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PROMOTING GENDER EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES: WHY IT MATTERS FOR AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS

GREATER ACCESS TO TRADE EXPANSION (GATE) PROJECT UNDER THE WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT IQC
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INTRODUCTION

Women's central role in agricultural development is well documented: women are engaged in laboring in the field, choosing seed varieties, caring for livestock, as well as processing and often marketing agricultural products. On smallholder family farms, women have historically and continue to provide a significant proportion of the agricultural labor force as unpaid household laborers. Women are also owners of farms, input supply stores, service delivery businesses, and export firms whose contributions to local, national, and global economies are far reaching.

As leading donors adopt value chain approaches to agricultural development, there is a strong imperative to consider gender issues. The Greater Access to Trade Expansion (GATE) Project's approach to Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains is built on the growing body of empirical evidence that addressing gender issues in value chains can improve program outcomes. Developing value chains and supporting gender equity are mutually supportive goals.

Given the importance of agricultural development as a springboard to economic growth and enhanced food security, there are several compelling reasons for development programs to explicitly examine gender issues and proactively integrate gender components into value chain analysis and development strategies. Value chain programs, when designed with gender equitable principles, can foster both competitiveness and gender equity goals to enhance poverty-reduction impacts. This brief outlines the following key "evidence-based correlations" among gender equality, competitiveness, and empowerment that inform the GATE Project's "Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains: A Handbook": *

- ✦ Increasing asset equality between men and women improves growth in the agricultural sector.
- ✦ Increasing gender equality in the labor market improves economic efficiency.
- ✦ Increasing opportunities for women improves equality and empowerment.

WOMEN'S CRUCIAL ROLE IN AGRICULTURE

Women produce more than 50 percent of the world's foodstuffs. In Southeast Asia women provide up to 90 percent of labor in rice cultivation. In Thailand, women are extensively engaged in agriculture, including about 50 percent of field crop cultivation, horticulture, plant protection, and harvesting. Almost 80 percent of soil improvement is undertaken by women. Almost all the work in food processing, mulberry tree cultivation, and silkworm raising is carried out by women. In Pakistan, 80 percent of livestock is managed by women. In Kenya, women are 75–89 percent of the agricultural labor force.

Reprinted from:

Williams, Mariama. Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System: A Handbook for Policy-Makers and Other Stakeholders. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003.

GENDER, ASSETS, AND AGRICULTURAL GROWTH

There is significant empirical evidence that asset inequality has negative impacts on growth in the agricultural sector. ** Relative to men, women worldwide tend to lack access to natural, physical, financial, and human capital. † Intra-household and extra-household factors such as legislation, institutional structures, and social expectations impact the differential accumulation and distribution of critical productive assets for men and women. These asset disparities can impede agricultural growth. The discussion below explores gender differences in assets across four key types of assets.

* The Handbook is available on the USAID Office of Women in Development website, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/.

** Birdsall et al., "Inequity and Growth"; Deininger and Squire, "New Ways"; Sabates-Wheeler, "Asset Inequality."

† Doss, Grown, and Deere, "Gender and Asset Ownership."

LAND

Studies highlight the importance of secure property rights for increased agricultural productivity.* Secure land ownership increases women's incentives for agricultural investments, leading to higher productivity. Further, women who own land are also more likely to have access to other essential assets including credit, technical assistance, and information.

Globally, women's land ownership rates lag behind those of men. In much of sub-Saharan Africa, few rural women own agricultural land: 3 percent in Zimbabwe, 11 percent in Benin, and 25 percent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Women's landholdings are also smaller than men's; for example, the average size of women's landholdings in Zimbabwe is 1.86 hectare (compared with 2.73 for men) and .98 hectare in Benin (compared with 1.76 for men).** A 1999 survey found that throughout the Middle East, women own only 5 percent of land.† In Egypt, for example, less than 3 percent of all women own land. Whereas the average size farm size is 1.7 hectares, the average size of land owned by women is .7 hectare.†† The share of woman landowners in Latin America ranges from 11 percent in Brazil to 27 percent in Paraguay. Further, household surveys in eight Latin American countries revealed that the mean amount of land owned by women was always less than men's.‡

LABOR

Gender roles are important social determinants of the availability of labor. It is widely recognized that disparities in access to and control over labor can impede productivity. Social expectations underpin the gender division of agricultural and household tasks. These social expectations can lead to unequal bargaining power that distorts intra-household allocation of labor and

productive resources. In rural Guatemala, Katz found significant differences between men's and women's labor allocation.‡‡ It is socially accepted that the head of the household has the prerogative to mobilize women's labor. Women's primary obligation is to domestic labor. Only after these responsibilities are fulfilled, by herself, her daughter or, daughters-in-law's labor, is a woman able to divide her time between income-generating activities for herself and/or for her husband.

Relative to men, women also often lack resources to hire additional labor when family labor is not adequate to meet labor needs.§ With the intensification of French beans production in Meru, Kenya, only 39 percent of women hired people to work on horticultural crops. Unable to rely on their husbands for labor or hire casual laborers, women were forced to increase their own labor inputs.±

INPUTS

Adequate and timely access to inputs is critical for improving productivity. In addition, women have relatively less access to labor, improved seeds, fertilizers, machinery, and improved technologies than men. In Gambia, an irrigated rice project found that less than 1 percent of women owned a seeder, weeder, or multipurpose cultivation instrument, compared with 27 percent, 12 percent, 18 percent of men, respectively.±± Similar differences were found in Kenya and Zambia.*** Research in Burkina Faso in the 1980s showed that men and women had different access to labor and other inputs on their plots, resulting in different yield levels, with women's yields being lower than men's. The researchers found that the differences were not the result of inefficiency on the part of the women but rather resulted from the lower access that women had to labor and fertilizer. By allocating labor and inputs more equitably within the household, models predicted that

* Jacoby, Li, and Rozelle "Hazards of Expropriation"; Besley, "Property Rights."

** Cotula, Lorenzo, Gender and Law.

† Keddie, Women in the Middle East.

†† Tzannatos and Kaur, "Women in the MENA Labor Market."

‡ Deere and Doss "Gender and the Distribution of Wealth."

‡‡ Katz, "Gender and Trade."

§ Spring, "Commercialization and Women Farmers."

± Dolan, "Gender and Witchcraft."

±± Mehra, "Raising Agricultural Productivity."

*** Quisumbing, "Improving Women's Agricultural Productivity."

yield increases of between 10 and 20 percent could be achieved across the household.* Another study using data from several other Kenyan villages concluded from its models that if women farmers were given the same level of agricultural inputs and education as men, their yields would increase by more than 20 percent.**

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

The importance of financial capital for agricultural productivity is well established. A field study in Kenya tested the effects of providing fertilizer credits on maize yields. It found that when women's groups were given credit for fertilizer, alleviating the need for an up-front cash investment, their maize yields increased significantly on the group plots and the resulting additional income was reinvested to purchase fertilizer and other inputs in later seasons.†

Access to finance remains a key impediment for women entrepreneurs. For example, in Kenya, women represent 48 percent of business owners yet receive only 7 percent of formal credit.†† A survey by the International Labor Organization (ILO) on women entrepreneurs in Pakistan found that while women's entrepreneurship is on the rise, less than 5 percent of women business owners' accessed credit from formal sources.‡ In addition, studies indicate that of the credit disbursed to women, only a limited amount is for agriculture. For example, in Indonesia, women receive approximately 13 percent of formal credit, but only 2 percent is for agricultural investments.‡‡

HUMAN CAPITAL

A World Bank study found strong correlations between gender equality in education and agricultural productivity. Achieving gender parity in education could increase farm yields by 7 to 22 percent.§ Not only do women's education rates worldwide lag behind men's, women are also less likely than men to pursue degrees in agricultural

sciences. Though women's enrollment rates vary from country to country, a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) found that the percentage of women studying in this field ranged from a low of 6 percent in Zambia, 19 percent to in Nigeria, 27 percent in the Philippines, and up to 48 percent in Jamaica.±

MISSED GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Burkina Faso: Shifting existing resources between men's and women's plots within the same household could increase output by 10–20 percent.

Kenya: Giving women farmers the same level of agricultural inputs and education as men could increase yields obtained by women more than 20 percent.

Tanzania: Reducing time burdens of women could increase household cash incomes for smallholder coffee and banana growers by 10 percent, labor productivity by 15 percent, and capital productivity by 44 percent.

Reprinted from:

Blackden and Bhanu. "Gender, Growth and Poverty Reduction." Special Program of Assistance for Africa 1998 Status Report on Poverty, World Bank Technical Paper No. 428. Washington, DC: World Bank, 1999. Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003.

* Alderman, et al. "Gender Differentials."

** Blackden and Bhanu, "Gender, Growth and Poverty Reduction."

† Achieng et al. "Sustainability of Fertilizer."

†† IFC, "Women Entrepreneurs."

‡ Niethammer et al., "Women Entrepreneurs."

‡‡ IFC, "Access to Credit."

§ FAO, "Gender and Food Security."

± Van Crowder, "Enrolment of Women."

GENDER, LABOR MARKETS, AND ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY

Gender bias in labor markets creates distortions in the allocation of labor, affecting productivity outcomes. The ILO has noted that discrimination faced by women and minority groups is a significant obstacle to economic efficiency and social development. Sex-segregated labor markets lead to losses in total output because of the misallocation of the labor force. In addition, reduced employment opportunities for women may reduce the average ability of the workforce, thus leading to lower economic growth. Misallocation of human resources compromises a country's competitive potential.* For value chain programs concerned with the competitiveness of firms and sectors, unresponsive labor markets distort human capital investment and limit the ability of firms to upgrade, adapt, and compete in a rapidly changing global market.**

SEX SEGMENTATION IN THE AGRICULTURAL LABOR MARKET

While both men and women participate in agriculture activities, sex segmentation across occupational categories is common. A key feature of gender segregation in agricultural labor markets is the clustering of women in low-entry, low-return activities and the clustering of men in high-entry, high-return activities.† Women are often hired to do labor intensive tasks such as weeding and pruning in the fields, selection and cutting in processing, and sorting and wrapping in packing. On the other hand, men are hired to do tasks that require strength such as lifting crates,

operating machinery such as tractors, applying pesticides, and maintaining equipment.†† Dolan and Sorby draw the following conclusions about women's employment in the agricultural sector: women are employed for labor-intensive tasks; women generally earn lower wages than men; women are the major supplier of temporary, seasonal, and casual labor, while men occupy the majority of permanent jobs as well as management positions.‡ In Chile, up to 70 percent of the temporary workers in the fruit export labor market are women, and the majority of permanent workers are men.‡‡ Similarly, a USAID-funded project in Egypt in the 1990s found that women, especially young women (ages 14–25), formed the bulk of the labor force in horticulture, working both in the fields and in the packing houses. Employers preferred women for planting, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting.

From the maquiladoras in Mexico to the strawberries fields of Egypt, perceptions about women's supposedly "natural" abilities contributes to the congregation of women into low-skilled, low-paying jobs. For example, women's familiarity with domestic work, especially food preparation, is often presented as an argument for their greater suitability for handling delicate horticultural products like strawberries.§ In reality, this channeling of men and women into specific employment opportunities is the result of social and economic factors, not natural or genetic ones. Employers regard women as submissive, docile, and flexible with regard to work conditions (e.g., work hours, wages, and contracts).

* Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, "Women's Empowerment."

** Gammage et al., "Enhancing Women's Access."

† Whitehead, "Gendered Impacts."

†† Lastarria-Cornhiel, "Feminization of Agriculture."

‡ Dolan and Sorby, "Gender Employment."

‡‡ Barrientos et al., "Women and Agribusiness."

§ El-Messiri, "Women Laborers."

GENDER, EMPLOYMENT, AND EMPOWERMENT

The concept of empowerment generally refers to people's ability to define and achieve their life goals more deliberately, using all of the resources (material, human, and social) available to them.* For women specifically, the ability to increase the value of their contributions to agriculture is important not only in terms of the value of the income they earn but the value that income has in changing gender roles and relations in the household, the community, and elsewhere. Evidence from the garment sector, where large numbers of women were drawn into low-wage and low-skilled jobs in the 1990s, has shown that women's increased access to income has supported economic independence, greater equality in the household, personal freedom, and female companionship.** A 1990 survey of female garment factory workers in Bangladesh indicated that two-thirds of women working had some control over their earnings, and in 2003, married women claimed that they had greater decision-making power in the household.† Honduran women in the garment sector earn 50 percent more than minimum wage and perceive themselves as having increased their political and household power.†† The literature also reports a positive correlation between employment and greater control over marriage decisions for younger women. Wage workers in rural Malaysia and Indonesia, factory operatives in Sri Lanka, and rural-urban migrants in Thailand all used the independence gained through their earnings to negotiate with parents over desired partners or to postpone marriage.‡

When the peanut market declined in Senegal, more women were encouraged to seek work outside of the farm. Through trading, working in the market, and cultivating their own fields, women earned independent income for personal needs such as clothing, medicine, and gifts. Women's income-generating activities have led to greater freedom and autonomy, including their ability to travel, make decisions about their labor, control their own income, and build relationships outside of the household.‡‡

In addition, waged employment also provides women with access to organizations through which they can address inhibiting gender roles and relations and campaign for change. For example, women who participated in the Seasonal Workers Union in Chile have challenged men's notion of "natural" gender roles. In addition, the women's political activism has led them to also confront the existing gendered division of labor.§

Studies also link women's empowerment and property rights. In the northern Peruvian highlands, for example, women landowners play a significant role in farm management and make decisions about intra-household labor and income allocation.± Similarly, positive correlations between women's land ownership, participation in household and farm-related decisions, and stronger bargaining positions within the household have been observed in Ecuador and southern Brazil.±± This is consistent with Argawal's argument that an individual's economic situation, command over property and control over institutions, and participation in collective action contribute to their ability to bargain within the household and beyond.***

* Oxaal, "Gender and Empowerment."

** Lim, "Women's Work."

† Raworth, *Trading Away our Rights*.

†† Ver Beek, "Maquilas."

‡ Ong, *Spirits of Resistance; Wolf Factory Daughters; Mills, Thai Women; Lynch, Juki Girls*.

‡‡ Perry "Wolof Women."

§ Bee and Vogel, "Temporeras."

± Deere, *Household and Class Relations*.

±± Hamilton, *The Two-Headed Household; Stephen, Women and Social Movements*.

*** Argawal, "'Bargaining' and Gender Relations."

GENDER EQUALITY AND THE VIRTUOUS DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

Addressing gender-based constraints can lead to a virtuous development cycle where women’s increased economic opportunities lead to improved overall development outcomes. There is compelling empirical evidence that gender equality helps foster economic growth. Increases in women’s employment can reduce poverty through intergenerational transmissions of wealth. Studies indicate that women’s earnings are often transmitted to and invested in other family members. These intergenerational transmissions of wealth contribute to human development and the creation of


human capital. Increased investment in human capital contributes to the economic growth of a country. As people become better nourished and educated, they contribute more to economic growth—particularly the composition and volume of outputs and exports—and are more able to adopt foreign technology and innovate upon it. Empirical evidence from Bangladesh, Peru, the Philippines, and elsewhere demonstrate how increases in women’s income earnings result in greater investments in education and health.* This, in turn, can make a remarkable difference in the output of workers and their capacity over a lifetime. Research, including studies of farmers in Sierra Leone, sugar cane workers in Guatemala, and road construction workers in Kenya has shown a range of labor productivity gains associated with an increase in caloric intake.** As Secretary Clinton stated, “Supporting women is a high-yield investment, resulting in stronger economies.”†

* Wright, “Assessing the Social Performance”; Ranis et al. “Economic Growth.” Smith et al., “Public Policy.”

** Ranis, et al. “Economic Growth.”

† Clinton, “International Women’s Day.”





ABOUT THE GREATER ACCESS TO TRADE EXPANSION (GATE) PROJECT

The Greater Access to Trade Expansion (GATE) Project is a five-year (September 2004–September 2009) United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Task Order (TO), funded by the Office of Women in Development (WID) and implemented by Development & Training Services, Inc. (dTS). GATE works with seven USAID Missions to better integrate gender considerations into economic growth and trade-related programs in order to help expand areas of opportunity and mitigate the adverse effects of economic and trade expansion for poor women and men. "Addressing Gender Issues in Global Value Chain Development" was implemented with technical support from Cultural Practice, LLC.

THE GATE PROJECT GENDER AND VALUE CHAIN RESOURCES

The GATE project developed a suite of resources to provide development practitioners with an understanding of and the tools for addressing gender issues in value chain analysis and development programs. These resources include the following:

- ✦ Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains: A Handbook
- ✦ Kenya Gender Training Materials: Integrating Gender in Agricultural Value Chains
- ✦ Tanzania Gender Training Materials: Integrating Gender in Agricultural Value Chains
- ✦ Gender and Pro-Poor Value Chain Analysis: Insights from the GATE Project Methodology and Case Studies
- ✦ A Pro-Poor Analysis of the Artichoke Sector in Peru (available in Spanish, with a summary in English)
- ✦ A Pro-Poor Analysis of the Shrimp Sector in Bangladesh

These are available on the USAID Office of Women in Development website, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/.

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