Women’s Collective Action in Agricultural Markets

Synthesis of preliminary findings from Ethiopia, Mali, and Tanzania

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This paper presents an analytical framework and preliminary findings from the second phase of the Researching Women’s Collective Action project. It documents participatory field research in Ethiopia, Mali, and Tanzania, covering 15 agricultural sub-sectors. Findings are reported on women smallholders’ motivations and capacities to engage in collective action, as well as on gender-based patterns and outcomes of collective action. The main benefits that women derive from various types of collective action are described, highlighting where collective action is addressing key barriers faced by women in engaging in markets and where current strategies are lacking. Emerging themes will be further explored and key hypotheses tested in the final phase of the project.
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List of abbreviations

CA Collective action
CAEB Conseil Appui pour l’Education a la Base (Council Support for Basic Education)
CAPRi Collective Action and Property Rights
PASDEP Plan for Accelerated Sustainable Development to End Poverty 2005–2010
RWCA Researching Women’s Collective Action project
WCA Women’s collective action
USAID United States Agency for International Development

List of tables

Table 1: Summary of collective action groups studied by country, region, and sub-sector ............................................................ 14
Table 2: Location of collective action in value chain segments and associated services in the 15 sub-sectors studied ................................................................. 21
Table 3: Benefit ranking across sub-sectors: Tanzania .................................................................................................................. 28
Table 4: Benefits ranking across sub-sectors: Mali ......................................................................................................................... 29
Table 5: Benefit ranking across sub-sectors: Ethiopia .................................................................................................................. 31
Table 6: Sub-sectors selected for research in Phase I .................................................................................................................. 47
Table 7: Overview of characteristics of selected sub-sectors in Mali .......................................................................................... 48
Table 8: Characterisation of collective action groups across market types and sub-sectors in Tanzania ......................................................................................... 54
Table 9: Characterisation of collective action groups across market types and sub-sectors in Mali .......................................................................................... 54
Table 10: Characterisation of collective action groups across market types and sub-sectors in Ethiopia ......................................................... 55

List of figures

Figure 1: Analytical framework for women’s collective action in agricultural markets ......................................................................................... 12
Figure 2: Levels of specialisation of collective action in different sub-sectors for Tanzania (TZ) and Mali (M) ......................................................................................... 24
Figure 3: Relationship between incidence of women-only groups and degree of specialisation in eight sub-sectors (Mali and Ethiopia) ............................................. 25
Figure 4: Relationship between incidence of women-only groups and level of formality in six sub-sectors (Mali) ......................................................................................... 26
Summary

This paper presents preliminary findings from the second phase of the ‘Researching Women’s Collective Action’ (RWCA) project. The project’s focus is on primary-level collective action (CA) by smallholder farmers in agricultural markets — in formal, informal, single- and mixed-sex groups — including rural producer groups, farmers’ associations, agricultural co-operatives, and savings and credit groups. The second phase consisted of a broad literature review and three country studies covering a total of 15 agricultural sub-sectors across two regions each in Ethiopia, Mali, and Tanzania.

RWCA is designed to investigate how CA can benefit women smallholders by empowering them and enabling market engagement. However, it is well understood that CA does not automatically reduce poverty or inequality: women smallholders often still face limited access to markets, services and representation in formal producer groups, as well as limited control over productive resources. Markets tend to be ‘gendered’, with products and marketing locations segregated by sex, and with women generally receiving lower returns than men, while gender biases affect women’s negotiation and decision-making capacity in the household.

The RWCA project considers CA in agricultural markets on three main levels:

1. **Motivations and capacities for engaging in collective action**

Women smallholders face a number of gender-specific constraints to their engagement in markets, including a lack of control over products, and their relative lack of mobility and time and lower productivity compared to male counterparts. In addition, women may have limited awareness of market dynamics and lack business and organisational skills. Findings from focus groups indicate that some of these specific constraints can be at least partially addressed by CA, through techniques and measures to increase productivity, access to market services, training, and confidence. Other constraints do not appear to be reduced by CA currently — such as access to land and productive resources, time poverty, mobility, transport and “restrictions from husbands and/or community” on women’s actions and roles because interventions are not addressing them, or because they require wider policy, market or social changes.

All three countries have passed legislation in recent years to promote the development of formal co-operatives; however, many women still opt instead for informal groups, often due to negative past experiences of formal CA. Indeed, women face many barriers to participating in CA. For example, a lack of land may limit their membership of CA groups directly, when ownership is an explicit or implicit precondition, or indirectly due to an inability to produce a marketable surplus. Despite formal recognition of women’s land rights, customary practices can severely limit *de facto* tenure. Other obstacles include household status (married) women from male-headed households are often disadvantaged), an inability to pay membership fees, limited information and/or confidence, time, and negative attitudes to women’s involvement from within their households or communities or from the groups themselves. New commercial opportunities do not always result in increased empowerment for women. One possible reason for this is that men might move into profitable sectors and take over leadership roles. This suggests that proactive strategies are needed to ensure that women benefit equitably from new commercial opportunities, even in sectors in which they traditionally dominate.

2. **Gendered patterns and forms of collective action**

CA innovations include self-help groups, market-oriented farmer organisations, and bylaws promoting dual household membership in informal groups. The analytical framework in this report identifies three sets of factors influencing the formation and
Women’s Collect

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The research identified that more women participated in CA groups involved in production, savings and credit, and labour-sharing activities than in other segments of the value chain like processing and marketing. The balance between women-only and mixed groups varied between countries, as did levels of women’s participation. For instance, in Ethiopia, mixed groups were often male-dominated; in Tanzania, women often dominated numerically in mixed groups. Formal groups outnumbered informal groups in most sub-sectors studied in all three countries, though less formal groups tended to have higher levels of participation and leadership by women. External support—by government, companies, or NGOs—was a dominant feature of most of the groups identified, and appeared to be correlated with formality. Accordingly, informal women-only groups had a relatively low degree of external support.

Analysis of CA across countries suggests some possible correlations between sub-sectors and other characteristics. For example, in Tanzania and Mali, formal and externally supported marketing CA groups were more prevalent for those dealing with high-value exports. Food staple crops, on the other hand, tended to have multi-functional CA groups, with marketing a limited element.

3. Gender equality outcomes of collective action

Focus group discussions with women CA group members identified the perceived benefits of membership: access to quality inputs, training, and technical advice; improved access to markets; higher incomes; social support; the ability to build assets; savings and credit; and improved social status. There was variation in the ranking of these across countries and sub-sectors.

However, in all three countries, the main benefits of savings and credit groups (and to some extent labour-sharing groups) were seen as social cohesion, capacity building and personal development. Women perceived specialised marketing organisations as able to deliver more economic benefits, such as access to more stable markets, better prices, and access to inputs and advice.

However, while evidence suggests that CA is beginning to enable women to participate in markets—to varying degrees in different contexts—initial findings suggest that they do not always benefit to the same extent as men. Further, women in focus groups spoke about constraints they believe are not being addressed adequately, such as transport, access to land, social barriers, and lack of time.

Future research

Phase III of the RWCA aims to explore these themes in more detail, especially:

- whether activities within informal groupings act as critical ‘enablers’ of participation in formal groups.
- the identification of the main determinants of women’s participation in CA;
- the influence of relationships with traders/buyers on the structure, rules, and gender composition of groups;
- the role of governance structures and group dynamics in encouraging or hindering CA.
1. Introduction

1.1. Background to Researching Women’s Collective Action

The ‘Researching Women’s Collective Action’ (RWCA) project aims to provide evidence on women’s participation in, and benefits from, collective action (CA) in agricultural markets, and on which strategies are effective in promoting and sustaining benefits for women smallholders, in order to influence the thinking and practice of development actors.

Agricultural market and value chain development is central to the livelihood strategies of Oxfam and other development actors. There is also growing interest among private companies in engaging smallholder farmers in their supply chains. Development actors, including Oxfam, increasingly support and promote CA as a means for smallholder farmers to strengthen their assets and livelihoods and to remain competitive in liberalised and globalised markets. At the same time, Oxfam is committed to promoting gender justice and women’s empowerment and leadership through its broader livelihoods strategy. It is thus important to understand how women can gain greater and more sustained benefits from CA in markets.

The overall question addressed by this research is: to what extent and under what conditions does the engagement of women smallholders in market-focused CA lead to gender-equitable outcomes? The research covers three countries in sub-Saharan Africa—Ethiopia, Mali, and Tanzania—providing scope for comparisons of experiences and outcomes across similar sub-sectors.

The research takes as its starting point primary-level CA of smallholder farmers—i.e. the first level of collective organisation in which rural producers engage in their communities—via both single-sex and mixed groups. Primary groups form the building blocks of higher levels of organisation. They may be informal as well as formal groups, especially given an understanding that women are more likely to be represented in informal activities. Secondary- and tertiary-level CA is studied in as much as it influences the rules, norms, and practices of primary-level CA.

The project is organised in three phases. In Phase I, an initial literature review was carried out, as well as dialogue with stakeholders in the three countries to gain engagement in the process and to identify sub-sectors and communities on which the research would focus. In Phase II, exploratory qualitative research was carried out across six sub-sectors in each of the three countries, in order to develop and refine the key hypotheses for further research. A final phase will carry out an in-depth survey and case study research to test these hypotheses.

1.2. Purpose and overview of paper

This paper presents findings from Phase II of the RWCA project, based on a broad literature review and three in-depth country studies covering 15 agricultural sub-sectors. The research is still in progress and this synthesis presents preliminary findings, which will be further verified and deepened in Phase III. The purpose of the paper is to update the analytical framework and provide a preliminary overview of findings. These will inform the main hypotheses for testing more rigorously in the final phase of the project.

The paper is organised into sections:
- **Section 2** sets out the underlying concepts and framework of analysis for the research.
- **Section 3** presents the approach, methodology, and limitations of Phase II’s research.
- **Section 4** contains the main body of findings to date (from secondary and primary field data) and draws out some tentative hypotheses. The findings are organised, like the analytical framework, into three levels: motivations and capacities for engaging in CA; gendered patterns of CA; and gendered outcomes of CA. Where possible, comparisons are made across the different sub-sectors and countries that are the focus of the research.
- **Section 5** summarises the main conclusions and highlights emerging hypotheses and key questions for further research in Phase III.
2. Underlying concepts and framework of analysis

2.1. Research rationale
CA in agricultural markets can provide significant benefits to smallholders, including raising incomes and reducing risk. It can allow farmers to pool resources; increase access to and reduce the costs of market services and the transaction costs of market engagement; and increase access to information, bargaining power, and opportunities for value addition and improving skills. CA can also promote market integration, reduce the costs of inter-market commerce, and improve access to innovative technologies and productive assets. CA can simplify long marketing chains by connecting smallholders directly to markets, bypassing marketing intermediaries.

CA also has the potential to promote women’s livelihoods and empowerment. The pooling of labour, resources, and assets can overcome some of the gender-specific barriers that women face: for example, access to resources and time poverty. CA can enable women to directly access markets and services to improve their livelihoods: for example, by organising secure transport, which may otherwise be difficult or costly.

However, CA does not automatically reduce poverty or inequality. Women, poor people, and religious and ethnic minorities may face significant constraints in their ability to participate in CA. There is a growing body of empirical evidence demonstrating that women smallholders (a) face many barriers in access to markets and market services and (b) are weakly represented in formal producer groups in key economic sectors. This suggests that existing forms of CA may not be effectively addressing these market barriers to women’s participation. At worst, they may be perpetuating gender biases in access to markets and key market services.

Meanwhile, there is limited existing research on the conditions under which women can benefit equitably from CA, and on the role that development actors can play in fostering such conditions. This project attempts to fill that gap in order to inform the practice both of Oxfam and of wider development actors. Specific questions guiding the research overall are:

- Which categories of women smallholders benefit from participation in CA in agricultural markets?
- What livelihoods (income, assets) and empowerment benefits do women smallholders gain from their participation in CA in agricultural markets?
- How, and to what extent, does CA help women smallholders overcome key barriers to their engagement in markets?
- Which strategies of development actors are most effective in promoting equitable benefits for women from their engagement in CA in agricultural markets?

2.2. Defining collective action
‘Collective action’, simply, can be defined as ‘voluntary action taken by a group to achieve common interests’. It refers both to the process by which voluntary institutions are created and maintained and to the groups that decide to act together. Most definitions of CA have in common several basic features: the involvement of a group of people, a shared interest, and some common action. CA can be a one-time event, for example a community coming together to build a water tank, or it can refer to the...
activities of a specific group of people. CA can occur around any social, economic, or political issue. It can be formal or informal, ranging from voluntary community-level self-help groups to formal groups advocating for change at the global level.

This research is focused on CA with respect to agricultural markets. In this context, CA is defined as ‘ongoing group activity, which may be formal or informal, involving women separately or together with men, with a shared purpose of promoting their role as direct actors in specific agricultural markets or of accessing services that enable access to specific markets’. Common forms of CA in agricultural markets include rural producer groups, farmers’ associations, and agricultural co-operatives; other forms of CA, such as savings and credit groups or farmer field schools, also enable smallholders to access markets.

2.3. Gender, agricultural markets, and collective action

Gender relations are a source of power differentials, which interact with other sources of power—such as caste, class, ethnicity, and age—to shape women’s and men’s entitlements to and ability to mobilise a range of resources. Gender relations shape societal rules and norms on appropriate roles and behaviours for men and women, and are embedded in institutions at the household, community, and wider societal levels.

To varying degrees, women small-scale farmers are confronted with a number of gender-specific barriers to their direct participation in markets, including relative lack of access to and control over productive resources (land, equipment, finance, etc.), as well as less access to knowledge and information, social networks, and mobility. Time poverty is a key issue for rural women in particular, given the overwhelming burden of ‘reproductive work’ that they carry, i.e. day-to-day maintenance of the household and caring for other household members. This is particularly critical in rural settings where basic services and infrastructure are lacking, which translates into arduous working days when all aspects of work are considered.

Reflecting these wider societal biases, markets themselves tend to be organised along ‘gendered’ lines. Specifically, women’s and men’s participation in markets is differentiated by commodity type; by point or segment in the market system; by distance and mobility; by scale of operation; and, crucially for this research, by form of organisation. Women’s engagement in markets is also typically over a relatively narrow range of activities, and particular commodities may be specifically associated with women. Where gender biases in markets restrict women’s sphere of activity in this way, their returns from markets are often correspondingly lower than men’s, limiting their capacity to accumulate and invest.

Given the low societal value placed on reproductive work and the invisibility of much of women’s agricultural labour (often unpaid) in the farm household, in spite of long hours of work, women are frequently perceived as contributing less to household welfare than men. This, combined with socio-cultural norms of deference to men and weak legal rights (or their lack of enforcement), impacts on women’s negotiating power and decision-making capacity in the household, thus weakening their control over resources.

At the same time, gender can also serve as an identity around which women organise in response to constraints experienced within their households or their broader environment, including markets. The specific activities around which women organise, and the forms of CA in which they participate, tend to be different from men, with women often engaging in more informal types of CA.

Women’s participation in formal CA is often limited by membership criteria, because they lack the required assets and resources to become members. Gender-based norms limit the scope for women’s participation in public spaces or mixed groups, particularly where meetings are scheduled in places or at times of day that conflict with women’s
wider roles. Many women lack time and sometimes the necessary skills (e.g. literacy) or confidence to participate effectively in collective activities. Where women do participate in mixed groups, leadership is often dominated by men, and they may not benefit to the same extent from their participation.

The effectiveness and benefits of smallholder CA depend on both market and commodity type. For example, staples such as rice and maize are relatively easy to store, and are usually destined for local markets. Perishable and high-value commodities such as vegetables carry a higher risk and require more sophisticated storage and transport facilities. Therefore, there are many more successful examples of collective marketing of higher-value crops than of staples. Similarly, there are fewer benefits to be gained from acting collectively to sell agricultural products in local markets compared with harder-to-reach regional, national, or even international markets.

2.4. Framework of analysis

The framework of analysis for the project is described briefly in Box 1, and represented visually in Figure 1. The purpose of this framework is to identify the key factors and relationships shaping women’s choices about engaging in CA and the outcomes of these choices in the context of agricultural markets.

The framework builds on the work of the CAPRi initiative, in particular on CA and gender, and on CA and marketing (see Annex 2 for more details). It has been further developed by drawing on the wider literature (e.g. on social capital), Oxfam’s own experience, and input from a variety of external commentators.

Box 1: Women farmers’ participation in and benefits from collective action

Women smallholder farmers have varied motivations and capacities to join groups that may help them to access or engage in agricultural markets. Their choices are influenced by individual circumstances, as well as by the broader living conditions of their families. They must have a surplus to sell. This depends on whether they have the resources and equipment to produce a surplus, and whether they can reach markets or traders can reach their communities. Many rural women, lacking the resources or capacities to produce, or the time to participate in additional activities, are unable to engage in collective marketing of agricultural produce. Women with more resources may prefer individual trading.

Patterns of CA differ between types of crop and production, regions, and communities: there need to be attractive market opportunities available to justify groups coming together. There also need to be opportunities of which women can take advantage. Some communities have stronger social ties and networks than others, such that there are fewer barriers to forming and joining organisations; networks also vary between men and women. In some communities, social attitudes make it difficult for women to participate in activities outside the home, or in mixed groups. External actors—including government agencies, traders or companies, and NGOs—are important catalysts for CA. The legal and policy framework surrounding co-operatives, associations, and enterprises defines membership criteria, permitted activities, etc., and so affects how farmers—especially women—can organise, gain formal recognition, and operate as economic actors.

Where women do participate, and CA groups function effectively, with women in leadership positions, this may lead to positive benefits or outcomes for group members—such as access to training, agricultural inputs, and equipment, sales in new or more profitable markets, or cheaper access to loans and other services. There may also be less tangible benefits, in terms of strengthened social support networks. However, there are also costs and trade-offs, such as demands on women’s time and exposure to new risks.

Depending on how any profits from CA are distributed and invested, and on the degree to which women can maintain control of the resources acquired, women farmers may gain benefits from CA in terms of increased income, secured assets (e.g. savings to buy livestock, access to group land holding), or empowerment (greater self-confidence, recognition, decision-making influence in the household or community).
The framework of analysis has three main levels:

- motivations and capacities;
- patterns of CA; and
- outcomes (group and individual).

In the first two levels of analysis, different factors are important in shaping women’s decision to engage in CA, and in influencing where and in what form CA occurs and its ‘dynamics’. These decisions and patterns of CA contribute to the outcomes of women’s engagement in agricultural markets at group level—and ultimately to its impact on individual smallholder women (represented by the green arrows in Figure 1).

The framework is focused on influencing factors, characteristics of CA, and outcomes that seem most relevant for a gender analysis. The project has identified type of sub-sector as a key factor influencing CA of rural women smallholders. The underlying assumption is that the opportunities for CA by women smallholders vary across sub-sector categories—food staples, bulk exports, traditional high value, and non-traditional high value. This is because sub-sectors have different market structures, actors, and demands; it is also because women are positioned differently in different types of market.

**Figure 1: Analytical framework for women’s collective action in agricultural markets**

Further details on the framework of analysis are contained in Annex 2.
3. Overview of Phase II research

3.1. Research aims, approach, and methodology

In Phase II of the RWCA project, exploratory qualitative research was carried out in each country on the patterns of CA across the six sub-sectors and two regions selected in Phase I. The aim was to gain a better understanding of how women benefit from engaging in CA and what the gender dynamics in CA are, both within a sub-sector and between sub-sectors. This phase of work was framed around the following five questions:

1. Where does CA occur in each sub-sector, and what form does it take?
2. What benefits do women gain from engaging in CA?
3. How do these benefits vary by type of CA, and why?
4. How does CA, and the benefits that women derive from it, vary between sub-sectors?
5. Why do the characteristics of CA vary between sub-sectors?

The research methodology for Phase II of the project consisted of two main components:

- A secondary literature review and data collection to deepen understanding of the context for women’s collective action (WCA) in the study countries, regions, and sub-sectors; and
- A field study comprising: a) key informant interviews to develop sub-sector maps, identify districts and communities for study, and gather information about the sub-sectors and CA, and b) focus group discussions conducted at community level.

Fieldwork was carried out in two contrasting regions of each of the three countries. Table 1 provides an overview of the CA groups studied by country, region, and sub-sector. Researchers selected four communities per sub-sector, in two separate districts: one close to and one more distant from a main market centre. They conducted two focus groups in each of the four communities.

The first focus group, which was mixed-sex, with a majority of women present, aimed to identify the types of CA present in the community and their characteristics. The second, which was women-only, focused on the specific benefits of CA groups linking women to markets, the constraints faced by women in accessing markets, and the relationships of different types of CA with other actors.

During these focus groups, a number of participatory techniques were employed to stimulate discussions. Both men and women participated in focus groups, but in-depth discussions involved women only.
Table 1: Summary of collective action groups studied by country, region, and sub-sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Region/zone</th>
<th>Sub-sector</th>
<th>Number of groups identified</th>
<th>Number of groups studied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Shinyanga</td>
<td>Local chicken</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chickpea</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tanga</td>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allanblackia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country sub-total</td>
<td></td>
<td>254</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Koulikoro</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Millet/sorghum</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Groundnut</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sikasso</td>
<td>Tiger nut</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shea butter</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country sub-total</td>
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<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<td>Honey</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Milk</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country sub-total</td>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A= Not available

Sources: Compiled from country reports, Coulibaly et al. (2011); Lazaro et al. (2011); Berhanu and Adenew (2001)

For each country, findings from the field study were compiled and analysed for each sub-sector and across sub-sectors, in conjunction with findings from the literature review, to answer the main research questions. Initial results and preliminary analysis were presented at stakeholder dialogue meetings in each region of the three study countries, in order to validate and deepen findings and generate ideas for further research in Phase III.

3.2 Scope and limitations of research to date

Phase II consisted of exploratory research which sought to deepen understanding of the patterns and benefits of women’s collective action (WCA) in different sub-sectors, on which there is currently limited empirical evidence. The information gathered serves to further refine the analytical framework as the project develops. At this stage, the research is not attempting to test hypotheses or provide definitive answers to the research questions, but to identify important themes and possible trends to be further explored.
While a large number of ‘cases’ of WCA were included in the fieldwork (just over 200: see Table 1), due to the exploratory approach and the range of variables and relationships involved, findings from these cases are not ‘representative’ and therefore cannot be widely generalised. Results highlight the most common constraints upon women’s engagement in markets, and the range of benefits of CA in the communities of study. However, they do not at this stage enable us to make general claims about CA in the countries or directly compare the ranking of benefits or constraints across countries.

There were a number of challenges in the implementation of Phase II research, including maintaining consistency in the participatory methodology across three countries. Particular challenges were faced in applying the methodology around ranking of benefits (see Section 4.3). Given time limitations, it proved difficult in practice to ensure the participation of different categories of women smallholder such that focus groups represented different socio-economic categories in a given community. Therefore, nuances in terms of which women are participating in CA, and the differential motivations and benefits of CA participation among various categories of women have not been captured at this stage.

The research approach taken so far has emphasised women’s agency as individuals rather than as members of farming households with both ‘shared and separate interests’ with other members, shaped by gender relations. These gender dynamics influence the equity of outcomes at group and individual levels. In Phase III, it will be important to systematically incorporate a differentiated profile of smallholder women, as well as an understanding of how gender dynamics play into women’s choices to engage in different forms of CA and the outcomes of this participation.
4. Findings from Phase II

4.1. Motivations and capacities to engage in collective action

4.1.1. Constraints upon women’s engagement in agricultural markets

Three main categories of constraint upon women’s engagement in agricultural markets that can potentially be addressed through CA were identified in the field research.33 These constraints do not affect all women equally, however.

Supply-side constraints upon engagement in markets include:

- **Scale of production and low productivity:** as volumes are low, large-scale buyers lack incentives to come to villages. Maize producers in Tanzania, and millet and sorghum producers in Mali rely on small traders who come to their villages and offer a very low price;

- **Smaller volumes of product under women’s control:** some of women’s production is used to meet household needs; they also tend to sell regularly in small quantities to small traders to meet immediate household needs (as is the case for rice and vegetables in Tanzania and coffee in Ethiopia); and

- **Limited access to and availability of capital:** this especially weighs on women who have less collateral, and is particularly constraining in sectors with high entry barriers due to requirements for land, investment, or high input costs.

Constraints on access to markets include:

- Limited access to transportation, and mobility more generally;

- Family responsibilities, e.g. child-care and housework, which mean that women have limited time to engage in marketing;

- Social constraints, such as men not allowing women to engage directly in markets, or women perceiving this as a male role;

- Lack of information on prices and markets; and

- Collusion between middlemen and wholesalers (to stop small producers or CA groups from entering the market).

Constraints on women reaping benefits from markets include:

- Low awareness about the market (prices, etc.); and

- Lack of business skills and organisation.

CA in markets provides potential opportunities to increase or secure women’s incomes by:

- **Increasing volumes, identifying new buyers or markets, and increasing bargaining power:** this applies especially to mixed groups, as men have higher production capacity, a better awareness of markets and more contacts with buyers, and greater mobility than women in all three countries studied; and

- **Linking groups of producers to secured markets, through relationships with established producer unions or external buyers:** examples of this were found in honey, organic coffee, sesame, shea butter, and allanblackia production.
4.1.2. Factors influencing motivations and capacities to engage in collective action in markets

Farming systems

Across different regions in the three countries studied, smallholder women operate under varying agro-ecological, climatic, socio-cultural, and socio-economic conditions. From the degraded land tended by women in semi-arid regions of Mali to the high-rainfall areas of the Tanga region in Tanzania, ecological factors play a determining role in terms of scope and opportunities to grow a range of crops.

However, the data in Table 1 do not indicate that CA is more prevalent in areas of higher agricultural potential (e.g. Tanga and Sikasso). Market opportunities may be more diverse in these regions, but these advantages may be offset by other factors, such as weaker social capital. There may also be a tendency for intervention by INGOs to establish groups in ‘less developed’ regions.34

Physical infrastructure and proximity to markets also affect the ease and costs of market access. The absence of a clear market opportunity within close proximity may be a disincentive to engaging in any form of CA.35 Physical infrastructure also has implications for the amount of time required to meet basic households needs (e.g. for water and fuel), which is of particular significance for women. Data were not collected on this aspect of the different communities, so it is not well studied in the current phase.

The research confirmed the particular significance of land tenure systems across all three countries for WCA, both for cultivated and uncultivated land (relevant in the case of collected items such as shea butter and allanblackia nuts). Land tenure is shaped by social institutions, including gender relations and norms. Lack of land may limit women’s membership of CA groups directly. Indirectly, gender inequity in access to land limits women’s capacity to produce (or gather) marketable surpluses to sell collectively.

In Mali, land holdings of female farm owners—representing only 3 per cent of total farm owners—are on average 0.5 hectares (ha) for women, compared with 1.5 ha for men.36 In Tanzania, female-headed households, representing 19 per cent of all land holders, have an average of only 1.6 ha compared with 2.7 for male-headed households.37 When women do have direct control over land, either small plots they have been allocated or as female heads of household, their ability to engage directly in markets is greater.

There are differences here across countries. In Mali, for example, one possible reason for the relatively strong presence of, and benefits for, women in lucrative sub-sectors such as sesame is that older women tend to have access to their own separate piece of land (albeit often a very small, low-quality plot with insecure tenure), with control over its outputs and the proceeds of their sale.38 This practice appears to be less prevalent in Ethiopia and Tanzania.39

Household status

Within a given agro-ecological setting, smallholder households face different situations based on, for example, the location of their village, their ethnic and religious identity, their socio-economic status within the community, and household composition. Although planned, limitations on the time spent in each community, resulted in difficulties in ensuring that focus group participation reflected the socio-economic categories in a given community or to probe effectively on these issues. Responses affirmed that marginal farmers—those with limited or no access to land—are less likely to participate in marketing groups, as they have less to sell; however, poorer households may engage in labour sharing forms of CA relatively more.
**Individual status and relations within the household**

Individual women have differing motivations and capacities to engage in CA, which are affected by relations within the household. For example, it is easier for women heads of household (female-headed households comprise 24.7 per cent of all households in Ethiopia) to gain membership of producer groups in their own right. Conversely, junior wives in polygamous households face barriers to membership. Female heads of households do appear to have a degree of recognition in their own right in collective structures, but this does not mean that they are represented in proportion to their presence in the wider community.

Other potential influences on women’s motivation or capacities identified include:

- Prior participation in another form of CA (e.g. a woman who is part of a savings and credit group will more easily join a mixed, specialised CA group); and
- A women’s age— which may confer seniority and leadership— or stage in the reproductive life cycle is also significant: older women were strongly represented in focus groups, which may also reflect the fact that younger women with young children are more constrained in terms of their participation in groups.

Specific barriers to women’s participation in CA cited by respondents were:

- Lack of financial resources to pay for shares or entry fees for groups;
- Lack of information about opportunities, and a lack of self-confidence: these may be linked to rural women’s low literacy levels, although illiteracy per se is not necessarily a critical barrier;
- Time factors: women’s capacity to engage is limited due to household responsibilities, especially affecting those with child-care responsibilities; and
- Negative attitudes towards women’s engagement in collective activity, noted particularly in Ethiopia and Tanzania. In one community in Mali, however, female respondents identified an evolution in attitudes towards women’s participation in CA as groups have multiplied, so that rather than being perceived negatively, it is now regarded as desirable, or even expected, that women engage in group activities.

**4.1.3 Conclusions and emerging themes for further research**

A range of both supply-side and market constraints impact on women’s capacity to be effective actors in markets, and some of these have potential to be addressed through CA; others require broader changes in the enabling environment.

Land tenure and status within the household (female headship vs. wives in polygamous households, age, and level of household responsibilities) clearly emerge as major factors influencing capacities to engage in CA.

In future stages, the research will adopt a more differentiated approach to understanding constraints to market participation, as well as motivations and capacities for engaging in different types of CA. It will be important to build a systematic profile of which categories of women are engaging in which types of CA at two levels: the overall household profile, and women’s individual profiles. Individual characteristics such as age, marital status, family responsibilities, literacy, degree of control over land or other assets, and prior participation in CA will be important to investigate in terms of their influence on women’s participation. The influence of specific barriers in excluding women will also be explored among those women who are not participating in CA.

The next phase will also attempt to shed light on how gender relations in the household interact with women’s motivations and capacities to engage in CA. In doing so, it will explore to what extent other household members (men but also other women)
accommodate women taking on commitments outside the home, and the ways in which women ‘negotiate’ these new collective roles.

A further theme to explore is how gendered needs and interests inform men’s and women’s preferences towards different types of CA. In a number of the focus groups, a preference was expressed by women participants for engaging in women-only groups because they perceive there to be less conflict and more scope for their initiative and leadership, and where they also have a platform to share common issues and build solidarity.

Other specific themes that merit further exploration are the relationship between land tenure systems and the degree to which women are able to engage in direct sales and control the proceeds of output, and the extent and specific benefits of labour sharing, especially among poorer groups.\(^{45}\)

### 4.2. Gendered patterns of collective action

#### 4.2.1. Legal and policy context of collective action\(^{46}\)

The scope for CA is shaped by the legal and policy framework—including but not restricted to the legislative provisions around associative activity. These are evolving over time. The research so far confirms that these rules and related institutions are dependent on national context and vary over time, shaping differences and changes in patterns of CA across countries, though with several common trends.

Liberalisation has created pressures towards increased formalisation of smallholder groups, to enable them to engage with other value chain actors. It has also led to the entry of large private corporations into the agricultural sector, sometimes taking over from parastatals. This liberalisation and related formalisation have advantages for smallholders in terms of more diverse opportunities for market linkages, but, at the same time, agricultural commercialisation has increased competition in some sectors and segments of the value chain.

This may have specific implications for women farmers, if the sectors or functions in the value chain in which they have previously specialised are affected. Where commercialisation has increased demand for products, this may lead to increased demands on women’s time, or to men ‘encroaching’ on activities formerly seen as women’s. Investment in value addition, for example in industrial processing, may also introduce competition in both input and output markets for small-scale processing units or cooperatives. In Mali for example, Groupe Tomota\(^1\) is involved in the industrial processing of oilseeds. Similarly, the increase in global demand for shea butter has led international buyers to purchase kernels in West Africa for external industrial processing, possibly increasing competition for women’s processing units.\(^{47}\)

Co-operatives in all three countries form important components of their governments’ current agricultural development strategies.\(^{48}\) New legislation has been passed in all three countries in the past 10–15 years to provide a framework for ‘new generation’ co-operatives.\(^{49}\) These laws regulate the establishment of co-operatives and their administration, mostly according to international co-operative principles, which require that membership is voluntary and management democratic. According to the most recent legislation, women are allowed, or even encouraged, to take part in co-operatives as individuals, rather than just as household members.\(^{50}\)

However, to varying degrees, collectives were historically used by both colonial and nationalist governments as instruments of control over rural populations. In Tanzania

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\(^{1}\) Groupe Tomota is a Malian industrial conglomerate that, in 2005, bought a majority share in the oilseeds company Huicoma, previously owned by the Malian government.
and Ethiopia, government interference in co-operatives came in the form of coercive membership and strict regimentation of activities: women’s groups in Tanzania, for example, were forcibly transformed into formal groups to facilitate production and political mobilisation through the women’s wing of the ruling party, Umoja wa Wanawake wa Tanzania (UWT).\textsuperscript{51}

Often political goals superseded economic ones at the cost of efficiency, with co-operatives being primarily a channel for distributing subsidised inputs and credit.\textsuperscript{52} This has contributed to the collapse of many organisations under more liberalised markets. It has also contributed, in Tanzania and Ethiopia, to a lingering mistrust in these organisations. In Mali the relationship is more ambiguous, given the widespread participation of civil society in the opposition movements which led to democratisation in 1991, meaning that there are strong ties between civil society leaders and government.

Ethiopia’s long history of CA is marked by the ‘rise and fall’ of the state-led co-operative movement between the 1960s and the early 1990s, followed by a revival of somewhat more independent forms of co-operative since 2002.\textsuperscript{53} The overall penetration of co-operatives among the rural population remains relatively low, however, especially for rural women. By 2005 there were approximately 14,423 co-operatives in Ethiopia, 80 per cent of which were services-based; however, they reached only around 8 per cent of the rural population and have on average just 10 per cent female membership.\textsuperscript{54} Political influence over the choice of leaders may also limit women’s ability to actively participate in formal CA. Past negative experiences with co-operatives may at least partly explain why women opt instead for informal groups which, despite attempts by authorities, remain relatively free of official control.

In general, across all three countries, there is some innovation occurring in forms of rural CA. In Tanzania, over the past two decades, savings and credit co-operatives have emerged as a major form of rural organisation; government agencies and NGOs have made efforts to facilitate women’s participation in groups, and new types have emerged.\textsuperscript{55} In Mali, women’s participation in co-operatives has increased since 2004 as a result of policies supporting the advancement of rural women, through access to training, leadership skills, and credit, in particular.\textsuperscript{56}

Even in Ethiopia, where rural CA remains somewhat synonymous with the co-operative movement, some innovations are occurring and the government is taking more interest in informal CA. Currently the main form of recognised CA in agriculture is the Multipurpose Farmers Primary Co-operatives (involved in providing access to inputs and marketing support for some commodities), which are present in every kebele\textsuperscript{2}, reflecting state policy initiated by the Federal Co-operatives Agency in 2002 for the promotion of co-operatives. There are also a limited number of specialised co-operatives (i.e. focused on one sector), most of which are mixed sex. NGOs are proactive in revising the by-laws to enable dual membership in co-operatives or in developing new forms of lower-tier organisation, such as market-oriented farmer organisations.

Informal CA includes mixed iqub (informal rotating savings schemes), and other self-help or savings and credit groups, many of which are women-only. Other more traditional forms of CA include iddir, which provides support for funerals and in coping with death-related shocks, and daadoo, a generations-old practice of CA where group members support each other through labour sharing. Women’s participation in these groups is prominent. Informal CA such as daadoo has been completely neglected in policy approaches.

The broader policy context for smallholder agriculture has also evolved in all countries, such that women’s roles are more formally recognised and structures are in place to deal with their interests. Changes have occurred in land laws and there have also been

\textsuperscript{2} The smallest administrative unit equivalent to neighbourhood or ward
changes enabling women to access finance, as well as in the provision of finance and extension services and inputs to rural women.

In practice, however, legislation has been insufficient in redressing persistent barriers. Despite formal recognition of women’s land rights, customary practices severely limit women’s ownership of land and security of tenure. This is true regardless of the status of customary rights in statutory law: in Mali, where customary law is not recognised, women’s access and land ownership is not much different from in Tanzania, where plural systems of law have given rise to conflict and the effective dominance of ‘traditional’ custom. Similarly in Ethiopia, while positive policy changes have occurred in women’s land rights, implementing these changes on the ground has proved challenging.57

4.2.2. Characterisation of collective action by country

In order to begin identifying common patterns and trends across sub-sectors, regions, and countries, researchers characterised CA groups in each country along four main dimensions:

- Function of the organisation within the market system;
- Women’s participation and leadership;
- Degree of formality; and
- Degree of external support.

Details on these categories and summary country tables are provided in Annex 3. Research findings and field experience indicate that these categories do not fully capture the diversity of situations encountered in the field.58

Function in the market system

Mapping of each sub-sector found a concentration of CA at the production level and in savings and credit activities. Labour-sharing activities are also common in about two thirds of sub-sectors. CA in marketing was noted in three quarters of sub-sectors. There was a contrast between Tanzania, which has few farmers’ co-operatives involved in marketing, and Mali and Ethiopia, which have well-established co-operatives in several sub-sectors (coffee, honey, and milk in Ethiopia; sesame and tiger nut in Mali).59 There is limited evidence of CA in processing (most of which is found in Mali).

Table 2: Location of collective action in value chain segments and associated services in the 15 sub-sectors studied60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Access to inputs, training, and equipment</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Labour sharing</th>
<th>Processing</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Savings and credit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Shea</td>
<td>Honey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Honey51</td>
<td>Pepper/spices</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Milk52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Maize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Millet/sorghum</td>
<td>Groundnut</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Millet/sorghum</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Groundnut53</td>
<td>Groundnut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Groundnut</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tiger nut</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tomato</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Local chicken</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maize</td>
<td></td>
<td>Maize</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local chickpea</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chickpea</td>
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<td>Chickpea</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chilli</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chickpea</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Women’s Collective Action in Agricultural Markets, Synthesis of Findings, October 2012 21
The initial characterisation defined four functions: specialised marketing, multi-sectoral marketing, multi-purpose (i.e. marketing and other functions), and ‘service provision’ (see Annex 3 for further details). These categories, however, did not sufficiently account for the range of CA functions related to production as well as marketing, including CA around mobilising savings and collective labour, both of which facilitate women’s engagement in different sub-sectors (see Table 2).

Based on the fieldwork, the main CA functions identified were as follows:

a. Labour pooling/sharing;

b. Savings and credit;

c. Access to inputs/equipment/extension or other services (e.g. irrigation);

d. Processing; and

e. Marketing of output.

The evidence suggests that most groups are multi-functional. The research also found that function is a variable rather than a constant, both in terms of the type of activity and, in some cases, the range of sectors in which these activities occur.

**Women’s participation and leadership**

There are stark differences between countries in terms of the balance between women-only vs. mixed groups and the levels of participation of women in mixed groups.

In Ethiopia, the constraints on women’s participation in mixed CA seemed strongest, while in Tanzania women often dominated in mixed groups. Very few women-only groups were identified in Tanzania, compared with a high number in Mali and a substantial amount in Ethiopia. The incidence of women-only groups varied significantly by sub-sector, and they tended to dominate in some sub-sectors, such as millet and sorghum, shea butter, groundnuts (in Mali) and spices (in Ethiopia).

However, these categories disguised some more subtle differences. The research highlighted that gender composition of groups involves many more facets than ‘mixed vs. women-only groups’. In Tanzania, for instance, women are very present in mixed CA, and even outnumber men. In Mali, what superficially appeared to be women’s groups were found in some instances to have a couple of ‘token’ male members associated with them, where women lacked literacy skills or where a man could facilitate access to local decision makers, for example. Information from the field also indicated that gender composition as well as gendered division of leadership roles evolve over time.

Women’s participation is conditioned by the type of household as well as the type of CA. In Ethiopia, formal co-operatives are, broadly speaking, open only to women from female-headed households (with a few exceptions where ‘dual membership’ has been introduced). Women’s self-help groups, on the other hand, are open to all women.

More broadly, the notions of ‘participation’ and ‘membership’ (and their relationship with benefits) need revisiting in light of what was found on the ground. In Mali, for example, women were loosely and informally organised to sell their produce to a co-operative, despite not being registered as members. In addition, where women are not formal members due to restrictive membership criteria (as, for example, in Ethiopia where women in male-headed households generally do not participate), they nevertheless may capture some benefits: a man’s membership in a co-operative may lead...
to increased income and purchasing power for the family, with indirect benefits for his spouse and children.

**Degree of formality**

Formal groups seem to outnumber informal groups in all countries and in the majority of sub-sectors. Millet/sorghum, groundnuts in Mali, local chicken in Tanzania, and vegetables in Ethiopia are exceptions. Often formal groups are initiated by external actors, with a specific objective for example receiving improved varieties of chickpea, or collective marketing of organic sesame.

However, linked to or embedded in these formal groups are almost always less formal or informal groups, such as savings and credit or labour-pooling groups; local relays of the co-operative at hamlet level when a co-operative is located in a main village (e.g. sesame, Mali). These more local informal groups usually have a strong female presence compared to the formal groups, and therefore more instances of female leadership.

**Externally/self-driven**

Across almost all sub-sectors in the three countries, external support is a dominant feature of the CA groups identified. The exceptions to this are millet/sorghum and groundnuts in Mali.

Different actors are involved in this external support and in initiating groups. In Ethiopia, the government plays a dominant role. In some emerging non-traditional sub-sectors, such as allanblackia in Tanzania and honey in Ethiopia, CA groups may be the result of an organisational initiative by a single marketing or processing company. Similarly, some sub-sectors, such as sesame in Mali, have received a lot of external support via donor financing and INGOs, and are now very structured.

However, external support often builds on existing forms of social capital. Traditional women’s or women-dominated rural savings and credit groups are also increasingly stimulated or supported by external interventions, but often build directly on pre-existing savings groups, or at least on a history of familiarity with such practices. On the other hand, labour pooling and sharing – which is sometimes linked to savings groups – seems to have received limited, if any, attention from development actors as an informal CA mechanism.

**4.2.3. Patterns emerging from the country characterisation**

Analysis of CA characteristics across countries suggests some initial patterns and possible correlations between the different characteristics of CA. These are summarised below:

**Sub-sector and degree of specialisation**

Looking at the relationship between degree of specialisation and different sub-sectors in Tanzania and Mali (see Figure 2), the following findings emerge.
High-value, non-traditional, and traditional exports seem to have more CA groups specialised in marketing (e.g. tiger nuts, sesame, allanblackia, shea butter). This also appears to be correlated with formal and externally supported groups.

The rice sector in Mali also features a high percentage of specialised CA (most of which is also formal), with local co-operatives playing a major role in collective production and marketing. Interestingly, this is a sub-sector that has an almost equal number of mixed and women-only groups, signalling a fairly strong female presence in CA.

Other food staple crops (maize and rice in Tanzania, millet/sorghum in Mali) have multi-functional CA, and marketing tends to be only a limited element of group activity. In these sub-sectors, the benefits from CA lie in a range of services and direct or indirect forms of support.

Many CA groups are active across several sub-sectors; equally, different types of group (specialised and multi-functional) may co-exist in a given sub-sector.

Across different sub-sectors, different types of relationship to the market were identified: for example, allanblackia groups could be described as company- or buyer-driven linkages, and coffee in Ethiopia as a vertical strategic alliance with a producer union, while millet/sorghum, groundnut, and local chicken groups rely mainly on informal trader networks. This aspect of the market relationships of CA groups is not well captured in the current characterisation.

Sub-sector specialisation, function, and women’s participation

The incidence of women-only groups varies significantly by sub-sector. They tend to dominate in some sub-sectors, such as millet and sorghum, shea butter, groundnuts (in Mali), and spices (in Ethiopia).

No clear correlation was found between the incidence of women’s groups and the degree of specialisation per se (see Figure 3). Equally, multi-purpose CA can be mainly women-only (groundnuts in Mali) or mixed (milk in Ethiopia).
In Mali, across all sub-sectors, mixed groups are the majority in input supply, marketing, and technical advice, while women-only groups are more prominent in processing (although this activity was very limited) and in savings and credit.

Women are involved in mixed specialised groups: these can be dominated or led by men (mostly the case in Ethiopia) or can have more balanced or even female leadership (more cases of this were found in Mali and Tanzania, e.g. in rice and sesame and rice, chicken, and vegetables respectively, where membership was quite balanced). Mali had the only examples of groups that were both specialised and female-dominated (shea butter).

**Degree of formality and women’s participation**

There seems to be a positive correlation between the level of participation of women-only groups in the sub-sector and informality, at least in the case of Mali (see Figure 4). ‘Women-only’ and ‘informality’ also seem to be related to a low degree of external support in certain sub-sectors (e.g. millet/sorghum, groundnut). This may also suggest that formal groups (linked with external intervention) are more likely than informal groups to be, or become, mixed.
4.2.4 Group dynamics and evolution

The field research illustrated that CA groups evolve over their lifetimes and may not be permanent. Groups can go ‘dormant’ for certain periods of time, due to a lack of external support or clear objectives, as noted in Tanzania. Some groups also dissolve or split as a result of internal disputes linked to a lack of leadership or transparency.

A number of different trajectories for groups’ evolution were identified in the field, e.g. from a savings and credit group to a marketing group; from specialised marketing to multi-functional groups; expanding from one main sub-sector into others; division into separate entities (e.g. marketing and savings and credit groups); and affiliation to a larger group or federation.

In the analytical framework, three sets of factors influence directly the formation and evolution of CA groups: external intervention; social capital; and societal norms on gender roles. There is evidence from the country studies that these factors contribute to shaping WCA.

For example, the Tanzania study concludes that women’s participation in CA is largely the outcome of external intervention focusing on women’s empowerment through increased participation in local groups. Similarly, in Ethiopia, NGO-driven initiatives have secured double membership for a single household (so a woman can join even if her husband is a member) in primary honey co-operatives, leading to an increase in women’s membership, from 17 per cent to 24 per cent.

Mali has a long history of traditional forms of CA, of which much is gender-specific. This has potentially raised trust levels in certain communities, paving the way for stronger and more numerous groups, and greater levels of women’s leadership. This phenomenon will need further exploration in Phase III.
4.2.5 Conclusions and emerging issues for further research

Policy context and external interventions are major influences shaping smallholder CA in markets in all three countries, with ambitious targets being set in Ethiopia in particular. Mali appears to have the most positive enabling environment for WCA, combining both traditional social capital and government intervention. Changes in the legislative and policy context in all three countries are clearly impacting on the scope for women to participate in CA, but in potentially contradictory ways.

Legislation leading to greater formalisation of CA may be increasing barriers to women’s membership (e.g. through requirements for shares or membership fees). At the same time, there is increasing emphasis on gender equality and individual membership of organisations in new legislation. This, as well as specific efforts to promote women’s participation, is tending to increase women’s engagement in collectives. Improvements in women’s land rights are also a major enabling factor especially in Ethiopia. In addition to changes in the policy context, the potential influence of changes in technology and migration on patterns of CA are important trends to understand.3

Liberalisation and commercialisation of agricultural markets enable relationships with new market actors, but at the same time greater concentration and vertical integration may be displacing some more informal types of CA. The relationship of smallholder CA to other market actors is critical in terms of its positioning in a market system, but this was not fully captured in this phase of work.76 How different relationships with traders or buyers affect motivations for CA as well as the structure, rules, and evolution of groups are issues requiring further investigation.

In Mali, women-only groups dominate in ‘female-identified’ sub-sectors; however, this trend is less obvious in Tanzania (e.g. in the case of local chicken) and Ethiopia (e.g. milk). It will be important for future research to understand what hinders women’s CA in sectors that are traditionally ‘under their control’, particularly where commercialisation seems to trigger increased male involvement. Conversely, the scope and limitations of mixed groups in terms of women’s engagement in agricultural markets (especially in Tanzania, where mixed groups prevail) is important to understand.

The high prevalence of savings and credit groups and, to some extent also, labour-pooling groups, begs the question: to what extent can these be seen as a platform for increasing women’s engagement in markets? Are there cases of such an evolution taking place and, if so, under what circumstances? The potential of labour pooling groups to evolve into labour service providers is another issue worth exploring.

Governance structure and group dynamics have a strong influence on group evolution and particularly on women’s engagement in CA, as illustrated in the analytical framework (level 2). These two dimensions will require further investigation. Specifically, it will be important to understand factors which support women’s participation in group leadership and decision making in mixed groups.

4.3. Outcomes of collective action

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3 For example, mobile telephony may be facilitating access to information and markets linkages for individual farmers; youth and especially young male outmigration may be impacting on the gender composition of collective action groups.
4.3.1 Overview
As part of the country studies, evidence was gathered through focus group discussions in each community to identify the benefits of WCA perceived by those involved. Subsequent analysis across communities and sub-sectors set out to identify any variation in perceptions of benefits by type of CA and sub-sector.77

Interpreting, comparing, and aggregating these results across communities and sub-sectors is challenging. Categories of benefit, generated within focus groups, are not always consistent across communities or sub-sectors, and the context-specific meanings of these categories—such as ‘building assets’ or ‘social support’—are not sufficiently explored, especially considering translation from local languages.

The summarised results below are illustrative of the range of perceived benefits and the types that tend to be associated with specific sub-sectors. The benefits derived are strongly related to the objectives or function of different types of CA, which also depends on where they are located in the market systems.

At this stage, we do not have detailed evidence about the outcomes (at group level) and impacts (at individual level) of CA that can be compared across countries, sectors, or types of CA. This would require more in-depth analysis at group, individual, and household levels, beyond the scope of this phase. The results here enable us to identify those categories of benefits that seem most significant and are valued by women in different contexts, and the possible ‘mechanisms’ for achieving wider outcomes and impact.

4.3.2. Benefits from women's collective action by country and sub-sector
The tables below summarise results on the ranking of benefits for each country, across the different sub-sectors. Given methodological constraints, these results are not strictly comparable across countries.

In Tanzania (see Table 3), women reported:

- Access to quality inputs as an important benefit of CA in three sub-sectors (rice, local chicken, chickpea);
- Access to technical advice being important in maize, and training the major benefit identified for allanblackia;
- Vegetables particularly and also allanblackia are perceived to contribute significantly to building women’s assets. This requires further investigation in terms of which assets, who controls these assets, and how CA contributes;
- Social support is a noted benefit in virtually all sub-sectors (although to a lesser extent in vegetables and maize); and
- It is notable that ‘higher incomes’ does not rank highly in any sub-sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Local Chicken</th>
<th>Chickpea</th>
<th>Allanblackia</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Maize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to technical advice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training (e.g. marketing, savings, and credit)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to quality inputs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher incomes from farm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Mali, the main findings were:

- Access to inputs, market access, higher income, savings, and credit are all significant benefits arising from WCA (across sub-sectors);
- CA has led to important improvements in market access for women working in millet/sorghum, sesame, shea, tiger nut, and, to a lesser extent, rice. This provides support to the idea contained in the analytical framework that, under certain circumstances, CA improves women’s capacity to become effective actors in the market (although this is less true for Tanzania and Ethiopia);
- Increased incomes for women seem to be most important in non-traditional export sectors—sesame, shea butter, and tiger nut—followed by rice and millet, but less so in groundnut. This lends support to the assumption of differences in the effectiveness of CA in increasing incomes, depending on sub-sector.
- Increased market access and incomes appear to enable women to build their personal assets to some extent, and translate into increased contributions by women to family expenditures; and
- In four sub-sectors, CA has enabled women to access group assets directly: land (shea), production equipment (sesame), and processing equipment (shea, rice). This is important, because land and equipment are two major factors limiting women’s capacity to generate higher volumes of production (both individually and collectively).

Table 4: Benefits ranking across sub-sectors: Mali

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Groundnut</th>
<th>Millet/Sorghum</th>
<th>Sesame</th>
<th>Shea</th>
<th>Tiger Nut</th>
<th>Rice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to inputs (seed, fertilisers, herbicides, etc.)</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to production equipment (ploughs, bullock carts, and cattle)</td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to processing equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to market</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings and credit</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased incomes (collective marketing at negotiated rate)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased social status (resulting from increased contribution to family budget)</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social cohesion (good relations, solidarity, reciprocity)</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity-building (advice, training, exchange visits)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets (personal assets)</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td>●●●</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranking: low (one dot), medium (two dots), and high (three dots)

For Ethiopia, two tables are presented, one for each region of study. The main findings are as follows:
Higher incomes as a result of CA are identified by women as significant benefits for milk and spices, and to a lesser extent, for coffee and maize;\(^78\)

For milk, access to a stable market is also a noted benefit;

For coffee, women identify social support and labour as the most significant benefits;

In milk, CA serves to reduce costs and save women’s time (a benefit noted in only a few sub-sectors across the study);

Access to quality inputs and finance, and increased mobility, are all second-level benefits for coffee, maize, and milk sub-sectors; and

Training and savings and credit are the most important benefits from CA for honey.

Some apparently contradictory findings from Ethiopia require further investigation. A detailed analysis of focus group discussions shows that women declare that CA generates higher incomes in milk and coffee, and yet:

Women are not represented in great numbers in the co-operatives associated with these sub-sectors;

Women are not reported to be involved in trading these commodities — the report mentions on several occasions that women individually gather ‘left-overs’ in fields, in the case of coffee and pepper, and sell these at a low price in the market;

Women report that they benefit less than men from training and access to modern bee-hives in the honey sub-sector, which presumably limits scope for ‘increased production’; and

Women are widely involved in labour-sharing groups (especially in coffee).

One possible hypothesis, therefore, is that male membership in these organisations generates an increase in income that is not appropriated by men but used by households as a whole, explaining why women state that they benefit from CA in coffee and milk sub-sectors. This potential positive ‘spill-over effect’ of men’s participation in male-dominated co-operatives requires further investigation.

An alternative hypothesis is that women derive additional benefits from their labour and savings groups, such as a capacity to invest in land or equipment, build assets, etc. (there is strong evidence of this in honey, but not in other sub-sectors).
## Table 5: Benefit ranking across sub-sectors: Ethiopia

### A. Results for Jimma zone (coffee, maize, spices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Coffee</th>
<th>Maize</th>
<th>Spices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to technical advice/extension</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training (e.g. marketing)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to quality inputs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to loans/finance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher incomes from farms, better prices</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support, labour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building up assets (women)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased mobility (women)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness, women’s rights, assertiveness</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting social service costs</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving own home/utensils</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B. Results for West Gojam zone (honey and milk)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Honey</th>
<th>Milk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Savings and credit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training (e.g. marketing)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased production</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to stable market</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sufficiency</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to inputs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher incomes</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced cost and time</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase asset of the CA</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the three countries, savings and credit groups and, to a lesser extent, labour-sharing groups, most of which are women-only, tend to generate:

- Social cohesion (referring, broadly, to the density of social networks upon which people depend, the scope for access to information via these networks, and solidarity in times of crisis e.g. borrowing money or food);
- Capacity building and personal development (scope for training in literacy, financial management); and
- Leadership opportunities and scope for setting and influencing internal rules and organisations’ modes of operating.
Specialised marketing organisations (a high proportion of which are mixed) lead to more tangible economic benefits, such as access to more stable markets, better prices, access to inputs, and agronomic advice. Women derive economic benefits from being in these organisations. Anecdotal evidence from this phase of research suggests that women do not always benefit to the same extent as men in mixed organisations. This will require further exploration in the next phase of research.

4.3.3 Evidence on the role of collective action in overcoming constraints in women’s access to markets

In all the study communities, focus groups of women involved in CA (as well as, in most cases, a few women not involved in CA) identified key constraints to women’s engagement in markets in the different sub-sectors and assessed which of these are addressed by CA, comparing where possible women-only and mixed groups.80

- **Low volumes or low quality of production**: this problem is addressed by training in improved production techniques, and increased access to inputs, equipment or finance; however, sesame, shea butter, and groundnut groups, for example, lack funds to acquire processing equipment.

- **Inadequate business skills, organisation, and information about markets**: CA groups provide training, access to information, possibilities for exchange, and potentially contacts with a wide range of external actors.

- **Lack of secure markets**: this constraint is overcome in some but not all sub-sectors by links to specialised co-operatives and unions (sesame, coffee, rice) and/or through an established relationship with a specific buyer (allanblackia, tiger nuts). High-value exports seem to provide more ‘secure’ markets.

The constraints noted by women but which are not addressed, or addressed in very limited ways, by CA include:

- **Transporting goods to market**: co-operatives buying goods from villages (e.g. milk in Ethiopia, sesame, tiger nut, millet/sorghum in Mali) does partially address the challenges that women face in getting goods to market, but this remains a barrier in most sub-sectors studied. To date, research has found little evidence of women organising to transport their goods.81

- **Access to land for women to produce and market independently**: this is cited as an important constraint, but is rarely addressed directly by CA. A few instances were reported (mainly in Mali) in which CA has been instrumental in enabling women to access land. Other evidence supports the idea that women are more likely to gain secure tenure when organised as a group.82

- **Social barriers, including to women’s mobility**: restrictions placed by husbands on women’s engagement in markets do not seem to be overcome by CA. These may be less significant in Mali, where changes in perceptions are reported. In Tanzania, this constraint is apparently addressed better via mixed groups than women-only groups (suggesting that husbands may distrust women-only groups).

- **Women’s lack of time due to family responsibilities**: this remains a barrier for those participating in CA to engagement in markets. It seems to be better addressed by women-only groups, perhaps because they are more flexible and responsive to women’s needs.

There was also some evidence of constraints or challenges that those in CA groups faced specifically, reflecting ways in which CA does not always lead to positive or equitable outcomes. For example, women in honey groups noted challenges with new technologies
and also that they had less access to training than men; delays in payment from co-operatives and unions were noted in the sesame sector in Ethiopia.

### 4.3.4 Conclusions and emerging issues

The study of benefits arising from WCA provides a number of insights, which will require further probing:

- It emerges clearly that women perceive a wide range of benefits from CA and that these vary considerably across sub-sectors and countries.

- Monetary and market benefits rank higher in Mali than in Ethiopia. Higher incomes are associated with a range of sub-sector types, but predominantly in non-traditional exports. This may be due to the level of maturity of sub-sector organisation in Mali, which is linked to the history of CA in the country and also to the ongoing influence of the state, donors, and non-governmental actors in structuring sub-sectors.

- In Mali and, to a lesser extent, Ethiopia, there is some evidence of an increase in women’s social status as a result of engagement in CA, partly attributable to their increased contributions to household expenditures. This contributes to a ‘greater respect from their husbands’ (Ethiopia report, p.105), a better position in the household, greater capacity to influence decision-making, and to men being more inclined to accept their wives’ opinion on various matters.

- These benefits are not so apparent in Tanzania, where it would appear that WCA is in its early stages, such that the main benefits are skewed towards training, inputs, and savings.

- Across all three countries, access to quality inputs and training or advice are valued as benefits across many sub-sectors. Access to finance and savings is also prominent in all three countries.

- ‘Social support or cohesion’ and the ‘build-up of assets’ also appear as significant benefits across all three countries — the former particularly in Mali — and a range of sub-sectors. These categories require further probing.

- Labour sharing is a key benefit of CA for women, particularly in Mali and, to some extent, in Ethiopia (especially in coffee); this is less so in Tanzania.

Evidence from the three countries suggests that CA is beginning to enable women, to varying degrees in different contexts, to overcome key constraints to being effective actors in markets, but that the focus is predominantly on improved production skills and capacities. The scope to increase volumes will, however, remain limited while women’s access to land remains a binding constraint — and one currently not addressed by most CA efforts.

Other key barriers, such as transport, could potentially be addressed more systematically through CA. Fundamental barriers, such as social attitudes and time poverty, require wider and deeper changes, although evidence from Mali suggests that, as CA becomes more widespread and accepted, attitudes towards women’s participation become more accepting. Possibilities for services such as child care to be provided through CA may need to be explored.

Other issues may impact on women’s participation in markets — including wider social attitudes to women’s mobility, harassment, and safety issues — although they did not emerge strongly in the current phase of fieldwork.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Preliminary findings and emerging hypotheses

This paper has reviewed in detail the evidence on rural women smallholders’ motivations and capacities to engage in CA, patterns of CA, and the outcomes of CA across 15 different agricultural sub-sectors in two regions each of Mali, Ethiopia, and Tanzania.

Overall, the study found that policy context and external interventions are major influences shaping the scope for CA by women smallholders in markets in all three countries, with ambitious targets being set in Ethiopia in particular. Mali appears to have the most positive enabling environment for WCA, combining both traditional social capital and government intervention. Changes in the legislative and policy context in all countries are clearly affecting the scope for women’s participation in CA, while liberalisation and commercialisation of agricultural markets are creating new opportunities for, and new challenges to, women’s participation in and benefits from markets. Less clear, but potentially areas to explore further, are the impacts of migration and technology change on opportunities for and benefits of rural CA for women.

One key hypothesis is that emerging commercial opportunities, even where women benefit from increased incomes through their engagement in markets, do not necessarily correlate with increased empowerment. While the study suggests some link between increased income, status, and influence over decisions, this is not necessarily a causal relationship.

One possible reason suggested by the evidence gathered is that highly profitable sectors—even those traditionally dominated by women—tend to see men moving in and taking over leadership roles, a process often facilitated by external intervention. Some of the functions around which women have traditionally organised—e.g. small-scale processing—may be undermined by the development of commercial opportunities, such that these functions go ‘higher up’ the value chain. This suggests that proactive strategies are needed to ensure that women benefit equitably from new commercial opportunities, even in sectors where they traditionally dominate.

It is unclear under what conditions women ‘own’ the proceeds from farm output and therefore have direct (or joint) control over the benefits deriving from these. Clearly, the contribution of their labour alone is not a sufficient condition; one hypothesis is that they need to have recognition of their rights over the assets involved in production. This suggests the importance of strengthening land rights for women, but also perhaps—and especially where land resources are under pressure—of greater emphasis on rights over non-land assets and developing sectors less dependent on land. There may be more scope for women to benefit and retain control over benefits where key assets are non-land assets e.g. livestock or forest products or where production is carried out on land over which there are established group rights.

5.2 Which women participate in and benefit from collective action in agricultural markets?

In Mali, women appear to be benefiting economically from CA in markets in most of the sub-sectors identified. This may be because the particular sub-sectors identified have greater potential to benefit women; other explanations include a strong history of gender-specific organisation and a history of government, donor, and other external support to the organisation of markets. We have also suggested that the practice in Mali of women having access to a plot of land from which the proceeds of any sales of output are
understood to belong to them may be an important factor in ensuring that women benefit, compared with other countries.

Women participate in mixed forms of CA in Tanzania, but its benefits are related primarily to service delivery (e.g. savings and credit, extension, and inputs) rather than increased incomes or improved positions in markets. Collective marketing by smallholders is very weak overall, with a high proportion of product being sold outside formal organisations, and existing organisations serve mainly as a mechanism to mobilise finance and inputs. One question needing further exploration is the fact that almost no women-only groups were identified in Tanzania, in contrast to Mali and Ethiopia. This may be related to the negative legacies of ‘forced’ organisation historically in Tanzania or it may have wider social causes; alternatively, it could reflect differences in the intervention strategies of external agencies.

In Ethiopia, formal CA is synonymous with a highly structured co-operative sector that is pervasive throughout the country down to village level, with strong government support, mainly focused on delivery of inputs. Constraints to women’s participation in these structures seem high, due to social barriers but perhaps also related to their politicised nature. Among women farmers, only female heads of households have widespread representation in these co-operatives, although not proportionally to their numbers in the rural population. Women perceive economic benefits from CA in some sub-sectors, although it is unclear whether these benefits are direct (and controlled by women) or more generalised benefits to households.

In all countries, women’s participation in formal CA (e.g. co-ops) is complemented by informal organising alongside or within formal CA. This may be a critical ‘enabler’ to their participation in formal groups. These less formal groups are often women-specific and a value is clearly placed on these women-only spaces. Savings groups — many women-specific — are important mechanisms enabling women to manage expenditures, develop control over assets, and build skills in group organisation and leadership. Many of these groups are externally supported, particularly by INGOs. Informal labour-sharing groups are also highly prevalent in Mali and Ethiopia (as well as other forms of informal CA, such as burial societies) though they have received almost no attention from development actors, meaning that their functions and evolution are poorly understood.

The research to date does not enable us to have a differentiated view of which women are participating in CA and, of those who are, which are deriving most benefits. Going forward, it will be important to build a systematic profile of which categories of women are engaging in which types of CA at two levels: the overall household profile and the individual woman’s profile. Individual characteristics such as age, marital status, family responsibilities, literacy, degree of control over land or other assets, and prior participation in CA will be important to investigate in terms of their influence on women’s participation. The influence of specific barriers in excluding women will also be explored among those women who are not participating in CA.

The next phase will also attempt to shed light on how gender relations in the household interact with women’s motivations and capacities to engage in CA. In doing so, it will explore to what extent other household members (men but also other women) accommodate women taking on commitments outside the home and the ways in which women ‘negotiate’ these new collective roles.

5.3 What benefits do women gain from participation in collective action?

A broad conclusion is that, given the diversity of sub-sectors and forms of CA, outcomes and impacts differ considerably between these sub-sectors and types of CA, depending also on the functions and objectives around which these are organised. In this sense, it is
not feasible to identify which type of CA works best for women; firstly, because they play
different roles and, secondly, because this will depend on the context, in particular the
sub-sector and type of activity.

However, benefits are not equitable: there are ‘gendered’ associations between types of
product and market and women’s ‘rights to sell’ (e.g. chickens in Tanzania; coffee in local
markets in Ethiopia). The range of products and markets where women can sell and
control incomes remains limited. The greatest potential for economic benefits of CA that
women are engaged in appears to be in non-traditional exports. These tend to be highly
vertically integrated, have secure contracts, high margins and (perhaps) fewer barriers to
women—especially those which are traditionally ‘women’s’ sectors.

Neither do benefits necessarily derive from participation in a straightforward way.
Participation in CA does not guarantee (equitable) benefits for women, and non-
participation does not mean that women do not receive any benefits. In future research,
‘benefits’ will need to be disaggregated and investigated systematically at group,
household, and individual levels. The nature of the sub-sector, volumes produced, and
profit margins, as well as the capacity of the group to respond to market opportunities all
affect the ‘returns’ of CA. How groups distribute or invest these returns affects whether
men and women receive equitable benefits. Furthermore, household dynamics impact on
whether women receive or can ‘control’ any of the benefits received.

5.4 To what extent is collective action overcoming barriers
to women’s access to markets?

Evidence from the three countries suggests that CA is beginning to enable women, to
varying degrees in different contexts, to overcome key constraints to them being effective
actors in markets, but that the focus is predominantly on improved production skills and
capacities.

The scope to increase volumes will, however, remain limited while women’s access to
land and other key production resources remains a binding constraint—and one currently
not addressed by most CA efforts. Other key barriers such as storage and transport could
potentially be addressed through CA, but current efforts here are apparently limited.

Fundamental barriers such as social attitudes and time poverty require wider and deeper
changes, though evidence from Mali suggests that, as CA becomes more widespread and
accepted, attitudes to women’s participation become more accepting. Possibilities for
services such as child care to be provided through CA may need to be explored.

5.5 Which strategies are effective in supporting equitable
outcomes of collective action for women?

At this stage, RWCA has not looked in detail at development actor interventions.
However, it has found that external interventions are pervasive in initiating or supporting
the majority of CA forms identified in most sub-sectors. Therefore, development actor
strategies are clearly very significant. In some communities, there was a bewildering
multiplicity of interventions and complex relationships between them, often perhaps
poorly understood by individual development actors. In others, one main development
actor was dominant.

Evidence also suggests that there are limits to the effectiveness of some strategies, as well
as some key areas that are not being addressed in terms of overcoming constraints to
women’s access to agricultural markets and benefits from market engagement:

- Significant support is being provided to women’s savings and credit groups, building
  on traditional social capital. Depending on the context, these may have the potential
to develop effective linkages into markets, but this may require an evolution in ways of organising and organisational form.

- A lot of efforts are supporting the capacity of small farmers, including women, to produce a surplus or improve the quality of their production to meet certain market requirements. However, few efforts are adequately addressing issues of volume/scale needed to supply markets (bulking and collection centres) or necessarily focused on linking to the most profitable markets.

- Less evident are effective strategies for engaging smallholder women directly in profitable markets. Existing strategies here include focusing on sectors which are specifically women-dominated and where there are emerging market opportunities, or promoting women’s representation on group marketing committees. Little evidence was found of attempts to improve women’s mobility through addressing transport constraints or social attitudes.

- Time poverty is addressed primarily through technology, such as food processing (e.g. mills) or via strategies to reduce time required to access markets (e.g. direct collection/collection points). CA itself can be very time-consuming and women’s much greater presence in more flexible informal groups perhaps reflects this. The pervasiveness of labour pooling groups and their potential function in reducing or managing women’s labour burdens is worth exploring further.

In the next phase of research, qualitative case studies will be used to investigate development actor strategies for supporting WCA and their effectiveness. In this context, it will be important to deepen understanding of how development actors influence and shape group dynamics and evolution, including enabling the emergence of women’s leadership, particularly in mixed organisations. In addition, case studies will need to explore further how CA governance rules shape women’s ability to engage in CA (e.g. through membership criteria), and determine how benefits get distributed.
Notes

1 See Kidder, Baden, and Canepa (2010) for further details on the dialogue process.
2 Devaux et al. (2007); Penrose Buckley (2007).
3 Barrett (2008).
5 Charman (2008).
6 Penrose Buckley (2007).
7 Pandolfelli et al. (2007).
8 Peterman et al. (2010); Quisumbing (1996); Develtere et al. (2008); DFID (2004); and IBRD (2009).
10 Pandolfelli et al. (2007).
11 Meinzen-Dick et al. (2004).
12 See also Glossary of Terms on the project Wiki: http://womenscollectiveaction.com/Glossary+of+Terms
13 Pandolfelli et al. (2007).
16 Ibid.
17 Coulter (2007).
18 Pandolfelli et al. (2007).
19 Markelova and Meinzen-Dick (2009).
21 Earlier versions of this framework were discussed at the project’s International Advisory Group meetings in June 2010 and 2011. An online ‘webinar’ to discuss the revised framework was held on 21 August 2011 (see http://womenscollectiveaction.com/Conceptual+Framework).
22 A sub-sector is an aggregation of alternative marketing channels or value chains for one product or a group of closely-related products. Sub-sectors can be delineated by a final product or a key raw material. The scope of a sub-sector will depend on the extent/range of sub-products made from a primary commodity in a given region, and the complexity of actors within the wider market system. Table 1 lists the 15 sub-sectors selected for study in this research.
23 For example, the degree of concentration, length, and complexity of market chains; local traders and wholesalers vs. supermarkets; and relative importance of quality or timely delivery and other standards.
25 ‘Authors’ note: Commentators have suggested a need to revise this figure to be more clearly an analytical framework encompassing all possible outcomes vs. a ‘theory of change’ indicating a pathway to desired outcomes. Currently levels 1 and 2 are presented as such, but level 3 (outcomes and impacts) needs to be reviewed to allow for other possible outcomes. Moreover, commentators have pointed to a need to consider wider trends such as technological change and migration among the features influencing patterns of collective action. The framework will be revised to take account of these comments.
26 Details are contained in Annex 1.
27 In terms of agro-ecological, socio-economic, and socio-cultural profiles.
28 Full details on the methodology for focus groups are contained in the research methodology guidance. See Pionetti, Lloyd Williams, and Baden (2011).
Data reported for Ethiopia in this table excludes data from Jimma zone (Oromia region) due to challenges faced when generating the inventories of CA in that zone.

For honey, the inventories of groups provided by the researcher do not include rankings, making it unclear how many CA groups were studied of the ones identified.

The number of groups identified and studied for the vegetables sub-sector in West Gojam was from two communities only (not four communities as was the case for other sub-sectors/countries).

In Ethiopia, however, specific efforts were made to ensure the participation of female heads of household.

Researchers investigated constraints during focus group discussions with a group of 8–12 smallholder women, the majority being members of collective action groups, and some acting only as individual producers. The exercise consisted in:

a) Identifying all constraints faced by women in accessing markets (in the selected sub-sectors);

b) Comparing the level of constraints faced by individual women and women in mixed and women-only groups.

The ranking exercise was not performed in all communities due to time constraints, and also because women-only groups are not present in every community (e.g. in Tanzania). The study therefore provides extensive evidence of the nature of constraints faced by women in accessing markets, but only limited evidence on which types of group best enable women to overcome these different constraints. For a discussion on which types of groups best help women in overcoming which types of constraint in the three countries, see section 4.3.

This is the case, for example, in Shinyanga region in Tanzania. More detailed review of inventories of collective action for different regions may suggest more nuanced trends. This aspect has not been investigated in detail.

Comparing data on collective action in districts close to main markets with those more distant from markets may identify differences in terms of number or functions of collective action or in women’s participation. This aspect has not been investigated in detail at this stage.

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In Tanzania, for example, only 12 per cent of male-headed households have female land holders compared with 50 per cent of female-headed households (URT (2007) cited in Lazaro et al. (2011) p.10). This implies that even in female-headed households land is often controlled by men. In Ethiopia, it was noted for coffee in Jimma zone, for example, that it was exceptional for women to grow coffee on their own plots through maahri (a small plot of land acquired from their husbands during marriage) (Adenew and Abadi (2011)).

One response to this has been to mobilise resources via savings groups.

In Mali, for example, women’s groups ‘use’ literate men as their secretaries where they do not themselves have this capacity. Many savings and credit groups are explicitly designed to work with women with low levels of literacy. On the other hand, women’s lower rates of literacy are often used to explain why women are not present in groups, particularly in leadership positions.

Author’s observation during field visit to Mali in April 2011 (Sally Baden). The Malian field researcher also reported that – to her surprise – she had not encountered the expected resistance to women participating in groups (Faoussatou Tadjou, reported in International Advisory Group discussion, 29 June 2011). In Tanzania field data, ‘women’s laziness’ was reported as a constraint to access to markets for individual women, also suggesting a view that women should be participating in groups (Lazaro et al. (2011)).

In Ethiopia, for example, it was found that labour sharing was evolving into a mechanism for increasing incomes through collective labour hiring (Adenew and Abade 2011).

This section draws on a literature review carried out for Oxfam by Luisa Enria (2011).
Ethiopia’s poverty reduction strategy paper (2005–2010), the Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), sets out certain targets, such as that close to 70 per cent of the people ought to be organised through service co-operatives and that the share of the market for agricultural inputs claimed by co-operative marketing organisations is expected to increase from 70 per cent to 90 per cent. Up to Ethiopian birr (ETB) 14bn in loans are to be made available to encourage co-operatives to increase production.

PASDEP pledges to raise the number of women participants from 13 per cent to 30 per cent, although no concrete plan is offered (or indeed any analysis of why participation is so low). The Growth and Transformation Plan, the successor to PASDEP, once again states that women will be helped to form co-operatives, this time without a specific target (Enria (2011)).

In Tanzania, the 2003 Cooperative Societies Act; in Mali, the 2001 Cooperative Law (Loi 01-076); in Ethiopia, the 1995 and 1998 Agricultural Societies proclamation and amendment.

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De Weerdt (2001). This may be a factor explaining why women’s groups are less prevalent in Tanzania.

See e.g. Francesconi and Heerink (2010).

Adenew and Abadi (2011).

Emana (2009).


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USAID (2010).

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See e.g. Francesconi and Heerink (2010).

Adenew and Abadi (2011).

Emana (2009).


This may be a factor explaining why women’s groups are less prevalent in Tanzania.


Although collective marketing occurs across most sub-sectors in Tanzania, in each of these sub-sectors there are only one (for maize) or a few instances (for local chicken, chickpea) of collective action in marketing.

This table was created based on the inventories of collective action groups and sub-sector maps compiled during country field research.

Women’s self-help groups are part of the Honey Primary Farmers’ Cooperatives.

Milk processing into butter, aib, cheese, cream, and skimmed and full-fat milk.

Some groups engage in the preparation of groundnut paste.

There is very limited collective action in tiger nut processing (lack of access to equipment).

Two related but distinct elements are conflated in the original characterisation i.e. gender composition and female participation in group leadership. A separate category for understanding gendered leadership dynamics will be required in further research.

The issue of female participation and leadership in CA is further analysed and discussed in section 4.3.

Men’s groups are also present, but were not studied here given the focus on women’s collective action.

Different modes of ‘participation’ of households and their members may include where:

- The head of household is registered as the collective action member ‘representing the household’, with other members not on the list;
- The head of household (or other individual) is a member and others are excluded from participation and not seen as members, even indirectly;
- Collective action membership is dual, with both husband and wife registered as members; and
- Membership is defined on an individual rather than a household basis, so that several members of the same household can participate and benefit in their own right.

It may be that this is an inherent bias of the research because, while formal collective action is clearly identified and referenced by informants, informal, loosely organised groups are not well documented and can easily be bypassed unless substantial time is spent in a single community.
In this instance, the local informal associations are all members of the main co-operative and receive support from it.

For example, CAEB/Savings for Change in Koulikoro region in Mali, and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Oxfam in local chicken, rice, and chickpea sectors in Tanzania.

This figure was prepared based on data from Tables 9 and 10 in Annex 3, looking in particular at data on specialised vs. multi-functional groups across market types.

Tanzanian sub-sectors are not represented in this figure because evidence shows a very low number of women-only groups, alongside a high incidence of female participation in mixed groups. Since this figure depicts the correlation between degree of specialisation and percentage of women-only groups, representing data from Tanzania could be misleading (i.e. falsely indicating a low degree of women's participation in CA).

Coulibaly and Tadjou (2011). The equivalent analysis is not available for Tanzania or Ethiopia.

This figure is based on an analysis of numbers provided in Table 9 in Annex 3, looking in particular at figures relating to mixed vs. women-only groups, and the number of informal vs. formal groups.


Focus groups consisted only of women involved in collective action and, in some but not all cases, a control group of non-members. The proposed method was to ask the group to distribute 10 points (literally, kernels) across the categories of benefits identified, based on the relative importance of each benefit. However, some researchers used alternative methods (20 kernels instead of 10, or numerical ranking (from 1 to 5, by order of importance), leading to challenges in comparing findings.

‘Improving own home and utensils’ (in maize) also refers to an increased contribution by women to family expenditures.

A consolidated ranking is not available for vegetables in West Gojam.

See note 33 for summary of group exercise and Pionetti et al. (2011) for full details. In some cases it was not possible to compare between types of group.

One or two instances were noted of women organising informally to transport vegetables to market in Ethiopia.

Haidara et al. (2011).
References


About the authors

Sally Baden: Currently the Senior Adviser in Agriculture and Women’s Livelihoods for Oxfam GB, Sally Baden has managed or advised Oxfam programmes since 2001, first in Oxfam’s West Africa region and then based in Oxford. She has been the project manager for the Researching Women’s Collective Action project since its launch in 2009. Before joining Oxfam, she worked at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (1992–2000) where she managed the Briefings on Development and Gender (BRIDGE) programme and co-directed the Masters programme in Gender and Development. She has master’s degrees in Development Studies and Agricultural Economics.

Carine Pionetti: Trained as an anthropologist, and then as a political ecologist, Carine Pionetti works as an independent researcher and as a consultant on gender, development, and environment issues. The interplay between gender and agriculture has been at the core of her work for the last ten years. In her PhD research, she looked at women farmers’ management of agro-biodiversity in semi-arid India and the implications of new forms of control over seeds for small-scale women farmers.
Annex 1: Selected outcomes of Phase I research

During Phase I of the RWCA project (January–June 2010), a broad-ranging literature review was carried out to develop the analytical framework and to identify existing evidence and gaps in knowledge. At the same time, researchers in each of the three case study countries undertook reviews of available secondary data and selected key informant interviews to identify sub-sectors where CA is present and might have the potential to deliver benefits to women. They then engaged in dialogue with stakeholders at regional and national levels, to select key sub-sectors to focus the research. The outcomes of these dialogues are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: Sub-sectors selected for research in Phase I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-sector</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Countries/regions in which sub-sector is being studied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>Food staples</td>
<td>Ethiopia (Jimma), Tanzania (Tanga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millet/sorghum</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mali (Koulikoro)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mali (Sikasso), Tanzania (Shinyanga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Traditional bulk commodity cash crop</td>
<td>Ethiopia (Jimma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnuts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mali (Koulikoro)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Traditional high value</td>
<td>Ethiopia (West Gojam), Tanzania (Tanga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethiopia (West Gojam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shea butter</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mali (Sikasso)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local chicken</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tanzania (Shinyanga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey (A)</td>
<td>Non-traditional high value</td>
<td>Ethiopia (West Gojam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices (B)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethiopia (Jimma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mali (Koulikoro)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger nuts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mali (Sikasso)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickpea</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tanzania (Shinyanga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allanblackia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tanzania (Tanga)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once the sub-sectors were selected, an initial mapping of each sub-sector and where CA occurs within it was carried out with stakeholders in each region. Table 7 summarises information on the selected sub-sectors from the Mali study.

**Table 7: Overview of characteristics of selected sub-sectors in Mali**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-sector</th>
<th>Value chains</th>
<th>Rate of women’s participation</th>
<th>Presence of CA</th>
<th>Market potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groundnut</td>
<td>Production and commercialisation</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing (groundnut paste)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shea</td>
<td>Production and commercialisation</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing into shea butter</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millet/sorghum</td>
<td>Production and commercialisation</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing into semi-finished food products</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger nut</td>
<td>Production and commercialisation</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing (juice)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Production and commercialisation</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing (drying)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Conventional sesame production and commercialisation</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bio sesame production and commercialisation</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following this, inventories were drawn up identifying existing instances of CA in which women are participating. These inventories helped to define the key geographic areas where CA could be the focus of field research in Phase II.
Annex 2: Detailed presentation of analytical framework

A. Introduction

Pandolfelli et al. (2007:14) identify three entry points or levels for a gendered analysis of CA: motivation, effectiveness, and impact. They also provide a framework for understanding the dynamics of CA from a gender perspective. This has three levels. The first is the ‘context’ (in terms of assets, vulnerability, norms, legal structures, and power relations) representing the initial conditions which people face shaping their livelihood choices. This in turn affects the ‘action arena’ in which actors with different preferences mobilise ‘action resources’ and existing rules to engage in ‘social bargaining’, leading to decisions and shaping institutions. In turn, these processes lead to ‘patterns of interaction’, for example within a CA group. Gender is important at all these levels. We have drawn from this to integrate into our framework the idea of a dynamic process shaping patterns of CA (see Figure 1). At each level of analysis, different factors are important for shaping outcomes. These individual factors interact with each other and feedback loops also exist between different levels of the framework.

Markelova and Meinzen-Dick (2009) identify three broad groups of factors that determine the effectiveness of smallholder engagement in markets via CA: the market and product type; group characteristics; and the institutional arrangements governing the behaviour of the group (e.g. rules and norms). All of these factors are in turn influenced by the external environment.

Given the focus of this research on CA in markets from the perspective of women smallholders, the ‘outcome’ at group level is defined as ‘women’s improved capacity to be effective as market actors’. The form and group characteristics and dynamics of CA are factors affecting this ‘effectiveness’, as well as the type of market (‘sub-sector’ in our terminology). A distinction is made between those factors which directly determine the forms and patterns of CA and those which set the broader parameters in which it occurs. Based on wider literature on CA, we have also added social capital and external intervention as key factors determining patterns of CA.

B. Motivation and capacity of woman smallholders/farmers to join collective action

The lower section of Figure 1 represents the motivation and capacity of women smallholders to engage in CA. This part of the framework relates to the key research question: which women participate in CA? Women’s agency is central: they have the choice to participate or not, even if this choice is circumscribed. This question also incorporates two more specific issues: the motivation of women to join a CA group and their capacity to do so.

Two key sets of factors are identified which impact on women smallholders’ motivations and capacities to engage in CA:

- The farming system, which sets the agro-ecological conditions for practising any farm activity:
  - Land ownership patterns and gendered division of labour are of particular significance to gender, as they determine whether or not a woman have access to land, and how burdened a woman may be (depending on what tasks are assigned, both in production and post-harvest work); and
b. Levels of risk, the distance to market, and transportation constraints (linked to availability and quality of road infrastructure, for example) also impact on smallholders’ capacity to respond to market opportunities.

- Individual assets and status include various parameters that directly influence an individual woman in her choices and capacities:
  a. Asset endowment — how much a women controls in terms of land, equipment; capacity to acquire loans, etc.;
  b. Age, skills, and literacy all greatly impact on a woman’s capacity and motivation to join a group; and
  c. Status within the household, which depends on whether the household is monogamous or polygamous, male-headed or female-headed, and which socio-economic group it belongs to.

C. Gendered patterns of collective action

The central section of Figure 1 represents the dynamic space in which groups are formed, evolve, merge, or dissolve. This is also where they gain or lose visibility, bargain for legitimacy or status, and attract members. This dynamic space is represented as a circle.

CA groups vary in composition, function, and form. Key characteristics include size of membership (determined by a combination of internal and external criteria); gender composition of membership (a continuum from single-sex to mixed groups); functionality (they may be single-purpose or multi-functional groups, and functions differ depending on where they are ‘located’ in the market system); and degree of formality (a continuum from informal to formal groups). These characteristics are represented in the centre.

CA groups are also continually evolving: change is linked to group dynamics and composition (influenced by the context for the formation of the group and definition of its objectives, and ways in which the group evolves in terms of membership, size, mandate, etc.), as well as to rules and functioning (the governance structure of the group), which also sets the framework for negotiation within the group. The rounded arrows in the diagram represent these ongoing processes of change.

These characteristics and dynamics of CA are influenced by three major factors, located on the outside of the circle in the central part of the figure, representing patterns of CA:

- **External intervention**: an NGO driving its own agenda of women’s empowerment through an existing group; a university offering technical advice on agronomic practices; a micro-credit institution making loans available to groups: all these forms of intervention contribute to the mandate, composition, and evolution of CA groups;

- **Social capital**: social networks and bonds, kinship relations, and traditional forms of organisation play an important role in shaping CA, especially in building trust and providing credibility or legitimacy. Social capital is significant from a gender perspective as women (especially poor women) tend to rely extensively on such networks for survival (during times of crisis especially);

- **Societal norms on gender roles**: ascribed responsibility for domestic work which leads to low, medium, or high levels of time poverty for women; levels of acceptability of women’s participation in the public space; and the legitimacy of women playing leadership roles.

Outside this central circle, two major systems contribute to defining the scope for CA in a given geographical and socio-economic context (CA being studied in the context of agricultural markets):
**The legal and policy framework**

This refers to the policies, laws, and regulations that govern CA in a given political and socio-cultural context. It includes policies enabling the creation of farmers’ groups, co-operatives, or savings and credit groups; policies promoting changes in status of certain groups or the acquisition of certain rights for existing groups (e.g. the right to register, engage in sales, and enact contracts).

- A legal framework dictates the need for internal rules, membership criteria, and governing structures for various types of group. It is driven by the wider policy context (for example, trade and market liberalisation).

- Both the policy framework governing co-operatives and the wider framework affect how patterns of CA are gendered: for example, where land rights are a prerequisite for women’s engagement in co-operatives, but the legal framework does not guarantee these; or where co-operative laws stipulate that a household can only have one member per co-operative (which by default is the head of household—who is usually male).

**Sub-sector characteristics**

- Any agricultural product that is sold enters into a market or value chain, characterised by different segments, from production through to commercialisation. Depending on the type of product and sub-sector, there are different actors, degrees of concentration, barriers to entry, and gender segregation, etc. For instance, the market for chicken is highly localised in some parts of Tanzania, with a large range of traders of both sexes, while the market for allanblackia—a forest product traditionally collected and processed by women—is dominated by one player, a private company that buys up nuts collected from a whole region.

- These elements partly determine the types of CA groups likely to enter the value chain, in which given segment, and for which objectives and scope for effectiveness (for instance, a women-only group is less likely to try to market goods that are typically only traded by men, or may attempt to find a niche market).

- Risks and opportunities vary by sub-sector as well as season and location. There may be opportunities linked to demand for processed goods (maize, shea butter) and risks linked to market fluctuations, climate change, etc. CA groups with a marketing component may form in response to emerging opportunities, or with an objective to minimise risk.

**D. Outcomes**

*Figure 1* defines two levels of outcome: collective outcome (at the group level), linked to individual impact.

**Collective outcomes**

The main outcome is defined as the improved capacity for women to become effective market actors, hinging on a series of changes that CA has made possible:

- New spaces and roles for women (as technicians, veterinarians, seed-dealers, processors, etc.);

- Improved capacity to negotiate terms of trade (through the acquisition of skills such as financial literacy, bargaining skills, knowledge about alternative marketing routes, etc.).
• Fewer barriers to women’s participation at various levels of the value chain (which includes lifting physical or structural barriers, but also more subtle societal norms or preconceptions about women’s capacities).

**Individual impact**

The expected impact is three-fold, as represented by the top section of the graphic:

- **Increased incomes**: designates the capacity of an individual woman to generate and control income, i.e. to make or influence decisions about its use. Women’s increased contribution to household income may generate additional decision-making influence/bargaining power;

- **Building up of assets**: refers to the capacity of individual women to build personal assets, and to their capacity to secure or maintain control over assets over a period of time. This leads to a wider range of coping strategies, which is of particular importance to poor women;

- **Empowerment**: self-confidence and leadership capacity are important dimensions of empowerment at the individual level. Better access to skills, information, and opportunities are external signs that a woman has gained ‘power’ (especially in terms of control over her own life). All this leads, ultimately, to a woman’s increased capacity to influence decisions, both at household and community levels.

These three dimensions are inter-related and dynamic. For example, an immediate outcome of effective market engagement might be increased income; however, the capacity to control that income or reinvest it into building up assets may also depend on the ‘empowerment’ outcome of engagement in CA.

RWCA will seek to demonstrate how these two outcome levels articulate with patterns of CA, and what mechanisms might ensure that these outcomes are achieved. CA may not ‘remove’ all the barriers to women’s effective engagement in markets. The research will examine the extent to which this is the case.
Annex 3: Characterisation of collective action by country

The qualitative information gathered in Phase II of the research was used to characterise CA groups in each sub-sector. Four categories were used to analyse the CA groups identified, defined below. Though each category was defined with specific, nuanced criteria, the definitions below are what researchers used to develop the consolidated information in this annex (see Tables 8, 9, and 10).

1. **The function of the organisation within the market system:** This was determined to be ‘specialised’ or ‘multi-purpose’ according to whether the group focused on marketing a single crop (specialised) or whether it supported more than one crop, either through marketing and other services necessary in crop production or through the provision of services which directly facilitate entry into specific sub-sector markets, such as finance, agricultural training, or input supplies (multi-purpose).

2. **Women’s participation and leadership (with the gender composition of groups used as a proxy):** Gender composition of groups was categorised as ‘women-only’ or ‘mixed’, with ‘mixed’ ranging from groups that were heavily male-dominated but with female members to groups where female members held leadership positions and took an active role in decision-making for the group.

3. **The degree of formality:** This was determined according to whether the group was registered, followed rules and norms, met regularly, and had links with other organisations, with ‘informal’ groups showing none of these qualities and displaying more ad hoc forms of collaboration.

4. **The degree of external support:** Groups were determined to be either ‘externally supported’ or ‘self-driven’, with self-driven groups those that were initiated by their own members and reliant on resources that are internally generated and secured.
### Table 8: Characterisation of collective action groups across market types and sub-sectors in Tanzania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market types</th>
<th>Staple</th>
<th>Traditional high value</th>
<th>Non-traditional high value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-sectors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maize</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chickpea</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Total number CA groups</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Function of the organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of specialised groups</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of multi-purpose groups</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender composition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of mixed groups</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women-only groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Degree of formality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of formal groups</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of informal groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Degree of external support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally supported</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-driven</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Sub-sector in Shinyanga region.
2 Sub-sector in Tanga region.

### Table 9: Characterisation of collective action groups across market types and sub-sectors in Mali

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market types</th>
<th>Staple</th>
<th>Traditional bulk export</th>
<th>Traditional high value</th>
<th>Non-traditional high value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-sectors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Millet/ sorghum</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Groundnut</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shea butter</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Total number of CA groups</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Function of the organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of specialised groups</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of multi-purpose groups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender composition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of mixed groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women-only groups</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Degree of formality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of formal groups</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of informal groups</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Degree of external support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally supported</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-driven</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10: Characterisation of collective action groups across market types and sub-sectors in Ethiopia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market types</th>
<th>Staple</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Traditional high value</th>
<th>Non-traditional high value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>Bulk</td>
<td>High value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-sectors</td>
<td></td>
<td>export</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables **</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices (pepper)**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Total number CA groups/categories

2. Characteristic of the type of organisation

- Number of specialised groups/types
  - Staple: 0
  - Traditionally bulk: 0
  - Export: 0
  - High value: 1
  - Non-traditional high value: 2

- Number of multi-purpose groups/types
  - Staple: 5
  - Traditionally bulk: 4
  - Export: 3
  - High value: 3
  - Non-traditional high value: 2

3. Gender composition

- Number of mixed groups/types
  - Staple: 2
  - Traditionally bulk: 2
  - Export: 4
  - High value: 4
  - Non-traditional high value: 3

- Number of women-only groups/types
  - Staple: 3
  - Traditionally bulk: 2
  - Export: 1
  - High value: 2
  - Non-traditional high value: 1

4. Degree of formality

- Number of formal groups/types
  - Staple: 4*
  - Traditionally bulk: 3*
  - Export: 3
  - High value: 3
  - Non-traditional high value: 3

- Number of informal groups/types
  - Staple: 1
  - Traditionally bulk: 1
  - Export: 1
  - High value: 1
  - Non-traditional high value: 1

5. Degree of external support

- Externally supported
  - Staple: 4
  - Traditionally bulk: 3
  - Export: 3
  - High value: 3
  - Non-traditional high value: 2

- Self-driven
  - Staple: 1
  - Traditionally bulk: 1
  - Export: 1
  - High value: 1
  - Non-traditional high value: 2

* Also includes semi-formal.
** Numbers provided for coffee, milk, vegetables, and honey are for categories of collective action rather than for specific groups studied (see list of categories below).
Categories of collective action found for coffee, milk, vegetables, and honey sub-sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coffee</th>
<th>Milk</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Honey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women Saving and Credit Self Help Group</td>
<td>Mixed Milk Co-operative</td>
<td>Irrigation (specialised sub-sector-based CA)</td>
<td>Mixed Honey Primary Co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulbul women SCSHG</td>
<td>Mixed multi-purpose co-ops</td>
<td>Savings and credit</td>
<td>Honey women’s self-help groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daadoo</td>
<td>Mixed <em>iqub</em></td>
<td>Multi-purpose co-ops</td>
<td>Mixed <em>iqub</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulbul Farmers’ Multi-Purpose Primary Co-operative</td>
<td>Savings and credit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed multi-purpose co-ops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biklitu Gibe Seed Growers Co-operative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

83 Pyburn et al. (2010).
85 There were four criteria or options provided for each category to enable researchers to move away from a binary approach and better capture nuanced information when characterising CA. For instance, with the second category on women’s participation and leadership, we sought to obtain information not just on gender composition of groups, but also on the way in which women engaged with the group, from being passive members to active ones playing a leading role in the organisation. For more detailed information on the more nuanced criteria used to define each category, see Table 1 in Baden and Pionetti’s ‘Toward a Typology of Collective Action in Agricultural Markets’. [http://womenscollectiveaction.com/webinar2-Typology](http://womenscollectiveaction.com/webinar2-Typology).
87 It should also be noted that Table 5A (CA characteristics for Jimma zone in Oromia region) rests on a relatively limited number of groups per sub-sector. One reason for this may lie in the legislative context: the State has been promoting a centralised model of ‘one kebele, one multi-purpose co-operative, one marketing association’ (for milk, honey, or coffee). Therefore, unlike in Mali and Tanzania, it is possible that sub-sector-based collective action may be limited to one State-sanctioned co-operative per community, precluding the emergence of informal CA. This issue requires further investigation.