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## **Gendered Participation in Poultry Value Chains**

**Qualitative Findings from an Impact Evaluation of Nutrition-Sensitive  
Poultry Value Chain Intervention in Burkina Faso**

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## INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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## Contents

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ACRONYMS	v
Introduction	1
Background	3
<b>Component 1: Poultry production and marketing systems</b>	<b>3</b>
Implementation of the poultry-related SELEVER component	4
<b>Components 2 and 3: Nutrition and Gender</b>	<b>5</b>
Implementation of the nutrition and gender-related SELEVER components	5
<b>Component 4: Poultry-WASH (only in SELEVER+WASH villages)</b>	<b>7</b>
Implementation of the enhanced poultry WASH-related component	7
Methods	9
<b>Data collection</b>	<b>9</b>
Focus Group Discussions	11
Semi-structured Interviews	12
Ethics	14
<b>Analysis</b>	<b>14</b>
Results	16
<b>Division of Labor for General Activities and Poultry Production</b>	<b>16</b>
Trading and Small-Business Activities	16
Domestic Labor	17
Agricultural Labor	19
Poultry Rearing	22
SELEVER Impact on Household Division of Labor	23
<b>Gendered Barriers and Opportunities in the Poultry Value Chain</b>	<b>25</b>
Gendered Access to and Use of Necessary Inputs for Poultry Rearing	25
Barriers and Opportunities for Gendered Participation in Production and Marketing	31
SELEVER's Impact on Gendered Participation in the Poultry Value Chain	34
<b>Poultry Rearing and Women's Empowerment</b>	<b>37</b>
Poultry Rearing's Effect on Women's Lives	37
SELEVER Impact on Women's Empowerment and Reducing Household Barriers	38
<b>Barriers and Opportunities for Women's Participation in VVV Service Provision</b>	<b>39</b>
How Women Establish Themselves as VVV Service Providers	39
Gendered barriers and opportunities to VVV service provision	41
Community and Household Support for Women VVVs	44
Discussion	45
<b>Division of Labor</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Gendered Participation Along Poultry Value Chain Nodes</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Poultry Rearing and Women's Empowerment</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Women's Participation in VVV Service Provision</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>49</b>
REFERENCES	51

## Tables

<b>Table 1</b> Study sites in Burkina Faso.....	9
<b>Table 2</b> Number of Participants by Activity and Village .....	12
<b>Table 3</b> Common Income Generating Activities for Women by Village.....	16
<b>Table 4</b> Common Crops Grown by Men and Women by Village .....	19
<b>Table 5</b> Common Types of Poultry and Livestock Owned by Men and Women by Village .....	20
<b>Table 6</b> Average Number of Poultry Birds / Livestock Heads Owned by Men, Women, or Jointly by Village.....	20
<b>Table 7</b> Summary of Investments and Activities of 4 Women VVVs .....	41

## ABSTRACT

The SELEVER study is a five-year impact evaluation designed to address key knowledge gaps on the impact of a poultry value chain intervention on the diets, health, and nutritional status of women and children in Burkina Faso. This report uses qualitative methods to examine gendered participation in poultry value chains, the gendered opportunities and barriers experienced in poultry value chains, and the SELEVER program's impact on these factors. A previous report (Eissler et al., 2020) based on the same fieldwork covered questions relating to local understandings of empowerment and dynamics of household food production and allocation.

Six villages across five provinces were purposively selected for this study. Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods. In each village, we conducted four sex-disaggregated focus group discussions and semi-structured individual interviews with a man and a woman from two different households. Sex-disaggregated seasonal calendars were created for half of the villages. Interviews were also conducted with project service providers in each community, including group leaders (n=13), voluntary vaccinators (n=10), and poultry traders (n=6). A mix of inductive and deductive coding guided the thematic analysis of the data.

The results indicate that while women in the study areas do engage in agricultural labor and various income-generating activities, they must prioritize their domestic responsibilities. Men are primarily responsible for providing staple food ingredients (e.g. grains or meat) for household consumption and earning the primary income, which often requires them to engage in seasonal migration. Men are increasingly aware of women's time and unpaid labor burdens, and have started sharing in these tasks, a shift in which participants attribute to SELEVER. Additionally, we find that SELEVER has increased women's capacity and opportunity to engage in poultry value chain activities while reducing barriers to their participation. SELEVER has trained selected women to practice as Village Volunteer Vaccinators (VVs), which has enabled them to earn additional income. Notably, SELEVER has been effective in challenging and facilitating changing perceptions on traditional gender norms, such that men are increasingly supportive of their wives to engage in income-generating activities or activities outside of the household. Results highlight the importance of SELEVER's engagement with men, as women's ability to participate in activities outside of traditional gendered boundaries relies on their husbands' permission. Without it, a woman cannot raise poultry, cultivate her own crops, practice as a VV, or participate in women's associations or income-generating activities.

Despite evidence of success, barriers to women's full participation persist. A lack of sufficient financial capital and autonomy in decision making limit women's ability to improve upon and manage their poultry endeavors. A lack of financial capacity and time, limited freedom of movement, and restricting social norms further limit women's ability to practice as service providers in the value chain. SELEVER can continue to address challenging social norms and focus on these more nuanced barriers women face in increasing their capacity for participation

**Keywords:** Burkina Faso, gender, nutrition-sensitive value chains, poultry, value chains, women's empowerment

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## ACRONYMS

ACF	Association chant des femmes
APS	Association pour la paix et la Solidarité
ASIENA	Association Inter-Instituts “Ensemble et Avec”
BCC	Behavior change communication
CBDF	Coalition Burkinabé pour les Droits de la Femme
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
DRRAH	Direction régionale des ressources animales et halieutiques
fCFA	Franc Communauté Financière Africaine
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GRAINE	Groupe d’Accompagnement à l’investissement et à l’Épargne
GS	Solidarity Groups
MUSO	Mutuelles de Solidarité
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
Pro-WEAI	Project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index
SELEVER	Soutenir l’Exploitation Familiale pour Lancer l’Élevage des Volailles et Valoriser l’Économie Rurale
SSI	Semi-structured Interviews
VVV	Vulgarisateur Volontaire Villageois (formerly Village Volunteer Vaccinators)
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WEAI	Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index

## INTRODUCTION

A consortium involving IFPRI and partners is conducting a five-year impact evaluation in Burkina Faso designed to address key knowledge gaps on the impact of poultry value chain interventions on the diets, health and nutritional status of women and children (Gelli et al., 2017). The impact evaluation is designed around the scale-up of the Soutenir l'Exploitation Familiale pour Lancer l'Élevage des Volailles et Valoriser l'Économie Rurale (SELEVER) project, a five-year initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The SELEVER project is implemented by Tanager in partnership with local NGOs, private institutions, and governmental services. SELEVER aims to increase poultry production and improve the nutritional status of women and children in the Centre-Ouest, Hauts-Bassins and Boucle de Mouhoun regions of Burkina Faso. The project uses an integrated market-facilitation approach combining revenue generation, women's empowerment, and nutritional behavior change interventions.

This report is the second of two reports published from the same qualitative fieldwork in Burkina Faso examining the SELEVER program. The prior report (Eissler et al., 2020) explored local understandings of empowerment, the impact of SELEVER on women's empowerment, and household dynamics around food preparation and allocation. The purpose of this report is to examine the opportunities and barriers for women's involvement in the poultry value chain as producers and service providers. The data presented here was collected alongside the process evaluation study (Gelli et al., 2019), and indeed highlights the ways in which the SELEVER program affected these opportunities and barriers. The overarching research questions addressed in this study are: What are the gendered barriers that limit women's involvement in poultry value chains and the opportunities that can enhance it? How is the SELEVER program affecting these dynamics? To this end, we address the following specific questions:

1. What types of labor are women and men involved in throughout the calendar year? What are the gendered labor dynamics of poultry production?

2. What are key actors' and service providers' views on women's barriers to adopting better practices? What are the practices that are (not) adopted and what are the associated obstacles and facilitators to adoption?
3. What are the social factors barring women's full inclusion in poultry value chains? How are women in poultry production perceived?
4. How have the lives of beneficiaries changed as part of their poultry rearing experience? What barriers have been encountered by women from husbands and other family members?
5. What are the views of women in poultry rearing, compared to those of men? Are there price or quality differences from the men and women that traders buy from?
6. What are the gendered barriers to establishing oneself and operating in livelihoods that are linked to poultry value chains? How do men and women enter and stay established in the profession, and how does this correspond with other aspects of their lives?

## BACKGROUND

Four Burkinabé NGOs were contracted by Tanager to implement the SELEVER program activities. The two NGOs tasked with implementing the poultry and microfinance related activities include l'Association inter Institut Ensemble et Avec (ASIENA) and Groupe d'Accompagnement à l'Investissement et à l'Épargne (GRAINE). The two NGOs responsible for the gender and nutrition activities include the Coalition Burkinabé pour les Droits de la Femme (CBDF) and the Association chant des femmes (ACF). Contracts were also signed with the three regional Government livestock extension directorates (Centre-Ouest, Boucle du Mouhoun and Hauts-Bassins) to provide technical support through training and monitoring, support to NGO facilitators for training in poultry breeding techniques, market facilitation, and supply of vaccines other livestock inputs to *vulgarisateurs volontaire villageois*, formerly known as village volunteer vaccinators (VVs).

An additional Burkinabé NGO, namely l'Association Paix et Solidarité (APS), was contracted by IFPRI to implement an enhanced poultry-WASH related intervention in a sub-set of SELEVER supported villages as part of the SELEVER impact evaluation.

### **Component 1: Poultry production and marketing systems**

This component includes vaccinations, financing and training on poultry flock management (including housing). SELEVER strengthens the capacity of village-level volunteers to provide vaccination services for poultry producers, aiming to increase vaccination against Newcastle's disease, reduce poultry mortality, and increase poultry production, sales, and revenues. The commercial relations between VVs and other chain actors, including service providers, are also supported to enhance the efficiency of the poultry value chain system as a whole. In addition, the SELEVER training package for VVs includes activities around nutrition-related behaviors, including consumption of animal source foods and basic hygiene practices, as well as messaging on women's empowerment and decision-making.

### ***Implementation of the poultry-related SELEVER component***

This component is implemented by ASIENA and GRAINE and the three regional directorates of livestock resources. ASIENA implements poultry-related activities in villages in the Boucle du Mouhoun and Hauts-Bassins regions, whilst GRAINE is mainly active in the Centre-Ouest region. Technical staff at Tanager train NGO staff (including a technical lead and several facilitators per NGO) on the project approach using eight modules focusing on improved poultry production systems. Tanager staff's role then shifts to providing technical support to the NGO implementers, facilitating collaboration between the different actors involved, and monitoring implementation.

The main roll-out activities at the community level by the NGOs include training, advocacy and follow-up monitoring. Training materials include guideline manuals and videos developed by Tanager for the SELEVER program. The roll-out at the community-level includes some NGO-specific features. In the case of ASIENA, producers in intervention villages who have an interest and are committed to raising poultry are identified and organized into groups called Mutuelles de Solidarité (MUSO). In the case of GRAINE, interested and committed producers are organized in Solidarity Groups (GS). A MUSO has 15 to 30 members and there may be several MUSOs in each village. A GS consists of up to 15 people (both women and men) who have an interest in breeding. Each group appoints a president and a treasurer. In each village there are about 10 GSs. Beneficiary groups are then trained by the NGO facilitators on all the SELEVER poultry modules. The facilitators also monitor credit use and poultry production practices at the beneficiary level. Facilitators are also subsequently trained on a gender and nutrition package (see section below) so that they can incorporate these dimensions into their activities.

Government representatives from livestock extension services, the Direction régionale des ressources animales et halieutiques (DRRAH), provide technical support through the training and monitoring of VVV, support to NGO facilitators for training in poultry farming technique, market facilitation, supply of VVVs in vaccines and other livestock inputs in each region. Each DRRHA has a focal point from the SELEVER project who monitors activities in the field.

VVVs are the key community-level actors in the implementation of the SELEVER poultry component. VVVs are identified by the livestock extension agents and trained on vaccination and poultry husbandry. They are also trained on gender and nutrition by the project team. After their training, VVVs offer vaccination services, poultry deworming, and nutritional advice to the beneficiaries.

### **Components 2 and 3: Nutrition and Gender**

Although these two components are distinct in terms of training materials and activities, their implementation at the community level has been fully integrated. The nutrition component includes behavior change communication (BCC) on nutrition and diets provided through women's groups, poultry producer groups, and local community leaders. The content of the BCC activities includes the promotion of improved diets at key stages of the lifecycle, including infant and young child feeding practices (e.g., breastfeeding promotion for infants) and basic hygiene, amongst other items.

The gender component includes community-level sensitization on women's economic empowerment and gender equity, including strengthening of women's groups. The activities under this component include training participants from existing women's associations on enterprise development, including village saving and loans and enhancing commercial opportunities, for example. The activities also focus on strengthening women's role in decision-making within households and the community on entrepreneurship, nutritious food production, marketing, consumption and in child health, feeding and care.

### ***Implementation of the nutrition and gender-related SELEVER components***

These two components are implemented by ACF and CBDF. CBDF implements nutrition and gender activities in villages in the Centre-Ouest and Hauts-Bassins regions, whilst ACF is active in the 10 villages in the Boucle du Mouhoun. Technical staff at Tanager train NGO facilitators on the project approach, including modules on nutrition and modules on gender. Tanager staff then provide technical support to the NGO implementers, facilitating collaboration between the different actors involved, and monitors the implementation.

The main roll-out activities at community level by the NGOs include cascade trainings, home visits, peer-group support, advocacy and follow-up monitoring. Training materials include guideline manuals and videos developed by Tanager for the SELEVER program. The roll-out at the community-level includes some NGO-specific features. In the case of CBDF, once the NGO facilitators have been trained, they in turn begin the community level activities, engaging with community leaders, women leaders, champion husbands, model women, and community groups (MUSO, GS, for example):

- Community leaders, including one or two religious or traditional leaders per village, once trained are then responsible for training the community (i.e., MUSO, GS, other peer beneficiaries) on nutrition and gender. They contribute, in part through their status, to remove certain barriers or taboos. They develop and implement action plans, including public meetings and home visits.
- Women leaders, selected from women's groups (MUSO, GS) are responsible for training their women's groups on nutrition and gender.
- Champion husbands are selected based on their positive actions on nutrition and gender or on supporting women's poultry production. They are trained on messaging and sensitization for husbands' and men's groups. They develop and implement action plans.
- Model women are women who are also selected based on their behavior or practices. They are trained on gender equity and nutrition, and serve as consultants for other women on nutrition, gender or poultry production (2 per village). They each identify 10 households to raise awareness about gender and nutrition and household spending plans.

In the case of ACF, trained facilitators conduct advocacy sessions with community leaders, providing information about SELEVER to the targeted communities. 120 people per village are then trained on gender and nutrition. Of the 120 trained, eight to ten people are designated by village to form a “network hub<sup>1</sup>”, which includes the Village Development Advisor, MUSO Leaders, VVVs, Community Based Health Officer (CBOA) and other community leaders. The network hub then receives extensive training

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<sup>1</sup> Or “noyau relais” in French.

on gender and nutrition. They are then responsible for training the GSs on gender and nutrition through talks and home visits.

#### **Component 4: Poultry-WASH (only in SELEVER+WASH villages)**

The enhanced poultry-WASH behavior change intervention aims to enhance the impact of the SELEVER program on children's health and nutrition status by improving the general WASH environment at community and household level, reducing the risk of exposure to livestock feces for young children. The poultry-WASH component involves applying a specific poultry-livestock lens to the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) behavior change approach, integrating these two approaches within a single programmatic activity that is being rolled-out in the 30 SELEVER+WASH communities.

The CLTS component of the intervention is well-defined and encompasses materials developed in the context of the national strategy currently being rolled out across the country. Similarly, the messages related to reducing young children's exposure of poultry and livestock feces are included within the SELEVER program package materials.

#### ***Implementation of the enhanced poultry WASH-related component***

This component is implemented by APS in 30 villages in the study population. APS worked with the SELEVER and IFPRI teams to integrate SELEVER and CLTS dimensions by identifying the entry points for poultry-related messaging within the CLTS materials and roll-out activities. The CLTS approach generally involves three stages: pre-triggering, triggering, and follow-up (Crocker et al., 2017). Pre-triggering occurs when APS engages with community members. Triggering occurs when APS conducts group activities to elicit emotional responses, including shame and disgust, with the intention of generating motivation to eliminate open defecation. Follow-up is comprised of monitoring progress and offering feedback toward eliminating open defecation in the community. The roll-out of the community level activities undertaken in these three stages were broadened to also include livestock and poultry specific topics. In the pre-triggering phase, this involves also engaging with poultry- and livestock-related actors. Poultry and livestock feces management are then included as explicit themes in the triggering

activities, inducing an action-plan. Following the triggering event, facilitators are trained (one per commune) and a village hygiene committee is organized within each targeted community. The committees include youth, women, and other resource people with influence in the community. Committee members undertake home visits to follow-up on the planned activities, providing feedback, advice, and information to APS staff.

## METHODS

### Data collection

This study employs multiple qualitative methods and was conducted in six villages across five provinces in Burkina Faso (Table 1). The study villages were selected from the pool of 60 villages where the SELEVER intervention was underway. These villages were selected for inclusion in this study based on the baseline survey analysis and SELEVER project monitoring data. The goal was to select six villages, three with the standard SELEVER intervention (Kiééré, Douré, Koumbia) and three with the SELEVER+WASH intervention (Goumogho, Koubounga, Ta). The villages were purposively selected based on variability in known characteristics including size of the household poultry flock size; poultry mortality, sales and revenue; village average probability of adequate iron intake in mothers and children; and egg and chicken consumption.

The village sites selected for this study are the same ones selected for the quantitative process evaluation of the SELEVER program (Gelli et al., 2019). In each study village, eleven to fifteen households were randomly selected from among poultry producing households to participate in a structured quantitative survey (selecting either the primary woman or man), for a total of 81 households across the study areas. General characteristics of each of these villages are described below.

**Table 1** Study sites in Burkina Faso

	Village	Province	Region	Ethnic Groups	Languages	Religion
1	Goumogho	Boulkiemdé	Centre-Ouest	Mossi*, Peulh	Mooré, Ffuldédé	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Animism
2	Douré	Boulkiemdé	Centre-Ouest	Mossi*, Peulh	Mooré, Ffuldédé	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam*, Animism
3	Koubounga	Sissili	Centre-Ouest	Mossi, Peulh, Nouna, Dagara, Dioula*	Waala, Ffuldédé, Nouni, Mooré	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam*, Animism
4	Koumbia	Balé	Boucle du Mouhoun	Mossi, Peulh, Bwaba*	Mooré, Ffuldédé, Bwamu	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Animism
5	Ta	Mouhoun	Boucle du Mouhoun	Dafing*, Mossi, Peulh	Dafing, Mooré, Ffuldédé, Peulh	Not disclosed
6	Kiééré	Tuy	Hauts-Bassins	Bwaba*, Mossi, Peulh	Bwamu, Mooré, Ffuldédé	Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Animism

\*=Majority

For the qualitative study described herein, within each of these six villages, individuals were purposively recruited to participate in this qualitative study due to their affiliation with the SELEVER

program, either as a service provider or a beneficiary. Community leaders and other community members also participated, as detailed in the following section. The study team worked with each village leader to identify and recruit participants to join the study. Participants in the qualitative study did not participate in the aforementioned quantitative process evaluation study.

The field research team consisted of five facilitators and supervisors (four women and one man). The entire field research team was Burkinabé and each member speaks French and one (or two) additional local languages (Moore and Dioula). Two members (one man and one woman) of the field team supervised the qualitative and quantitative field collection activities, and occasionally facilitated FGDs or SSIs. The supervisors have training at the PhD and Msc levels and all field team members had formal qualitative and quantitative social science training. Before data collection, two IFPRI researchers facilitated a week-long training in Koudougou, Burkina Faso on the data collection tools, research objectives, and project themes.

The qualitative methods used to examine the research questions were adapted from the protocols developed by the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project (GAAP2) (<https://gaap.ifpri.info/>), which were designed, among other things, to validate existing metrics being developed for the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) and provide evidence on how gender-sensitive agriculture development projects facilitate opportunities for women to empower themselves (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019). These methods include focus group discussions (FGD), participatory activities, and semi-structured interviews (SSI). FGDs were sex disaggregated. Individuals were compensated 500 fCFA<sup>2</sup> for their time to participate in FGDs and 1000 fCFA<sup>3</sup> to participate in SSIs. The following section describes each data collection activity and the type of participants recruited for each activity.

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<sup>2</sup> Approximately \$0.83 USD.

<sup>3</sup> Approximately \$1.65 USD.

### ***Focus Group Discussions***

Two types of FGDs were held in each village for a total of four FGDs per village (two with women, two with men). Table 2 describes the total number of men and women who participated in each activity. The first FGD consisted of fifteen topics related to food preparation practices, food availability, consumption patterns, decision-making and food choices, food budgets, and the effect of the SELEVER program on these categories (“Nutrition FGD” henceforth; protocol available from authors upon request). This discussion guide built off of an approach developed by Elias et al. (2018). The overall purpose of this activity was to understand the household food acquisition, preparation, and consumption dynamics, seasonality of these dynamics, and how participation in SELEVER affected these dynamics. The Nutrition FGD had between eight and twelve participants each, and a minimum of six participants in each group were involved in agricultural production. A total of 63 men and 70 women (133 total) participated in twelve Nutrition FGDs across the study areas. This FGD took approximately two and a half hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

The second type of FGD consisted of eleven overarching questions and covered definitions of empowerment, gender norms related to mobility, empowerment, marriage, social status, household and community decision-making patterns about land-use, accessing resources, health and sanitation, and agricultural production, and the effect of the SELEVER program on these related categories (“Gender FGD” henceforth; protocol available from authors upon request). This activity aimed to inform underlying social dynamics related to gender-specific barriers and opportunities for accessing resources, market integration, and factors affecting best practice adoption. Participants were selected to include only those specifically involved in raising poultry. Each Gender FGD included between eleven and fifteen participants. A total of 58 men and 74 women (132 total) participated in twelve Gender FGD across the study areas (Table 2). This FGD took approximately three hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

**Table 2** Number of Participants by Activity and Village

Village	Focus Group				Participatory Activity		Semi-Structured Interviews					TOTAL
	Nutrition		Gender Norms		Seasonal Calendar		Household		VVV	Group Leader	Trader	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W				
Goumogho	9	12	10	11	4	4	2	2	2	1	2	59
Douré	12	12	12	12	0	0	2	2	4	1	0	57
Koubounga	12	12	12	12	4	4	2	2	2	1	0	63
Koumbia	8	11	6	15	0	0	2	2	1	4	2	51
Ta / Kona	12	11	12	12	4	4	2	2	0	4	0	63
Kiéré / Houndé	10	12	6	12	0	0	2	2	1	2	2	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>342</b>

M = men  
W = women

### ***Semi-structured Interviews***

SSIs were held with individual household members engaged with raising poultry, VVVs, group leaders, and poultry traders across the village sites. There were four types of SSIs conducted. Explained below are the SSIs with individual household members, VVVs, group leaders, and poultry traders.

SSIs were held with four individual household members in each village. In each village, two households were selected; one household with more than twenty fowl and one with fewer than twenty fowl were randomly identified from the survey roster for an SSI (two total households per village). SSIs were held with one man of each category (two SSIs with men per village) and one woman of each category (two SSIs with women per village). These interviews were conducted by women facilitators. A total of twelve men and twelve women were identified across all study villages for SSIs (Table 2).

The interviews with household members consisted of nine overarching questions related to child rearing practices, household dynamics, household decision-making patterns, income-generating activities, community participation, food allocation, and participation in the SELEVER program (protocol available from authors upon request). Men and women participants were asked similar questions, which were

modified to account for participant characteristics.<sup>4</sup> The overall purpose of this activity was to better understand the roles that men and women have in household activities and poultry value chain activities, identify barriers and opportunities for participation, and understand gender dimensions of food allocation practices. These interviews took between one hour and forty-five minutes to two and a half hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

The three remaining types of SSIs were conducted with VVVs, poultry traders, and group leaders engaged with SELEVER. Four women and six men VVVs (n=10) participated in SSIs across all study sites. SSIs were held with six men poultry traders in select villages.<sup>5</sup> Finally, SSIs were held with leaders of local groups, which included the GS/MUSO or the women's association, both of which participate in SELEVER. Eight women and five men leaders (n=13) participated in the group leader SSIs (Table 2).

The overall purpose of these interviews was to better understand the specific role of VVVs, traders, and community groups in village poultry rearing and women's empowerment and identify opportunities and barriers for women's participation in the poultry value chain. SSIs with women VVVs were asked an additional set of questions to understand their motivations for being a VVV and unique challenges they face to participate in the value chain (protocol available from authors upon request). These interviews took approximately one hour and fifteen minutes to two hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

Finally, two seasonal calendar activities (one with men, one with women) were held in three study villages (Table 2). For each seasonal calendar, four individuals who were well informed of the village's agricultural and poultry raising activities were selected to participate. Community leaders helped to identify participants for this activity. A total of six seasonal calendar discussions were held, with a total of twelve men and twelve women across the study areas. The overall purpose of the seasonal calendar was to understand seasonal activities undertaken by men, women, boys, and girls within the village specific to

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<sup>4</sup> For example, women were asked to describe the decision-making dynamics with their husband as well as with their other co-wives, whereas polygynous men were asked to describe the decision-making dynamics with all of their co-wives.

<sup>5</sup> As expected, we did not identify any women who worked as poultry traders.

agriculture, poultry raising, domestic chores, gendered division of labor related to each activity, and the seasonal availability of certain types of food and incomes. This activity took approximately four hours to complete. No respondents declined to participate.

### ***Ethics***

Prior to data collection, IFPRI Institutional Review Board approval was secured to conduct this research project. Prior to each activity, participants were informed of the activity's purpose and that their participation was voluntary. All individuals included in this study gave oral consent for their participation and audio-recording prior to participating. During the SSIs and FGDs, facilitators maintained the privacy of each participant. All data collected remained secure and confidential, as each participant was identified with a code in lieu of their name or other identifiers. Participants were notified during the consent process how and to whom they could reach out if they had any follow up questions.

### ***Analysis***

All data were collected by trained facilitators in the local language and were audio-recorded. The facilitators translated and transcribed the audio recording of each activity into French. The transcripts were coded using a combination of inductive and deductive thematic codes, by which sections of the text were tagged as exemplifying specific thematic codes. The lead author drafted the codebook with deductive codes using an axial coding scheme (i.e., sub-codes were nested within broader codes) prior to data collection. The codebook was then revised by the first two authors to integrate emergent themes through frequent reflection and preliminary analysis throughout the data collection process. During the first two weeks of data collection, the qualitative research team convened each evening to discuss the day's data collection activities, such as the most useful probing questions and emerging findings. This iterative process inspired a few inductive codes, specifically concerning co-wife dynamics, cultural barriers, and migration impacts.

The analysis was then conducted by reviewing the text across common codes to identify emergent themes across specific topics to answer the research questions. For example, an entire section of codes was concerned with the SELEVER program's impact on women's participation in poultry rearing, specifically changes in how women raised poultry, were able to access necessary resources to adopt best practices or sold or consumed poultry. These codes informed the section on SELEVER's impact on best poultry rearing practices (codebook available from authors upon request).

## RESULTS

### Division of Labor for General Activities and Poultry Production

#### *Trading and Small-Business Activities*

Women across the study sites typically engage in trading and small-business activities, such as selling *dolo*<sup>6</sup>, snacks and cakes, dry fish, condiments, cereals, or sweet millet couscous, and producing shea butter. They prioritize their time during the dry season on these trade and business activities, as their time is consumed by agricultural activities in the rainy season. Table 3 presents common income-generating activities employed by women across the study villages.

**Table 3** Common Income Generating Activities for Women by Village

Village	Activities
Douré	Shea butter, grain trade
Kiéré	Selling <i>dolo</i> , pancakes, groundnut, fish, soumbala, and fried fish
Koumbia	Selling <i>dolo</i> , pancakes, groundnut, fish, soumbala, and fried fish
Ta	Selling treats, soap, dry fish, couscous sweet millet, groundnut, cereals, condiments, shea nuts, <i>nééré</i> seeds, and <i>dolo</i>
Koubounga	Selling condiments (baobab leaves) and various items like plastic dishes, restoration, cereal trade, reselling goods purchased abroad
Goumogho	Selling condiments (sorrel leaves), soumbala, groundnut, beans, and <i>dolo</i> , and market gardening

Women in Ta engage in more diverse income generating activities than those in other villages, as explained by one woman, “*After the harvest, we buy the millet, which we store to resell when there is an increase in the price of the gain. We sell [the millet] at the beginning of the rainy season, in May, and at the approach of Ramadan*” [Seasonal Calendar, Ta]. Women in Kiéré and Koumbia rely heavily on selling *dolo* and other types of foods, when available, to earn additional income. Women in Douré and Koubounga strategically utilize small loans to build their business activities and/or reinvest into their agricultural activities. In Douré, women typically rely on small loans from women’s organizations to produce shea butter for selling, trade grains, or conduct other business activities. Typically, group

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<sup>6</sup> *Dolo* is sorghum beer, a common locally produced alcohol.

members contribute 2500 fCFA weekly to the group savings, which will then be distributed to those that pay into it. One woman explained, “*We shared the contribution money. Each had about 100,000 fCFA or 150,000 fCFA*<sup>7</sup>. *We organized a party and we bought some beans to store and sell*” [SSI, Household, Douré]. Women use these sources of income to purchase additional condiments (e.g., leafy greens, vegetables, okra, sorrel, eggplant, spices) for meals and clothing for themselves and children and support their husband with other expenses that are typically considered the responsibility of the head of household, such as school fees, healthcare, and food during the lean season.

Men also engage in income-generating activities during the dry season to supplement their farming activities, and often migrate to do so. Men and youth (boys and girls, ages 10-24) often leave after the harvest in December or January and return to their village in May before the rainy season. Men and young men migrate internationally and domestically for work. Some go to Côte d’Ivoire to work on cocoa, coffee, or banana plantations; others leave for domestic cities for several months (like Ouagadougou or Bobo) to learn trade skills. Others yet work in gold mines, both within and outside of Burkina Faso. In certain villages, like Koumbia and Kiéré, women will also migrate to participate in gold mining. With an increase in domestic gold mining sites in the last seven years, younger people (both men and women) are leaving Burkina Faso less frequently; as explained by one man, “*Before young people went out, but now with gold panning, emigration has decreased*” [SSI, Household, Kiéré]. Typically, younger women will leave the household to search for labor as domestic help or in restaurants or bars. In the event that many household members migrate during the dry season, the division of labor is adjusted amongst those remaining in the household.

### ***Domestic Labor***

Regardless of women’s business or agricultural activities and season, it is expected that women’s first priority will be to take care of their children and domestic tasks. As described by a woman in Ta when discussing her daily activities during the rainy season:

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<sup>7</sup> Approximately \$168.12-\$252.18 USD.

*You have to get up very early in the morning and finish with all that before leaving... You get up at 5 or 4 o'clock, so that you can finish everything. It's not because there is too much work that you do not take care of your children. After sweeping and cooking, it is an obligation to take care of the children and bring them to the field. Once in the field, if the child is hungry, you feed him, give him food, and then continue your work [Seasonal Calendar, Ta].*

Domestic work is considered entirely women's responsibility, as it is "*the work of women*" [FGD, Gender, Kiéné, Man]. Household labor activities are similar across study sites and seasons. Women must cook and prepare food, take care of children, clean the house and the yard, do the dishes, do the laundry, secure water, and search for firewood. As one man explained, "*In the morning the women sweep the yard first. Then they prepare the meal and take care of the children before they take the trip to school*" [FGD, Gender, Ta]. One woman described her daily activities in the dry season, "*I wake up at 3am to prepare my sales products until 6am ... I warm water; and at 6am, I wash the kids, give them breakfast; and I get my [vegetable] sales ready. That's what I give to children in the morning. At noon, it's bean, attiéké<sup>8</sup>, and fish that I sell. I give it to them, and at night, I return [to the house] to prepare for the evening*" [FGD, Gender, Koubounga]. Hygiene activities are typically within the woman's domain as well, as she is expected to sweep the compound's ground and bathe the children.

Generally, young daughters help their mothers wash dishes and fetch water, whereas older daughters directly help prepare meals.<sup>9</sup> In polygynous households, co-wives typically take turns in leading domestic chores. For example, one co-wife will lead the preparation of the meal, and the others will support her by either crushing the staple grain (millet, corn, or other) or arranging the condiment leaves for the meal. Co-wives then rotate these responsibilities. In cleaning the courtyard, depending on the household, co-wives will either take turns accomplishing this activity or they will all work together.

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<sup>8</sup> *Attiéké* is a common West African side-dish made from fermented cassava pulp.

<sup>9</sup> See Eissler et al., 2020, p. 32, for further discussion on how the SELEVER program is challenging social norms related to domestic labor in Burkina Faso.

## ***Agricultural Labor***

Throughout the year, men engage in agricultural labor, business activities, paid labor, and seasonal gold mining. Men’s agricultural labor generally consists of weeding, plowing fields, sowing, and harvesting crops on their own land. Sometimes, brothers will share landownership and will work together on these activities. At the community level, it is expected that men grow staple cereals for their household; they either store or sell their surplus. Men also will engage in cash crop production, such as cotton, in some areas. Men typically do not work on women’s fields unless it is for spraying pesticides or assisting in plowing. Men typically grow maize, millet, cotton, beans, groundnuts, sesame, and voandzou (a type of bean, also referred to as *poids de terre*). Typically, women and children within the household help the man on his agricultural plot before tending to their own. Table 4 presents a list of common crops grown by men and women in each village included in this study. Men and women also engage in livestock rearing in the study areas. Pulling in data on poultry and livestock ownership from the baseline survey of the impact evaluation conducted in the previous year, Table 5 presents the most common types of poultry and livestock that men and women respondents own in each village. Table 6 then presents the average number of birds (poultry) / heads (livestock) that men and women own by village, including any joint ownership of poultry.

**Table 4** Common Crops Grown by Men and Women by Village

<b>Village</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Koubounga	White sorghum, corn, groundnuts, sesame, millet, voandzou	Groundnut, sesame
Goumogho	Corn, sesame, groundnuts, beans, voandzou, tomatoes, eggplant	Millet, beans, groundnuts, onion, sorrel
Ta	Sorghum, cotton, groundnut, beans, corn, sesame, tomatoes, peppers, rice, sweet potatoes, voandzou	Tomatoes, okra, condiment leaves (such as sorrel), groundnuts, sesame, beans, millet, voandzou, cotton, okra, eggplant
Kiééré	Millet, sorghum, groundnut, beans, corn, cotton	Sesame, groundnuts (collective group)
Koumbia	Millet, rice, maize, sesame, groundnut, beans, cotton, vegetables (cabbage, tomatoes, eggplants, onions)	Sesame, groundnuts, corn, millet, rice
Douré	Millet, sorghum, groundnut, sesame, beans	Groundnuts, corn

**Table 5** Common Types of Poultry and Livestock Owned by Men and Women by Village

Village	Poultry			Livestock	
	Men	Women	Joint Ownership	Men	Women
Koumbia	Chicks, hens, cockerel	-	-	Sheep, goat, pigeon	Pig
Ta	Hens, chicks, cockerel	Chicks, cockerel, hens	Hens	Sheep, goat, bulls (beef)	Goat, sheep
Douré	Chicks, guinea fowl, cockerel	Chicks, cockerel, hens	Guinea fowl, cockerel, hens	Goat, sheep, pig	Pig, sheep, goat
Goumogho	Chicks, hens, cockerel	-	-	Goat, sheep, bulls (beef)	Pig, goat
Koubounga	Chicks, cockerel, hens	Chicks, hens	-	Goat, sheep, cow	Goat, pig, cow
Kiééré	Guinea fowl, chicks, hens	Chicks, hens, cockerel	-	Cow, sheep, bull (beef)	Pig

**Table 6** Average Number of Poultry Birds / Livestock Heads Owned by Men, Women, or Jointly by Village

	Koumbia	Ta	Douré	Kiééré	Goumogho	Koubounga
Poultry Ownership <sup>1,2</sup>						
Men	31.2	49.3	46.5	31.9	40.6	33.5
Women	0.0	1.7	1.8	5.1	0.0	1.5
Joint	0.0	1.3	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Livestock Ownership <sup>1,3,4</sup>						
Men	17.8	17.9	20.3	55.5	11.3	12.4
Women	2.7	1.1	1.7	2.6	1.0	2.3

<sup>1</sup>Average number of birds / heads owned

<sup>2</sup>Poultry includes average number of cocks, hens, chicks, cockerel/pullet, guinea fowl, and young guinea fowl combined owned.

<sup>3</sup>Livestock includes average number of bulls (beef), cow, calf, goat, sheep, donkey, duck, pig, and pigeon combined owned.

<sup>4</sup>Joint-ownership of livestock heads was not recorded.

Most women set aside their own trade and small-business activities during the rainy season (approximately June to October, depending on location), because they have to spend their time on their husband's field in addition to their own plot. As explained by one man, "*My wife does the housework, and during the rainy season, she helps me with the field work and after, [she] works in her own field*" [FGD, Gender, Koumbia], leaving little time for women to engage in commercial activities. Another man explained, "*[Women] suspend commercial activities at the moment to resume after the rainy season*" [FGD, Gender, Goumogho]. Women often wake up earlier in the rainy season to work on their own plot before going to the household's principal plot, which they often refer to as "the husband's plot", because

it is controlled by the husband who is the head of the household. Overall, women participate in almost all forms of agricultural labor on both the husband's plot and her own, should she have access to one.

Women's participation in agricultural activities typically falls into one or more of the following categories, which varies depending on location: manage their own plots, work on their husband's plots, and/or work on a separate plot outside of the household as part of a women's collective group. These collective groups are either organized by and for women within a community, or women within a family.

According to the Gender FGDs and Seasonal Calendars, most women in Ta have their own plots where they grow groundnuts, sesame, beans, millet, voandzou, cotton, and condiments (e.g., okra, sorrel, eggplant). Nowadays, women in Ta grow crops in groups, as one woman explained, "*We help in the fields for money... [about] 500fCFA<sup>10</sup> per person*" [FGD, Gender, Ta]. In Koubounga, most women actually do not work in their husband's field, one woman described, "*Except for the support we give to cotton harvesting, we do not work in the men's fields*" [SSI, Household, Koubounga]. Women in Koubounga spend their time either working in their own field or in fields jointly managed by women's group, growing groundnut, and sesame. Women in Goumogho grow their own crops in their fields during the rainy season and make and sell *dolo* in the dry season. Women in Douré work with their husbands to grow corn and groundnut but also work on other community members' farms for income.

The women in the Bwaba ethnic group in Kiééré spend their time on the family field and do not have their own plots. One woman described:

*In our husband's field, we sow our vegetables near the seedlings. We do not have a field to grow our vegetables... Often, when I grow the vegetables, they do not succeed, because the pesticides used in the fields destroy our vegetables. So, what we have is little and dry. Even if you ask [for land], you will not have any. [The men] say you can grow near the field or not grow at all. If we were given land, we would grow and have condiments* [SSI, Household, Kiééré].

Women from the Bwaba and Mossi ethnic groups have formed groups to facilitate the hire of women as agricultural laborers on each other's or community member's fields as a form of income generation. The Bwaba create family organizations that enable women to be hired for agricultural work by other family or

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<sup>10</sup> Approximately \$0.84 USD.

community members, although payment is not always immediate. Women laborers will use the money earned from these informal labor arrangements to pay for uniforms or other household necessities.

Women across Koumbia engage with all three: they manage their own plots, work on their husbands' plots, and work for family organizations. On their own fields, women in Koumbia grow cereals and cash crops, as described by one woman, "*We grow groundnuts, corn, millet, rice, sesame, and we raise pigs and take care of children*" [FGD, Gender, Koumbia]. Many women in Koumbia work in women's groups as cropping or harvesting labor in the rainy season months, earning either cash (400-500 fCFA/day<sup>11</sup>) or in-kind remuneration (e.g., 1 bag of cereal at harvest).

In certain villages where women's cooperative groups are present (such as Koubounga, Douré, Koumbia, Ta, and Kiéré), some of these groups cultivate sesame and groundnuts on collective fields. They also serve as an opportunity for women to generate additional income and function as an informal source of credit. As one woman explained, "*If there is a problem, we take money from the group to solve it instead of selling what you do not want*" [SSI, Household, Koubounga, Woman]. These cooperative groups exemplify how women exert collective agency and work together to build collective capacity.

### ***Poultry Rearing***

The tasks involved in poultry rearing include acquiring the poultry, keeping them safe, providing clean and healthy food and water supplies, obtaining veterinary care (i.e., vaccinations and getting treatment in case of illness), cleaning the coop and troughs, and selling the poultry. Across the village sites, everyone in the household – men, women, boys, and girls – typically participates in most of these poultry activities, regardless of ownership. Women are responsible for sweeping and maintaining the hygiene of the compound, which includes keeping it clean of poultry feces and any poultry-related residue. Prior to SELEVER, men and children generally spent more time doing certain poultry tasks, such as cleaning the henhouse, because, "*The woman is busy. It is the man who takes care of it more*" [FGD, Gender, Kiéré, Man]. One woman elaborated that, "*It's the man who goes for the termites [for the poultry], while I go to*

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<sup>11</sup> Approximately \$0.67-\$0.84 USD.

*crush the millet*” [SSI, Household, Ta]. Poultry were not as much of a priority to women prior to the program, and women therefore were less actively involved in poultry rearing.

The program aimed to strengthen women’s capacity to manage poultry, and there was strong evidence of women’s involvement in poultry-related tasks post-intervention. Beneficiaries explained that regardless of who owns specific fowl, they are all usually kept together in the household compound, unless there is ample space and financial means to build separate coops for men’s and women’s fowl. In instances of limited space or financial means, which is often the case, women’s birds typically reside with the men’s, and women assume care for the entire flock. Additionally, as men are increasingly engaged in activities outside of the household and women are now trained on or familiar with poultry rearing practices due to SELEVER, women cite that they are more involved in managing the household flock.

Regardless of ownership, husbands have the final (and sometimes sole) decision over when to sell or slaughter poultry. Men’s control over these decisions has been a persistent challenge for women raising poultry as women lack the autonomy to sell or slaughter their birds without their husband’s buy in, which may limit women’s control and ability to reap full benefits of their poultry rearing.

Women may raise pigs, sheep, poultry, and goats, although the acceptability of doing so varies across communities. In some communities, such as in Kiénéré and Koumbia, it is common for women to raise pigs, but it is forbidden in Ta, where dominant cultural views prohibit it. One woman explained, *“It is not because of magical spells that pork farming is prohibited, because it has been done before and currently in neighboring villages. But according to a legend, a woman gave birth and the pig ate her newborn. So, since then, it is forbidden to raise pork here in [Ta]. It is possible to bring pork to the village, but just for a party”* [FGD, Nutrition, Ta].

### **SELEVER Impact on Household Division of Labor**

The SELEVER program has had observable impacts on the gendered division of labor in household and agricultural activities. A member of a MUSO group highlighted an important lesson from SELEVER:

*“We have also learned that boys and girls should be educated in the same way without discrimination”*

[SSI, Ta]. Previously, boys and girls were assigned gender specific tasks that are now increasingly shared among boys and girls, as the gender sensitization trainings have challenged and transformed these gender norms. One man explained: *“Well, it’s true that young boys did not draw water, nor wash the dishes, but today when the woman is busy, the boy does the dishes. These things were not there before. What was forbidden to the woman, it was all about perception. If the man can do [it], so can the woman. The project SELEVER came to reinforce this way of seeing things”* [SSI, Household, Ta].

Results also suggest that men are increasingly more aware of women’s time and labor burdens. For example, before SELEVER, men used to spend from 6am until 6pm in the fields and women would spend from 6am until 5pm in the fields. One man explained, *“From 6pm on, the man can rest, but the woman must prepare in the kitchen for his family and others, which can take beyond 9pm before they can rest”* [Seasonal Calendar, Goumoghó]. Now men are more attentive to this burden and are increasingly sharing domestic tasks, along with young boys, such as fetching water and firewood, caring for children, and sweeping the compound to alleviate women’s task load. One man confirmed, *“Yes, now the man helps the woman with the housework”* [Seasonal Calendar, Koubounga]. We see effects of SELEVER shifting how boys are tasked with chores previously assigned to girls. However, we did not find evidence of the extent to which women’s labor burdens are reduced by adult men, or if they are only reduced by shifting labor to boys and girls, which may have negative consequences if, for example, it takes time away from school.

In addition to engaging men and boys in a larger variety of domestic tasks, the SELEVER program has led to increases in women’s opportunities to participate in agricultural and livestock rearing activities. One woman explained, *“Women did not participate actively in field work. During the harvest, the share for each woman was handed over. Today everything has changed. We work alongside men in the fields, and we help them in raising chickens. So, if you have pigs, in your absence, your husband takes care of them”* [FGD, Gender, Kiéré]. Men are also increasingly contributing to activities like sowing and harvesting their own fields, which were typically women’s responsibility, and women are increasingly participating in decisions regarding their husbands’ plot. The results indicate that women are also

expanding the diversity of their own crops, from previously only groundnuts to now including sesame, rice, and millet. Women will sell all staple crops grown (cereals, grains), and will sell surplus condiments for additional income.

SELEVER also encouraged women to participate in poultry breeding and other production activities: *“We are still moving forward, because a woman was not authorized to breed poultry livestock and therefore, they did not participate in breeding activities”* [FGD, Gender, Goumogh]. One woman confirmed, sharing her experience:

*This is a good thing for us, to have the project. Before, we did not know that a woman could raise chickens and sell them, but the project allowed us to know that. Also, the communication between the man and woman in the home was difficult. But with the project, it is possible and that pleases us also. With this project, we know that the man can help his wife in the domestic work and that pleases us, too* [SSI, Koumbia].

Participants also described increases in cooperation amongst household members to share tasks previously accomplished separately. One woman explained, *“Before SELEVER came into [our] household, breeding was done separately. But nowadays, our thoughts have changed. More and more, there is harmony and cohesion within the families”* [SSI, Koumbia]. Moreover, tasks, such as cleaning the troughs and chicken coops, are shared among men, women, and children in the household. One man described, *“Before, it was the man who cared for the poultry. The women and children weren’t interested [in it], but nowadays when the man leaves his house, he is confident that the women and children will manage his flock”* [FGD, Nutrition, Ta].

## **Gendered Barriers and Opportunities in the Poultry Value Chain**

### ***Gendered Access to and Use of Necessary Inputs for Poultry Rearing***

This section describes the barriers and opportunities to accessing necessary inputs for poultry production that are faced by men and women poultry producers, with particular attention to unique barriers women face compared to men. As identified by the study participants, these necessary inputs include access to

chicks, care and management labor, water, space, vaccines and necessary services, financial capacity, access to credit, and knowledge via trainings.

One best practice identified by service providers and producers alike is poultry breeding. Breeding chickens enables producers to replenish their flock without having to purchase new chicks. A producer in Goumogho indicated that he learned how to invest the income generated from poultry sales to increase the number of their flock “*from 10 to 80 individual birds*” [SSI, Goumogho]. This is a best practice reinforced by the SELEVER intervention.

Another important resource needed for managing household flocks is members of the household who are trained on and knowledgeable of best poultry rearing practices. Respondents indicate that everyone in the household now engages in poultry rearing activities, as there are more people who can contribute to ensuring the quality and health of all of a household’s fowl due to SELEVER trainings. Producers explained that this is important as they realize the strategic importance of poultry to the household’s wellbeing. As one man explained, “*The advantage of raising poultry is that you can prepare to welcome a stranger, sell to solve a problem, or consume in the household*” [SSI, Koumbia]. Another man noted that poultry enables “*an ease in paying tuition, even the consumption [of meat] at parties*” [FGD, Nutrition, Goumogho].

Another necessary resource for raising poultry is access to clean water to not only keep poultry hydrated, but also to maintain household and poultry hygiene. In some villages, such as Kiéré, Koubounga, and Goumogho, water is not always readily available, as they typically rely on boreholes, which require upkeep and are not always functional. Those living on the outskirts of the community, far from the boreholes, also lack convenient access. Some villages have a management committee to which each household contributes a small fee (e.g., 6000 fCFA<sup>12</sup> / year in Koumbia) for management and upkeep of the boreholes. Yet access to potable water remains a challenge, as one man explained: “*We want the project to help us with access to water with a pump...*” [SSI, Kiéré].

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<sup>12</sup> Approximately \$10.09 USD.

Access to space to house and maintain separate flocks is another important resource needed to raise poultry. Women, compared to men, often lack enough space around the household to shelter their own chickens. Women cannot own their own land and must rely on their husbands for access to land to house and raise their poultry.<sup>13</sup> In some areas, if additional land is available, husbands will permit their wives to use it for agriculture or poultry rearing. However, this land is typically prioritized for the first wife, often resulting in lower-rank co-wives lacking space for agricultural, including poultry rearing, activities. This limitation is also compounded by the fact women often lack the financial means to construct their own henhouse, and women would likely be expected to share the space for their flock with that of their husbands'. When this occurs, women end up caring for and feeding both their own and their husbands' poultry, without seeing the benefits of their husbands' poultry sale.

Vaccinating poultry, and thus access to service providers such as VVVs, is a critical input necessary for poultry rearing. It costs approximately 50 fCFA<sup>14</sup> to vaccinate a fowl. All producers face serious challenges with poultry diseases. Particularly during the months of January and February, colder weather brings diseases that will kill fowl and small chicks, and increased rain during the rainy season carries away and kills small chicks. In Kiéré, a poultry trader noticed these deaths had been decreasing due to an increase in vaccination rates. He said, *"This year, 2019, we vaccinate chickens and it's okay. In the past, from February, I could kill more than 10 sick chickens sold to me. But there is more, all the chickens that I slaughtered this year for food were in good health. It shows that the poultry diseases have greatly decreased this year"* [SSI, Kiéré].

Producers with a nearby VVV are more likely to vaccinate their poultry than those without. In some villages, such as Ta or Koumbia, access to vaccinators is a challenge for all producers as there are not enough to meet demand. Often producers' flocks will become sick or die before they can be visited by a VVV. In Koumbia, producers explained that the VVV does not respond in time to help their poultry.

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<sup>13</sup> See Eissler et al., 2020 p. 24, for a further discussion of land rights in the study areas.

<sup>14</sup> Approximately \$0.08 USD, although rates may vary from village to village.

Social norms, particularly ones that limit interactions between men and women, may inhibit women's ability to interact with VVVs and receive critical messaging. For example, visitors to the home, such as VVVs—whether a man or woman—must always first address the head of household out of respect. As described by one man VVV: *“First to the man out of respect, and after to the woman”* [SSI, VVV, Douré], and one woman VVV: *“I cannot greet the woman first and leave her husband, who is the head of the family”* [SSI, VVV, Kiéré]. Only when the husband is not available would a visitor greet a woman first. Greeting a wife in the absence of her husband in the household, however, also poses reputational concerns for a woman, as a man cannot speak alone with a woman without raising suspicions of infidelity or *“getting in trouble”* [SSI, VVV, Goumoghó]. In areas where there are no active women VVVs or poultry traders, limits on interactions between men and women can be a strong barrier for women producers, who must then rely on their husband being home to discuss caring for or selling their flock or risk generating household tensions<sup>15</sup>.

Finally, having access to financial capital is the most important, necessary input for poultry producers as cited by producers and service providers alike. For men and women producers, a lack of savings or extra money to invest in productive assets limits their ability to adopt best practices. As one man explained, *“The lack of financial means for the construction of poultry houses and for the fattening of livestock [is a major challenge]. If we could get help in this way, it would relieve us”* [SSI, Kiéré]. His comments reveal the compounding effect financial constraints pose. The inability to purchase materials to construct a hygienic, enclosed living space for a producer's poultry may lead to diseases or theft, which in turn negatively impacts their income generation potential. In fact, poultry theft and disease are major factors listed by women for not wanting to engage in poultry rearing.

Another producer explained that producers may not always be able to pay service providers; in their words, *“We [producers] learned a lot [about poultry rearing], but we lack the financial means to support the activity. People do not always pay [the VVVs for their service]”* [FGD, Koumbia, Woman].

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<sup>15</sup> The results do not shed further light on how women VVVs have been able to overcome limits on their ability to interact with men.

Without payment, VVVs may have to suspend their operations due to a lack of resources— leaving the community without anyone to perform vaccinations.

Specifically, for women producers, a lack of financial means limits their ability to adopt best practices compared to men producers. For example, compared to men, women producers typically do not build and maintain a coop for their poultry, which can result in “*diseases affecting their flock*” [SSI, Koumbia], as free-roaming poultry more easily transmit diseases and are susceptible to theft.

Poultry traders observe that women producers are less likely to purchase high quality, nutritious feed for their poultry due to limited financial means as it is more expensive than less nutritious, generic feed, “*It is usually the lack of means to ensure the care and, especially, the feeding of poultry. Moreover, many women who raise chickens do not have henhouses*” [SSI, Trader, Goumoghó]. Another explained, “*The current difficulty is access to their diet. There is a woman in our neighborhood who has a lot of chickens, but what tires her is the lack of food for [them]*” [SSI, Kíéré]. Sometimes purchasing poultry is challenging for women, as, “*Women cannot afford to buy poultry like men*” [SSI, Koumbia].

Finally, access to and ensuring proper vaccination can be a major challenge for women producers due to their limited financial means. As one VVV explained, “*It is mostly women who refuse [vaccination]. Since when the man calls [me] [for services], you vaccinate first for him and then after, he asks [the women] if they want to vaccinate their poultry. There are some who will accept, but others will refuse since it is a problem of [financial] means*” [SSI, VVV, Koumbia].

To this extent, women also face challenges compared to men in accessing formal loans. Conditions for securing loans from formal financial institutions, such as banks, are onerous: a loan application, guarantees, fees, a review of the file, and a home visit by a financial officer before a loan can be granted. Especially for women, a loan is granted to a women’s group or business owner, not an individual, because she typically cannot afford collateral or save the required minimum. The SELEVER program aimed to circumvent these challenges by working with GS/MUSO groups to provide suitable alternatives for women producers to access lines of credit for their enterprises. These loans available from GS/MUSO serve as a feasible alternative option for women as they are more systematic, yet not always

guaranteed. They require no collateral and offer very reasonable interest rates; however, the total amount granted is typically lower than what the applicant requests.

The following excerpt describes a beneficiary from Koumbia's experience with a GS/MUSO loan and provides an explanation for why the short duration and repayment schedule offered by the GS/MUSO's current credit model and loan packages are not working for the target clientele.

*The MUSO leader spoke to us about the credit, but these conditions do not suit us. With him, you cannot have more than 100,000 fCFA<sup>16</sup> and the repayment period is 6 months from the day you receive the money. Many of us are farmers, and if you have to take 100,000 today to pay it back in 6 months, it's difficult. What can we do to repay this money within the time limit? If you take the 100,000 fCFA when you have no poultry, no henhouse, no food, and you have to buy all that with the money, what will you have left to buy poultry? Raise and sell it within 6 months? People were interested at first, but when they became aware of the conditions, they gave up. There is a person who has joined, but who says that [she] can no longer [do it]. It is very difficult. But, if it turns out that you [already] have everything – henhouse, poultry, vaccines, medicines, food – in 6 months, you can raise the poultry and sell. But it turns out that we do not sell our poultry at any time. There are periods during which we can sell. Currently, poultry is bought, but from August [on], we no longer sell it. At this time, a rooster sells for around 1000 fCFA<sup>17</sup>, while you would have spent 100,000 fCFA to sell without profit. Currently you can sell small chickens at 1000 fCFA, 1500 fCFA<sup>18</sup>, and 500 fCFA<sup>19</sup>. If you have to buy at 1500 fCFA to sell at 1500 fCFA, it shows you operate at a loss. The selling period is from December to January. At this same time, you can have something else to sell to pay off your loan, in case you can't sell your poultry. Their conditions are difficult. In agricultural activities, farmers usually have repayable credits in 9 or 12 months [SSI, Koumbia].*

Additionally, the GS/MUSO leaders explained that husbands would not allow their wives to attend meetings. One explained, “*Some refuse to welcome us and even refuse to let their wives participate in the program...[because] men say that the sensitization carried out by the GS/MUSO within households to accompany women will come true and will lead [women] to stop listening to their husbands*” [SSI, Kiéré]. He continued by saying that, “*[Some men] find...that the economic independence of women will prevent men from controlling them. Some find that accompanying women to raise poultry goes against customs, because a woman cannot own poultry on her own*” [SSI, Kiéré]. However, these perceptions applied to only a minority of men in the community, whereas the vast majority were generally supportive

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<sup>16</sup> Approximately \$168.12 USD.

<sup>17</sup> Approximately \$1.68 USD.

<sup>18</sup> Approximately \$2.52 USD.

<sup>19</sup> Approximately \$0.84 USD.

of their wives' participation. It is important to highlight this tension, as SELEVER should be acutely attentive to the fact that improving opportunities for women's empowerment may threaten some men's identity and masculinity. SELEVER should be sensitive to this in future iterations of the program and continue to engage with men.

### ***Barriers and Opportunities for Gendered Participation in Production and Marketing***

Men and women participants described barriers and opportunities for gendered participation in poultry production and marketing. Barriers included those attributable to social norms, which limit women's autonomy in decision-making and ability to fully engage in the poultry value chain, whereas opportunities are primarily described as the adoption of hygiene-related best practices.

Participants described best hygiene-related poultry rearing practices as keeping the henhouse clean, regularly sweeping the henhouses, washing the troughs and feeders, and separating the poultry from human living space. Men VVVs indicated that a lack of hygiene will result in major poultry losses, and a woman VVV explained that a lack of poultry hygiene also results in human illness, particularly the "*exposure of children to poultry droppings*" [SSI, Koumbounga]. Women in Koumbia expressed challenges in raising poultry such that they assume the labor of caring for both theirs and their husband's poultry that occupy the same space; women are responsible for maintaining the hygiene of all household poultry. In some cases, they are also responsible for providing food to all household poultry. A woman described her experience, "*At home, in the morning, when I feed my chickens, [my husband's] chickens also arrive while we give the food. He does not give food to his poultry, because he says they do not need it. But once it's for sale, it is he who takes the money from the sales*" [FGD, Koumbia]. According to several women producers in this study, men justify this because they are the heads of family and can do as they please.

There are also best practices for hygiene employed at the village level, such as the construction, use, and regular cleaning of latrines. In some villages, such as Kiééré and Koumbia, women sweep the area around the markets, paths, and water sources at least once a year, although at this low frequency it is not clear how effective this is for optimal hygiene.

Although women have been increasingly engaged in poultry production, social barriers still hinder their full participation, particularly as it comes to their power and influence over when to sell their poultry. These barriers include norms shaping women's reputations with regard to poultry production. Norms may also constrain their market participation, such as those around gendered decision-making and respect for men as the head of the household.

Regarding production, women may not slaughter a chicken under any circumstances across all villages without risking their reputations. Customs dictate this norm, such that, "*There is no respect for women who [slaughter chickens]*" [Seasonal Calendar, Ta]. Pregnant women or women of childbearing age especially may not kill any living being; as described by one woman, "*A woman who gives birth must not kill a living being. It is forbidden. If you are pregnant and you slaughter, at your delivery the child will present a neck as if you want to slaughter it. It is for this reason*" [Seasonal Calendar, Koubounga].

Poultry traders indicate that women can never sell chickens without her husband's permission. In accordance with local gender norms, men are considered the lead decision-makers around poultry production and marketing. Typically,

*For example, it is the head of the household himself who calls us to come to take chickens. When we arrive, we ask to see him. And the case where his wife calls us to pick up [the chickens], when we arrive, we ask to see the head of the household to tell him that his wife has called us to sell the chickens. If it turns out that the woman had left him the chickens, he then sells them to us* [SSI, Kiéré, Poultry Trader, Man].

Many respondents explained that it would be inappropriate and disrespectful for a woman to sell her chickens, but rather she should leave this business to her husband. As a woman producer explained, "*She can ask her husband to sell for her. Otherwise, out of respect for her husband, she cannot [sell the poultry]*" [FGD, Koubounga]. From a man's perspective, "*Many women have chickens but must give [them to] a man to sell. Because if the woman catches her chickens and sells herself, she will have disrespected her husband*" [FGD, Douré]. In some instances, men even sell or slaughter their spouses' chickens without permission, in accordance with this norm.

Cultural norms additionally dictate that women, and thus their property such as fowl, belong to their husband, as aptly described by one woman, “*No, it is not possible [to sell poultry without your husband] because the hen and you belong to your husband*” [FGD, Kiéré]. A man shared his perspective, “*Here, the woman does not have a house; the courtyard does not belong to [her]. Since it’s me who brought her to my house, she has to do whatever I want, even if something belongs to her*” [FGD, Kiéré].

Women shared covert strategies they employ to influence their husbands’ decisions around poultry production. Women lobby elderly family members “*to try to bring their husband back to his senses*” [FGD, Kiéré, Man]. They use flattery or “*bedroom charms*” to influence their husbands’ decisions, as well as appealing to their husbands’ parents or family members to change his mind. Co-wives will discuss with each other their ideas and plans before engaging in strategies to influence their husband. Further research is required to understand the full extent that women are able to influence their husbands’ decisions.

In the cases where a buyer would directly negotiate with a woman to purchase her poultry, her husband must be present for the sale to demonstrate adequate respect for the head of the household. Poultry producers – both men and women – confirm this is a community norm. One poultry trader highlighted that, “*You do not buy chickens directly with a woman in the absence of her husband or someone else*” [SSI, Kiéré]. If the husband is away, the buyer must look for a “witness” (e.g., a neighbor man or an elder son in the household) to buy chickens from a woman, because otherwise it would be considered extremely disrespectful to the head of household. A second poultry trader presented this scenario, “*Imagine that you buy the chickens with the woman, and her husband comes to ask you why you bought the chickens from the woman, you see! You will have absolutely nothing to say since you yourself know that the courtyard does not belong to the woman*” [SSI, Kiéré]. Some men, particularly in Koumbia, perceive that women should never be allowed to go to a market to sell chickens because of the possibility she will be courted by another man.

Some men, however, challenged norms preventing women from engaging in poultry marketing directly; as explained by one man, “*This is not a forbidden norm, but rather an internal organization by*

*the couple. If you understand correctly, she can sell her hens without any problem*” [FGD, Ta]. Another elaborated, *“Yes, it is possible. If my wife decides to sell her chickens, I do not see any problem. These are her hens. She can also choose to go through me to sell her hens”* [FGD, Ta]. One man in Koubounga explained that his wife once sold his chickens and received much higher prices: *“Yes, my wife even sold my chickens in my absence. I had more than 50,000 fCFA<sup>20</sup>”* [Seasonal Calendar, Koubounga]. These results highlight the importance of engaging men in sensitization trainings so that they are increasingly supportive of women’s ability to maintain autonomy in her choices regarding her poultry rearing.

### **SELEVER’s Impact on Gendered Participation in the Poultry Value Chain**

SELEVER has reduced barriers and facilitated access to necessary inputs for poultry producers, enabling them to adopt best practices to improve their production. Since the project’s beginning, more women are engaged in poultry rearing, which has benefitted most participants beyond poultry rearing to include transformed gender norms, enhanced crop quality, and improved health outcomes. Yet women still face unique barriers to accessing the necessary inputs to adopt best poultry rearing practices. The SELEVER program has tangibly facilitated reducing these barriers.

By providing access to various training and support, SELEVER has increased awareness and adoption of best poultry rearing practices as well as health and wellbeing outcomes. For example, SELEVER increased the amount of available poultry droppings, which participants were able to use as a form of fertilizer in maize fields and vegetable gardens. Several producers indicated that this enables them to enrich the quality of their cropping fields as well as remove the droppings from around the household for safety and hygiene. SELEVER has also taught the importance of building, maintaining, and using henhouses to divide spaces for chicks, cockerels, and full-grown chickens as a best breeding practice, which can also have positive impacts on human health by separating animal and human living spaces. One woman explained that, *“[I] learned that poultry houses must be cleaned every day”* [FGD, Koumbia]. In addition, separating the poultry and human living spaces is essential for household health in

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<sup>20</sup> Approximately \$82.05 USD.

order to keep children away from the poultry droppings. Mothers also now eat with their children to watch their meals, as fowl may transmit illnesses when they peck at children's food.

Participants cite increased knowledge and improved practices for feeding and maintaining the health of their poultry due to the SELEVER project. They provide new, diversified foods such as maize, dried fish, sesame, millet, and groundnuts to their flock, as one beneficiary explained, *“Before we went looking for termites in the bush to come and feed the chickens. Today, there are all kinds of chicken food that sells. We can buy these foods to give to the chickens”* [FGD, Kiéré].

Additionally, due to SELEVER, producers increasingly recognize the importance of vaccinating their poultry and now see the effect of vaccination on the viability of their flock. One man explained, *“Before [SELEVER], it was twice in the year, but now we vaccinate [the poultry] every three months”* [SSI, VVV, Kiéré]. Another explained, *“Yes there was a change, I just vaccinated my chicks a few days ago, and today I paid the VVV 2,400 fCFA<sup>21</sup>. Before [SELEVER] we did not vaccinate chickens, but since we are told that the vaccine was good for the growth of chickens, we do it more and more”* [SSI, Ta].

Additionally, while one woman in Douré indicated that the SELEVER project had no impact on the family's actual poultry consumption, others highlighted that they had learned the health benefits of consuming poultry. One woman mentioned that, *“We learned that chicken meat is beneficial for pregnant women”* [FGD, Kiéré], while another learned that, *“Eggs are beneficial for children, for our bodies”* [FGD, Kiéré]. A man indicated that, *“We have learned that we can occasionally consume chickens to have a lot of vitamins”* [SSI, Koumbia], whereas before beneficiaries *“had to wait for a visitor or a funeral to hope to eat meat”* [SSI, Ta]. However, while SELEVER has increased awareness of the benefits of consuming poultry, it is still widely considered only for sale or consumption at a celebration (funeral, visitor, wedding).

According to participants across this study, the SELEVER program has changed the way people perceive women's poultry management. From the gender-sensitization trainings, many participants

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<sup>21</sup> Approximately \$3.94.

describe this shift as men developing more ‘open minds’ around women’s empowerment and what women should be allowed to do. One man explained, *“There were people who not did understand the freedom that should be given to women. Now they allow their wives to carry out income-generating activities, such as livestock and petty trading. And they attend training and awareness meetings”* [FGD, Koubounga]. In Kiéré, men observed more women either raising or wanting to raise poultry as well as participating in income-generating activities. One woman succinctly summarized this change: *“There is now a change in the habits of women. Before men did not accept that women do this type of trade, but now everyone has started searching for [additional] money, including women”* [FGD, Kiéré]. One man in Douré indicated that, *“We learned to raise [poultry] in collaboration with the women”* as a result of the SELEVER project. Another described that, *“Now, even when the man is not there, the woman takes care of the chickens very well”* [SSI, Ta]. Another explained, *“Nowadays women are raising a lot more and have lots of heads of poultry. They even have cattle”* [SSI, Koubounga]. And, as the president of a MUSO group stated, *“This [SELEVER] project teaches us to value and believe in the potential of women and accept that they can do income-generating activities”* [SSI, Kiéré]. Such comments indicate that intervention participants may view women’s participation in poultry production more favorably, which may indicate that gender norms are transforming to be more equitable.

Still, women in this study maintained no difference prior to SELEVER in their ability to sell their own chickens without their husband. As one woman explained, *“It’s not in all families. At home, it’s the man who always sells chickens”* [FGD, Ta]. In Douré, women producers expressed frustration at this barrier, such that even if women have chickens to sell, they must rely on their husbands to either sell the chicken or allow them to travel to the market to sell the chicken: *“Despite that, it’s hard for the woman to sell her chickens at the market. What we women can do is call the buyer, who will come and pay at home [after receiving her husband’s permission]”* [FGD, Douré]. In summary, SELEVER has had marginal effect on women’s ability to sell or slaughter her chickens, as they are still reliant on their husbands’ permission. The changes we do see differ across households and are typically related to the openness of the men in shifting their perspectives. Further research should explore the effect of gender-sensitive

trainings and related activities on men's attitudes towards women's empowerment to understand the aspects of such interventions that can foster this shift in attitudes. Further, barriers to women's participation in production constrain women's empowerment as they lack access to resources needed to enhance empowerment, a principal objective of the SELEVER intervention.

## **Poultry Rearing and Women's Empowerment**

### ***Poultry Rearing's Effect on Women's Lives***

Raising poultry has improved household wellbeing, and specifically the lives of women producers in several ways. Poultry rearing enables men and women to increase their overall income and resilience to shocks. For example, upon a shock, such as unexpected healthcare costs or unanticipated food shortage, a man or woman could sell a chicken for immediate cash. It is commonly perceived as a means of "famine reduction," as poultry is saved to sell and buy additional foods during the lean season. A poultry trader explained, "*You can have a problem, but if you have chickens, you just have to sell some to solve the problem. Also, when raising about 20 chickens, this can be used to buy a sheep or a goat, in terms of investment*" [SSI, Kiéré]. Selling poultry can also assist in paying school fees, uniforms, and food for the household all year long. A poultry producer explained, "*For example, the question of health, the funeral, the expenses are numerous. Women and children, buying their clothing, etcetera, you have to have money available. You also have to have money available to pay for work equipment. I have a tractor; it needs maintenance that's a bit expensive*" [SSI, Kiéré].

Raising poultry also saves households from needing to take loans and buy meat for celebrations or ceremonies. One trader in Goumogho explained that "*Poultry breeding helps us avoid taking credit, allows us to solve financial problems. Even at parties, we do not suffer to have meat*" [SSI, Goumogho]. Whenever a household welcomes a visitor, they can slaughter one of their own chickens rather than needing to purchase a chicken from the market.

Beyond shocks and cost-saving strategies, raising poultry is a new source of income that can increase women's financial independence. Men respondents perceived that raising poultry is more

beneficial to women, as it enables women to earn higher net incomes than men as women do not share similar obligatory expenses. For example, the heads of household's (typically a man's) obligatory expenses include staple food items (e.g., grain, meat, etc.), healthcare, clothing, school fees, and other necessary households needs, whereas woman traditionally do not bear these financial responsibilities. Women will contribute to these expenses when necessary and are required to cover food costs that supplement staple ingredients (e.g., condiments). Raising poultry enables women to reduce overall household financial burdens by increasing their own incomes and their ability to contribute to more categories of expenses.

Importantly, women producers perceived benefits from rearing poultry to their own lives, which include earning additional incomes, increasing financial independence, the ability to purchase items such as clothing, soap, herbicide or fertilizers for their gardens, nutritious feed for other livestock, participating in women's savings groups, and starting new or investing in existing income-generating activities. Women express that raising poultry increases their self-confidence in their skills and capacities. Gaining financial independence is critical for women, as they now do not need to rely on their husbands' permission or direction for how to spend money. However, it is important to note that men continue to execute sales without women, which limits women's ability to control their income generated from poultry, a key concern that SELEVER should aim to address as the program continues.

### ***SELEVER Impact on Women's Empowerment and Reducing Household Barriers***

The SELEVER program has yielded perceived impacts on reducing barriers to women's involvement in the poultry value chain. Participants note that more women are involved in poultry rearing and income-generating activities, and importantly, more husbands are supportive of these activities. One man explained, "*When the project arrived, they taught us a lot about women's empowerment to conduct economic activities*" [SSI, Goumogh]. Another man explained, "*It is with the project that women decide now to [financially] take care of themselves... Many women have started to sell soumbala, some sell tomatoes, onions, fish, others buy corn, or millet to sell*" [FGD, Koumbia].

Though men and women beneficiaries expressed that, due to SELEVER, husbands now support their wives' involvement in poultry rearing, there are stipulations. First, while men are supportive of women's engagement in production, they seek to retain control over decisions. As summarized by one man, *"For me, the essential contribution we have made from the SELEVER project is the empowerment of women to manage their own livestock. The only thing that matters to me is that the husband is always consulted and agrees before any decision. And, even if it is the man who has to sell his wife's chickens, the money goes back to his wife"* [FGD, Ta].

On the other hand, men appreciate women's ability to assume decisions during emergencies to help their children: *"For me, the change that the project has brought is that in the absence of the husband, if a child is sick, the woman can take the chickens, sell them, and take care of the child. Before, even if the chickens belong to the woman, and she wants to sell them, it is necessary to wait for the return of [her husband] to do it"* [FGD, Ta]. The SELEVER project has had noticeable shifts in support for women rearing poultry, and to some extent, taking the decisions to sell their poultry. Overall, women still lack the ability to control decisions related to their own poultry. As the SELEVER program continues, it should aim to further address the extent to which women are able to make decisions related to the use of their poultry.

## **Barriers and Opportunities for Women's Participation in VVV Service Provision**

### ***How Women Establish Themselves as VVV Service Providers***

The SELEVER program provided training and support for approximately 30 women to become VVVs, which aimed to reduce obstacles for women to practice as VVVs as well as increase opportunities for women VVVs and producers to engage in the poultry value chain. Four women included in this study attended these trainings and now practice as a VVV; they shared their experiences establishing and managing their practice.

A woman VVV described her training experience with SELEVER. She spent six days in Koudougou, Burkina Faso in December 2017 for the first training and another three days for a second

training at a later time. The training topics included: vaccination, poultry deworming, henhouse construction, poultry hygiene, and poultry feed manufacturing. At the end, she received syringes, needles, a vaccine vial, and a bottle of deworming drops. For each training, she received a per diem of 25,000 fCFA<sup>22</sup> for housing, transport, and food, and then an additional 2,800 fCFA<sup>23</sup> for return travel.

VVVs not only vaccinate poultry, but also do wellness and health checks on fowl, along with follow-up and support visits to remind farmers of best practices, such as to provide nutritious feed to chickens, keep their coops clean, and separate human and poultry living spaces. Usually after a vaccination visit, a VVV will stay for 30 minutes to discuss these best practices with the producer. A VVV explained part of her role: *“I advise. I show the households how to record the expenses. I teach the families to use latrines. I also raise awareness about nutrition and interact with households about their own health. And after each vaccination, I talk with the families about the SELEVER project, [particularly] on the separation of animal species”* [SSI, Kordié]. Supplies necessary to start up a VVV practice include a cooler, vaccine vials, poultry feed, and de-wormer, all of which are provided to attendees at the SELEVER training. Typically, these supplies are purchased and thus replenished from a veterinarian.

VVVs build their client base by employing a variety of self-marketing strategies for their services. One woman VVV solicits a market manager to help advertise her services at a local market; another woman VVV asks her current and former clients to share her information with other possible clients in addition to advertising her own services. Another also relies on her current and former clients to market her services, as well as directly introducing herself to new potential clients in their compounds to teach them the importance of vaccination. Working hours per month depend on the frequency of epidemics amongst poultry. One VVV explained, *“When it is the period of diseases, I work 10-15 days. When there are fewer diseases, maybe 5 days [per month]”* [SSI, Kiéré]. Table 7 highlights the different expenses, activities, and time involved for women practicing as a VVV.

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<sup>22</sup> Approximately \$41.53 USD.

<sup>23</sup> Approximately \$4.63 USD.

The VVV who serves Koubounga highlighted that she also trains producers on poultry food production, but charges an additional fee for this service, either in kind (e.g., two palates of millet) or in cash, depending on the client’s ability. However, the VVV who serves Kordié explained challenges in retaining interest in this type of training: “*I had trainings on making poultry food, but people do not buy these foods, so I stopped [the training]*” [SSI, Kordié].

**Table 7** Summary of Investments and Activities of 4 Women VVVs

Village	Initial / Typical Expenses	Investment source	Areas Covered	# Clients	# visits/ year	Ave. time spent per visit	Awareness Activities
Koalio	-Transport (bicycle) -Vaccine vials (3,000 fCFA / month) -deworming powder (4,000 fCFA / month) -box of tablets (20,000 fCFA / month) *for every 3,000 fCFA spent, she earns 2,000 fCFA	20,000 fCFA loan from husband	3 villages -Kalière -Zinai -Koalio	22	-1x/month -3x/year for vaccination	-1 hr per client -travel to client in Zinai can take up to 2hr roundtrip	-2 meetings per month -30 participants per meeting
Koubounga	-Vaccine vials (3,000 fCFA each) -deworming (6,000 fCFA every 2 months) -fuel costs (6L; 750fCFA/L) 4,000 fCFA	- saved 30,000 fCFA from training per diems	--	6	--	-2 hr per client -often waits up to 1 hr per visit for client to return home	-conducts these during client visits
Kordié	--	--	--	--	--	--	-conducts these during client visits
Kiéré	-Vaccine vials -Tablets (4,000 fCFA / box) -syringes	--	--	--	--	--	-conducts these during client visits

--The respondent could not provide this information at the time of the interview.

### ***Gendered barriers and opportunities to VVV service provision***

VVV service providers – men and women alike – face a variety of general challenges related to their practice, which include conserving the stability of their vaccine supply, lack of adequate transport and maintenance, lack of financial means to support maintenance of transport and supplies, long working hours, bad roads, and unstable profits as most work is paid on credit. However, both men and women VVVs observe that women face additional challenges to practice as a VVV compared to their male

counterparts, predominately a lack of financial capital to finance their costs and a limited freedom of movement. There were no known women poultry traders in the study sites.

Women in general have less financial means compared to men to finance their start up or ongoing business costs. Men VVVs were more likely to use a loan to begin their VVV practice than women. The women VVVs either borrowed money or saved their training per diems to establish their practice. One woman had borrowed 20,000 fCFA<sup>24</sup> from her husband to purchase the necessary inputs. Others explained saving their training per diems to start their businesses, and therefore did not need to borrow any money: *“No, I had 30,000 fCFA from the training and equipment. That’s the money I used to start the job”* [SSI, Koubounga]. Women are restricted from accessing formal lines of credit, as they do not own necessary collateral and must go through their husbands. While formal options are limited, some women who participate in women’s savings groups are able to access small loans via these groups: *“We have women’s groups here, and we contribute 100 fCFA per week. So, I could borrow 10,000 or 50,000 fCFA”* [SSI, Kordié]. However, their participation in these groups is moderated by their husbands’ permission and support. For those that do participate, it is common for men to seek small loans from these groups via their wives to cover their own business costs. For example, a man VVV in Goumoghó received a 50,000 fCFA<sup>25</sup> loan, repayable over six months at 10% interest from the women’s savings group through his wife. A man VVV in Koumbia received a loan from the women’s association for 50,000 fCFA, which enabled him to pay for his motorbike’s maintenance costs.

In an agentic decision, women VVVs typically refuse to work on credit and only accept cash for their services, citing credit as a potentially bad or risky business decision. One woman in Kiéré indicated that she will accept credit, but only if specifically requested. Another explained that, *“Before leaving, I always warn producers to avoid absences and also to have my money [ready] when the work is done”* [SSI, Koubounga]. She will refuse payment by credit, although she will accept payment-in-kind, such as in exchange for a chicken.

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<sup>24</sup> Approximately \$33.22.

<sup>25</sup> Approximately \$82.75.

Compared to men, women have limited freedom of movement, which inhibits their practice. According to one man VVV, *“It is difficult for a woman to exercise this profession because of the work hours and multiple locations for travel. For a woman to leave home for this job, it is complicated, unless she is a free woman”* [SSI, Kouboundga]. Their limited freedom of movement is linked to traditional gender roles, which emphasize women’s responsibility for domestic work and childcare. VVV activities often occur in the early morning or late evening, when the poultry flock returns to the household from daily grazing. This timing conflicts with when women are expected to be at home to prepare meals or care for children.

Reputational concerns also constrain women VVV’s mobility. The community and her husband will always *“accuse [a woman traveling alone at night] of adultery”* [SSI, Goumogho]. Women may be able to circumvent such allegations with the permission and accompaniment of their husbands. One VVV in Goumogho provided an example: *“But among the ten women, there is only one woman who travels at night and is accompanied by her husband for work. The others are sitting at home, because their husbands are not understanding. They may forget what [SELEVER] taught them”* [SSI, Goumogho, Man]. Some women do not practice as a VVV, because their husbands refuse to give permission. In Kouboundga, only one of the three women trained by SELEVER actually practices as a VVV. She described her experience: *“I cannot know if the husbands of all women accept that they go out or not. It’s everyone’s privacy. Me, especially, it is my husband who registered me and in case of a challenge, he encourages me to continue”* [SSI, Kouboundga]. Regardless of SELEVER training, a husband’s permission and support is essential for a woman to practice.

There were no known women poultry traders in the study sites, as social norms prohibit women from collecting hens, traveling, and selling poultry at the markets, according to respondents. Women traders would also likely experience similar barriers described above. Poultry trading operates on demand, often requiring extensive travel, sometimes over long distances without fixed hours. The poultry traders included in this study observed it would be difficult for a woman – particularly married women – to work as a trader. One trader offered a potential scenario where a woman could feasibly navigate these barriers

to practice as a trader, given that “[she] does it on the spot, because it is an activity that requires a lot of movement...With regard to housework, it is difficult for a married woman with children to return [to her home] late” [SSI, Kiéré]. Even if the community would support her, she must make concessions with her housework: “[It] would be difficult to do, reconcile [this housework demand] with the sale of poultry. That could therefore create problems in her home” [SSI, Kiéré].

### **Community and Household Support for Women VVVs**

Women VVVs received mixed support from their household and community members. In Kordié, a woman VVV explained that some people find her stubborn while others find her brave: “Some people tell me I’m brave. Others even think I’m stubborn. Others say that this work is only for men” [SSI, Kordié]. While she has her husband’s support to practice, he instructs her to not return home late. Her co-wife does not say anything, and her children view her work positively as it returns additional income.

However, a woman VVV in Kounbougá described more significant challenges, such that many producers will not hire her, because she is a woman: “Some people still say that a woman will not vaccinate their chickens, but [they allow] men to do it, and then the chickens die. Once there was a VVV man who vaccinated 170 chickens. They are now all dead except for the older chickens. I never vaccinated a chicken that then later died” [SSI, Kounbougá]. According to her, a VVV should only be evaluated on the quality of their work and not on their gender. While she also receives full support from her husband, she notes that her co-wives are jealous and do not always support her, as she is their “rival...you know [what I mean] well” [SSI, Kounbougá]. Overall women VVVs’ mixed support from household and community members reveals that communities may grow more accepting of their work.

## DISCUSSION

This study qualitatively explored the household division of labor among poultry producing households and barriers to women's participation in different nodes of the poultry value chain in Burkina Faso. It also examined the extent to which the SELEVER program has been able to address barriers to women's participation in value chain activities. It is important to note that this study is a qualitative component of a larger mixed methods process evaluation and relies on only a small sample of SELEVER's beneficiaries and actors. Therefore, when we use causal language to describe impacts, it is reflective only of beneficiaries' and actors' perceptions.<sup>26</sup> In the following section, we summarize findings from the study, which raise important insights to be considered in future iterations of the SELEVER program, and key questions for further exploration.

### Division of Labor

This report highlights the gendered division of labor in Burkinabé households regarding domestic, agricultural, poultry-related, and other income-generating activities. The SELEVER program has challenged gender norms dictating responsibility for different forms of labor. It is observed that men and boys are more involved in domestic work than prior to SELEVER, which helps to alleviate women's domestic labor burden, although it is unclear to what extent this occurs. Some men discuss no longer feeling shame or emasculation while sharing certain domestic duties. Boys now carry firewood home, search for and collect water, sweep the compound, wash dishes, and sometimes cook, which are chores typically reserved for girls. Men will now care for children, search for firewood or water, grind cereals at the mill, and purchase vegetables at the market on behalf of their wives. Men also now conduct some domestic labor tasks while women engage in income-generating activities outside of the compound.

Women maintain responsibility for all domestic and unpaid care work and are increasingly accessing opportunities to engage in agricultural and income-generating activities. SELEVER's gender

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<sup>26</sup> Stronger causal statements regarding of SELEVER's attributable impacts will be confirmed from trial studies, which are currently underway at time of publication.

awareness trainings have increased men's support of women engaging in such activities, which is a critical barrier overcome to facilitate women's participation. More women have confidence in their ability to successfully raise poultry, and most have the support of their husbands to do so as well. All household members are involved in poultry and livestock activities to some extent, which enables better care and management of these enterprises in the husband's or wife's absence.

Women engage in various agricultural activities across the study villages. In some villages, women only work on their husband's plots; whereas in others, women receive parcels of land to cultivate on their own. SELEVER has helped to expand the types of crops women can grow, a means of diversifying sources of income. SELEVER has also emphasized the importance for women to be able to grow their own crops; for instance, both men and women indicated that women are now working more in the husband's field as well as in their own field than they had prior to SELEVER. Women have established cooperative women's groups (either family-based groups or community-based women's groups) that provide paid labor opportunities to work other people's agricultural fields during the harvests and rainy season. Existing literature provides evidence that women's engagement in collective farming groups empower women overall, however the extent to which women may participate and take advantage of empowerment potential from such groups is dictated by gender norms and relations (Mudege et al., 2015). Future research should examine how these collective groups operate to foster women's empowerment in the study areas in order for future iterations of SELEVER to improve its functioning of program-related groups.

As a result of the SELEVER gender-sensitivity trainings, there is increased awareness and acceptance of women participating in new streams of income-generating activities outside of the homestead and their husband's plot. Through these activities, women are able to support their own needs as well as contribute to household expenses. Men generally supported their wives in participating in income-generating activities as they saw how this improved household wellbeing and helped to alleviate financial strain. Men sometimes demonstrated this support – in addition to giving permission – by taking care of women's domestic duties in their absence.

## **Gendered Participation Along Poultry Value Chain Nodes**

Across all study sites, poultry producers – both men and women – have learned and adopted new best practices and techniques for raising poultry from SELEVER. These include regular vaccination, implementing high quality and nutritious feeding, and constructing and utilizing henhouses that are separate from human living areas. Men and women indicate vaccinating their poultry more often and producing or purchasing more diversified and nutritious feed for their poultry that they had prior to SELEVER. However, barriers to adoption persist, particularly for women. With limited incomes, women have lesser financial capacity to invest in their poultry production compared to men. This means that women often cannot afford to vaccinate their entire flock. Additionally, women less often build and maintain henhouses to keep their poultry separated from their husbands' flock. This is further compounded by a lack of available space, which limits women's ability to build their own henhouse outright. Women often must keep their flocks with her husband's, which translates to women assuming the care labor for her and her husband's flock. Should additional space be available, the first wife is usually prioritized, meaning that space is a more persistent challenge for lower-rank co-wives. For all poultry producers, the availability and access to trained service providers and water also remains a challenge.

Although SELEVER has improved women's capacity and access to poultry rearing information and services, barriers to their full participation persist, as these opportunities are bounded within her husband's control. Out of respect for the husband, traders and service providers must first interact with the him (as head of household) and wives must first receive their husband's permission to engage in poultry rearing activities. Decisions to sell or slaughter a chicken remain with the husband, which limits women's full autonomy to control her poultry-related income or consumption, regardless of how many chickens she owns. Further research on covert strategies women employ to influence their husbands' decision-making may illuminate to what extent women have say in these decisions. Additionally, a lack of freedom of movement, limited financial capacity, and social norms further present barriers to women's full participation in poultry rearing.

Some producers highlighted how poultry rearing can in turn help farmers improve their financial capacity: “*What I like is when I get up one morning without money and know that I can sell a chicken to get money on the spot*” [SSI, Goumogho]. There is an opportunity for the SELEVER credit groups to address this dynamic to better support producers who aim to raise poultry and build financial capacity through selling, saving, and reinvesting income in poultry production. In particular, credit groups should pay particular attention to women producers and facilitate their ability to invest in poultry rearing to the best extent possible. These services should also be complemented with gender-sensitive approaches that work with husbands and other men in the community so that women can gain more control over deciding when to sell or consume fowl.

### **Poultry Rearing and Women’s Empowerment**

Raising poultry has had a significant impact on women and households, particularly with regard to insurance, income, and money saving techniques. In general, poultry rearing serves as a means of insurance, such that in the event of a financial shock or food shortage, a household can sell a chicken to receive immediate income to ameliorate the problem. This type of insurance can ensure household wellbeing during shocks. Outside of such events, men and women both receive incomes from their poultry, which increases their capacity to pay for nutritious foods, school fees, healthcare costs, and agricultural and livestock investments, and overall improve household wellbeing. Finally, poultry rearing enables households to save money when they celebrate holidays and funerals, or host visitors, because they can slaughter one of their own chickens, rather than purchase one. While the SELEVER program has increased awareness of the nutritional benefits of poultry consumption, particularly for young children, we found no evidence in this study that households are actually increasing their regular consumption of poultry products.

In general, women who raise poultry are accepted within the community, as households increasingly understand the benefits it yields for the entire household. With gender-sensitization trainings, social norms are challenged and undergoing an evolution among men and women alike. It is now more

acceptable for women to raise poultry, as well as for men to assist women in their domestic chores. However, the husband still retains control over the household and his property – of which women and their assets are included – and therefore, women lack autonomy over important decisions related to poultry rearing.

### **Women’s Participation in VVV Service Provision**

The SELEVER project has been instrumental to increasing opportunities for women VVVs in the poultry value chain. The project has provided trainings on techniques and skills required to practice as a VVV, facilitated access to credit for women via savings groups, and importantly, facilitated gender-sensitivity trainings to men and women to challenge existing social norms and increase openness and acceptance for women’s empowerment.

Despite such advances, women still face gender-based challenges to practicing as VVVs, of which we have highlighted several. A salient example is the challenge women face in reconciling their responsibilities as a VVV with that of their domestic duties. Practicing as a VVV requires sometimes long and frequent travel concentrated in the mornings and evenings, when women are expected to be at home caring for children and managing domestic responsibilities. For some, this burden is too onerous and therefore, prohibitive. Others who did practice as a VVV indicated their work required tradeoffs, in which their household duties were sometimes overlooked, resulting in increased household tensions. These barriers also limit women from becoming poultry traders. While the SELEVER program has helped to increase awareness and acceptance of women’s capability in practicing in the poultry value chain, social norms and lack of husbands’ support limit women’s ability to practice as service providers. As the SELEVER program expands, it should address these norms and continue to include men in sensitization trainings and program activities.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the SELEVER project has been instrumental in challenging beliefs and norms related to women’s capacity and freedom of movement to engage in various income-generating and agricultural

activities, as well as raising awareness of their domestic labor burdens. Without her husband's permission, a woman cannot raise poultry, cultivate her own field, practice as a VVV, or participate in women's associations or income-generating activities. Because permission from husbands is essential to women's success in poultry value chains, the SELEVER program should continue to engage men in awareness building and gender-sensitization activities, particularly those that promote understanding for why and how women's empowerment is beneficial to the entire household.

While the SELEVER project has created opportunities for women to engage in income-generating and poultry value chain activities and increased awareness amongst men, barriers to women's full participation still exist. Overall, women lack decision-making power and are still limited in their freedom of movement, mostly tied to persistent social norms and domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, women have less access to credit with favorable terms and financial capacity building opportunities to invest in adopting best practices for their poultry production. The SELEVER project can continue to address such challenging social norms and focus on these more nuanced barriers women face in increasing their capacity for participation.

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