

Working Paper

Investment and Cultivation Strategies for Women and Youth Inclusion: Cases from On-farm, Off-farm and Non-farm Activities in Ethiopia and Mali

Likimyelesh Nigussie, Assitan Diallo and Thai Thi Minh



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GO	Government Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
SaWeL	Safeguarding Sahelian Wetlands for Food Security
VCD	Value Chain Development

Summary

Africa's agriculture sector is vital for food security, employment, and economic growth. Women and young people, who contribute to innovation, diversification, and income, face limited opportunities in the sector due to social and economic power imbalances. This disparity wastes resources and impedes agricultural value chain development (VCD). Inclusive VCD aims to empower women, men and youth from diverse social groups and strengthen the agriculture sector. However, the literature on inclusive VCD in Africa is limited due to urban biases, and the lack of a framework to address gender inequality and poverty. This study explores how livelihood assets, strategies for accessing the assets, and enabling and discouraging factors in the value chain shapes the inclusion of women and youth in on-farm, off-farm and non-farm activities. It is based on the Safeguarding Sahelian Wetlands for Food Security (SaWeL) program that aims to make the market work for the poor through inclusive VCD in the Ziway-Shalla Sub-basin of Ethiopia, and Wegnia and Sourou basins in Mali. A qualitative dataset of 32 focus group discussions, 48 key informant interviews and 40 in-depth interviews were analyzed. We identified investment and cultivation inclusion strategies

that demonstrates how women and youth from diverse social groups actualize business opportunities, overcome challenges and create new opportunities for inclusion. Investment strategies involve women and youth from better-off households with good access to natural, social, political and physical capital for capital-intensive roles. On the other hand, cultivation strategies involve women and youth from resource-poor households who can harness natural, social and political capital to participate in off-farm and non-farm activities. Our results show that women and youth who adopt either one of the strategies are encouraged by good support from social networks, cooperatives, Government Organizations, Nongovernmental Organizations and private sector actors. However, access to productive resources and services for women and youth adopting any strategies is hampered by gender and intergenerational norms, poverty and insufficient institutional capacity. We argue that it is essential to understand how social disparities and local environments interact to inform the design and implementation of inclusive value chains. Additionally, inclusive value chains necessitate building capacities of institutions at different scales.

Investment and Cultivation Strategies for Women and Youth Inclusion: Cases from On-farm, Off-farm and Non-Farm Activities in Ethiopia and Mali

Likimyelesh Nigussie, Assitan Diallo and Thai Thi Minh

Introduction

Agriculture is a vital sector in Africa that provides food security, employment and economic growth. Women and young people, who make up a large portion of the population and workforce in the continent, play important roles in the agriculture sector (Fofack 2020). They contribute to the increase of income and resiliency by innovating, diversifying and adding value to agricultural products (Njiraini et al. 2018). African women are actively involved in various aspects of agriculture, including crop cultivation, livestock rearing and postharvest processing. The youth, with their energy and creativity, are contributing as farmers, laborers, entrepreneurs and leaders in agricultural enterprises, and injecting new ideas and innovations into the agriculture sector (Maisule et al. 2023).

Despite their contributions, women and young people face limited opportunities to engage in profitable transactions due to social and economic power imbalances that hinder access to productive resources and participation in cooperatives (Omeje et al. 2020). Moreover, they are often excluded from decision-making processes which further restricts their ability to improve their lives, and contribute to food security and nutrition (Njiraini et al. 2018; te Lintelo 2012). Additionally, the lack of social support and the focus on production in existing agricultural initiatives discourages young people from pursuing careers in agriculture (Geza et al. 2021). The gender and youth disparity in the agriculture sector not only wastes valuable resources but also impedes the development of the agricultural value chain leading to significant adverse economic consequences (Dacizejnullahi 2014).

One essential approach to enhance economic growth and agricultural development is through inclusive value chain development (VCD) (Habaradas and Mia 2021). VCD has the potential to empower small-scale farmers and advance the agriculture sector (De Brauw and Bulte 2021) by including excluded players, such as female business owners, in value chains (Kaag et al. 2019). Moreover, VCD can greatly empower women and improve their quality of life (Christian et al. 2013). By providing support for participation in VCD, women and young people can overcome obstacles, unlock their economic potential and achieve their aspirations. African governments are now taking steps to recognize and amplify the contributions of women and young people to economic progress. They are implementing policies and initiatives that promote gender empowerment, equality and the development of inclusive value chains (Kubik 2022).

Although research on VCD involving women and youth has been increasing, the existing literature fails to provide an effective framework for addressing gender inequality and the poverty conditions experienced by women in low-income countries (Kini 2022). Furthermore, while there is a growing emphasis on encouraging women's participation in VCD, there remains a need for more data to establish a causal relationship between involvement and empowerment (Ihalainen et al. 2021). Also, there is a lack of understanding regarding African youth participation in inclusive VCD, mainly due to urban biases (Arslan et al. 2021). This study aimed to fill these gaps by shedding light on the livelihood assets and access mechanisms women and young people utilize to engage in VCD. The study sought to understand how women and youth from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds participate in agricultural, off-farm and non-farm activities, and how they overcome challenges to create new opportunities for inclusion. The study also emphasized the importance of protecting the environment while pursuing business activities.

It specifically asked:

- What factors encourage the participation of women and young people from various social groups in agricultural surplus production and off-farm and non-farm activities?
- What are the enabling and disabling factors that determine the inclusion of these social groups?
- What combination of livelihood assets, access mechanisms and contextual factors shape the inclusion strategy of these social groups?

Using an integrated livelihood (Ellis 2001; Shaffer 2008) and access (Ribot and Peluso 2003) framework, we presented a qualitative analysis of women and youth inclusion in the Safeguarding Sahelian Wetlands for Food Security (SaWeL) program that was designed to address sustainable agricultural water management challenges in the Sahelian eco-region. The program's intervention was focused on 1) Ecological Sustainable Agricultural Water Management (ESAWM); and 2) Make Market Work for the Poor (M4P), with a specific emphasis on the inclusion of women and youth from diverse socioeconomic groups in the agricultural value chain. These interventions seek to enhance the value of agricultural products produced by smallholders, thereby creating market opportunities. The program places significant importance on the inclusion of the most vulnerable social groups. Since the program's outset, women and youth from diverse socioeconomic

groups have been recognized as the most marginalized and excluded groups when it comes to accessing resources and having agency. Therefore, their inclusion is a top priority for the program. To achieve this, SaWeL focused on understanding the barriers that prevent women and youth from participating fully, as well as identifying pathways to address the issues related to access, control and agency over productive resources and services.

We closely examined drivers of unequal access to resources, services and agencies such as gender

norms, values and institutional capacities. Regarding the productive work of women and young people and the level of market profitability, perspectives in the entrepreneurial environment and the factors for income loss were considered. The extent to which the government's support and public policies make any difference was also an essential consideration of this study. The prevailing context is that public policies and investments seek to enable an environment for improved landscape, water and market management systems.

Analytical Framework

An agricultural marketing cooperative is “*an association of farmers who voluntarily cooperate to pool their production for sale.*” (Agbo et al. 2015). Landscape restoration is “*a long-term process of regaining ecological integrity and enhancing human well-being across an unproductive, fragmented and degraded landscape.*” (Lamb 2014; Chazdon et al. 2017). In our context, agribusiness includes farm (surplus agricultural production), off-farm and non-farm activities. “*Inclusivity aims to give those who have never had the opportunity to participate in processes affecting their livelihoods, the capacity to do so and to encourage shared actions and decision-making*” (Phiri et al. 2022: 4). Hence, the inclusion of marginalized groups in agricultural marketing cooperatives and landscape restoration initiatives requires removing contextual barriers and enhancing incentives by supporting the system (Sajuyigbe 2017). Accordingly, the inclusion of women and young people in agribusinesses reflects how they use their resources and opportunities, overcome obstacles, and create new opportunities to keep and help grow their agribusinesses.

The analytical unit for the study is individual women and youth farmers with a set of livelihood assets and abilities (or access actions) to participate in agribusinesses and benefit from access to the market. These individuals are embedded within a household, obtaining different

livelihood assets such as economic, natural, physical, human, social, cultural and political capital. Women and youth-inclusive agribusiness also involve multiple actors operating at different functions of the agricultural value chain (Minh et al. 2021). These functions influence the ability of women and youth to access livelihood assets and benefit from participation in agribusiness. To understand how diverse women and youth groups can harness the opportunities in agribusiness, an insight into the enabling environment and the power relations that shape the inclusion of women and youth groups is required. Figure 1 presents a framework to analyze the inclusion of marginalized women and youth groups in agribusinesses.

Factors that influence the participation of diverse women and youth groups in agribusiness such as policy frameworks, risks, business environments, and support from government organizations (GOs) and development partners are also investigated. The inclusion of diverse women and youth groups in agribusiness is attributed to livelihood assets, opportunity structures and enabling environment factors. Women and youth use their livelihood assets to engage in diverse opportunities in agribusiness while they control, keep and create access to resources to continue and leverage their engagement. Such ability is referred to as access control, access maintenance and access gaining (Ribot and Peluso 2003).

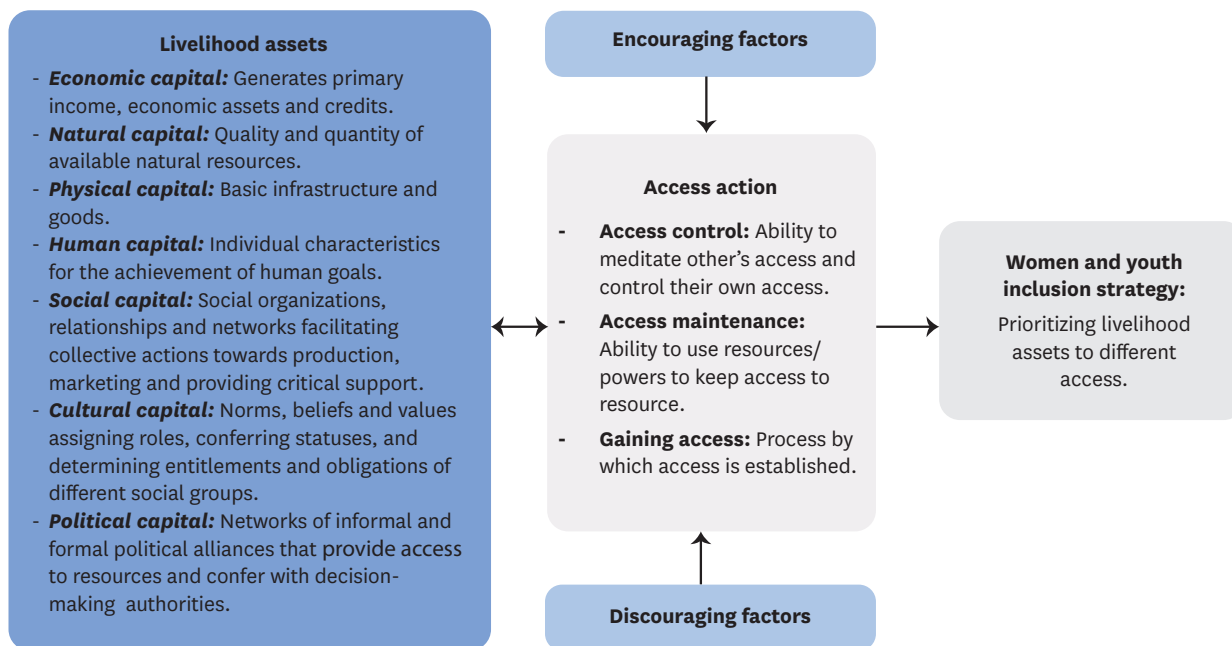


Figure 1. Analytical framework.

Source: Adopted from Hiwasaki and Minh (2022).

Methodology

Study Sites and Data Collection

Studies were conducted in SaWeL program sites (Figure 2). First, the Tiyo and Ziway Dugda districts are situated in the Ethiopian Central Rift Valley. The dominant livelihood activity in the districts is a mixed crop-livestock farming system. Crop production includes rainfed farming and irrigation (in areas where water is available). Second, Wegnia and Sourou are in Mali. Wegnia is in the southern Sudanese zone of Kolokani around Lake Wegnia in Mali. Agriculture is mainly

subsistence farming, whereas most families are involved in commercial vegetable gardening. The Sourou is in the Sourou River Valley in the central Sahelian zone of Mopti. It has excellent potential for irrigable land, forestry, wildlife and fisheries. These cases were selected due to two reasons. First, it allows for the examination of commonalities and disparities across various settings and enables the recognition of underlying patterns and developments that may not be apparent when focusing solely on a single location. Second, these sites are accessible for primary data collection.

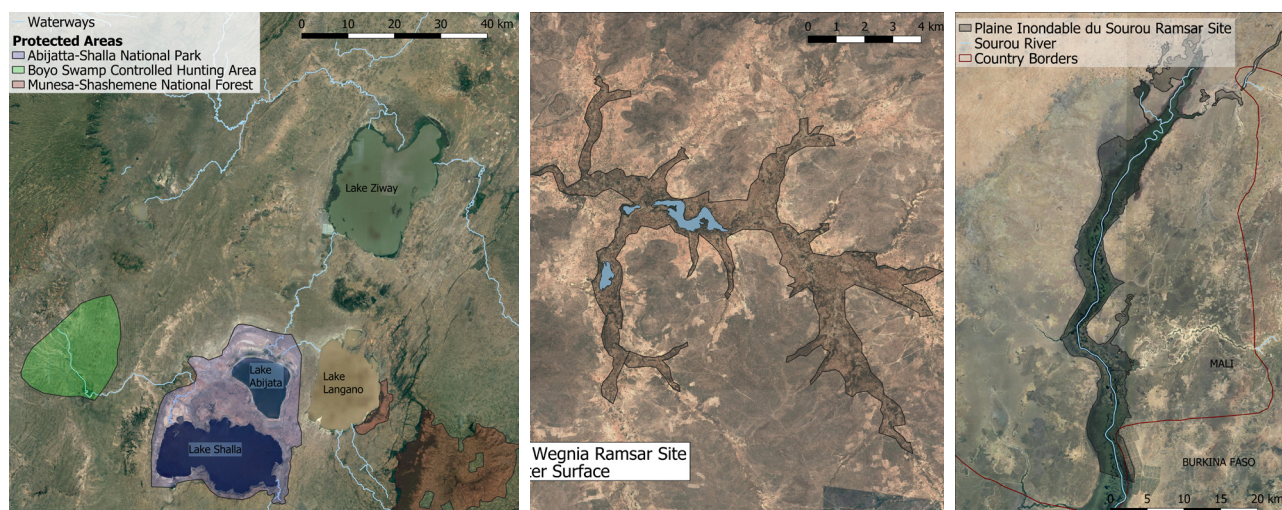


Figure 2. Map of Ziway Shalla Basin in Ethiopia (left), and Lac Wegnia (middle) and Sourou Basin (right) in Mali.

Source: Hydrosolutions Ltd.

For this study, both primary and secondary data were collected. Secondary data was drawn from a short literature review and was made of background information on VCD, agriculture, socioeconomic development, local governance and gender relations in the countries. Primary data was collected using focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual semi-structured interviews. A total of 291 individuals participated in the study. Among these, 131 were from Mali in Wegnia (Kolokani and Kati) and Sourou (Koro and Bankass), including 15 government office agents, 10 private sector actors, 11 community leaders, 7 key informants from civil society organizations and 88 individuals from the study communities comprising of men, women and youth. In Ethiopia, 160 individuals including 10 government agency officials, six private sector actors and 144 individuals from the Tiyo and Ziway Dugda districts representing men, women and youth from diverse groups participated.

Sixteen FGDs in Ethiopia and seven FGDs in Mali were conducted with adult men, adult women, young men and young women from better-off and resource-poor households. Participants were selected by consulting the local government and using selection criteria such as age, gender, wealth status, livelihood activities and geographic location (applies for all). In each FGD, a maximum of eight people participated. Key issues that were covered in the FGD discussions were related to: 1) livelihood activities and practices; 2) access to productive resources, services and markets; 3) the types of, and the roles played during collective actions and landscape restoration.

The interviews were conducted using questionnaires developed for specific types of respondents depending on their involvement as agricultural producers, service providers, or civil society representatives. The data collection was carried out by enumerators with qualitative research experience. The enumerators were trained to familiarize themselves with the tools. The interviews and FGDs were conducted to gain in-depth insights into experiences, opportunities and barriers to women and youth participating in surplus production, as well as off-farm and non-farm activities in landscape restoration. The interviews and FGDs with men, women and youth informants were guided by the same module. Government technical staff, value chain actors and community leaders were asked about policies and interventions for the inclusion of youth and women, gender equality and governance of resources. Specifics of the private sector were covered through questions about their investment in agribusiness, services and perceptions of women and youth inclusion in their

services. The semi-structured interviews and FGDs were conducted in local languages and then translated into English for data analysis. For Mali, the interviews and FGDs were translated into French before they were translated into English.

Data Analysis

Inductive qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff 2018) was used for the data analysis. Based on the analytical framework, a coding scheme was developed that captured livelihood assets, access and the factors in the enabling environment that influenced the inclusion of women and youth in surplus agricultural production and off-farm and non-farm activities. Accordingly, the data was first classified into seven types of capital: economic, natural, physical, human, social, cultural and political. The compilation process consisted of grouping the data into tables for each type of capital, listing the corresponding assets and their sources (one or more) for the different women and youth groups. Then, a list of enabling factors (opportunities/conditions) that would allow access to the capital and disincentives that may prevent access was made. Additional categories of data were identified and listed to analyze livelihood access by assessing the capital involved in controlling, maintaining and gaining access.

Livelihood access control is informed through assessing what types of resources (financial assets, land, agricultural materials and inputs) are invested in, at the onset of an agribusiness. This would involve examining the constraints and opportunities relative to capital access and accumulation for starting an agribusiness. To understand access maintenance, we assessed existing agribusinesses to analyze the types and origins of assets utilized to maintain consistent market access and opportunities for revenue-generating activities in the agribusiness sector. Access gain is informed through analysis of resources and mechanisms used to enable new opportunities and start or run successful agribusinesses. Changes in access and their impact on roles and practices are examined to understand access gain.

Based on the analysis, we identified two types of inclusion: 1) investment strategy for inclusion in surplus agricultural production; and 2) cultivation strategy for inclusion in off-farm and non-farm activities. The analysis focuses on the availability and access of various capital for participation, opportunities for capacity building and relevant information. Also, it is linked to analyzing factors that may promote or inhibit participation in the two inclusion strategies that would be scrutinized for impact.

Women and Youth Inclusion in Ethiopia's Agriculture VCD Policies

Women and youth are important contributors to Ethiopia's agriculture sector. However, they face unique challenges that hinder their ability to benefit from the sector. Gebremedhin et al. (2016) and Njiraini et al. (2018) noted the challenges that women face in Ethiopian agricultural value chains, including limited access to resources (such as land and information), financial marginalization, cultural barriers and a male-dominated culture. In addition, traditional development strategies, according to Gebremedhin et al. (2016), usually excludes women, but legislative measures are being taken to improve their contributions to economic growth. The Government of Ethiopia implemented a gender equality strategy for Ethiopia's agriculture sector and relevant guidelines to increase their access to and control over assets, skills, knowledge and decision-making roles (MoANR 2017a). However, Tsige et al. (2020) discovered that the implementation of policies often neglects the needs of women and there is a lack of coordinated efforts and strategies to facilitate the integration of gender considerations. Additionally, Nigussie et al. (2023) identified insufficient institutional capabilities at various levels, including household, communal, market and policy levels, as obstacles to the effective implementation of gender-related policies, particularly within the irrigation sector. These imply the need for interventions that promote and support the participation of women and youth. In this regard, Gebremedhin et al. (2016) and Belete (2019) discussed the importance of inclusive VCD to increase access to resources, innovation, technologies and knowledge for women and the youth.

Regarding the youth in Ethiopia, using the official definition of youth as persons aged 15 – 29, the rate of national youth unemployment in 2021 was 11.8% (CSA 2021). To address issues of youth unemployment and underemployment, policies such as the National Youth Policy (MoYSC 2004) and the Rural Job Opportunity Creation Strategy (MoANR 2017b) are in place. To achieve youth inclusive agriculture VCD, policies and strategies for youth tend to focus on investments in skill development, financial inclusion and increased land access for youth. Specifically, the Rural Job Opportunity Creation Strategy (MoANR 2017b) encourages the use of family land, the distribution of communal and degraded land to enhance young people's access to land. To increase access to finance, the Rural Savings and Credit Cooperative laws (MoANR 2017b) prescribed special rural borrowing arrangements for youth. The Ethiopian Youth Revolving Fund (FDRE 2017) also aims to improve access to finance instruments. However, practical implementations of youth policies and strategies are challenged by limited

institutional capacities and a lack of data and information on the strengths and weaknesses of policy contexts (Getahun and Fetene 2020). Further, although the needs and aspirations of the youth differ based on multiple intersecting identities, the policies and strategies have gaps in treating youth as a homogeneous group that may reinforce the inequity in the sector (Yami et al. 2020).

Women and Youth Inclusion in Mali's Agriculture VCD Policies

Smallholders contribute the largest subsistent agricultural production and income generation in Mali, with significant disparities between gender categories. Adétonah et al. (2015) found that women in Mali do not have control over resources such as capital, land and decision-making resources. They rarely own property or have rights to private lands due to widespread prejudices, curtailing their ability to exploit and develop large pieces of land and access financial resources (Diallo 2019). They also have limited use and control of collective lands due to the duality around the access to land (state laws versus customary rules) in a highly patriarchal society (Diallo 2019). Weak capacities of public institutions and rigid patriarchal norms also challenge women's limited ownership and access to land, undermining women's productivity and profitability (Runezerwa 2019). Studies indicate unfavorable social norms and practices (such as primacy on family roles) deter women's productivity, mobility and representation in collective action and decision-making processes (Diallo 2019).

To address the issue, the Malian constitution, policies and strategies and international conventions (such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW],¹ which was ratified by the country, established a firm ground for the inclusion of women and youth in VCD. Policies such as the Agricultural Orientation Law (SGG 2006) stress equal fundamental rights, active citizenship and equitable access to the country's resources. The policies pay particular attention to improving women's access to land by allowing positive discrimination in the allocation of plots and promoting their organizations through capacity building. Further, the National Agricultural Water Management Policy² is set to benefit women and other vulnerable groups by guiding the creation of infrastructures and enhancing their access to agricultural water and inclusion in decision-making processes at all levels. However, the actual appropriation of the policies by all rural development actors is a significant challenge that remains to be met.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

² Politique Nationale de Maitrise de l'Eau Agricole / PNMEA

Results

Investment Strategy for Inclusion in Surplus Agricultural Production

Investment strategy is found when women and youth from diverse social groups leverage their livelihood assets and their access to invest in surplus agricultural production and maintain their business in agricultural marketing. In Mali, women and youth who adopt this strategy are dominantly from better-off households characterized by having large properties and equipment such as carts, plows, seeders, multi-cultivators, tractors and domestic animals (e.g., more than 100 heads of oxen and small ruminants). Their specific livelihood activities include vegetable gardening and irrigated rice production. This type of household develops viable economic activities characterized by cohesion, solidarity and fewer conflicts among household members.

In Ethiopia, these groups are from better-off households characterized by food sufficiency, having good access

to productive resources (such as land, oxen, and labor inputs) and savings from income. Their investments focus on surplus production of staple crops (e.g., wheat, teff, barley, haricot beans and fava beans) and irrigated crops (e.g., tomatoes, cabbages, onions and carrots). Surplus production in this study refers to a situation where crops, mostly high-value ones, are produced mainly for the market to generate income and ensure resources are utilized efficiently. Women and youth who can produce a substantial marketable surplus have more opportunities for marketing their products and generating income.

Across the study sites, women and youth adopting the investment strategy use land (owned or rented) and finances from social networks, cooperatives and financial institutions to invest in surplus agricultural production. The initial investment usually involves buying farm inputs and technologies and/or renting land. This indicates their ability to use existing economic, natural and social capital to control their access (Figure 3).

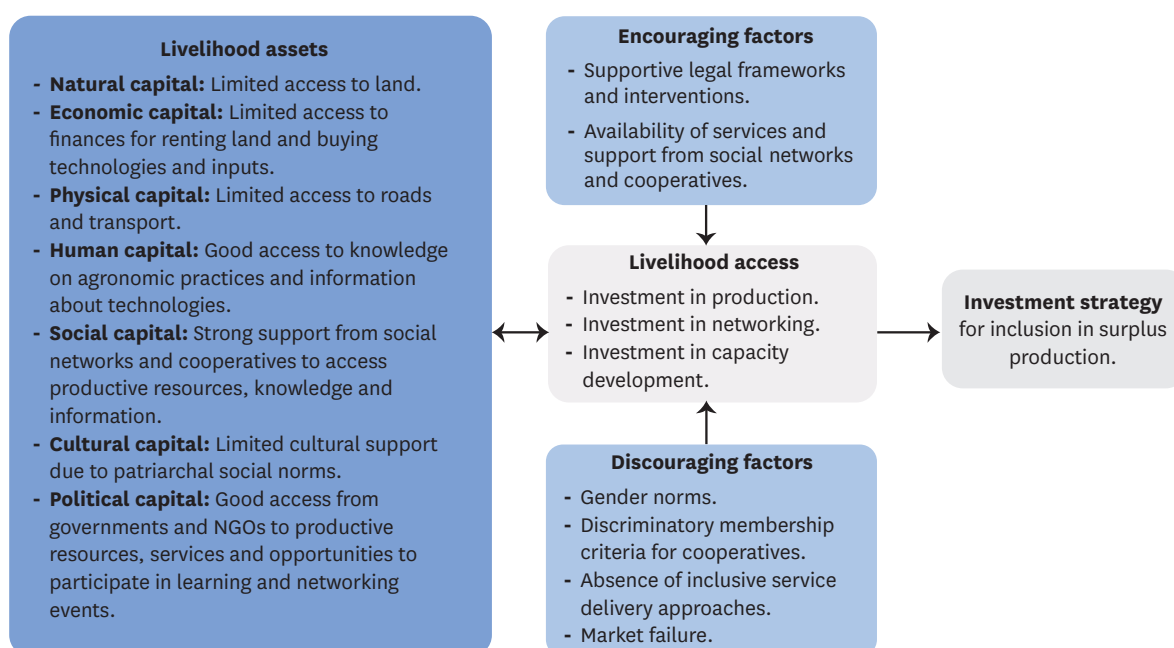


Figure 3. Investment strategy for inclusion in surplus production.

Source: Authors' creation.

To gain access to information, knowledge and networks, women and youth adopting this strategy use services from government organizations (GOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), private sector actors and their social networks (such as model farmers, families and neighbors). In Ethiopia, women and youth also use markets as a source of information about farm inputs and technologies, while in Mali local radio stations and private television stations dedicated to farming are used. This implies the ability of women and youth to use their political, physical and social capitals to search

and even create opportunities to gain access. Women and youth participate in cooperatives to keep their businesses going. These cooperatives allow them to gain opportunities to participate in income-generating activities and decision-making processes, and access farm inputs and opportunities for networking, learning and sharing. This reflects the ability of these social groups to use social and political capital to maintain access to businesses, thereby generating income. Women and youth adopting this strategy have support from social networks (such as friends, family and

neighbors) and cooperatives (social capital), as well as GOs and NGOs (political capital) to invest in surplus production. The support they get includes finance, farm inputs, information and knowledge. For example, GOs and NGOs in Mali support women, youth and people with disabilities from resource-poor households to engage in irrigated rice production and vegetable gardening by providing farm inputs, training and coaching (political capital). In Mali, women and youth adopting this strategy also have good access to local media, such as radio stations and private television stations dedicated to farming, to get information about modern farm technologies and practices (physical capital). In Ethiopia, they have good access to the market, which gives them opportunities to gain access to information on technologies and best practices. However, women and youth adopting this strategy have limited access to finance (economic capital) to rent land, and buy farm inputs and technologies. In addition, they have limited access to land (natural capital) due to poverty and patriarchal social norms (cultural capital) that limits their participation in surplus production of staples and cash crops. Specific to Mali, limited access to infrastructure facilities such as transport and storage facilities (physical capital), mainly due to poverty and patriarchal social norms (cultural capital), restricts their ability to gain access to the market.

Different factors encourage the engagement of women and youth from various social groups in surplus production and marketing. Supportive legal frameworks and interventions by GOs, NGOs, cooperatives, private sector actors and social networks encourage their participation in surplus production. In Ethiopia, for example, the Cooperative Societies Proclamation No. 985/2016 prescribes cooperatives to increase the active participation of women, youth and the disabled in their strategic and annual plans (FDRE 2016). The provision in Mali also prescribes the allocation of 30% of developed spaces to women, youth, the disabled, and men and women from resource-poor households to encourage their participation in surplus production. Additionally, the government of Mali encourages women and youth by providing subsidies and other kinds of support to improve their access to inputs and technologies.

The availability of cooperatives, private sector actors and social networks that provide women and youth opportunities to access resources, opportunities for capacity development and networking encourages their participation in surplus production. In Mali, for example, women and youth participating in irrigated rice production and vegetable gardening cooperatives have improved access to farm inputs, finance, training and coaching. Additionally, women and youth cooperative members have easy access to various means of transport (such as bicycles, motorcycles and donkey carts) to go to remote marketplaces. This benefit encourages them to become members of cooperatives. Results from Mali also show that women and youth have better chances of being

treated fairly and benefiting equitably from participating in cooperatives and village associations engaged in surplus production. In Ethiopia, women and youth cooperative members have better access to services including finance, advisory services, networking and opportunities to learn about modern farm inputs and technologies. Private sector actors in Mali support women and youth from resource-poor households, who cannot afford to buy inputs and get access to on-the-job training opportunities on cash, by providing credit. Support from social networks that improve access to finance, networking and access to information also encourage the participation of women and youth in surplus production.

Women and youth adopting these strategies face discouraging factors that limit their engagement in surplus production. These include gender and social norms, criteria for memberships in cooperatives, absence of inclusive approaches by GOs and NGOs, lack of tailored services and market failure. Gender norms that result in unequal distribution of power and labor negatively affect the participation of women and youth in surplus production. For example, due to the assumption that women and youth living with their parents are always in the care of some other person (be a husband, parents, or relatives), the inheritance system in both countries disfavors women in particular, which limits their ability to invest in surplus production. Gender and intergenerational norms that consider men as the head of the household (breadwinner), and the dominant decision-maker on high-value harvest and income also excludes women from land ownership. For example, in Mali, men who customarily own the land hold the right to retrieve the land women are using if needs be. In Ethiopia, Article 35 of the constitution grants men and women equal land and property rights (FDRE 1995). Due to customary law, women tend to have limited access to and control over land. Youths also have very small plots of land given to them by their families; even a significant number have no land. Although families are the dominant source of land, due to land fragmentation, they find it difficult to transfer land to their children. This challenge is amplified for young women, who have limited chances to inherit land from their parents due to the customary tenure system.

The patriarchal culture in Mali also limits women's and youth's access to infrastructure facilities such as transportation and roads. Due to the limited availability of storage facilities in the harvest season, community leaders are given priority to access the service, which increases the likelihood of losses of perishable products produced by women and youth. Social norms that consider women's role in the domestic sphere and men's domain in productive activities challenge women's participation in surplus production. In Ethiopia, women are found to have restricted opportunities for personal growth and development as a result of the heavy burden of domestic and productive duties, which leaves them with minimal or no time to focus on self-improvement.

These sentiments are reflected in the following statements of an FGD participant: *“We love to attend training because we learn how to change our life, but we mostly spend our time at home cooking and taking care of our families.”* This limitation hinders their ability to gain information about technologies and technical knowledge on agricultural production and practices (human capital).

Membership for cooperatives in Ethiopia is contingent on land ownership and household headship. Specifically, cooperatives' 'one member per land certificate' rule leaves out women and youth in male-headed households, and those from landless households. Further, the lack of inclusive approaches from service providers such as GOs, NGOs and private sector actors that provide farm inputs, technologies, and learning and networking opportunities also hinders the participation of women and youth in markets. In Ethiopia, for example, when cooperatives organize training and meetings, invitations are usually sent to household heads, which leaves out other household members, such as women and youth in male-headed households. Women in male-headed households may remain uninformed about the date and time of meetings. In cases where spouses are invited to meetings and trainings, permissions by male spouses are not always guaranteed. This is described by a key informant as: *“I expect my wife to stay home, and the outside/public role is my responsibility. This is what we learnt from our society.”*

Limited availability of tailored services also inhibits the participation of women and youth in surplus production. Women and youth in Ethiopia dominantly use finances from savings, financial institutions and cooperatives to invest in modern agricultural inputs and technologies. However, access to finance from financial institutions is challenging for these groups due to a lack of access to information about the services, high-interest rates and unsuitable monthly payments. Private sector actors are amongst the suppliers of farm inputs and technologies. However, they use unilateral supply/service provision mechanisms that fail to consider the special needs and interests of women and youth from diverse social groups. Finally, market failure, specifically high cost and limited availability of farm inputs, technologies and equipment, hinders the participation of women and youth in surplus production. Poverty and expensive rental fees further challenge their ability to access land through purchase or rent.

Cultivation Strategy for Inclusion in Off-farm and Non-farm Activities

This strategy is found when women and youth from diverse social groups leverage their livelihood assets and access actions to invest in off-farm and non-farm activities (Figure 4). Women and youth adopting this strategy are dominantly from resource-poor and landless households. In Ethiopia, resource-poor households are

characterized by having limited access to productive resources such as land, oxen, inputs, labor, finance and savings, and in some cases food insecurity in some seasons. Among female household heads, those with no family support, bedridden husbands, disabled children and large families with a small plot of land are also considered resource-poor. In Mali, resource-poor households are those with limited access to agricultural equipment, little cattle, income or real estate and limited laborers fit for fieldwork.

In both countries, the livelihood activities of these social groups depend on natural resources and small businesses, including gathering and trading natural products and producing small ruminants, handicrafts, beekeeping and poultry. In Mali, these social groups are also engaged in paid work in reforestation and profit-making cooperatives that harvest groundnuts and cowpeas from farmlands belonging to others. The opportunities for paid work for women and youth, however, vary based on their educational status. Specifically, while the paid work opportunities available for those who did not complete high school are seasonal, graduates have a relatively secure opportunity. Graduates have good opportunities to get access to paid work in promoting modern technologies and practices.

Under these circumstances, women and youth use forests as well as financial and technical support (from GOs and NGOs, social networks, cooperatives and private sector actors) to make initial investments in non-farm and off-farm activities. This shows the ability of women and youth from resource-poor households to use natural, political and social capital to control access. Furthermore, they use employment opportunities and participation in cooperatives to gain access to productive resources such as land, forests and income. This implies their ability to use social, economic and natural capital to maintain access to businesses and generate income. They use services from GOs and NGOs, private sector actors and their social networks to gain access to information, knowledge and networks. This reflects on the ability of women and the youth to use their political and social capitals to search and even create opportunities to gain access.

These social groups from both countries have strong support from GOs and NGOs (political capital), social networks and cooperatives (social capital), to gain access to productive resources and services such as finance and inputs (economic capital), land (natural capital) and market (physical capital). For example, in Mali, they participate in cooperatives focusing on composting, afforestation and gully rehabilitation to earn income. In Ethiopia, participation in cooperatives for employment opportunities is gendered. Young men tend to dominate the cooperatives for sand producers, and loading and unloading horticulture products that demand physical labor. Women, especially from resource-poor households, dominate cooperatives for savings and credit, seedling production, firewood saving stove production, poultry raising and backyard cultivation.

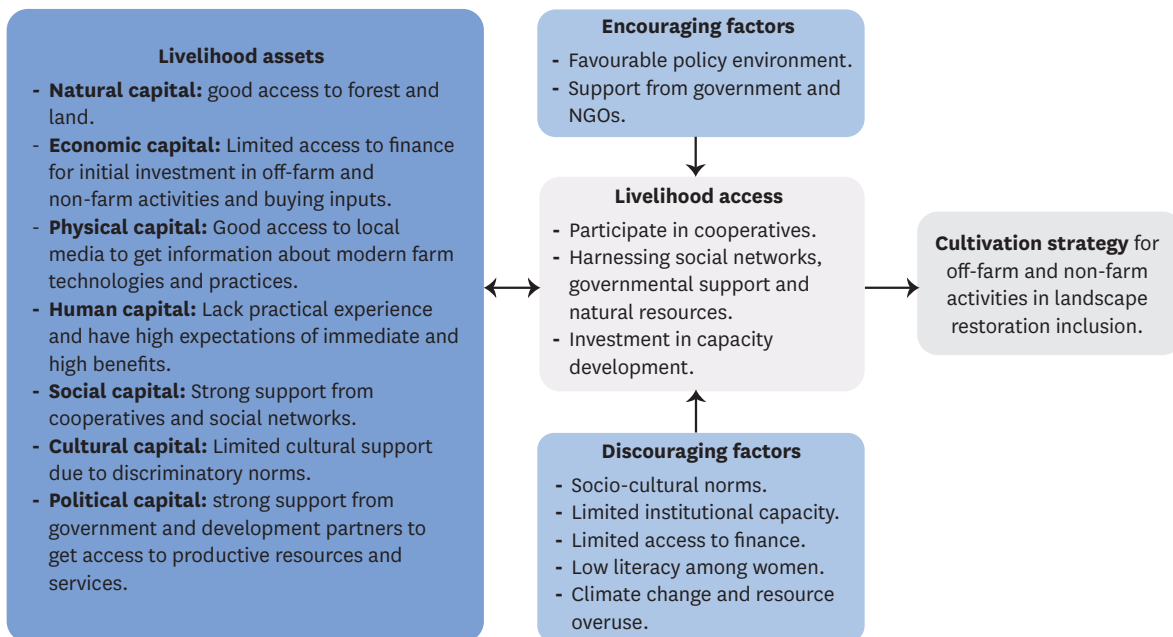


Figure 4. Cultivation strategy for inclusion in off-farm and non-farm businesses.
Source: Authors' creation.

In Mali, women have good access to forests that provide opportunities to generate income from timber, firewood, wild fruits (such as *soumbala*, shea, *nééré* and tamarind), food for livestock, fresh fish, honey, leaves and peels that are sold raw or processed for consumption or pharmaceutical purposes (natural capital). However, in both countries, women and youth have limited access to finance for initial investment in non-farm and off-farm activities (economic capital). Further, sociocultural barriers (cultural capital), a lack of practical experience and the expectations of having immediate and high benefits from their work (human capital) limit the patience and aspirations of young men and women to get employment opportunities.

Various factors encourage the participation of women and youth in non-farm and off-farm activities. These include favorable policy environment and support from relevant GOs, NGOs and the private sector. A favorable policy environment encourages women and youth to establish cooperatives that provide opportunities for capacity development and networking. Cooperative laws provide opportunities for women to be represented in decision-making processes to ensure representation of their voices. However, participation in decision-making processes is sometimes translated to having representation in decision-making processes without having a voice or the ability to influence decisions.

Support from relevant GOs and NGOs encourages the participation of women and youth in off-farm and non-farm activities. In Ethiopia, for example, local GOs such as small- and micro- enterprises, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVETs), women and social affairs and agriculture offices encourage and support women and youth from resource-poor and landless households to set up cooperatives and participate in income-generating

activities. These institutions provide access to land, initial capital, inputs and market linkages. Additionally, they provide platforms for learning, and opportunities for networking with input suppliers, financial institutions and TVETs. For example, young men and women are provided with degraded land to enclose and treat while generating income from fodder production, apiculture and cattle fattening. Sectoral offices also train women on leadership and their legal rights, and also provide inputs and finances to enhance their economic benefits and empowerment. Such support enables female spouses and heads of household to have control over the income they earned. This also helps to increase their influence in joint decision-making processes, including decisions on reinvesting income.

Development partners such as NGOs also support women and youth cooperatives. A key informant from Tiyo in Ethiopia expressed the support as: “Some NGOs are interested in natural resource conservation. As per the regulation, youth and women organized in a cooperative are mostly linked with such NGOs to enable them participate in income-generating activities. This enhances access to inputs and creates market linkages.” In Mali, landscape restoration initiatives by the GOs and NGOs create opportunities for participating in income-generating activities for women and youth, including wage employment opportunities, and income from collecting and selling natural products. These initiatives support women and youth to obtain training, knowledge and new expertise such as farming, fish-smoking techniques, breeding small ruminants, and managing income-generating activities. They also provide women with coaching and mentoring opportunities to raise their awareness of property rights and their right to participate in decision-making processes. The availability of affordable and accessible financial services from microfinance

institutions and private enterprises enable women and youth to gain access to finance and advisory services and hence encourages their participation.

Various hindering factors discourage the participation of women and youth in off-farm and non-farm activities. These include sociocultural norms, limited institutional capacities, limited financial resources, low literacy rates among women, climate change and the overuse of natural resources. Sociocultural norms that give privilege to men have control over resources and make key decisions which leads to unequal sharing of labor and benefits discourages women. In Mali, while women are exempted from restoration activities allegedly seen as 'heavy work,' girls and young adult women (the daughters-in-law) are expected to collect wood and fetch water to make them a part of their chores. This kind of work is very excruciating, being seen as an impediment to women's inclusion in income-generating activities. Likewise, in Ethiopia, the traditional gender division of labor that associates women with the domestic sphere results in the limited participation of women in income-generating activities and the public sphere, and limited access to information. A young woman FGD participant described this as: *"As young women, we do not have big kids to get support for domestic activities. Our husbands help fetch water and firewood when we are pregnant or sick. We do not have the power to complain about these roles because God gives them to us. These keep us busy at home, this limits our participation in income-generating activities outside the home."*

The sociocultural norms also limits their choice regarding their mobility, access and control over resources and taking leadership positions. In both countries, women have limited participation in decision-making processes at the household level and in traditional village settings due to cultural barriers. For example, in Mali, the ability of women in male-headed households to get access to credit is challenged by the need to validate their request from various

financial institutions by men in the household. Limited institutional capacities negatively influence the quality, relevance and effectiveness of interventions to support women's and youth's participation in off-farm and non-farm activities. For example, in Ethiopia, limited financial capacity of institutions, weak coordination among sector offices, and limited understanding of policies on gender and inclusion by experts at the local level remain as challenges. Further, the lack of a mandate by the women and social affairs office to support the economic empowerment of these groups is an issue. A key informant from the Women's and Social Affairs Office in Tiyo emphasized this as : *"Our main challenge is the lack of budget and mandate. Our role is only organizing them and we have no resources to empower them economically. We are looking towards other institutions for this service. So, we are considered powerless and blamed by the women as if we did nothing for them and are of no use or benefit."*

Limited access to finance is a barrier for women and youth to engage in off-farm and non-farm activities. The dominant sources of finance to make a first investment in off-farm and non-farm activities are informal sources such as savings, private loans from friends or family, *tontines* and village funds. The finance from these sources is smaller for the initial investment. Hence, women and youth resort to private enterprises, cooperatives and financial institutions such as microfinance institutions to complement loans from informal sources. However, accessing finance from these sources is challenging due to procedural barriers, such as the need for collateral and high-interest rates. This implies the need for sustained sources of finance for women and youth through co-financing or providing the required guarantee for investment. The low literacy rate among women in Mali is also a barrier for them to get secure paid jobs that require soft skills. Climate change and the overuse of resources that affect the quality of water and land, and livelihood activities such as fishing, vegetable gardening and livestock production discourages women and youth from participating in off-farm and non-farm activities.

Discussion

Use of the Integrated Livelihood Asset - Access Framework

The integrated livelihood asset framework (Ellis 2001; Shaffer 2008) and access approach (Ribot and Peluso 2003) were used to explore the inclusion strategies of women and youth from diverse social groups in agribusiness. Table 1 summarizes the integrated asset-access framework as it applies to women and youth inclusion in surplus agricultural production, and off-farm and non-farm activities.

The investment inclusion strategy was found when diverse women and youth groups leveraged their livelihood assets and access to invest in surplus agricultural production. In both countries, women and youth adopting this strategy have good social, political and physical capital to access productive resources and services. They also have good natural capital (especially land) that encourages them to adopt the strategy. These social groups use combinations of capital as mechanisms to control, gain and maintain access. To control access to initial investment, they use owned and rented land and finances from cooperatives, social networks and financial institutions. They use their social networks as well as private sector actors, GOs and NGOs to gain access to information, knowledge and networks. Markets in Ethiopia and local radio channels in Mali are also sources of information and knowledge. To maintain access to income-generating businesses, they

use productive resources and services from cooperatives, social networks, and governments and their development partners. Poverty, social norms, and limited access to economic and physical capital discourages women and youth from adopting investment inclusion strategies. Additionally, factors such as limited access to finance, high cost of inputs, and the lack of infrastructure such as storage facilities and transportation services contribute to this discouragement.

Cultivation inclusion strategy is found when unemployed women and youth from resource-poor households leverage their livelihood assets and access to create capital and opportunities by harnessing off-farm and non-farm activities. Women and youth adopting this strategy have good natural, social and political capital to access productive resources and services. To control access to the initial investment of productive resources and services, they use support from cooperatives, GOs and NGOs. To gain access to information, technical knowledge and networking, they use support from social networks, private sector actors, GOs and NGOs. To maintain access, they use economic capital (including employment opportunities), natural capital (including forests) and cooperatives (that provide access to productive resources and services). However, women and youth adopting this strategy are discouraged by limited access to economic capital (such as limited access to finance), human capital (lack of experience and knowledge) and cultural support.

Table 1. Overview of the integrated asset-access approach for diverse women and youth inclusion.

Inclusion factors	Investment strategy	Cultivation strategy
Assets prioritized for access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic, natural and social capital to control access. - Political, physical and social capital to gain access. - Political and human capital to maintain access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural, social and political capitals to control access. - Political and social capital to gain access. - Social and human capital to maintain access.
Encouraging factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supportive legal frameworks and interventions. - Availability of services and support from social networks and cooperatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Favorable policy environment. - Support from GOs and NGOs.
Hindering factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender norms. - Absence of inclusive service delivery approaches such as discriminatory membership criteria for cooperatives. - Market failure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sociocultural norms. - Limited institutional capacity. - Limited access to finance. - Low literacy among women. - Climate change and resource overuse.
Access prioritized for inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Controlling and gaining access to overcome limited assets to productive resources, information and knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Controlling and maintaining access to overcome limited assets to productive resources and address social norms.

Source: Author's creation.

Two Inclusion Strategies: Similarities and Differences

One **similarity** between the two strategies is that women and youth from all social groups use social and political capital to get access to opportunities. They use social networks and receive support from GOs and NGOs to get access to opportunities for learning, networking and access to finance. The availability of opportunities to participate in cooperatives also provides them with 1) access to productive resources; 2) opportunities for learning about modern inputs, technologies and best practices; 3) sharing and networking opportunities; and 4) access to markets.

The second similarity is a favorable policy environment that aims to support women and youth, particularly from resource-poor households. Policies in Ethiopia and Mali grant rights for women and youth to participate in cooperatives and suggest different mechanisms for enhancing access to resources and opportunities for capacity development (MoANR 2017a; MoANR 2017b; FDRE 2017; SGG 2006). Investments are also made to develop women's self-confidence and capability for public speaking and leadership. However, limited institutional capacity to effectively implement the policies and sustainably support women and youth remains a challenge. Treating youth as a homogeneous group in policies also reinforces the inequity in the sector (Yami et al. 2020). Effectively implementing policies that support women and youth in both countries calls for strengthening the capacity of institutions (Tsige et al. 2020; Getahun and Fetene 2020; Diallo 2019).

The third similarity is that gender and intergenerational norms inhibit the ability of women and the youth

to adopt either strategy. The norms cause an unequal distribution of labor and power that makes women primarily responsible for activities around the homestead and have subordinate positions at household and communal levels. This inhibits their access to information and participation in the public sphere, including income-generating activities. This is amplified for young women who do not have someone to support them to take care of their small children. In both countries, men are assumed to do the heavy and 'real' work. Hence, adult men tend to have more control over productive resources and more valued voices, while women and youth mainly tend to have only use-rights to these resources. Although there are attempts in Mali to address inequality in land ownership, the dual system of land designation makes it challenging to minimize the gap (Diallo 2019).

There are also **differences** between the two strategies. In both countries, those adopting an investment strategy are mostly from better-off households, while those adopting the cultivation strategy are mostly from resource-poor households. This is because the first strategy is capital-intensive compared to the latter. Access to farmland is a key determinant factor for adopting an investment strategy. In contrast, access to natural resources such as forests, degraded land and employment opportunities is critical for adopting the cultivation strategy. The need for experience, knowledge and skills required to adopt a specific strategy differs. Given that other products are easily accessed, farming knowledge can easily be acquired from families for adopting investment strategies. However, adopting a cultivation strategy requires knowledge, skills and experience from various sources including cooperatives, GOs, NGOs, initiatives and private sector actors.

Conclusion and Practical Recommendations

Using the integrated livelihood asset and access framework, two strategies were identified for women and youth to adopt and to engage in livelihood activities and the market: investment and cultivation strategies. The ability of women and the youth to adopt either of the strategies is largely shaped by their ability to use livelihood assets, access mechanisms, the enabling environment and their ability to overcome hindering factors. The investment strategy prioritizes using economic, natural, physical, political and social capital to exercise control access and gain access that, in turn, helps to overcome limited access to productive resources, information and knowledge. The cultivation strategy emphasizes using natural, human, political and social capitals to exercise controlling and maintaining access that, in turn, helps to overcome limited access

to productive resources and addresses social norms. Using the integrated asset-access framework allows us to understand how women and youth from diverse social groups choose their livelihood outcomes by adopting different inclusion strategies.

Women and youth adopting either one of the strategies are encouraged by good support from social networks, cooperatives, GOs, NGOs and private sectors. Policies in Ethiopia and Mali grant equal property rights and equal opportunities for everyone, including women and youth, to participate in any development initiatives. However, women and youth encounter a range of factors such as sociocultural norms, and limited access to resources and tailored services that compel them to adopt a particular strategy.

We provided practical implications for designing and implementing inclusive and gender-responsive agribusiness programs or interventions. First, to enhance the inclusion of women and youth in the design and implementation, providing deliberate and consistent financial, technical and institutional support is critical. This includes allocating sufficient resources for women and youth-related activities. Strengthening institutional capacities through commitment from management, setting up institutional systems such as accountability systems and collaboration with development partners with the same focus are also needed.

Second, more research is required to understand the perspectives of women and youth from diverse social groups, with regard to their abilities, requirements and issues, before designing and implementing inclusive and gender-sensitive interventions. Exploring the potential for the engagement of youth and women in a wider set of livelihood activities and ecosystem services is key to opening economic and agroecological opportunities. Hence, informing the design and implementation of interventions with research provides a pathway for designing interventions responsive to the needs of diverse women and youth groups. This also contributes to new discourses and knowledge about the inclusion of women and youth in agribusiness.

Finally, challenging discriminatory gender and intergenerational norms that cause an unequal distribution of labor and power by using gender-responsive and gender-transformative approaches is key. This can be achieved by i) engaging spouses and/or all family members in designing programs; ii) engaging elders, community leaders, men, boys, entrepreneurs and social leaders in participatory gender training to transform gender relations and iii) strengthening women's leadership skills and voices through capacity development. These pathways help to ensure an equitable sharing of power, resources and labor among household members that help to enhance meaningful engagement of women and youth in agribusiness.

The application of an integrated livelihood and access framework, which aims to study the inclusion of women and youth in the agricultural value chain, including on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm activities, as a development target, provides valuable insights into the capacities, needs, and concerns of these social groups. Hence, applying the framework to do similar studies in other parts of the two countries and other countries would help to enhance a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges women and youth face along the value chain. Further, follow-up studies to understand pathways for addressing discriminatory sociocultural norms and designing tailored services in specific contexts would be useful.

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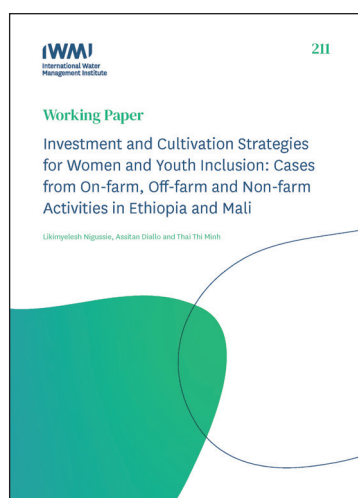
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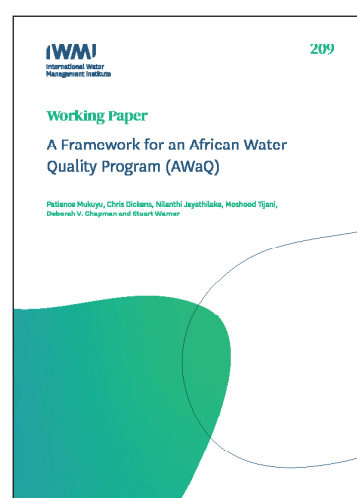
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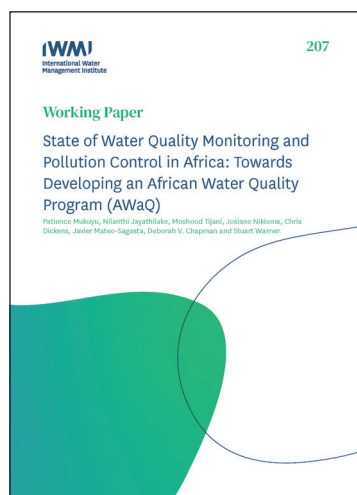
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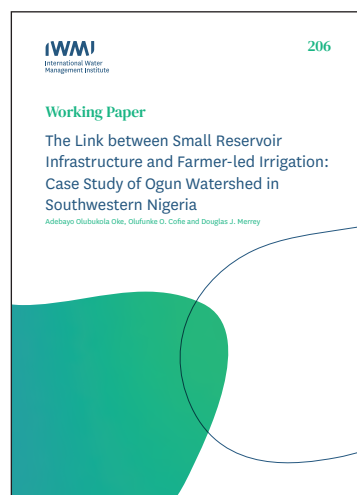
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