

# REVIEWING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN GENDER, MARKET ASSESSMENTS AND MARKET-BASED INTERVENTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper underlines the need for gender-informed market analysis to design responses to food insecurity, such as cash-based transfers (CBT), that have the potential to affect economic empowerment. Based on assessments carried out by WFP and partners, the authors point towards gaps in awareness, capacities and accountability and funding that reduce the availability of gender-informed market data. The authors, citing evidence on some of the main issues related to gender and markets based on case studies carried out by the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit's Gender and Markets Initiative across the West African region, make the case – and highlight some innovative tools – for a deeper understanding of social dynamics in households, communities and markets in order to know them better to support them better.

## INTRODUCTION

Market-based interventions can bring important contributions to sustainable food systems and build resilience.<sup>1</sup> Participation in markets is not only a means for men and women to secure their livelihood, but it also enables them to exercise agency, maintain dignity, build social capital and increase empowerment. Markets and cash-based transfers (CBT) are directly linked. CBT can make important contributions to enhancing economic empowerment at household and community levels and give incentives for changing the way certain market actors behave.

A focus on building resilient markets through CBT and other components can support preparedness, and recovery and rehabilitation stages of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. This should minimize the need for emergency response and support early recovery through resilience-oriented and market-based activities.

However, to affect positive change through market-based programming, it is essential to understand the complex social dynamics that govern market systems and the way they interlink with households and communities. These dynamics are inherently gendered, meaning that boys, men, girls and women hold different roles and responsibilities in society and are affected by political, legal, cultural and economic forms of discrimination that shape their participation and their agency as market actors.

WFP's regional Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit's Gender and Markets Initiative aims to build the evidence base for the impact and the transformative potential of gender in West African food markets.<sup>2</sup> It further seeks to strengthen WFP and partners' commitment to, accountability for and capacities in integrating gender into market analysis and design of market-based interventions so that they can have an empowering impact on food insecure individuals and communities in West and Central Africa. The initiative takes a systems perspective that allows for close examination of social networks and value chains and the development of new tools that can be easily integrated into existing market assessments to make gender differentials visible and comprehensible to analysts and decision-makers.

This article highlights some of the main issues identified and lessons learned with regards to the need for gender-informed market analysis for CBT programming. It presents the evidence from regional case studies that clearly shows the powerful impact of gender differentials in markets. The paper concludes that these findings can only be produced by applying gender-informed methodologies.

“Boys, men, girls and women hold different roles and responsibilities in society and are affected by political, legal, cultural and economic forms of discrimination that shape their participation and their agency as market actors.”

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<sup>1</sup> See more on this subject at <http://www.cashlearning.org/markets/markets>

<sup>2</sup> See more at <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/node/106>

## ARGUMENT

In 2015, the Gender and Markets Initiative took stock of what we then knew about gender in market analysis and more specifically, the roles of women in West African food markets. A secondary data review<sup>3</sup> analyzed 36 WFP and partner market assessments undertaken between 2010 and 2016 and concluded that only 50 percent included gender dynamics. This was true to varying extents at all stages of the assessment process (data collection, analysis and reporting), with the largest gaps found in analysis and reporting. The market section of food security assessments often included a gender aspect in disaggregating data and information on consumers. However, the main market actors were described as traders, without specification on whether they were men or women. Only 7 percent of the assessments contained a full gender analysis.

Why wasn't more done to understand the gender dimension within markets assessments, when it has been shown that gender analysis is a prerequisite for delivering well-tailored assistance to those most in need?<sup>4</sup> Through a regional consultation that took place in March 2016<sup>5</sup> with over 30 WFP, other UN and partner staff, as well as interviews with WFP staff from 12 different countries in the region, three main gaps and challenges in gender analysis were highlighted and solutions were identified.

### (1) Gaps in awareness of the need to integrate gender and market analysis

WFP VAM assessments conducted in West and Central Africa rarely include sex and age disaggregated data or gender analysis because staff are not aware of the implications and significance of this transversal theme. Gender therefore is regarded and treated as an additional obligation rather than an integral element of sound analysis and programming. As a result, when gender specificities are taken into consideration, it is in a limited manner that does not compel programmatic recommendations to address gender-based or age-related issues.

To address this, the Gender and Markets Initiative carried out 12 case studies in West Africa to provide staff and partners with evidence on the gendered disparities existing in markets, households and communities in terms of access to capital, to productive resources and to decision-making power, amongst other issues.<sup>6</sup> Studies were carried out in urban and rural environments, in communities affected by internal displacement and migration as well as by conflict or crisis. The next chapter presents some of the findings from these studies to underline the value added of taking gender into account.

### (2) Gaps in skills and capacities, as staff was not trained on how to use existing tools and guidance

Guidance materials on food security and market assessments currently in use in WFP and partner interventions contain a limited amount of clear and comprehensive information on how market analysis and assessments can be gender-informed. Importantly, the link between market dynamics and gender is not clearly articulated, and guidance does not provide adequate analysis to support market-based internal assessment teams to fully integrate gender into analysis. As a result, materials fail to provide practitioners with the information needed to meet standards in gender-informed data collection, analysis and reporting.

Food security actors struggle daily with issues in obtaining the right data from the right sources. Obtaining data for the region, for example on cross-border movement of food, food stocks in markets, and on food insecurity, is tedious and demanding, and there are important funding

<sup>3</sup> World Food Programme (2016), *Gender and Markets in West Africa: Secondary Data Review*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000036201/download/>

<sup>4</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2006), *Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs, Equal Opportunities*. IASC. URL: [https://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/IASC\\_Gender\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/IASC_Gender_Handbook.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> For the full workshop report, see <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/node/104>

<sup>6</sup> <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/node/106>

gaps. This holds especially true when data on vulnerable groups such as women and youth are required. One of the main issues is the practicality of including further disaggregation in assessments, as this can simply mean adding pages to already long questionnaires, which increases assessment time and raises costs. Another issue is that partners, and often even WFP colleagues lack awareness of why this data is needed and also lack the capacity to analyze and use it. If more rigorous measurement systems are to be employed – as may be required in social impact partnerships – we need greater investments into data coordination, collection, analysis and management.

Staff may not fully grasp what questions to ask and where to look for the right kind of information. Assessment teams may collect sex and age disaggregated data and even gender-specific data, but then lack direction on how to analyze and interpret the data in reporting. Consequently, the Gender and Markets Initiative developed tools to improve gender analysis and reporting capacity among staff: one example is the “Gender Analytical Framework for Assessing Value Chains” that can be adapted as needed to support the humanitarian programme cycle.<sup>7</sup>

### (3) Gaps in accountability for integrating gender

Due to weaknesses in clear prioritization and direction from management, staff responsibilities for integrating gender are not sufficiently clarified and enforced. It was observed that programming staff do not prioritize gender during the planning stage for assessments, thus frequently omitting direction to assessment teams on what information is needed, which in turn results in a lack of gender-informed data needed for decision-making.

Action is needed at all levels of organizational and programme management to inform and design programmes that contribute to engineering gender equality in markets, households and communities. Within organizations, a standard route of communication should be established between assessments and programmes to clearly communicate on gender-related information needs before an assessment is conducted. This route would also be used by assessments to share findings before an intervention is designed. The same is true for supply chain management which plays a crucial role within food security and market-based interventions.

At the government level, efforts should be taken to work collaboratively towards developing government capacity to collect, analyze and report on key gender figures in markets and value chains. This, in turn, will benefit regional and global bodies that use the data collected by governmental and other actors, for example for food security classification.

“Why wasn’t more done to understand the gender dimension within markets assessments, when it has been shown that gender analysis is a prerequisite for delivering well-tailored assistance to those most in need?”

<sup>7</sup> For more information on this tool, visit <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp287833.pdf>

## METHODOLOGY/EVIDENCE

This chapter presents the most relevant findings from eight out of 12 case studies carried out in 2016 and 2017 in West Africa to illustrate the deeply gendered dynamics in markets.<sup>8</sup>

### Value chains and gender

The case study focusing on Ghanaian markets underlines the gendered roles and responsibilities of women and men in agricultural value chains.<sup>9</sup> Women traditionally produce and trade agricultural commodities. Men participate in value chains where more capital and resources are required, and profit margins are higher. The informal food markets in legumes (soybean, cowpea) and cereals (millet) are dominated by women when it comes to small-scale production, transformation and trade, while men dominate the wholesale trade. But even for commodities traded mostly by women, male value chain actors tend to enjoy greater profits than their female counterparts. Women can often only play a greater role in formal markets and value chains through participation in farm-based organizations, allowing them to pool investments, secure more favourable marketing conditions, reduce risks, increase agency and social capital, strengthen participation in decision-making processes and heighten acceptance for advocacy and social organizing.

Women and men generally face the same challenges and constraints in the agricultural value chain, though these tend to be more exacerbated for women than for men. Key constraints for women entering, operating and expanding within agricultural value chains relate to insufficiencies in:

- capital (including land ownership);
- access to credit and financial services (in part due to limited or lack of capital but also to financial institutions limited knowledge on adequate services in rural areas);
- skills and knowledge in agro-technology;
- extension services;
- access to labor, storage facilities and, primarily for aggregators and transportation infrastructure.

Gender disparities are clearly observed through the comparative advantage men enjoy at most stages of the agricultural commodity value chain.

As stated by OECD, CBT interventions need to take many of these issues into account, as greater 'equality in land and asset ownership and financial access has positive impacts on family nutrition, education, food security, agricultural productivity and women's well-being. Conversely, low rates of female ownership and decision-making power over land and assets have been correlated with an increased vulnerability to poverty among women and their families and reduced income-generating opportunities for women.'<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Online library of all case studies and short summaries: <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/node/103>

<sup>9</sup> Pepper, Analee (2016), *Value Chain Development, Gender and Women's Empowerment in Ghana*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000022433/download/>

<sup>10</sup> Bouchama, Nejma, et al. (2018), « *Gender Inequality in West African Social Institutions* », *West African Papers*, no. 13., Éditions OCDE, Paris: OCDE. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/fe5ea0ca-en>

### Cash as economic empowerment

As studies in Chad<sup>11</sup> and Mali<sup>12</sup> have shown, women's lack of financial access is a pervasive problem. In Chad, WFP's CBT initiatives have stimulated the local economy both on IDP (internally displaced people) sites and in host communities. The emergence of economic opportunities, especially for women, through small-scale trading and the creation of seasonal jobs for youth were positive effects of CBT. However, as the value of cash transfers was fluctuating, they were not a reliable source of support. It could be observed that recipients had to adopt strategies that further undermined their livelihoods (such as seasonal out-migration or taking debts) and made them increasingly vulnerable. This, in the long run, may have compromised the level of empowerment of households, especially for women.

In Nigeria, a Gender and Markets study examining urban street food vendors in Maiduguri found that many of the vendors were internally displaced women who found it to be a viable activity to gain more independence, feed their children and have a sense of purpose instead of remaining in perpetual limbo in an IDP site.<sup>13</sup> In Cote d'Ivoire, a case study showed that street food is an important source of food for mostly male low-income and migrant workers in Abidjan, but women owners work under precarious conditions and under high protection risks.<sup>14</sup> In both cases, cash injections could bring the necessary seed money to boost the activities of small-scale entrepreneurs.



A woman uses her cash based transfers card from WFP. The activities of the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast region of Nigeria have displaced 1.62 million people and left another 4.7 million in need of emergency food assistance in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states. WFP uses either food or cash transfers to support displaced people living in camps or with host communities, as well as vulnerable host populations. Photo: WFP/Amadou Baraze

<sup>11</sup> Sy, Oumar and Niaré, Abdoulaye (2017), *Genre et l'accès et l'utilisation des services de crédit, de capitaux et d'assurance au Mali*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa.

<sup>12</sup> Salami, Abdoul Ali (2017), *Transferts monétaires, autonomisation et genre au Tchad*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa.

<sup>13</sup> Sclama, Greg and Aguiari, Sabrina (2017), *Gender and Urban Street Food in Maiduguri, Nigeria*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000050370/download/>

<sup>14</sup> Simao, Johana (2017), *Gender and Urban Street Food in Abidjan, Ivory Coast*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000050371/download/> (French version)

The below graph shows that access to capital and credit remain key constraints for traders in the Lake Chad Basin (there is no data available for women in Niger).<sup>15</sup> Women are more affected by these issues than men, although these constraints are also a major hindrance to male market actors, especially in rural areas.

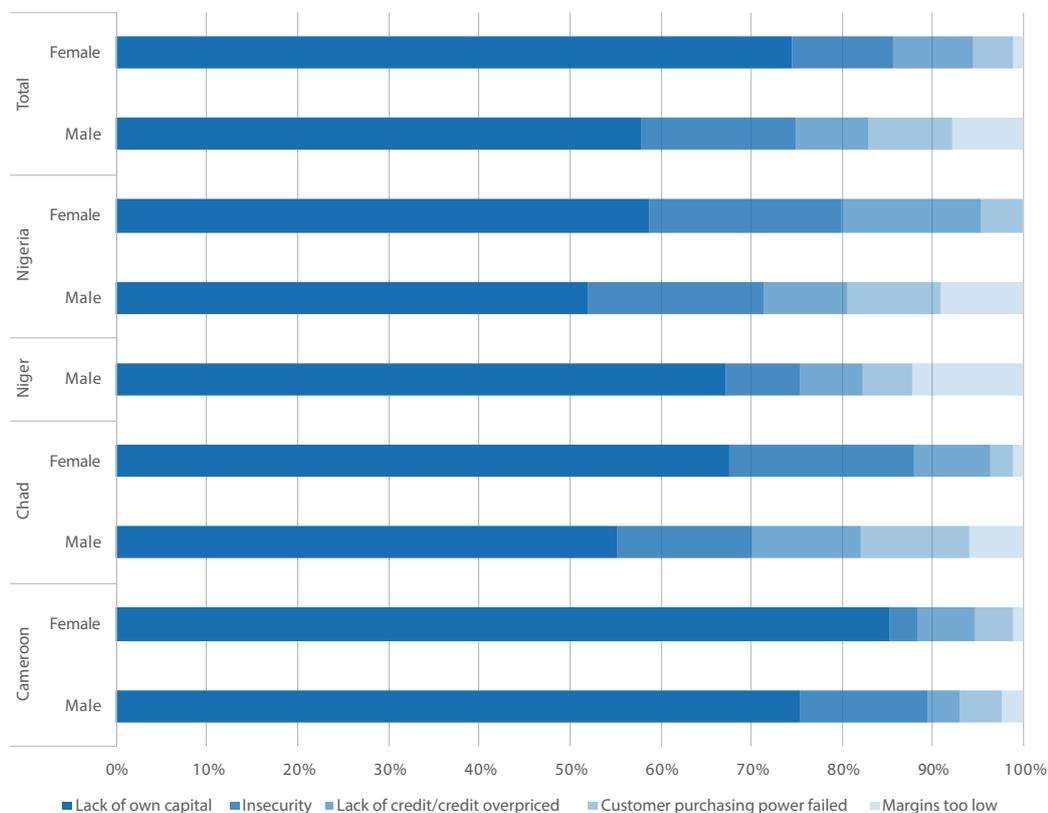


Figure 1: Key constraints for men and women's market access in the Lake Chad basin

Market-based programming such as CBT can thus alleviate some of the issues food insecure populations face in accessing markets and thriving in them. However, we need to be careful not to equate economic gains with economic empowerment. As markets and communities are complex systems, CBT cannot constitute a stand-alone measure but needs to be tied in with other components, such as support to women's farm-based organizations, advocacy, sensitization and education. This is especially important when the goal is to affect empowerment at the household level. One way to measure empowerment is to evaluate whether women gain more decision-making power. However, even this indicator can be misleading, as it may not reflect the true level of agency women hold.<sup>16</sup>

For example, Chadian women can use the earnings from their own entrepreneurial activities as they see fit, whereas Malian women must ask their husbands' permission. This gives the impression that Chadian women enjoy greater empowerment than Malian women. However, a deeper look at the gendered responsibilities of women within the household reveals that this capacity remains almost entirely in principle and is seldom realized in practice. The reason for this is two-fold; one, only few of the women interviewed in Chad are able to engage in profitable entrepreneurial activity; and two, the economic obligations Chadian women face in their roles

<sup>15</sup> Source: WFP RBD, ACF, et al. (2016) *Lake Chad Basin Crisis Regional Market Assessment*. See also: Pepper, Analee; Brunelin, Stéphanie and Renk, Simon (2016), *Assessing Gender and Markets in the Lake Chad Basin Region*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000022434/download/>

<sup>16</sup> Boddaert, Mathilde (2017), *Le Transfert d'Autonomisation des Femmes des Marchés aux Ménages et aux Communautés au Niger*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa.

within the household entirely consume any disposable income they might be able to accrue, so that their financial freedom is in practice highly constrained.<sup>17</sup>

A similar dynamic lies at the heart of WFP's demand-driven, pro-smallholder procurement programs (Purchase for Progress or P4P). Working mainly with farmers' organizations and other partners, P4P provides training and assets to improve crop quality, facilitates access to finance and promotes marketing. An example from Mali has shown that while there were several factors that would indicate relative empowerment of the Malian women in the P4P communities, not having access to agricultural implements and labor when they are critically needed reduced women's capacity to fully benefit from the programmes. More specifically, at the crucial times of planting and harvesting, men have the right to use machinery and other productive assets first, resulting in higher yields for men. To fulfil P4P purchase quotas, women then needed to buy a part of the crops produced by men. As with the Chadian example, it is not sufficient to consider empowerment factors separately, but in interaction with each other and with consideration of which factors determine actual behavior change.<sup>18</sup>

“Action is needed at all levels of organizational and programme management to inform and design programmes that contribute to engineering gender equality in markets, households and communities.”



Chad in Central Africa has one of the highest levels of hunger in the world. Around 87 percent of its mainly rural population lives below the poverty line. Photo: Giulio d'Adamo/WFP

<sup>17</sup> See Boyer, Micah (2017), *Gender, Markets and Women's Empowerment in the Sahel Region: A Comparative Analysis of Mali Niger, and Chad*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000022437/download/>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

### Cash for work, food for assets, and the issue of overburdening

Given that women are already placed under high labor burdens including unpaid household work across West Africa; it is crucial to ensure that participation in CBT programs which encourage community participation are not taking away from productive labor otherwise expendable toward agricultural obligations or care work. As the below graph shows, in Cameroon, 75 percent of women traders in the market were also responsible for cooking meals at home, against 4 percent of men traders.<sup>19</sup>

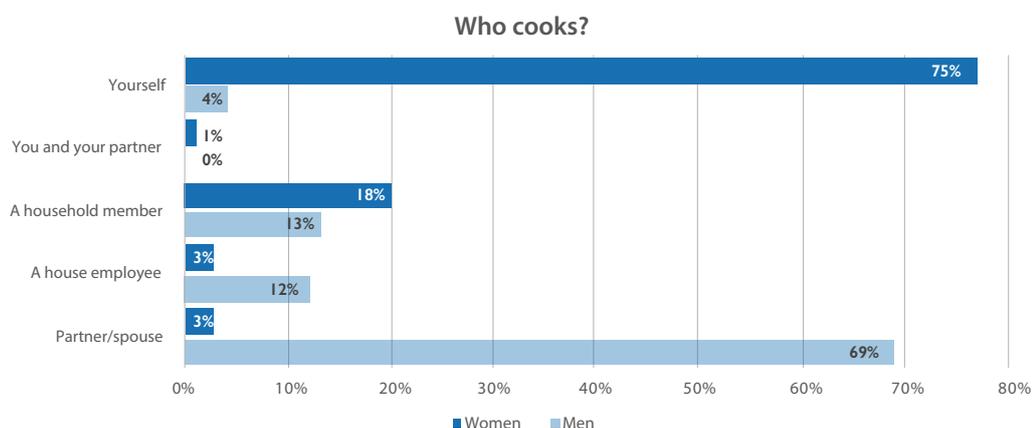


Figure 2: Male and female trader's responsibilities for cooking food in their homes (Cameroon)

Is it enough to say that women themselves are choosing to participate, given the lack of other options, and the possible lack of agency within the household, or within the village once the chief has pledged community participation? Should it be assumed that women, or the poor more generally, know where the limit of their ability lies before they cause themselves or their household economies harm? And to what extent are their decisions based on informed choice rather than economic hardship? For example, women may be making calculations that participation is worthwhile to have access to external funds or donors in future, even when harmful.

In the marketplace context, there are concrete steps that any intervening actor can take to alleviate the double burden placed on women simply by making market spaces more gender-transformative. The example of Cameroon has shown that two of the main constraints for women to participate in markets is the absence of adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities and the absence of childcare facilities or appropriate spaces for their young children. In advocating to improve on these conditions, actors can levy the necessary investments to accommodate the specific needs of women and children in the market space. In sum, gender analysis leads to better programmes and better outcomes.

### Social capital and social networks

In terms of promoting innovative approaches, there is operational risk in considering power primarily as a constraining force rather than a force enabling action. In development, gender analyses seldom fully include considerations of men's roles and the performance of masculinity, and this omission tends to simplistically relegate men to the role of antagonist or oppressor. In the context of the case studies, WFP and its partners should be particularly on guard against ready-made assumptions.

As an example: a large part of the justification for women-focused CBT has been evidence that women invest household earnings in ways more in line with development objectives than men (i.e. nutritive objectives). In the Sahel, this line of evidence is often paired with studies showing that large proportions of male earnings are spent on luxury goods such as tea. However, in the local cultural

<sup>19</sup> Source: Yossa, Thaddée (2016), *Agricultural Value Chains and Gender in Northern Cameroon*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000022430/download/>

context tea purchases may be an essential investment in social capital and therefore necessary for household resilience and livelihoods.<sup>20</sup>

This example shows that gendered trends in economic behavior are rooted in social relationships, and without a deep understanding of the relational nature of behavior, it would be misleading to draw conclusions about the similarity of economic behavior. To explain certain trends better, the Gender and Markets Initiative has begun to collaborate with OECD who are doing ground-breaking research on Social Networking Analysis (SNA).<sup>21</sup>

SNA is a relational approach to understand the structure of social, economic, and political interactions. It focuses on making the links between people visible, which is especially valuable for understanding support networks, social ties and how cash may affect them. SNA is increasingly recognized as a useful approach to understanding how development and humanitarian interventions affect local communities.

SNA could explain how gender inequalities are reproduced through social norms that limit women's choices and opportunities. A gendered system of relationships at the household and community level significantly shapes women's participation in markets. This system constrains women's access to information on price and market conditions, new consumer demand, and news of border closures or existence of untapped market opportunities. Understanding how gender is embedded in a wider system of socially mediated norms and practices and how the relations defining men and women's position in the social structure may cause disparities is, therefore, of the highest importance for development and humanitarian agencies such as the WFP.<sup>22</sup> In examining both the individual autonomy of social actors and their structural constraints, SNA is an excellent analytical tool for local and regional actors to develop more effective, tailored initiatives that can enhance humanitarian response in West Africa.



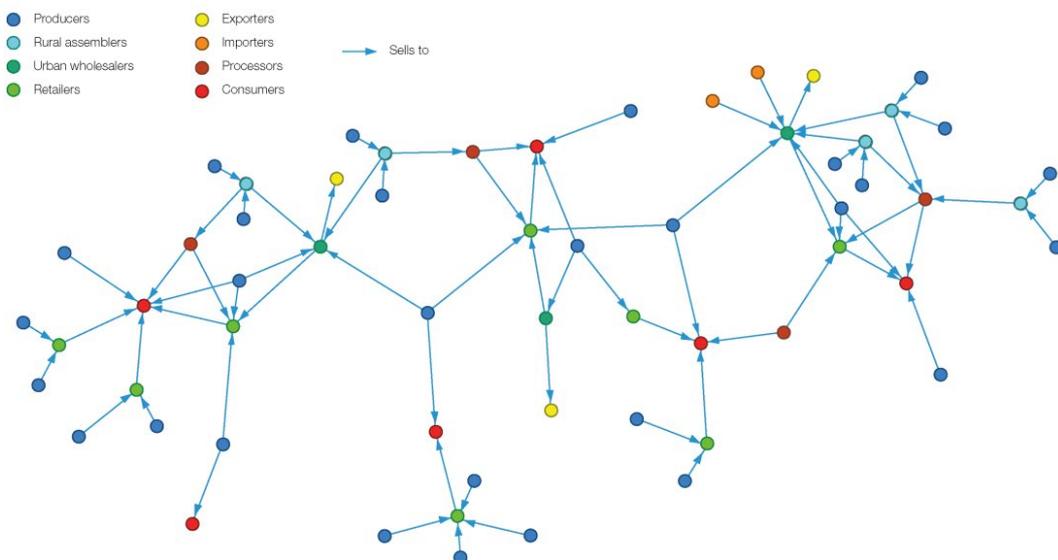
WFP's asset creation programme helped a women's gardening collective in Walewale, Northern Ghana, build a dug-out to store water for gardening during the dry season. Photo: WFP/Nyani Quarmyne

<sup>20</sup> Boyer, Micah (2017). *Gender, Markets and Women's Empowerment in the Sahel Region: A Comparative Analysis of Mali Niger, and Chad*. Dakar: WFP Regional Office for West and Central Africa.

<sup>21</sup> Walther, Olivier (2017), "Cross-border Co-operation Networks in West Africa", *West African Papers*, No. 6, OECD Publishing, Paris. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/73298292-en>. See also: Walther, Olivier and Renk, Simon (2017), *Can Social Network Analysis Inform African Development Policies? An Application to Food Security, Market Analysis and Gender*. WFP. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000021022/download/>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

### Supply chain by role



### Supply chain by gender

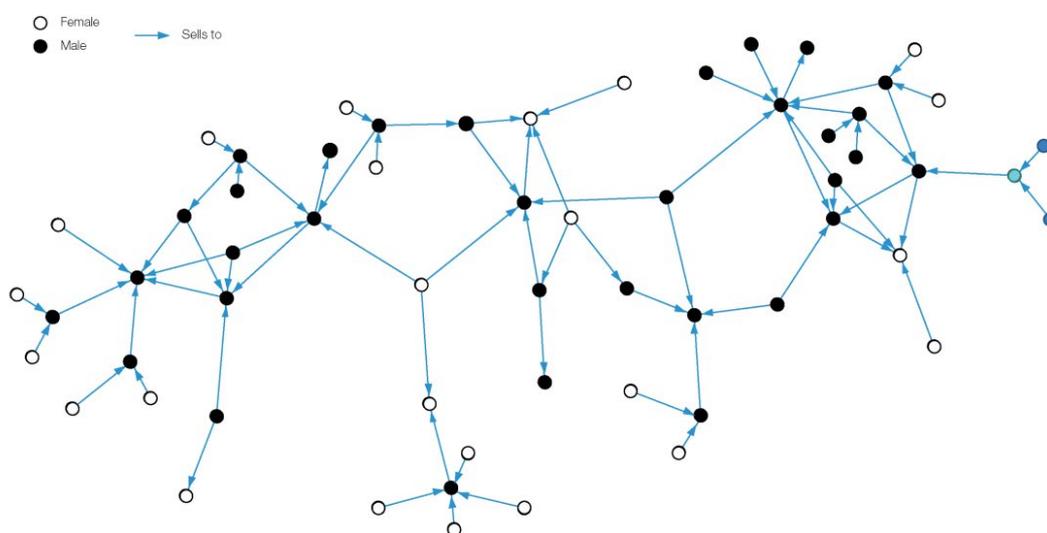


Figure 3: Examples of mapping supply chains by role and by gender using Social Network Analysis (SNA).

## LESSONS

The preceding discussion of case studies and tools has provided a representation of the richness that is missed out when gender analysis is not adequately integrated into market assessments. In light of the above findings, the main recommendations to CBT practitioners and partners, as well as other actors that seek to carry out market assessments and design market-based programmes are to:

- Leverage greater investments into gender-informed market data coordination, collection, analysis and management.
- Integrate gender coherently and across the board into assessments and studies.
- Strengthen actors' accountability for integrating gender into all areas of their work, emphasizing leadership and a common vision that strengthens commitment and clarity of purpose.
- Create two-way communications systems specifically oriented towards gender issues between assessment/monitoring/evaluation and programming teams.
- Strengthen actors' capacities for gender-informed market analysis and for the design of market-based interventions that empower women and vulnerable populations, ideally through on-the-job coaching and communities of practice.
- Revisit assumptions about gender, empowerment and food security through continuous engagement with the latest research and participation in the global discourse on these topics.
- Test new approaches to understand intra-household and intra community linkages e.g. SNA and promote initiatives filling the knowledge gap between gender and markets.
- Choose integrated and simple approaches that combine various components – including CBT – into a unified whole and that allow to address the complexities of gender inequalities.

Most importantly, there needs to be a deeper exchange between local civil society, local market actors and the private sector for a truly participatory approach to market assessments and market-based interventions. Investments need to be made into innovation, fostering out-of-the-box thinking and identifying the best solutions for cost- and time-saving, gender-informed market analysis that leads into gender-informed response. There also needs to be a better understanding of where to find women food retailers in markets, who they are, what they sell, and how to connect them to consumers.

WFP is increasingly focused on support for smallholder farmers<sup>23</sup> and is investing in learning and innovation<sup>24</sup> to adapt policies and programmes based on evidence from the field. There is potential for WFP's beneficiary database, SCOPE, to evolve to include millions of individuals, allowing WFP to serve them more efficiently. There are also increasing efforts among UN and other humanitarian partners to share and pool data, looking to create joint databases and, at the same time, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data is gaining traction.

However, more needs to be done to save lives and to change lives. Better data on markets can feed into better solutions. For effective CBT programming, it is essential to understand the complex social dynamics that govern food systems and the way they interlink with households and communities. It is in coherently assessing social impact and social change that a sound evidence base can be created and integrated partnerships and strategies that work can develop.

<sup>23</sup> Visit <http://www1.wfp.org/smallholder-market-support> for more information.

<sup>24</sup> Visit <http://innovation.wfp.org/> for more information.

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