



## Gender Analysis for Piloting the Use of Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) Program in East Africa

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interest in the use and potential benefits of voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) programmes has grown in recent years, as evidenced by the adoption of the Codex Guidelines on vTPA programmes in 2021. Whilst the authorities in Rwanda and Uganda countries have some general experience of public private partnerships, they have limited understanding on how such a partnership would work in the food control system. Hence, this study that employed a qualitative participatory approach to conduct a gender analysis of the different dimensions of gender related to the horticulture and aquaculture sectors in the “piloting the use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance in East Africa” program. Findings are presented for the two countries taking part in the pilot project, beginning with the horticulture value chain in Rwanda, followed by the aquaculture value chain Uganda. These are aligned to the objectives of the consultancy which are:

1. Apply a gender lens to the project context, analyzing gendered aspects of roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and power relations within project implementation.
2. Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade.
3. Generate the data related to aspects of the vTPAs contributions, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women.
4. Provide policy and strategic recommendations to the project's leadership and stakeholders on refining or amending project activities and implementation to be more gender responsive and better promote gender equality; and how to best incorporate gender equality dimensions into monitoring, evaluation and learning activities

### Summary and observations in the horticulture sector in Rwanda

**Objective 1:** Apply a gender lens to the project context, analyzing gendered aspects of roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and power relations within project implementation

- Participants reported that, all roles and responsibilities in the different value chains whether done by male or female, carry equal value because of their interconnectedness. However, this value is in terms of quality standards and not in terms of what is earned, especially for the women who are constrained by their limited education. Ultimately, some roles and responsibilities are more lucrative than others, so inherently, they do not have equal value to the person doing the job. It is therefore, important to educate women about their rights and laws that protect women from discrimination so as to heighten their potential benefits from the different levels of horticulture value chains. Women's strong points such as assuming supervisory roles, meeting targets and following up on the results up to the end, can be seen as good entry points for the women into management which can help them gain experiences and develop their skills. Thus, the project should work to ensure that women are able to benefit from their participation, by promoting equal opportunities for women at the various levels of value chain, providing women access to quality education, creating opportunities for them to learn on the job and to enable them get experiences and skills to support them succeed at work. The project should provide training in quality handling, such as control, assurance,



improvement and promotion, breakdown the glass ceiling, by encouraging promotion of women to leadership position, training and development opportunities and creating a more inclusive work culture, expose them to current research on consumer behavior, encourage FBOs to be open and value ideas from women, and give the women the opportunity to share their unique experiences and perspectives. Participants who do not have the requirements to access external markets should be helped to access markets, and appreciate the importance of engaging certification, and eventually be enabled to purchase vTPAs.

- This study found the physical, economic, and political resources known to participants, present and accessed by both males and females in the food business operations visited. Examples mentioned were land as a physical resources, information, leadership and decision making as political resources and capital as an economic resource. Important is to promote diversity of thought and perspectives, quality of decision making, as well as fairness and equity in project implementation in addition to addressing gender stereotypes. Further, women possessing the relevant training had some level of control to drive innovations, and the opportunity to create positive impact to the business, by being consulted. Thus, the project ought to teach women to be assertive and lifelong learners and make an effort in organizing women to get directly in the leadership of horticulture value chain in Rwanda.
- The benefits men and women receive from the use of productive resources in the aquaculture business, include; safe homes, salary to meet their needs, access to loans and health insurance among others which depend on where they working and the positions they hold. It is therefore important that the project is aware of these benefits to ensure that employees have access the benefits they need. It is also necessary that the project enhances an inclusive work environment such that women can balance their work and family responsibilities.
- Initiatives undertaken by the different FBOs to promote gender relations include: putting in place policies on anti-discrimination, harassment and hiring of women, working with farmers regardless of sex across the country to sustain supply, conduct gender inclusive trainings on the different forms of promoting quality, having in place various committees to promote gender equity; food safety, gender equity and sexual harassment, a center for breast feeding mothers, provision of food and accommodation and women did not work in night shifts, periodically inviting guests to talk about gender issues and hiring women in leadership positions. Thus, the project can support FBOs to celebrate diversity by ensuring regular reviews of and update policies to meet the changing needs of employees, help women access more of these opportunities, encourage collaborations and a platform for women to share their ideas and promote women friendly environments.

**Objective 2:** Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade.

- The position of women relative to men in the horticulture industry, was evident in women in leadership positions, decision making in businesses, self-confidence, economic independence, pursuing further training in master, involvement in personal and family improvement, which are indicative of reduced discrimination and bias against women. Therefore, project implementation should aim at promoting diversity and inclusiveness, as a

factor in horticulture business certifications to access markets, promotion of policies and procedures that focus on likelihood of increasing women's incomes to expand business globally.

- On the question of cultural or gender specific issues practiced in the horticulture sector that constrain women participation in business operations and how they can be minimized, findings show that culture does not allow women to climb trees and miss out on that prospective payment of harvesting avocados. This has been sorted out by technology, through encouraging growing of short varieties of avocado. It was also reported that women do not move at night, men are attracted to women, women cannot manage public affairs, women cannot leave the house without the permission of a man which were sorted out by awareness raising on gender issues and implementing constitutional provisions. The burden of women fetching water from longer distances was linked to their traditional roles, but government, excavated ponds near cooperatives, for the purpose of irrigating crops. On these issues, the project can work with local communities to understand and address cultural norms, incorporate aspects of training in negotiation skills, create support groups for women, educate the community about the importance of women freedom of movement, and fund research on women's participation in public affairs. It is also important to support women entrepreneurs to grow their business, working with financial institutions to provide women access to credit and support them in marketing. They can reach many customers and get the money to purchase vTPAs.
- Regarding strategies employed in FBOs to ensure equal participation and benefits for women in the horticulture business, responses reveal promotion of experience sharing among the women, provision of essential services such as education, medical care and insurance, encouraging promotion and recognition of women at every level at work, being monitored to ensure compliance with policy as well as good leadership and consultations with women. It is important that the project implementation builds on these good practices and replicates them where they are not yet adopted. Offer trainings on how to implement gender inclusive policies and promote awards and recognition for businesses that take gender inclusive initiatives.
- On the question of government and stakeholder support, the study revealed that the government of the Republic of Rwanda gives fiscal incentives, such as tax holidays to growing businesses, helps to build capacity of staff, provides seedlings, grafting services, and trainings about standards for food business operators. National Agricultural Export Development Board provides raw materials for free to individuals and groups that are starting businesses, while NGOs provide funding for horticulture projects, support the businesses to mainstream gender, support funding for policy development funding for women initiatives. Government enacted and/ or ratified gender sensitive policies aimed at promoting inclusion of women. It invites employees from different companies, and trains them on gender equality. There was also a wish for government to put up a day-care that takes care of children. It is thus important that the project raises awareness on the benefit of having more women in the industry and engage government in creation of stronger and inclusive communities that supply the produce for global markets.

**Objective 3:** Aspects of the vTPAs contributions, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women in horticulture food business operations.

- The main reason for Rwanda horticulture FBOs' decision to engage vTPA is to have access to the international markets. Other reasons are putting in place standards to compete on the market, have guidance on quality for consumer protection, promotion of food safety and to work with quality assurance corporations worldwide, changing market demands, and that consumers need safe food products. Women representation in food business operations in Rwanda was between 40 and 70 % for most of those reached by the study. This implies that the importance of gender continues to grow in business, leading to better decision making in terms of innovations for the market and potential for purchase of vTPA. The project can educate Food Business Operators about the benefits of international assurance and the growing importance of women consumers, through workshops and outreaches, support the rise of female horticultural businesses, focus on gender diversity in workforce to benefit all as the business world becomes more interconnected and diverse.
- The reasons for encouraging and facilitating women to work in horticulture businesses with vTPA in Rwanda include policy protection, job security for the women, safe employment, women involvement is a requirement for some buyers, application for gender sensitive grants, enhance women's knowledge regarding quality in horticulture business, improving production, creating more jobs for women and value addition. This means that the potential of more women engagement of vTPAs for the long run, ought to be designed in project implementation. What the project needs to do is to connect food business operators by providing clear information on assurance providers, make international assurance more affordable by negotiating discounts with providers for women horticultural owned businesses or lobbying government to provide subsidies, and sourcing funders to provide financial assistance to women food business operators that are unable to afford.
- The Benefits of engaging vTPA for horticulture businesses were; competition globally, earning in hard currency, increasing market, consumer retention due to the confidence in the product, improving a company profile, exposure and creation of more jobs. The reasons raised for some women FBOs not getting interested in purchasing vTPAs were; a lot of documentation is required, certification is very expensive, it requires a lot of groundwork and lack the knowledge of how the process works. This means that vTPAs, if designed and implemented carefully, could have a positive impact to women farmers and women food business owners and more women are likely to invest in horticultural business to have more yields for the market. Important is for the project implementation to minimize gender bias, ensure, women who are unable to afford vTPAs are not excluded and existing gendered inequalities are addressed. For instance, provide women farmers access to information, about vTPAs that are affordable, facilitate women access to credit to enable them have land, build the trust of FBOs in certification and work with extension staff to promote vTPAs. It is also important to simplify the application process, propose use online resources, such as website, to apply and share experiences of successful women.
- The conditions favorable for women owned FBOs to engage vTPA include; willingness to

comply with standards, knowledge of how to engage government and private consultants, get experience, getting trained, having the commitment, being passionate for the business and having faith and hope. This means that examining and understanding these conditions and how they impact on certification of women horticulture business is important in determining how to engage the vTPAs from an informed grounding. It is therefore important for the project to develop a training program for the women on how to get international certification, how to find affordable providers and host a conference if possible and give the providers an opportunity to showcase, avail networking opportunities with others business operators to share their experiences and advise, and advocate for policies that make it easier to do business.

- Gender related challenges of having vTPAs revealed by the study are: getting experts to audit is very expensive, building of structures and capacity, the business is seasonal, high prices for the flights, duplication of the product on the market, failure to pay farmers money, high turnover of women leaving the horticulture business due to finance and failing to meet the required specifications for packaging, and lacking the required documentation. The kind of help that is required for women to engage vTPA effectively entails, capacity building, getting certification, training in standards, grants to companies that employ many women, construction of roads, storage facilities, electricity, subsidies to female owned businesses, and creation of gender balanced committees in charge of certification at every level of governance. Note that women are more likely to experience gender related challenges of having vTPAs in horticulture businesses than the men. These challenges can be complex for small and medium enterprises with no financial resources to purchase vTPAs and especially to women food business operators who are less likely to have access to information about financial services, women who are struggling in their businesses, as well as those with limited literacy skills. Findings therefore inform project implementation to put in place policies that promote women's economic empowerment, provide financial assistance to cover operational costs, refresher trainings to get new and competitive skills on the markets. Create a peer-to-peer mentoring program for sharing of challenges and solutions, and provide training and mentorship in basic grant writing, and the requirements of different funding agencies, and connect them with experienced grant writers for mentorship, this can lead to improved funding for women led businesses, improve the quality of products to access markets that require them to purchase vTPAs,
- Opportunities that vTPA programmes bring to women in the horticulture business include; those in production planning to do processing, access to serious markets, easy access to gender related grants, confidence in export marketing, innovations, product prices will increase, recognition on the local and international market and women being able to choose from the available packages. The implication is that actions are needed to address the underlying barriers that prevent FBOs and women from accessing the said opportunities, Further the opportunities that come with the existing businesses can be replicated in other settings in the country. Also, important the display of opportunities globally for the sale of horticulture products and at the same time displaying requirements to enter the same markets, support FBOs make a cost benefit analysis and help them make decisions on moving forward. The project therefore ought to connect women and men with buyers through organizing trade

fairs, buyer-seller marching, online platforms, and help the women brand their products. Advocate for fair trade policies and regulations and build the capacity of women FBOs to expand their access to markets. Equally important is to create a database that would make it easier for buyers to locate women businesses whenever market is available.

- Unintended consequences to gender equality vTPA likely to bring include: Women working for many hours in order to get the money, closure and loss of jobs in case of incompletion. Important for the project implementation is to address social cultural norms that limit women access to markets and train the women in skills they need to succeed in their businesses. In addition, there will be need to advocate for a supportive work environment, such as flexible working arrangements, and safe working conditions that pay attention to specific needs of women in horticulture business to make them more effective.

## **Summary and Observations in the Aquaculture Sector in Uganda**

**Objective 1:** Apply a gender lens to the project context, analyzing gendered aspects of roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and power relations within project implementation

- All roles and responsibilities in the entire value chain, regardless of whether they are done by men or women, carry equal value. This is because all activities are interconnected and valued equally in terms of quality standards by all actors at all stages of the value chain. However, it is important to note that the majority of women work in low-paid activities. This means that even though their work is valued equally in terms of quality standards, they are not paid equally. This makes it harder for women to achieve financial security. To address this, projects should provide training on unconscious bias and collect data on pay disparities. This data can then be used to advocate for policies that support equal pay for equal quality standards. By taking these steps, we can help to close the gender pay gap and ensure that all women have the opportunity to achieve financial security.
- Responses further show that in production, men tend to do activities that require physical energy such as pulling the nets, loading and offloading, mending nets, harvesting fish, cage installation, excavation of ponds and security and the women do those that require less physical energy like feeding among others. The breeding and grading fetched more money on the market, and it is done by the men only, since treatment of sex reversals is not aligned to females. Technical work; such as supervision of farm activities, record keeping, data management, quality control, can be done by both male and female, although the field is male dominated. This could be linked to the education gender divide that channel girls in non-science subjects and limiting professionals in the aquaculture field. The implication is that men were likely to access more skills and opportunities to work in this value chain than the women. Important is for project implementation to encourage women to pursue careers in aquaculture and make it more accessible through scholarships and flexible learning options, challenge gender stereotypes and promote the idea that women can be just as good as men in aquaculture. Also, to challenge workplace policies that discriminate women in fisheries and support organizations that are working to promote gender equality.
- In processing value chain, findings show that no gender differences in the kind of activities that

are done by men and women, such as washing, filleting, skinning, trimming, packaging, sorting, smoking, checking and selection and Inspection of staff for quality promotion. However, gents grade the fish because it requires lifting. It was also reported that men are not good at handling quality specifications. Women do it, although, many of them are not educated, and because of that, they are not paid well. Thus, promotion of gender responsive quality assurance measures that pay attention to the specific learning needs of females will likely enhance profitability at the level of individual women, as well as FBOs access to the markets. It is therefore essential that the project provides trainings, mentorship or one to one coaching for women in quality, so, they become more confident and proficient in quality specifications. Provide women access to resources and training materials, while taking into consideration their background, experiences and language skills.

- In the marketing and trade value chain, men are more likely to perform roles that require manual labor, such as loading fish onto trucks, transporting them, and handling them. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to perform less labor-intensive roles, such as labelling and selling fish. Both men and women may interact with clients, look for markets, process export documents, and manage the business overall. According to respondents, women are preferred to men for tasks that require neatness, concentration, and presentation, such as fish packaging and labelling. This is because women are seen as being more patient, detail-oriented, and dedicated to their work. They are also seen as being more dependable, honest, and selfless, while men are seen as being more energetic, decisive, and technically skilled. These responses suggest that women need to be trained in the different aspects of quality promotion in order for Fish Business Operators to effectively engage with the vTPAs. This means that project implementation should create a supportive and inclusive work environment for women to develop their skills. Women can be helped to upskill to remain relevant in their jobs. The project can also connect exceptional women with other women for guidance and support, as well as to share their stories and experiences and inspire others by speaking at events. FBOs can be encouraged to listen to women's concerns, be flexible and accommodative of them, and consider the cultural context when making decisions.
- On the question of access to and control over productive resources in aquaculture businesses, the study found that both men and women have access to physical, economic, and political resources in aquaculture businesses. However, women have less access to productive resources than men, due to low-income levels and lack of access to land. Women also have less control over physical resources, but they have more control over political resources. To improve access to productive resources for women in aquaculture businesses, it is important to provide women with training and education on how to manage productive assets, support women's participation in leadership positions and decision-making and ensure that all channels of communication are gender neutral. These measures will help to level the playing field for women in aquaculture businesses and allow them to participate more fully in the sector.
- The benefits received from the use of productive services identified by the study were those that relate with employment, such as insurance, capacity building, the mental benefit of providing a service, access to credit because of a job to be used as collateral, self-esteem and confidence to talk among women, building a career in fish profession and getting connections.



Also, food and nutritional security, among others. There was no differential treatment reported in accessing benefits. As shown, the benefits are many, if anyone cared to find out. They can even multiply if FBOs are able to engage vTPAs, to access international markets. It is important therefore, for the project to increase participation of women alongside men in the aquacultural value chain, create a task force to review the different assurance policies, products and services, enhance collaboration among men and women to share the risks and benefits of purchasing vTPAs and build women's confidence to ensure accountability for the decisions they make.

- On the question of initiatives undertaken to promote change of power/gender relations in the aquaculture business, findings show; having fair working conditions, organizing training programmes for women to understand all aspects of the different value chains, putting in place a provision for confidential reporting system, monthly refresher trainings in quality control for all workers, and sponsoring employees regardless of sex for external trainings to expand their skills. Most business put in place a suggestion box, provide for monthly medical fitness for all staffs, ensure that planning at the different levels of the value chain fit in the macro level gender policy framework. Analysis of FBO's initiatives to support change of power/gender relations from the context of aquaculture value chain, points to inclusion and a commitment to gender equality in whatever interventions, such as trainings, that are undertaken, so as to promote a health working relationship. This means that all staffs can be supportive of proposals to purchase vTPAs when it deems fit. Therefore, project leadership ought to train participants in critical thinking and analysis of inequality and how it shapes their lives, create spaces to foster dialogues that build confidence of women, support women's leadership by providing them training resources they need, and advocate for policies that promote gender equity.

**Objective 2:** Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade.

- On the question of enhanced women's position due to their involvement in the aquaculture business, the study found; promotion of competence sharing, exposure among women, increase recognition, improved self-esteem, and increase in the standards of living among women. Although participants noted that gender is still in its infancy in the aquaculture sector. This suggests that women's enhanced position could be significantly associated with their investments and contribution to the fields. Thus, it would be important to ensure gender balance in project teams, recruiting women in project roles and making sure that they are present in decision making. There is also need to create a supportive and inclusive work environment, that promotes women's visibility and recognition
- Regarding cultural/gender specific issues that constrain the aquaculture sector business operations and how they can be minimized study noted the following: men want to be in control, women were taken to be of subordinate status, weak and fragile, lack of inheritance rights for women and the thinking that fisheries women are prostitutes and males in fisheries have no financial discipline. However, those with business mindset said that the rule is that, as long as we supply fish, there is no culture/gender in business. These were sorted out by creating advocacy voices, being open on issues of gender at work and implement equal pay, for equal

work policy. However, the absence of a specific strategic framework, meant that gender is not anchored well in the aquaculture sector. Analysis of the cultural/gender aspects show that, despite the fact that women are not fully accepted in the aquaculture value chains, efforts were in place to put up measures to address gender issues in policy provisions, change of attitude and advocacy. It is suggested that the project works with local organizations and leaders that can provide valuable insights on cultural issues, provide training and support to extension staffs to understand how cultural issues may affect women and their participation on the project and be able to put on gender eyeglasses. Also important is to raise awareness on women's inheritance rights through information and education and to provide legal assistance to both men and women when needed.

- Strategies to enhance women participation and benefits in aquaculture business were: organizing sensitizations on the potential of the women in the sector, implementing provisions of the Uganda's constitution i.e., efforts to enforce a certain percentage of females and same pay for equal work, men and women given equal chances to contribute to the growth of business, documenting and sharing of good gender practices, putting women in decision making positions as well as incentives for those doing well irrespective of sex, among others. What is needed is how to intensify implementation of these efforts, forge even more innovations that can create gender justice in the sector to support women along with men storm the global markets in big numbers. The project should therefore empower women as entrepreneurs, producers, consumers and as leaders in the sector. They can increase their productivity, create new businesses and jobs, and make decisions to create new markets for sale of aquaculture products.
- The support government and other stakeholders implemented to promote gender equality in the aquaculture business was in the form of capacity building, providing rules and regulations for operations of the businesses, extension services, fish equipment, and funding for training institutions to train women professionals, and in good saving culture. This study has shown that government and other stakeholders once engaged, can do a lot to promote women and men in the aquaculture value chains. Therefore, the project had better work with government to direct grants to small business, especially those owned by the women, make loan guarantees to small scale business leaders, support access to markets, through trade missions, export opportunities and partnership with private companies. The project can also help SMEs to develop market plans. These can create more jobs in the sector to further economic growth.

**Objective 3:** Aspects of the vTPAs contributions, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women in Food business operations.

- The reasons for Ugandan aquaculture FBO's decision to engage vTPAs were: to have safe food on the market and the need to raise standards of food in a country and on international market. The market forces dictate that a Food Business Operator buys vTPA. If the intention is to send fish to Europe and other developed countries a company has to buy vTPAs. For international markets certification is mandatory. It is market driven by the importing countries. Certification is a reality not a plan. This calls for support towards the growth aquaculture

businesses to increase production which is likely to hire more women and accelerate access to international markets. The project can provide financial support to women owned businesses, invest in training and capacity building programs for FBOs to get the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in this business, and advocate for policies that promote access to markets, resources and decision-making powers for women to engage fully in the business.

- The reasons for encouraging and facilitating women to work in aquaculture businesses were that; gender is a marketing tool. When one has it, more market, more business and more jobs will be available. Gender accreditation is market driven. Gender is a footprint of trade. This means that promoting gender and women in project implementation will have a significant impact on the growth of the industry. There is therefore a need for the project to encourage women to take on aquaculture as a career path, challenging the social norms that limit women's opportunities in the aquaculture business and address stereotypes that limit women's participation in the industry. Also important is to provide technical assistance to women fish farmers to improve management practices as well as infrastructure to make their businesses attractive to insurers.
- Data shows that engaging vTPAs is important in expanding business opportunities, manufacturing of safe products, assurance of customer satisfaction and that standards of women and men increase. It makes the business competitive and protects quality. The reasons reported for women FBOs in Uganda, unlikeliness to purchase vTPAs were prohibitive audit costs, high costs of transportation, limited securities to access loans, and that, vTPA is a new thing, the women may not really understand it well. There is therefore need to engage all actors in the aquaculture value chain to appreciate the benefits and give them the necessary support to purchase vTPAs. Important is for the project to educate fish farmers about the importance of assurance, to make them informed of the risks and benefits associated with their business, so, they make informed decisions about whether to get or not to purchase insurance. Making insurance more accessible to fish farmers by negotiating prices, or offer subsidized insurance programs for them through government assistance. The project can also work with insurers to develop a more tailored insurance products to fish farmers that are gender sensitive and share success stories of women who have bought and benefited from vTPAs.
- Conditions favourable for women owned aquaculture FBOs to engage vTPA are having women in aquaculture to get the knowledge, skills and competences that will help them compete in the value chain with vTPAs, they have to train in how to access, use and invest loans. The results here provide indicators that can be used by policy makers and other stakeholders to allocate and channel resources to women in aquaculture sector as an initial step towards recognition of their relevance in the sector. Now that the conditions are known according to study participants, the project can share this information and also provide data about the different types of vTPAs. It should help women find affordable assurance policies, help women and men complete application process, and make application user friendly. The project can also work with insurers to offer discounts and other incentives for women to benefit from vTPAs.
- Gender related challenges reported of having vTPAs in aquaculture business in Uganda include; corruption, time allocation between housework and involvement in fish activity, large

scale fish processing being dominated by the men, women having no money to pay auditors, certification is a rigorous process that require upgrading of infrastructure and the time and venues for training are rarely gender sensitive. Responses on how these can be overcome include sensitization on available vTPAs and encourage them to purchase, training in value addition and skills development, access to finance, markets and affordable loans and on how invest. In addition, women can be provided with motorised boats, creation of special investment incentives for women and the development of aquaculture policies and approaches that are gender sensitive. It is therefore necessary for the project to support research that raise awareness of the important role that women play in the fisheries and promote fish business assurance through marketing and outreaches. Raise awareness to farmers, the media, to government officials and the general publics, and work with them to promote the message.

- Opportunities that vTPA programmes bring or likely bring to women in the aquaculture business in Uganda comprise of; acquisition of more application skills for women, trainings into gender technical knowledge, expansion of aquaculture businesses to employ more women, and on-ground training for employers and employees in gender equality. Also mentioned were tax holidays, creation of women specific fund, building the capacity of females, recruitment of women at all costs, sponsorship of female workers for further studies, in more specialised aquaculture field, putting in place incentives on fishing materials, promotion of research on gender issues in aquaculture, social connections and formation of associations for easy access to credit facilities. When the project opens up these opportunities especially for women, better economic viability among women in the industry will be possible. Therefore, educating business owners on the importance of vTPAs, technical assistance to make aquaculture businesses more competitive and more stable so they can be attractive to insurers, is imperative.
- The concerns raised on the likeliness of vTPA implementation to bring unintended consequences to gender equality in the aquaculture business are; causing of redundancy at specific times, lack of personal time, and the job may be so overwhelming with no sick leave. This implies that the more the sensitizations will be done, the likelihood of limiting the risks of these predictions. Thus, the project ought to consider these unintended consequences from its design, review, on up to evaluation for its positive contribution.

**Objective 4:** Provide policy and strategic recommendations to the project's leadership and stakeholders on refining or amending project activities and implementation to be more gender responsive and better promote gender equality; and how to best incorporate gender equality dimensions into monitoring, evaluation and learning activities

## **Recommendations**

### **Policy recommendations**

1. Streamlining gender in project implementation. This requires that all staffs involved in the horticulture and aquaculture businesses have a basic understanding of gender and the practice of how to integrate it. A gender responsive training will address this. However, this kind of training may not necessarily make the staff gender experts. The projects therefore ought to employ the



services of a technical person whenever it deems fit to:

- To train all the competent authorities in project implementing countries in gender sensitive policy and programming, such that they are gender aware in their planning of project activities and continuously reflect on gender issues in project implementation.
- Integrate gender in all project documents to enhance awareness and guide monitoring and evaluation of gender issues project activities.

2. Piloting the Use of Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) successfully requires that the personnel on the ground are at the same level of understanding gender issues and how they are detected. It can therefore be possible to report gender issues to the project focal persons for necessary action and at the same time inspire the rest to address the same. Thus:

- Training government extension workers in how to develop gender sensitive indicators for quality promotion is imperative. This means that the specific needs of women and men are addressed in project implementation. This should facilitate linkage with project focal persons regarding information sharing.

3. Support infrastructural development for women owned FBO in preparation for engaging vTPAS. This can be in form of land acquisition, access to water resources, and equipment for value addition. Access to and control of productive resources were weak areas for women in both sectors. The same ought to facilitate access to certification and also access to international markets.

4. The project can work with respective governments authorities to support upcoming women in the horticulture and aquaculture food businesses to get the necessary competences in the relevant industry. Initiatives like these can go to small and middle level businesses that are performing well. This may entail:

- Placement of young women in reputable FBOs in the sectors globally to get the experiences they can apply to their own businesses.
- Facilitate local exchange visits of women in the horticulture businesses to well established business to learn how to improve their own businesses.
- Facilitate exposure for women in the aquaculture to learn on what they can aspire for when establishing their own businesses. This can create a multiplier effect to the industry.
- Identify and facilitate women willing to share their experiences and facilitate them to mentor others in small scale businesses and encourage peer to peer learning.
- The government and partners should reach out to young female students in institutions and interest them into aquaculture. This can be through an established scholarship fund.

5. The report identified the compliance to constitutional provisions and public regulatory frameworks as important for effective promotion of participation and benefit for women in Food Business operations. This is because, the instruments emphasise equity and inclusiveness. For

property follow up, therefore, the study recommends:

- The project should support the development of gender specific policies for the horticulture and aquaculture sectors for the respective implementing countries. To support staffs in their effort to uphold equal rights for women and men.
- Development of simple guidelines of policy and standards, preferably in local languages that can be understood and used by the women.
- In line with the national policy frameworks, the project ought to support FBO's without gender specific policies that are easy to follow and implement and put them in place.
- Work with participating governments to put in place a think tank that can continuously generate strategies for promotion of women alongside men in project implementation.

6. Equally important is the support for formation of a joint accreditation body for the horticulture and aquaculture produce. This can be done in consultation with the existing certification bodies for their input. The accreditation body can put in place a secretariate that is recognized by all, to facilitate a singular accreditation, like it is for higher education sector in East Africa, to enable standardization, and subsequent sharing of accredited products from project implementing countries on the global markets. It can also enable FBOs to beat the cost of multiple accreditation that are currently prohibitive.

### **Strategic recommendations**

1. Promote appropriate capacity building in gender sensitive quality standards for empowerment of grassroots women and men in aquaculture and horticulture businesses. This will increase the technical competences of women and will buy-in men's support towards increased participation by the women. Important therefore is to:

- Train both men and women in the horticulture and aquaculture sector in utilizing gender eye lens i.e., paying particular attention to gender imbalances; the ways in which interactions are gendered at farm levels and making women's perspectives and experiences visible, while executing work.
- Build women capacities in gender aspects of certification and facilitate them to mentor other women. The project may pay them a little token to facilitate their fuel. These should be women involved in horticulture and aquaculture activities. Training of grassroots women should take into consideration the place, time, venue, language, practices, to prevent conflicts at family levels.
- Build the capacity of women in aquaculture and horticulture businesses in leadership qualities and skills required for SME management.

2. Promote experience sharing and mentorship for promising young women in the horticulture and aquaculture businesses

3. Pilot innovations on financing women FBO to purchase vTPAs. Certification has been found by

the study to be of great potential for expansion of both horticulture and aquaculture businesses. Hence project implementation should aim at;

- Guarantying women to get credit and pay back in instalments.
- Encouraging saving and loaning among others to access finance.

4. Promotion of knowledge on consumer protection, effective access to local and international markets, promotion of food safety, how to engage government and private consultants and the changing market demands for women and men in the aquaculture and horticulture sectors. It is therefore important to:

- Support women FBOs regarding how to access the required documentation, certification and the knowledge of how the process works.
- Work with quality assurance corporations worldwide on standards to show case their options for vTPAs.
- Documentation of good certification practices in horticulture and aquaculture for sharing among stakeholders and compare.

5. The project should hold discussions with relevant stakeholders to ensure their cooperation and partnership in promotion of gender in the aquaculture and horticulture industries. This calls for:

- Working with media houses to publicize the importance of women and gender in promotion of food safety.
- Developing policy briefs on gender issues in horticulture and aquaculture business for sharing in the newspapers and with policy makers.
- Encouraging business owners to recruit more women since they have been found to be very good at managing specifications which is important in taking vTPAs.

6. The project should promote research in horticulture and aquaculture value chains.

- This will enhance literature in the project areas provide information on monitoring and data on the efficiency and productivity of the sectors.
- Promotion of research on gender appropriate technologies that can allow more women engage in the horticulture and aquaculture value chains.
- Sex disaggregated data will be key in bridging the gap for increased data access.

7. Support the strengthening of farmers groups/ cooperative with specific focus to active participation of women. Especially women in leadership roles. The project can use fish farmers groups and cooperatives to reach many farmers for training, information sharing, learning and joint activities.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	African Development Bank Group
CCFICS	Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification
COMESA	Common Markets for East and Southern Africa
COVID-19	Corona Virus 2019
DFO/UMENA	District Fisheries Officer
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FBO	Food Business Operator
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAP	Good Agriculture Practices
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
P-IMA	Prioritizing Investments for Market Access
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
MIGEPROF	Gender Monitoring Unit at the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
NAEB	National Agricultural Export Development Board
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
STDF	Standards and Trade Development Facility
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
vTPA	Voluntary Third-Party Assurance
WAFICO	Walimi Fish Cooperative Society

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Piloting the Use of Third-Party Assurance Programme in East Africa to Improve Food Safety Outcomes for Public Health and Trade is a three-year activity beginning November 2022 and ending October 2025 that is implemented by Land O'Lakes Venture37 (Venture37) and funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). This activity will pilot the use of a Voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) Programme in Rwanda for the horticulture sector and Uganda for fisheries to improve food safety, based on the Codex Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes (CXG-93-2021). The pilot will be implemented in close cooperation with the governments of Rwanda and Uganda and will complement two other ongoing pilot projects, generating additional data and evidence on the use of the vTPA approach in developing countries, and promoting dialogue and learning across West Africa and Central America. The project will also assess and make use of data and information from vTPA Programmes to support ongoing food safety reform processes in Rwanda and Uganda, including the move towards a more risk-based inspection system that will further strengthen dialogue and cooperation with small-scale producers and food business operators, as part of efforts to modernize and strengthen food safety management.

Venture37 commissioned a consultant to carry out a gender analysis of the horticulture sector in Rwanda aquaculture sector in Uganda as it would relate to carrying out the vTPA in East Africa Program. This report provides the results of the analysis. Section 1.0 Introduces the study. Section 2.0 provides the background of vTPA programmes, horticulture value chain in Rwanda, and aquaculture value chain in Uganda. Section 3.0 explains the purpose and scope of the consultancy. Section 4.0 describes the methodology of the study. Section 5.0 presents the findings. Section 6.0 provides both policy and strategic recommendations for how the project can mainstream gender in its operations. While Section 7.0 presents the bibliography. The report also provides the tools used to gather the data.



## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 VOLUNTARY THIRD PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMMES IN FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS

A voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) programme has been defined by Codex as “an autonomous scheme comprising of the ownership of a standard that may utilize national/international requirements; a governance structure for certification and conformity assessments that provides for periodic onsite audits of food business operators for conformity with the standards, and in which FBO participation is voluntary”. Common vTPA programmes in food safety include ISO22000 at the processing level and Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) at the farm level.

Interest in the use and potential benefits of vTPA programmes in national food control systems has grown in recent years, as evidenced by the adoption of the Codex Guidelines on vTPA programmes in 2021 ([www.codexalimentarius.org](http://www.codexalimentarius.org)). Some competent authorities are taking account of and/or using information and data generated by vTPA programmes to better inform their risk profiling of food businesses, inform the implementation of risk-based inspection and more effectively targeting resources within their national food control system. These trends started in developed countries. Some developing countries have also taken steps to pursue greater collaboration with the private sector, including increased reliance on vTPA. Whilst the authorities in Rwanda and Uganda countries have some general experience of public private partnerships, they have limited understanding on how such a partnership would work in the food control system. Thus, exploring the challenges and opportunities arising from the use of vTPA programmes to improve (not to replace or diminish) their national food control system, will support implementation of the Codex Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes, developed by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS).

Food Business Operators (FBO) are defined as companies and/or persons responsible for running food businesses, including producing, processing and marketing of food products, have the most critical role and responsibility to ensure that consumers’ health is preserved by producing food that is safe and nutritious. To do so, they have to implement food safety management systems and to comply with food safety regulatory requirements (Badarneh, 2023). More and more companies in the food sector are voluntarily deciding to use food safety and quality vTPA programmes to demonstrate compliance with regulatory requirements. The information and data generated by vTPA can be beneficial to National Food Control Systems, enabling competent authorities to target inspections according to the risk posed by food business and to direct their resources more effectively (Badarneh, 2023). The implementation of vTPA in aquaculture and horticulture in Uganda and Rwanda respectively presents many opportunities, for women, since they interact with the environment on a day-to-day basis in their daily chores. For instance, women traditionally take over tasks related to household such as looking after cattle, fetching water and food and nutrition (Davis & Bustelo, 2023) Thus, the Piloting the Use of Third-Party Assurance

Programme in East Africa to Improve Food Safety Outcomes for Public Health and Trade project pays close attention to the varying roles that women play in the horticulture and aquaculture value chains in Rwanda and Uganda, while working to increase awareness on gender equality and gender responsiveness.

## **2.2 COUNTRY SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENTS FOR HORTICULTURE AND AQUACULTURE**

The pilot project in Rwanda and Uganda pays particular attention to the horticulture and aquaculture sectors/value chains. These value chains – largely employing small and medium-sized producers in these countries – have their own challenges, including limited resources and capacity. However, women farmers are more affected than men, due to inequitable access and control of productive resources, as well as unequal intra household power relations (Ingabire, 2021). This is representative of the food sector in developing countries, where SMEs constitute approximately 90% of FBOs. Strengthening the capacity of SMEs is therefore essential to ensure that food produced for human consumption is safe (Land 'O' Lakes Venture 37 Project Documents, March 2023).

### **2.2.1 RWANDA**

The pilot project will be implemented in the horticulture sector, which is an important part of the overall agriculture sector and economy. Agriculture contributes about 29% of the national gross domestic product (GDP) and 68% of the labour force are employed in agriculture, of these women represent 79.1% (Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey – Rwanda, 2015). It is estimated that women contribute up to 70% of the labour to agricultural production (ADB, 2008). The horticulture sector consists of a number of value chains, but this particular report focuses on Chili, French beans and Avocado. In comparison to the fiscal year 2020/2021, horticulture (vegetables, fruits and flowers) accounted for 6.7 per cent of total agro-export revenues, as they generated \$42.8 million. Rwanda's agricultural exports increased by 44% to over \$640.9 million (Rwf 663 billion) in 2021-2022, from \$444.8 million (Rwf 460 billion) in the previous financial year (<http://www.newtimes.co.rw>). Continued growth in horticulture high-value fresh products for export is a national priority. This includes exports of French beans, avocado and chili for international markets (mainly Europe and Middle East) and regional markets.

There is also growing domestic demand for safe and fresh horticulture products, linked to growth of an urban middle class and tourism industry, including hotels and restaurants. Rwanda targets 46,314 tonnes of horticulture harvest and an annual export revenue of 130 million by 2024 according to the projections of the Ministry of Agriculture (<https://www.cbnafrica.com>). In Rwanda, international exports are certified against the official controls under the Plant Health Law, and products destined for domestic and regional markets are certified against the national GAP standard.

### **2.2.2 UGANDA**

The pilot project focusses on aquaculture. Industrial and intensified fish culture in Uganda is only

just beginning to be established (FAO, 2023). Most farms and companies at this level are at the stage of putting infrastructure in place or are at the beginning of production process. The fisheries subsector contributes 2.5% to the national GDP, 12% to the agricultural GDP and is a direct source of livelihood for more than 3 million Ugandans. 9.7 of fish folks are women and 90.3% are fisher men (<http://www.zippia>). 74% of fish is sold by women in Uganda, with 51% of women processing all the fish before sale. According to Uganda government fisheries strategic plan (2019/2020), about 70% of the fish business is conducted by women who are in vulnerable group. Aquaculture is the leading supply of dietary animal protein in the country, estimated at 50% of animal protein food. The industry, through backward and forward linkages, supports other sectors such as oil and petroleum, beverages, transport, and the airline industry. The introduction of cage fish farming in the major water bodies and commercial fish farming in the country has boosted aquaculture production. The target is to raise production to aquaculture to 1,000,000 MT by 2025. The present production from aquaculture includes mainly production from small-scale fish farmers, emerging commercial fish farmers and stocked community water reservoirs and minor lakes. The prevailing business opportunities have created a recent expansion in aquaculture, which has transformed about 30% of the ponds into profitable small-scale production units.

In Uganda, international exports are certified against the established official controls under the Uganda Fish Quality Assurance Rules (2017), the authority responsible for issuing movement permits is the Department of fisheries resources or designated officers in the local governments (FAO, 2023). The aquaculture sector has attracted a significant number of local and foreign investors who can be supported to ensure mass production. The current challenges facing aquaculture mainly include: limited access to quality fish seed, feed and aquaculture extension services, and start-up capital among others. The design and implementation of Good Aquaculture Practices was identified as a priority option for investment in Uganda during a Prioritizing Investment for Market Access (P-IMA) analysis carried out under the COMESA led regional project (STDF/PG/606), supported by the STDF in partnership with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF).

## 3.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE CONSULTANCY

### 3.1 PURPOSE

To conduct a gender analysis of the different dimensions of gender related to the horticulture and aquaculture sectors in the “piloting the use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance in East Africa” program

### 3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Apply a gender lens to the project context, analysing gendered aspects of roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and power relations within project implementation.
2. Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade.
3. Generate the data related to aspects of the vTPAs contributions, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women.
4. Provide policy and strategic recommendations to the project's leadership and stakeholders on refining or amending project activities and implementation to be more gender responsive and better promote gender equality; and how to best incorporate gender equality dimensions into monitoring, evaluation and learning activities



## 4.0. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 APPROACH

In consultation with Venture37, a qualitative participatory approach was employed in conducting this study. This entailed several engagements with the potential beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders, including project line officials at the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries Uganda and The Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition and Consumer Protection Authority, Food Business Operators, and the community of horticulture and aquacultural farmers.

First, the consultant undertook a review of both published and unpublished literature which was continuously updated. Using the information from the review of literature, available project documents, and initial discussions with the project officials and the assignment manager, the consultant developed tools for collection of the data from the field, developed the methodology, and identified potential participants of the study and a sampling frame. The process culminated into an inception report that was shared with Venture37.

Gender analysis is one of the key aspects of the consultancy. The project pays attention to the different gender roles in the horticulture and aquaculture value chains, while also seeking to assess gender constraints to women's participation in trade and the opportunities that exist for working with women and women owned FBOs, along with men to develop their food safety knowledge and skills, in a way that enables them to grow and generate increased revenues through access to local and international markets.

### 4.2 METHODOLOGY

#### 4.2.1 STUDY DESIGN

A descriptive study design with qualitative approach was adopted for this assignment, because it was useful in studying situations where not much is known about the phenomena under investigation. This assisted in identifying and describing the patterns and state of gender and how this affects the organisation of the aquaculture and horticulture sectors in Uganda and Rwanda, in order to provide the data for improving and incorporating gender related aspects in implementation of the national regulatory frameworks for food control systems.

#### 4.2.2 AREA AND POPULATION OF STUDY

The study was carried out in the districts of Wakiso and Kampala, in central Uganda, and the areas of Kigali, and Rulindo districts, central and northern provinces in Rwanda. Wakiso and Kampala were selected due to high concentration of aquaculture firms on Lake Victoria who provided information on gender aspects of aquaculture business. Rulindo district is famous in the production of Avocado, French beans and Chilli and most horticulture dealers have their businesses located in Kigali city. The study population comprised of men and women drawn from food business operations cooperatives/associations and line ministries, involved in horticulture and aquaculture businesses in Rwanda and Uganda respectively, who provided information on

gender aspects of roles and responsibilities, resources ownership, power relations, current status, constraints and opportunities as well as food safety compliance and application of vTPA approaches in project implementation.

#### **4.2.3 SAMPLE SIZE AND SELECTION**

The individuals and groups included in this study comprised of Sixty-one (51) respondents; thirty-one (21) of whom were drawn from 11 Food Business Organisations, including business owners, quality assurance managers, marketing officers and production officers. Further, seven (7) Key informants were interviewed, 4 from the aquaculture and 3 from the horticulture sectors, who included Line managers from the MAIF Uganda and RICA in Rwanda, Heads of associations/cooperatives, and District fisheries officers. More so, five (5) Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) comprising of twenty-three (23) participants were held, three for the horticulture and two for the aquaculture sectors. These were purposively selected with the support of project officials, based on their knowledge and understanding of project goals, to ensure that the categories of people, their views, and situations are relevant to the question under investigation. This sampling technique effectively dealt with the reasoning, ensured logical flow and representation of ideas related to women involvement and gender related aspects of project implementation. Figure 1 presents the characteristics of business visited by country, ownership, methods of data collection, type and category of business.

**Figure 1: shows the characteristics of business visited by country, ownership, methods of data collection, type and category of business.**

Method	Food Business sectors visited and location	No. of contacts	Type of business	Category of value chain	Gender of business owner
<b>Interviews Rwanda</b> <b>11</b>	Horticulture 1 Production officer Quality Assurance officer	2	Avocado, Chili and French Beans	Entire value chain	Female
	Horticulture 2 Business Owner	1	Avocado and Chili	Entire value chain	Female
	Horticulture 3 Production/Quality Assurance officer	2	Chili and French Beans	Entire Value chain	Male
	Horticulture 4 Marketing Manager	2	Chili and French Beans, avocado	Entire Value chain	Male
	Horticulture 5 Business Owner	1	Avocado	Production and trade	Female
	Horticulture 6 Business Owner, production and marketing manager	3	Chili	Processing and export trade	Male
<b>Interviews Uganda</b> <b>10</b>	Aquaculture 1 Production officer, quality Assurance and Marketing officer	3		Production and Marketing	Female
	Aquaculture 2 Rep of Business owner and Quality Assurance officer	2		Entire value chain	Male
	Aquaculture Business Owner and Quality Assurance officer	2		Processing and Trade	Male
	Aquaculture Production and Marketing Officer	2		Processing and export trade	Male
	Aquaculture Quality assurance officer	1		Processing and export trade	Male
<b>Key informants Rwanda</b>	Horticulture	03	Avocado, Chili and French Beans	Cooperatives, cooperative Inspector,	
<b>Key Informants Uganda</b>	Aquaculture	04	Aquaculture	Inspectors, Head of Association, DFO/UFBEA	
<b>PLA</b>	Horticulture Aquaculture	5	Rwanda 3 Uganda 2	Processing, production and Marketing	18 females 05 males
<b>Observations</b>	Data collected concurrently with PLA, interviews, Key informants				

#### **4.2.4 FIELD IMPLEMENTATION**

A letter of introduction was sought from the assignment manager Venture 37 to enable the consultant have access to the line ministries in both Rwanda and Uganda, for the necessary guidance and support towards field activities. The consultant then conducted preliminary visits to the study areas to acquaint herself with the nature of the assignment, from which she was able to update the study tools. After this the process of data collection commenced. The consultant collected the data herself with the assistance of a note taker, a recorder and an interpreter-specifically for Rwanda.

#### **4.2.5 DATA COLLECTION**

The consultant used qualitative methods: interview schedule, key informant guides, participant observation and participatory learning tools to collect the data on gender issues from a sample of different targets, specifically on gendered roles and responsibilities; resource ownership; power relations; participation and benefits; constraints and opportunities, and actions taken to enhance gender equality in food business operations and export trade, in order to appreciate and analyse the problem. More so, the study investigated issues of participation and benefits; constraints and opportunities of vTPA to women in Food business operations. In addition, the consultant carefully examined archives on studies of existing researches, relating to gender issues in the horticulture and aquaculture sectors, as well as the existing documents on Voluntary Third-Party Assurance, to arrive at a more concrete understanding of the problem. This involved the review of relevant literature including studying secondary sources that entail project baselines, reports and journal publications, end line reports, policy documents, and records among other sources that have a bearing on gender relations.

#### **4.2.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data gathered using multiple methods, was transcribed, interpreted and expanded into more complete narratives with the necessary corrections within 12 hours from the field. The narrative was edited to ensure accuracy, consistency and completeness of information. The edited data was coded and organized in different themes and patterns that reflect the study objectives, in order to establish the relationships. This was analysed using content analysis, and written notes were classified accordingly to make this gender analysis report.

## 5.0 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section of the report discusses and draws conclusions on findings of gender analysis on Piloting the Use of Third-Party Assurance Programme in East Africa to Improve Food Safety Outcomes for Public Health and Trade project. Findings are presented according to study objectives. These are; applying a gender lens to the project context; analysing the gender related aspects of roles and responsibilities, resources ownership and power relations; assessing the contributions and benefits, gender related constraints and opportunities for women in project implementation and challenges and opportunities in getting third party verification, as well as the conditions favourable for women to engage quality standards and/or benefit from vTPA , including unforeseeable consequences. Furthermore, we provide policy and Strategic recommendations on streamlining gender in project implementation.

### A. HORTICULTURE SECTOR IN RWANDA

#### OBJECTIVE 1.

Apply a gender lens to the project context, analysing gendered aspects of roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and power relations within project implementation

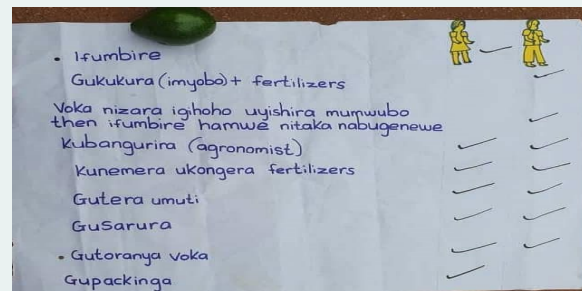
##### 5.1.1 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE HORTICULTURE SECTOR IN RWANDA

This section presents study findings of the gender differences in roles and responsibilities in horticulture. The view that women are predominantly involved in agriculture remains clear in this study. For instance, 82 % of women in Rwanda work in agricultural sector to feed themselves and their families (Strube, 2021). Participants reported that, all roles and responsibilities in the different value chains whether done by male or female, carry equal value because of their interconnectedness. The farm feeds into packaging, etc, until you complete the cycle to export. But quality is important at all the stages of horticulture value chain. However, this value is explained in terms of quality standards and not in terms of what is earned which could possibly be linked to gender differences in resources ownership. Ultimately, some roles and responsibilities are more lucrative than others, so inherently, they do not have equal value to the person doing the job. It is important to educate women about their rights and laws that protect women from discrimination so as to heighten their potential benefits from the different levels of horticulture value chains.



## Avocado Production

Results from the interviews show that production roles and responsibilities of Avocado are performed by both the men and women. Those reported include Farm clearing, Weeding, mulching, purchase and use of pesticides pruning and removing hiding places for insects, and harvesting. 'When harvesting we ensure that we are not damaging the fruit', said one of the respondents.



**Figure 2.** showing activity tool for Avocado production by Kavejuba Study Participants. Rurindo District

## Avocado Processing

No gender differences in the kind of activities that are done during processing were reported. Activities identified include: Logistics, packaging, supervising, and sorting. According to participants; sorting is one activity that reveals the quality of a product. 'We sort according to sizes, colour and quality' explained one of the participants. It was reported that supervisors at this stage are mostly women. The reasons are clearly explained including those mentioned that; women meet targets, while men focus on the volume i.e., %Kg. Women are specific, they take their time, women follow-up on the results up to the end, they are friendly, can work perfectly in teams and have intrinsic leadership skills, all of which makes them strong in the business. These qualities can be seen as good entry points for the women into management which can help them gain experiences and develop their skills.

## Avocado marketing and Trade

Results show that both men and women are engaged in the marketing and trade of horticulture products. Activities reported at this value chain level include; working with exporters and local traders to buy produce, exporting products, Looking for market and shipment. This participant noted that; "I do a market search of our products. For instance, I want to open up a new market in some other country. I have just made a trial shipment of 100kgs of Avocado to find out if buyers are welcoming the product. In case they find it good, we discuss policy issues" (Female owner, FBO, WR)

However, participants in some companies visited indicated that they sell locally, they do not export because they do not have the requirements to access external markets. This may mean reduced opportunities for women to advance their careers and can make it difficult for them to build their businesses. Thus, the need for project to create a supportive environment for the women in horticulture, by connecting women with others in the field, offering scholarships and financial assistance to cover costs of training, link them to organisations that are working to advance women and helping them access markets, which can eventually enable them to purchase vTPAs.

## Chili Production

The roles at this level of value chain farm clearing, weeding, mulching, pruning and harvesting among others. These are done by both men and women. In addition, the study noted that: More women were reported to take part in Chili production value chain as observed by this participant, in an interview; “Everywhere, women are dominating from land preparation, ploughing to harvesting. that’s what we believe

in. When women for instance, do the harvesting, we expect more output. There is also quality when women do the sorting” (Male production officer, FBO, YR). When women are made aware of this compliment, it gives a sense of confidence. Other participants reported that they worked with farmers to ensure quality of the products they buy: “We outsource. We generate social contracts with women and men. We provide seeds and send agronomists to the farmers and they sell us the produce. Women here have their plots. They grow and supply. We implement all closes of the contracts made between the company and the workers in the field and we pay them” (Female production officer FBO XR). As indicated, female domination of the chili production value chain means that women will continue to reap from the economic gains at this level, especially, when given the knowledge of what is required on the market. Thus, the project should work to ensure that women are able to benefit from their participation.



**Figure 3.** Land cleared and ready for

## Chili Processing

Activities involved at this level of value chain are: labelling, cutting, packaging, supervising, and sorting that were reported by the study participants. These are done by both women and men. In most Chili processing FBOs visited, the raw materials come from the people in the villages around the business. Interviews revealed that some of the supervisors are women but the men still dominate, which is likely to lead to unconscious bias, preventing women from taking on challenging jobs. What is required is for the project to promote equal opportunities for women at his level of value chain.

## Chili Marketing and Trade

Results show the roles and responsibilities at this level of Chili value Chain, involve; commercial marketing, sells planning, control of the point-of-sale system, receiving client feedback and dealing with client’s challenges to ensure their satisfaction, and deployment of employees. These activities are done by both male and female depending on the qualifications. It is important for the project to breakdown the glass ceiling, by encouraging promotion of women to leadership position, training and development opportunities and creating a more inclusive work culture. Further, drawing on the results of observations, interviews and discussions during the field visits, it is clear that women are doing great work in the entire value chain of Chili and comprehend the market demands of have the quality specifications. However, those at the grassroots are constrained by their limited education. Ntabakirabose et al (2021) explains that male farmers as compared to female farmers in Rwanda are the ones who mostly attend the training and seminars that are

eventually enabled men to fetch relatively more profit compared to women. It is therefore important to provide women access to quality education, create opportunities for them to learn on the job and to enable them get experiences and skills to support them succeed at work.

### **French Beans Production**

Roles and responsibilities reported entail Farm clearing, Weeding, purchase and use of pesticides. They mentioned that women should be protected from the chemicals used in spraying, so mostly men undertake the spray activity. This reinforces the ideas that women are vulnerable and weak, and need to be protected, which excludes them from these activities. The project needs to access and share information on how women can protect themselves and show that they are capable of managing the associated risks, in order to have the same benefits. Findings however show that mostly women participate in harvesting, because they have the patience,



**Figure 4.** Brainstorming session at Abakumburwa Cooperative

as elaborated by this participant: “there are some tasks that are considered women activities and probably linked to culture, such as harvesting. Everywhere in horticulture women are dominating”. While much attention is focussed on quality promotion, women ability to pursue this work perfectly will depend on how well they are trained in handling quality. Therefore, the project should provide women the training in quality handling, such as control, assurance, improvement and promotion and celebrate their successes.

### **French Beans Processing**

Some of the activities reported under processing are: labelling, cutting, packaging, sampling for market tests, weighing, recording and reporting. These are done by both women and men. Women also carry out professional work such as management and all other work that would require patience, as they explained: “Most men do not want to work in processing. They say the activities are for women because they require patience. Women check on small things that can boost quality”. (Male QA officer, FBO ZR). This was also reported by another respondent that; “Women maintain a sustainable quality assurance on the produced crops, they not only work, but they go an extra mile on the quality of products at the business. They adapt quickly, they are innovative, have the responsibility and know how to make the product attractive to consumers” (Key Informant, 3R). This therefore requires the project to give women the training they need to do their work perfectly, expose them to current research on consumer behaviour, encourage FBOs to be open and value ideas from women, and give the women the opportunity to share their unique experiences and perspectives.

### **French Beans Marketing and Trade**

The roles and responsibilities of men and women at this level of value chain are similar to those of other vegetables discussed earlier. That is commercial marketing, sales planning, control of the point-of-sale system, receiving client feedback and dealing with client's challenges. These activities are still done by both male and female. Promoting women in this can give them a sense of empowerment, relative to men which the project needs to pursue.

As discussed above women undoubtedly maintain a sustainable quality assurance service in the entire value chain of French beans, compared to the men. Important is to give these women the resources they need to do their work perfectly.

### **5.1.2 PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES THAT WOMEN AND MEN HAVE ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER IN THE HORTICULTURE BUSINESS**

The study explored the physical, economic, and political resources that men and women access to and control over in the horticulture sector. Physical resources could include land and buildings; economic resources include capital and labour, and political resources include management and information among others. This study found the physical, economic, and political resources known to participants, present and accessed by both males and females in the food business operations visited. Examples mentioned were land as a physical resources, information, leadership and decision making as political resources and capital as an economic resource. Important is to promote diversity of thought and perspectives, quality of decision making, as well as fairness and equity in project implementation in addition to addressing gender stereotypes. Among study participants, these phrases were used to explain what is reported:

In relation to political resources study participants indicated that:

“I have access to all information in the business, because I make major decisions about new investments and about marketing the products. I participate in deciding the choice of the region where to invest, selection of company suppliers for raw materials and the clearing agents to work with.” (Female, participant FBO, WR)

In one business visited, it was made clear that, the women are found in all departments. They make decisions based on their position in the business. They make decisions which are fully considered and implemented, especially when they are concerning the quality of the services. The finance director is a woman. Further, a participant indicated that; “the deputy managing director in charge of strategic planning ‘who is a woman’ brings in data that is influencing the direction of the businesses.” (Male production officer, FBO XR).

Meanwhile, another male business owner commented that: “by encouraging women to make decisions, that’s how they are able to be leaders or feel like they can access leadership positions.” In relation to leadership, another respondent pointed out that: “I advise the production manager, approve produce and harvests, and approve recordings. I am the quality controller, trusted officer and it’s my career.” (Female, Quality Assurance Officer, FBO WR)

Results of observations show that women in FBOs were consulted. Our interview session with a female quality assurance manager, which took 90 minutes, was interrupted at least four times by the male general manager, who made consultations on issues regarding business operations. This could be a sign of respect for female employees’ expertise or being open to ideas from a female employee. In my view, the chief executive was not consulting the woman, but someone in the position, although it was a woman occupying it who had the skills and experiences that were required of that role. This means that women possessing the relevant training had some level of control to drive innovations, and the opportunity to create positive impact to the business. Important is to train girls, alongside male children in the relevant professions and teach them to

be assertive and lifelong learners. This participant also said that: “I advise the MD on what can be done to improve the business, on recruitment and new investments”. (Female participant, FBO, YR)

Equally significant were economic resources. Participants in a focus group discussion mentioned that; ‘Middle men’ affect us. They mercilessly, cut off our prices. If we had the capital, we would prefer to work with exporting companies directly (FGD,1R).

In other businesses, they indicated that: ‘there is a woman in a leadership position’, ‘the department is led by a woman’, a woman makes the decisions.’ ‘The final decision is made by the female. She is the boss’. ‘All major decisions are made by the boss, who is a woman’ (Participants, FBO XR; YR, and WR). According to Boardrooms (2021) Diversity Report, women held 14.2 of executive board seats in African businesses, which was an increase of 3.4% point over 2020 (<https://africa.business>). In the United States, women hold 31.7% of top executive positions across industries in 2021. Further men own 83% of business in rural Rwanda, while women own only 17% (Davis & Bustelo, 2023). This should be one of the indicators to help a project make an effort in organising women to get directly in the leadership of horticulture value chain in Rwanda.

From the data gathered here, it is clear that the six women with the relevant qualifications, reached by the study, were doing great work in promoting horticulture business in the country. This is because most of them were educated. However, acknowledging the significance of women at the grassroots and the roles they play in the sector, calls for training women in the respective fields. They will be able to bridge the gender gap in the business and find options into purchasing vTPAs.

### **5.1.3 BENEFITS WOMEN AND MEN RECEIVE FROM THE USE OF PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES IN THE HORTICULTURE FOOD BUSINESS.**

Regarding this question, study participants identified a number of benefits men and women receive from the use of productive resources in the aquaculture business, including; safe homes, salary to meet their needs, access to loans and health insurance among others highlighted in this section. Note that these benefits depend on where one is working and the positions they hold. It is therefore important that the project is aware of these benefits to ensure that employees have access the benefits they need, which can eventually unleash their potential to access vTPAs and larger markets.

This respondent said that: “Women contribute to family development. Men will respect you depending on what you bring on the table. You make your choices and it minimises conflicts at home. Workers here have stable homes and they support each other at no cost.” (Female owner, FBO, WR). Another woman said that: “Women repossess the hope to realise their childhood dreams. ‘Last year we held a staff party and each one shared their dreams for the coming year. This year we will talk about how these were achieved.’” This participant reported that: “The workers get paid and it is this money which they use to meet their children’s needs and buy clothes for themselves and their husbands. “Female owner, FBO ZR). In many FBOs interviewees reported that: “staff have appointment letters and when one’s salary is stable, women can access salary loans.” (Participants FBO WR; XR). Regarding the same, focus group discussions revealed that; “we get loans, gifts and the money from the cooperatives. When we make the money,



everyone gets their share and we use that balance to have a party. For instance, this year, at the party, everyone got a hoe to carry home.” (FGD, 3R). While this female participant indicated that: “I gained the skill, that I can use to be able to manage other businesses”. Providing welfare benefits to women employees sends a message that the business values increased gender equality and that women are more likely to be productive and sustain production. This means that a business will get attracted to more customers and improve access to markets. It is necessary that the project enhances an inclusive work environment such that women can balance their work and family responsibilities. At a community level, the study based on the results of FGD noted that people share according to their input. “Everyone works for themselves. If you really want to earn good money, you have to work hard. No body takes the other persons money. Women receive as much as men do” (FGD, 2R)

#### **5.1.4 INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE CHANGE OF POWER/GENDER RELATIONS IN THE HORTICULTURE BUSINESS**

Transforming power/gender relations in the horticulture sector to allow both men and women develop their own beliefs and confidence rather than compromising them, would be a desired outcome of this study. This thinking hinges on the development of conscientisation skills which support both male and females to question gendered stereotypes currently constraining the horticulture sector. It also means that feedback from employees, to improve practices can promote a positive work environment, retain and attract top talent some of who are women.

Most FBOs visited had employed initiatives to contain power relations in the horticulture, including the following which were reported:

Putting in place a policy on anti-discrimination, harassment and hiring of women; follow up with farm activities, i.e., frequent field visits to farmers to check on quality promotion and recognition of hardworking staffs, specifically women, as observed: “Boss appreciates the work women do and in terms of honesty as compared to their brothers who used to ‘steal’. This builds confidence among women which makes them to work hard and this is shown in productivity of the company” (Male Quality Assurance Officer, FBO XR)

Other responses indicated that FBOs by working with farmers regardless of sex across the country to sustain supply, paying contractors both male and female on time, ensuring proper use of records to allow for participation and benefits for men and women, they would be helping to improve gender relations.

Other participants stated that they conduct trainings on the different forms of promoting quality: “We train farmers on standards, qualifications, certifications, harvesting, logistics, pack housing, administration, human rights and support the operations team with knowledge of inclusiveness. (Female Owner, FBO YR). Here a project can help women access more of these opportunities, encourage collaborations and a platform for women to share their ideas which can bring more women into business.

Another respondent observed that gender equality is promoted at high level in the business: “We have a gender equity committee, a special committee in charge of prevention of sexual harassment, and the boss is part of it. We meet every Monday and Friday, and gender equality is

part of the agenda. We invite guests from the different sectors to talk to employees on gender issues among other things. The structures in this company provide an opportunity for workers to be exposed.” (Male Quality Assurance officer, FBO XR). Another one indicated that “We have in place a food safety committee which is headed by a woman with Master qualifications.” (Participant FBO, WR)

The idea of keeping children close to their mothers has been supported both scientifically and culturally, and often related to proper children upbringing. In one business visited, a centre for breast feeding mothers was established, to allow women concentrate at work, when they move with their children. Normalising breastfeeding makes it easy for women to continue work, which can help them stay in workforce and progress their career. Also, reported was a provision of food and accommodation and women did not work in night shifts. However, working in teams allowed sharing of experiences by those who have been in the business longer, irrespective of who they are. Another study participant said that: “In this business, the managing director, the general manager, human resources are all women. These inspire women. We working with a specialised cluster of women to mentor others. We push those who are not much interested” (Female Owner, FBO WR). Thus, having these in place helps other women growing in the business to have role models that the project can facilitate to sustain mentoring activities.

## **OBJECTIVE 2.**

Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade

### **5.2.1 HOW THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE HORTICULTURE BUSINESS ENHANCES THEIR POSITION IN INDUSTRY**

The aim of this study was to conduct a gender analysis of the horticulture sector in Rwanda and how this relates to carrying out vTPAs. Having the position of women relative to men improved can be a reflection of gender justice in the sector performance. Position refers to women’s social economic standing in society, relative to men, such as in terms of opportunities equal wages and representation. Position matters because it shows sensitivity to gender issues.

The study found that the enhanced position of women in relation to men in the horticulture industry, could be identified in the following indicators:

Women in leadership positions: For instance, some business owners were women. In one business visited, all top managers i.e., Finance manager, human resources, among others. were women. Also reported was enhanced self-confidence for some women, as in this example; “I manage and deliver, that is why I am in this position.” Noted one of the participants.

There was involvement in decision-making as in this example “I make decision in every part of the business. It is a system that involves supervision, budgeting pricing etc. When you make a loss, you determine how to proceed. You go to the excel sheet, compare costs and benefits. Seventy (70) percent of women here are able to make decisions, because it makes sense to the business.” (Female owner, FBO, WR)

Participants in one FBO visited reported that a considerable number of women were taking on further training in masters and heading departments, and they have respect and recognition for the women's contribution to the industry.

Increased incomes: it was reported that women are able to solve their needs and meet requirements at home and can support siblings' fees requirements.

Therefore, project implementation should aim at promoting diversity and inclusiveness, as a factor in horticulture business certifications to access markets, promotion of policies and procedures that focus on likeliness of increasing women's incomes to expand business globally.

### **5.2.2 CULTURAL OR GENDER SPECIFIC ISSUES PRACTICED IN THE HORTICULTURE SECTOR THAT CONSTRAIN WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND HOW THEY CAN BE MINIMISED**

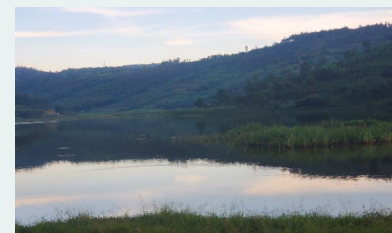
Cultural practices can affect the rights of women in terms of land access, labour, and access to credit, among others. While majority of the study participants reported lack of awareness of cultural/gender issues, existing in the horticulture sector, a number of cultural concerns were revealed during participants interactions with the consultant.

Participants of a focus group discussion indicated that culture does not allow women to climb trees. So, they miss out on that prospective payment of harvesting avocados. But they mentioned a possibility of using sticks to make the avocados fall down. This was dangerous though because the activity would damage the fruit and cannot be put to the market. (FGD, 2 R). The challenge had been sorted out by technology, through encouraging growing of short varieties of avocado, that women can harvest, as noted by this participant "We plant short varieties that do not requires a lot of energy to harvest. Women do it" (Female owner, FBO YR). Also, farmers can be encouraged to remove the traditional avocado trees that are prohibitive to effective harvest handling among women.

Ladies do not move at night. This prevents women from moving to the field because of the fear that they might return late at night. This appears rather a control measure to prevent women from pursuing opportunities at any spaces available to them and hold women back.

Men are attracted to women. Let the women manage the businesses, the men will come to buy the products. This is indicative of women being used to attract male customers among others as a means of promoting a business, which is a questionable practice. This means that part of project trainings should aim at awareness raising on helping them women in how to reject unwanted sexual advances, since it can happen.

Distance to water points for irrigation of crops, increased the role burden of women, considering other reproductive roles. This is also linked to traditional roles of women that still exist in society. However, in some places, the government, excavated ponds near cooperatives, for the purpose of irrigating crops.



**Figure 5.** lake excavated by government

Women cannot leave the house without the permission of a man, which means that men controlled the movements of women in this community. This requires the project to critically reflect on gender gaps that may exist within their communities, as part of the training package to improving standards.

Women cannot manage public affairs. This makes women to be compromised on issues that affect the community of women in general. However, there is this visionary young woman who argued against gendered stereotypes, that women cannot manage. “Aha, here I am, a woman and managing my own business and we are doing well. It told friends who discouraged me that, it’s okay to think that way, but I know that my children will be able to study because of my business.” (Female owner, FBO, VR). Thus, project implementation ought to identify such individual women with gender lens and support them to grow their businesses.

Another participant commented that cultural/gender issues can be minimised when everybody (duty bearers as well as rights holders), are fulfilling their obligations. (FDG, 2R).

On these issues, the project can work with local communities to understand and address cultural norms, incorporate aspects of training in negotiation skills, create support groups for women, educate the community about the importance of women freedom of movement, and fund research on women’s participation in public affairs. It is also important to support women entrepreneurs to grow business, working with financial institutions to provide women access to credit and support them in marketing. They can reach many customers and get the money to purchase vTPAs.

### **5.2.3 STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN FBOS TO ENSURE EQUAL PARTICIPATION AND BENEFITS FOR WOMEN IN THE HORTICULTURE BUSINESS**

As noted already, findings show that any job in the horticulture value chain can be done by either male or female. The strategies in place to enhance women participation and benefits in the horticulture businesses, identified by the study participants are presented in this section. However, these strategies are not new to any planned social service provision with an aim of addressing the needs of populations in vulnerable positions. Important is for the project to intensify implementation of these efforts, forge even more innovations that can create gender justice in the sector to support women storm the global markets in big numbers. Strategies include:

Promotion of experience sharing among the women. For instance, in one of the FBOs visited, a participant explained that: “In each department, there must be a woman. This is a deliberate effort. Even for internship placements, we do not have any limitations on recruiting women. In fact, we recruit 100% women who we hope to work with in the future. We retain some of them”. (Female owner, FBO YR)

Provision of essential services: In another FBO visited, the business owner instituted training of children for employees and had a health clinic to provide medical care for employees in the business, which was another way of promoting social capital with communities, as well as keeping women at work.

Encourage promotion and recognition of women at every level at work: This respondent shared that: “when we go to find potential partners like in cooperatives, and we find the men who are

usually present. We tell them that we want to meet women. We ask them to recruit women. We say; if you have the women, we will need to work with you. They become conscious and recruit women in their structures”. (Female owner, FBO YR)

Being monitored to ensure compliance with policy: The Gender monitoring unit at the ministry of Gender and family promotion (MIGEPROF) does the monitoring to ensure compliance with set guidelines. All businesses visited indicated that they abide by the government policy to promote equal opportunities for men and women. One said that; “Implementation of the gender policy is mandatory in Rwanda. We have respect for government rules and laws; for example, maternity leave with pay, and we respect the rights of everyone and accept them as colleagues”. (Male Marketing officer, FBO XR). In fact, several businesses visited had received recognition certificates from the gender monitoring unit for promoting women and gender in their business, and their certificates were hanging all-over on the office walls, according to results of observations. More so, good leadership and consultations are important: Participants in an interview reported that: In a meeting, everyone has to say something and then we agree. Decisions do not have to come from the men and taken up by the women uncritically.

It is important that the project implementation builds on these good practices and replicates them where they are not yet adopted. Offer trainings on how to implement gender inclusive policies and promote awards and recognition for businesses that take gender inclusive initiatives.

#### **5.2.4 CURRENT SUPPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT, NGOS, OR PRIVATE SECTOR IMPLEMENTED TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE HORTICULTURE BUSINESS**

It is rarely possible to grow a profitable business without some helping hand under normal conditions. Yet, it may require a great deal of effort and determination on the part of women to get help due to the disadvantages already highlighted in this report, such as accessing capital and gaining market share. Support therefore, can be imagined in the horticulture sector to grow, which makes it easier to access global markets, and a necessity to purchase of vTPAs. With regard to the question of support, participants revealed the following facts:

The government of the Republic of Rwanda gives fiscal incentives, such as tax holidays to growing businesses. For example, when a business has not generated a profit of 12million Rwandan Franks, it is not obliged pay taxes.

Government helps to build capacity of staff in businesses, provides seedlings, grafting services and does not compel citizens to pay taxes, because they know that farmers will pay after harvesting (FGD, 1R). Government also organises trainings for food business operators about standards. This is done to all companies, not only for those owned by the women. It also provided funding to the horticulture businesses, among others, during COVID-19 period, which supported them to remain in business.

National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB) provides raw materials for free to individuals and groups who are starting businesses, as a package to build their capacity, as indicated by this participant. “NAEB gave me seedling and I have since made progress day by day”. Participants also reported receiving trainings from NAEB specifically on food safety and



sustainable food initiatives, focussed on both men and women.

NGOs support with grants; some NGOs provide funding for horticulture projects. For instance, the participants drawn from Kavejuba cooperative, noted that KOICA donated a cold room. This increases the shelf -life of their products. This is supported by Ntabakirabose et al. (2021) study of 108 sample size, who indicated that a unit increase in distance to market of perishable products, let to a decrease in profit margin by 0.0704 units at 5% level of significance. KOICA support also had a positive effect of reducing the frequency of movements to the market, creating more time for the women to concentrate on other productive work.

In another cooperative visited the government excavated a lake to provide water for irrigation of fresh beans that are grown by the cooperative.

Government enacted and or ratified gender sensitive policies aimed at promoting inclusion of women. Some of these include: The Rwanda National Gender Policy, 2010; The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, 2003; CEDAW, 1985; Beijing Platform for Action, 1995 and The Agriculture Gender Strategy 2010. At least 30% of any decision-making organs will be women according to Rwandan constitution.

Participants mentioned that: “Government invites employees from different companies, and trains them on gender equality; NGOs support the businesses to mainstream gender; we were also given the gender seal award by the gender and monitoring office.” (Male Quality Assurance officer, FBO XR). The gender and monitoring unit monitors how gender equality principles are respected at the different levels.

Some other stakeholders support funding for policy development, funding for women initiatives, and funding trainings that are gender sensitive. More so, creation of awareness regarding gender policies and encourage respect for constitutional provisions on advancement of gender equality. People said that, let the stakeholders keep the doors open to everyone endeavouring to work with women.

Others wished government to put up a day-care that takes care of children during working hours in order to allow mothers concentrate at work. (FDG, IR). In relation, a participant said that; “Little girls drop out due to fees and thus go to farm with their mothers, if donors can pay fees for the girl children, sponsorship will attract more girls into production in the future and contributing to family strengthening.” (Production Officer FBO, XR). Indeed, in a study by Davis and Bustelo (2023) women groups reported that women with small children found it hard to attend trainings and had limited working hours. They requested for anything that could make them more available. It is thus important that the project raises awareness on the benefit of having more women in the industry, and engage government in creation of stronger and inclusive communities that supply the produce for global markets.

### **OBJECTIVE 3.**

Generate the data related to aspects of the vTPA contributions, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women

### **5.3.1 VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE: IMPLEMENTATION, CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF CERTIFICATION AMONG FBO IN HORTICULTURE SECTOR**

The study interviewed FBOs that had acquired vTPAs to understand more about the gendered aspects of certification. The FBOs interviewed had many different types of vTPA certifications, including the general operating permits (GOP), Halal, BRC, SMETA, ISO 22000 certifications, among others. Majority of FBOs had been holders for one to five years, only one processing business visited had been a holder for 10 years. While, some FBO mentioned that they were still working on their certification. However, what is clear is that once the challenges are addressed, conditions improved, fears and benefits clarified, and the opportunities are harnessed, there is likelihood of many FBOs, for women and men in horticulture to engage Vtpa.

### **5.3.2 REASONS FOR RWANDA HORTICULTURE FBOS' DECISION TO ENGAGE VTPAS**

Participants reported several reasons for their decision to engage vTPA including the following; certain standards have to be put in place to ensure you compete on the market, to have guidance on quality for consumer protection, carryout businesses at the international markets, promotion of food safety and to work with quality assurance corporations worldwide. Others indicated that there are some markets you cannot access if you do not have vTPA. Another participant observed that vTPA Certification opens 'our' minds to see how to improve, and this was not different from the response of the key informant who observed that, "there are changing market demands, now the consumers need safe food products. It can only be guaranteed by engaging vTPA. In fact, the main reason is to have access to the international market." (Key Informant, 1R).

Analysis of women representation in food business operations in Rwanda indicate that women composition was between 40 and 70 % for most of those reached by the study. In one of the organisations visited 60% of employees are women and 30% of these are heads of units. We also found that the director of finance, business auditor and two other women were part of the business think tank. Two women sat on the production and marketing decision-making team. In one cooperative visited, with a membership of 840 people of whom 416 are women, eight (8) groups were headed by the women. In relation this respondent observed that: I am not sure if women are not taking part, may be in other countries" (Key informant, 1 R).

This implies that the importance of gender continues to grow in business and having more women in the workforce makes the business become more diverse, which brings with it a variety of perspectives and experiences and a need to address gender inequality, leading to better decision making in terms of innovations for the market. There can be potential for more purchase of vTPA so as to access international markets. The project can educate Food Business Operators about the benefits of international assurance and the growing importance of women consumers, through workshops and outreaches, support the rise of female horticultural businesses, focus on gender diversity in workforce to benefit all as the business world becomes more interconnected and diverse.

### **5.3.3 REASONS FOR ENCOURAGING AND FACILITATING WOMEN TO WORK IN HORTICULTURE BUSINESSES WITH VTPA IN RWANDA**

All participants interviewed indicated a need to encourage women to work with vTPA certified businesses, citing the following reasons that; policy will always protect women, it creates job

security for the women since there will be market for products, it will be a safe employment for the women, because women like men, can all contribute to the development of a country and globally. Other participants noted that: “To access some markets, some buyers indicate that the business must have some percentage of women. It is also the same with application for grants, some require a certain percentage of women to be in the business.” (Key informant 2 R). Some mentioned that women’s involvement will enhance their knowledge in regard to horticulture in general; “Because of their upbringing, women will bring quality and safe produce to the market and that most work done by the women is most effective, because they do it with their heart and are responsible for their roles. Because of this, the demand will increase, improving production and consequently more women employees, who will add value to the company” (Male Production officer FBO, ZR). This means that the potential of more women engagement of vTPAs for the long run, ought to be designed in project implementation. What needs to be done is to connect food business operators by providing clear information on assurance providers, make international assurance more affordable by negotiating discounts with providers for women horticultural owned businesses or lobbying government to provide subsidies, and finding funders to provide financial assistance to women food business operators who are unable to afford.

#### **5.3.4 THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGING VTPA FOR HORTICULTURE BUSINESSES IN RWANDA AND WHY SOME WOMEN WOULD NOT PURCHASE THEM.**

Participants stated that the benefits are many, including, but not limited to these: The company will compete globally, prices will increase since products will be sold in a hard currency, hire more women and men in the enterprise due to increasing market, facilitates consumer retention due to the confidence in the product and improvement of a company profile. Another participant said that they get the money and this was expounded; “We are a team of 840 members of whom 416 are women. We sign contracts with the certified companies to supply them with produce. They come with their measurements, send agronomists to support us and sometimes they provide the seeds. We implement what we are advised to do, specifically good agricultural practices. They provide specifications, mostly on French beans. When we do not meet the standards, they take the produce, but they reduce the price. When quality is safeguarded, it is pays”. (Key Informant 1R) Other benefits were; exposure to important people in the business and sometimes attracted their support. In addition, this participant said that: “engaging vTPAs will lead to creation of more jobs, which will reduce unemployment rate for women. This is the commitment of government” (Key Informant 1R).

Participants in the interviews indicated that some women FBOs in horticulture industry were not likely to get interest in having certification for a number of reasons: certification is very expensive to get, lack of access to information about existing markets, a lot of documentation is required and that trainings are costly. They said that “Women need capital which they do not have. Men can find different ways to engage the business because they have collateral, they can easily access loans. The percentage of women accessing finance is little. But who is there to follow-up on these women?” (Female owner, FBO YR). This other emphasised that: “vPTA requires capable women to implement. It comes with competences. It comes with quality. To increase women’s competencies, they need training. Women also need mentors in the business to introduce them to quality issues and ensure their promotion of quality” (Female owner, FBO VR), others noted

that “Certification is not something very hard, that women cannot do. It is very normal if anyone would want to access serious markets. However, it’s a risky sector, the challenges put women out of the business. First, they have to get the knowledge of how the process of certification works.” (Owner, FBO WR). Not differing much, this participant also observed that: “In Rwanda, there is gender balance being emphasised in all spheres. Both women and men have the liberty to do business. But certification is very costly to get, although, it pays off in the long run. It requires a lot of groundwork, documentation, capital among others. But NGOs favour women, they have assisted some of their organisation to reach that far!” (Key Informant R2). This means that vTPAs, if designed and implemented carefully, could have a positive impact to women farmers and women food business owners and more women are likely to invest in horticultural business to have more yields for the market. Important is for the project implementation to minimise gender bias, ensure, women who are unable to afford vTPAs are not excluded and existing gendered inequalities are addressed. For instance, provide women farmers access to information, about vTPAs that are affordable, facilitate women access to credit to enable them have land, build the trust of FBOs in certification and work with extension staff to promote vTPAs. It is also important to simplify the application process, propose use online resources, such as website, to apply and share experiences of successful women. These will eventually enable them to fetch the benefits identified here.

### **5.3.5 CONDITIONS FAVOURABLE FOR WOMEN OWNED HORTICULTURE FBOS TO ENGAGE VTPA**

These are some of the conditions cited by participants during interviews, for women owned horticulture FBOs in Rwanda, to engage vTPA; willingness to comply with standards, having the knowledge of how to engage government and private consultants, they need to get experience and be trained. One noted that: “It is about ensuring standards. It does not exclude men or women organisations. If women comply to standards, they are certified. In fact, most certified companies we work with are owned by the women” (Key Informant, 1R). Another said that women must be committed and have passion for the business. Even if it’s not easy, we do the work. The good thing government supports women who work hard. (Female owner FBO, YR), “Having faith and hope, that’s what I was trained by my religion – catholic, to be ready and clean in faith. This means that one must have all it takes to do business, including the required skills, documents like licences, the premisses or place to conduct business, staff with the required skills, a market survey, and where to get the materials. All this must be done in a clean way. This is why certification is important.” (Male owner, FBO XR). Another interviewee observed that: “You have to care for the growth of the business, and coordinate all workers to think and have a global focus (Owner FBO, YR). This means that examining and understanding these conditions and how they impact on certification of women horticulture business is important in determining how to engage the vTPAs from an informed grounding. It is therefore important for the project to develop a training program for the women on how to get international certification, how to find affordable providers and host a conference if possible and give the providers an opportunity to showcase, avail networking opportunities with others business operators to share their experiences and advise, and advocate for policies that make it easier to do business.

### **5.3.6 GENDER RELATED CHALLENGES OF HAVING VTPAS IN HORTICULTURE BUSINESSES IN RWANDA AND THEY KIND OF HELP THEY COULD NEED TO OVERCOME THEM**

This study examined gender related challenges of having certifications among horticulture businesses in Rwanda and these were the findings: Women need infrastructure for certification, getting experts to audit their companies which is very expensive, auditing that has to be done every year is very expensive to maintain, high prices for the flights, for those mostly when exporting goods, Initially, its important having the required documentation, training and building of structures and capacity. The business is seasonal. A product can be out of stock due to lack of raw materials. One participant reported duplication of the product on the market. At the time of conducting the interviews, one business was in court with the bureau of standards in another country over duplication of its Chili product. In addition, these women also shared their concerns. “Those of us who have work on contract farming with certified companies to supply the products, the price is determined by the company as it is usually low. Some companies have even refused to pay farmers money. We want to have support from government, NGOs, or whatever, to get connected to the international markets” (FGD 1R). Lack of trust among producers, brokers and exporters has been cited by (Ntabakirabose et al., 2021) measures should be put in place to promote farmer access to global markets, especially those that are organised in cooperatives. It was also reported that the turnover of women leaving the horticulture business is high, mostly due to access to finance and failing to meet the requires specifications for packaging.

While V37 will work with SMEs and MSEs horticulture FBOs to promote women, the above challenges will still be biting. Thus, the Sort of help required for women in aquaculture business to engage vTPA effectively, according to study participants are in the forms of: capacity building in terms of training, assistance in getting certification, the need for training in standards, good agricultural practices and access to grants for companies the employ many women. The other support required by the women was for access to crop insurance, construction of roads leading to cooperatives, provision of storage facilities and distribution of electricity at village levels. Women also needed to relate with companies that have gender in their mandate and if support can be given from government and investors to expand existing business structures. They called for creation gender balanced committees in charge of certification at every level of governance and expansion government provision for subsidies to female owned businesses. This respondent also mentioned that: “Any way they can work with us for the promotion of gender will be important to the promotion of the industry. Especially building company capacity; Provision of grants to women businesses and trainings that are costly. They can provide trainings at lower price to those interested in doing the horticulture career (Female owner, FBO XR). Women need assistance in terms of finance, according to the Vice president of the horticulture exporters in Rwanda.

Note that women are more likely to experience gender related challenges of having vTPAs in horticulture businesses than the men. These challenges can be complex for small and medium enterprises with no financial resources to purchase vTPAS and especially to women food business operators who are less likely to have access to information about financial services, women who are struggling in their businesses, as well as those with limited literacy skills. Findings therefore inform project implementation to put in place policies that promote women’s economic



empowerment, provide financial assistance to cover operational costs, refresher trainings to get new and competitive skills on the markets. Create a peer-to-peer mentoring program for sharing of challenges and solutions, and provide training and mentorship in basic grant writing, and the requirements of different funding agencies, and connect them with experienced grant writers for mentorship, this can lead to improved funding for women led businesses, improve the quality of products to access markets that require them to purchase vTPAs.

### **5.3.7 OPPORTUNITIES THAT VTPA PROGRAMMES BRING OR LIKELY BRING TO WOMEN IN THE HORTICULTURE BUSINESS IN RWANDA**

Opportunities that vTPA programs are likely to bring to women in the horticulture sector that were mentioned during interviews include; processing by those currently in production, easy access to serious markets, easy access to gender related grants, training in quality and food safety and exposure to business opportunities. The results also found out other opportunities like building the company confidence in export marketing and innovations and always having a new product in line to sustain presence of business on the globe. These mentioned that: “The company won the trust and confidence of the farmers, because they know they have fair prices as well as the market for the products they grow. It increases production” (Key Informant, 2R) and that when a company has been certified, product prices will increase, the company will earn more, as there will be assurance for selling their products on the international market (Key Informant, 2R). Another one observed that: “Here in Rwanda, women come first. I know that they are likely to benefit from the trainings/workshops on season preparations, quality assurance and savings”. (Key Informant 1R). Others mentioned that: “We have a cold room, but we would prefer to take to the market directly” (FGD 1R). Findings also indicate that, women owned businesses are likely to gain recognition on the local and international market. This also creates an opportunity for innovations that have to sustain market standards. For example, the proprietor of a business YR that employs 60% of women, in addition to being awarded a certificate by the gender monitoring unit for employing many women, was given a PhD (honoris causa) conferred by the University of Mexico for innovation of the ‘Akabanga’ Chili product. In addition, this participant advised that: “Women have to look for available vTPA packages, choose what works for them and purchase that for insurance.” (Female owner, FBO YR)



**Figure 6.** Akabanga Chili product

Others mentioned that: “Our French beans are missed on the market - “Abakumburwa” – the interpretation of a cooperative name; for us we shall continue producing for the market.” (FGD, 2R). The implication is that actions are needed to address the underlying barriers that prevent FBOs and women from accessing the said opportunities, Further the opportunities that come with the existing businesses can be replicated in other settings in the country. Also, important the display of opportunities globally for the sale of horticulture products and at the same time displaying requirements to enter the same markets, support FBOs make a cost benefit analysis and help them make decisions on moving forward. The project therefore ought to connect women and men with buyers through organising trade fairs, buyer-seller marching, online platforms, and



help the women brand their products. Advocate for fair trade policies and regulations and build the capacity of women FBOs to expand their access to markets. Equally important is to create a database that would make it easier for buyers to locate women businesses whenever market is available.

### **5.3.8 LIKELINESS OF VTPA IMPLEMENTATION TO BRING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES TO GENDER EQUALITY**

While majority of those interviewed fore saw no consequences, and mentioned that, “it is just to ensure that food is safe.” Some predicted that: women are likely to work many hours in order to get the money. For whatever work they would do, may add to their reproductive burdens that are already consuming a lot of their time. They further mentioned that: Unless people are up to certification and not intending to do what it requires, then the consequences of poor work will be seen. More so, businesses ought to comply to the requirements of certification and if they do not comply, they would close and that will lead to loss of jobs. Participants mentioned that as long as horticulture operators are still in business, women will not quit the business either, because there will be work. Important for the project implementation is to address social cultural norms that limit women access to markets and train the women in skills they need to succeed in their businesses. In addition, there will be need to advocate for a supportive work environment, such as flexible working arrangements, and safe working conditions that pay attention to specific needs of women in horticulture business to make them more effective.

### **5.3.9 SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS IN THE HORTICULTURE SECTOR**

**Objective 1:** Apply a gender lens to the project context, analysing gendered aspects of roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and power relations within project implementation

- Participants reported that, all roles and responsibilities in the different value chains whether done by male or female, carry equal value because of their interconnectedness. However, this value is in terms of quality standards and not in terms of what is earned, especially for the women who are constrained by their limited education. Ultimately, some roles and responsibilities are more lucrative than others, so inherently, they do not have equal value to the person doing the job. It is therefore, important to educate women about their rights and laws that protect women from discrimination so as to heighten their potential benefits from the different levels of horticulture value chains. Women’s strong points such as assuming supervisory roles, meeting targets and following up on the results up to the end, can be seen as good entry points for the women into management which can help them gain experiences and develop their skills. Thus, the project should work to ensure that women are able to benefit from their participation, by promoting equal opportunities for women at the various levels of value chain, providing women access to quality education, creating opportunities for them to learn on the job and to enable them get experiences and skills to support them succeed at work. The project should provide training in quality handling, such as control, assurance, improvement and promotion, breakdown the glass ceiling, by encouraging promotion of women to leadership position, training and development opportunities and creating a more inclusive work culture, expose them to current research on consumer behaviour, encourage FBOs to be open and value ideas from women, and give the women the opportunity to share their unique

experiences and perspectives. Participants who do not have the requirements to access external markets should be helped to access markets, and appreciate the importance of engaging certification, and eventually be enabled to purchase vTPAs.

- This study found the physical, economic, and political resources known to participants, present and accessed by both males and females in the food business operations visited. Examples mentioned were land as a physical resources, information, leadership and decision making as political resources and capital as an economic resource. Important is to promote diversity of thought and perspectives, quality of decision making, as well as fairness and equity in project implementation in addition to addressing gender stereotypes. Further, women possessing the relevant training had some level of control to drive innovations, and the opportunity to create positive impact to the business, by being consulted. Thus, the project ought to teach women to be assertive and lifelong learners and make an effort in organising women to get directly in the leadership of horticulture value chain in Rwanda.
- The benefits men and women receive from the use of productive resources in the aquaculture business, include; safe homes, salary to meet their needs, access to loans and health insurance among others which depend on where they working and the positions they hold. It is therefore important that the project is aware of these benefits to ensure that employees have access the benefits they need. It is also necessary that the project enhances an inclusive work environment such that women can balance their work and family responsibilities.
- Initiatives undertaken by the different FBOs to promote gender relations include: putting in place policies on anti-discrimination, harassment and hiring of women, working with farmers regardless of sex across the country to sustain supply, conduct gender inclusive trainings on the different forms of promoting quality, having in place various committees to promote gender equity; food safety, gender equity and sexual harassment, a centre for breast feeding mothers, provision of food and accommodation and women did not work in night shifts, periodically inviting guests to talk about gender issues and hiring women in leadership positions. Thus, the project can support FBOs to celebrate diversity by ensuring regular reviews of and update policies to meet the changing needs of employees, help women access more of these opportunities, encourage collaborations and a platform for women to share their ideas and promote women friendly environments.

**Objective 2:** Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade.

- The position of women relative to men in the horticulture industry, was evident in women in leadership positions, decision making in businesses, self-confidence, economic independence, pursuing further training in master, involvement in personal and family improvement, which are indicative of reduced discrimination and bias against women. Therefore, project implementation should aim at promoting diversity and inclusiveness, as a factor in horticulture business certifications to access markets, promotion of policies and procedures that focus on likeliness of increasing women's incomes to expand business globally.
- On the question of cultural or gender specific issues practiced in the horticulture sector that

constrain women participation in business operations and how they can be minimised, findings show that culture does not allow women to climb trees and miss out on that prospective payment of harvesting avocados. This has been sorted out by technology, through encouraging growing of short varieties of avocado. It was also reported that women do not move at night, men are attracted to women, women cannot manage public affairs, women cannot leave the house without the permission of a man which were sorted out by awareness raising on gender issues and implementing constitutional provisions. The burden of women fetching water from longer distances was linked to their traditional roles, but government, excavated ponds near cooperatives, for the purpose of irrigating crops. On these issues, the project can work with local communities to understand and address cultural norms, incorporate aspects of training in negotiation skills, create support groups for women, educate the community about the importance of women freedom of movement, and fund research on women's participation in public affairs. It is also important to support women entrepreneurs to grow their business, working with financial institutions to provide women access to credit and support them in marketing. They can reach many customers and get the money to purchase vTPAs.

- Regarding strategies employed in FBOs to ensure equal participation and benefits for women in the horticulture business, responses reveal promotion of experience sharing among the women, provision of essential services such as education, medical care and insurance, encouraging promotion and recognition of women at every level at work, being monitored to ensure compliance with policy as well as good leadership and consultations with women. It is important that the project implementation builds on these good practices and replicates them where they are not yet adopted. Offer trainings on how to implement gender inclusive policies and promote awards and recognition for businesses that take gender inclusive initiatives.
- On the question of government and stakeholder support, the study revealed that the government of the Republic of Rwanda gives fiscal incentives, such as tax holidays to growing businesses, helps to build capacity of staff, provides seedlings, grafting services, and trainings about standards for food business operators. National Agricultural Export Development Board provides raw materials for free to individuals and groups that are starting businesses, while NGOs provide funding for horticulture projects, support the businesses to mainstream gender; support funding for policy development funding for women initiatives. Government enacted and/ or ratified gender sensitive policies aimed at promoting inclusion of women. It invites employees from different companies, and trains them on gender equality. There was also a wish for government to put up a day-care that takes care of children. It is thus important that the project raises awareness on the benefit of having more women in the industry, and engage government in creation of stronger and inclusive communities that supply the produce for global markets.

**Objective 3:** Aspects of the vTPAs contributions, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women in horticulture food business operations.

- The main reason for Rwanda horticulture FBOs' decision to engage vTPA is to have access to the international markets. Other reasons are putting in place standards to compete on the

market, have guidance on quality for consumer protection, promotion of food safety and to work with quality assurance corporations worldwide, changing market demands, and that consumers need safe food products. Women representation in food business operations in Rwanda was between 40 and 70 % for most of those reached by the study. This implies that the importance of gender continues to grow in business, leading to better decision making in terms of innovations for the market and potential for purchase of vTPA. The project can educate Food Business Operators about the benefits of international assurance and the growing importance of women consumers, through workshops and outreaches, support the rise of female horticultural businesses, focus on gender diversity in workforce to benefit all as the business world becomes more interconnected and diverse.

- The reasons for encouraging and facilitating women to work in horticulture businesses with vTPA in Rwanda include policy protection, job security for the women, safe employment, women involvement is a requirement for some buyers, application for gender sensitive grants, enhance women's knowledge in regard to quality in horticulture business, improving production, creating more jobs for women and value addition. This means that the potential of more women engagement of vTPAs for the long run, ought to be designed in project implementation. What the project needs to do is to connect food business operators by providing clear information on assurance providers, make international assurance more affordable by negotiating discounts with providers for women horticultural owned businesses or lobbying government to provide subsidies, and sourcing funders to provide financial assistance to women food business operators that are unable to afford.
- The Benefits of engaging vTPA for horticulture businesses were; competition globally, earning in hard currency, increasing market, consumer retention due to the confidence in the product, improving a company profile, exposure and creation of more jobs. The reasons raised for some women FBOs not getting interested in purchasing vTPAs were; a lot of documentation is required, certification is very expensive, it requires a lot of groundwork and lack the knowledge of how the process works. This means that vTPAs, if designed and implemented carefully, could have a positive impact to women farmers and women food business owners and more women are likely to invest in horticultural business to have more yields for the market. Important is for the project implementation to minimise gender bias, ensure, women who are unable to afford vTPAs are not excluded and existing gendered inequalities are addressed. For instance, provide women farmers access to information, about vTPAs that are affordable, facilitate women access to credit to enable them have land, build the trust of FBOs in certification and work with extension staff to promote vTPAs. It is also important to simplify the application process, propose use online resources, such as website, to apply and share experiences of successful women.
- The conditions favourable for women owned FBOs to engage vTPA include; willingness to comply with standards, knowledge of how to engage government and private consultants, get experience, getting trained, having the commitment, being passionate for the business and having faith and hope. This means that examining and understanding these conditions and how they impact on certification of women horticulture business is important in determining how to engage the vTPAs from an informed grounding. It is therefore important for the project

to develop a training program for the women on how to get international certification, how to find affordable providers and host a conference if possible and give the providers an opportunity to showcase, avail networking opportunities with others business operators to share their experiences and advise, and advocate for policies that make it easier to do business.

- Gender related challenges of having vTPAs revealed by the study are: getting experts to audit is very expensive, building of structures and capacity, the business is seasonal, high prices for the flights, duplication of the product on the market, failure to pay farmers money, high turnover of women leaving the horticulture business due to finance and failing to meet the required specifications for packaging, and lacking the required documentation. The kind of help that is required for women to engage vTPA effectively entails, capacity building, getting certification, training in standards, grants to companies that employ many women, construction of roads, storage facilities, electricity, subsidies to female owned businesses, and creation of gender balanced committees in charge of certification at every level of governance. Note that women are more likely to experience gender related challenges of having vTPAs in horticulture businesses than the men. These challenges can be complex for small and medium enterprises with no financial resources to purchase vTPAs and especially to women food business operators who are less likely to have access to information about financial services, women who are struggling in their businesses, as well as those with limited literacy skills. Findings therefore inform project implementation to put in place policies that promote women's economic empowerment, provide financial assistance to cover operational costs, refresher trainings to get new and competitive skills on the markets. Create a peer-to-peer mentoring program for sharing of challenges and solutions, and provide training and mentorship in basic grant writing, and the requirements of different funding agencies, and connect them with experienced grant writers for mentorship, this can lead to improved funding for women led businesses, improve the quality of products to access markets that require them to purchase vTPAs,
- Opportunities that vTPA programmes bring to women in the horticulture business include; those in production planning to do processing, access to serious markets, easy access to gender related grants, confidence in export marketing, innovations, product prices will increase, recognition on the local and international market and women being able to choose from the available packages. The implication is that actions are needed to address the underlying barriers that prevent FBOs and women from accessing the said opportunities, Further the opportunities that come with the existing businesses can be replicated in other settings in the country. Also, important the display of opportunities globally for the sale of horticulture products and at the same time displaying requirements to enter the same markets, support FBOs make a cost benefit analysis and help them make decisions on moving forward. The project therefore ought to connect women and men with buyers through organising trade fairs, buyer-seller matching, online platforms, and help the women brand their products. Advocate for fair trade policies and regulations and build the capacity of women FBOs to expand their access to markets. Equally important is to create a database that would make it easier for buyers to locate women businesses whenever market is available.
- Unintended consequences to gender equality vTPA likely to bring include: Women working for

many hours in order to get the money, closure and loss of jobs in case of noncompliance. Important for the project implementation is to address social cultural norms that limit women access to markets and train the women in skills they need to succeed in their businesses. In addition, there will be need to advocate for a supportive work environment, such as flexible working arrangements, and safe working conditions that pay attention to specific needs of women in horticulture business to make them more effective.



## B. AQUACULTURE SECTOR IN UGANDA

### OBJECTIVE 1.

Apply a gender lens to the project context, analysing gendered aspects of roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and power relations within project implementation.

#### 5.1.1 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE AQUACULTURE SECTOR IN UGANDA

This section presents the study findings of gender analysis of the aquaculture business sector. As reported earlier for the horticulture sector, the view that women are predominantly involved in agriculture remains clear even in the aquaculture sector in Uganda. For example, according to Medard et al. (2001), women represent 70% to 87% of fish workers in Lake Victoria, especially in artisanal fish trade, and 73% of the 11 million people in agriculture, forestry and fisheries work in Uganda are women (UBOS, 2019/2020). Participants still reported that, more women than men were present at all businesses that were reached during field work.

Participants indicated that all roles and responsibilities in the entire value chain whether done by male or female, carry equal value because of their interconnectedness and that all activities are valued equally in terms of quality standards by all actors at all the stages of the value chain. The performance of the business is determined by all the sections. The moment you overlook one step, another step is constrained for it is a chain of production. “It is like a conveyer belt. When one section is not performing the rest of the sections are not.” (Female participant, FBO, YU). Important to note though, is that majority women work in low paid activities; thus, the value will never be equal in terms of wages, even when it was equally valued in terms quality standards, which makes it harder for the women to achieve financial security. This informs project implementation to provide training on unconscious bias, collect the data on pay disparities, which can be used when addressing the gender pay gap and advocacy for policies that support equal pay for equal quality standards.

#### Aquaculture production

Responses show that men tend to do activities that require physical energy such as pulling the nets, loading and offloading, mending nets, harvesting fish, cage installation, excavation of ponds and security and the women do those that require less physical energy like feeding among others. It was emphasised that: “Men tend to specialise in activities that demand manual labour while women concentrate in those with less physical labour requirement”. (Key Informant, 2U). Social norms about heavy and light work, has been documented by (Timmer, 2013) stating that both men and women themselves, have maintained the discriminatory societal beliefs responsible for structuring gendered roles across the fishery value chain. However, participants did mention that spaces were open to all individuals’ male and female to take part in any activity whether considered “masculine or feminine”. This implies that practices to strengthen women in male dominated roles will address gendered stereotypes in project implementation.

Female participants noted that “Sometimes men are not cooperative. They want women to work with them on tasks that are energy demanding such as operating machines, and also do work in women’s specific domains. Yet, in production, it’s like dealing with babies, women are so much attached to giving the care.” (Female production manager FBO, XU)

Despite of participants’ report that all activities done by the men and women carry equal weight, because each section feeds into the other as observed earlier. The breeding and grading fetched more money on the market, although the activity is done by the men only. This is because methyltestosterone the hormone that is used in the treatment of sex reversals is not designed to be handled by the females.

Other work that is more valued is technical work; supervision of farm activities, record keeping, data management, quality control, because it requires professionals to do it, and these can be done by both male and female. However, it is important to note that the field is male dominated. This could be linked to the education gender divide that channel girls in non-science subjects and limiting professionals in the relevant fields. However, this particular participant argued from a policy point of view that: “There are no gender differences. The public regulatory framework such as equal opportunities act commission, emphasise equity. The framework does not allow discrimination. We have to respect these constitutional provisions.” (Key informant 3U). Another participant interestingly argued against the idea of gender differences indicating that: “Gender differences! You are a lady, so what? gender parity is highly observed at our farm, all of us at the same level are getting the same salary. There is no discrimination based on sex.” (Female production officer, FBO XU).

The implication is that men were likely to access more skills and opportunities to work in this value chain than the women. Important is for project implementation to encourage women to pursue careers in aquaculture and make it more accessible through scholarships and flexible learning options, challenge gender stereotypes and promote the idea that women can be just as good as men in aquaculture. Also important is to challenge workplace policies that discriminate women in fisheries and support organisations that are working to promote gender equality.

### **Aquaculture Processing**

Participants reported no gender differences in the kind of activities that are done by men and women in the processing value chain. Some of these activities are washing, filleting, skinning, trimming, packaging, sorting, grading, smoking, checking and selection. As in production, men tend to do activities that require energy, including inspection of staff for quality promotion, but women also do it. However, a participant made emphasis on specialisation; “We have specific roles with in quality control assigned to ladies and gents differently. For example, ladies wash fish and gents grade the fish because it requires lifting.” (Male Quality Assurance officer, FBO, YU). “Men are not good at handling quality specifications. Making sure that they cut according to the required sizes, and using the phrase- ‘tebemoramora’- meaning they are not good in designing. All these are considered women’s roles. Yet, there is no school here that trains quality specifications. They all learn on the job, but women learn faster, which may be linked to their traditional gender roles. Although, many of them are not educated, and because of that, they are

not paid well. If you actually check in the book where they sign, some of them cannot write their names. (Male Quality assurance officer, FBO YU). According to UBOS (2019/20), more than 82% of the population without formal education work in the aquaculture sector. Up to day, women's access to training remains scarce. Non the less, women demand for training on topics such as processing, handling, entrepreneurship, packaging, marketing and financial literacy (FAO, 2023). Thus, promotion of gender responsive quality assurance measures that pay attention to the specific learning needs of females will likely enhance profitability at the level of individual women, as well as FBOs access to the markets. It is therefore essential that the project provides trainings, mentorship or one to one coaching for women in quality, so, they become more confident and proficient in quality specifications. Provide women access to resources and training materials, while taking into consideration their background, experiences and language skills.

### **Aquaculture Marketing and Trade**

Identified at this level of the value chain are activities such as packaging, sale of fish, labelling, export, transportation, handling, interacting with clients, looking for markets, processing export documents and general management. Regarding role performance, the men were likely to perform roles that require manual labour at this level of value chain, such as loading on truck, and women less labour roles such as labelling and sale of fish. In fact, many women depend on the post-harvest subsector for their livelihood, food security and nutrition. They contribute particularly to fish trading and processing activities as a major source of income across the value chain (FAO 2020). According to FAO (2023) 95% of women in a study conducted in Uganda were engaged in marketing and retail of fish. Both men and women were reported to be involved in food safety, quality assurance and supervision of staff to ensure quality of produce.

Overall, one participant mentioned that “Women keep trying all roles including heavy activities, but where neatness, concentration and presentation is required like fish packaging and labelling, women may be preferred to men (Male Quality Assurance manager FBO, YU)

This is because they have abilities that are associated with quality: including some of these that were revealed in interviews: - women are polite and patient, they pay to attention to detail, they give more time to the business, they are available, flexible and dependable, they have planning and persuasive skills, they are honest, selfless and have managerial traits. In contrast, men strengths were in working overtime and at night, energetic, good at defending their decisions, managerial and technical ability.

Another person mentioned that “these women are also very observant in case of fish disease” (Key Informant, 4U)

Participants further noted that, it is easier for men to work over time, and even at night. The women are patient and pay attention to the detail, which ensures quality in some activities that require specifications, such as cutting of fish according to the ordered size and shape, as it was explained: “Heavy work is for men, checking for the quality is in brain. Women do that perfectly. So, 100% of what they cannot do is compensated here!” (Male QA officer, FBO XU)

Meanwhile, this respondent employed a different skill. “I happen to be the only female in my

department. I have interpersonal skills. I engage the men to handle the work I cannot do at a specified time. I also engage the manager, when necessary (Female Marketing officer, FBO, RU)

The study found that some women have very strong negotiation and convincing skills, that can help them win the confidence and trust of others. “The one close, is educated though, knowledgeable, an expert in the field and very articulate with good communication skills. Her decisions are informed and very difficult to underate” (Key Informant, 3U)

Another respondent explained on leadership qualities: “Walimi Fish Cooperative Society (WAFICO) is led by a woman. ‘But this is an exceptional case’ – she is a competent leader, has integrity, confident, courageous, commands respect and has a voice. (Key Informant, 3U)

These responses suggest that women need to be trained in the different aspects of quality promotion in order for Fish Business Operators to effectively engage with the vTPAs. This means that project implementation should create a supportive and inclusive work environment for women to develop their skills. Women can be helped to upskill to remain relevant in their jobs. The project can also connect exceptional women with other women for guidance and support, as well as to share their stories and experiences and inspire others by speaking at events. FBOs can be encouraged to listen to women's concerns, be flexible and accommodative of them, and consider the cultural context when making decisions.

### **5.1.2 PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES THAT WOMEN AND MEN HAVE ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER IN THE AQUACULTURE BUSINESS.**

Findings show that all workers irrespective of the type of business, only had access to the physical and economic resources. These, including land, finances, containers, etc, are controlled by the owner of the business who may be a male or female. However, males had access to different types of resources. Noteworthy, is that among all businesses visited only one belonged to a female entrepreneur and according to interviews, she was the only one with a big investment in aquaculture, in Uganda, at the time of collecting the data. The other resource in aquaculture business, is the lake resource and this is owned and controlled by the government, according to existing laws. To work with these resources, such as in cage fishing, the business partners must be licenced to do so. There were no reported differences in licencing for males and females.

Further, responses show that “productive resources among women, are few, because of low-income levels and lack of access to land due to traditional land management systems. It is difficult to trace them in the entire value chain. They are mainly in the service sector and in hatcheries because it requires attention. They can also be found in marketing but in limited numbers.” (Key Informant, 3U)

The control of political resources among women and men was mainly in the leadership positions. Participants at this level reported that they used their offices to direct work methods in relation to the action plans. ‘In this position, I have control over the manual labour provided for the company’ I control the quality and quantity of labour needed to run the business on a daily basis. I fire, recruit and pass out leave to employees. (Female representative of the owner FBO, YU)

The other political resource was on decision making. “Participants mentioned that decisions are not dependent of sex, as long as an idea will generate income, it is important”. (FGD 1U). while

this one said that: “I am the quality assurance manager and my assistant is a lady. She is consulted by the men. She makes decisions. The person who checks people at the gate, ‘the one you saw’, is a woman, if she does not allow you in, you will never be able to enter that gate. (Male Quality Assurance officer, FBO WU)

A respondent indicated that “I make all decisions that involve sale of products, except price reduction, because this can affect the company negatively or positively. (Male Marketing manager FBO, WU)

Most food business operators observed that: Information is given in regard to position, there were no gender issues attached.

While it is possible for the women to control political resources, it is still an uphill task to gain control of physical resources. To improve access to productive resources for women in aquaculture businesses, it is important to provide women with training and education on how to manage productive assets, support women's participation in leadership positions and decision-making and ensure that all channels of communication are gender neutral. These measures will help to level the playing field for women in aquaculture businesses and allow them to participate more fully in the sector.

### **5.1.3 BENEFITS WOMEN AND MEN RECEIVE FROM THE USE OF PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES IN THE AQUACULTURE FOOD BUSINESS**

Most benefits that were identified by the respondents were in the form of medical insurance, salary increment /allowances, accommodation, use of firewood and food, especially, poor grade fish. One female noted that: “in aquaculture there is not much promotion but the salary is fat. I am now constructing a house of my own, after building one for my parents” (Female production officer FBO, YU). While another woman indicated that she is able to pay for her sister's education. Further, results indicate safe working environment, leadership roles and access to credit because they have a job to be used as collateral. Women also indicated that they have attained self-esteem and confidence to talk, “I could not stand before my boss and others, when I was stammering” (Female production officer, FBO, XU).

Participants also reported increased wellbeing, being able to build a career in fish profession, getting connections, knowledge and skills. Other benefits reported include experience, confidence, respect and the mental benefit of providing a service. They indicated that bonuses are received across the board for meeting targets or when exceeded the set targets. Another response was that the benefits depend on one's productivity level and the time one gives in to do the work. Further, there were also benefits of food and nutritional security, reduction of poverty and increased production reported.

As shown, the benefits are many, if anyone cared to find out. They can even multiply if FBOs are able to engage vTPAs, to access international markets. It is important therefore, for the project to increase participation of women alongside men in the aquacultural value chain, create a task force to review the different assurance policies, products and services, enhance collaboration among men and women to share the risks and benefits of purchasing vTPAs and build women's confidence to ensure accountability for the decisions they make.

#### **5.1.4 INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE CHANGE OF POWER/GENDER RELATIONS IN THE AQUACULTURE BUSINESS**

As discussed already in section 6.3, interventions to change power/gender relations, hinge on the need to develop conscientisation skills which support both male and females to question gendered stereotypes constraining the aquaculture sector. These initiatives to promote change of gender relations were identified by the participants in the FBOs visited by the study.

Having fair working conditions, as explained; “The boss cares and makes it good to work for her. Women are allowed to work with breast feeding babies. This enables them to concentrate on work” (FGD, 2U). Other initiatives were; separation of facilities such as toilets for male and females, promotion of team work, organising training programmes for women to understand all aspects of the different value chains and putting in place a provision for confidential reporting system in some FBOs.

Some FBOs held gender intensive trainings for all employees to meet the required standards, that is, monthly refresher trainings in quality control for all workers, refreshers that put emphasis on changing technology and training in standard operations and procedures, including food safety management for all staffs. Other firms sponsored employees regardless of sex for external trainings to expand their skills. Some FBOs promote equal opportunities for all employees, exposure of employees to external trainings, put in place a suggestion box, provide for monthly medical fitness for all staffs, without discrimination and encourage participation of female in workers union. Important is that staffs use these unions to fight for equal pay and speak about unfair treatment.

Participants further observed that the external initiatives employed emphasised gender responsiveness. For instance, planning at the different levels of the value chain has to fit in the macro level gender policy framework. “This requires gender sensitive budgets and workplans that have to be implemented.” (Key Informant, 3U)

Analysis of FBO’s initiatives to support change of power/gender relations from the context of aquaculture value chain, points to inclusion and a commitment to gender equality in whatever interventions, such as trainings, that are undertaken, so as to promote a health working relationship. This means that all staffs can be supportive of proposals to purchase vTPAs when it deems fit. Therefore, project leadership ought to train participants in critical thinking and analysis of inequality and how it shapes their lives, create spaces to foster dialogues that build confidence of women, support women’s leadership by providing them training resources they need, and advocate for policies that promote gender equity.



## OBJECTIVE 2.

Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade

### **5.2.1 HOW THE INVOLVEMENT IN THE AQUACULTURE BUSINESS ENHANCES WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE INDUSTRY**

As indicated already, position that is women's social economic standing in society, relative to men, matters when looking at women's contribution to the aquaculture business, because the exclusion of women produces inequalities in business operations. Thus, boosting women's capacities both soft and in hard form, for enhanced capabilities, will likely impact on their engagement of vTPAs in the near future.

The study found that involvement of women in aquaculture business, enhances their position in the industry in the following ways:

Promotion of competence sharing - allows sharing of the skills and experiences gained in running aquaculture business with those new in the business.

Exposure - women are able to become bosses on their own by creating their own businesses, based on what they gain from established businesses.

Recognition - this participant noted that gender is still in its infancy in the aquaculture sector. However, the level of recognition is based on one's contribution to the industry. For instance, "We have a woman who is highly recognised. By virtue of her investment, she has to be present in any meeting that requires expertise." (Key Informant, 3R)

Builds self-esteem: "My being here reflects that I am able and responsible enough to execute leadership and control activities for the progress of the business." (Female production Manager, FBO, RU). Increased standards of living, raising social capital and promotions, were also mentioned as indicators of women's increase position in the industry, by the participants.

Analysis of women's position resulting out of their participation in the aquaculture business value chain, suggests that women's enhanced position could be significantly associated with their investments and contribution to the fields. Thus, it would be important to ensure gender balance in project teams, recruiting women in project roles and making sure that they are present in decision making. There is also need to create a supportive and inclusive work environment, that promotes women's visibility and recognition

### **5.2.2 CULTURAL OR GENDER SPECIFIC ISSUES PRACTICED IN THE AQUACULTURE SECTOR THAT CONSTRAIN BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND HOW THEY CAN BE MINIMISED**

Tackling cultural/gender issues have the potential to address unequal representation, gender stereotyping and sexual discrimination in the aquacultural sector. It also allows appreciation of the different cultural effects on women and men, such that project decisions do not have negative consequences on the state of women's participation. This done, women can thrive well together with men in the business and can be plausible candidates for vTPAs.

Participants met during interviews, had mixed reactions about the ways cultural aspects contained operations of women in aquacultural businesses, expressed as follows:

One participant said that: “Those men you see do not allow a woman to take control. They say, how can a woman lead this big business? But it shows that ability and responsibility. Don’t you see? -seeking approval of the researcher. They are difficult. But even if they are, it’s the boss to think about an idea you have proposed and suggests whether to implement it using their judgement.” (Female production officer, FBO, XU)

Another observation was that: “Even researchers, when they come here, and they find a ‘lady boss’, they do not take you seriously – ‘batuzalawa’ –, sometimes I put on an overall and they will ask, is this the person in-charge- a lady? It really feels bad. This is why sometimes we refuse to give them information. However, I have overlooked that. So long as I get paid, I do not care about what people say”. (Female production manager, FBO, XU)

And this one said that: “No cultural norms can constrain our operations. It is about doing business for money. The investor’s workplan clearly states roles. In fish processing, the rule is that, as long as we supply fish. Inside here -referring to business- there is no culture/gender things”. (Male Quality Assurance Officer, FBO, XU)

The thinking that fisheries women are prostitutes and that the males in fisheries have no financial discipline were also mentioned during interviews. It was also noted that most employers liked employing male staff referring to women to as a weak sex. In relation, participants of FGDs noted that “Women are considered weak and fragile. They cannot enter water. But for me I do, except when I am in menstruation, there are points I cannot reach. (FGD 2U). Further, culture regards men as strong and women as weak. Therefore, men do most work that require energy...this could affect their health. With technology, some of this work can be done using heavy lifters (FGD, 2U)

Sexual harassment was also mentioned to exist in some businesses, but it could be handled: “Until you speak out, you can never be given a hearing. The good thing is that our boss is so fair, so long as you speak out”. (FGD, 3U)

Other constraints mentioned were lack of inheritance rights for women, and vesting land resources in the names of men, which implies that women have to work hard to secure these resources.

Responses reveal that such challenges can be solved by:

Creating advocacy voices and show case that women are able to do better than the men, and the women should create networks as women, build more synergies and coordinate at that level.

Other suggested solutions pointed to government and external partners to design gender initiatives dedicated to women’s empowerment in the industry.

Being open on issues of gender at work, implement equal pay, for equal work policy, and allocation of work without regard to sex. However, participants further reported absence of supervision by the policy makers, indicating that the policy makers do not even follow-up to ensure that the policy is implemented! a participant observed.

In relation, it was reported that:

“There is no specific strategic framework. So, gender is not anchored well in the aquaculture sector. However, we need to promote strong networks for women in fisheries to do the advocacy work” (Key informant, 3U)

Some participants responded that: “Most people do not accept that gender inequalities exist. They find the situation normal. This is because they are ignorant about these things. There is need for improved engagement of women” (FGD 2U)

Analysis of the cultural/gender aspects show that, despite the fact that women are not fully accepted in the aquaculture value chains, efforts were in place to put up measures to address gender issues in policy provisions, change of attitude and advocacy. It is suggested that the project works with local organisations and leaders that can provide valuable insights on cultural issues, provide training and support to extension staffs to understand how cultural issues may affect women and their participation on the project and be able to put on gender eyeglasses. Also important is to raise awareness on women’s inheritance rights through information and education and to provide legal assistance to both men and women when needed.

### **5.2.3 STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY FBOS TO ENSURE EQUAL PARTICIPATION AND BENEFITS FOR WOMEN IN THE AQUACULTURE BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

The study examined strategies employed by the FBOs to ensure that women and men are participants as well as beneficiaries of what goes on in the aquaculture businesses. As noted already, these strategies identified by the study participants are not new to any planned social service provision with an aim of addressing the needs of populations in vulnerable positions.

Findings reveal that: food business operators made arrangements of sensitizing all workers and the public on gender related rights, the role of effective participation of women in aquaculture and the focus on community awareness about the potential of the women in the sector.

In some FBOs visited, there were efforts to enforce a certain percentage of females and males. One mentioned that: “the business is an equal opportunity employer. Men and women have equal rights. Men and women are being given equal chances to contribute towards the growth of the business.” Another mentioned that: we ensure that both men and women are specialised in what they do best.” (Study participants, FBO YU)

A deliberate awareness to male business owners that male and females equally perform i.e., same position, same salary, same pay for equal work, creation of equal opportunities for male and female, and the importance to follow regulations on gender and promotion of inclusiveness was suggested by participants. This is also linked to affirmative action and the provisions of the Uganda’s constitution.

This participant noted that “Everyone is comfortable in their job. That is why there is trust and confidence in the business.” (Production Manager, FBO, WU)

Others strategies reported were; fighting cases of seducing women, putting women in decision making positions, putting up incentives for those doing well irrespective of sex, education and training of both men and women, encouraging collegial association among men and women, as

well as documenting and sharing good gender practices in the aquaculture business. In addition, there were consultations on how effective participation of women can be realised in the aquaculture sector reported.

Another one observed that: “It is actually natural that women are competing with the men. In fact, I do not see any problem! However, this is business. Whoever, gives the fish gets paid – it is a liberal economy. Maybe I am talking from a chauvinistic point of view - questioning his ideas.” (Quality assurance manager FBO, YU). Surprisingly, some businesses owners indicated that they put anti-discrimination issues in special prayer meetings.

What is needed is how to intensify implementation of these efforts, forge even more innovations that can create gender justice in the sector to support women along with men storm the global markets in big numbers. The project should therefore empower women as entrepreneurs, producers, consumers and as leaders in the sector. They can increase their productivity, create new businesses and jobs, and make decisions to create new markets for sale of aquaculture products.

#### **5.2.4 CURRENT SUPPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT, NGOS, PRIVATE SECTOR AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IMPLEMENTED TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE AQUACULTURE BUSINESS OPERATION**

Government and any other support to farmers is necessary in the entire value chain of aquaculture, since agriculture is the back bone of the economy in Uganda. The forms of support identified by the participants are particularly pertinent to women, when it comes to food business operations’ and opening to international markets where purchasing vTPAs become relevant.

Government and other implementing partners supported aquaculture Food Business Operators, in the following ways:

Capacity Building. “They receive capacity building in form of training in food safety system

from government and also provide critical inputs, such as fingerings and feeds to starters. It also offers training and mentoring to both men and women in how-to live-in diversity. (Key Informant, 3U)

Rules and regulations are in place governing the operations of the businesses. Women were supported by the administration when doing their work. The requirement that all development programmes must include at least 30% of women was implemented. This makes women available and informed about the existing programmes.

Extension services are provided to both men and the women. The extension workers visit FBOs to inspect and support them on food safety compliance.

FAO and Nutrifish donated drying racks and solar tent driers to the women silver fish processors. They spend less time drying, and they get quality fish, and for better income. Nutrifish also carried out training for the women in food safety systems.

Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program, is a government initiative under the Ministry of Gender to support women with funds. Uganda Fishnet supports women dealing in fish from production value chain to marketing (Key Informant 2U).

It was also noted that: “Government supports some women in aquaculture. But only those that get organised into groups receive the support. This is in the form of capacity building, construction of cages and seed starters, Kilns for smoking, containers, dry bars and sometimes, it supports development initiatives according to a group’s request. (Key Informant, 3U)

Nonetheless, this participant reported that “Trainings are organised by the fisheries department. Other than that, government has nothing to do with private businesses. Government says, we are businessmen.” (Quality Assurance Director, FBO, YU).

Among other stakeholder interventions, was the support to formation of policies and procedures that empower women, funding for training institutions to train women professionals in aquaculture, sensitizations on gender equality in aquaculture and organising trainings on gender awareness in the different value chains.

Stakeholders also ought to conduct trainings for women in good saving culture. Participants noted that: ‘When you train a woman, you are promoting the family that will build a nation’ (FGD 1U). They also provide funding for research in gender issues in the aquaculture

This study has shown that government and other stakeholders once engaged, can do a lot to promote women and men in the aquaculture value chains. Therefore, the project had better work with government to direct grants to small business, especially those owned by the women, make loan guarantees to small scale business leaders, support access to markets, through trade missions, export opportunities and partnership with private companies. The project can also help SMEs to develop market plans. These can create more jobs in the sector to further economic growth.

### **OBJECTIVE 3.**

Generate the data related to aspects of the vTPAs contributions, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women

#### **5.3.1 VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE: IMPLEMENTATION, CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF CERTIFICATION AMONG FBO**

The study interviewed FBOs that had acquired vTPAs to understand more about the gendered aspects of certification. Aquaculture FBOs interviewed had mainly the general operating permits (GOP), certification and ISO 22000 certifications. These had held their vTPA a shorter amount of time, for only one to two years, while some of them were making progress towards acquiring one. However, what is clear is that once the challenges are addressed, conditions improved, fears and benefits clarified, and the opportunities are harnessed, there is likelihood of many aquaculture FBOs, to engage vTPA, whether male or female owned.

#### **5.3.2 REASONS FOR UGANDAN AQUACULTURE FBO’S DECISION TO ENGAGE VTPAS**

Participants cited the reasons for engagement of vTPAs, including the following; to have safe food on the market, the need to raise standards of food in a country and on international market

Market forces dictate that a Food Business Operator buys vTPA, if the intention is to send fish to Europe and other developed countries. Others noted that international markets certification is mandatory. It is market driven by the importing countries. So, its extra to get vTPA (Key Informant,

3U) Another participant observed that “certification is a reality not a plan. We are already in it, markets are better, more clients. It brings more opportunities for men and women i.e., exposure to quality trainings. The workers do not even know.” (Quality Assurance Manager FBO, YU) Findings have shown that majority of the people involved in the aquaculture value chain in Uganda are women although most of them are not anywhere in the decision-making positions. This calls for support towards the growth aquaculture businesses to increase production which is likely to hire more women and accelerate access to international markets. The project can provide financial support to women owned businesses, invest in training and capacity building programs for FBOs to get the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in this business, and advocate for policies that promote access to markets, resources and decision-making powers for women to engage fully in the business.

### **5.3.3 REASONS FOR ENCOURAGING AND FACILITATING WOMEN TO WORK IN AQUACULTURE BUSINESSES WITH VTPA IN UGANDA.**

All study participants would encourage women to participate in aquaculture business with vTPA. The reasons were that; gender is a marketing tool. “When one has it, more market, more business and more jobs will be available.” A participant observed. Also noted was that gender accreditation is market driven. It is not gendering (sensitivity) it is a marketing tool to promote quality. It was also said that gender is a footprint of trade. In respect of quality, this controversial statement revealed that: the expectation from anyone working in the business is that of quality specification. That is what customers want, irrespective of whether it’s a woman or man involved. This means that promoting gender and women in project implementation will have a significant impact on the growth of the industry. There is therefore a need for the project to encourage women to take on aquaculture as a career path, challenging the social norms that limit women’s opportunities in the aquaculture business and address stereotypes that limit women ‘s participation in the industry. Also important is to provide technical assistance to women fish farmers to improve management practices as well as infrastructure to make their businesses attractive to insurers.

### **5.3.4 THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGING VTPA FOR THE AQUACULTURE BUSINESSES IN UGANDA AND THE REASONS FOR NON-PURCHASE BY WOMEN**

Data generated by interviews, Key informants and PLA methods, shows that engaging vTPAs is important in: expanding business opportunities, manufacturing of safe products, assurance of customer satisfaction and that standards of women and men increase. This participant observed that: “Private business is driven by transacting money for services, unlike the other organisations or government where processes are clearly stipulated. Even when a business is doing well, the set-up is different. In government, for everything that goes on well, there is a bonus and the incentive goes to everybody. In a private company work performed is what you were expected to do.” (Male Production officer, FBO, YU). Also stated is increase in production as expounded by this participant: “The number of ponds, stocking levels, prices of fish will likely increase and making the business competitive.” (Key Informant, 3U). Another respondent said that: “as long as they cut the fish to the expectations of the buyer, nothing else. Quality is what I want. Gender things are for those who are professional. Those are not even 5% of the population.” (Male Quality Assurance Manager, FBO WU). The reasons for women FBOs in Uganda, unlikeliness to purchase vTPAs were identified in the study, including; audit costs, transport, accommodation



and fees that are extremely high, lack of organised women groups which can be supported, limited securities to access loans among women, accessing loans is not easy due to lack of required collaterals for women, and another participant observed that “it’s a new thing, the women may not really understand it well”. There is therefore need to engage all actors in the aquaculture value chain to appreciate the benefits and give them the necessary support to purchase vTPAs. Important is for the project to educate fish farmers about the importance of assurance, to make them informed of the risks and benefits associated with their business, so, they make informed decisions about whether to get or not to purchase insurance. Making insurance more accessible to fish farmers by negotiating prices, or offer subsidised insurance programs for them through government assistance. The project can also work with insurers to develop a more tailored insurance products to fish farmers that are gender sensitive and share success stories of women who have bought and benefited from vTPAs.

### **5.3.5 CONDITIONS FAVOURABLE FOR WOMEN OWNED AQUACULTURE FBOS TO ENGAGE VTPA**

Discussions with study participants indicated that, women in aquaculture have to get the knowledge, skills and competences that will help them compete in the value chain with vTPAs, they have to train in how to access, use and invest loans, as some of the conditions favourable for them to engage vTPAs. While another one observed that “certification is for the company not women, the products are not gender sensitive.” (Male Quality Assurance Manager, FBO YU). The results here provide indicators that can be used by policy makers and other stakeholders to allocate and channel resources to women in aquaculture sector as an initial step towards recognition of their relevance in the sector. Now that the conditions are known according to study participants, the project can share this information and also provide data about the different types of vTPAs. It should help women find affordable assurance policies, help women and men complete application process, and make application user friendly. The project can also work with insurers to offer discounts and other incentives for women to benefit from vTPAs

### **5.3.6 GENDER RELATED CHALLENGES OF HAVING VTPAS IN AQUACULTURE BUSINESS IN UGANDA AND THEY KIND OF HELP THEY COULD NEED TO OVERCOME THEM**

The gender related challenges of having vTPAs in aquaculture business in Uganda were investigated. The study found that corruption among workers in the business, time allocation between housework and involvement in fish activity, large scale fish processing being dominated by the men and that women do not have the money to pay auditors who are not from the region. For instance, this participant shared their experience: “It costed us money i.e.- pay their fees etc. You have to facilitate them to come and audit and then give a certificate and you are good to go.....” (Male Quality Assurance Officer FBO, YU). A key informant reported that the time and venues for training are rarely gender sensitive (Key Informant. 2U). the other reason is that certification is a rigorous process that require upgrading of infrastructure.

Responses show that women aquaculture businesses can be supported to access loans to engage vTPA effectively. The study also found that women and men in the aquaculture business need sensitization on available vTPAs and encourage them to purchase. They need training and skills development, access to finance and affordable loans and access to markets. They said that:

“Government should assist small scale farmers with funds and access to markets. They need to be trained on how to use the loans and on investing so they are able to invest. Once they have invested in aquaculture, and their business are running it can be easily possible to access external market and having vTPA is the ticket.” (Key Informant, 3U). They need to support existing women groups financially for instance, Uganda National women network, can be supported in areas related to value addition.” (Key Informant, 1U) and also support to establishment of women groups. In addition, the project can provide motorised boats for women, since they find it difficult to use manual wooden propellers. There is also need for creation of special investment incentives for women undertaking industrial fish processing, advocacy and policy reform to promote gender inclusiveness in the aquaculture sector and empowering women through trainings and support. Further, the development of aquaculture policies and approaches that are gender sensitive, advocacy for formation of cooperatives and streamlining gender in all activities along the value chain is important. It is therefore necessary for the project to support research that raise awareness of the important role that women play in the fisheries and promote fish business assurance through marketing and outreaches. Raise awareness to farmers, the media, to government officials and the general publics, and work with them to promote the message

### **5.3.7 OPPORTUNITIES THAT VTPA PROGRAMMES BRING OR LIKELY BRING TO WOMEN IN THE AQUACULTURE BUSINESS IN UGANDA**

Regarding the opportunities that vTPA programmes bring to the women in aquaculture business, participants maintained that vTPA creates unlimited opportunities to everyone, as long as they are able to utilise it. Some of the opportunities identified by the study are: acquisition of more application skills for women, trainings into gender technical knowledge, expansion of aquaculture businesses to employ more women, and on-ground training for employers and employees in gender equality. Findings also talk about tax holidays as an opportunity that: “Tax holidays are granted and vehicles that are tax exempt. But there is no reason why government or NGOs would care to give money to a private business; it’s a bit tricky. This participant wondered. Participants hope for creation of women specific fund, building the capacity of females like it is done for the males and recruitment of women at all costs. There is also optimism for gender equality being institutionalised in aquaculture businesses, for living and practicing gender rules, regulations, providing experiences and skills, and sponsorship of female workers for further studies, in more specialised aquaculture field.

Participants further expressed the need to encourage the women to enrol for school and allow them to study parttime i.e., work during the week and studying over the weekend and evening hours.

They further called for training of workers in more practical skills, putting in place incentives on fishing materials and promote research on gender issues in aquaculture. They urge women to find out certification implementation options, since vTPAs are likely to open up chances for any woman who is interested and qualify, increase mobility and social exposure, enhance social connections to help women to access information and share the experiences of those in related business (Key informant, 3U). Women are also urged to form groups or associations that promote gender equity., i.e. formation of circles, cooperatives, trade groups and associations for easy

access to credit facilities and capacity building. (Key informant, 2U). Another opportunity is of access to information on markets and training to change from local to global realities and a likelihood of demanding for more products and leading to innovations. Engaging vTPAs will change the scope of products from Uganda, not necessarily food safety in nature. Participants observed. When the project opens up these opportunities especially for women, better economic viability among women in the industry will be possible. Therefore, educating business owners on the importance of vTPAs, technical assistance to make aquaculture businesses more competitive and more stable so they can be attractive to insurers, is imperative.

### **5.3.8 LIKELINESS OF VTPA IMPLEMENTATION TO BRING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES TO GENDER EQUALITY IN THE AQUACULTURE BUSINESS**

Findings show that, most respondents could not predict unintended consequences. However, a few concerns were raised: For instance, when certain roles are stereotyped for a specific sex, this may cause some people being redundant at specific times. Some participants predicted lack of personal time, and that, the job may be so overwhelming. There may not be sick leave provided. This implies that the more the sensitizations will be done, the likelihood of limiting the risks of these predictions. Thus, the project ought to consider these unintended consequences from its design, review, on up to evaluation for its positive contribution.

### **5.3.9 SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS IN THE AQUACULTURE SECTOR**

**Objective 1:** Apply a gender lens to the project context, analysing gendered aspects of roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and power relations within project implementation

- All roles and responsibilities in the entire value chain, regardless of whether they are done by men or women, carry equal value. This is because all activities are interconnected and valued equally in terms of quality standards by all actors at all stages of the value chain. However, it is important to note that the majority of women work in low-paid activities. This means that even though their work is valued equally in terms of quality standards, they are not paid equally. This makes it harder for women to achieve financial security. To address this, projects should provide training on unconscious bias and collect data on pay disparities. This data can then be used to advocate for policies that support equal pay for equal quality standards. By taking these steps, we can help to close the gender pay gap and ensure that all women have the opportunity to achieve financial security.
- Responses further show that in production, men tend to do activities that require physical energy such as pulling the nets, loading and offloading, mending nets, harvesting fish, cage installation, excavation of ponds and security and the women do those that require less physical energy like feeding among others. The breeding and grading fetched more money on the market, and it is done by the men only, since treatment of sex reversals is not aligned to females. Technical work; such as supervision of farm activities, record keeping, data management, quality control, can be done by both male and female, although the field is male dominated. This could be linked to the education gender divide that channel girls in non-science subjects and limiting professionals in the aquaculture field. The implication is that men were likely to access more skills and opportunities to work in this value chain than the women. Important is for project implementation to encourage women to pursue careers in aquaculture

and make it more accessible through scholarships and flexible learning options, challenge gender stereotypes and promote the idea that women can be just as good as men in aquaculture. Also, to challenge workplace policies that discriminate women in fisheries and support organisations that are working to promote gender equality.

- In processing value chain, findings show that no gender differences in the kind of activities that are done by men and women, such as washing, filleting, skinning, trimming, packaging, sorting, smoking, checking and selection and Inspection of staff for quality promotion. However, gents grade the fish because it requires lifting. It was also reported that men are not good at handling quality specifications. Women do it, although, many of them are not educated, and because of that, they are not paid well. Thus, promotion of gender responsive quality assurance measures that pay attention to the specific learning needs of females will likely enhance profitability at the level of individual women, as well as FBOs access to the markets. It is therefore essential that the project provides trainings, mentorship or one to one coaching for women in quality, so, they become more confident and proficient in quality specifications. Provide women access to resources and training materials, while taking into consideration their background, experiences and language skills.
- In the marketing and trade value chain, men are more likely to perform roles that require manual labour, such as loading fish onto trucks, transporting them, and handling them. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to perform less labour-intensive roles, such as labelling and selling fish. Both men and women may interact with clients, look for markets, process export documents, and manage the business overall. According to respondents, women are preferred to men for tasks that require neatness, concentration, and presentation, such as fish packaging and labelling. This is because women are seen as being more patient, detail-oriented, and dedicated to their work. They are also seen as being more dependable, honest, and selfless, while men are seen as being more energetic, decisive, and technically skilled. These responses suggest that women need to be trained in the different aspects of quality promotion in order for Fish Business Operators to effectively engage with the vTPAs. This means that project implementation should create a supportive and inclusive work environment for women to develop their skills. Women can be helped to upskill to remain relevant in their jobs. The project can also connect exceptional women with other women for guidance and support, as well as to share their stories and experiences and inspire others by speaking at events. FBOs can be encouraged to listen to women's concerns, be flexible and accommodative of them, and consider the cultural context when making decisions.
- On the question of access to and control over productive resources in aquaculture businesses, the study found that both men and women have access to physical, economic, and political resources in aquaculture businesses. However, women have less access to productive resources than men, due to low-income levels and lack of access to land. Women also have less control over physical resources, but they have more control over political resources. To improve access to productive resources for women in aquaculture businesses, it is important to provide women

with training and education on how to manage productive assets, support women's participation in leadership positions and decision-making and ensure that all channels of communication are gender neutral. These measures will help to level the playing field for women in aquaculture businesses and allow them to participate more fully in the sector.

- The benefits received from the use of productive services identified by the study were those that relate with employment, such as insurance, capacity building, the mental benefit of providing a service, access to credit because of a job to be used as collateral, self-esteem and confidence to talk among women, building a career in fish profession and getting connections. Also, food and nutritional security, among others. There was no differential treatment reported in accessing benefits. As shown, the benefits are many, if anyone cared to find out. They can even multiply if FBOs are able to engage vTPAs, to access international markets. It is important therefore, for the project to increase participation of women alongside men in the aquacultural value chain, create a task force to review the different assurance policies, products and services, enhance collaboration among men and women to share the risks and benefits of purchasing vTPAs and build women's confidence to ensure accountability for the decisions they make.
- On the question of initiatives undertaken to promote change of power/gender relations in the aquaculture business, findings show; having fair working conditions, organising training programmes for women to understand all aspects of the different value chains, putting in place a provision for confidential reporting system, monthly refresher trainings in quality control for all workers, and sponsoring employees regardless of sex for external trainings to expand their skills. Most business put in place a suggestion box, provide for monthly medical fitness for all staffs, ensure that planning at the different levels of the value chain fit in the macro level gender policy framework. Analysis of FBO's initiatives to support change of power/gender relations from the context of aquaculture value chain, points to inclusion and a commitment to gender equality in whatever interventions, such as trainings, that are undertaken, so as to promote a health working relationship. This means that all staffs can be supportive of proposals to purchase vTPAs when it deems fit. Therefore, project leadership ought to train participants in critical thinking and analysis of inequality and how it shapes their lives, create spaces to foster dialogues that build confidence of women, support women's leadership by providing them training resources they need, and advocate for policies that promote gender equity.

**Objective 2:** Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade.

- On the question of enhanced women's position due to their involvement in the aquaculture business, the study found; promotion of competence sharing, exposure among women, increase recognition, improved self-esteem, and increase in the standards of living among women. Although participants noted that gender is still in its infancy in the aquaculture sector. This suggests that women's enhanced position could be significantly associated with their investments and contribution to the fields. Thus, it would be important to ensure gender balance in project teams, recruiting women in project roles and making sure that they are present in decision making. There is also need to create a supportive and inclusive work

environment, that promotes women's visibility and recognition

- Regarding cultural/gender specific issues that constrain the aquaculture sector business operations and how they can be minimised study noted the following: men want to be in control, women were taken to be of subordinate status, weak and fragile, lack of inheritance rights for women and the thinking that fisheries women are prostitutes and males in fisheries have no financial discipline. However, those with business mindset said that, the rule is that, as long as we supply fish, there is no culture/gender in business. These were sorted out by creating advocacy voices, being open on issues of gender at work and implement equal pay, for equal work policy. However, the absence of a specific strategic framework, meant that gender is not anchored well in the aquaculture sector. Analysis of the cultural/gender aspects show that, despite the fact that women are not fully accepted in the aquaculture value chains, efforts were in place to put up measures to address gender issues in policy provisions, change of attitude and advocacy. It is suggested that the project works with local organisations and leaders that can provide valuable insights on cultural issues, provide training and support to extension staffs to understand how cultural issues may affect women and their participation on the project and be able to put on gender eyeglasses. Also important is to raise awareness on women's inheritance rights through information and education and to provide legal assistance to both men and women when needed.
- Strategies to enhance women participation and benefits in aquaculture business were: organising sensitizations on the potential of the women in the sector, implementing provisions of the Uganda's constitution i.e., efforts to enforce a certain percentage of females and same pay for equal work, men and women given equal chances to contribute to the growth of business, documenting and sharing of good gender practices, putting women in decision making positions as well as incentives for those doing well irrespective of sex, among others. What is needed is how to intensify implementation of these efforts, forge even more innovations that can create gender justice in the sector to support women along with men storm the global markets in big numbers. The project should therefore empower women as entrepreneurs, producers, consumers and as leaders in the sector. They can increase their productivity, create new businesses and jobs, and make decisions to create new markets for sale of aquaculture products.
- The support government and other stakeholders implemented to promote gender equality in the aquaculture business was in the form of capacity building, providing rules and regulations for operations of the businesses, extension services, fish equipment, and funding for training institutions to train women professionals, and in good saving culture. This study has shown that government and other stakeholders once engaged, can do a lot to promote women and men in the aquaculture value chains. Therefore, the project had better work with government to direct grants to small business, especially those owned by the women, make loan guarantees to small scale business leaders, support access to markets, through trade missions, export opportunities and partnership with private companies. The project can also help SMEs to develop market plans. These can create more jobs in the sector to further economic growth.



**Objective 3:** Aspects of the vTPAs contributions, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women in Food business operations.

- The reasons for Ugandan aquaculture FBO's decision to engage vTPAs were: to have safe food on the market and the need to raise standards of food in a country and on international market. The market forces dictate that a Food Business Operator buys vTPA. If the intention is to send fish to Europe and other developed countries a company has to buy vTPAs. For international markets certification is mandatory. It is market driven by the importing countries. Certification is actually a reality not a plan. This calls for support towards the growth aquaculture businesses to increase production which is likely to hire more women and accelerate access to international markets. The project can provide financial support to women owned businesses, invest in training and capacity building programs for FBOs to get the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in this business, and advocate for policies that promote access to markets, resources and decision-making powers for women to engage fully in the business.
- The reasons for encouraging and facilitating women to work in aquaculture businesses were that; gender is a marketing tool. When one has it, more market, more business and more jobs will be available. Gender accreditation is market driven. Gender is a footprint of trade. This means that promoting gender and women in project implementation will have a significant impact on the growth of the industry. There is therefore a need for the project to encourage women to take on aquaculture as a career path, challenging the social norms that limit women's opportunities in the aquaculture business and address stereotypes that limit women's participation in the industry. Also important is to provide technical assistance to women fish farmers to improve management practices as well as infrastructure to make their businesses attractive to insurers.
- Data shows that engaging vTPAs is important in expanding business opportunities, manufacturing of safe products, assurance of customer satisfaction and that standards of women and men increase. It makes the business competitive and protects quality. The reasons reported for women FBOs in Uganda, unlikeliness to purchase vTPAs were prohibitive audit costs, high costs of transportation, limited securities to access loans, and that, vTPA is a new thing, the women may not really understand it well. There is therefore need to engage all actors in the aquaculture value chain to appreciate the benefits and give them the necessary support to purchase vTPAs. Important is for the project to educate fish farmers about the importance of assurance, to make them informed of the risks and benefits associated with their business, so, they make informed decisions about whether to get or not to purchase insurance. Making insurance more accessible to fish farmers by negotiating prices, or offer subsidized insurance programs for them through government assistance. The project can also work with insurers to develop a more tailored insurance products to fish farmers that are gender sensitive and share success stories of women who have bought and benefited from vTPAs.
- Conditions favourable for women owned aquaculture FBOs to engage vTPA are having women in aquaculture to get the knowledge, skills and competences that will help them compete in the value chain with vTPAs, they have to train in how to access, use and invest loans. The results here provide indicators that can be used by policy makers and other stakeholders to allocate

and channel resources to women in aquaculture sector as an initial step towards recognition of their relevance in the sector. Now that the conditions are known according to study participants, the project can share this information and also provide data about the different types of vTPAs. It should help women find affordable assurance policies, help women and men complete application process, and make application user friendly. The project can also work with insurers to offer discounts and other incentives for women to benefit from vTPAs.

- Gender related challenges reported of having vTPAs in aquaculture business in Uganda include; corruption, time allocation between housework and involvement in fish activity, large scale fish processing being dominated by the men, women having no money to pay auditors, certification is a rigorous process that require upgrading of infrastructure and the time and venues for training are rarely gender sensitive. Responses on how these can be overcome include sensitization on available vTPAs and encourage them to purchase, training in value addition and skills development, access to finance, markets and affordable loans and on how invest. In addition, women can be provided with motorised boats, creation of special investment incentives for women and the development of aquaculture policies and approaches that are gender sensitive. It is therefore necessary for the project to support research that raise awareness of the important role that women play in the fisheries and promote fish business assurance through marketing and outreaches. Raise awareness to farmers, the media, to government officials and the general publics, and work with them to promote the message.
- Opportunities that vTPA programmes bring or likely bring to women in the aquaculture business in Uganda comprise of; acquisition of more application skills for women, trainings into gender technical knowledge, expansion of aquaculture businesses to employ more women, and on-ground training for employers and employees in gender equality. Also mentioned were tax holidays, creation of women specific fund, building the capacity of females, recruitment of women at all costs, sponsorship of female workers for further studies, in more specialised aquaculture field, putting in place incentives on fishing materials, promotion of research on gender issues in aquaculture, social connections and formation of associations for easy access to credit facilities. When the project opens up these opportunities especially for women, better economic viability among women in the industry will be possible. Therefore, educating business owners on the importance of vTPAs, technical assistance to make aquaculture businesses more competitive and more stable so they can be attractive to insurers, is imperative.
- The concerns raised on the likeliness of vTPA implementation to bring unintended consequences to gender equality in the aquaculture business are; causing of redundancy at specific times, lack of personal time, and the job may be so overwhelming with no sick leave. This implies that the more the sensitizations will be done, the likelihood of limiting the risks of these predictions. Thus, the project ought to consider these unintended consequences from its design, review, on up to evaluation for its positive contribution.

**Objective 4:** Provide policy and strategic recommendations to the project's leadership and stakeholders on refining or amending project activities and implementation to be more gender responsive and better promote gender equality; and how to best incorporate gender equality dimensions into monitoring, evaluation and learning activities.

## 6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Streamlining gender in project implementation. This requires that all staffs involved in the horticulture and aquaculture businesses have a basic understanding of gender and the practice of how to integrate it. A gender responsive training will address this. However, this kind of training may not necessarily make the staff gender experts. The projects therefore ought to employ the services of a technical person whenever it deems fit to:

- To train all the competent authorities in project implementing countries in gender sensitive policy and programming, such that they are gender aware in their planning of project activities and continuously reflect on gender issues in project implementation.
- Integrate gender in all project documents to enhance awareness and guide monitoring and evaluation of gender issues project activities.

2. Piloting the Use of Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) successfully requires that the personnel on the ground are at the same level of understanding gender issues and how they are detected. It can therefore be possible to report gender issues to the project focal persons for necessary action and at the same time inspire the rest to address the same. Thus:

- Training government extension workers in how to develop gender sensitive indicators for quality promotion is imperative. This means that the specific needs of women and men are addressed in project implementation. This should facilitate linkage with project focal persons regarding information sharing.

3. Support infrastructural development for women owned FBO in preparation for engaging vTPAS. This can be in form of land acquisition, access to water resources, and equipment for value addition. Access to and control of productive resources were weak areas for women in both sectors. The same ought to facilitate access to certification and also access to international markets.

4. The project can work with respective governments authorities to support upcoming women in the horticulture and aquaculture food businesses to get the necessary competences in the relevant industry. Initiatives like these can go to small and middle level businesses that are performing well. This may entail:

- Placement of young women in reputable FBOs in the sectors globally to get the experiences they can apply to their own businesses.
- Facilitate local exchange visits of women in the horticulture businesses to well established business to learn how to improve their own businesses.
- Facilitate exposure for women in the aquaculture to learn on what they can aspire for when establishing their own businesses. This can create a multiplier effect to the industry.
- Identify and facilitate women willing to share their experiences and facilitate them to mentor others in small scale businesses and encourage peer to peer learning.

- The government and partners should reach out to young female students in institutions and interest them into aquaculture. This can be through an established scholarship fund.
5. The report identified the compliance to constitutional provisions and public regulatory frameworks as important for effective promotion of participation and benefit for women in Food Business operations. This is because, the instruments emphasise equity and inclusiveness. For property follow up, therefore, the study recommends:
- The project should support the development of gender specific policies for the horticulture and aquaculture sectors for the respective implementing countries. To support staffs in their effort to uphold equal rights for women and men.
  - Development of simple guidelines of policy and standards, preferably in local languages that can be understood and used by the women.
  - In line with the national policy frameworks, the project ought to support FBO's without gender specific policies that are easy to follow and implement and put them in place.
  - Work with participating governments to put in place a think tank that can continuously generate strategies for promotion of women alongside men in project implementation.
6. Equally important is the support for formation of a joint accreditation body for the horticulture and aquaculture produce. This can be done in consultation with the existing certification bodies for their input. The accreditation body can put in place a secretariate that is recognised by all, to facilitate a singular accreditation, like it is for higher education sector in East Africa, to enable standardisation, and subsequent sharing of accredited products from project implementing countries on the global markets. It can also enable FBOs to beat the cost of multiple accreditation that are currently prohibitive.

## 6.2 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote appropriate capacity building in gender sensitive quality standards for empowerment of grassroots women and men in aquaculture and horticulture businesses. This will increase the technical competences of women and will buy-in men's support towards increased participation by the women. Important therefore is to:
- Train both men and women in the horticulture and aquaculture sector in utilising gender eye lens i.e., paying particular attention to gender imbalances; the ways in which interactions are gendered at farm levels and making women's perspectives and experiences visible, while executing work.
  - Build women capacities in gender aspects of certification and facilitate them to mentor other women. The project may pay them a little token to facilitate their fuel. These should be women involved in horticulture and aquaculture activities. Training of grassroots women should take into consideration the place, time, venue, language, practices, to prevent conflicts at family levels.
  - Build the capacity of women in aquaculture and horticulture businesses in leadership qualities and skills required for SME management.

2. Promote experience sharing and mentorship for promising young women in the horticulture and aquaculture businesses

3. Pilot innovations on financing women FBO to purchase vTPAs. Certification has been found by the study to be of great potential for expansion of both horticulture and aquaculture businesses. Hence project implementation should aim at;

- Guarantying women to get credit and pay back in instalments.
- Encouraging saving and loaning among others to access finance.

4. Promotion of knowledge on consumer protection, effective access to local and international markets, promotion of food safety, how to engage government and private consultants and the changing market demands for women and men in the aquaculture and horticulture sectors. It is therefore important to:

- Support women FBOs regarding how to access the required documentation, certification and the knowledge of how the process works.
- Work with quality assurance corporations worldwide on standards to show case their options for vTPAs.
- Documentation of good certification practices in horticulture and aquaculture for sharing among stakeholders and compare.

5. The project should hold discussions with relevant stakeholders to ensure their cooperation and partnership in promotion of gender in the aquaculture and horticulture industries. This calls for:

- Working with media houses to publicise the importance of women and gender in promotion of food safety.
- Developing policy briefs on gender issues in horticulture and aquaculture business for sharing in the newspapers and with policy makers.
- Encouraging business owners to recruit more women since they have been found to be very good at managing specifications which is important in taking vTPAs.

6. The project should promote research in horticulture and aquaculture value chains.

- This will enhance literature in the project areas provide information on monitoring and data on the efficiency and productivity of the sectors.
- Promotion of research on gender appropriate technologies that can allow more women engage in the horticulture and aquaculture value chains.
- Sex disaggregated data will be key in bridging the gap for increased data access.

7. Support the strengthening of farmers groups/ cooperative with specific focus to active participation of women. Especially women in leadership roles. The project can use fish farmers groups and cooperatives to reach many farmers for training, information sharing, learning and joint activities.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

Overall, women as well as men play a vital role in the aquaculture and horticultural food business sectors in Uganda and Rwanda respectively. They contribute significantly to the overall success of the industries and are at the forefront of the day-to-day operations of these businesses, as show in this this study. However, cultural/gender related barriers prevent women from fully participating in the horticulture and aquaculture food business, including lack of access to land, credit, and training, among other factors. Ensuring that women have access to the same opportunities as men in project implementation is essential for the growth of the horticulture and aquaculture industries. This study suggests providing women with access to land, credit, training, extension services, infrastructural development, and exposure, as a part of the gender mainstreaming strategy in project implementation. By addressing gender inequalities in the aquaculture and horticulture value chains, i.e., two areas of project implementation, and enabling women to purchase VTPAs, for their businesses, the project can help to level the playing field and ensure that women have the same opportunities to succeed in these business operations as men. Further, access to Voluntary Third-Party Assurance will help to protect women's businesses from financial, among other risks and ensure that women continue to operate their businesses even in the face of gender related challenges. This can help women to invest and to grow their businesses more confidently and their businesses cannot be forced to close due to unforeseen consequences. This will have a positive impact on the growth of the aquaculture and horticulture industries in Uganda and Rwanda. For instance, when women use gender sensitive irrigation methods to increase avocado, chilli and French bean yields, adopt gender and environmentally friendly farming practices in aquaculture businesses, improve their marketing and negotiate skills for better prices for their SMEs products. This can lead to increased productivity and profitability of their businesses, help to improve the lives of women, men and their families and contribute to the economies of the two participating countries, whereas at the same time contributing widely to the sustainable development goals.



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# APPENDICES

## 1. Data Collection tools

### 1.1. Consent form: Confidentiality and informed consent form for all participants

Greetings!

My name is Saidah Mbooge Najjuma (PhD). I work with Ndejje University and for this activity, I am for contracted by Land O Lakes Venture 37 to undertake a gender analysis study, for its Piloting the use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) program being implemented in East Africa. I am investigating women's participation in horticulture and aquaculture value chains, including their contribution, benefits, challenges and opportunities involved. Through this, Land o' Lakes would like to have your input in the study. Your ideas, and those of others participating in this study will be factored in during the final refining of the program to address gender imbalances in Food Business Operations.

**Procedures:** I will ask you question about roles and responsibilities, resources ownership, power relations, as well as constraints and opportunities on women's roles in Food business operations and export trade in the horticulture and aquaculture value chains. Further, your general suggestions on how the program can best ensure that women participate and benefit too, from the intervention will be appreciated. This process will take a maximum of 1 hour and with your permission, we may record the proceedings.

**Risks:** During our interactions, you can decline to answer any specific question that makes you uncomfortable, or stop the interview at any point. Your responses will be available only to the team conducting this study. We intend to do everything in private; if anyone comes in, we will pause the talking until we can continue in private.

**Benefits:** There are no direct and immediate benefits to you for participating in this interview. There may be indirect benefits later from the pilot project where you can be a beneficiary.

**Confidentiality:** We will take precautions to keep any information you give to us during our interaction confidential. For example, your name or other identifying information will not appear on any of our records of responses. At the end of the study, we will put all the answers together and make a report. Your responses will be seen only by the researcher, and will be kept in a locked place under the control of Land O' Lakes Venture 37. What you share with us will be used for our research work as well as for designing programs to help enhance gender equality in the horticulture and aquaculture interventions.

**Compensation:** You will not receive money for participating in this study. This is because, we will find you at your home or where you work.

**Voluntary Participation:** Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to take part, you may stop at any time or skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Please note that your choice to take part or not to take part in answering these questions will in no way affect or hinder your business. If you have any questions about taking part in this study, please feel free to talk to me and I will be happy to answer your questions to the best of my ability. You can also ask questions at any time about the project. A copy of this consent form will be availed to you for review in future.

**Persons Contact:** if you want to talk to anyone about this study because you think you have not been treated fairly or you think you have been harmed in any way by joining the study, or you have any other questions about the study in the future, you may speak directly with the assignment manager of this project: Mr. Ssubi Johnson – at Telephone +256 776811166



**I certify that I have read and understood the consent procedures on this paper and continued only on consent.**

**Name of Participant ..... Name of Consultant; Saidah Mbooge Najjuma  
Signed and Date..... Sign and Date.....**

## 1.2 Interview schedule for Food Business Operators

### A) Introduction

Participants will entail men and women (i.e., business owners, QA officers, production officers and marketing officers) involved in horticulture and aquaculture in Uganda and Rwanda. Note: For the case of data collection in Rwanda, the translator will only understand the theme and will only translate not interpret.

Date.....  
Start time.....  
End time.....  
Interviewer: SM

### B) Purpose

This tool facilitates collection of the data on gender issues among food business operators in the horticulture and aquaculture sectors, specifically roles and responsibilities; resources ownership and power relations, participation and benefits; constraints and opportunities on women's roles in the aquaculture and horticulture food business operations and export trade.

### C) Background

1. Sex:
2. Age:
3. Level of Education
4. Food Business (Sector): Avocado ☐ Aquaculture ☐ Chili pepper ☐ French Beans ☐
5. Type of Business: Production ☐ Processing ☐ Trade ☐

6. How long have you been operating this business?

### D) Gender related aspects of Roles and Responsibilities

7. Mention the activities you carryout in this business? (Probe on the volume of work)
8. a) Are some of the roles in this business more valued than others? (Probe on Why?)  
b) What unique abilities are you proud of, that make you strong in doing this business?

### E) Resources Ownership

9. What productive resources do you have access<sup>1</sup> to and control<sup>2</sup> over in this business? (Probe on How and Why?)
10. What benefits do you receive from the use of productive resources mentioned in E9 above?
11. What initiatives (internal and external) support and promote change of power/Gender relations in this business (probe on policies, procedures, trainings etc.)

### F) Current Status (to be administered to women only)

<sup>1</sup> The opportunity to make use of a resource.

<sup>2</sup> The ability to define a resource use and impose that definition on others.

12. How does your involvement on this business reduces your subordinate position<sup>3</sup> in the industry? (Probe for explanation)

**G) Constraints**

13. (a) Please mention any cultural/gender issues practiced in this community that constrain your operation of this business? (How? Probe separately for men and women)  
(b) How can these constraints be minimised gender in a business like this one?

**H) Opportunities**

14. What strategies are in place to ensure equal participation and benefits for men and women in this business?  
15. Please mention any current support by government, NGO, private sector or other stakeholders that have been implemented to promote gender equality in the business? (Probe for (Probe on training, new technologies, exhibitions, on farm demonstrations, famers markets etc. and effectiveness)

We have come to the end of our interaction. Do you have any questions or suggestion that would be helpful to us?

Thank you very much.

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<sup>3</sup> A woman's social economic standing relative to a man.

### 1.3. Participatory Learning and Action tool for participants from food business operators

#### A. Introduction

The PLA tools will be applied to separate groups for men and women. Due to time constraints, each tool will be administered to an FBO where it most likely to yield relevant data. Data will be collected using local resources and afterwards transferred on paper with community notes.

Date.....  
Start time.....  
End time.....  
Facilitator: SM

#### B. Purpose

This tool facilitates collection of the data on gender issues in the horticulture and aquaculture sectors, specifically the gender related aspects in the target food business operations on male and female roles and responsibilities; resources ownership and power relations, within project implementation as well as the current status; constraints and opportunities on women's roles in the aquaculture and heliculture food business operations and export trade. We would like to ask you some questions regarding your participation in the target value chain.

#### C. Background

1. Name of group
2. Type of Group
3. Sex & Levels of education
4. Food Business (Sector): Avocado ☐ Aquaculture ☐ Chili pepper ☐ French Beans ☐
5. Type of Business: Production ☐ Processing ☐ Trade ☐

#### D. Gender related roles and responsibilities

##### Tool: Gender roles and responsibilities Analysis tool (Avocado)

This PLA tool will help to determine the roles and responsibilities of various actors' in avocado. Application of the tool will look for; Clarity on who is responsible for what; highlight areas that receive support and advise and discuss ways of reducing the risks associated with roles and responsibilities currently experienced.

##### Process

The consultant will:

- Introduce the exercise
- Ask participants to list all activities they are involved in (preferably using symbols.
- Identify who among women and men does what role
- Use the opportunity to discuss gender related issues, constraints and opportunities

Roles		Men	Women
Avocado	1.		
	2.		

## E. Resource Ownership

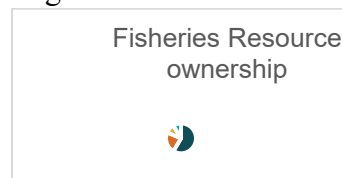
### Tool: Chapati Diagram/Pie Chart (aquaculture)

Participants will develop the diagram and divide it into sections, whose sizes vary to show relative ownership of resources. The proportions of the different resources will be useful in understanding percentages in terms of ownership of resources among men and women. The information gathered will emphasise relative rather than absolute information to be used to discuss gender aspects of project implementation.

#### Process:

The consultant will:

- Explain to study participants the objectives and purpose of using the tool.
- Facilitate the participants to name the resources that apply to the business
- Assist participants to develop a chapati diagram and divide it up into segments where each segment represents one resource. The size of the segment indicates the relative importance of the resource. E.g.



Note: Discussions on implications to gender equality will be held in the whole process. (Probe as the discussions proceed i.e., using the 6Ws and H)

## F. Power/Gender relations with in project implementation

### Tool: Brainstorming (French beans)

The tool will quickly generate the data, thoughts and facts connected to French bean value chain regarding constraints, opportunities among others issues, experienced by the women and men undertaking this activity. It will explore the relative decision-making powers, and changes in decision making processes.

#### Process.

- The consultant will explain to study participants the objectives and procedure of the task and make sure that everyone understands that any ideas or opinions can be expressed.
- Ask participants to talk about gender issues in a brainstorm session.

Gender issues in French bean growing
Symbol
Summary:

- A note taker will be writing the proceedings of the discussion.
- When time is up, the team will cluster ideas according to study themes and evaluate them for clarity.

Note: Gender relations, constraints and opportunities, will be discussed during the process of interaction

#### **G. Participation and Benefits of men and women**

##### **Tool: Focus group discussion (Chilli)**

The tool will help in exploring aspects of access and control of resources among women and men, identify gaps for women's involvement and suggest measures for adoption in project implementation. It will also generate the data on the position of women relative to men and how this affects production of Chilli and the farming systems.

##### **Procedure:**

- In relation to the business under study, the consultant will explain the reasons for carrying out the exercise.
- We will discuss different aspects related to benefits, constraints and opportunities for participation of women in the chilli value chain.

**End**



## 1.4. Key Informant Guide

### A. Introduction

**Interview schedule for Fisheries Department Line Officials, Heads of NGOs, Associations/Cooperatives working in food business in Uganda and Rwanda.**

Date.....
Start time.....
End time.....
Interviewer: SM

### B. Purpose

This tool facilitates collection of the data on gender issues in the horticulture and aquaculture sectors, specifically the gender related aspects on male and female roles and responsibilities; resources ownership and power relations, within project implementation as well as the current status; constraints and opportunities on women's roles in the aquaculture and heliculture food business operations and export trade. Please feel free to respond to these questions regarding your support in the target value chain.

### C. Background

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Sex:   |
| 2. Age:   |
| 3. Level of education   |
| 4. Food Business (Sector): Aquaculture <input type="checkbox"/> Horticulture <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. How long have you been supporting this business?   |

### D. Gender related aspects of Roles and Responsibilities

6. (a) Do you find any gender related differences in the kind of activities men and women do in this business? (i.e., time, value etc)
- (b) What unique abilities do you think women or men have, that make them strong participants in such a business?

<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>

### E. Resources Ownership

7. What productive resources do women and men have control over in this business? (Why?)

Men Control (ability to define and impose the use)	Women Control

8. What benefits do men and women each receive from the use of productive resources mentioned in E7 above?

Benefits Men	Benefits Women
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9. What initiatives are you aware of that support and promote change of power relations in this business?

Initiatives (Internal)	Initiatives (External)
------------------------	------------------------

**F. Current Status:**

10. How does women's involvement in this business reduce their subordinate position in the industry? (Please explain)

--

**G. Constraints**

11. (a) Please mention any cultural/ gender issues practiced in this community that constrain women and men's participation in this business (es)? (Please explain)  
(b) How can these constraints be minimised or overcome?

Cultural/gender constraints (men)	Cultural/Gender constraints (women)
-----------------------------------	-------------------------------------

**H. Opportunities**

12. What strategies are in place to ensure equal participation and benefits for men and women?

participation and benefits (Men)	participation and benefits (Women)
----------------------------------	------------------------------------

13. Please mention any current or previous support by government, NGO or private sector that has been implemented to promote gender equality in this business? (Explain its effectiveness)

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We have come to the end. Please indicate any other questions or suggestion that would be helpful?  
Thank you very much.

## 1.5. Supplementary Questions for Food Business Operators holding vTPA plus Key Informants

### A) Introduction

Participants in will entail men and women involved in horticulture and aquaculture in Rwanda and Uganda respectively. The business they operate should be holders of vTPA.

### B) Purpose

This tool facilitates collection of the data Related to aspects of vTPAs contribution, benefits, challenges and opportunities for women and men in the aquaculture and heliculture food business operations and export trade. These questions are specific to vTPA holders.

### C) Background

1. Food Business (Sector): Avocado ☐ Aquaculture ☐ Chili pepper ☐ French Beans ☐

2. Type of Business: Production ☐ Processing ☐ Trade ☐

3. For how long has this business been a holder of vTPA?

4(a) Why did you decide to get Certification?

(b) Are women well represented in the activities carried out in this business? Please explain.

5. Do you think women should be encouraged and facilitated to operate in businesses with vTPA? (why)

6. (a) What are the benefits of engaging vTPAs to this sector?

(b) why are some women FBOs not likely to have interest in getting certification?

7. Under what conditions are women owned FBOs likely to engage vTPA?

8. (a) What are the gender related challenges of getting certification in this business?

(b) What sort of help is required for women to engage vTPA effectively?

9. What opportunities does vTPA programmes bring or likely bring to women and men in this business?

10. How likely does certification cause unintended consequences to gender equality?

We have come to the end of this session. Do you have any questions or suggestion that would be helpful to us?

Thank you very much.

## **1.6 Observation Guide**

### **Introduction**

This tool will be used with tools 1.1 -1.5 developed for this study to collect the data using the six senses. The task will involve taking part in ongoing activities, listening to what people say in their interactions and crosschecking what they say with what is on ground. In addition, I will participate in ongoing activities in order to check on attitudes and behaviours during the data collection process. The use of the tool will be guided by the first two objectives of the study.

**Section 1:** (i) Apply a gender lens to the project context (ii) Analyse the gendered related aspects within project implementation.

What to Observe:

Roles and responsibilities; b) Resources ownership and c) Power relations (Probes during interactions)

**Section 2:** Assess the current status, constraints and opportunities of women's roles in food business operations and export trade.

What to observe:

a) Current status women b) Constraints, d) Opportunities (Probes during interactions)