GENDER DYNAMICS IN VALUE CHAINS

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PIM SYNTHESIS BRIEF

DECEMBER 2021

Over the past 20 years, value chain development (VCD) initiatives and value chain research have increasingly integrated gender dimensions to allow for gender-differentiated employment and income opportunities and other benefits for women and men, and to address the exploitation of women's labor (Pyburn and Kruijsen 2021). This research often addresses constraints to women's participation in specific value chains, such as administrative procedures in transboundary fish trade (Ratner et al. 2018) or disproportionate harassment of women food traders by authorities in Nigeria (Resnick et al. 2019). This brief draws on research conducted under the CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets (PIM) to illustrate how VCD supports and constrains progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment. In particular, the brief summarizes work from a portfolio of six PIM co-funded projects (2020–2021) on gender dynamics in value chains beyond the production node and single commodity analysis (Box 1), a book chapter in a CGIAR-wide gender

KEY MESSAGES

- Participation of women and men smallholder farmers and other low-income groups in value chains can have both empowering and disempowering outcomes; achieving empowering outcomes requires interventions with a deliberate focus on gender relations.
- Women's empowerment through value chain development (VCD) requires particular attention to the gendered division of labor and potential trade-offs of participation.
- The relationship between enhancing women's (economic) resources and agency and achieving broader transformational change is neither automatic nor linear.
- Collective action – like membership in cooperatives or other producer organizations – can support women's empowerment through VCD and transformational change, but challenges remain, particularly in terms of governance.
- Comprehensive gender analysis in value chains addresses both women and men, taking into account intergenerational equity and the overall complexity of gender relations.
- Sex-disaggregated data can reveal structural inequalities and their root causes.
- Guidance for gender-responsive value chain research and gender-equitable VCD needs to balance gender equality and broader value chain aspects to be effective and usable.

BOX 1: PIM co-funded projects on gender dynamics in value chains beyond the production node and single commodity analysis (2020-2021)

Understanding the relationship between women's empowerment and women's increased participation in poultry value chains in Burkina Faso – **Jessica Heckert** and **Jessica Leight** (IFPRI)

Helpers, employees or owners: Opportunities for women's economic empowerment in agricultural value chains - **Jennifer Twyman** (Independent Consultant) and **Jenny Wiegel** (The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT)

Gender dynamics along fish value chains in India: Testing assumptions about the influence of women's self-help groups - **Surendran Rajaratnam** (WorldFish)

Understanding gender dynamics in the input segment of upgraded value chains for root crops in Vietnam - **Vanya Slavchevska** (The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT) and **Nozomi Kawarazuka** (CIP)

From oil palm mamas to market queens: Measuring the gender footprint of informal and formal market value chains in Eastern Region, Ghana - **Emily Gallagher** (CIFOR)

Agricultural value chain financing for marginalized women: A multi value chain project in Viet Nam and Indonesia - **Kate Ambler** (IFPRI)

publication (Pyburn and van Eerdewijk 2021), the Pro-WEAI (project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index) for Market Inclusion, and other gender-integrated value chain work within PIM (Crimi 2018; Vos and Pyburn 2021), and provides an outlook for future research.

What we are learning about gender dynamics in value chains

Participation of women and men smallholder farmers and other low-income groups in value chains can have both empowering and disempowering outcomes; achieving empowering outcomes requires interventions with a deliberate focus on gender relations.

PIM research demonstrates many empowering outcomes for women (and men) through value chain participation, many of which are mentioned in studies cited in this brief. In one study, a novel contract design with a dairy processing factory in

Northern Senegal specifically targeted women because they received rewards – in this case a micronutrient-fortified yogurt manufactured by the dairy company – while men usually received cash payments. The intervention delivered incentives at the milk collection points, mainly accessed by women, in order to better reach them (Bernard et al. 2020). In a review of PIM's 2017 gender research, Crimi (2018) notes that gender expert input and specific engagement with women and their needs "provided equal opportunity for them to benefit from VCD implementation." Ihalainen et al. (2021) conclude that while participation in value chains can have empowering outcomes for women, they can also have disempowering outcomes, sometimes concurrently. According to the authors, to achieve empowering outcomes, interventions need a deliberate and often exclusive focus on women and gender relations.

Women's empowerment through VCD requires particular attention to the gendered division of labor and potential trade-offs of participation.

PIM research identified both the benefits and additional burdens and limitations resulting from women's participation in value chains, such as extra domestic responsibilities, less leisure time, or conflicts within their households or communities (Stoian et al. 2018; Hirvonen et al. 2020; Malapit et al. 2020; Mayoux 2020; Ambler et al. 2021). A study on women's economic engagement in the sugarcane value chain in Uganda noted that *"increasing women's ownership of cane is not guaranteed to empower women, and in fact may have unintended impacts on women's other productive activities and time use, the time use of others in the household, and the household's livelihood diversification"* (Ambler et al. 2021). Multiple studies have documented how the increased value of commodities often leads men to take over female-dominated crops (Bernard et al. 2020) in terms of production and/or the related income. Ihalainen et al. (2021) conclude that interventions with an explicit gender or women focus are more effective in terms of empowerment outcomes. Gendered division of labor and potential trade-offs between time spent on market, nonmarket, and leisure activities require special attention to ensure women are empowered rather than disempowered through VCD (Stoian et al. 2018).

The relationship between enhancing women's (economic) resources and agency and achieving broader transformational change is neither automatic nor linear.

While PIM research clearly shows that empowerment outcomes related to value chain participation can be achieved, there is also evidence that empowerment does not automatically result from this participation in the absence of special attention to gender aspects. For example, case studies in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Ghana on women's roles in the (garment and soybean) market examine women's empowerment and transformational potential (Faveri et al. 2020). They illustrate how specific strategies to increase

women's empowerment achieved transformational change at the level of the household, community, and market. The authors conclude that *"when community members see buyers that are eager to do business directly with women, they begin to internalize the importance of women's economic empowerment and the transformative potential that it can bring"* (Faveri et al. 2020). At the same time, Ihalainen et al. (2021) conclude that an automatic, linear relationship between enhancing women's access to and control of (economic) resources and agency and achieving broader transformational change, while possible, cannot be assumed. This is backed by other PIM research like the study on women's participation in value chains in Bangladesh (Raghunathan et al. 2021) that shows women's empowerment does not result directly from agricultural entrepreneurship and associated economic benefits, as women in better-off households were not necessarily more empowered than women in households with less income (wage-earning households). Gender inequalities are not only embedded in the lack of women's economic resources. As such, transformational change requires a focus on a broader set of factors with direct or indirect influence on women's opportunities to engage in and benefit from value chains, such as laws, regulations, and other formal institutions, along with the availability and orientation of technical, business, and financial services (Stoian et al. 2018). VCD interventions often require gender-sensitive reforms of laws, policies, land and resource ownership, and other potentially discriminatory institutions (Coles and Mitchell 2011).

Collective action – like membership in cooperatives or other producer organizations – can support women's empowerment through VCD and transformational change, but challenges remain, particularly in terms of governance.

A number of studies address how cooperatives, producer organizations, and other forms of collective action contribute to enhancing women's agency, empowerment, and ultimately transformational change (Manchon and Macleod 2010;

Ashok 2017; Faveri et al. 2018; Raghunathan et al. 2018; Stoian et al. 2018; Horton et al. 2020). These organizations can serve as platforms for collectively enhancing women's benefits from value chain participation. For example, membership in cooperatives or associations provides women with various tangible and intangible resources including access to capacity development, inputs, and credit, as well as bargaining power, economies of scale, and political leverage. These are all resources and capabilities that contribute to women's capacity to negotiate and influence decision-making not only in the household but also in the market and the political sphere (Lyon et al. 2010; Ferguson and Kepe 2011). Ashok's (2017) study on a broiler value chain model for empowerment of poor tribal women in India shows how women benefit from economies of scale in the procurement of inputs and in marketing realized through cooperatives. In a case study of the Zardozi network in Afghanistan, a key support to women in a male-dominated environment was for engagement in management and negotiation. This case study showed that after receiving such support, as well as other benefits including better-paid work, women were able to start increasing their incomes significantly, along with enhanced healthcare, family nutrition, and investments in girls' education; and gained confidence to confront gender stereotypes in the community (Faveri et al. 2020). A study on women's empowerment through market inclusion in Bangladesh showed higher ranking for women's collective agency than for men, which likely reflects the deliberate targeting of women for group formation by the government and NGOs, such as microfinance-based groups; it is noted, however, that this does not necessarily translate directly into actual transformation of working conditions or exploitative labor practices (Raghunathan et al. 2021).

Despite numerous potential benefits, it is often a challenge for women to become members of cooperatives and even more so to become part

of their governance bodies (Manchon and Macleod 2010). Limitations in the membership criteria, power dynamics within the organization, inconvenient timing and locations of meetings and decision-making spaces, among others, may prevent women from becoming members or being active members, or may discourage women from continuing their membership. The importance of addressing discriminatory gender norms within collective enterprises is stressed by Stoian et al. (2018). This is in line with other studies suggesting initiatives for gender equitable VCD to focus on the roles of men and women in these enterprises, and to provide entry points for more meaningful participation of women (e.g., Bernet, Thiele, and Zschocke 2006; Lundy et al. 2007; Purcell, Gniel, and van Gent 2008; Donovan and Stoian 2012).

Comprehensive gender analysis in value chains addresses both women and men, taking into account intergenerational equity and the complexity of gender relations.

Discussion of gender-based constraints and opportunities for strengthening women's participation in value chains often focuses on women's capacities, income generation, and decision-making (Stoian et al. 2018; Faveri et al. 2020; Raghunathan et al. 2020). Analysis of social norms as challenges for women's participation in value chains also tends to focus on women, specifically, sexual and reproductive roles, work, mobility, and gender-based violence (Stoian et al. 2018). Similarly, although some studies collect sex-disaggregated data on gender roles in production and marketing, analysis tends to focus on women only (Stoian et al. 2018). In a review of guides for gender equitable VCD, Stoian et al. (2018) call instead for "*a dual view on women and men*": understanding men's roles in gender relations is critical to transformative change. They further observe that value chain participation can be disempowering for women when the complexity of gender relations beyond women's economic empowerment is overlooked.

Aspects of gender relations that require deeper analysis include the power dynamics in intra-household negotiations regarding income distribution and access to resources (Stoian et al. 2018). Women face trade-offs when assuming new roles in value chains while at the same time continuing their engagement in nonmarket-oriented livelihood activities. This may lead to increased workloads, compromise food security, and put a strain on individual or household assets. These trade-offs are important to examine, and viable strategies are required to minimize them, as they affect both individual and household well-being (Stoian et al. 2018). In addition, assets and benefits, especially land, labor, machinery and equipment, tend to take precedence in VCD guides over more intangible resources related to human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital (Stoian et al. 2018). There are a few guides where intangible and tangible assets are distinguished and used to assess gender equality and gender-based constraints (Stoian et al. 2018), but more attention is needed generally on nonmaterial aspects.

Sex-disaggregated data can reveal structural inequalities and their root causes.

Good use and analysis of disaggregated quantitative data can help to identify structural inequalities, challenges, and disadvantages affecting women and men in value chains (Mtimet et al. 2017). De Brauw et al. (2020) show how detailed gender- and task-disaggregated household and wage labor data collection permits a comprehensive understanding of fundamental inequalities and their root causes in Bangladesh. Detailed data collection allowed the authors to: (1) examine gender roles in agricultural production, revealing limited opportunities for empowering women through field-based tasks; (2) highlight gender gaps vis à vis benefits from working in production (women earning significantly lower wages than men for the same tasks); and (3) nuance the hypothesis that outmigration improves women's position in agriculture, which proved to

be true only when female, not male, household members left (de Brauw et al. 2020).

Guidance for gender-responsive value chain research and gender-equitable VCD needs to balance gender equality and broader value chain aspects to be effective and usable.

A balance is needed between gender and broader value chain aspects to keep VCD initiatives manageable for researchers and practitioners, and for achieving tangible progress toward gender equality through VCD and accompanying research (Stoian et al. 2018; Pyburn and Kruijssen 2021). Guidance for gender-responsive value chain research and gender-equitable VCD needs to focus on the essentials and allow for other aspects of social differentiation, in order not to overwhelm practitioners and researchers and to ensure effective application of gender-responsive approaches, methodologies, and tools.

Evidence gaps and setting research priorities

1. Broader focus on geographies, value chains, and value chain nodes to address the patchiness and biases currently seen, including using a multi-chain approach.

Value chain research has tended to focus on particular geographies (e.g., Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania), specific nodes (e.g., production), and a limited number of value chains (e.g., coffee, cocoa, cereals, flowers, horticulture) (Pyburn and Kruijssen 2021; Ihalainen et al. 2021). While some research is addressing nodes downstream the value chain (for example, see Box 1, and Kruijssen et al. 2020 paper on inclusive business models for fish seed value chains in Ghana), studies focusing on upstream nodes, particularly production, dominate the literature. Gaps in gender-responsive value chain research to date can also be seen with regard to gendered access to value chain services, including innovative finance (e.g., impact investments and other forms of responsible

finance), which need to be addressed going forward. Another major limitation is the focus on single value chains, which fails to consider the multiple market- and nonmarket-oriented activities women and men are engaged in. These limitations can be addressed by adopting a multi-chain approach that helps to identify gender-differentiated opportunities for women and men across a portfolio of value chains (Stoian and Donovan 2015a). Such an approach also minimizes the trade-offs linked with the prioritization of given value chains, as it adequately considers the diversified livelihood strategies of smallholder households and women and men therein (Stoian et al. 2015b).

2. Link processes within the value chain and processes in the broader systems within which women and men are embedded.

A next iteration of gender in value chains research and development should focus on linkages between processes within value chains and those in the broader environment within which they operate (Bolwig et al. 2010; Ihalainen et al. 2021). This implies assessing how economic, institutional, and environmental processes and transformations shape the outcomes of VCD processes and vice versa, with a view to associated choices and options for women and men (Ihalainen et al. 2021). Value chain studies often do not address structural challenges, such as illiteracy, that restrict women from engaging in value chain nodes beyond production, for example, with regard to the transformation from animal-rearers to dairy producers in India (see BIRTHAL et al. 2017, Crimi 2018). Social, cultural, and economic factors have an impact on where and how women participate in the value chain and on their empowerment as an outcome of such participation, for example in Bangladesh (Raghunathan et al. 2021). Gender norms in specific contexts limit women's opportunities to enter specific nodes in the value chains. Examples include women being constrained from attending marketplaces on their own, or not being permitted to sign contracts on behalf of their households.

3. Develop and use methodologies that engage with notions of masculinity and femininity in the context of value chain-related processes.

Gender sensitive and/or women-focused initiatives aim for structural changes, which often imply significant shifts in the roles that women and men play, and therefore in gender relations. Such interventions may be seen as disruptive – even disrespectful at times – of customs, laws, and norms that idealize men's stereotypical roles as leaders, providers, and the likes, and women as primarily responsible for reproductive labor, including care of households, children, and the elderly. This in turn, affects women's and men's perceptions of themselves as these may imply men performing household chores they had not taken care of previously, or sharing other livelihood activities, decision-making spaces, or even income. Malapit et al. (2020) found that despite relatively egalitarian gender norms in the Philippines, persistent gender stereotypes influence both men's and women's empowerment and value chain participation. Stoian et al. (2018) indicate how a better understanding of masculinities can contribute to *"a deeper reflection on the effects of value chain development on women's and men's well-being and household-level livelihood outcomes."* There is a wide scope for research on masculinities and constraining gender norms in the context of value chain processes. The call is to develop and use methodologies that allow for diverse notions of masculinity and femininity in the context of value chain participation, and to use the findings for adapted VCD processes (Ihalainen et al. 2021).

4. Track potential unintended consequences such as backlash from spouses or family members, or trade-offs with domestic work or leisure.

Engaging in value chain activities has consequences for other work and commitments that an individual is engaged in. As such, family and (male) community members often react as

women become more active in value chain activities. These shifts in gender relations can trigger backlash and even gender-based violence as men try to assert their masculinity forcefully. WEAI results across four value chains in the Philippines (abaca, coconut, seaweed, and swine) suggest that respect within the household and attitudes about gender-based violence are the largest sources of disempowerment for both women and men (Malapit et al. 2020). Backlash from spouses or family members, as well as trade-offs with domestic work or leisure, are critical to track and measure if we are to understand the full impact of value chain participation for women and men (Stoian et al. 2018; Raghunathan et al. 2021).

5. Determine intra-household impacts of value chain participation.

Expand the focus of research into VCD impacts beyond the household level by considering differences in terms of roles such as entrepreneurs, producers, and wage-earners not only across households (Raghunathan et al. 2021) but also among individual members therein (Coles and Mitchell 2011). This helps to identify ways to strengthen women's bargaining position within the household to enhance their capacity for strategic decision-making and to effectively negotiate the new roles or opportunities they assume within a value chain (Stoian et al. 2018). In addition to individual decision-making by women and men, Stoian et al. (2018) also call for attention to be placed on areas of jointness and negotiations within the household that ultimately determine outcomes in terms of women's empowerment and gender equality. Finally, they suggest that analysis and action in VCD need to take place across five levels: (1) individuals, (2) households, (3) collective enterprises, (4) value chains, and (5) business and regulatory environment.

6. Gather (better) quantitative and qualitative baseline data across multiple dimensions of empowerment to assess change over time.

Better quantitative and qualitative baseline data across multiple dimensions of empowerment is needed in order to assess change over time (Ihalainen et al. 2021). Solid baseline data, gathered with quantitative and qualitative methods, will help us to understand diverse constraints women face when seeking to engage in value chains and to increase resulting benefits (Ambler et al. 2020). Integrated data emerging from mixed methods allow researchers to answer key questions regarding fundamental constraints, for example women's limited access to credit, and to develop evidence-based policy guidance to overcome these (ibid.). Raghunathan et al. (2021) offer an example of a collection of quantitative and qualitative data to assess multiple dimensions of women's and men's empowerment along the nodes of agri-food value chains in Bangladesh. A first step toward better data is to enhance conceptual clarity and to develop more transparent and more comprehensive operationalizations of "empowerment" as a basis for comparative analysis of cases (Ihalainen et al. 2021). This typically implies developing a concise theory of change that lays out various pathways from participation to empowerment across multiple dimensions, spheres, and levels (ibid.). The survey-based project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) is a tool that can be used to address the limited research across and within value chains (Malapit et al. 2020).

7. Develop and use approaches, methodologies and tools that account for intersectionality without overwhelming or neglecting value chain elements.

The study by Fabry et al. (2022) on decent work in food value chains in Senegal focuses on labor conditions, wage gaps, and the overall work situation of women, youth, and migrant workers. However, by treating youth and migrant workers as homogeneous groups, they fail to determine whether their findings for women having "*favorable working conditions in general*" applies for young local women and migrant women alike. Nuanced categories of analysis are needed to understand

gender inequalities and design appropriate empowerment interventions. For example, the authors of a study on the avocado value chain in Kenya (Oduol et al. 2017) suggest different strategies for women in female-headed households than for women in male-headed households, and tailoring interventions to women in male-headed houses who are farm managers, because their husbands have an alternative source of income, separate from those where husbands engage in farm management. Further development and use of intersectional approaches – looking at gender alongside other social parameters – are needed (Ihalainen et al. 2021). At the same time, gender and intersectional elements need to be viewed together with broader VCD issues to come up with methodological guidance that is manageable and meaningful for value chain

researchers and practitioners alike (Stoian et al. 2018). A next generation of research on gender dynamics in VCD needs to both engage with and delve into the complexity of gender relations and intersectional analysis as well as remain practical and manageable. This demands approaches, methodologies, and tools that explicitly address trade-offs facing researchers and practitioners in terms of limited time and resources as well as the multiple objectives to be achieved.

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