, they

have to ask their husbands for permission to farm their land. Men do not believe in women's abilities to do farm work and argue that women do not have education and knowledge to do it properly since farming has always been done by the men in the past. The men also state that they do not want to give their wives the land which is preserved for their male children.

Recommendations

To facilitate women's ownership of land, discriminating customary as well as statutory inheritance laws need to be changed to achieve equal access to land for women. This could be done for example through mandatory joint titling giving women real equal land rights that they can rightfully claim in a court as well as through strengthening widow's rights given them the opportunity to farm and own the land after their husband's death. In this regard, it is indispensable to work together with local governments, traditional leaders and village elders as well as with male household heads. In order to gain their acceptance and consent, awareness has to be raised, e.g. through the education of women's potentials in agriculture and resulting benefits for the household. An understanding has to be reached to make clear that giving women access to land does not undermine men's power and influences but rather contributes to higher yields and increased incomes through the recognition of women's capabilities and important role in agriculture. With regards to facilitate access to agricultural assets and resources for women, the regional units of agricultural ministries could hire out machines, tools and inputs for female farmers.

Finding 4: The gender division of labor in cashew production is less rigid in Ghana than in Burkina Faso

In Ghana, women do – however to a lower extent – the same specific farming activities as men. Except a few exemptions there are no clearly determined roles for men and women and what tasks are done might also vary between individual households and different extents of power relations.

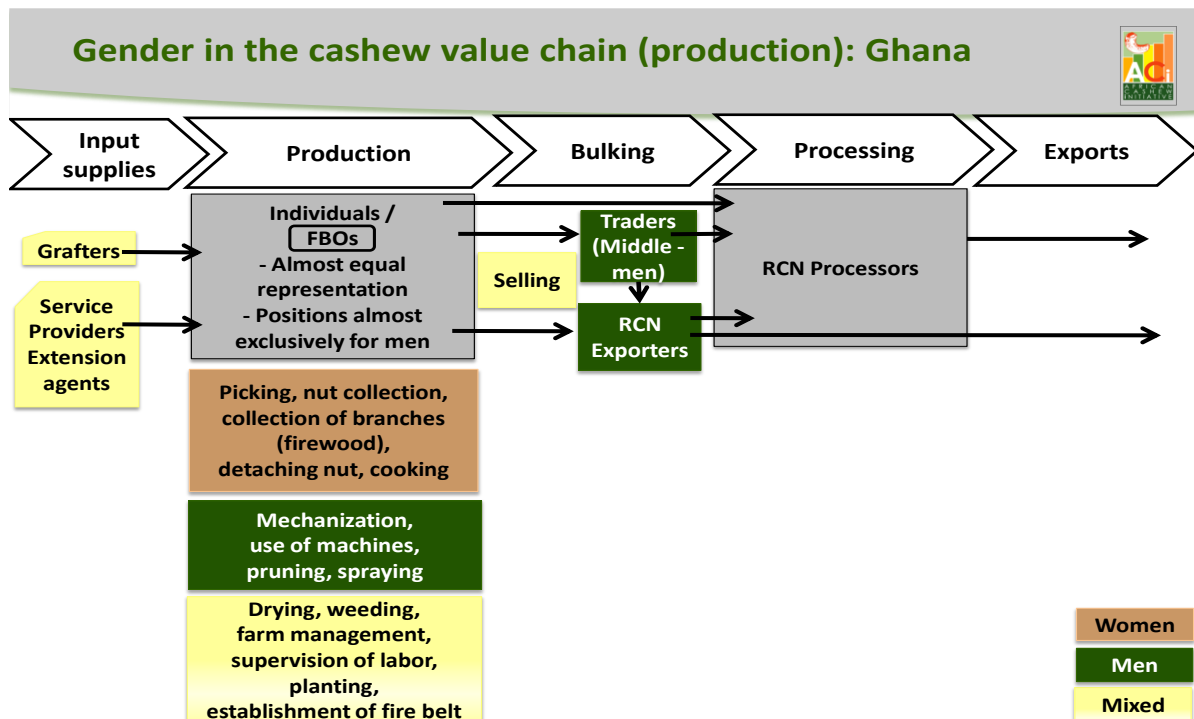


Fig. 3: Gender division of labor (Ghana)

What is determined – as illustrated in Figure 3 – is that men are more involved in the pruning and spraying – tasks perceived as heavy and tedious.

“A woman cannot work as hard as a man can do” (Man, Ghana)

This is however a wrong perception as women’s tasks (mostly the picking and collection of nuts) are also tough and often even more time-consuming. Moreover, interviewed female farmers also do not want to do the pruning and spraying (see Finding 3) but, especially if women cultivate their own plots, they are involved in all – even male-dominated – activities.



Picture 5: Woman harvesting cashew nuts (Ghana)

Women carry out these duties sometimes independently but mostly hire labor. The supervision of hired workers is perceived as an empowering task with the ability to tackle and change traditional role models since the women are in charge, are more knowledgeable in farming and tell mostly male laborers what to do.

In Burkina Faso, the gender division of labor in cashew production is determined: Women are only involved in the lower scales of the value chain and mostly collect the nuts or cook for their husbands while men are responsible for the actual farm management and all other tasks (Figure 4).

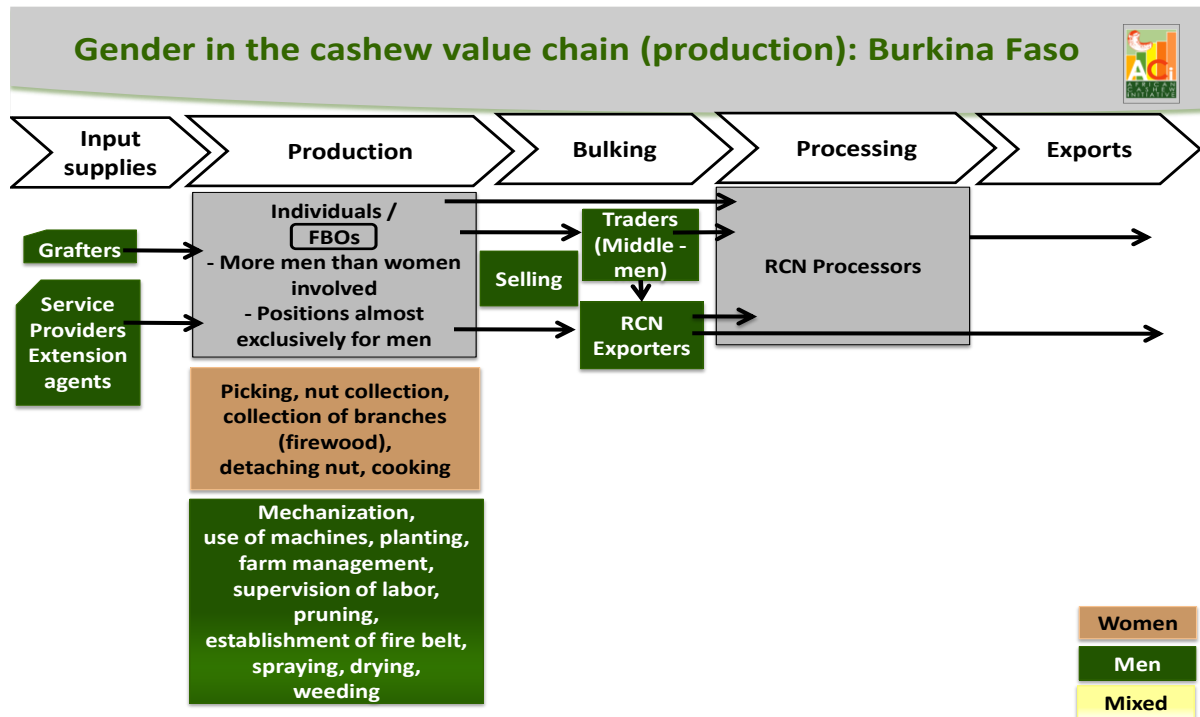


Fig. 4: Gender division of labor (Burkina Faso)

Women in Burkina Faso mainly only help their husband during harvest season and occasionally with other tasks such as clearing/weeding, drying, stocking etc. but are not responsible for cashew production and do not play an active role in it. The men also tell them what exactly they have to do and are therefore more powerful in agricultural decision-making. Except women organized in women-only organizations, there are no female cashew farmers in Burkina Faso and the cultivation of cash crops is the sole responsibility of men who earn all the income gained from the selling of the produce.

“It is the men who practice cashew production. We only help with the nut collection, drying and stocking” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

The reasons for this strictly determined gender division of labor are traditionally established societal roles in farming, women’s less knowledge in agriculture and the perception that women cannot carry out heavy and demanding tasks. Nevertheless, if women are engaged in women’s farming groups and cultivate a farm jointly they are responsible for cashew

production and carry out the majority of tasks – they might only hire labor to do the pruning or help with the clearing. Hence, being a member of a farmer-based organization empowers women who gain more knowledge in agricultural practices and might therefore also widen their involvement at the family farm (see Finding 9).

The gender differences are in both countries reflected in the family: Girls help their mothers with their specific work while boys at a certain age rather follow their fathers doing more physical work. The same applies to hired laborers: Women are hired doing harvest time for the nut collection; men are employed for helping with the strenuous tasks such as clearing and pruning.

“The workers are all men because women cannot do this kind of work” (Man, Ghana)

Recommendations

Engaging women in all sections of the gender division of labor, particularly in Burkina Faso, requires the knowledge of women in all specific tasks of cashew production. Hence, women have to be taught and trained crucially as well in traditionally male-dominated and more technical and mechanic tasks. These trained women can function as role models for other female farmers who realize that women are able to participate actively in cashew production and carry out demanding tasks. Even if they do not want to take over certain responsibilities, e.g. the use and work with machines, it is important that women have an idea of these tasks for instance in order to teach and supervise hired labor.

As will be explored later, women also share what they have learned in the trainings with their fellow female farmers: As a result, the dissemination of good practices educates women in all areas of cashew cultivation and not only in specific ‘female’ sections.

Following the good practice from Ghana where women are more involved, awareness can be raised on the benefits for the entire household that arise if the plantation is farmed jointly with shared burdens in all specific tasks. In this regard, daughters of farmers – even if they do not (yet) own the farm– should as well be promoted and trained early so that they are introduced to the business, learn the specific tasks plus to also be able to engage more and take over the farm management.

Finding 5: Women are rarely involved in selling cashew nuts and as buying agents

In Ghana – as seen in the gender division of labor illustration – women are involved in selling the nuts. It often depends on who is around to sell them to either buyers (often middlemen who acquire a margin) who come to their house, directly to processors or through bulk selling in farmer-based organizations (considered as the best option). However, if both partners are in the house it is usually the men who sell them, women often have no time (household chores) to do the trading and are also not eager to be involved.

“My husband sells mine for me in the house because I might be busy elsewhere and also because he is a male, he won’t be cheated. He then gives me the money from my nuts”
(Woman, Ghana)

If they have their own farms and own produce, the women sell the nuts usually independently and gain their own money which they keep or contribute to the household income.

“I sell my produce myself, when they come to the house with their own price and we sell since we don’t have any other place to sell them to” (Woman, Ghana)

This is considerably different in Burkina Faso where women almost never negotiate or sell the cashew nuts. In some areas, selling the produce means bringing it to the market where the buyers are located. Therefore, women are already from the beginning disadvantaged since they are more immobile, have no time to go due to household tasks and cannot carry the heavy loads to far-away markets. Moreover, in Burkina Faso – unlike in Ghana – women rarely know the prices of cashew and are not informed or involved by their husbands. Again women show little incentives to change that.

“No I do not have anything to do with cashew. I am the housewife” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Respondents stated that women are not involved since they do not know much about marketing. Furthermore, traders rather cheat and lie to the women while the men generally receive a better price. Women are not seen as capable to negotiate the prices but as inferior and men do not acknowledge their skills and talents.

“The market is verbal. You need to speak, negotiate and bargain at the same time which is not easy” (Man, Burkina Faso)

Moreover, women almost never buy the farmer's produce or are 'middlewomen' who trade cashew nuts. Interviews with the buyers have not been conducted and the farmers could not give a reason of why this is the case. It can however be assumed that women are not seen as serious negotiating partners because of their deprivations in form of lacking education and money-handling skills. Also the strict gender division of labor plays a role: Trader is a 'higher' employment where more money is earned – a job for a man.

"At our place it is the men who come to buy. I have never seen any women buying" (Man, Burkina Faso)

Recommendations

To overcome the limitations, various options can be implemented. Firstly, different trainings on financial aspects of the cashew sector as well as basic business and marketing skills can be rendered, e.g. about cashew price development, how to spot market developments, how to meet market requirements, when it is the best time to sell the produce etc. These trainings would be particularly helpful for female farmers since male traders are usually better educated and more knowledgeable about these aspects, and are therefore in an advanced position to make informed decision on when and where to sell without making losses.

Secondly, female farmers and their demands need to be directly linked to buyers and processors who should increasingly consider women as negotiation partners. Women could sell to them individually or favorably through farmer-based organizations (FBOs) to achieve a higher price, better transparency and reduce the danger of being cheated by middlemen.

Thirdly, middlemen often dictate the prices and farmers only receive the information on the current commodity price from the buyers. Hence, prices and market information have to be made more available beforehand for all, especially for female farmers who generally have less access to this information. As a result, farmers would have an idea of the current price, get regular price and market updates, are in a better negotiating position and can decide by themselves what time they favor to sell.

Fourthly, selling the nuts means access to money. Gaining their own income is seen as an essential step towards women's empowerment. It should therefore be facilitated that women are more involved in independent selling directly to the buyer or through FBOs and

gaining a share of the cashew income, especially in Burkina Faso where only men are involved in the transaction.

Best practices

Since in Burkina Faso farmers have to bring their produce to the market, buyers and processors should be identified – like in Ghana – who come to the farmer’s houses and buy the nuts in order to include more immobile women in the selling process.

With regards to the linkage to processors, a good example has been identified where processors give advice and help farmers, e.g. with micro loans or free chemicals. This in turn also benefits the processors who receive more nuts with a better quality due to farmers’ increased yields and improved growing techniques.

Lastly, one interviewed woman stated that she heard about the cashew price from a town information center which could be a viable place where women can come and learn about the current price and its possible future development. Also, the local agricultural unit – if present – should always have an open door to give out these information and share advice.

Finding 6: Women in Ghana are more involved in household decision-making than in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, women have little influence in household decision-making. Husbands sometimes consult their wives and listen to their ideas and opinions, however decisions are rarely done together and men always have the final decision. Sometimes men ‘give pocket’ money to their wives who do not have their own income but only if there is money left and under the precondition to buy what the husband requests and not for their own needs or wishes.

“No, it is my husband who gives me money and if I buy anything I have to go and say see that is what I bought with the money” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“The women cannot have a total independence in the spending on the money since they exaggerate a lot” (Man, Burkina Faso)

“He is the head of the household so I need to ask for his permission” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“It is me who married my wife and I brought her to my family and made the children so that is why we discuss problems but it is always me who gives the solution” (Man, Burkina Faso)

The revenues made from cashew – the major share of the overall income – are always kept and handled by the husband. Women can mostly keep the money from their small businesses and decide on its use – however compared to the income from cash crops, selling vegetables etc. is not very profitable. Due to little opportunities in rural Burkina Faso, often women have no source of income at all resulting in no saying at household level and being dependent on the husband’s money and spending patterns.

“The woman belongs to the man who paid the dowry for me. If you gain money in other activities you can use it but the money from cashew it is the husband who decides” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

If women take part in decision-making, they are only involved in decisions regarding the household or the family needs (‘social’ decisions). These issues are considered as ‘their’ domain following deeply rooted gender stereotypes in the Burkinabé society.

“No, I cannot influence my husband in the decision-making. I think that my opinion regarding the household is respected” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

This can be seen as another form of discrimination since household spending involves smaller amounts of money and women are not involved in ‘higher’ decisions regarding larger investments, e.g. on assets or in agriculture. Involving the women in ‘social’ decisions is furthermore only a small step towards equal decision-making and women’s empowerment: Men agree that women handle these decisions not because of women’s power and influence but rather due to their lack of interest in being more involved at household level.

“She understands many things regarding the family” (Man, Burkina Faso)

Limitations

Women often show no incentives or are too afraid of questioning the traditional power relationships.

“Yes because a woman is always inferior to a man and when a man gives you money it shows his respect for you” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“I do not want to change the way the money is spent because it is my husband and the father of my children so we have to obey what he says for the well-being of the children” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“The men are the head of the family because it is them who marry the women and not the woman who marries the man, therefore we can discuss but always the man is right”
(Woman, Burkina Faso)

Recommendations

Again awareness for women’s capabilities in farm work has to be raised: Involving more female farmers in cashew cultivation transforms household relations and is a chance for women to gain more decision-making power due to the income they earn from cashew as following findings from Ghana show.

Ghana

Women in Ghana are more involved in decision-making than in Burkina Faso. Generally decisions are taken jointly but women might even decide independently.

“If I suggest something and he does not want to do, I will then go ahead and do it myself, building this house for instance” (Woman, Ghana)

“My husband and I always make decisions together. He always consults me” (Woman, Ghana)

“When it comes to the money I make, I decide and only ask my husband for his opinion”
(Woman, Ghana)

“I keep all the money I make for myself” (Woman, Ghana)

In Ghana there are more economic activities than in Burkina Faso and women earn more money – most importantly since they have their own cashew farms. Women keep the money they earn from cashew farming, can use it on what they want and need and do not have to ask their husbands for permission to spend it. However also in Ghana men remain more powerful than women in deciding on the money use.

“If he says no, I can’t do anything. I will not do anything that upsets him” (Woman, Ghana)

Yet the extent is different and compared to Burkina Faso, women have a lot more saying.

Findings from both countries point out that there is a high return if women are more involved in decision-making: The money women earn or receive is mostly spent on the household and the family needs, especially on the upbringing, health and education of their children. An investment in increasing women’s share of the household income is therefore

likely to positively impact on the well-being of the family and ultimately reduces rural poverty.

“We did not understand anything in this world and we do not want that the same will happen to our children” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“I would spend more on education and clothing if I had more money” (Woman, Ghana)

“Yes, she would make changes like the amount to give at funerals and also on food but I am the head of the family” (Man, Ghana)

Finding 7: ACi’s intervention empowers women in farm work and household

As seen in the section on its gender approach, ACi promotes women’s well-being through cashew farming, mainly in form of trainings and specific activities. This chapter will now have a closer look on how these two initiatives have contributed to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

1. ACi trainings

ACi renders – in cooperation with the respective agricultural ministries – mainly three training programs promoting good agricultural practices: harvest/post-harvest, existing farm management and maintenance and establishment of new plantations. As a result, farmers now apply the following good practices taught in the trainings:

- Nylon technique to detach the nut from the apple
- Pruning with a chainsaw instead of using cutlass
- Conservation management
- Proper clearing of plantation
- Drying of nuts
- Let the apples fall down before collection



Picture 6: Woman detaching cashew nut from cashew apple (Ghana)

The majority of respondents expressed that they learned a lot during the trainings and the application of good practices offers following benefits:

- Higher yields
- Increased income

- Materials (leaflets, books etc.) provided for domestic use, especially the pictures in the books are helpful
- Know how to distinguish between good and spoiled nuts
- Understand more about cashew production and the whole sector

“Before I did not know the value of cashew” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“The trainers have raised our awareness that cashew production is good and can help us gaining money if we do it the right way” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“If there were more training, we would not complain” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Another positive outcome for female farmers is the so called ‘snowball effect’: Training attendants disseminate the knowledge learned to their partners, friends, and neighbors etc. who were not able to attend. It has been identified that especially women share a lot with other (female) farmers.



Picture 7: ACi training on grafting (Ghana)

Husband and wife also regularly discuss the things that they have learned in the trainings, for example on how to apply the nylon technique. Men usually encourage their wives to participate in the trainings, have usually no objections if their wives want to attend and partners often go together. This is a very good finding and was not thought of beforehand: Hence, mediation is not really needed and the risk of offending the husbands with raising awareness for their wives’ needs and wishes to attend the trainings is considerably reduced.

Limitations

As seen in Figure 1, more men than women attend the trainings due to following reasons:

- Women have to do household chores/take care of the children
- Women are not allowed to go (rarely)
- Women were not informed/selected by extension agents or village officials
- Women do not consider themselves as eligible to attend and do not think of themselves as ‘real’ cashew farmers since their farms are small, their husband is more involved and they are new in growing cashew

- Women are more immobile and cannot go far for trainings if they live in remote villages
- In Burkina Faso certain trainings did not concern women: only harvest/post-harvest training is of interest for them since they are just involved in this part of cashew production

“My husband has not told me about the training. It is the men who participate” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Moreover, men are more active and share more during ACi-trainings as women feel intimidated by the men’s dominance and are afraid of speaking out in public.

Another major limitation is the lack of female agricultural extension agents who function as trainers for the farmers. In Burkina Faso there are almost no female extension agents and in Ghana fewer women than men have been instructed for being trainers. ACi usually recruits these trainers from agricultural ministries or employs knowledgeable production leaders from the respective villages. However, there are two main constraints in this approach, especially in Burkina Faso. First, women rarely work in agricultural ministries or study agriculture at university level. Second, the search for female production leaders has not been successful in Burkina Faso where women are not responsible for cashew farming, do not have their own farm and are generally less knowledgeable in agriculture than men.

Recommendations

Trainings are generally well-regarded by respondents who asked for new trainings in e.g. fertilizer application, stocking, drying and commercialization of cashew nuts. Interview partners also expressed the wish of having regular updates on new developments and techniques in cashew production. Very few women stated that training contents remain unclear and named fire belt establishment, intercropping and nursery management as the aspects in which they would like to deepen their knowledge.

Crucial in the efforts to reach and involve more women are the skills and motivation of the extension agents. The best solution is to train more female extension agents who can relate more to women’s demands. Women also feel more comfortable to speak out if training sessions are lead by female trainers. In addition, female extension agents function as role

models as women and men realize that agriculture is not necessarily a men's domain and that there are also knowledgeable women involved in cashew cultivation.

In order to increase the share of female extension agents, more women need to be employed in agricultural ministries from where ACi sources its trainers. In this regard, agricultural education for girls should be intensified. A viable solution would be to work together with schools, colleges, agricultural universities etc. to create incentives and reach women's interest in agriculture.

Generally, all extension agents have to consider and be knowledgeable in women's needs as well as should include more women in their training activities. To achieve that, various measures could be implemented:

Firstly, gender sensitivity could be taught in workshops for already active trainers as well as be included in trainings for new extension agents. The aim of these advanced trainings would be to teach extension agents the techniques to facilitate that women participate more actively and that their voices are heard as well as to mediate conflicts between men and women. A less extensive effort would be to develop manuals or give presentations concerning these aspects.

Often male extension agents contact village representatives to inform the farmers about the upcoming training. These predominantly male leaders invite mainly men to participate and neglect female farmers. Secondly, therefore, extension agents need either make clear that women are explicitly welcome in the trainings or invite the women directly to the trainings by themselves, in particular through visits to their houses.

Thirdly, since trainings are usually held at the farm, attention should be paid on choosing the appropriate time to ensure women – who are occupied with household chores – can participate. Training activities could for example be broken down in more numerous but shorter sessions so that women do not have to commit for a long time. Additionally, videos with the training contents can be created and shown to strengthen the message and reach more women at flexible times.

Fourthly, a more radical thought would be to hold separate sessions for women and men and evaluate the outcomes to see if women are significantly more confident and informed plus engage more in cashew farming and apply more what has been taught.

Fifthly, incentives have to be created to make sure that women who live in more remote communities and are generally more immobile can attend the trainings, e.g. through the payment of the transport costs.

Lastly, women in Burkina Faso should be encouraged to also attend the other trainings (besides harvest/post-harvest) in order to learn new things and gain experiences in male-dominated areas. This might lead to women's stronger engagement in overall farm management.

To conclude, if men continue to be more involved in trainings, power relations will prevail since men will maintain their status of being more knowledgeable and experienced in farm work. It is therefore a good investment to reach more women in training activities to ensure gender equality and encourage women to be more involved and take advantage of the benefits of cashew farming.

Best practices

Extension agents should follow up on trainings with the participants to monitor and verify lessons learned, evaluate if practices are adequately applied in the field and how high the adoption rate is – measured with sex-disaggregated figures. A suitable way to do this has been identified in the survey: In one village, respondents pointed out that extension agents visit former training participants at their houses, discuss problems and uncertainties and remind them of good farming practices and when to apply them. Through these visits, also women who did not participate in the trainings can be reached and they can gain awareness of the training contents.

Furthermore the many husbands who attend the trainings together with their wives provide a good example to follow and disseminate in order to encourage other farmers to also take their women along.

2. Specific activities

The second sub-chapter examines three of ACi's already implemented measures and one planned activity that offer noticeable benefits in particular for women.

a) Innovative programs: Radio messages

Radio messages transmit good agricultural practices and complement training programs mainly as a reminder, e.g. when is the best time to harvest. They are therefore especially very useful for women who might not have taken part in trainings. Female respondents particularly like the radio messages, listen regularly and want further information through this medium. They shared that they have learned more about farm management and good agricultural practices, amongst others how to establish a new cashew farm, how to prune the trees, how to kill insects with toxic substances, how to treat and reduce tree diseases, how to properly clear the farm etc.

“I have listened to the radio program before. There was once a discussion on how to identify good kernel. They said that when you crack the nut and it looks white then it is good but if it is black it means that it is not good and must not be used” (Woman, Ghana)

Limitations

One respondent in Burkina Faso did not understand the language of transmission (Douala) so she did not learn anything. Douala is the major language in ACi’s area of intervention in Burkina Faso, however if the capacities are there it would be helpful to translate and transmit the messages as well in Moré, one of Burkina Faso’s major languages, and in other not so-widely used languages.

Recommendations

Since statements and answers show the popularity of the messages, new topics could be identified and developed. In this regard, specially designed messages on gender equality and women’s disadvantages can be included to raise awareness, e.g. on the fact that if women participate more in cashew farming, the income could be increased. Moreover, the program has to be up-scaled to reach farmers in regions where no messages have yet been transmitted.

“If you could establish these programs here, that will be good news” (Man, Ghana)

“I have not been part yet but it would be good to be part. I would like to get involved in anything that would help me in my cashew production” (Woman, Ghana)

b) Nursery groups

In order to increase the yields of cashew trees, ACi has established nurseries to grow high-quality seedlings which can be used when mature on the farms of cashew growers. The nurseries are run by farmers who form a group to grow and take care of the seedlings.

Women particularly benefit from the involvement in the nurseries since it gives them not only all the benefits of a group membership, in particular access to social networks (see Finding 9), but also an independent and further income source through the selling of the seedlings.



Picture 8: ACi nursery (Ghana)

Furthermore, even women who do not own a cashew farm can be members of the groups. The involvement in a nursery group is more flexible and women who e.g. have no access to land or too many household tasks to do can still benefit from the services and gain knowledge in agriculture. Hence, the focus of the project in this regard goes beyond its direct goals and targets rural poor women in general. One woman for example has reported that due to the training on grafting and budding rendered within the group she can now do it for other farmers for a fee.

“I can quickly graft to save my farm if some seedlings go bad (...). I give the good seeds to my friends and teach them how to graft” (Woman, Ghana)

Limitations and recommendations

Since only in Ghana women are engaged in the nurseries, it has to be facilitated that women in Burkina Faso also join the existing groups which to date are just composed of men. What is more, even if women in Ghana account for the majority of group members, more men occupy leadership positions. Both limitations can be overcome for example through awareness-raising and the creation of incentives already exemplified in more detail (see also Finding 9).

In Burkina Faso, people report that nurseries are scattered and not established in all areas. Farmers from these regions only have access to lower-quality seedlings from neighbors or

friends resulting in reduced yields. This suggests extending the network of nurseries so that a greater number of farmers benefit from the services and improved planting material.

Often problems are reported: scions came late, seedlings did not grow, the group did not earn income or interpersonal problems occurred. Therefore, nursery groups need more assistance, e.g. on money and quality management, how and where to sell the seedlings, behavior in a group, conflict resolution, gender sensitivity etc. These trainings would not only benefit the groups but also contribute to greater efficiency of the entire cashew sector since seedlings as inputs stand at the beginning of the value chain and crucially determine success or failure of cashew-growing.

c) Beekeeping

In a pilot project in Ghana's Northern region, ACi has implemented trainings for women in beekeeping. Beekeeping sites or farmers who are engaged in beekeeping have not been visited in this survey. However, given the interest expressed by interviewed female farmers to participate as well as the huge potential of beekeeping for income diversification and women's empowerment, this activity should be up-scaled and also be implemented in other regions of Ghana and Burkina Faso.

d) Cashew apple processing

Cashew apple processing as an income-generating activity has been identified as a viable activity in several feasibility studies. This survey has made a contribution and found the huge potential this byproduct offers particularly for rural women. Cashew farmers in Ghana and Burkina Faso rarely use the cashew apples and the huge majority are thrown away or left to rot on the plantations. A minor percentage is eaten or fed to the animals and an even smaller share of farmers sells them if the market is not far away. In Burkina Faso, women have however been seen selling the apples at the road side. While in Ghana farmers mostly have a basic understanding of what cashew apples can be used for – juice, alcoholic beverages, marmalade etc. – in Burkina Faso rarely people know that cashew apples have a value and can be processed into sellable goods. Almost all respondents and especially

women stated their interest of becoming involved in the processing, receiving training and learning more about what can be done with the apples.

“I would be grateful if we can be trained on processing of the apples” (Man, Ghana)

“The cashew apples are thrown away. I would like to know what it can be used for. Maybe I could do this and make some small money which I can keep in my cloth and buy what I want” (Woman, Ghana)



Picture 9: Cashew-apple processing (Ghana)

It can therefore be concluded that there is a good starting point for promoting cashew apple processing since the farmers are motivated and – at least in Ghana – already knowledgeable about the use of the byproduct. Moreover, if there were more cashew apple processing factories around, farmers would benefit from the income of selling the apples to them. These factories could favorably be run by local women-only cashew organizations.

In conclusion, specific and innovative activities offer a huge potential for transforming women’s lives and contribute to their well-being mainly through access to social capital and independent incomes. It is therefore worth to think about new and alternative measures but also importantly to develop and search new and alternative markets for women’s products.

Finding 8: Women’s heavy workloads remain or have even increased

Most respondents report an increase in farm work due to recognizing the value of cashew – farmers have neglected cashew cultivation before – and applying the good agricultural practices they have been trained on. This holds especially true for women who are more engaged in cashew farming than before; e.g. due to higher yields women have to collect more nuts. However, even if women are more involved in cashew production, they are still responsible for the tasks they have always done such as care work (children and elderly), housework, small businesses (selling food items or leftover food crops) etc. What is more, men rarely acknowledge their wives’ heavy workloads, do not perceive household chores as actual work and show no incentives to help the women with their specific tasks. Once they

have finished farm work, men mostly relax or go out while the women wake up earlier, e.g. for preparing breakfast, and still do housework after coming back from the farm. This has therefore major limitations on women's free and leisure times and wives – except for weddings, baptisms etc. – rarely go out to meet friends or family members. It can therefore be concluded that women generally work more hours than men.

“I take care of all the kids plus have household chores before we both go to our separate farms. He only works on his farm” (Woman, Ghana)

As a result of their multiple burdens, women in Ghana might neglect the work on their own cashew plantations and experience lower yields than men. Moreover, women often bring their children to the farm which even increases their burden, e.g. they need to do the weeding with a baby on their back.

“I live with my mother and when I'm away there is nobody to take care of her so I do everything for her before leaving for the farm. My mother is very old and immobile so I feel bad leaving her all by herself but I have no choice” (Woman, Ghana)

“We prepare the food, we bring the food to the farm, we help on the farm and when we go home we prepare the dinner while the men relax” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Differences Ghana – Burkina Faso

Even fewer women go out in Burkina Faso where women are expected to stay at home and take care of the children. As a result, Burkinabé women who spend all their time at the house lack independence and are deprived of access to social networks and capital.

Furthermore, men in Burkina Faso state more often that they work more hours and harder than their wives; in Ghana men rather realize the burden of their women however do also not take incentives to help or contribute to 'women's tasks'. Mainly women from Burkina Faso sometimes even conclude themselves that their husbands work more than they.

“Men have more strength so I believe my husband does work more than I do” (Woman, Ghana)

“A woman cannot work harder than a man” (Man, Ghana)

“I am the head; she just works at the house” (Man, Burkina Faso).

“She is a woman, I have to work more than her” (Man, Burkina Faso)

“I work more in the house since you must satisfy your husband” (Woman, Burkina Faso).

These perceptions reflect the discrimination and subordination of women in Burkina Faso. As it has been concluded before, women work more hours than men however their efforts are not paid and not visible so they usually do not gain respect or attention from family and society for their merits.

Recommendations

As it has been argued before, the pressure of work prevents women from taking part in trainings or meetings of farmer-based organizations. It is however worth to note that women's higher work burdens do not only have the negative effects examined above: Due to working more in agriculture, women have more control over their own farm and earn higher incomes, mostly in Ghana. The solution can therefore not be to ban women from cashew farming but rather to lessen their workloads through different mitigating measures.

Firstly, men have to learn and realize women's high and heavy workloads and perceive them as actual work. Due to several socio-cultural factors and stereotypes such as the pride of the men, the fear of being mocked by friends or 'traditions' that permit men to work in the house, men do not help their women in the household. The ultimate goal is therefore to work towards positive social change in rural communities.

Secondly, the development and deployment of innovative technology in cashew farming would decrease women's burdens, e.g. women-friendly sprayers with a reduced capacity allow women to use tools and carry out their tasks independently.

Lastly, a more elaborated measure is to provide basic services and infrastructure that would help women to save time. The availability of social amenities will reduce women's time constraints. Therefore other tasks have to be reduced or made easier, e.g. through the construction of water wells near the house, the establishment of child care facilities in the community etc.

Finding 9: Women benefit from memberships in farmer-based organizations but do not occupy leadership positions

The membership in a farmer-based organization (FBO) offers considerable benefits for women:

- Share knowledge and ideas, learn new things and understand more about the cashew business/sector; before they had no access to these information since the husbands were the only ones involved
- Access to inputs such as seedlings, e.g. through group-run nurseries where they get high-quality seedlings ensuring better quality and higher yields of their plantation
- Group and bulk selling facilitate higher prices for their cashews
- Learn better marketing skills to commercialize cashew
- Get easier access to ACi-trainings and information on these
- Direct links to processing companies: higher prices, increased transparency
- Access to joint and communal labor: members work together on individual farms
- Access to hired labor
- Access to group-facilitated loans and credits to use for women's small businesses as well as for farm expansion; organizations have also easier access to credits of rural banks and financial institutions (see 5.2.)

"The membership benefits me a lot, firstly I gain a higher price on the market through group bulk selling and secondly if I have problems, the group can lend me some money which I can pay back out of my stocks" (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Moreover, FBOs offer spaces where women gain access to social capital and networks, i.e. they go out of their house, come together, talk to other people, bond and find friends. These spaces and networks are rare in rural settings and are mainly offered by various FBOs and community meetings.



Picture 10: FBO representatives (Ghana)

However, only FBOs facilitate women's empowerment: Women rather participate in cashew-growing organizations since they are interested, share opinions and can relate the topics covered to their everyday work and livelihood. Conversely, women rarely attend political community gatherings where they feel uninformed and intimidated by the men's dominance.

In both countries many established cashew-farming groups can be found. While in Ghana there is often almost equal participation in terms of numbers of men and women in the group, fewer women are involved in Burkina Faso FBOs. Following reasons – mostly from Burkina Faso – were given of why women are not part of the organization:

- The land belongs to the husband who is responsible for cashew growing: women do not feel as being involved in cashew farming
- Women have just started growing cashew and do not consider themselves as eligible members but want to join in the future
- Women do not earn a lot of money and are therefore less powerful; members perceive that only powerful people who bring the group forward should participate
- Women have no time to attend the meetings due to household chores
- Cashew is a men's crop: Revenues of cashew growing go to the men so the women do not have an interest in participating
- Rarely: men do not allow their women to participate
- People are generally not aware of group's existence
- Women show little incentives of joining

"We were once called together and informed about the need to form such a group. After we were informed, we haven't heard anything again. But it is something I think will be good for us" (Woman, Ghana)

"The men said if the women are many, they bring in more problems" (Woman, Ghana)

Normally, men do not show objections and often encourage their wives to participate in their FBO. Hence, having men's acceptance offers a good and necessary precondition to lobby for more female participation.

In terms of group decision-making, in both countries men have significantly more power, occupy the main leadership positions, share more during meetings and usually take the last decision. In Burkina Faso, men's influence is still stronger than in Ghana.

“The men decide and the women follow because it is the men who take the right decisions and tackle the problems. The women come after the men” (Man, Burkina Faso)

“The men participate, the women don’t want to talk in front of their men” (Man, Ghana)

“We share our opinions but it is the men who have the final word since I give my ideas but these are not taken into account. The men are stronger than us” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“The men react positively towards our ideas and contributions but mostly it is the men who give the solution” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

However – unlike in community meetings – female FBO members are generally knowledgeable and confident to share their opinions and ideas. The men consider and listen to the voices of the women, especially in decisions regarding harvest and post-harvest handling. This part of cashew production is considered as a women’s domain and in these decisions – e.g. when is the best time to collect the nuts – women can convince the men of their viewpoints and suggestions.

“If the idea is good, then we accept, if not we will not” (Man, Burkina Faso)

“The women follow the decisions of the men, but the women give often good ideas which the men accept” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Women in both countries rarely occupy FBO leadership positions (chairman, secretary, treasurer, activity organizer, porter), not even if they are more numerous or equally represented, due to the following reasons:

- More women are analphabets and less educated (very few older women in Burkina Faso have attended school): cannot articulate well, not able to formulate policies etc.
- Women do not have the knowledge and power needed to occupy these positions
- Women are afraid to confront men and do not dare to question the status quo
- Women do not receive information of involvement and election of positions
- Women do not attend meetings regularly; men do not consider the reasons, e.g. housework
- Only the most hard-working people can run for positions: These are all men in the member’s perceptions
- Men win the elections due to male ‘circles’: women are not nominated or appointed

“I have a lot of work to do so I am not very interested in becoming an executive because I might be busy when we call for executive meetings” (Woman, Ghana)

“The men occupy the posts and we the women follow them because we are analphabets”
(Woman, Burkina Faso)

“We have discussed the relationship and came to the insight that we women are not educated and cannot adequately represent the group” (Woman, Ghana)

If women occupy positions – more in Ghana than in Burkina Faso – they are only porter or activity organizer, the lower posts where not a lot of power is exercised. In Ghana, women are also often the treasurers as it is believed that they can handle the money better. There are mainly two explanations for women’s unchanged roles: Firstly, both male and female respondents view women as being equally represented so women do often not show incentives to seek for higher positions and men assume that they are not interested and remain the status quo. A male respondent for example perceived it as fair and equal that women are porter and treasurer while men are chairman and secretary.

Secondly, however, the relationships between men and women have regularly been discussed, amongst others have the women demanded more power or money from the group’s income. But no real problem-solving has followed and the men paid lip service, e.g. claim that they are in the process of doing something about it and will address women’s concerns in the future.

“We sometimes discuss the role of men and women. We agreed that women have less energy and should do the picking of the cashew” (Man, Ghana)

“We had meetings about the relationship between men and women and we demanded more power. I was then chosen by the group leader as the treasurer and he said that I should lead the women while the others should stay members” (Woman, Ghana)

Precisely, the last statement illustrate that men do not strive towards equal representation: one woman is given a position in order to satisfy the others and end the discussion but female members are not really empowered or have more saying in decision-making.

Differences Ghana-Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, fewer women are members of FBOs than in Ghana. Yet, it has been found out that if women are involved they always attend the meetings unlike in Ghana where women sometimes state that they do not go regularly due to time constraints. However, also Ghanaian women usually go to the gatherings.

“Yes I attend every time because I want to understand more” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

In Burkina Faso, since cashew is a men’s crop fewer women are interested in cashew organizations and are more active in e.g. rice-growing FBOs. Moreover, socio-cultural traditions and gender stereotypes are still stronger in Burkina Faso than in Ghana. As a result, men are ahead and women follow, that is why men dominate in mixed FBOs and women do not occupy positions higher than treasurer.

“It is the society here” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

“The men are always stronger than the women” (Woman, Burkina Faso)

Limitations

Respondents shared the following shortcomings of FBOs:

- Mostly in Burkina Faso groups are still young, not yet certified and in the process of establishment: many FBOs do not even have names yet
- Due to interpersonal problems women sometimes cancel their memberships
- Lack of financial means: Difficult access to credits, credits are given late
- Not well organized: Do not have a vision or plan for the future
- High expectations can lead to discouraging the members if these expectations remain unfulfilled
- People do not have much leisure time when they always attend the meetings
- Dates for meetings might not be at appropriate times for women to attend
- People do not know the benefits of the groups

“There is no group around here since the price of the cashew is not high, so there is no incentive from the people” (Man, Burkina Faso)

Recommendations

As there are already many established FBOs and women’s groups – especially in Burkina Faso – it should be focused on strengthening these organizations and ensuring that women are equally represented in mixed groups.

Generally, women have to be encouraged to join FBOs and ultimately take on leadership positions. This can amongst others be facilitated through awareness raising. Essentially in these efforts is to take the men on board who often show resistance of the promotion of

women's empowerment. Men as well as particularly FBO and community leaders need to be convinced of the importance women play in cashew farming and of the benefits female members contribute to the group, for example through women's new and innovative ideas (see Annex for more detail). It has to be made clear that the aim is to promote equal opportunities for women and men instead of achieving women's empowerment at the expense of men's interests. Men should also be animated by group leaders to take their wives along to meetings.

Besides raising awareness, providing incentives could bring women to FBOs, for example would more women in leadership positions and with decision-making power encourage other female farmers to participate; in Ghana influential 'queen mothers' could play a role in this regard. Likewise, trainings and education in good agricultural practices motivate women to be more involved in cashew production and to join FBOs. Incentives could also be offered through competitions – e.g. the best female cashew farmer – or awards.

Due to cultural beliefs and practices, power relations prevail and women are not seen as suitable to occupy leadership positions. That is why quotas could initially be a viable option. Men would realize that women are capable of taking over responsibilities and over time accept them as leaders so that in the future women naturally take up these positions.

Especially in Burkina Faso, women expressed the advantage of being a member of a women-only group where they can discuss issues among themselves, are not afraid of talking or asking questions, understand more and do not face subordination by men. This could be a start-up intervention in order to organize women but probably not an ultimate goal since women need to be equally represented in mixed groups to facilitate real empowerment and tackle traditional power relations. If women are more numerous in mixed FBOs in Burkina Faso they would also share more, as happened in Ghana where more women are involved.

Best practices

Men already occasionally realize the capabilities of women and as well benefit from their wives' involvement such as that the entire family gains respect, illustrated in this statement of a man whose wife is the treasurer of a FBO:

“She does a good job so she got a good name in the community. A good name is better than riches” (Man, Ghana)

In general, good practices in organizations visited have mainly been identified in the area of capacity development. In this regard, one FBO organizes trainings independently in order to reach prospective new farmers or producers who want to refresh their knowledge. Another FBO has set up a committee to go round and assess the individual farms on the application of good practices to ensure continuing knowledge-sharing. Lastly, one cashew-growing organization works closely together with an agricultural extension officer who attends FBO meetings to share knowledge, provide external insights and give valuable suggestions.

5. Other findings

As the questionnaire has been designed very flexible and open-ended, discussions have also taken place concerning other topics than gender. Some of answers of respondents are presented in this chapter on four important side findings.

5.1. Reasons to grow cashew

Farmers recognized the profitability of cashew growing mainly through word of mouth by friends, neighbors etc. as well as through the introduction of cashew by governments and foreign development agencies. Cashew is moreover the principal cash crop and source of income for most farmers in the visited regions and considered a profitable crop to grow; food crops are mainly used for subsistence and not primarily for selling. The vegetation in the growing regions is another reason of engaging in cashew instead of cocoa (the other important cash crop) which requires wetter climates and is grown in other areas of Ghana.

“Cashew is the cocoa of the savannah” (Man, Ghana)

All farmers expressed the wish to stay in cashew production, see the potential of it and anticipate rising prices in the future. They also want their children to continue cashew growing and the production is therefore expected to increase over the next years.

“The financial value of cashew has helped us to get our children grown up” (Woman, Ghana)

5.2. Access to credit

“Almost all problems rely on financial means and access to money will solve them” (Man, Ghana)

Farmers in rural areas of Ghana and Burkina Faso do not have many opportunities to take credits. This is due to the following reasons:

- Lack of rural banks
- People have no deposits and bank accounts
- High interest rates
- Farmers need to have start capital, guarantees or assets
- Farmers need to have regular income which is however not secured due to external factors (climate, environment etc.)
- Farmers are afraid of debt and not being able to pay back

By accessing credit, women would be in a better position to adopt the use of improved practices and technologies and farm on a larger acreage. Respondents stated that they would use the credits in cashew production for expanding the plantation, hire labor or purchase machinery and agric tools for farm maintenance and chemicals (pesticides). If a family takes a credit, it is mostly the man who acquires it and handles the repayment.

Credits for women are even harder to obtain, especially in Burkina Faso, since women do not have assets and collaterals.

Recommendations

Farmer-based organizations could give out loans to members. This will benefit both sides, the farmers can expand their production and the FBO receives repayments with interest rates. Furthermore, rural banks are more willing to give credits to a group since the bank has more guarantees and uses group liability as a collateral substitute. Still the loan has to be paid back individually however the embeddedness in a group creates social pressure and increases the chance of repayment. Hence, FBO-membership enhances the opportunities for members to get access to credit. Important is however to establish clear rules and regulations on the repayment process in order to avoid conflicts in the group. Additionally, cashew processors could provide loans as they are in the best position and know about the cashew business. Here, trust building is however a constraining issue and has to be facilitated, e.g. by a third party such as the African Cashew Alliance (ACA) or a newly established department in the processing plant which is responsible for micro credit giving.

Generally, institutions that give out loans have to make their services more women-friendly, e.g. accepting other forms of collaterals, establishing longer repayment periods spread out over smaller payments or providing trainings on money management.

5.3. Child labor

The International Labour Organization (ILO 2012) points out that children's engagement in work is not labeled as child labor if children's health or personal development is not affected as well as if the work does not interfere with their schooling or education. Following this definition child labor could not be recognized on the cashew farms even if the children occasionally help their parents on the weekend or during vacations. Not all children are however engaged and they are never forced to work. The children also do not complain to take over these tasks and do them voluntarily or see it as their duty to help. Moreover, parents often have no other choice than to take them to the farm since they have to take care of them – particularly of babies who need to be breastfed. Hence, cashew farming is considered a family activity, especially in Burkina Faso where hired labor is rare. Most young children help with the nut collection or the detaching of the nut from the apple – not the physically most challenging tasks. However they might also just wait for their parents to finish or play on the farm if they are too young.

To sum up, the work children do in cashew farming cannot be seen as mentally or physically harmful or as being exploitative. It is moreover even regarded as something positive and “these kind of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life” (ILO 2012).

5.4. Hired labor

Farmers hire labor mostly for the weeding or during harvest times for the nut collection. The gender division examined in Finding 4 is reflected in hired labor: Women are mainly employed for collecting the nuts while men are more involved in the clearing and weeding. There are considerable differences between Ghana and Burkina Faso: In Burkina Faso farmers rarely can afford to employ hired labor on their farm and rather fall back on their

family members to help. Additionally, cashew producers also mostly have their own farms that they do not want to leave to work on somebody else's plot. In Ghana people predominantly from the North – an economically poorer area – migrate to the Brong-Ahafo region to temporarily work on the cashew farms located here. Farmers however also seek hired labor locally and work with the same laborers for many years. In Burkina Faso, if hired labor is employed these workers are mainly acquaintances or friends coming from the same village or district. Since the farms in Burkina Faso belong to the men who have more knowledge in cashew farming, they are the ones supervising the hired labor while in Ghana this is also done by women who employ workers on their own cashew plantations.

6. Conclusions

The survey has shown that cashew farming offers substantial benefits for rural women in Ghana and Burkina Faso. This is facilitated mainly through ACi's intervention and favorable agricultural situations such as women's traditional involvement in this sector as well as established FBOs and women-only organizations. It is now important to take up these good findings and use the potential and advantages of cashew farming to contribute to gender equality, empower women and increase their well-being.

ACi provides with its trainings and specific measures important and effective initiatives to promote women in cashew farming: Knowledgeable female farmers with higher yields and higher incomes are not only economically empowered but also question traditional power relations in the household. Even if considered a major step, this alone does however not strengthen women's voice and agency and other rather social measures, as illustrated partly in the recommendations given at the end of each section, are needed to facilitate real empowerment, e.g. through creating access to social networks for women.

Moreover, women still participate less than men in ACi trainings, farm management and farmer-based organizations. Particularly in Burkina Faso women are only involved at the lower ends of the value chain and gain as a result fewer returns from the production. Generally, it can be concluded that Ghana is more progressive with regards to gender equality in cashew farming. Nonetheless, also in Burkina Faso positive aspects have been

found such as the many women-only groups already established. As schooling rates in Burkina Faso are becoming more equal for girls and boys, it is important to use this potential and promote the new generation of qualified and educated women.

As this example shows, times are favorable for achieving gender equality since societies are rapidly changing in both countries. Cashew farming can contribute to transform traditional gender stereotypes as seen for example in slowly-changing household power relations through cashew-related income in Ghana. Furthermore, women's roles in agriculture are growing at a faster pace than men's and they are significantly taking over tasks which were traditionally thought to be a male-dominated domain.

To conclude, eliminating gender disparities is the smart thing to do since inequality has an economic cost and if the aim is to promote the African cashew value chain, it cannot be afforded to neglect half of its workforce. Engaging women's talents and capabilities in cashew farming renders economic growth through amongst others better yields and higher incomes and therefore ultimately reduces rural poverty.

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Annex: Summarized recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners

Women participate less in farmer-based organizations (FBOs) and trainings and do not have leadership positions

- Create incentives for women to participate more, to join organizations, e.g. more women in leadership positions and with decision-making power would encourage other women to participate
- Render education for women: good agricultural practices, leadership, money management etc.
- More women-only groups in cashew production are needed to empower women
- Men should be encouraged to bring along their wives to trainings and FBO meetings
- Women volunteers and pioneers needed to be magnets and community leaders for the women (e.g. successful female farmers function as role models)

Women have generally higher work burdens than men

- Women's workloads have a major influence on participation of trainings and women do not participate since they have to carry out household tasks
- Innovative technology would decrease the burden of women: e.g. women-friendly sprayers with reduced capacities (now knapsack consists of 15 liters, reduce to 5) in order to allow women to use tools and carry out their tasks independently
- Availability of social amenities will reduce women's time constraints so they can be part in trainings and have more time for farming: reduce other tasks or make them easier, e.g. water wells near the house, child care facilities in the community etc.

Fewer women are extension agents

- Intensify agricultural education for girls: work together with schools, colleges, agricultural universities to reach women's interest in agriculture etc.

Women have less access to land

- Facilitate access to credits for women to purchase land, e.g. through FBOs, micro credit institutions
- Mandatory joint titling: Land belongs to both husband and wife
- Widow's rights to use and control land which belonged to their husbands

Fewer women are involved in selling cashew nuts and as buying agents

- Education and training on financial aspects of the cashew sector, e.g. how to spot market developments, regular updates on prices, when is the best time to sell etc.
- Increase negotiating power and encourage women to sell their cashew nuts independently directly to the buyer or within FBOs

Facilitate income-diversification for rural women

- Cashew apple processing considered as an important income source for women
- Up-scale already rendered activities such as bee keeping and nursery management
- Identify other possible interventions to create an independent income for women

Awareness-raising

- Women's rights and responsibilities, e.g. in the household, on the farm, in the FBO
- Gender sensitivity: education on women's needs, how to involve and encourage women and realize their value in cashew production (husbands, extension agents, MOFA, FBOs)
- Establish local gender units in agricultural ministries, gender focal persons in districts and provide training for them on gender issues
- Create trainings especially designed to strengthen FBOs and women's organizations: money management, group selling, dispute resolution etc.
- Talk to women: What do they want? Are they satisfied with their situation? How can it be improved?
- Gender awareness for community members to clear the wrong perception of gender (as being negative for the men and taking influence and power from the husbands), male household heads do not know the concept of gender and what it is about

How to raise awareness? Why including gender in your work?

Educate men on women's potentials: Beneficial effects of women's empowerment

- When inputs are allocated more equitably within the household, productivity on women's plots can be improved → higher incomes for the whole family
- Gender alone is not a significant determinant of agricultural efficiency, women are equally capable of being good farmers
- Importance of female-headed households: Women are increasingly taking charge of rural households and family farms (In Ghana, female-headed households now make up 35 percent of the total, with 53 percent of these being in rural areas)
- Likely to be rewarded with funds: Donors and governments pay greater attention to measures addressing gender equality
- Use innovative approaches to disseminate information on gender, e.g. radio messages, SMS texts, soap operas etc. with gender content
- Reach next generation of women (attended school, are more educated)

Women smallholders often deliver better-quality products

- Increasing the number of women smallholders helps to improve product quality since women place greater diligence and attention to quality control
- Chance to get access to premium markets (higher returns for farmers since consumers pay more for higher quality): Fair Trade, organic markets

Women typically receive little of the income from crop sales

- Encourage male smallholders to give a share of their land or crop income to their wives helps increase productivity: Women will gain a greater incentive to improve production
- Benefits for family and community: Women preferably spend money for social and longer-term interests, e.g. children's education, food security, health

Getting more women into leadership positions in FBOs

- Women and their priorities are better represented in group decision-making
- Delivers commercial benefits: new and innovative ideas, different perceptions heard