



INITIATIVE ON
Diversification in East
and Southern Africa

Strategies for promoting Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) in the agribusiness sector in Zambia: Experiences from the field

Technical Report by Solidaridad (Southern Africa)



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About the CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa

The [CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa](#) aims to help smallholders transition to sustainably intensified, diversified, and derisked agri-food systems based on maize in 12 ESA countries. Specifically, it seeks to enable 50,000 value chain actors, including farmers (at least 40% women, 40% youth), to adopt climate-smart maize based intensification and diversification practices and one million to access digital agro-advisory services. Emphasizing the role of the private sector in driving such transformation, UU targets to support at least 30 start-ups and SMEs.

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SUMMARY

Building on the Reclaim Sustainability! (RS!) programme's baseline studies and the Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Reports, and in partnership with CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa (Ukama Ustawi) through International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Solidaridad facilitated commodity specific voice amplification dialogues in Zambia focused on cotton and fruits and vegetables farmers. These GESI engagements were designed to form the basis for future programs around voice amplification, gender and social inclusion across agri-business value chains, policy, advocacy, and innovation acceleration. The commodity specific dialogues used a co-design approach in order to construct end-user archetypes of typical audiences for program engagement.

Over a two week period between November and December 2022, Solidaridad's commodity teams, supported by the Network's Gender Expert, visited cotton and fruits and vegetable farmers across Zambia in the following districts: Lusaka, Chongwe, Mazabuka, Chibombo, Kabwe, Mumbwa, Choma, Magoyi, Nyimba, Petauke and Katete. In groups of not more than 15 per community, the team engaged in dialogue with women (60), youth (3) and men (30) farmers, commodity relevant key informants, individuals in influential spaces and interest groups across the Cotton and Fruits and Vegetables value chains. This included government officials, market players such as Freshmark (Shoprite), Good nature Agro, Agricultural input aggregators, industry union representatives, policy makers, district agricultural officers, and most importantly, women smallholder farmers.

Key Outcomes:

The key outcomes for the GESI dialogues in Zambia were:

- i) Widespread gender and social inequalities across the target commodity food ecosystems were brought to light, leading to the need of creating local level multi stakeholder engagement platforms led by farmers. These will promote productive Interactions locally, create an awareness of risks and problems, and the ability to address them as they arise. The local MSP offers opportunities to build local level partnerships for innovative and inclusive agribusinesses
- ii) We were able to assess both cotton and fruits and vegetable food ecosystems in different local and national contexts; and mapped multidimensional challenges and opportunities, especially those faced by women and youth.
- iii) The discussions helped us to see where more advocacy and policy efforts are needed for transformative change interventions such as strengthening technical and financial capacity; enhancing access to on- and off-farm assets, gender inclusive technologies, services, and agri- innovations; where to increase engagement and agency through targeted investments, where peer-mentor support and training is most needed; and how we can best establish local change agents and inclusivity champions.
- iv) The GESI dialogues also enabled us to identify various pathways to transformative change that correspond to local demand. This will ultimately inform a robust GESI framework that can be adopted for scaling up evidence-informed inclusivity interventions across food ecosystems or value chains.

1. Objectives

The general objective of the supported project was to enable Solidaridad's RS! team to learn about inclusive value chain opportunities across the cotton and fruits and vegetables sectors, constraints and experiences related to programming of interventions aimed at advocacy, voice amplification and acceleration of farmer voices, particularly women and youth. This includes promoting gender and social inclusion, policy, advocacy, innovations as well as addressing identified issues across the supported sectors. In particular, to co-create contextually relevant and inclusive interventions in each commodity, and to understand how these can be initiated and sustained in collaboration with women and youth producers.

1.1 Specific objectives include:

- i) Voice Amplification: Conduct GESI dialogues with women farmers, public, private, and grassroots stakeholders
- ii) Capacity Building-Capacity strengthening of women and youth engaged in agribusiness
- iii) GESI Roadmap/Framework-Develop a GESI framework and approach that can guide and inform public, private, entrepreneurial agri-business initiatives
- iv) Technical Frameworks-Develop local (two) and national level (one) discussion reports in Zambia and Kenya
- v) Publication-Produce Case study evidence of positive "Stories of Change"
- vi) Theory of Change-Develop actionable pathways to GESI-informed agri-business ecosystem policies, investments and strategies for policy interventions presented to policy actors in Zambia & Kenya

2. Methodology

The dialogues deployed a co-design participatory approach to problem solving. This entailed both group discussions; in their local language, with men and women, and where culturally appropriate, women and men were interviewed separately. Key informants were also consulted and this enabled the team to gauge new views (rather than leaping to familiar answers), helped in supporting free thinking (rather than thinking in a box) and ultimately helped to communicate prototype solutions that will allow the RS! Programme to create tailor made and inclusive innovations. This co-design approach to dialogues was hands on, collaborative and encouraged creativity and the integration of indigenous and local knowledge from diverse voices and experiences. The dialogue approach was particularly useful as it allowed complex advocacy, policy, agricultural and development challenges to be articulated even by women who were illiterate. The dialogue approach was also a neutral method and highly inclusive as it allowed the team to engage many sectors across various agri-business disciplines. These were able to articulate problems which naturally, needed inputs from diverse sectors to validate our evidence base.

The guiding questions the RS! team deployed during the dialogues with key informants and farmers are set out below. These questions were prioritised for different commodities so they are most relevant to their context (e.g., for farmers in the fruit and vegetable industry or businesses in the same industry compared to stakeholders in the cotton sector).

1. What is your experience with programs that have promoted the voices of farmers, especially those of women and youth producers across agri-value chains?
 - a. Includes innovation and agri- technological platforms, learning alliances, consortia, tech hubs, knowledge-sharing fairs, knowledge transfer partnerships, research uptake projects, etc
2. What are the essential stakeholder groups who must be engaged to initiate and sustain such activities?
 - a. Includes local government, CSOs / CBOs, business and NGOs,
 - b. Missing stakeholders who might be partners in, or brokers for collaboration (e.g., opinion leaders, traditional leaders, religious or other affinity-based organisations, trades unions, cooperatives, political parties)
3. Which networks exist that represent each of the stakeholder groups mentioned or bridge them?
 - a. Includes formal platforms, national development forums, online discussion groups
4. What risks do you face when engaging in voice amplification activities for women and youth at farm level?
 - a. Includes issues like gender related victimisation, job uncertainty, imperfect knowledge on gender issues, unfamiliar administrative procedures, complicated governance arrangements, etc
5. What kinds of support are needed to sustain women and youth farmer voice amplification?
 - a. Includes sensitisation, trust building, arbitration, strategic advice, legal and financial advice, partnership management capacity building, etc
6. What benefits motivate you to engage in voice amplification for women and youth?
 - a. Includes things like enhancements to company profile, public reputation, funding, skills and experience, relationships, achievement of existing policy commitments, etc
7. How should we go about understanding the national political, economic and structural context of this commodity sector (i.e., power)?
 - a. Includes documentary sources, media and other communication channels to monitor and organisations that do this kind of analysis nationally to link with (e.g., think tanks, research depts., CSOs/NGOs, government departments, etc)
8. Of the many constraints that restrict farmers, especially youth, women and other marginalised groups from engaging across agri-value chains or policy and advocacy spaces that are meant to raise their voices, which approaches to overcome them do you think work and should be built upon?
9. Which are the most agri-tech and innovative national organisations (public, private, or civil society) you know?
10. What process or events in the immediate future present opportunities to promote voice amplification of women and youth around the issues of value addition and industry-worker relationships?
 - a. Includes policy consultations, political moments, popular campaigns, new programs or services, restructuring processes, financing discussions, etc

Other interrelated thematic areas the team had to be aware of or engage with during the dialogue visits include the following:

- a) **Local political dynamics:** being aware of, or observing the national political context and governance drivers of change that effect government and the private sector (e.g., political economy analysis, power analysis, coalition mapping, policy process analysis)

- b) **Livelihoods of youth and women marginalized by power asymmetries** - observe differential access, assets, and desired outcomes and determine how the Project can work with community-based organizations representing or coordinating them (e.g., livelihoods analysis, gender analysis, analysis of other socially differentiating characteristics such as age, ethnicity, disability, the legality of citizenship)
- c) **Government responsiveness to recommendations** - determine government's capacity, agenda and willingness to engage in more participatory dialogue on advocacy and policy making around inclusive economies (e.g. policy assessment, capacity assessment)

The analysis of the data was largely qualitative and a triangulation of data collected through different methods and across different locations was done to ensure accuracy.

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

3.1 Voice Amplification

During the project period, Solidaridad undertook two main activities. 1) Engage with diverse informants in dialogue to hear stories and gather evidence about voice amplification – especially those of women and youth across agri-value chains, advocacy and inclusive innovation issues in the cotton and food system sectors. 2) Group work to share and synthesis interview notes and other evidence gathered and work on developing follow up activities to fulfil the following Project deliverables:

- i) A GESI framework and approach that can guide and inform public, private, entrepreneurial agri-business initiatives
- ii) Develop a local discussion report in Zambia
- iii) Produce “Case study evidence of positive “Stories of Change”
- iv) Develop a capacity strengthening training intervention of women and youth engaged in agri-business
- v) Develop actionable pathways to GESI-informed agri-business ecosystem policies, investments and strategies for policy interventions presented to policy actors in Zambia

During the dialogues, the RSI team in Zambia visited the following districts over a two-week period between November and December 2022: Lusaka, Chongwe, Mazabuka, Chibombo, Kabwe, Mumbwa, Choma, Magoyi, Nyimba, Petauke and Katete. The team engaged in dialogue with over a hundred male and female producers in cotton and fruits and vegetable communities and actors across the value chain. The team identified opportunities, constraints and experiences related to programming of interventions aimed at amplification of voices, promotion of gender and social inclusion across agri-business value chains, policy, advocacy, inclusive innovations as well as addressing identified issues in the cotton and fruits and vegetable sectors. In particular, to co-create inclusivity interventions in each commodity in collaboration with other players. In addition to engaging with farmers, the following groups participated in the dialogues:

- a) Local government (e.g., city / municipal / regional level rather than national ministry level)
- b) CSOs and CBOs representing or coordinating those marginalized because of gender and other power asymmetries (e.g., young women, small farmers, youth,)
- c) Business (e.g., medium and large private sector organisations)
- d) Sub-national and sectorial focused indigenous NGOs (e.g., involved in policy, advocacy worker rights)

Key Recommendations from the dialogue outcomes:

- i) **There is need to strengthen viable and resilient production**, in which women and youth producers have the **knowledge** and **skills** to grow and diversify production and their agri-businesses, in a climate-smart manner, offering more decent jobs to their workers (including rural youth, men and women).
- ii) **Create interventions that support inclusive service delivery** that ensures sustainable access to inclusive innovations and agri-technology, inputs, products and services, tailored to the needs of women and youth farmers and agri-entrepreneurs.
- iii) **There is a need to facilitate inclusive market connection**, in which market actors adopt (and mainstream) inclusive trade, sourcing and pricing, and reward policies and practices.
- iv) **The creation of an enabling governance system is urgently needed to** respond to systemic root causes of a Weak Market Governance System. As already highlighted earlier, Solidaridad is currently working to strengthen and advocate for this through its current [RECLAIM Sustainability!](#) Programme.

3.2 Capacity strengthening of women and youth engaged in agribusiness

Between February and March 2023, Solidaridad developed and designed a training module which aimed to respond to the needs of producers engaged during the dialogues. Subsequently, the team facilitated a week-long value addition training titled “Farming as a Business” in Zambia’s Petauke and Katete districts. More than 60 cotton and fruit and vegetables producers - 30 women and 3 youth participated. This training was designed to support small scale farmers, especially women and youth who are active in agribusiness in the area of business literacy, which includes financial management and access to finance.

3.2.1 Specific Training Objectives:

The main objective for the training was to increase agribusiness and value addition skills and financial literacy of small-scale farmers, especially women and youth, working in the different value and supply chains of cotton and fruits and vegetables. The goal was to help amplify their voice through improved farm and enterprise management skills, resulting in increased access to fair value for their labor and produce across supply/value chains. In addition to this, it will help to grow their chances of financial access and inclusion.

3.2.2 Training Methodology

The training deployed a mixed methods approach of delivering information and knowledge. This was delivered through two components:

PART 1: this was an interactive session in which the facilitator interacted directly with the participants through a power point presentation and other interactive activities. The facilitator allowed participants to ask questions as the training progressed.

PART 2: this involved role plays focused on budgeting, saving and opportunities for agri-investments. The second part of this module was an interactive session in which participants engaged in groups to develop and discuss simple agri-enterprise budgets and basic strategies for saving and re-investing into their agri-businesses.

3.2.3 Training Content

During the training, participants were introduced to different types of entrepreneurship skills set. The first was the managerial skills needed to start and run a profitable farm business. The second was

‘entrepreneurial spirit’. Both skills are intended to equip women entrepreneurs with the necessary skills to access finance, land, labour, information and knowledge in order to be successful in their agri-business ventures. Other capacity enhancement objectives were to increase the number of women small scale farmers working in the different value/supply chain activities. In order to achieve this, participants were capacitated on the following aspects:

- i. Approaches to farming as a business and ways of operating with a view to improve production quality, performance and yields.
- ii. Strategically plan for farming as a business and use basic financial information in the process of making business improvements and decision making.
- iii. Setting SMART business goals for agro-enterprises
- iv. Keeping basic financial records.
- v. Managing cash flow more effectively.
- vi. Improving profitability.
- vii. Calculating funding requirements and borrowing needs.
- viii. Developing a simple marketing strategy.
- ix. Appreciating the importance of business networking.
- x. Identifying key business performance and monitoring aspects
- xi. Taking control of on-farm operations and controlling business growth.

In addition to the above training content and in order to make sustainability the norm among small-scale farmers’ business practices, the training looked at the economic/ profit pillar at the small-scale farmer level and ways of enhancing sustainability by changing the way farming is perceived and done. According to (Kahan, 2012), small-scale producers normally do their farming for four reasons, which are a) exclusively for home consumption with rarely any surpluses produced; b) mostly for home consumption, but with the intention of selling surpluses on the market; c) partly for the market and partly for home consumption and d) exclusively for the market. In the context of women small scale farmers and as already alluded to above, the focus was aimed at equipping participants to view themselves as entrepreneurs and their farming operations as a business.

3.2.4 Training Outcomes

By the end of the capacity strengthening training, participants had an improved understanding of how to run their farms as a business, calculating and accessing fair value for their produce, and money and its role in effective agri-business and farm management. Participants were able to comprehend what financial management is at farmer level; set SMART financial goals for their agri-enterprises and have the ability to discuss the basic concepts of fair income, expenses, debt and profits. Some of the skills strengthened include the ability to identify and develop basic strategies for saving and agri-business investing; the ability to differentiate an asset from a liability; identifying financial products and services suitable for, and available for emerging farmers.

3.3 Case study evidence of positive “Stories of Change”

During the Voice Amplification activity (see 2.1), the team observed that although women make up the larger share of the informal agri-businesses and workforce across both cotton and fruits and vegetable sectors, value addition business opportunities remain limited. This leads to lower incomes and profit, unfair value access and benefits for their produce and farm labor, and insecure livelihoods. Furthermore, the gender-specific barriers to engaging in high-value business hamper productivity and inclusive economic growth. Increasing voice and accountability remains challenging even in democratic systems, and women face particular obstacles in making their voices heard.

Central to the GESI dialogues is the collection and construction of stories based on female producer end-user archetypes who are in agribusiness across the cotton and fruits and vegetables value chains.

Through the lens of two women farmers who participated in the dialogues, we feature the short narrative on some of the interventions implemented by Solidaridad, aimed at amplifying the voices and needs of women in agri-business in related commodity value chains. These women's stories are aimed to further help us package policy and advocacy interventions through a workable framework and theory of change, including tools for program engagement that is inclusive, robust and holistic.

The two women agri-entrepreneurs featured below are part of Solidaridad's target of 50% women lead farmers across our commodity interventions. As part of their participation in our Programmes, they were empowered with training and information aimed at capacitating other farmers in their community on good agricultural practices, access to markets, technology and finance, inputs use and other commodity enhancing skills and knowledge.

3.3.1 Women in Agri-business: Stories of Change

Although women make up the larger share of the informal businesses and workforce across these sectors, value addition business opportunities are limited. This leads to lower incomes, unfair value distribution, difficult labour conditions and insecure livelihoods. Furthermore, the gender-specific barriers to engaging in high value business hampers productivity and inclusive economic growth. Increasing voice and accountability remains challenging even in democratic systems, and women face particular obstacles in making their voices heard. Central to the GESI dialogues is the collection and construction of stories based on female end-user archetypes who are in agribusiness across the tea, cotton and fruits and vegetables value chains.

Through the lens of two women farmers, we feature some of the interventions implemented by Solidaridad aimed at amplifying the voices and needs of women in agri-business and related commodity value chains. These women's challenges will help us to package policy and advocacy interventions through a workable framework and theory of change, including tools for inclusive program engagement in an inclusive and holistic way. These two women lead farmers¹ are part of Solidaridad's target of 50% women lead farmers across our commodity interventions. As part of their participation in our Programmes, they were empowered with training and information aimed at capacitating other farmers in their community on good agricultural practices, access to markets, inputs use and other commodity specific information.

Farmer 1

Mrs Melissa K is a 40 year old woman whose main crops are maize, cabbage, onion and okra. She lives in rural Mazabuka, Zambia with her family. Through the fruits and vegetables Programme, she received agricultural training and knowledge on how to grow and maintain her crops, organic farming, biological pest management, Global Gap and Food safety training. Additional training includes good soil preparation and how organic way of farming has can result in reduced farming input expenditure. She however reiterated that despite the valiant efforts in training, challenges still exist pertaining to suitable market access, transportation for taking goods to markets, irrigation, water harvesting and financial literacy, specifically how to use money wisely.

Farmer 2

Mrs Betsy C is a lead farmer living in Chongwe, Zambia. She is 44 years old and she grows tomatoes, rape, maize and soya. Aside from food safety training received from Solidaridad, she has been capacitated on

¹ The names of the farmers have been replaced with pseudo names to keep their identity anonymous.

chemical spraying techniques, disease and pest management and general good agronomic practices which she is currently implementing on her farm. The main challenge for her is the aspect of marketing and selling her produce, the problem of market access and being in control of the prices of her produce which are often dictated by middlemen. Secondary issues include access to water sources for irrigation and boreholes.

In response to the women's struggles shared through the GESI dialogues, our Reclaim Sustainability! Programme, Solidaridad will work towards increasing women and youth farmers' ability to stand up for their economic rights and claim fair value propositions for their products and produce, and access better trade positions across supply chains. Our stance is that there can be no genuine sustainability when the majority of the people who produce our local food products, who are women, continue living in poverty and are left out across agri-business value chains. The dialogues have also validated the need to advocate for inclusive technologies, policies, and business models that source out from women producers, inclusive trade, and investments. From an inclusivity perspective, we see real opportunities for a strong business case for companies to support women producers towards transformative economic growth. Successful businesses depend on open, inclusive, and equal rights-respecting societies.

3.3.2 Women Empowerment in the Food Sector

In Zambia, Solidaridad is currently supporting 16 clusters of farmers within the fruit and vegetable Programme in Chongwe and Mazabuka. Overall, more than 40% of the Project participants are women who receive capacity building in various skills, including leadership training. Land tenure still remains a critical issue in the country as some traditional rulers do not allow traditional land to be converted to titled land. This blocks the advantages that come with titled land such as commercial borrowing for farming enterprise development. Unfavourable land tenure rights make it difficult for women to own land for farming. In addition to this, technology uptake amongst women producers remains very low. This includes the use of smart phones in the implementation of smart agricultural interventions in Katete. Other prevailing challenges include cultural and social beliefs that favour men in leadership responsibilities in the clusters – mostly because women in the groups do not know how to read or write. This makes it difficult for them to compete with their male counterparts, especially in the adoption of new knowledge and skills.

Despite these challenges, the project has successfully incorporated women farmers to participate in the soy seed credit scheme, which gives them access to certified soy seed to improve on their production, yield, financial income and livelihood. The project also implemented a few technological innovations with the participation of women lead farmers to deliver knowledge to the soy farmers on good record keeping for successful soy production. Both the Soy project and the fruit and vegetable projects have successfully facilitated the adoption of women as lead farmers in their various clusters, and is promoting women farmers to set up commercial vegetable nurseries for income generation through the sale of vegetable seedlings. The fruit and vegetable project also facilitated the financial literacy training for the women farmers in various clusters.

Main Outcome

In promoting the gender business case, we will develop score cards to promote socially responsible companies. This will encourage companies across value chains to be inclusive in their business practices, and give them a competitive edge over companies lagging behind. The dialogues also reveal the need to engage agri-tech or innovation companies to play a positive role, or to become frontrunners, in developing gender sensitive technologies and innovations. These types of frontrunner businesses and tech companies will be key allies for our program to illustrate what's possible and set an example for others. In doing so, we will achieve genuine inclusivity and sustainability on a large scale as this not only requires supporting

women and youth producers but also stimulating an enabling policy environment at the market and industry level. Change will also be achieved through our multi-stakeholder engagement approach at both local communities and national levels. This is key in enabling our inclusivity advocacy and policy efforts for women and youth in agri-agribusiness.

3.4 GESI Roadmap/Framework

To achieve its higher-level objectives, as outlined above, the voice amplification dialogues in Zambia focused on cotton and sustainable local healthy food systems (e.g horticulture). These engagements formed the basis for future initiatives around amplification of voices in civil society, gender and social inclusion advocacy, and acceleration of disruptive innovations. In particular, the GESI dialogues managed to achieve the objective of co-creating contextually relevant and inclusive interventions targeting women and youth in agri-business, and in understanding how these initiatives can either be initiated, or sustained in collaboration with local multi-stakeholder partners, including women and youth producers.

The following is a roadmap of interventions emanating from the GESI dialogues. Given the short period of the UU initiative, these are ‘quick wins’ which can be incorporated into Solidaridad’s existing RS! Programme interventions or in collaboration with [Ukama Ustawi (UU)’s] other work packages (WPs).

3.4.1 GESI Roadmap

Intervention	Impact on gender empowerment	Resources required to adopt the recommendation
Identify and collaborate with gender sensitive agri-business Mentors to support women and youth with agro-business advisory Information (targeting women led agri-businesses, cooperatives, start-ups, SMEs etc)	High	Agri-Business mentors and coaches across supply chains. Potential link with WP 3
Establish youth and women self-help saving groups (SHG) that facilitate access to local finance	Medium/High	Local Savings Group Programmes and resources
Support Gender Sensitive Innovations and Agri-Tech Services e.g mechanization, and enablers for irrigation	Medium	Link with UU WP1 initiatives
Work closely with private sector investors, financial institutions, corporates to promote inclusivity trade policies/finance models - and establish score cards for these to create inclusivity competitiveness	Medium	Current Programme activities Link with UU WP3
Launch and operate incubation and acceleration program that focuses on value added products, including grants for women and youth winners, and demo day for	High	Entrepreneurship training materials Link with UU WP3

investor matchmaking activities.		
Establish a local policy hub that facilitates women and youth participation in policy dialogues and access to information	Medium/high	WP 4 linkages Solidaridad's MSP platforms

3.4.2 Actionable Pathways to GESI-informed agri-business ecosystem

The following three complimentary and mutually reinforcing Theory of Change (ToC) and Pathways proposed herein borrow from Solidaridad's latest Pathways to Prosperity Programme; whose overall vision is to see producers and workers thrive by participating in supply chains that are economically profitable, socially responsible and environmentally sound. These are very much relevant and well suited to respond to issues raised during the voice amplification dialogues, and the stories shared by the two women as reflected in this report. Furthermore, there is clear need to achieve inclusive services to avoid (un)intentional exclusion of women, youth and marginalised groups across agri-value chains. Achievement of true gender transformation in the agriculture sector will require tailor made strategies, tools and resources to enhance gender and social sensitivity among multiple sectors and players. This will ensure that products, technologies, inputs, and services are equally accessible for and benefit men, women, and youth. Concurrently, women and youth-specific capacity-building training such as financial literacy, agri-business and value addition access and management, and leadership skills and support with accessing (IT) technologies, are built into the proposed ToC and proposed interventions.



Theory of Change: Market Connection Systems

Theory based assumptions

1. *If* buyers are aware that products can only be sustainable when producers at the beginning of the value chain are rewarded and nature is protected *and* consumers demand that buyers pay a fair price for products, *then* buyers are willing to pay for sustainability

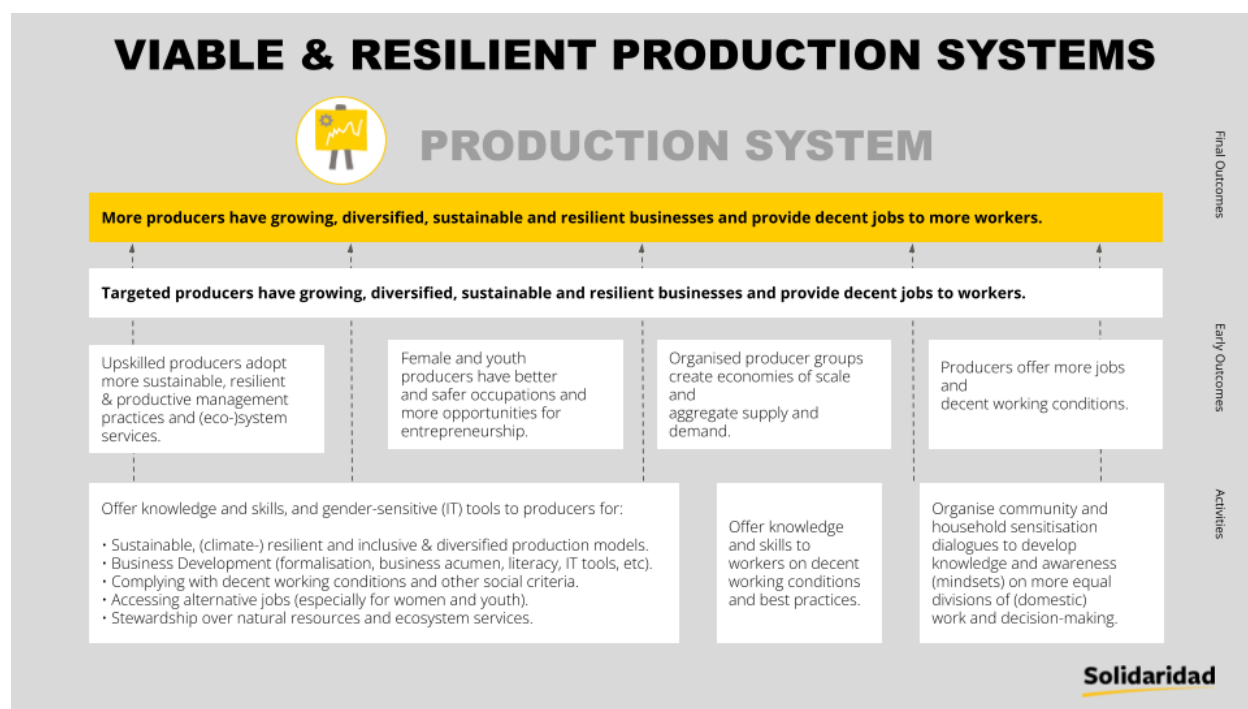
2. *If* producers can verify their sustainable products through digital tools, *then* buyers will trust that it is a sustainable product *and* producers get rewarded for this
3. *And If* value chain relations become more equitable *and* buyers adopt fair sourcing, trade and pricing policies and practices, *then* producers will be able to develop more viable businesses *and* barriers that lead to exclusionary or discriminatory market practices for women and youth are reduced
4. *If* Solidaridad raises awareness and support the marketplaces to match supply and demand for sustainable and inclusive products, *then* trade relations will develop and sustain over time

Preconditions to succeed / risks assessment

5. (Dominant) market players are willing to change and adopt and mainstream more sustainable purchasing policies
6. Commodity prices are not disrupted by global economic shocks, affecting the ability and willingness to source and invest in sustainable production
7. There are no severe tensions, disbalanced power dynamics, or (latent) conflicts between producers and buyers

Proposed ToC 1: (source: Solidaridad P2P Programme)

This pathway addresses the need for women and youth farmers being enabled to meet stringent market requirements, and the need for buyers to provide inclusive business investments. This will help solve the problems rooted in **unequal power dynamics** and the lack of inclusive **business models** to trade, and sourcing sustainably and offer fair prices for women and youth products/produce.



Proposed ToC 2: (source: Solidaridad P2P Programme)

Theory based Assumptions

1. *If* farmers understand the benefits of improved practices and have access to inputs, *then* they are willing to invest in them

2. *If data can be funnelled back, then producers will be incentivised to (continue to) adopt smart practices*
3. *If farmers are onboarded, sensitised and have gained awareness, then their motivation to engage in sustainable production methods increases*

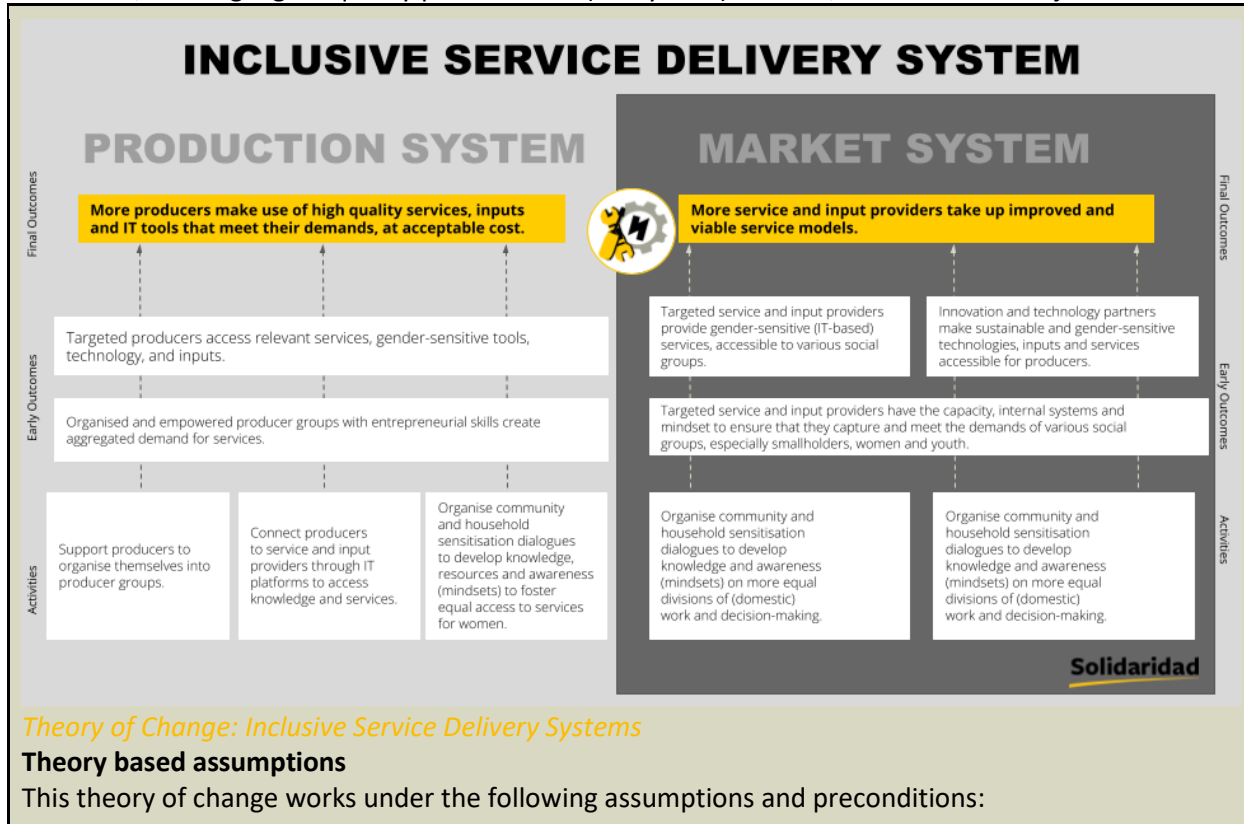
Preconditions to succeed / risks assessment

4. Extreme weather events do not disproportionately affect yields
5. Community-based tensions or conflicts do not occur or severely affect land ownership or land management
6. Availability and reasonable prices of farm inputs, including finance
7. Sufficient time and incentives create acceptance and willingness for women and youth to equally participate and benefit in formal supply chains

This pathway focuses on addressing the root causes that lie underneath the current vulnerable production systems which include:

1. Limited availability resilient production systems
2. Women and youth producers’ lack of capacity, knowledge and entrepreneurial skills and mindsets,
3. Shortage of decent work and agri- opportunities (esp for youth)
4. Lacking stewardship over resources to ensure ecosystem services

To address these root causes, there is a need to offer rich (innovative) knowledge transfer and skills building to producers, their workers and local communities in order for producers and their workforces to adopt sustainable (climate) smart production models to increase and diversify their income and optimise their businesses, offering higher quality products and (ecosystem) services, and more decent jobs.



1. *If producers (men, women, youth) are trained on sustainable production practices, then they are aware of the benefit of and need for quality inputs and services to professionalise and maintain their businesses and they will demand inclusive and sustainable services and inputs from service providers*
2. *If producers have access to sustainable and inclusive services and inputs, then they are better able to maintain their sustainable performance*
3. *If service providers are accessing data through digital applications, then they will use this data to improve their services and better match with various producer needs*
4. *If producers have access to digital tools, and women and youth receive tailored digital literacy training to equally access and use digital tools, then all producers will use this data to improve their sustainable practices*

Preconditions to succeed / risks assessment

5. There are no severe tensions, disbalanced power dynamics, or (latent) conflicts between producers and service providers
6. Sufficient time and incentives create acceptance and willingness for women and youth to equally participate and benefit from service delivery
7. Private sector and corporate-based service delivery models do not out-play individual MSME service/input providers
8. Subsidised service and input delivery models do not outcompete or frustrate the development of MSME-based service delivery
9. There are no policy barriers e.g. in terms of high taxes for service providers, insecurity or poor governance barriers
10. There are no financial barriers for service provider to invest or offer better services

Proposed ToC 3: (source: Solidaridad P2P Programme)

This pathway seeks to address the key barriers to develop, strengthen and maintain a sustainable and profitable agri-business, which are:

- i) weak or absent inclusive service delivery and technology that responds to the needs of the various target groups
- ii) a poorly organised producer base

Therefore supporting the organization of women and youth producer base with enhanced entrepreneurial skills and governance to create demand for services is essential. In addition, dedicated dialogues at household and community level that are intended to raise awareness and opportunities for youth and women to equitably access services should be considered.

Furthermore, in support of stronger and more gender inclusive service delivery, support for service and knowledge providers and innovation hubs to develop a business in service delivery to ensure farmers' enhanced and lasting access to relevant technology, (financial) inputs, products, and services are needed. Such services include, for instance, farm inputs provision (e.g., seedlings, planting materials, agrochemicals, fertiliser, financial services, loans, light tools, and equipment), on-farm services (planting, farm maintenance, harvesting, haulage, etc), processing services; trade and marketing services, and information services as well as formalisation and certification support (business registration, permits, local certification, international certification).

4. PROJECT OUTPUTS

- a) Gender actors/ partners in Zambia collaboratively produce and share GESI policy issues. This was done during the dialogues
- b) A GESI framework and approach that guides and standardizes all GESI policy and advocacy activities is developed.
- c) Youth and women are trained on Agri-business ecosystem policies, and investments, in Zambia and are GESI-informed

During the 2022 period, Solidaridad influenced 15 policies through various advocacy initiatives that include 27 multi-stakeholder dialogues and submission of 15 policy recommendations including Cotton and Africa Foods (fruits and vegetables) sectors. In Zambia and across our other Southern Africa focus countries, we engaged on mobilising supply chain actors to come together in a structured and inclusive way to harmonise their efforts in improving the performance of the cotton and Africa Foods sectors. Studies were conducted to further unearth gender and social inclusion challenges, policy obstacles, and opportunities in these sectors. Furthermore, GESI dialogues which were convened with government departments at local levels, farmers, farmer representatives and communities and ginner companies led to a resolution to institute structured multi stakeholder dialogues at local levels. National multi-Stakeholder Platforms were also convened to discuss and to prioritise key policy issues based on the baseline and Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) reports. Capacity building initiatives were also conducted to strengthen Civil Society Organisations' and the multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) that have become a vehicle through which the voice of farmers and other industry stakeholder influence policy.

5. OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Embedded in the GESI dialogues is the effort to change the underlying restrictive norms and mindsets towards more inclusive, resilient and sustainable production and trade systems, focusing on increasing equal access to resources, more equal control and more equal benefit from these resources. Where especially restrictive norms exist across agri value chains, the dialogues revealed the need to facilitate a comprehensive household approach that prioritises community dialogues that challenge restrictive norms such as the traditional gendered division of labor, limited mobility of rural women, household decision-making, and access to and control over resources. Specifically, jointly engaging both women and men in interventions to promote gradual changes in men's and women's perceptions of traditional gender roles and responsibilities can lead to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes at all levels of the supply chain. In order to achieve true gender transformation change as envisioned under UU's WP5, UU should consider increasing support towards a system change process that involves multiple partnerships across the other UU work packages. Adequate budget allocations for the proposed interventions (as proposed above), need to be considered in order to address the root causes of inclusivity problems. Borrowing from Solidaridad's P2P Programme, we would like to recommend collaboration with IMWI in supporting for the following accelerators or drivers that are instrumental to ensuring our transformative gender impact will be sustained over time. Herein, we have identified five important **core drivers** for effective change:

1. Digital Solutions and new technologies offer ample opportunities for transformative change, by facilitating transparency and verification, enabling fair market connection, and facilitating outreach to youth and women producers with knowledge, intelligence, and services.
2. Climate Action, climate-smart and regenerative agricultural practices, and the sale of carbon credits can be very beneficial for women smallholder farmers and open up interesting opportunities to improve livelihoods.

3. Gender and Social Inclusion is a necessity and good for business and society as inclusive approaches aim to catalyze the economic potential of women and youth. Additionally, women and youth empowerment is key to achieving the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 5, 8, and 10).
4. Learning and Innovation is an essential driver to constantly improve, be agile, and benefit from new developments and insights leading to effective programming and lasting results.
5. Public Private Partnerships are a key driver to make supply chains more inclusive and sustainable, by providing gender sensitive technology and innovation, applying sustainable sourcing principles at scale.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

International Water Management Institute (IWMI)

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) is an international, research-for-development organization that works with governments, civil society and the private sector to solve water problems in developing countries and scale up solutions. Through partnership, IWMI combines research on the sustainable use of water and land resources, knowledge services and products with capacity strengthening, dialogue and policy analysis to support implementation of water management solutions for agriculture, ecosystems, climate change and inclusive economic growth. Headquartered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, IWMI is a CGIAR Research Center with offices in 15 countries and a global network of scientists operating in more than 55 countries.

CGIAR

CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food-secure future. CGIAR science is dedicated to transforming food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis. Its research is carried out by 13 CGIAR Centers/Alliances in close collaboration with hundreds of partners, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, development organizations and the private sector. We would like to thank all funders who support this research through their contributions to the CGIAR Trust Fund: www.cgiar.org/funders. To learn more about Ukama Ustawi and other initiatives in the CGIAR research portfolio, please visit www.cgiar.org/cgiar-portfolio.