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POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

POTATO AND LEAFY
GREEN VEGETABLE
VALUE CHAINS

AKKAR, NORTHERN
LEBANON



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IN POTATO AND LEAFY GREEN VEGETABLE VALUE CHAINS

IN AKKAR, NORTHERN LEBANON

MARCH 2017

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AND	Akkar Network for Development
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	focus group discussion
GBC	gender-based constraint
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITCILO	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization
KII	key informant interview
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NGO	non-governmental organization
North LEDA	Local Economic Development Agency North Lebanon
RMF	Rene Moawad Foundation
SMART	Stimulating Markets and Rural Transformation
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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The study reflects data collected from various sources and any errors should not tarnish the reputations of these esteemed persons.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment entitled ‘Potential Opportunities for Women Empowerment in the Potatoes and Leafy Green Vegetables Value Chains in Akkar, Northern Lebanon’ was conducted by Mada Association as a complement to the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) *Value Chain Analysis of Potatoes and Leafy Green Vegetables in Akkar*. One of the key findings in that analysis was that women’s work in the two value chains is highly undervalued and generally invisible, highlighting the need to identify the various constraints and challenges faced by women while concurrently mapping potential opportunities for increased participation and visibility.

The current assessment was carried out between November 2016 and March 2017, and targeted vulnerable Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian women (as well as men for comparison) in the agricultural sector. As relevant research on gender roles and Gender Based Constraints (GBCs) in the Lebanese agricultural sector is generally lacking, particularly on potato and leafy green vegetable value chains, the team relied on literature from other countries and collected primary data in Akkar. Observations, questionnaires, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in the field. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed and a gender analysis was conducted, which developed into a mapping of opportunities and a set of recommendations.

Several major differences between men and women are identified in this assessment report. From division of labour to access and control of productive resources, women were found to be at a disadvantage when compared with men. Furthermore, certain differences between nationalities were also identified, such that Palestinian and Syrian women may be considered the most vulnerable. The results of the questionnaire, KIIs, and FGDs were consistent. Field observations confirmed several findings with

respect to GBCs, such as less access for women to productive resources (e.g. land and markets), lower levels of education, social and cultural pressures and norms, unrecognized and unpaid labour (mostly domestic chores), a lack of women's cooperatives/associations, and generally lower wages.

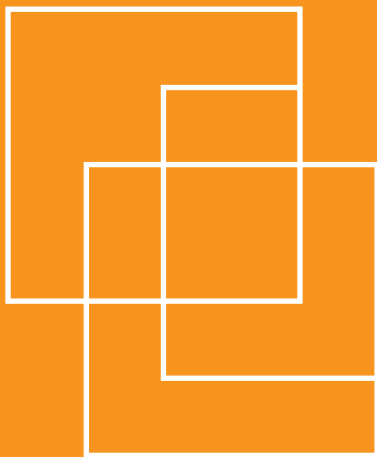
The assessment finds that: (1) women are generally paid less than men, with 70 per cent of the targeted women having a monthly income in the range of 200,000–300,000 Lebanese pounds (LBP);¹ (2) women are almost exclusively involved in production and not in other levels of the value chains, with 89 per cent having no trading experience; (3) women are only involved in specific agricultural activities (mostly harvesting, weeding, seeding, and chopping potato tubers) and are generally not involved in supervisory activities; (4) women do not interact with most stakeholders of the value chains, with 84 per cent of women claiming not to interact with any stakeholders; and (5) women often rely on their husbands or other family members for decision-making, with 64 per cent of the targeted women claiming they do not make work-related decisions – even regarding the activities they perform.

The most significant differences were in terms of access to productive resources. Only 13 per cent and 15 per cent of Lebanese women claimed to have access to irrigation sources and agricultural inputs respectively. Only one Lebanese woman claimed to have access to tools, machinery, and equipment, as well as to agricultural technologies and information on agricultural practices/techniques. Moreover, none of the women claimed to have access to external formal or informal financial resources. Moreover, this lack of (or limited access to) productive resources is exacerbated by the fact that, predominantly, these women do not drive and have little or no access to the Internet, hindering their mobility and limiting their access to information.

Opportunities were mapped in light of social and cultural factors and based on the identified strengths of women agricultural workers in Akkar. As the assessment revealed significant potential when it comes to processing in both value chains, several new opportunities were presented, as well as expansion options. Both value chain upgrading and value chain empowerment opportunities were presented, including, but not limited to: (1) the processing of dried and frozen leafy green vegetables; (2) the preparation of ready salad mixes; (3) the freezing of potatoes and processing of potato chips; (4) the establishment of collective groups and storage and working venues; and (5) the upgrading of post-harvest techniques, packaging and branding. The constraints and strengths of each opportunity were emphasized and formed the basis of the recommendations, which are meant to mobilize governmental and non-governmental actors to design and undertake initiatives to empower women economically and socially. Recommendations include the establishment of women's cooperatives/associations, the support of processing initiatives, and tailored training and extension programmes for women agricultural workers. Furthermore, improving access to finance and increasing the focus on research and assessment in projects with a gender dimension were recommended.

Finally, this assessment reveals major gaps in gender-disaggregated data, crucial to the design and implementation of relevant, adequate projects. Although the findings of this report can be used as a basis for future research, they must be complemented by more comprehensive studies, as well as studies targeting specific communities and cases. Moreover, these results must be viewed in their wider social context, from the perspective of communities facing poverty and marginalization and the coping mechanisms adopted by them. Future interventions must be developed in light of the internal and external factors leading to gender inequity and to the social and economic disempowerment of women.

1 Approximately 130–200 USD.



INTRODUCTION

In response to the Syrian crisis and its short, medium, and long-term impacts on neighbouring countries, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has undertaken several initiatives as part of a strategy that focuses on employment and livelihoods. In Lebanon, this strategy has materialized into a project aimed at increasing the resilience of entrepreneurs, including farmers, and workers affected by the refugee crisis. The goal is to create productive employment through local economic development and sustainable enterprises by: (1) enhancing access to employment opportunities and livelihoods that contribute to building the resilience of rural host communities; (2) promoting sustainable local economic development (LED) in at least one rural area in North Lebanon, targeting specific productive sectors; and (3) developing capacity building and business-expansion strategies for entrepreneurs.

The value chain analysis was implemented in collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC-IL) and five local organizations – the Rene Moawad Foundation (RMF), Mada Association, the Safadi Foundation, the Local Economic Development Agency North Lebanon (LEDA North), and the Akkar Network for Development (AND). From November 2014 to March 2015, the team conducted a value chain analysis of potatoes and leafy green vegetables in the Akkar region. Several key issues regarding underperformance and its root causes were identified.

In particular, one finding related to the role of women in the value chain and revealed that their work is highly undervalued and generally invisible. In order to complement the initial research, Mada Association (see Appendix 2 – Mada Association and the Team) conducted an assessment of women's roles in the potato and leafy green vegetable sub-sectors in Akkar. A further aim of the assessment was to highlight potential economic opportunities for women in these areas.

Currently, research on gender roles in the agricultural sector in Lebanon, particularly in Akkar, is limited, resulting in several challenges and restrictions when it comes to designing appropriate development programmes. An enhanced understanding of these complex issues ought to lead to better programme design and implementation, as well as improved monitoring and evaluation capacities. Thus, this study assessed the flexibility of gender roles, and the factors influencing them, by examining the challenges and difficulties related mainly to women's access to opportunities. Finally, the study identifies areas of opportunity for women across the potato and leafy green vegetable value chains, and makes recommendations to enhance women's participation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASSESSMENT

Globally, agriculture is recognized as a means for development and poverty reduction (World Bank 2007). The “value chain” concept is at the core of development and poverty reduction discussions. Furthermore, the role of women is being increasingly emphasized, as their contributions to agriculture, especially in developing countries, are essential and significant (FAO 2016). From production to processing, women are generally involved at all levels of the value chain, although their contributions are often less recognized and visible. This lack of recognition and the constraints faced by women in accessing productive resources hinders agricultural development in developing countries, leads to underperformance and exacerbates poverty. However, it is important to note the difference between gender equity and women's participation. Although the two are often used interchangeably, women's participation does not always entail gender equity as, although women might become involved in several activities, severe gaps can remain in terms of decision-making, representation, and wages.

TARGET AREA AND GROUP

Despite being rich in natural resources, Akkar has been classified as one of the most deprived regions in Lebanon. Decades of government marginalization, political tensions and clashes, as well as an overreliance on the significantly neglected agricultural sector, have led to the highest poverty rates and the lowest income levels of the country (MoSA 2004). Local communities generally suffer from inadequate basic infrastructure, poor housing conditions, and lack of access to public services. Agriculture, the dominant economic sector, involves directly or indirectly a large percentage of the population, and is facing several ongoing challenges that were exacerbated by the Syrian crisis. Today, Akkar hosts one of the largest numbers of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and is considered a priority area (FAO 2014). Given its important role in economic development, employment and food security, interventions in the region have increasingly prioritized the agricultural sector.

Women in the Akkar region are involved in various agricultural activities that often require particular patience and precision, such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting fruits and vegetables. However, they are generally paid less than men and subject to poorer working conditions. Several cultural barriers and societal perceptions regarding women contribute to their status, hindering them from developing their role within agricultural value chains. Within this context, this assessment targeted women aged 15 and above in the Akkar Plain, with a focus on the most vulnerable, such as widows, divorcees, and single mothers.

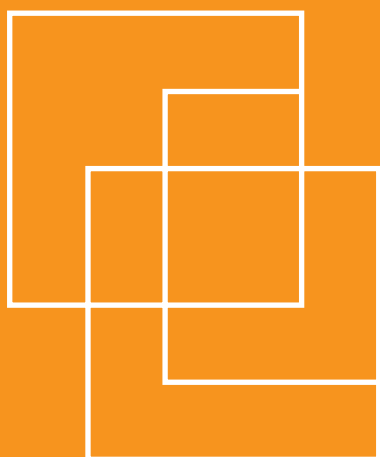
GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this assessment was to better understand women's status in the potatoes and leafy green vegetables value chains in the Akkar region in order to highlight potential areas that will increase their visibility as valuable members of both their individual communities and the agriculture sector, as well as to showcase opportunities for women empowerment.

Within the scope of the potato and leafy green vegetable value chains, the assessment set out with the following objectives:

- To consider the potential options available for women as new agricultural opportunities or expansion of existing opportunities in the potato and leafy green vegetables value chains at various levels.
- To examine the factors, difficulties, and challenges that affect women's access to these opportunities.
- To map case studies on the participation of women in value chains.
- To provide recommendations for improving women's participation.

It is anticipated that the results of this assessment can be used by ILO and development actors to improve the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring of programmes by addressing root causes of agricultural underperformance. Furthermore, it is hoped that the assessment will serve to raise awareness on current constraints and challenges faced by women in these value chains and the importance of their role and empowering them.



METHODOLOGY

The study consisted of three main phases: (1) data collection (qualitative and quantitative); (2) analysis; and (3) mapping of opportunities and development of recommendations (see Appendix 3).

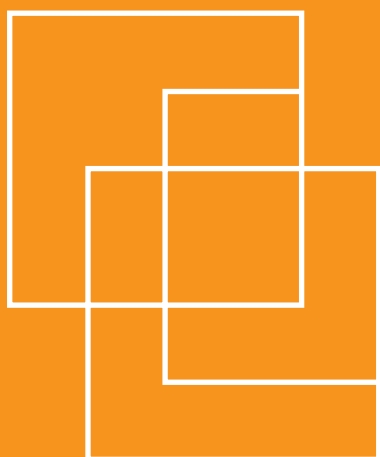
Several quantitative and qualitative tools were used in the assessment to collect necessary data for the analysis. Primary and secondary data were collected through a desk study, key informant interviews (KIIs), questionnaires, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Qualitative data was gathered both through direct interaction with individuals on a one-to-one basis through in the KIIs and in groups through the FGDs, while the questionnaires mostly comprised quantitative data. Variables included such concepts as labour division, management of income, balance of property ownership, and access to productive resources.

Questionnaires were completed in the field (see Appendix 3- Questionnaire Template) by a total of 59 Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian men and women from the Akkar region. The sample was from villages and communities selected in coordination with field contacts and local authorities to ensure reaching agricultural workers in the potato and leafy green value chains while taking into consideration accessibility and cultural restrictions. Six KIIs were conducted, consisting of formal, non-standardized and semi-structured interviews.

Two FGDs were conducted on 18 and 25 February 2017 with five and fifteen participants respectively. Two main exercises were conducted: (1) a problem tree analysis and (2) a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, And Threats (SWOT) analysis. Following the FGDs, Mada's research team conducted a debriefing session in order to highlight the principal findings of the day, review stories and information, and identify trends.

Data analysis aimed at (1) mapping gender roles and responsibilities along the value chains and determining the benefits derived from women's participation; (2) determining Gender-Based Constraints (GBCs) and identifying how these restrict women's access to resources and/or opportunities; (3) examining the consequences of GBCs; and (4) identifying entry points for overcoming GBCs and areas of opportunities for women. Moreover, a gender analysis was conducted by examining the gendered division of labour and access, control, and ownership of resources, assets and services and decision-making powers.

Opportunities were mapped by the team through two brainstorming sessions. Following that, based on the results of the analysis and the opportunities identified, a set of recommendations was developed. Mainly, these focus on how to increase the visibility, participation, decision-making capacity and recognition of women across the value chains. Case studies and success stories (see Appendix 4) and the concepts of value chain upgrading and value chain empowerment were used as the basis for these recommendations. Upgrading refers to improvements that chain actors can make to receive better financial returns from their products, while value chain empowerment occurs when "participants add value to their products, and also increase their control over income and the processes involved in value creation (ActionAid 2014).



DESK STUDY

GENDER AND AGRICULTURE

Despite playing key roles across agricultural value chains throughout the world, women are constantly faced with GBCs, hindering their access to resources, limiting opportunities, and often rendering their contributions invisible and unrecognized (Gurung 2006). Ranging from a country's laws to cultural and social norms, GBCs put women at several disadvantages compared with men, often excluding them completely from certain activities and functions (USAID 2010). From input supply to retailing, gender roles and power balances determine labour division, decision-making, and access to productive resources. Regardless of the economic development of a country or region, gender inequalities in rural employment are always present, resulting in significant economic disadvantages for women. Throughout developing countries, gender inequalities have been identified to be at the basis of 90 per cent of the wage gap between men and women (FAO 2010), often leading to major differences in productivity levels (FAO 2006).

Overlooking the gender dimension of agriculture in policy-making and planning has often limited and hindered the development of the sector. Only relatively recently, gender was recognized as a key factor affecting and shaping agricultural value chains, and gender gaps were identified among the major drivers of underperformance in developing countries (AARINENA 2012). Several studies have concluded that there are significant correlations between gender equity and economic development, with inequity reducing productivity and impacting performance (FAO 2006). As agricultural development is key to reducing poverty and improving livelihoods, while concurrently promoting economic development efforts must be made on the international, regional, and local levels to narrow, and ultimately close, gender gaps in agricultural communities. Programmes must be designed and implemented in gender-sensitive ways, by considering the distinctive needs of women while advancing towards equitable participation in the sector.

As a steady increase in food demand is taking place on a global scale, several opportunities for small-scale farmers, and especially for women, are emerging. Currently, female agricultural workers are predominantly located at the base of agricultural economies, performing significant manual labour but rarely taking a role in management and decision-making (SNV 2012). These realities must be assessed and the degree to which GBCs impact individuals and groups must be investigated in order to successfully empower women (USAID 2011).

In the context of agricultural value chains, reducing inequalities between men and women translates into allowing individuals, regardless of their gender, to have the same decision-making capacities. In a gender-balanced community, all members can decide which activities to undertake and the extent to which they wish to participate in value chains. Taking gender equity a step further, all individuals must benefit equally from this participation. Therefore, a gender approach sheds light on the gender-based differences when it comes to (1) access to resources and activities of both individuals and groups, (2) opportunities for upgrading, (3) labour divisions, (4) and power dynamics. Ultimately, the impacts of these differences on production and the overall development of the sector can be used to identify entry points and interventions (ISA 2011). In every setting and community, regardless of constraints and the extent of gender inequity, opportunities for empowering women can always be identified, especially given that women generally have the required skills and knowledge to build upon. Incorporating gender in value chain-related interventions is therefore crucial in ensuring inclusive development that benefits all community members equally.

As noted by UNIFEM, the most basic prerequisite for women's empowerment is economic self-reliance through improved access to resources and opportunities (UNIFEM 1996). In this context, value chain upgrading consists of modifying and/or changing production processes, products, functions, or market

channels within a value chain in order to increase financial returns and, in turn, contribute to food security and the protection of livelihoods. Upgrading can range from product/process upgrading, which increases efficiency and reduces unit cost, while also improving quality. On the other hand, functional upgrading involves the introduction of a new function into the value chain. However, although upgrading is crucial to increasing financial revenues and can often result in improved skills and production, it does not address the factors that influence a woman's ability to take decisions and participate in activities equally to men. For these reasons the concept of value chain empowerment evolved, which addresses control over income by looking for opportunities to increase participation and decision-making (USAID 2011).

As previously noted, women and men often participate at different levels of the value chain, performing activities largely dependent on gender, meaning that they have generally different upgrading opportunities. For this reason understanding gender dynamics and the division of labour is crucial to identifying opportunities for women. Furthermore, assessing the capacity and incentive of women to overcome constraints and take advantage of opportunities is essential, as the opportunity might be viable but GBCs, such as cultural norms or policies, do not allow women to change their behaviour. Furthermore, as women are more likely to reinvest back into their households and families, increasing their access to productive resources would have broader social benefits (Feed the Future – USAID).

Globally, the empowerment of women in agricultural value chains would result in an estimated 20–30 per cent increase in farm yields, which translates into a reduction of up to 150 million hungry people. Moreover, several studies have shown that when women secure land rights, land is used more efficiently and investments in agricultural activities increase. Correlations have been found between women's empowerment and the sustainable and efficient use of resources, and in particular land, as not only it ensures food security, but also contributes to identify, dignity, and social inclusion. Several examples from developing countries, and especially from Africa, reflect this correlation and show that when women obtain the same property rights as men, they tend to adopt more sustainable land practices. For instance, women farmers in Rwanda with formalized land rights were found to be 19 per cent more likely to adopt soil conservation techniques (Ali & Goldstein 2011).

The interconnectedness between gender equity and the proper use of resources in the agricultural sector has been linked to the role of women's empowerment in climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts (Corman 2008). Therefore, there is growing recognition that gender inequality hinders sustainable development and ultimately, the fight against climate change.

GENDER AND AGRICULTURE IN LEBANON

Women play a marginal role in the economy of Lebanon, and face limited employment opportunities, receiving generally lower wages than men. These challenges are exacerbated by a lack of day care services, medical insurance, and maternity leave, as well as an absence of laws to protect them from discrimination and harassment in the workplace (Tailfer, 2010). Furthermore, several cultural and social norms determine the level of participation and decision-making power of women. For a country with relatively high female enrolment rate in educational institutions, there is good potential for improvement.

In 2001, ESCWA published that 46 per cent of the total number of agricultural workers were employed on a seasonal basis and almost 23 per cent were temporary workers. Moreover, 56 per cent of women were employed on a seasonal basis and 19 per cent had temporary, contractual agreements. Notably, 30 per cent were considered helpers in a family business compared with only 7 per cent of men. Women also performed extensive work in their households, spending up to 14 hours a day on both agricultural and domestic tasks. In addition, although women played key roles in production and processing,

their inputs were widely under-recognized and rarely visible, (ESCWA 2001). This emphasised that regardless of the tasks' taken by women as often they perform the same tasks as men, women's work is generally invisible (please refer to Table 9 for few example of invisible work).

Women agricultural workers in Lebanon are less likely than men to own land and are generally involved in smaller-scale agricultural work, while concurrently having less access to productive resources and markets (Atallah & Helou 2011). Furthermore, illiteracy levels are highest among women, reaching up to 20 per cent in North Lebanon. Several factors, both internal and external to communities, determine the type and extent of involvement of women and men in agricultural value chains, with often clear-cut divisions of labour based on gender, but also on nationality and age. These differences have become even more prominent since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, with an influx of refugees into the poorest and most vulnerable areas of Lebanon. The presence of refugees has impacted on small-scale farmers, mainly due to wage competition with Syrian labourers, and divisions have become even more defined. In general, wages for both male and female agricultural workers have decreased by up to 50 per cent since the beginning of the refugee crisis (EMMA 2013).

No comprehensive data have been published on the status of women working in the agricultural sector in Akkar, North Lebanon. According to the value chain analysis of potatoes and leafy green vegetables conducted by the ILO, women agricultural workers can be divided into (1) semi-skilled workers (hired or family labourers); (2) Syrian migrant workers who have worked in Lebanon for several years; (3) Syrian refugees working as agricultural labourers in Lebanon; and (4) Palestinians working as skilled agricultural workers. Women are mainly responsible for seasonal activities requiring patience and precision, such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting, while men handle heavy machinery and transport. Gender, nationality, crop variety, and location are all factors that define wages, work conditions and the mode of payment (ILO 2015). Generally, women are paid less than men, and are often exhausted due to an overload of agricultural and domestic work (Markou & Stavri 2005). Among Syrian refugees, women are the primary agricultural labour force, mainly due to traditional divisions of labour. Living adjacent to agricultural lands in informal tented settlements, these workers are connected to farms and opportunities through the community leader or *Shawish*,² usually in exchange for a portion of their pay (EMMA 2013).

Women agricultural workers were identified as a vulnerable group by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in its 2015–2019 strategy; their empowerment and engagement in agriculture-related investments was emphasized as crucial to increasing productivity and competitiveness (MoA 2015).

CASE STUDIES

Several case studies (see Appendix 5) reflect worldwide efforts to empower women agricultural workers and farmers and promote gender equity across agricultural value chains. However, such initiatives are less common in Arab countries. Projects in the Arab states could be based on the success stories from Africa and Eastern Asia, as their contexts are similar to the Lebanese situation.

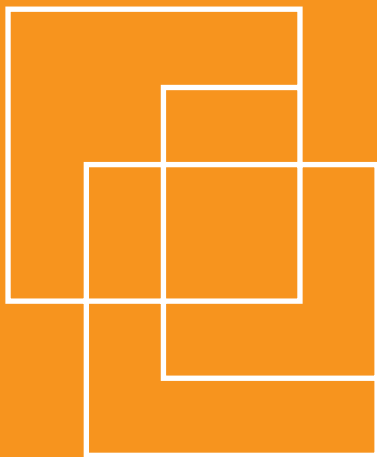
The following key findings are from a set of case studies that: (1) incorporated the gender dimension into agricultural value chains interventions; (2) emphasized the role of women across agricultural value chains to increase their visibility, and (3) identified opportunities for value chain upgrading and women's empowerment:

- There is a need to set gender empowerment indicators to reflect the qualitative and quantitative aspects of empowerment with disaggregated data.

² Middlemen for landlords who recruit workers. They generally offer workers a place to stay.

- Gender awareness can highlight the household as a “joint management unit” in which men and women share roles and responsibilities.
- Extension and training services can be modified and tailored to encourage women’s participation. Simple changes can be made such as decentralizing training centres and shifting to community-based venues, providing childcare, scheduling sessions during convenient times, and allowing women to sit in female-only groups during sessions.
- Extension agents can work with women at the household level.
- Literacy training courses focused on leadership, attitude change, and decision-making can be conducted at the household level.
- Innovative opportunities can generate alternative sources of income and allow small-scale women farmers to participate in value chains. For instance, a small group of housewives in Thailand has managed to find a way to participate in the production of potato chips by using substandard, unwanted or defective potatoes.
- The importance of women’s roles in agricultural value chains must be emphasized at community level through decision-makers and leaders.

In Lebanon, certain initiatives aimed at empowering women across agricultural value chains are beginning to emerge, focused mostly on the establishment of functional cooperatives and on extension services/training. The Stimulating Markets and Rural Transformation (SMART) programme funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in collaboration with the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) initiatives to support dairy production with a focus on women can serve as successful case studies to be learnt from and replicated.



FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Field visits were conducted to identify stakeholders and collect data on the roles and responsibilities of women in the relevant value chains, and to identify GBCs and map opportunities. The main villages and cities visited included Halba, Abdeh, Klaiat, Tal Abbas, Tal Maayan, Tal Hayat, Ballanit, Al Hisa, Mkaitih, Kabit Shomra, Massaoudiyeh, Arida, and Kherbeh. These locations were selected based on Mada's knowledge of the region and following recommendations of key farmers and interviewees.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

A stakeholder analysis (table 1) was conducted in order to identify individuals and groups at the various levels of the value chain affecting or being affected by the roles and labour of women. These were selected from the various stakeholders identified at the various value chain levels, as well as from the ILO's value chain analysis.

Table 1. Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder	Input suppliers
Scope/role/characteristics	Input suppliers provide farmers with seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. As noted by the ILO in the value chain analysis, there is currently an oligopoly of seeds and fertilizers by potato input suppliers, which controls the final product prices at the market level.
Main relevance to this assessment	Generally, women agricultural workers do not interact with input suppliers and are thus dependent on men for the purchase of inputs. However, women are involved in input supply. Throughout the assessment, women agricultural engineers and technicians were encountered by the team, of whom several were involved in input supply, mainly as employees. Furthermore, input supply companies employ women to perform administrative and financial tasks.
Stakeholder	Nurseries
Scope/role/characteristics	Several nurseries provide farmers directly with seeds and seedlings. Certain nurseries are expanding to include more agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides.
Main relevance to this assessment	As observed throughout the field visits, women are often employed as labourers at the nurseries. In the case of a nursery in the village of Tal Abbas, women undertake all tasks including preparing the substrate, feeding the compaction machine, seeding, arranging the seedlings, and irrigating. However, they do not interact with any other stakeholders, as the nursery is owned and managed by a man. In the case of another nursery visited in Al Abdeh, women employees are only responsible for seeding and weeding.

Stakeholder	Processors
Scope/role/characteristics	Processing includes sorting and packing facilities and commercial processors that add value to products by upgrading them in terms of shelf-life or by increasing marketing potential through branding and, in certain cases, certifications.
Main relevance to this assessment	Women are often involved in processing as labourers under the supervision of men. Their skills and experience in processing often originate from the domestic processing of excess vegetables and fruits.
Stakeholder	Wholesalers and traders
Scope/role/characteristics	Wholesalers and traders are key actors in the value chains, purchasing produce, while at the same time often providing inputs. Wholesalers and traders are capital providers and many farmers are significantly indebted to them.
Main relevance to this assessment	<p>Women agricultural workers generally do not interact with wholesalers and traders and are therefore dependent on male family members to sell the produce. Furthermore, middlemen in the region are exclusively men.</p> <p>However, women are involved in retail as they work in grocery shops, vegetable markets, and supermarkets, either as employees or as contributors to the family business.</p>
Stakeholder	National and international organizations
Scope/role/characteristics	Several national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work in the agricultural sector in Akkar, implementing programmes/projects with small-scale farmers and, in certain cases, cooperatives. Several are also involved in women's empowerment initiatives.
Main relevance to this assessment	The degree to which NGO interventions incorporate a gender dimension and collect disaggregated data cannot be fully determined due to a lack of evidence and documentation. A KII was conducted with two local NGO members to gain insight on the nature of their work and the challenges they face, as well as to identify ongoing projects related to women in agriculture.
Stakeholder	Farmer cooperatives/associations
Scope/role/characteristics	Although there is a high number of cooperatives and associations in both value chains, most are either not functional or not functioning to their full potential.
Main relevance to this assessment	Almost exclusively, men establish, join and manage cooperatives and associations in Akkar. Only one female cooperative member was identified through this assessment.
Stakeholder	Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI)
Scope/role/characteristics	LARI works under the supervision of the MoA and is involved mainly in research and development activities.
Main relevance to this assessment	In North Lebanon, LARI is not currently involved in any projects and/or initiatives directly targeting women farmers. However, LARI employs women agricultural engineers in research and projects.

Priority stakeholders were selected for the KIIs based on the stakeholder analysis. The questionnaire was tailored after consideration of the stakeholder analysis and the various roles played by each stakeholder along the value chain.

QUESTIONNAIRES

Gender was the main independent variable used for the analysis of the questionnaire. Differences between the three target nationalities were also explored. However, due to limited resources and time, the target group was not large enough to include more variables, such as age and sector. Gender was prioritized as it is the focus of this assessment and evident differences were emphasized, which may serve as the basis for a more comprehensive assessment that would include a larger sample size. Descriptive percentages were used due to the difference in the number of women and the number of men targeted, as well as the difference between the numbers of individuals from each nationality.

A total of 59 questionnaires were completed by 37 Lebanese (18 men; 19 women); 15 Syrians (3 men; 12 women); and 7 Palestinians (3 men; 4 women) agricultural workers/farmers between January and February 2017 (figure 1).

DEMOGRAPHICS OF TARGET GROUP

The sample included a wide range of age, which was not normally distributed (see figures 1 and 2). Men were generally older than women, who were predominantly between the ages of 35 and 40. Some 83 per cent of the men were married, compared with 48 per cent of women. Around 46 per cent of women were single and 6 per cent were widowed.

Figure 1. Sample gender and nationality

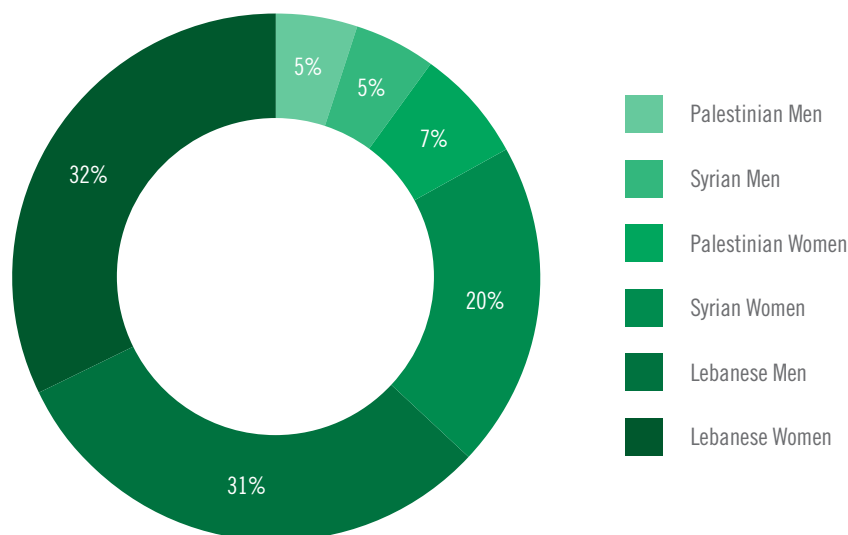
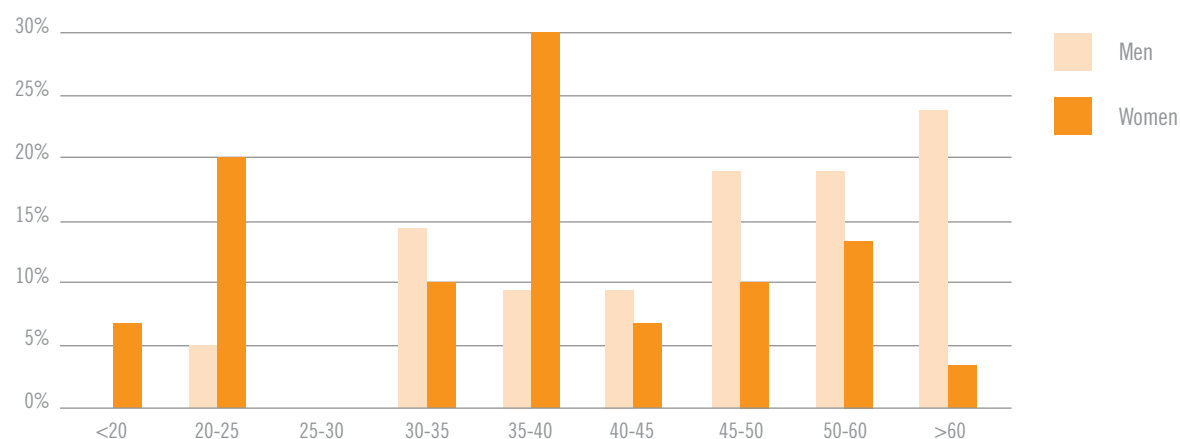
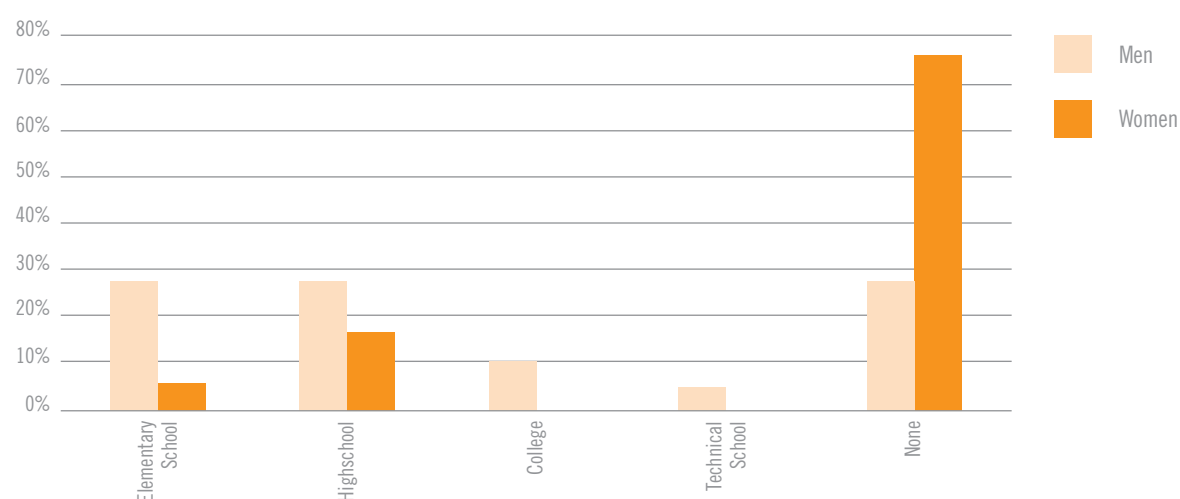


Figure 2. Age distribution of sample



In terms of education levels, there was a significant difference between men and women, with the majority of women (77 per cent) not having received any kind of education and none having been to college or technical school (figure 3).

Figure 3. Education level of sample by gender



Generally, the number of household dependents was high, with 43 per cent of both men and women having more than 6 household dependents (figure 4). Some 29 per cent of men and women had more than 7 children, which is in line with national statistics (figure 5).³

Figure 4. Number of dependents in household of respondent

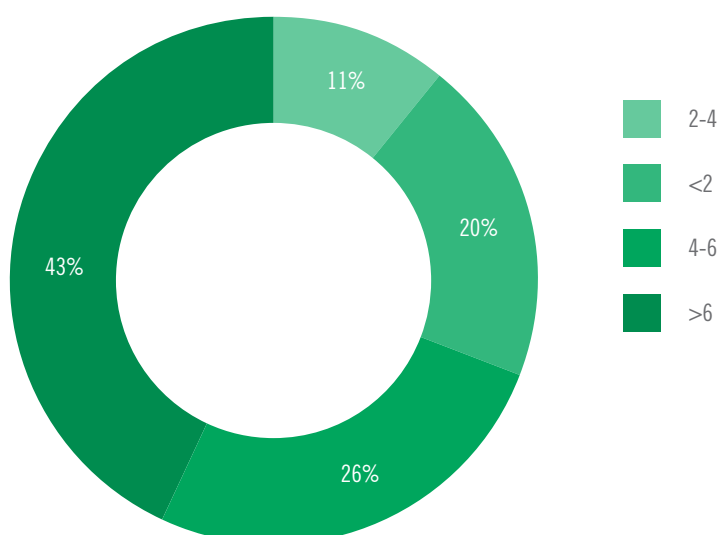
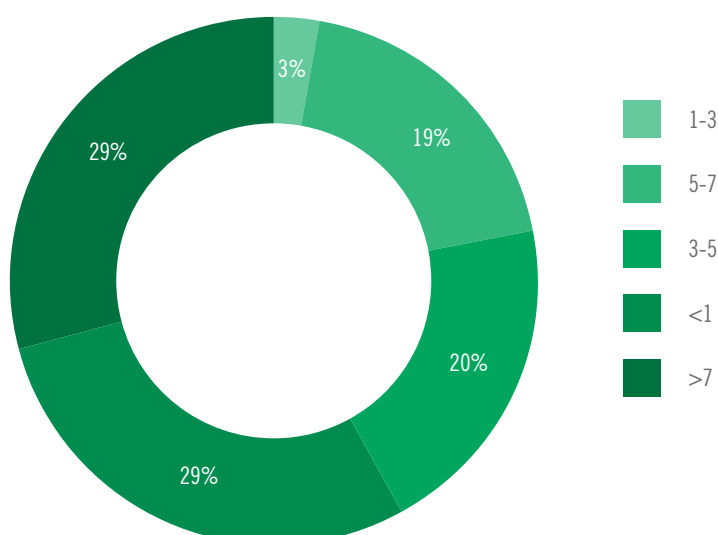
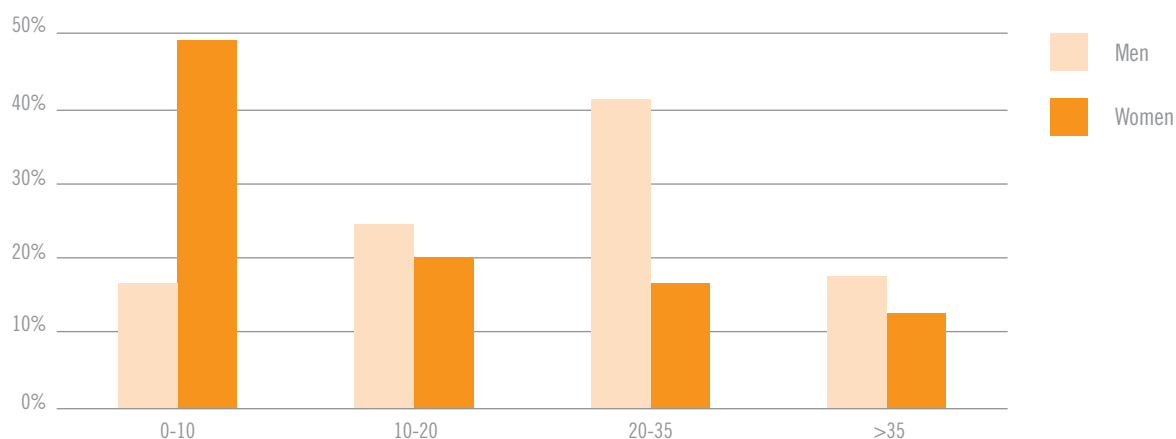


Figure 5. Number of children of respondent



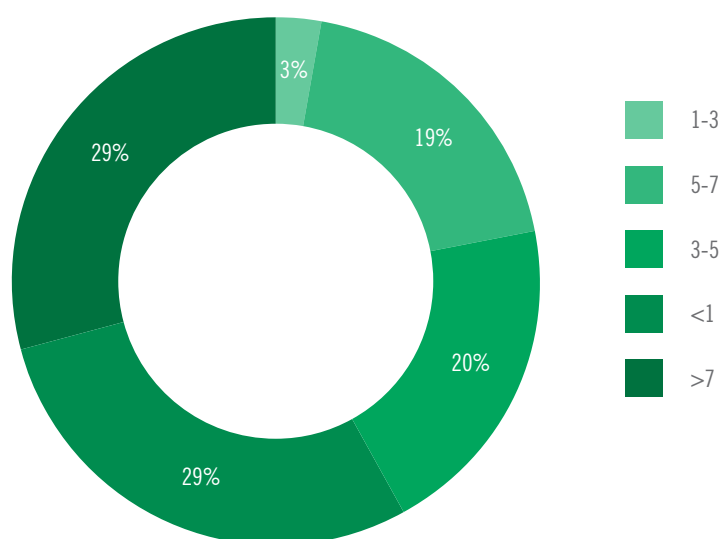
Of the men, some 41 per cent had worked in the agricultural sector for 20–35 years, compared with women, who had mainly worked for 0–10 years (50 per cent) in this sector (see figure 6). This difference can be mainly attributed to the greater number of young women and the predominance of older men in the sample. Notably, among the women, Syrians and Palestinians were those who had worked the least. This was particularly the case for Syrian women, indicating that they probably commenced working in agriculture following the Syrian crisis and their subsequent displacement into Lebanon. However, the number of Syrians and Palestinians in the sample is too small to claim this with confidence.

Figure 6. Years working in the agricultural sector by gender



Generally, respondents listed at least two other household members also involved in agricultural activities, with only 4 per cent of the men having no family members involved (figure 7).

Figure 7. Number of family members involved in agriculture by gender



Among both men and women, 48 per cent had family members who were involved in agriculture but not directly remunerated for their work (see figure 8). Of these, 87 per cent reported that these family members were children below 15 years of age who supported the family at farm level, fulfilling a variety of tasks that included weeding, seeding, and harvesting. A minority claimed that boys also helped transport produce to the market. Moreover, 13 per cent of men claimed that their spouses were not remunerated for their agricultural work (mainly seeding, weeding, and harvesting), referring to such work as household duties (figure 9). However, the number of non-remunerated family members was lower among Syrians and Palestinians, which can be explained by the fact that most are labourers, compared with the Lebanese, who often work in agriculture as a family unit, with the various members involved.

Figure 8. Presence of family members not remunerated

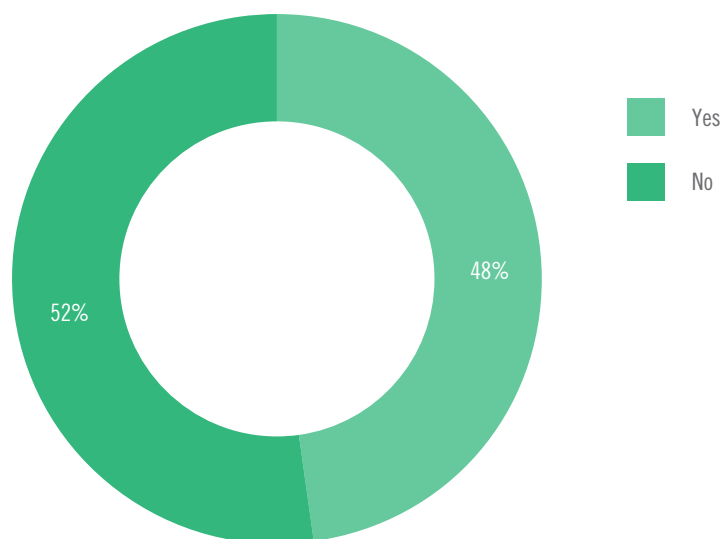
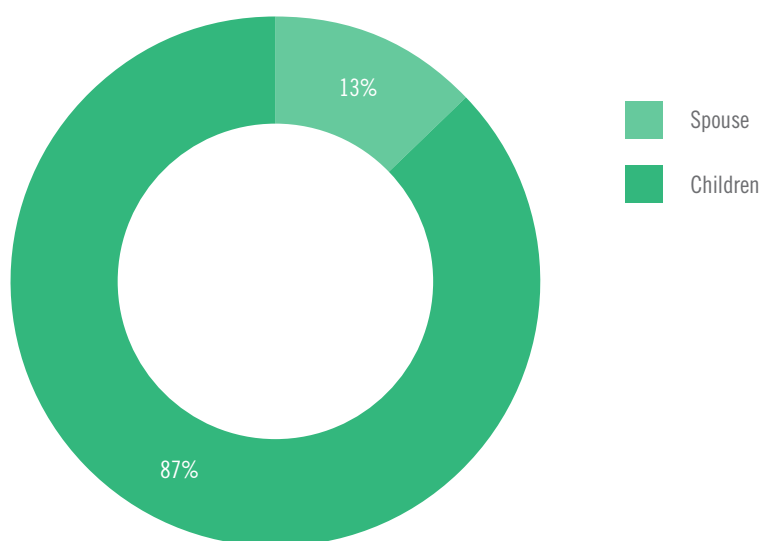


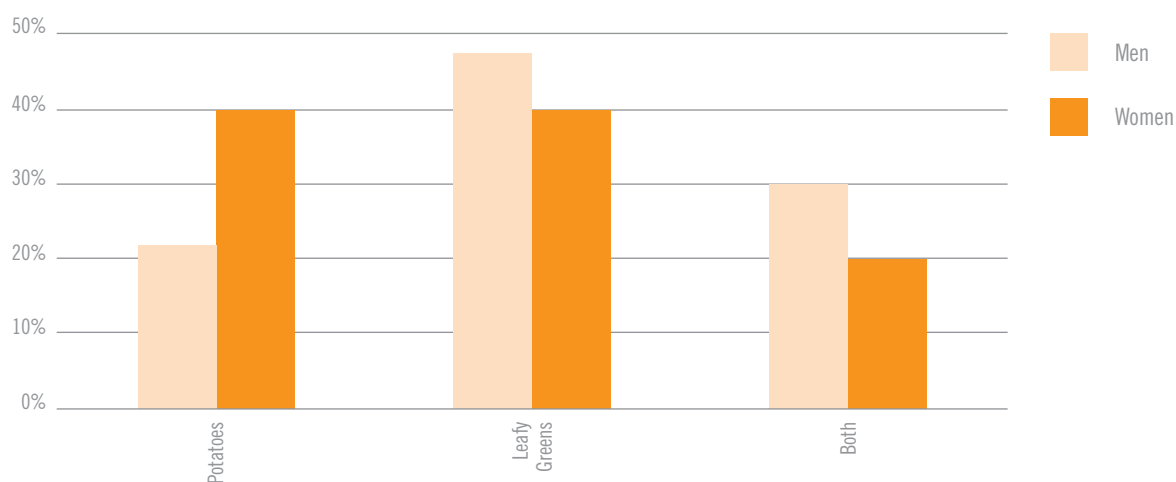
Figure 9. Family members not remunerated



LABOUR AND TIME USE

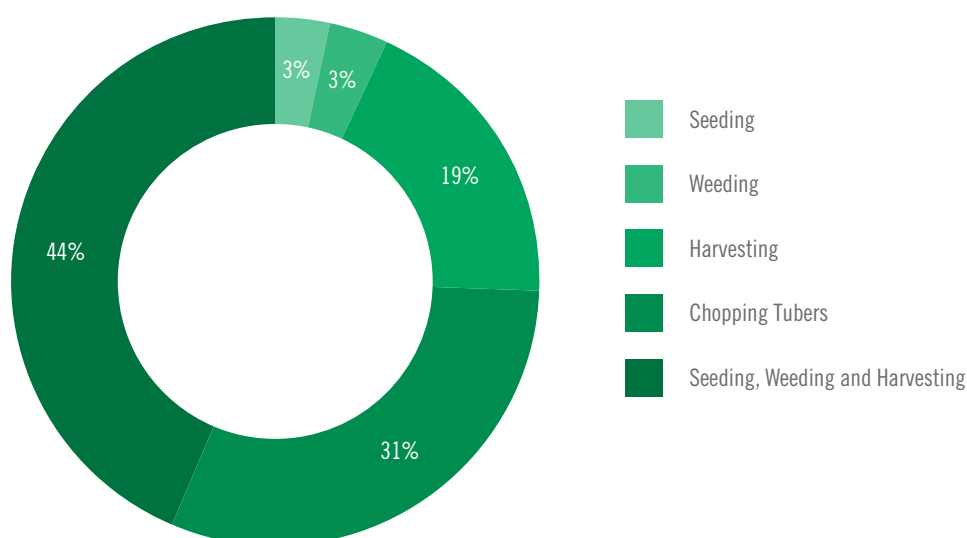
There were no significant gender or nationality-based differences regarding the kind of agricultural sector the target group was involved in, except that men were more likely to work in the leafy green vegetable value chain than in the potato value chain (see figure 10). Among Syrian women, 58 per cent worked in the leafy green vegetable value chain and 25 per cent in both, while only 17 per cent worked only in the potato value chain.

Figure 10. Agricultural sector of respondents' work by gender



44 per cent of the women reported being involved in seeding, weeding, and harvesting, while others mentioned only one of these categories. Some 31 per cent were involved in the chopping of potato tubers, which was confirmed by field observation. Importantly, none mentioned supervisory activities or activities which require interaction with other stakeholders. Furthermore, none mentioned irrigation or applying inputs (figure 11).

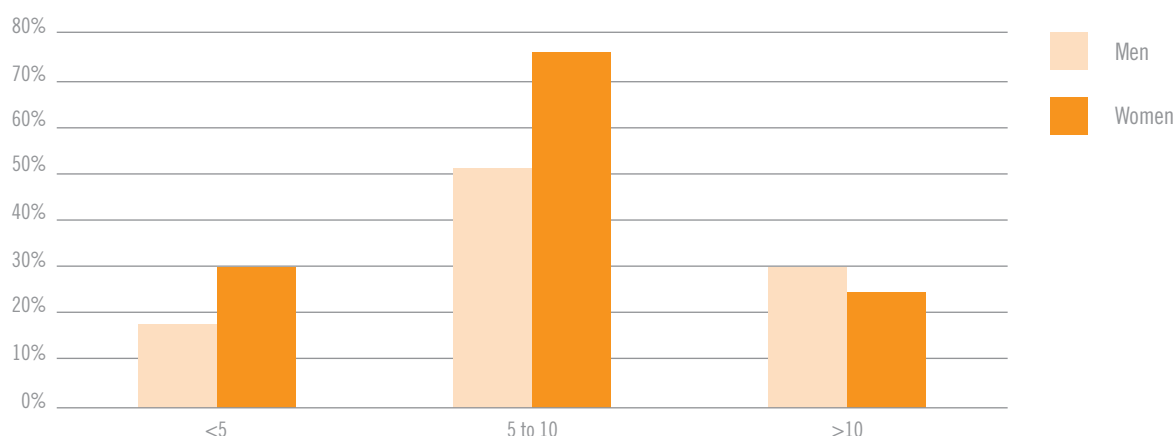
Figure 11. Women's agricultural activities



The majority (77 per cent) of women worked between 5-10 hours a day, 52 per cent of men worked between 5-10 hours a day, and 30 per cent worked more than 10 hours a day (figure 12). One Lebanese woman worked more than 10 hours a day.

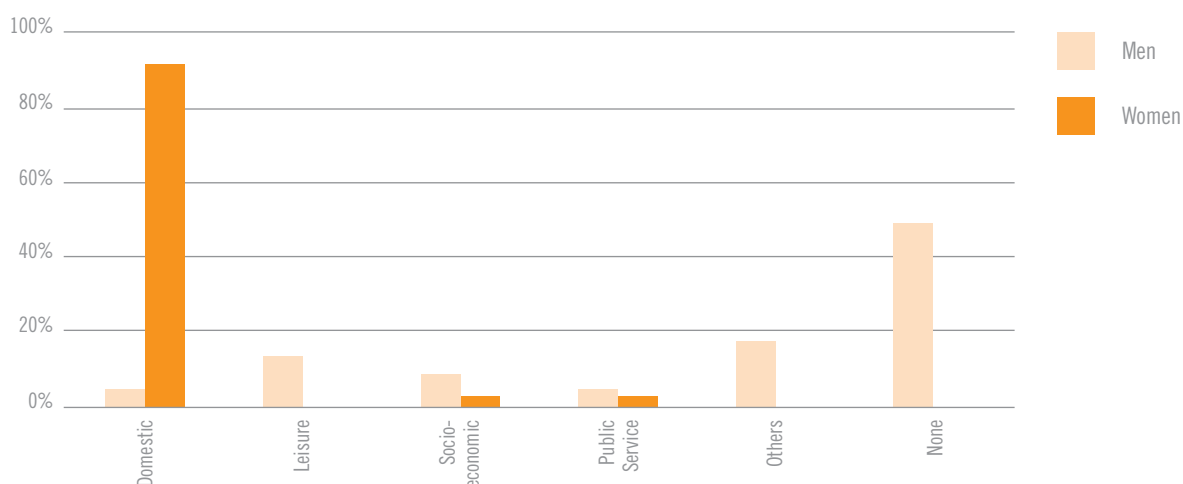
Some 88 per cent of women worked under supervision, including all the Palestinian and Syrian women. This was compared with just 39 per cent of the men, who were predominantly Syrian and Palestinian, while others worked independently.

Figure 12. Number of hours worked per day by gender



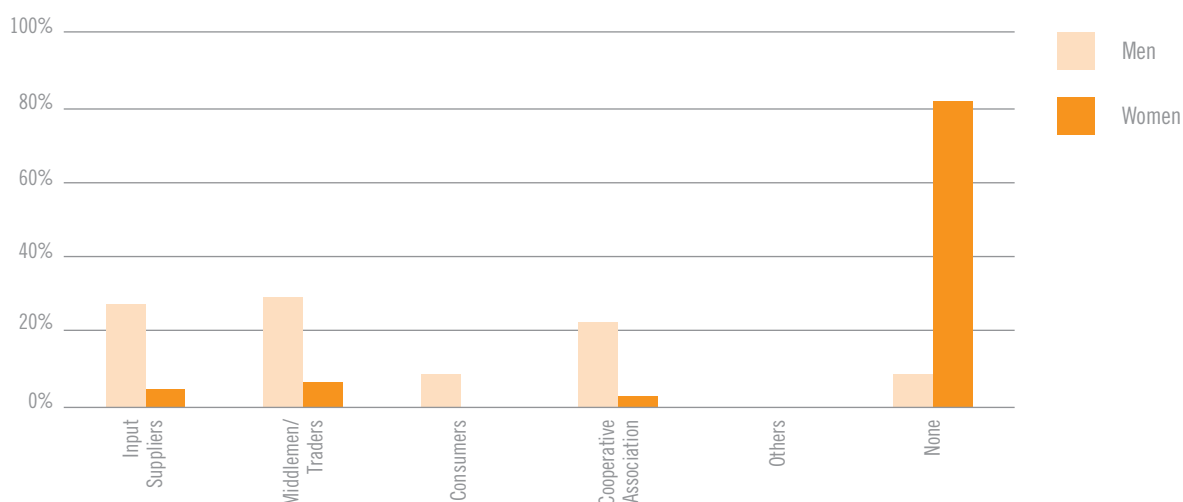
When asked whether they engaged in other activities on a daily basis, 94 per cent of women answered that they engaged in domestic activities. On the other hand, 50 per cent of men stated they did not engage in any activities other than farming, while the remainder mentioned a wide variety of activities. Only 4 per cent of men reported that they engage in domestic work (figure 13).

Figure 13. Activities other than agriculture by gender



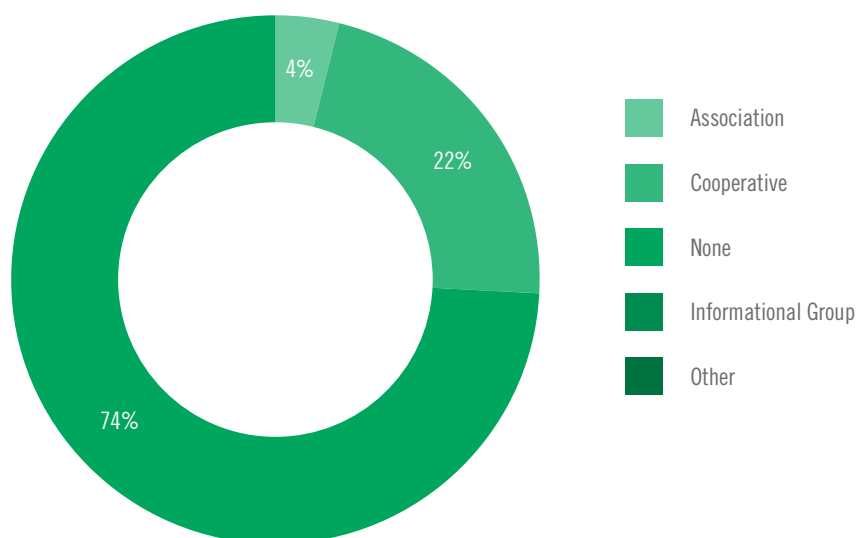
Of the women, 84 per cent claimed not to interact with any stakeholders, and only 5 per cent and 8 per cent of the women (all Lebanese) claimed to interact with input suppliers and middlemen/traders respectively. On the other hand, men claimed to interact with a variety of stakeholders, with only one Lebanese man, a labourer, not interacting with any (figure 14).

Figure 14. Interaction with stakeholders by gender



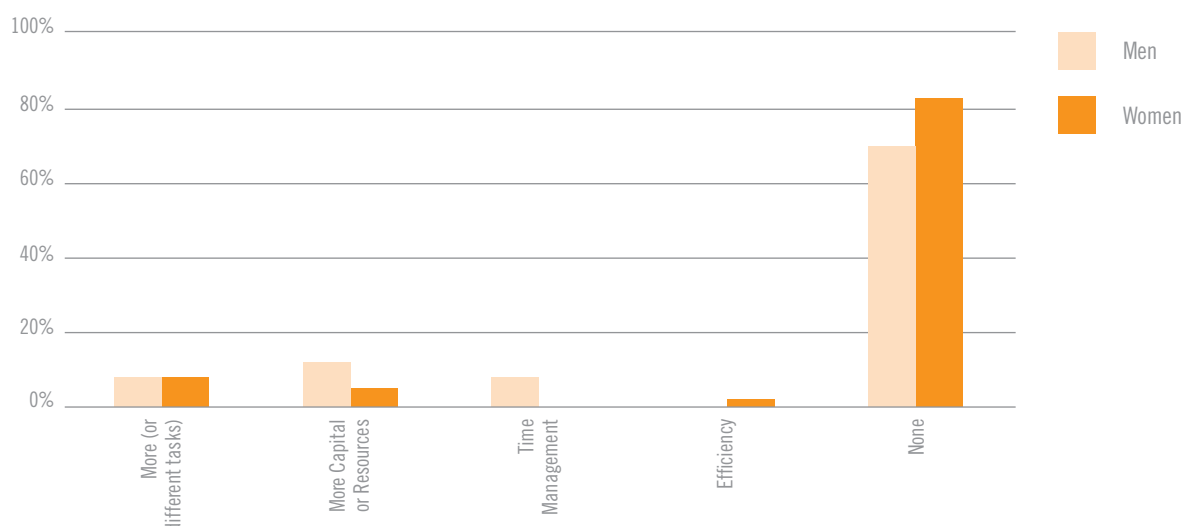
Only Lebanese men claimed to be involved in any type of labour network, including cooperatives/associations and informal groups, while the majority was not involved in any. Only 22 per cent were part of a cooperative and 4 per cent of an association (see figure 15).

Figure 15. Membership of labour network, Lebanese men



The majority of both men (63 per cent) and women (74 per cent) and of all nationalities reported they did not feel there were any kinds of knowledge or skills worth exploring. Furthermore, when asked what aspects of their daily work they would like to improve, the majority of men (70 per cent) and women (83 per cent) replied none (figure 16). These results could be indications of a general lack of motivation, which was also noted during the FGDs, as well as a perception that their knowledge and skills are sufficient and/or abundant. Alternatively, these results could indicate a lack of knowledge regarding the available opportunities for expanding their knowledge and skills.

Figure 16. Desired improvements at work by gender

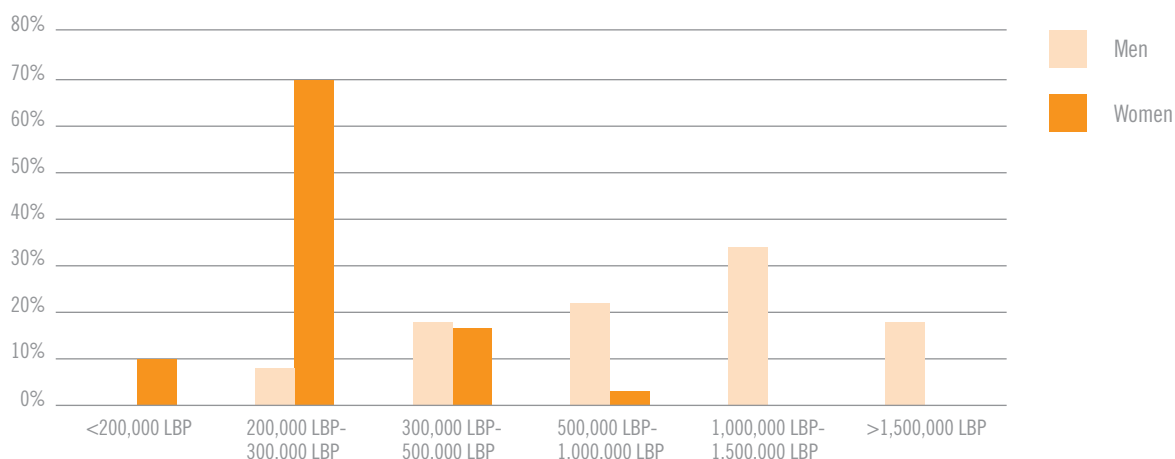


INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Monthly incomes ranged widely according to both nationality and gender, with Palestinian and Syrian men and women having generally lower monthly incomes (below 1,000,000 LBP and 500,000 LBP respectively). The largest proportion of men (35 per cent) claimed to have monthly incomes from agricultural work in the 1,000,000–1,500,000 LBP range, compared with the majority of women (70 per cent) earning 200,000–300,000 LBP (see figure 17).

Furthermore, 78 per cent of Lebanese men were self-employed, whereas the majority of Syrians and Palestinians were wage earners. On the other hand, only 14 per cent of women (only Lebanese) were self-employed. Of the wage earners, respondents (women and men of all nationalities) were generally paid in cash with the exception of only two individuals – a Lebanese man (who refused to answer the question) and a Syrian man who was paid with agricultural produce. 70 per cent and 62 per cent of men and women respectively would not be willing to accept more work for the same wage. Finally, only 7 per cent of men (all of them Lebanese) had ever experienced any form of salary increase in the last ten years.

Figure 17. Monthly income by gender



Agriculture was the only source of income for the majority of men (52 per cent) and women (63 per cent; see figure 18). Recall that most women work for wages and are not self-employed. Yet, both men and women claimed to rely on several alternative financial sources when agriculture was their main source of income but did not suffice. Interestingly, only 9 per cent of men claimed to rely on family members as opposed to 42 per cent of women (figure 19). Only 24 per cent of the total claimed to have received any form of governmental or non-governmental support.

Figure 18. Percentage of income from agriculture

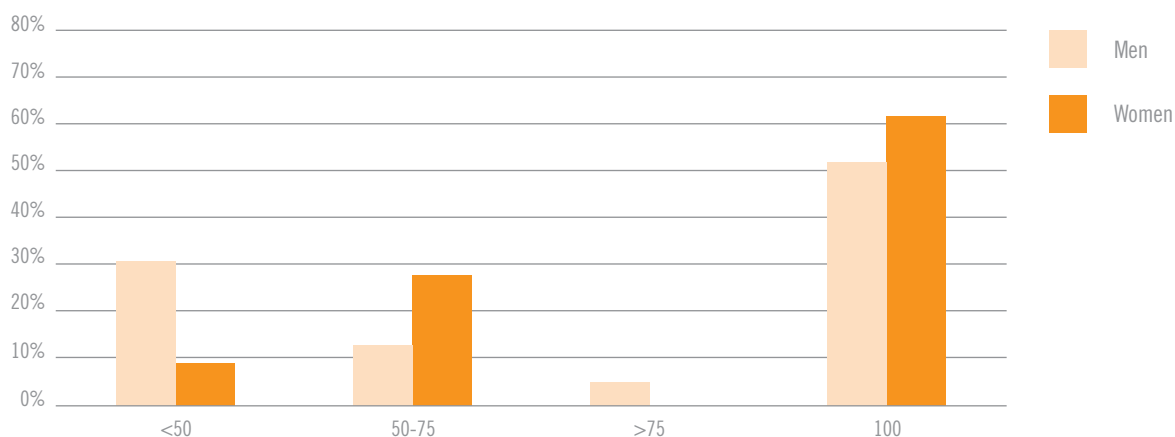
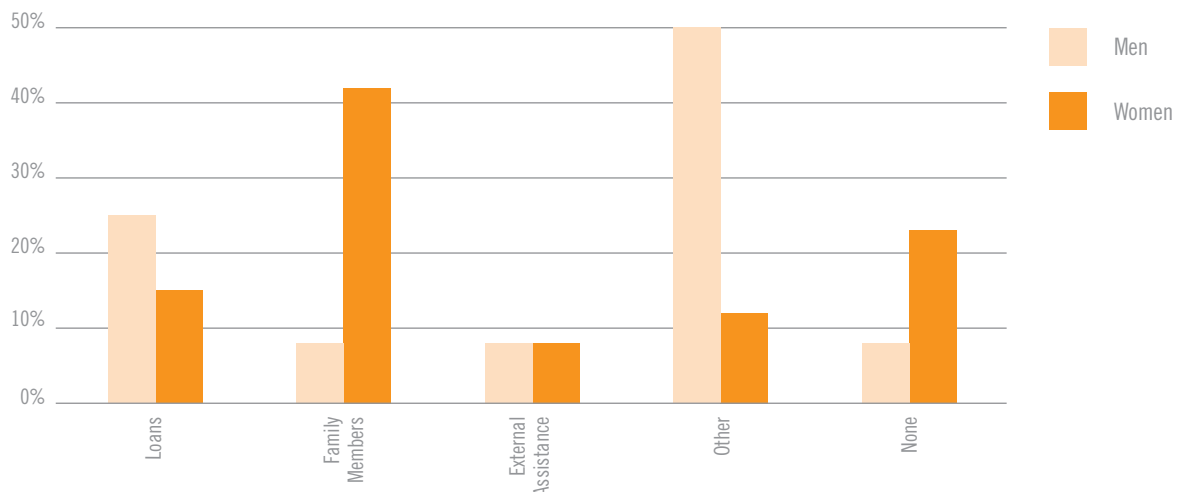
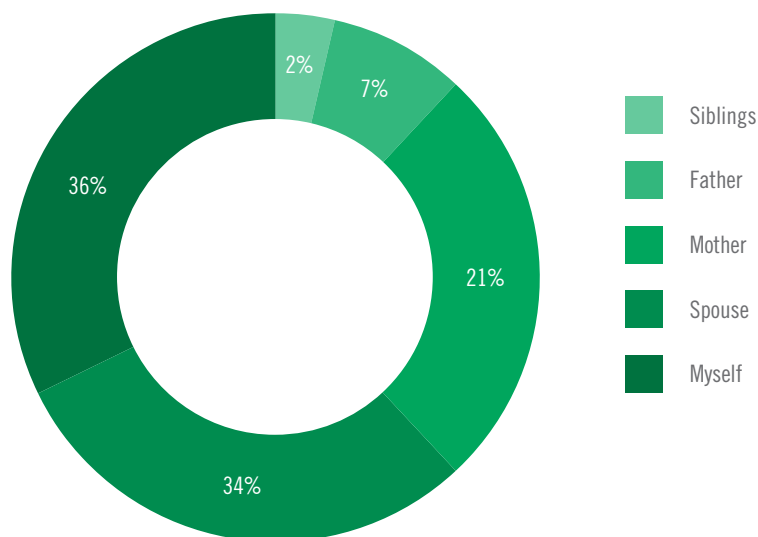


Figure 19. Alternative financial sources



While all the men claimed to be the decision-maker when it comes to work-related issues, women's answers were more varied, with only 36 per cent claiming they took their own decisions. Interestingly, 21 per cent mentioned their mothers as decision-makers, which might indicate that they come from women-headed households or that they interact with their mothers more than their fathers (their mothers transmit to them the decisions taken by their fathers). Considering that only 48 per cent of the women were married, the fact that 34 per cent of the total claimed that their husbands take the decisions is relatively high (figure 20).

Figure 20. Women's work-related decisions

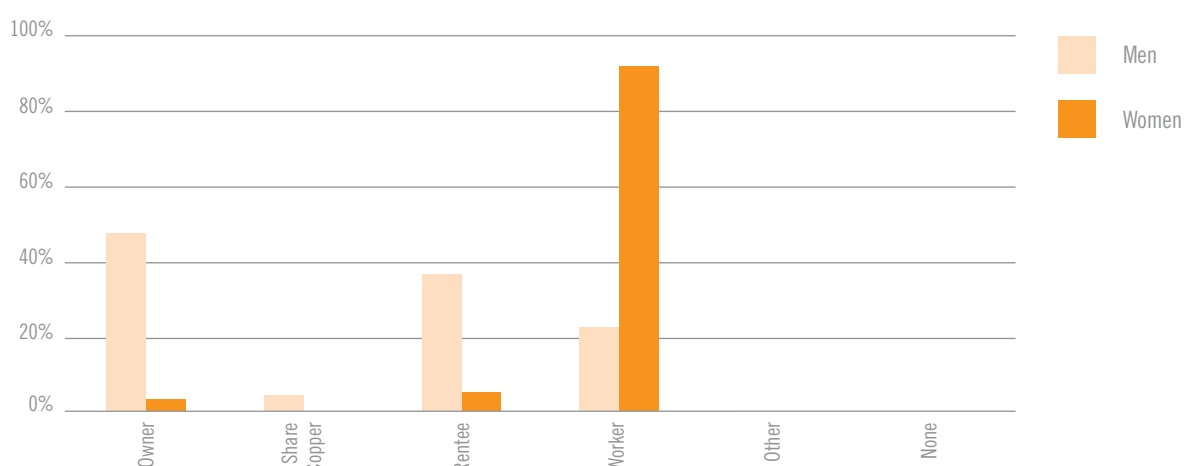


The vast majority of men (91 per cent) claimed to manage their own income, as opposed to only half (50 per cent) of the women. Notably, none of the Palestinian women managed their own income.

ACCESS AND CONTROL OF PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

Only one Lebanese women interviewed was a land owner, as opposed to the majority of Lebanese men. Predominantly, women of all nationalities were workers (see figure 21). However, 88 per cent of the women (all Lebanese) claimed that they had the right to own and/or inherit land and 68 per cent claimed they had the right and ability to sell land. These results are extremely interesting considering that most of the women were not land owners. At the same time, 66 per cent of the women stated that they did not have any decision-making power regarding the lands they cultivate, regardless of financial means to purchase the land. It can be inferred that the right to own/inherit/sell is present but social and cultural norms act as constraints and interfere in the ability to take decisions.

Figure 21. Land status by gender



In terms of access to resources, the following was revealed:

Table 2. Access to resources

	Men	Women	Comments
Have access to irrigation sources	80%	13%	The majority of men and women were Lebanese None of the Palestinian men and only two of the Syrian men responded affirmatively. None of the Palestinian and Syrian women responded affirmatively.
Have access to inputs	87%	15%	Only one Palestinian man and one Syrian man responded affirmatively. None of the Palestinian and Syrian women responded affirmatively.
Have access to tools, machinery and equipment	70%	3%	None of the Palestinian men and only two of the Syrian men responded affirmatively. Only one Lebanese woman responded affirmatively.

	Men	Women	Comments
Have access to agricultural technologies	48%	3%	None of the Palestinian and Syrian men responded affirmatively. Only one Lebanese woman responded affirmatively.
Have access to credit	65%	0%	None of the Palestinian and Syrian men responded affirmatively.
Have access to information on agricultural practices/techniques	57%	3%	Only one Palestinian man and one Syrian man responded affirmatively. Only one Lebanese woman responded affirmatively.

These results reveal significant gender-based differences with respect to access to resources, in favour of men. Moreover, Syrian and Palestinian women are even more vulnerable than Lebanese women, as confirmed by the KIIs. Further:

Table 3. Access to Resources (continued)

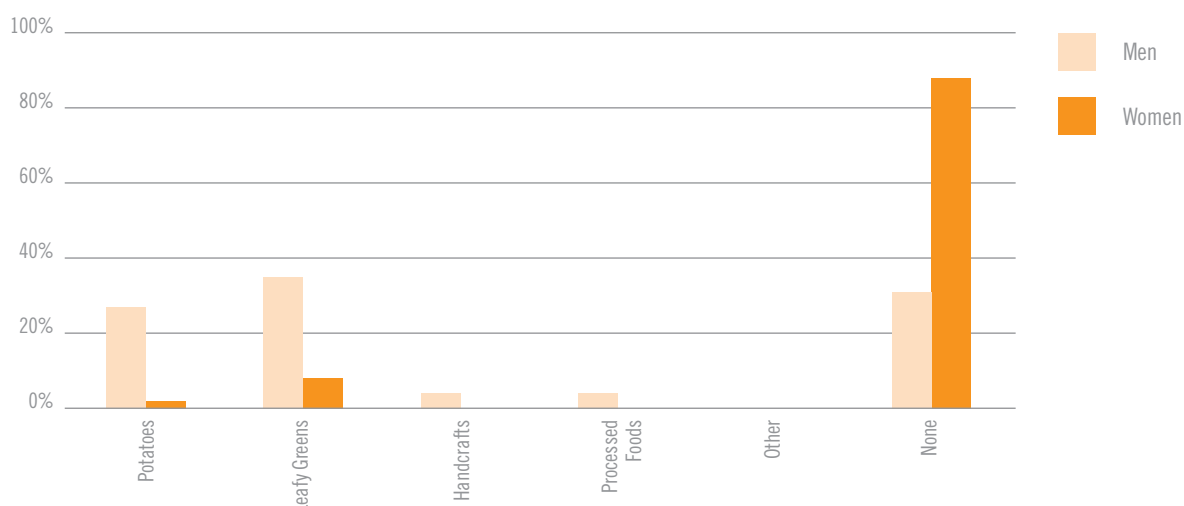
	Men	Women	Comments
Drive vehicles	96%	11%	Only Lebanese women responded affirmatively.
Own a phone	96%	35%	Of all nationalities?
Have internet access	57%	12%	Only Lebanese women responded affirmatively.

When asked if they were satisfied with their agricultural skills and knowledge, 61 per cent of men and 76 per cent of women responded that they were. When asked if they believed their skills and knowledge were being used efficiently, both men and women responded positively at 57 per cent and 62 per cent respectively. However, 57 per cent of men had received some kind of training and capacity building, as opposed to only 18 per cent of the women.

PROCESSING AND TRADING

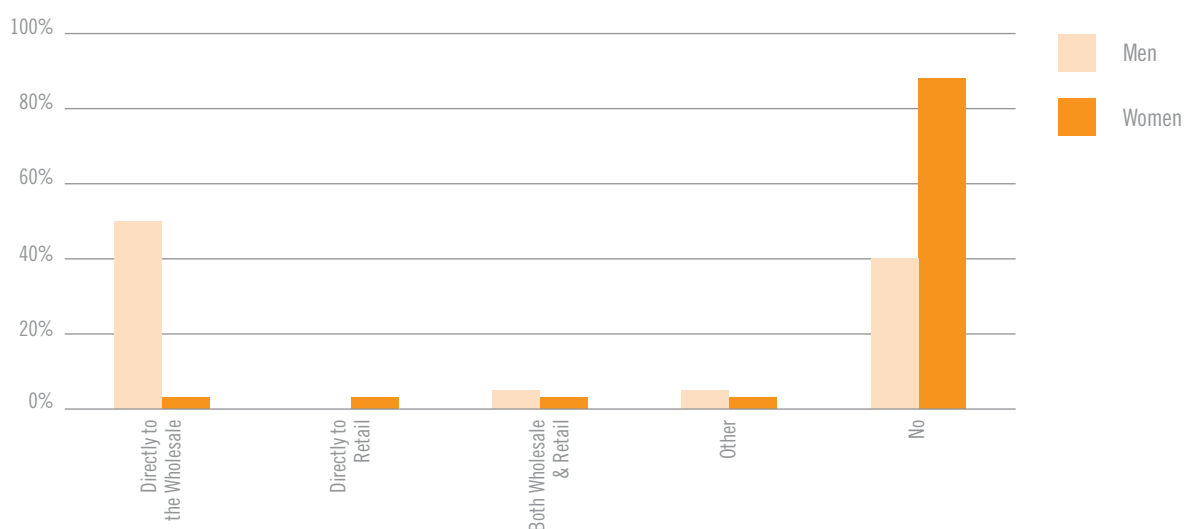
The vast majority of women had no experience in trading; just one had experience in leafy green vegetables and four in potato trading – all Lebanese. On the other hand, 31 per cent of the men had no experience in trading and 34 per cent and 27 per cent had experience in leafy green vegetables and potatoes respectively (figure 22).

Figure 22. Trading experience by gender



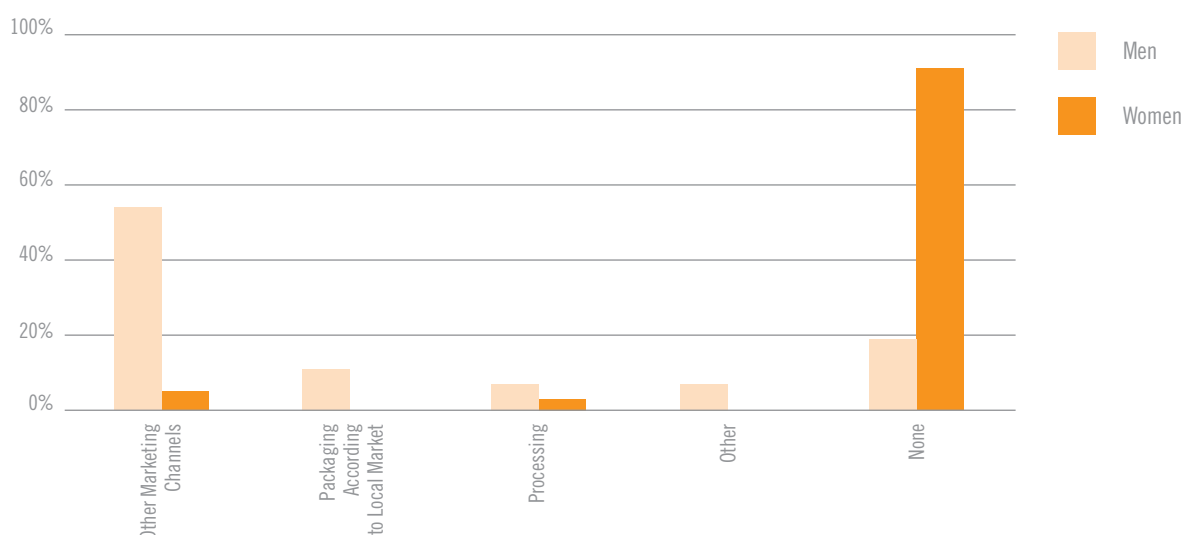
While only 12 per cent of women (including one Syrian but none of the Palestinians) had ever marketed their own products, 50 per cent of the men marketed directly to wholesalers, 5 per cent marketed to both wholesalers and retailers, and 5 per cent through other marketing channels. However, 40 per cent of the men had never marketed their own products. Many of these were Syrian and Palestinian labourers not involved in marketing (figure 23). While 75 per cent of men were familiar with the wholesale market, 91 per cent of women were not. Furthermore, 75 per cent of men claimed to have access to storage facilities before marketing their products, as opposed to none of the women.

Figure 23. Marketing own products by gender



When asked to list potential options to increase revenue, 54 per cent of men mentioned new marketing channels, while 91 per cent of women could not list any. Of the (9%) women who listed options, all were Lebanese except for one Syrian (figure 24). This is an indication of the lower level of involvement at the various value chain levels among women. Only two Lebanese men responded with “other”, with one mentioning export and the other mentioning switching to other varieties of potatoes.

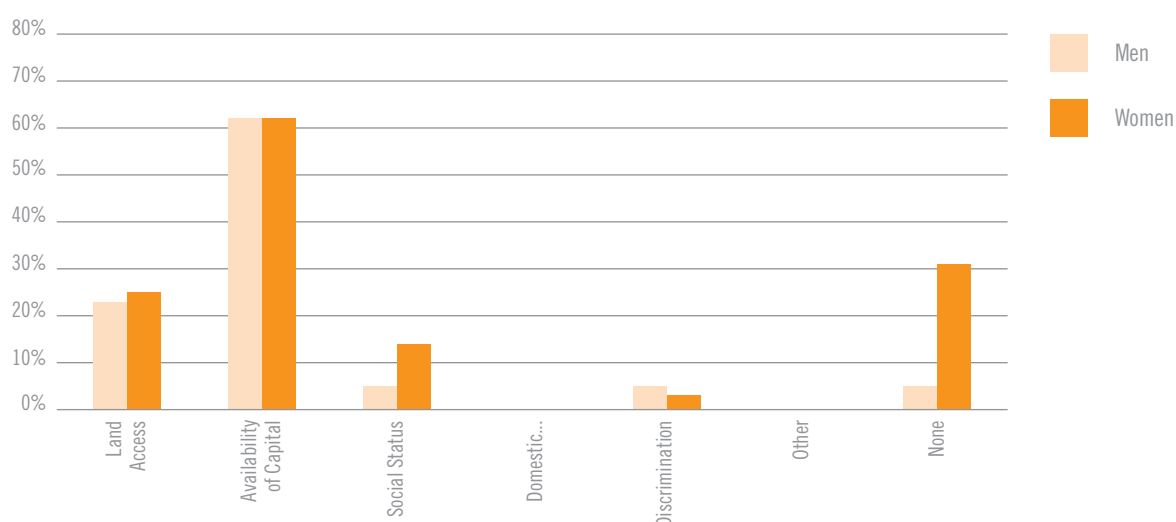
Figure 24. Potential options for increasing revenue by gender



STARTING A NEW BUSINESS

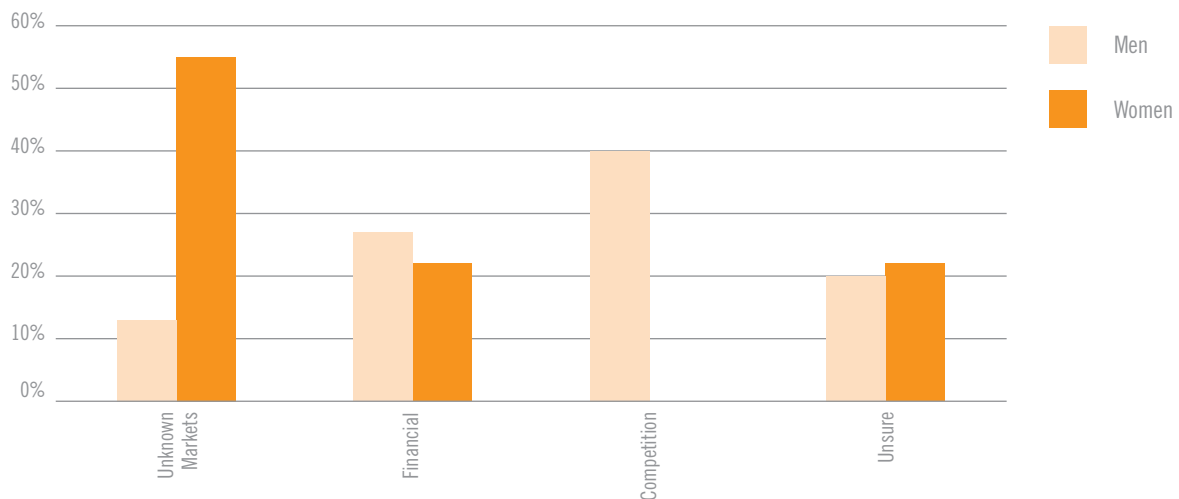
When asked whether they were motivated to start a new business, 57 per cent and 29 per cent of men and women, respectively, answered positively. All the women who answered positively were Lebanese except for one Syrian. Moreover, when asked about the challenges that were impeding them to start a new business, the majority of men (62 per cent) mentioned the lack of available capital. Notably, 30 per cent of the women could not list any challenges, indicating a lack of a holistic view of the value chains (figure 25).

Figure 25. Perceived impediments to starting a new business by gender



When asked about the expected challenges in undertaking a new business, 40 per cent of men mentioned competition with other producers, 27 per cent mentioned financial challenges (mainly the lack of capital), and 13 per cent mentioned unknown markets. Of women 56 per cent mentioned unknown markets, a further indication that women are only involved at the production level and have not been exposed to marketing and trading (figure 26). Notably, all the men and 80 per cent of the women claimed to be ready to take these risks.

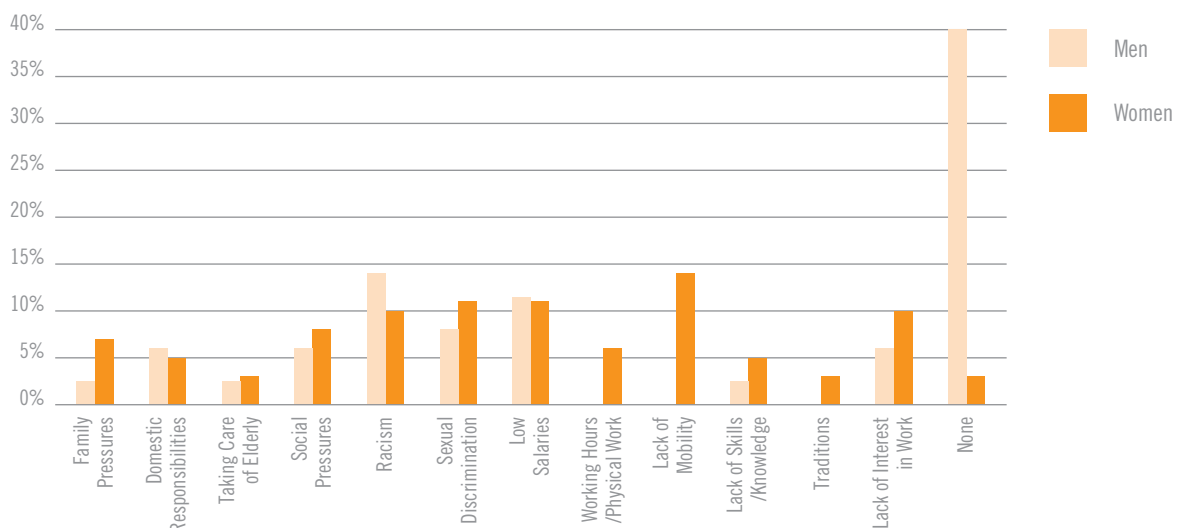
Figure 26. Expected challenges in new business by gender



WELL-BEING, SELF-ESTEEM AND DIGNITY

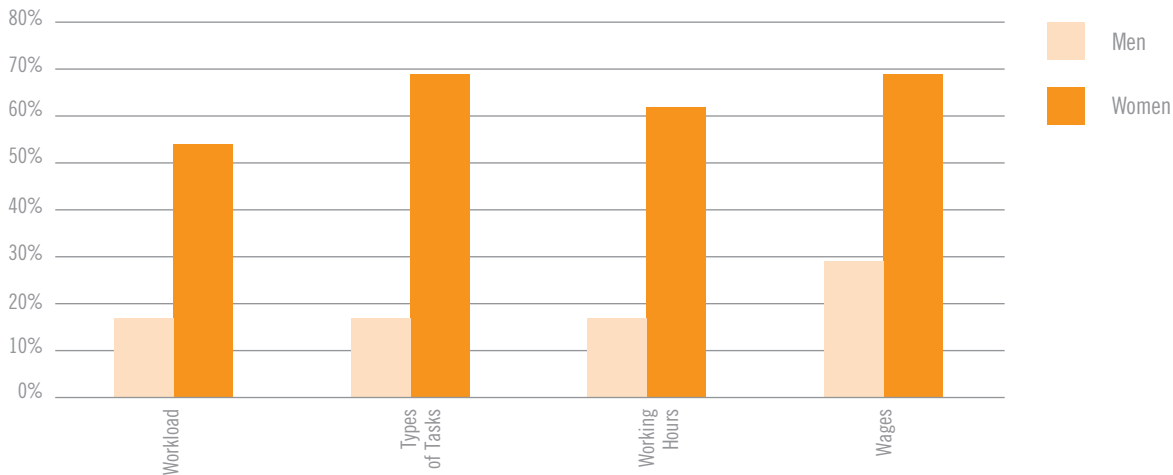
When asked about the barriers and challenges that they faced and which impacted them on a professional level, women consistently mentioned more challenges than men. Furthermore, a predominance of men claimed not to be facing any challenges. It is important to note that none of the men mentioned mobility challenges, traditions, or working hours/physical work (figure 27). All of the Palestinian women mentioned social status, while all of the Syrian women answered none. As the vast majority of Syrian women had responded that they are not motivated to start a new business, this result is consistent.

Figure 27. Perceived challenges for women by gender



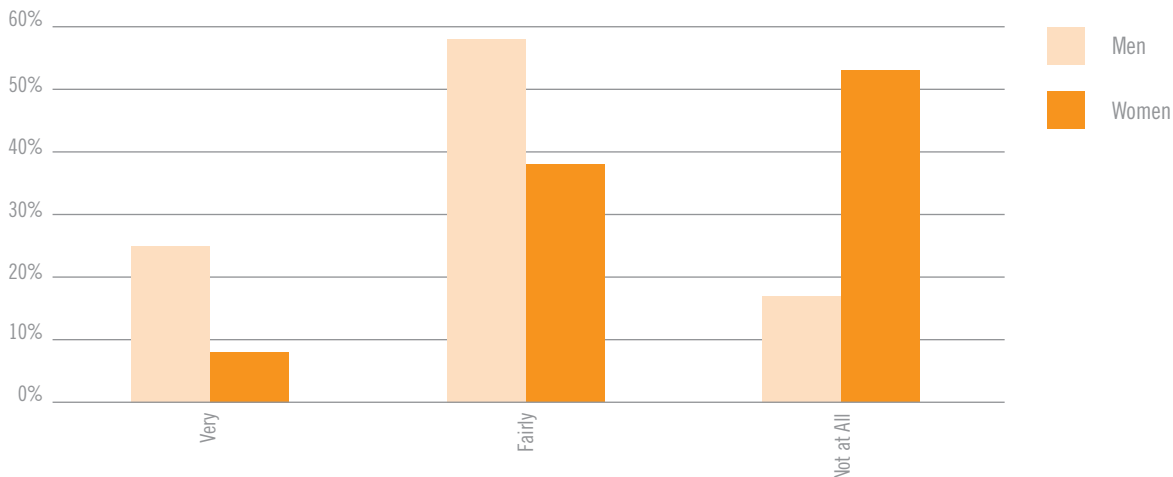
Consistently, women of all nationalities felt that they were treated differently at work based on their gender. These answers indicate the sharp labour divisions and different roles and responsibilities between men and women (figure 28).

Figure 28. Differential treatment at work based on gender



In terms of satisfaction at the professional level, 25 per cent of men were very satisfied, 58 per cent were fairly satisfied, and 17 per cent not satisfied at all. For women, 8 per cent were very satisfied, 39 per cent fairly satisfied, and 53 per cent not satisfied. Among Palestinian and Syrian women, only one Syrian woman responded that she was very satisfied. It can be inferred that women are less satisfied at the professional level than men (figure 29). Notwithstanding these differences, all of the women and 95 per cent of the men claimed not to have any opportunities at the professional level.

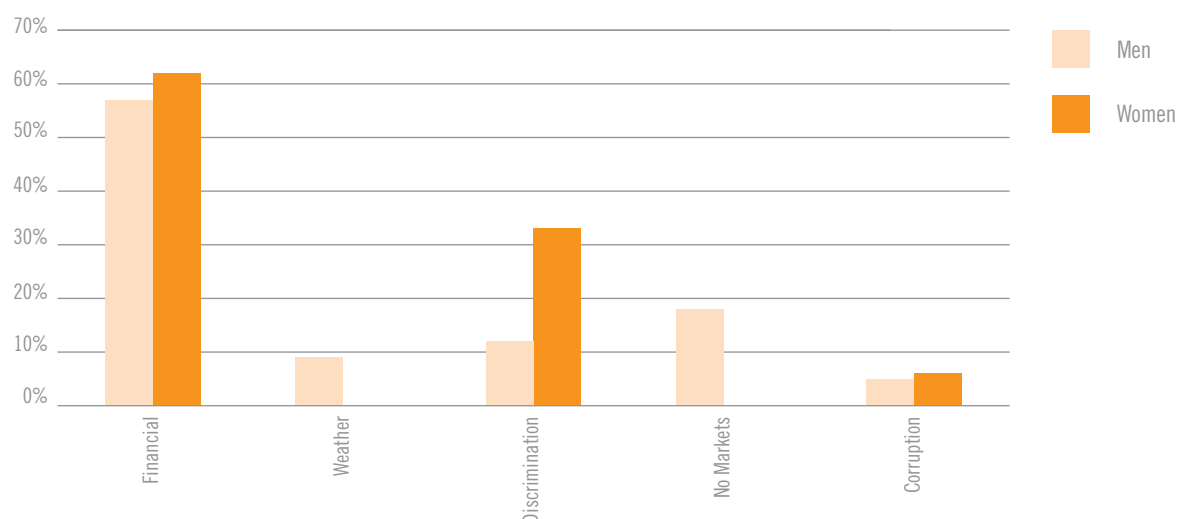
Figure 29. Satisfaction at professional level by gender



The majority of both men (57 per cent) and women (62 per cent) claimed that the main risks and shocks faced at work were financial, mainly due to a lack of capital or loss of produce. On the other hand, only 13 per cent of men mentioned discrimination as opposed to 33 per cent of the women. Notably, none of the women mentioned the lack of availability of markets, which might reflect the fact that they do not market the products and are not exposed to this level of the value chain (figure 30). While 82 per cent

of the sample claimed that shocks impact all members of the household equally, 69 per cent reported that they did not impact men and women equally. This is a potential indication that when asked to specifically reflect on differences related to gender, the target group was aware of the differences. However, there is also a possibility that respondents adapted their answers to fit what they perceived was the purpose of the survey.

Figure 30. Main risks and shocks faced at work by gender



EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUITY

When asked about the concepts of empowerment and gender equity, the following was revealed through the questionnaire survey:

Table 4. Empowerment and gender equity

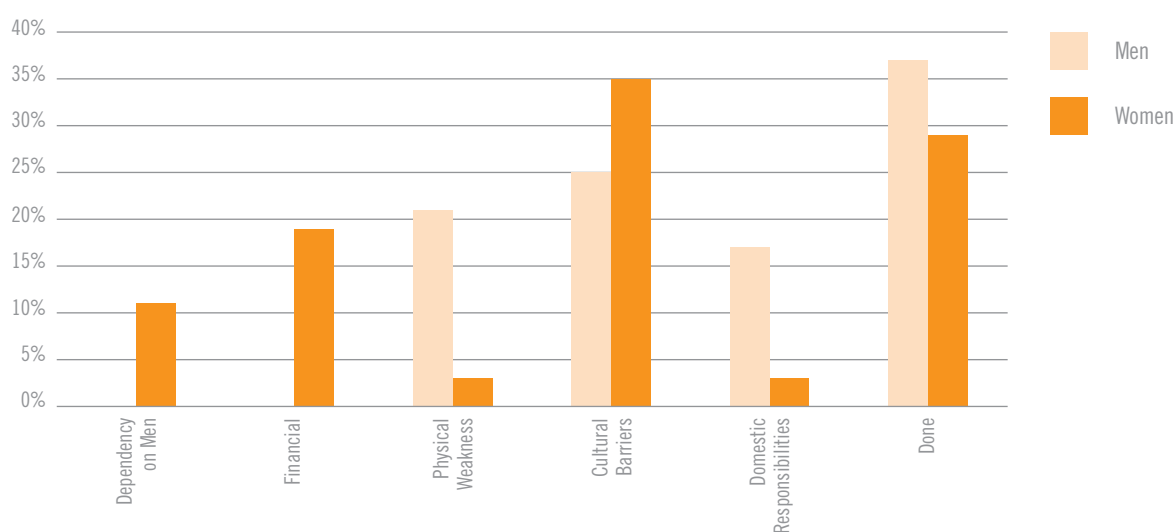
	Men	Women	Comments
Familiar with the concept of gender equity	65%	34%	None of the Palestinian women responded affirmatively.
Believe there is gender equity in their community	43%	45%	Two Palestinian men responded affirmatively, which contradicted their claim that they are not familiar with the concept.
Believe that gender equity is important	83%	57%	
Believe that women and men have different roles in the agricultural sector	83%	80%	All Palestinian men and all Syrian women responded affirmatively

	Men	Women	Comments
Believe that gender-based discrimination exists in the agricultural sector	69%	69%	All Syrian and Palestinian men responded affirmatively
Believe that there are some agricultural activities which women should not take part in	83%	71%	All Syrian and Palestinian men responded affirmatively
Believe that there are some agricultural activities which women should be more involved in	39%	49%	
Believe that women's contributions to agriculture are valuable	100%	98%	
Believe that women's contributions to agriculture are recognized and visible	61%	63%	
Believe that it is appropriate for women to manage the household income	60%	80%	
Believe that women are underpaid for their work in agriculture	65%	89%	
Believe that it is appropriate for women to participate in training	70%	91%	All Syrian and Palestinian men responded affirmatively
Believe that is appropriate for women to make economic decisions in the household	57%	54%	None of the Palestinian men responded affirmatively
Believe that it is appropriate for women to work outside the house	48%	86%	

The main differences between men's and women's perceptions were noted on less abstract questions on gender equity and women's empowerment. For instance, women were more likely than men to believe they should be able to earn and manage household income. Furthermore, the percentage of women who believe they are being underpaid for their work is higher, as well as the percentage of women who believe they should be able to participate in training. Finally, the most evident difference was observed on perceptions related to women working outside the house.

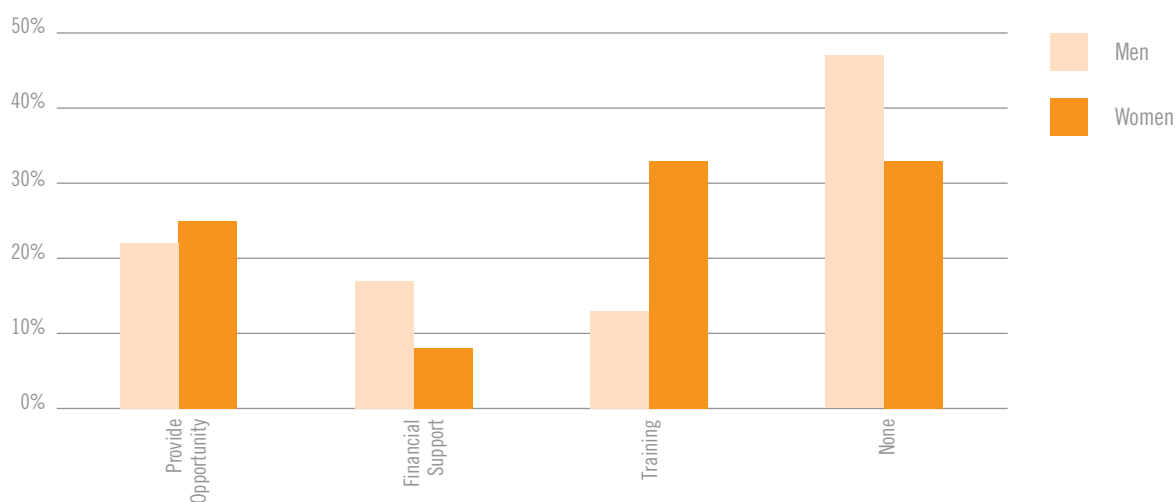
When asked about the GBCs faced by women at work, 38 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women claimed there were none. However, 25 per cent of men and 35 per cent of women mentioned cultural barriers. A further 21 per cent of men mentioned physical weakness and 17 per cent mentioned domestic responsibilities, reflecting men's perceptions of women and their fixed roles in the household. Notably, only women mentioned financial constraints (see figure 31). Interestingly, 75 per cent of the Syrian women claimed that GBCs did not impact on them at work. On the other hand, the vast majority of Lebanese women and all of the Palestinian women reported facing GBCs at work.

Figure 31. Perceived gender-based constraints faced by women by gender



When asked about the kinds of measures that could be taken to empower women in agricultural activities, 48 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women (but 83 per cent of Syrian women) cited none. Interestingly, 34 per cent of women mentioned training (figure 32). The majority of the Lebanese women and all of the Palestinian women cited at least one measure.

Figure 32. Measures to empower women



KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

In total, six interviews were conducted with key informants, including:

- a nursery owner (17 January 2017);
- a cooperative manager (17 January 2017);
- a farmer (17 January 2017);
- the LARI North Office Manager (28 February 2017);
- a Project Manager at the Safadi Foundation (6 March 2017); and
- the General Director of the RMF (6 March 2017).

The main findings of these interviews, extracted from the KII summary sheets, are found in table 5. It is important to note that these findings reflect the knowledge, perceptions and opinions of the interviewees, and the veracity of their statements could not be verified by the researchers due to limited time, and lack of resources and literature for cross validation.

Table 5. Summary of key informant interviews

Interviewee	Main observations/key statements of informant
Youssef Molass, nursery owner	<p>The nursery employs both women and men at the same daily rate.</p> <p>Currently, the agriculture sector in general is witnessing a significant slump in production, mainly because Syrian products are being smuggled into Lebanon, especially through Akkar.</p> <p>A significant portion of farmers in Akkar are indebted to middlemen, with some debts reaching up to 40,000,000 LBP.</p> <p>The role of Lebanese women in Akkar is predominantly domestic (taking care of the house, raising children, cooking, etc.). Women are mainly housewives.</p> <p>Some women in Akkar own land (inherited from relatives and husbands), although they do not cultivate it themselves but rather rent it out or partner with male farmers to cultivate it.</p> <p>There are opportunities for women in processing; acting as a group will reduce the prices of inputs, in turn reducing production costs. Moreover, acting collectively would give women more influence at the market level.</p>
Sarkis Bou Daher, cooperative manager	<p>Farmers are the weakest actors in the agriculture value chain, often indebted to middlemen through a vicious cycle and constantly having to compete with cheaper imported products.</p> <p>There is potential for improvement through collective action and cooperatives, although several cultural and societal factors limit the success of such initiatives. Presently, existing cooperatives are often not functional at all or not properly operational.</p> <p>Women working in the agricultural sector in Akkar are predominantly Syrian. Often, due to cultural and societal factors, Lebanese women do not engage in agricultural activities.</p> <p>Women can play a key role in processing, as they have the required skills and knowledge, given that most women process raw material for domestic consumption. A common kitchen would be an important initiative which would provide the space and equipment required for proper processing. The establishment of a cooperative to manage such a space would be extremely valuable, with the ultimate objective of respecting global food standards and obtaining a certification. Processing might range from freezing potatoes for restaurants and hotels to preparing fresh cuts of leafy green vegetables (e.g. pre-chopped parsley).</p>

Interviewee	Main observations/key statements of informant
Omar Awad, farmer of leafy green vegetables and potatoes	<p>The main challenge faced by potato farmers in Akkar is the marketing of produce. The potato harvesting period takes place prior to the one in the Bekaa, giving Akkar priority when it comes to determining prices. However, as the government does not assign tariffs, taxes or quotas on imported potatoes (especially from Egypt, Syria, and Jordan), Lebanese farmers are left with no choice but to lower prices. When large traders import potatoes during the harvest season in Akkar, prices drop automatically.</p> <p>Women play key roles in potato and leafy green production in Akkar, including the preparation/chopping of tubers, planting, weeding, harvesting, and packaging. Men are responsible for irrigation, applying fertilizers and pesticides, and ploughing.</p> <p>Women farmers are faced with several challenges, including not being allowed to take loans, as it is not socially acceptable, and having to work both in the fields and at home given their domestic duties.</p>
Michel Issa, LARI North Office Manager	<p>Women in the agricultural sector in Akkar, and in Lebanon as a whole, are generally followers and labourers, not leaders.</p> <p>Women usually do not have decision-making powers.</p> <p>The leafy green vegetable value chain can offer more opportunities for women than the potato value chain as women are highly involved in it.</p> <p>Farmers in Akkar in general have limited marketing skills and only tend to sell to wholesalers in Akkar and Tripoli. Exacerbating this weakness is often the inability to transport their produce to a wider range of markets.</p> <p>It is very challenging for women to obtain credit/loans as land in Akkar is mainly inherited and owned by men, which does not provide women with collateral.</p> <p>Several attempts to establish cooperatives have ended in failure across both value chains, partly because farmers associate the concept of cooperatives with donations and external financial support. An important role of governmental institutions and NGOs would be to provide training on cooperative management, functions, and regulations.</p> <p>Women have the capacity and skills to process produce, an activity which greatly improves their livelihoods and adds value to the agricultural sector. One alternative to a processing cooperative would be to form a group of women led by an external manager or a company.</p>

Interviewee	Main observations/key statements of informant
<p>Emile Asmar, Project Manager at the Safadi Foundation</p>	<p>The Safadi Foundation is implementing several projects on Lebanese women's empowerment in the agricultural sector, but their work is more focused in the mountainous region of Akkar. These projects mainly target women willing to participate in activities and surrounded by relatively tolerant/accepting communities. The projects support women and cooperatives through the provision of tools, inputs, irrigation systems, etc., as well as capacity building. They seek to enhance the enabling environment.</p> <p>Cooperatives in Akkar face several challenges, mainly an inability to market produce, lack of time management, lack of commitment among members, cultural barriers, and a lack of basic skills in establishing and managing cooperatives or even understanding the concept of cooperatives.</p> <p>When the Safadi Foundation began working with cooperatives, both men and women were targeted to ensure participation of both. Eventually, having established trust and acceptance, women and men were targeted separately.</p> <p>The Safadi Foundation supports women's cooperatives mainly with capacity building on hygiene, quality control, and packaging.</p> <p>With time, women's participation in project activities is increasing. For instance, women are increasingly participating in workshops and training sessions and, moreover, they are interested in and call for the development of their farms. This can be attributed to awareness sessions conducted and the empowerment of women community leaders. An increase in decision-making has also been witnessed.</p> <p>In certain cases, women are also becoming more involved in activities such as spraying and using heavy machinery. However, access to land and resources remains a significant challenge.</p> <p>Women are involved in almost all agricultural activities. They have the skills, ability, and willingness to work but are often constrained by social pressures that keep them from being decision-makers and gaining control over their work.</p> <p>Families in Akkar range from extremely conservative (viewing women only as housewives) to moderately conservative (viewing the man as the breadwinner but allowing women to participate in work) to more open to the idea of women becoming empowered.</p> <p>Women's cooperatives would help women generate income through improved production and processing. Women have the skills and capacities required for the processing of several products, but capacity building would be needed to ensure quality and to increase revenues.</p> <p>Gender awareness is necessary for communities to understand gender inequity and divisions of labour and responsibilities. Furthermore, communities must be made aware of the importance of women in the agricultural sector.</p> <p>Most cooperatives in the region have failed due to a lack of understanding of the roles and functions of cooperatives. Capacity building would be required to ensure that women can manage and run a cooperative.</p>

Interviewee	Main observations/key statements of informant
Nabil Moawad, General Director at Rene Moawad Foundation	<p>The main challenge faced by women working in the potato and leafy green vegetable value chains is land tenure – they rarely have access to land unless it is inherited. Moreover, they face societal and cultural pressures, as it is not common for Lebanese women to work in the agricultural sector unless to support their husbands.</p> <p>Women cannot have direct contact with input suppliers and their signatures are generally not recognized as trustworthy guarantees. This means they have to work through their husbands.</p> <p>Women do not have access to loans or even small levels of credit.</p> <p>Syrian and Palestinian women face more challenges, as they are constrained by several external factors, which adds to their poverty. For instance, inaccessibility to land and basic resources. Moreover, the majority are living in precarious conditions, mostly in tents.</p> <p>Syrian women face even more socio-cultural pressures than others, as the majority of their husbands are unemployed or in Syria.</p> <p>In March 2017, RMF launched a new project focused on linking a small potatoes processing unit in Akkar to Souk el Akel to insure better productivity along the potato value chain.</p> <p>The role of NGOs is first to identify needs and design sustainable projects to tackle those needs. Priority should be given to income-generating projects to ensure sustainable incomes.</p> <p>Cooperatives empower women if women are allowed to be active members. Intensive training and capacity building are needed to ensure that cooperatives function properly. Moreover, cooperatives should have a well-defined plan and set of objectives to increase income.</p>

It is important to note that all informants stressed the importance of involving women in processing and production but none mentioned marketing, trading, or other activities at other levels of the value chain. For the full KII summary sheets please refer to Appendix 6.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Participants were recruited following the stakeholder analysis. Although the team made efforts to include women, only two attended, while the others excused themselves and explained that their husbands had not agreed on their participation. This was taken into consideration in the analysis of the data, as the inability of women to attend was considered a relevant fact in itself and a reflection of the kinds of societal and cultural pressures acting on women.

The focus group results listed below reflect solely the responses from participants.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION 1

Figure 33. FGD 1 – Problem tree analysis



A focus group was conducted with five farmers, including three men and two women⁴, on 18 February, 2017 at the North Agriculture Department in Abdeh, Akkar. Due to the lower than expected number of participants and the fact that they all worked in both the potato and leafy green vegetable value chains, they were not divided into groups for the exercises. After a brief introduction about the project and the objectives of the FGD, the exercises were explained in detail and participants were given the chance to ask questions. The topic for discussion was the lack of appreciation and visibility of women's roles in the potato and leafy green vegetable value chains in Akkar, and a problem tree analysis was developed based on participants inputs (see table 6).

Table 6. Problem tree analysis results (FGD 1)

Value chain	Causes	Effects
Potatoes	<p>The difficult conditions of labour (financial, physical, etc.).</p> <p>The patriarchal society.</p> <p>The lack of freedom in terms of mobility and decision-making.</p> <p>Women's lack of involvement in marketing.</p> <p>The lack of cooperation between women farmers.</p> <p>Women are not members of existing cooperatives.</p> <p>Women's inability to own and rent land.</p>	<p>Poverty.</p> <p>Marginalization of the role of women in agriculture and society.</p>

⁴ Although several women were invited to attend, only two eventually showed up.

Value chain	Causes	Effects
Leafy greens	<p>Lack of women cooperatives.</p> <p>Competition in the market.</p> <p>Competition with cheaper Syrian labour.</p> <p>Lack of an agricultural calendar to be used by women.</p> <p>Loss of produce due to inability to market/sell.</p> <p>Lack of proper packaging due to lack of skills and knowledge.</p>	<p>Women experiencing debts.</p> <p>Loss of produce.</p> <p>Dire financial situations.</p> <p>Market inflation and competition with external markets.</p> <p>No variety in the sector.</p>

The participants were asked to reflect on the role of women in the potato and leafy green subsectors using a SWOT analysis (tables 7 and 8).

Table 7. SWOT analysis for potato value chain (FGD 1)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Women are involved in tuber preparation (chopping).</p> <p>Women have expertise in agricultural practices (mainly planting, weeding, and packaging).</p> <p>Potato-related activities are not very time consuming.</p>	<p>Women can't access the market as it is not socially acceptable (cannot transport products to the market).</p> <p>Women don't own/rent land and therefore cannot be self-employed.</p> <p>Women have household duties that interfere with agricultural work.</p> <p>Women do not have access to loans (although generally, small-scale farmers do not have easy access to formal loans regardless of gender).</p> <p>Lack of cooperatives to organize processing activities.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Potato processing (frozen potatoes and potato chips).</p> <p>Partnering with male farmers who can rent land.</p>	<p>Inability to market and sell processed products.</p> <p>Lack of awareness regarding collaborative work.</p> <p>Potato growing is very risky since market prices fluctuate dramatically.</p>

Table 8. SWOT analysis for leafy green vegetables value chain (FGD 1)

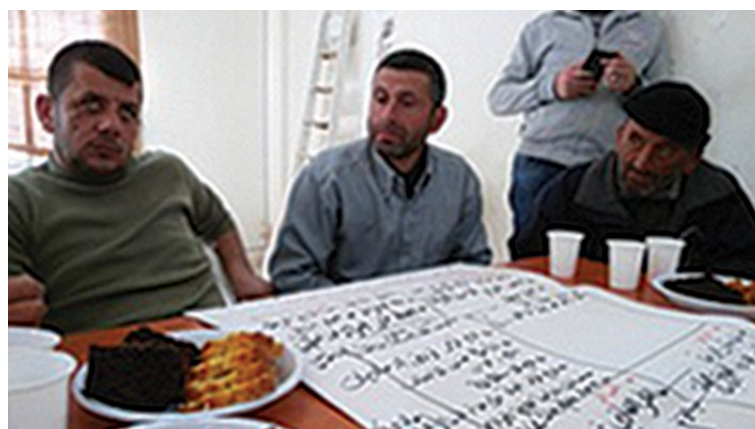
Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Women have the knowledge and skills required for production.</p> <p>Water is generally available for proper production.</p> <p>Women can plant small plots near their homes.</p> <p>Relatively short agricultural cycle for most leafy green vegetables.</p>	<p>Inability to own/rent land.</p> <p>Inability to directly sell produce in the market.</p> <p>Competition with Syrian labour.</p> <p>Syrian farmers rent land for higher prices than Lebanese farmers.</p>
Opportunities	Challenges
<p>Establishment of women cooperatives.</p> <p>Processing of parsley and other leafy green vegetables (chopped).</p> <p>De-stemming and drying of mint, basil, thyme, and mulukhiyah.</p> <p>Preparing ready mix salads.</p> <p>Contracting with restaurants and supermarkets through cooperatives.</p>	<p>Inability to market.</p> <p>In the case of establishing cooperatives, an inability to sustain them.</p> <p>Lack of willingness to cooperate.</p> <p>Lack of a common space for cooperatives.</p> <p>Social pressures impeding women from cooperation.</p>

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- The team had to constantly remind the participants of the objectives of the FGD, as they deviated from the topics of discussion, preferring to discuss other issues that they viewed as more important. The topics they constantly raised included government neglect, competition with cheaper imports, and poverty.
- The team sensed a general feeling of hopelessness and demotivation among the farmers, especially when it came to the potato value chain.
- The male participants led the discussion and, although the women were given opportunities to express their opinions and perceptions, it wasn't always easy for them to speak up or be heard by the men.
- The participants often disagreed about the role of women in agriculture and their level of involvement in the several activities at the farm level – an indication that the perceptions and understanding of women's roles and responsibilities are not clear and homogeneous. This was also noted in the KIIs, as certain interviewees claimed that Lebanese women do not participate significantly in production.
- The participants claimed more than once that the real challenges faced by both women and men in the agricultural sector in Akkar are political and economic, and therefore mapping opportunities for women would not benefit the sector if these other more significant constraints and challenges were not addressed.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION 2

Figure 34. FGD 2 - SWOT Analysis Discussion



A second focus group with 15 farmers was conducted on 25 February 2017 at the North Agriculture Department in Abdeh, Akkar.⁵ The participants were divided into two groups based on whether they worked mostly in potatoes or leafy green vegetables. After a brief introduction about the project and the objectives of the FGD, the exercises were explained in detail to each group separately and the participants were given the chance to ask questions. The problem presented for analysis was the lack of appreciation and visibility of women's roles in the potato and leafy green vegetable value chains in Akkar (see Table 9).

⁵ Although several women had been invited to attend, none showed up. Meanwhile, more than the expected number of men attended as the farmers had informed each other about the FGD.

Table 9. Problem tree analysis results (FGD 2)

Value chain	Causes	Effects
Potatoes	<p>The conservative nature of society.</p> <p>Low prices and lack of proper marketing.</p> <p>Loans are not socially acceptable, especially for women.</p> <p>A lack of women's freedom.</p> <p>Lack of financial capacities.</p>	<p>Weak role of women and dominance of men in the sector.</p> <p>Low morale among women.</p>
Leafy greens	<p>No direct involvement with middlemen.</p> <p>Inability to obtain loans.</p> <p>Women generally do not own land (except for widows).</p> <p>The patriarchal society.</p> <p>Women have household responsibilities.</p> <p>Lack of opportunities.</p> <p>Lack of access to the market.</p>	<p>Debt and deteriorating financial situations.</p> <p>Full dependence on the presence of a male family member.</p> <p>No financial capacities to invest in projects and businesses.</p> <p>Women remain confined to the home and engaged in domestic affairs.</p>

The participants were asked to reflect on the role of women in the potatoes and leafy green subsectors (tables 10 and 11).

Table 10. SWOT analysis for the potato value chain (FGD 2)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Women have significant agricultural roles/ responsibilities and extensive knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Women have the skills to package products.</p> <p>Women are efficient and effective in their work.</p>	<p>The lack of financial support.</p> <p>Women's inability to sell produce due to a lack of interaction with middlemen/retailers.</p> <p>Women's dependence on family members (mostly men) for interaction with stakeholders.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Potato freezing</p> <p>(The group did not seem to be able to identify opportunities in this value chain.)</p>	<p>Market stagnation of agriculture in general.</p> <p>Potato farming is risky because of fluctuating prices.</p> <p>Women's inability to market and sell processed products.</p> <p>The lack of proper storage facilities.</p>

Table 11. SWOT analysis for leafy green vegetable value chain (FGD 2)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Women are involved in most farming activities related to leafy green vegetables.</p> <p>Women are the backbone of the family and agriculture.</p> <p>Women have extensive experience in leafy green vegetables production and processing.</p> <p>Women are multi-tasking.</p>	<p>Women cannot interact with male stakeholders.</p> <p>Women are not socially active or influential.</p> <p>Social pressures impact on women's work.</p> <p>Women often work for daily rates and not for an hourly rate.</p> <p>Women's inability to access loans.</p> <p>The lack of variety in production.</p> <p>Women cannot work independently from men.</p> <p>The lack of water on a year-round basis or adequate pumping systems.</p> <p>Small plot sizes limiting produce.</p> <p>Middlemen controlling types and amounts of produce.</p>
Opportunities	Challenges
<p>Women's cooperatives and the establishment of a nursery owned by the cooperative.</p> <p>De-stemming, drying and packaging of leafy green vegetables.</p> <p>Ready mix salads.</p>	<p>The lack of processing and storage facilities.</p> <p>The lack of cooperative thinking and commitment.</p> <p>Traders and middlemen control the market.</p> <p>Competition with Syrian products.</p> <p>Women's inability to market the produce.</p>

To note that all responses in tables relevant to the problem tree and SWOT analysis were provided by participants in the focus group.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- Several participants were disappointed by the topic of discussion as they had been invited by other farmers, misunderstood the purpose of the study and arrived with other expectations.
- The team sensed a general feeling of hopelessness and de-motivation among the farmers, especially when it came to potatoes, as was noted during the first FGD. Comments and observations ranged from claiming that women are already extremely involved in the sector and therefore there is no need to identify opportunities to stating that such activities and exercises are often conducted by organizations with no concrete results.
- The discussion was monopolized by a few participants and although the team made efforts to engage all participants, it was extremely challenging, as certain farmers with stronger personalities did not always allow others to express their opinions. The group working on potatoes showed a greater degree of disagreement regarding the role of women in the value chain and the reasons for lack of visibility and recognition. While several participants claimed that women undertake the

same activities as men at the farm level, others disagreed and claimed that Lebanese women do not work in this value chain at all.

- There was a general agreement among the participants that the most significant challenges faced by both men and women are: (1) the presence of cheaper imports; (2) government neglect; (3) the presence of middlemen and traders controlling the market; and (4) the monopoly of input suppliers.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Several observations were made by the team while conducting field visits and KIIs, filling out questionnaires, and facilitating FGDs. These observations can be summarized as follows:

- Social pressures on women and gender roles are evident among agricultural communities. When conducting the questionnaires, there was often reluctance to be approached and/or to answer questions from several women, especially when in the presence of their neighbours or employers. Furthermore, several women requested that the team come back when their husbands were present.
- There is a general perception that Lebanese married women should become housewives and not be involved in field work. In situations where women cannot fully abandon work due to financial constraints, they still generally aim to eventually become full-time housewives.
- There is obvious resentment towards Syrian women agricultural workers among Lebanese women agricultural workers, as they work for lower wages.
- It is generally not socially acceptable for women to interact with male input suppliers and traders/wholesalers. At the same time, these stakeholders themselves often prefer a man to be present upon signature of an invoice or contract. Among female-headed households, it is common for women to record a male family member's name when purchasing seedlings or other inputs, although this type of activity is rare among women in the first place.
- Syrian agricultural workers are often working in harsh, inadequate conditions, for very long hours and with little compensation.
- Palestinian agricultural workers are less visible in Akkar and they are not mentioned by the Lebanese as competition, unless they are inquired about.
- Child labour is common and can be easily witnessed when visiting farms/fields. Girls are generally paid less than boys, partly because they perform different types of tasks. All of the families encountered long time to send their children to school but are unable due to financial constraints.
- Of the women encountered over the course of the assessment, many were illiterate, at a rate noticeably higher than men.
- While completing the questionnaires, it was observed that several women did not have information about their work or their family's income. In some instance, there were contradicting answers. They often asked that the team reach out to their husbands for more details.

GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender differences matter in farming systems, and can be observed throughout the potato and leafy green vegetable value chains in Akkar. Divisions of labour and responsibilities, access to productive resources, and constraints are significantly defined by culturally specific gender roles. Although their contributions to the sector are equally important, women face greater challenges and their role is not always visible nor formally recognized. As revealed by the questionnaires, KIIs, and FGDs, and as observed in the field, these gender differences are manifested in the type of work women and men predominantly undertake which is symptomatic of a society organized around gendered role (table 12). Women tend to be involved in activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, and processing, while men are the predominant decision-makers and interact with input suppliers, traders and wholesalers, and other relevant stakeholders.

Table 12. Gendered division of labour

Activity	Women	Men	Decision-makers
Purchasing inputs		X	Men
Land preparation		X	Men
Using machinery		X	Men
Planting/sowing	X	X	Both
Fertilizing		X	Men
Irrigating		X	Men
Weeding/tending	X	X	Men
Applying pesticides		X	Men
Harvesting	X	X	Men
Preparing, storing seeds/tubers	X		Both
Processing	X		Both <i>(Women mainly for household consumption)</i>
Marketing		X	Men
Selling		X	Men

DECISION-MAKING AND ACCESS/CONTROL/OWNERSHIP OF RESOURCES

Women agricultural workers in Akkar have less access to resources and opportunities than men. Gender gaps characterize several assets, inputs, and services, including land, education, and technology among many others. Social norms, poverty, and marginalization have led to gender roles and power dynamics, which impact not only on women's performance and visibility in the sector, but also on the

sector as a whole. Although women are significantly involved in agricultural activities, they have little control over their labour and time, are paid lower wages than men, and usually have domestic responsibilities which interfere with their work, meaning they can end up working more hours than men. As shown in table 12, regardless of who is responsible for an activity, men are ultimately in charge of decision-making.

WELL-BEING OF WOMEN

Recall that the questionnaire results showed that 53 per cent of the women were not satisfied on a professional level. This, along with the fact that the majority did not see any opportunities for improvement indicates that, at least professionally, women are aware of the challenges of their situation and are highly de-motivated. Furthermore, the majority of Palestinian and Syrian women perceived they face discrimination.

These results indicate a general lack of well-being. However, lack of well-being cannot be confidently and significantly attributed to GBCs, as the targeted communities suffer from poverty and marginalization. GBCs can be considered as reinforcing factors, impacting on the well-being of women, as they are marginalized within an already marginalized community.

GENDER-BASED CONSTRAINTS

ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

Women working in the potato and leafy greens value chains, or indeed in the agricultural sector in Akkar as a whole, face more challenges than men when it comes to accessing productive resources. The assessment revealed major discrepancies in access to productive resources, which indicate the following:

- **Access to Land.** Women generally do not own land in Akkar, with the exception of widows, who often inherit from their husbands. As land is one of the central factors of production in the agricultural sector, its ownership, control, and transfer play key roles when it comes to subsistence. Gender gaps in access to land exacerbate inequality and often perpetuate poverty, leaving women at a constant disadvantage. In addition, insecurity of land tenure leads to a reduction in the investments women are willing to make, undermining their productivity. A feeling of ownership and sustainability would increase the level of commitment and engagement in daily work. As revealed through the questionnaire, women are legally allowed to own and inherit land, meaning that cultural and social barriers mostly lead to these inequalities.
- **Access to inputs and outputs markets and infrastructure.** The majority of the surveyed women do not interact with input suppliers or sell their own produce. This suggests that women depend on male family members when it comes to purchasing seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, equipment, and machinery, as well as when marketing or selling their products. This significantly limits women's ability to produce, procure, process, preserve, or trade independently from men.
- **Access to training and information.** Women receive much less training than men, and their lack of interaction significantly limits their access to information. As per the assessment, only 18 per cent of women received training against 57 per cent of surveyed men. These constraints negatively impact women's ability to increase productivity, mitigate risks, respond to shocks, or adapt to changes. As a consequence, women tend to resort to second-hand information from their husbands or other male household members. Higher illiteracy rates also put women at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing information.

- **Access to financial services.** None of the Lebanese women reached through the questionnaire claimed to have access to financial services. However, this was not due to a lack of available loans, but rather to the lack of collateral and lack of social acceptance. This places women at a higher risk of resorting to alternative sources of funding, increasing the risk of perpetual debt. There is also a lack of business development support services, which are crucial when applying for loans.
- **Lower levels of education.** As evident from the assessment's results, women had lower levels of education. The differences in schooling between men and women can lead to differences in productivity. Furthermore, less educated individuals tend to occupy lower-skilled roles in value chains, meaning that female agricultural workers are often at a disadvantage as they can be perceived to be less capable of quality work. Lower education levels contribute to disempowering women and limiting them to non-managerial levels of the value chain, as their capacity to properly communicate with buyers and suppliers is limited and illiteracy is often a constraint, particularly when dealing with invoices and accounting records for sales activities.
- **Cultural and social factors and norms:** Several cultural and social factors and norms stand in the way of women's empowerment. For instance, women do not market their produce in part because it is not acceptable for women to go to the market and women do not generally interact with male input suppliers. These restrictions often hinder women's capacity to seize opportunities and expand their roles, limiting them to the production/processing levels of the value chain. Their constant involvement in household chores further limits their capacity to work.
- **Lack of recognition of unpaid labour:** Usually, women's labour, both agricultural and domestic, is considered part of their household duties, and therefore is not paid. This lack of recognition, even when they work the same amount of time as men, renders women's work as less valuable and less visible. As observed during the FGDs, men never referred to women as farmers and tended to perceive their work as part of their family duties.
- **Lack of cooperatives and associations:** The lack of women's cooperatives and associations puts women at a significant disadvantage. Working at the individual level often limits the potential for improving production/processing and accessing different marketing channels.
- **Lower wages:** As noted in the desk study and as confirmed by the questionnaires and KIIs, women are paid lower wages than men for the same work, with Palestinian and Syrian women paid even less than Lebanese. Several coping mechanisms, such as working longer hours, can lead to overload and exhaustion.

CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER-BASED CONSTRAINTS

The various GBCs impacting on women in the two value chains lead to a vicious cycle, through which poverty is perpetuated and inequity is constantly sustained. The following main points can be observed:

- Limited access for women results in high levels of dependency on men and particularly high risks and disadvantages for female-headed households. Women only work at the production/processing levels, meaning their contributions to the value chains and agriculture as a whole are highly restricted and limited.
- Women are not regarded as farmers, but as labourers (figure 35 and 36) regardless of whether they carry out the same activities as men or not. They undertake a significant portion of agricultural work, along with domestic chores, but they have little control over their labour. Limited control also leads to reduced incentives to work and, in turn, a decrease in production. This loss of potential to expand production leads to decreasing income and food security.

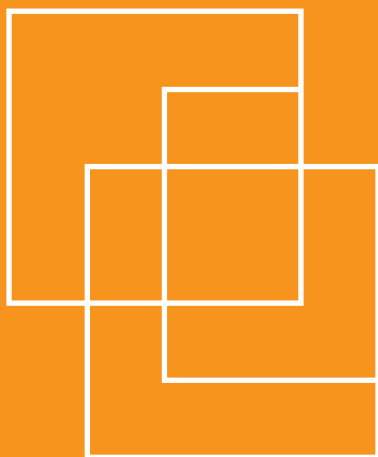
- Women have fewer opportunities due to several GBCs such as mobility restrictions and lower educational levels. This has a negative impact on production and limits women's economic empowerment.
- Lack of land ownership and the inability to rent do not allow women to access credit or undertake independent activities, further limiting their economic empowerment and independence.

Figure 35. Woman labourer at local nursery



Figure 36. Woman working in a leafy greens field





MAPPING OF OPPORTUNITIES

Several opportunities for value chain upgrading and women's empowerment were identified and are displayed in table 13.

Table 13. Opportunities for women

Value chain upgrading opportunities			
Opportunity	Justification	Incentives to change/ take action	Factors challenging/ impeding opportunity
Dried leafy greens (mainly mint, thyme, coriander, and mulukhiyah)	Leafy green vegetables often begin losing their quality immediately after harvest, and become easily damaged, losing their appearance and wilting. They are highly perishable, as well as seasonal, which decreases their marketing potential. Women in Akkar are already involved in the de-stemming, drying, packing, and labelling of leafy green vegetables, but this opportunity can be expanded in terms of both quantity and quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Gives an added value to produce. 2) Extends shelf-life and allows these varieties to be sold year-round. 3) Contributes to providing solutions for extra produce, which is often discarded. 4) Reduces bulkiness and weight of fresh product facilitating storage and transportation. 5) The techniques can be adapted to various capacities and situations, varying from low-cost sun drying to the use of driers controlling humidity and external contamination. 6) Potential marketing channels include local shops, restaurants, and hotels. 7) Can generate income for women without working at field level. 8) Suitable for both individuals and collectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Risk of mould and/or discolouring due to inadequate drying, as well as poor packaging and storage, which would reduce marketing potential. 2) Sun-drying can often lead to good results, but it also bears several risks, including poor quality yields due to exposure to dust, rain, wind, and insects. 3) More advanced drying equipment requires financial investment and adequate infrastructure. 4) Women generally do not interact with stakeholders in the value chain and do not usually market or sell their own products due to complex cultural and social factors. 5) Lack of a venue for processing. 6) Lack of women's groups/associations/cooperatives. 7) Mobility constraints.

Value chain upgrading opportunities

Opportunity	Justification	Incentives to change/ take action	Factors challenging/ impeding opportunity
Ready salad mixes, ready-made soups, and other ready-to-eat processed foods	Often, consumers prefer “convenience products”, as they are more practical and easy to use. This opportunity could begin with locally distributed salad mixes, ready-made soups, and other ready processed foods such as chard rolls, suitable to the region’s demand. If successful, these could expand to supermarkets and restaurants across Lebanon. Eventually, new varieties could be introduced and the production of suitable vegetables could be expanded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The leafy greens value chain in Akkar produces a wide range of diverse vegetables suitable for ready salad mixes. 2) This is a relatively low-cost opportunity for women. 3) Potential marketing channels include local shops, restaurants, and hotels. 4) Can generate income for women without working at field level. 5) Suitable for both individuals and collectives. 6) Potential to obtain label/certification and expand geographically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Risk of poor quality or inadequate appearance; inadequate packaging; and poor levels of hygiene. 2) Risk of limited marketing channels. 3) Women generally do not interact with stakeholders in the value chain and do not usually market or sell their own products due to complex cultural and social factors. 4) Lack of a venue for processing. 5) Lack of women’s groups/associations/cooperatives. 6) Lack of experience growing additional types of leafy green vegetables which would be suitable for this opportunity and could open channels to new markets.
Frozen leafy greens	In another attempt to increase shelf life and add value to an easily perishable product, the cutting up, freezing, and packaging of certain leafy green vegetables may be a viable option. As spinach is a very common crop in the Akkar region, it could serve for a pilot project for this opportunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Extends shelf-life and allows these varieties to be sold year-round. 2) Contributes to providing solutions for extra produce, which is often disposed of. 3) Experience among women agricultural workers in handling these types of crops. 4) Can generate income for women without working at field level. 5) Potential to obtain label/certification and expand geographically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Risk of poor quality products. 2) Lack of cold storage and the equipment required for freezing before distribution. 3) Relatively high-cost equipment and lack of financial sources. 4) Lack of women’s groups/associations/cooperatives. 5) Lack of experience/skills among women.

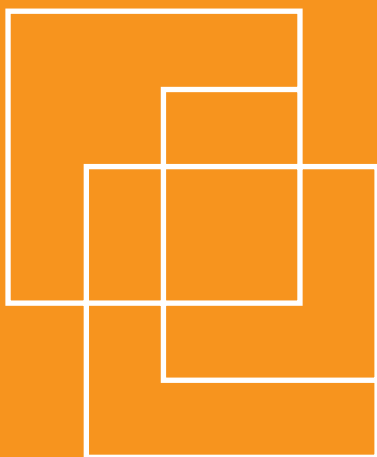
Value chain upgrading opportunities			
Opportunity	Justification	Incentives to change/ take action	Factors challenging/ impeding opportunity
Frozen potatoes	The demand for frozen French fries is rising on a regional and global scale. As women in the Akkar region are often involved in post-harvest activities, this opportunity could further add value to their produce and provide an alternative for surplus, especially considering that significant quantities of potatoes are disposed of.	1) Involvement of women in potato post-harvest activities. 2) Provides an alternative for unsold potatoes, which are usually disposed of. 3) Can generate income for women without working at field level. 4) Potential to expand into several markets and distribute to medium to large supermarkets and restaurants/joints.	1) Lack of a cold storage and the equipment required for freezing before distribution. 2) Relatively high-cost equipment and lack of financial sources. 3) Lack of women's groups/associations/cooperatives. 4) Lack of a market study to assess the relevance and potential of this opportunity.
Potato chips	Although potato chips production already exists in the Akkar region, there is potential for expansion. Through a community enterprise or a collective, this opportunity could link women to potato chips producers and/or to supermarkets and convenience stores. Moreover, there is potential for natural potato chips production, although a market demand and feasibility study would have to be conducted.	1) Provides an alternative for substandard potatoes which have lower marketing potential. 2) Option of using unwanted/substandard potatoes. 3) Women can be involved in both producing (through the introduction/expansion of appropriate varieties) and processing. 4) Potential to create a new brand through a community enterprise or a collective.	1) Lack of a processing venue and equipment. 2) Lack of financial sources to purchase equipment. 3) Lack of women's groups/associations/cooperatives. 4) Risk of low quality product which can only be sold locally and not on a national level. 5) Relatively high initial costs for branding/marketing.

Value chain upgrading opportunities			
Opportunity	Justification	Incentives to change/ take action	Factors challenging/ impeding opportunity
Improving post-harvest procedures for improved products	As women are already extensively involved in the post-harvesting of potatoes, capacity building and extension services could contribute to improving procedures and ultimately result in higher quality potatoes. All post-harvest procedures would be addressed, from handling to storage, and ultimately to packaging, transportation, and marketing. This would serve to expand marketing potential and increase income. Eventually, increased capacities could allow women to have supervisory roles in post-harvesting activities.	1) Women have the basic skills and knowledge to build upon. 2) Women are already significantly involved in this type of activities. 3) More efficient post-harvesting can reduce costs and result in more competitive products. 4) Can serve as an example to be replicated across Lebanon. 5) Would contribute to increased recognition of women's role among value chain stakeholders and their communities.	1) Risk of women not attending training due to several factors, including cultural and social norms and domestic duties. 2) Lack of responsiveness/motivation due to a general reluctance to improve and increase potato production among both women and men. 3) Lack of women's groups/associations/cooperatives. 4) Low education levels and high illiteracy levels among women, interfering with capacity-building activities and limiting extension services.
Upgrading through improved packaging and branding	Women's involvement in the potato value chain can be improved and expanded through enhanced packaging and branding. As observed, this type of activity is usually not undertaken by men. Ideally, this type of upgrading would be attained through the establishment of a cooperative.	1) Presence of the basic skills to be expanded through capacity building, including demonstrations. 2) Potential to expand to new markets and ultimately increase the possibility to exporting. 3) It is generally recognized that women are better suited for this kind of activity than men.	1) The medium/long-term added value of such activities could impact motivation levels to expand this opportunity. 2) Lack of financial resources.

Value chain upgrading opportunities			
Opportunity	Justification	Incentives to change/ take action	Factors challenging/ impeding opportunity
Collective production/processing	<p>Women cooperatives/associations have the ability to expand production and access new markets and expose women to the public sphere. Furthermore, collective work would allow them to influence decision-making and obtain better prices, as formal groups are generally more recognizable.</p> <p>Cooperative work can be further consolidated and strengthened through links with social enterprises that are focused on marketing products.</p>	<p>1) Empowers women to market/sell their products.</p> <p>2) Increases revenue through collective work and division of tasks.</p> <p>3) Selling under the name of a collective adds value to products, especially if a logo is created.</p> <p>4) Builds the leadership/management skills of women and empowers them in their community.</p> <p>5) Specialized NGOs can provide support with respect to forming and running collectives and create enabling mechanisms.</p> <p>6) Can expose women to different levels of the value chain and various stakeholders.</p> <p>7) Precedents of cooperatives in the region do exist, which could be learned from and built upon, even if related to different value chains.</p>	<p>1) Cultural/social barriers which might not allow women to participate and/or interact with stakeholders.</p> <p>2) The failure of several cooperatives in the region has given rise to negative perceptions regarding collective work among farmers. There are no successful precedents to build on or to use as an example in the leafy green vegetable and potato value chains.</p> <p>3) Lack of experience in management and lack of leadership skills.</p> <p>4) Lack of financial resources to sustain cooperative/association activities.</p>

Value chain upgrading opportunities			
Opportunity	Justification	Incentives to change/ take action	Factors challenging/ impeding opportunity
Establishment of working venues	The presence of safe, socially accepted venues for production/processing would allow women to improve the quality of their products and have access to centralized locations where they can share knowledge and expand their activities. These venues can be small scale at first and managed by local collectives/NGOs.	1) Provides the potential to produce quality products while abiding with hygiene standards. 2) Provides spaces where women can work away from both their homes and the fields and where they can feel a sense of ownership and safety.	1) Cultural/social barriers might not allow women to work away from their homes/fields. 2) Lack of financial resources to establish and maintain working venues.
Involving women in input supply	Several local nurseries employ a majority of women in their taskforce, and involve women in almost all activities. However, these nurseries are exclusively managed and owned by men. The establishment of a nursery run by women would involve women in input supplies and empower them within their communities.	1) Women have the basic skills and knowledge to build upon. 2) A nursery run by women would allow women to become involved in another value chain level and interact with more stakeholders. 3) This opportunity can be linked to the establishment of cooperatives/associations.	1) Lack of women's groups/associations/cooperatives. 2) Competition with existing nurseries. 3) Social and cultural barriers, as this type of activity might not be perceived as acceptable for women. 4) Need for an external party to support the establishment and medium/long-term management of the nursery. 5) Lack of women's involvement in the various value chain levels. 6) The need for gradual awareness raising and pilot projects prior to implementation.

Value chain upgrading opportunities			
Opportunity	Justification	Incentives to change/ take action	Factors challenging/ impeding opportunity
Empowering female-headed households	Households headed by women must be prioritized as they are usually more vulnerable, but also because, in the absence of men, women often take the lead in decision-making when it comes to work-related issues. Therefore, the opportunity of approaching these women must be explored. Initiatives can range from capacity building to the purchase of small equipment to expand/improve production.	<p>1) Potential to undertake activities which can then serve as examples to other community members, ultimately involving more women and gaining social acceptance.</p> <p>2) Potential to decrease the vulnerability of women heads of households.</p> <p>3) The absence of a dominant male in the household allows women to take more initiatives and decisions.</p>	<p>1) Even women-headed households are often under the responsibility of a male family member.</p> <p>2) Women heads of households are generally vulnerable and therefore the various protection concerns of such activities must be assessed carefully.</p> <p>3) The need for behavioural change, which can only be acquired through awareness raising.</p>



RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of this assessment and the recommendations made by ILO for the potato and leafy green vegetable value chains in the Akkar region, the authors make the following recommendations to empower women agricultural workers and expand their opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 1: ESTABLISH AND/OR STRENGTHEN COOPERATIVES/ ASSOCIATIONS

Collective work can support women to participate in community-level decision-making and planning, as it develops their leadership skills and gives them a sense of safety and belonging. However, this can only be achieved following intensive capacity building regarding the establishment and management of cooperatives/associations, as well as the functions and regulations of such formal collective work. However, these types of initiatives must consider the social barriers to women's participation and seek culturally acceptable means of overcoming them. Small pilot cooperatives/associations can be established, significantly supported by organizations and institutions (preferably local NGOs) to serve as examples. Ultimately, these formal collectives can become involved in the management of nurseries, storage spaces, and working venues. Furthermore, links can be established with social enterprises in charge of marketing the products.

It is important to note that men must not be excluded from such activities, in order to ensure acceptance but also to promote the concept of gender equity and collaboration among women and men.

RECOMMENDATION 2: PROMOTION AND SUPPORT OF PROCESSING

Given the advantages of processing vegetables and the suitability and appropriateness of this activity for women of all nationalities in the Akkar region, actions must be taken to support and promote its implementation and expansion. A market and feasibility study to identify potential channels, demand, packaging requirements, and more, will need to be conducted to determine marketable quantities and identify the varieties with most potential. However, given economic and social limitations and risks, as well as the constraints faced by women working in the agricultural sector in Akkar that do not allow them to interact with other stakeholders and access the market, the involvement of an external agency/organization would be highly recommended to launch and temporarily manage this activity.

As processing venues, especially for potatoes, are non-existent, this recommendation can be linked to the establishment of cooperatives/associations/groups, through which processing venues and, ideally, common kitchens could be established. Other beneficial interventions would provide storage facilities and informal working venues adjacent to farms. Moreover, such initiatives would have to be complemented by the provision of processing material and equipment, such as advanced drying and freezing equipment, as well as training on innovative techniques and the use of equipment. Further capacity building would incorporate management, branding, and marketing, as well as the financial aspects of business activities.

Importantly, such initiatives, if successful in forming women groups of various nationalities, can also contribute to peace building and social cohesion – essential to healthy societies and development.

RECOMMENDATION 3: TAILORED TRAINING AND EXTENSION PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Based on their needs and opportunities, training and extension programmes tailored for women are essential to improve and increase production and post-harvest outputs, enhance processing, and expand to new marketing channels. For instance, the potato value chain could benefit from capacity

building on production, management, post-harvest handling, entrepreneurship, decision-making, facilitation and leadership skills, markets for inputs and produce, among many others. Furthermore, they could be tailored to specific initiatives, such as the establishment of a nursery for leafy green vegetables and/or a common kitchen.

These programmes would have to be designed in culturally acceptable ways to provide appropriate knowledge and practical demonstrations. As noted in this report, programmes can be tailored to encourage women's participation. The venue can be selected so as to ensure that women attend, as well as alternative activities such as bringing advice to women's doorsteps through field schools and female volunteer farm advisors. Female extension agents and trainers can often be more suited to the needs and expectations of women and can be critical when building women's organizational and management skills, as well as their self-confidence. Independent female farmers can serve as role models when acting as extension agents, mobilizing women to take initiatives and become more empowered in their communities. As noted in table 13, female-headed households might provide a good entry point for such initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 4: IMPROVE ACCESS TO FINANCE

Access to finance was identified as a major challenge facing agricultural workers in Akkar, particularly women. As several of the opportunities presented in this report require significant financial resources, improving access to finance would be a key lever. One of the main barriers faced by small-scale farmers when attempting to obtain loans is the lack of sufficient information to take the proper decisions and maximize benefits. Therefore, facilitating access to finance entails primarily providing the necessary information in such a way as to ensure full understanding. Moreover, advisory services must be provided, as credit systems are often complex and include various options. Comprehensive interventions would also support beneficiaries throughout the process.

As the absence of collateral is a key constraint, facilitating access to finance must be carried out with caution so as to avoid creating debt that exacerbates vulnerability and poverty. Additionally, social and cultural barriers related to obtaining loans must be considered, especially when targeting women.

RECOMMENDATION 5: FURTHER RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENTS

Research and assessments on agriculture in Akkar, as well as gender-sensitive value chain analyses, including gender-specific components, would be extremely important for programme design and implementation, policy-making, and planning. Gender disaggregated data is lacking, which significantly limits the ability of NGOs and other actors to design relevant interventions. Furthermore, market studies are key to providing recommendations for the expansion of agricultural subsectors. A holistic approach should be adopted, taking in the malfunctioning of the agricultural sector as a whole and then specifically targeting particular value chains and women's involvement.

RECOMMENDATION 6: DESIGN AND DEVELOP PROJECTS WITH GENDER DIMENSIONS

Projects implemented in Akkar must take greater consideration of the gender dimension of agriculture. Local and international actors must integrate gender assessments and analysis before undertaking initiatives and include gender indicators in order to ensure proper and representative monitoring. Furthermore, increased flexibility in the design, planning, and implementation of initiatives would allow small-scale farmers, especially women, to become more involved and contribute to activities. The different roles and responsibilities of men and women must be regarded as key factors that influence project design and implementation, to ensure that activities are tailored to and address

the needs of both. However, although gender mainstreaming is crucial, it must go hand in hand with the development of women's empowerment projects based on field assessments and gender disaggregated data, which are currently lacking. In the long term, it is important to track changes in gender roles, labour divisions, and the overall gender-equity status of communities, which cannot be achieved without the use of specific indicators and the collaboration among both governmental and non-governmental actors. Beyond access to productive resources, women need to be able to use and control resources independently and equally to men. Only comprehensive projects can provide the necessary training tailored to women's needs. This should include: gender awareness among both women and men; linkages to markets and market information; production support amenities such as advisory services, processing venues, and storage facilities; and support to cooperatives/associations in order to increase visibility and decision-making.

Increasingly, manuals to incorporate gender in project design and implementation, as well as in value chain analyses, are becoming accessible. Several tools and methodologies have been adopted and evaluated in diverse contexts and settings. These can be used and adapted in order to improve interventions targeting the agricultural sector and, more specifically, women agricultural workers in Akkar.

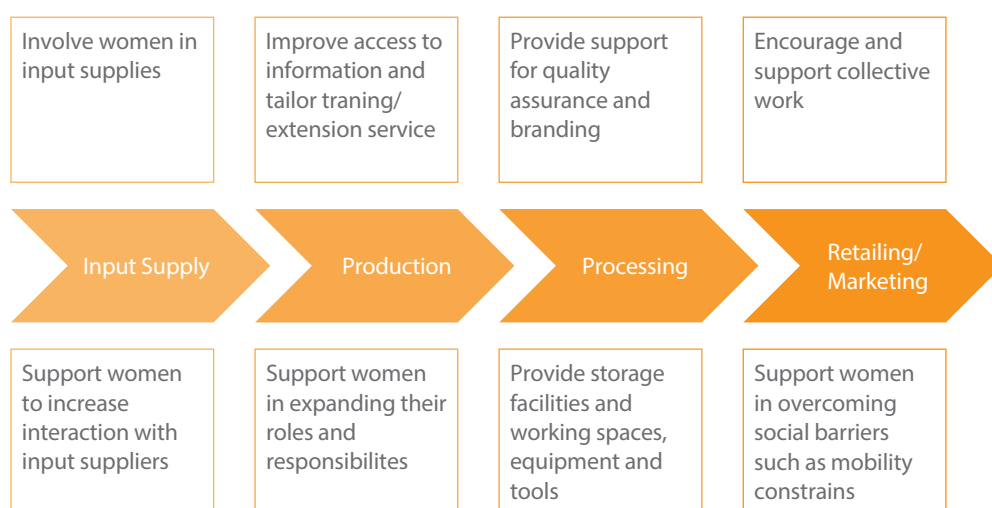
It is extremely important to note that inadequately designed and implemented projects often worsen situations instead of improving them. For this reason, interventions must be based on facts and on the actual needs of their beneficiaries. When the gender dimension is excluded from a project, it can lead to further inequity and disempowerment of women.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Marketing and feasibility studies are required before investing in opportunities, in order to identify the most appropriate marketing channels and most suitable products, and reduce the risk of failure.
- Targeting/including men by adopting a social-relational approach that places women in their wider social setting is crucial, even in interventions designed to empower individual women and/or groups. Excluding men from interventions often leads to less acceptance and can result in negative consequences, such as increased domestic abuse as women become empowered and assert themselves.
- Channels and approaches to conduct gender awareness must be explored and taken advantage of, as prevailing cultural and social norms dictating gender roles and creating GBCs cannot be overcome without changes in behaviour and, ideally, a paradigm shift. Both men and women must be reached through such activities.
- Advocacy to influence reform at the national level in terms of regulations and legislation to protect women of all nationalities is required in order to ensure long-term change and create an environment of safety and support.
- Dialogue between public, private, government, and non-governmental actors must be promoted and gender must be raised as a key issue with respect to agriculture in Akkar and in Lebanon as a whole. Dialogue platforms where women are represented can serve as an intermediate step in improving value chains and ensuring that development strategies take into consideration the gender dimension of the sector.

- Women must be empowered to interact with all stakeholders across the value chain, which can be achieved through several interventions, including the establishment of cooperatives/associations as well as their economic empowerment.
- Further analysis is required to reflect all stakeholders' roles and responsibilities when it comes to promoting and supporting women's empowerment in the agriculture sector. These stakeholders must be identified, including government actors; NGOs working in agriculture, women's empowerment, and women's rights; universities; and so on. Subsequently, their current and potential roles and levels of influence must be mapped out.
- Gender issues in Akkar must be approached through their wider perspective, in view of the external and internal factors and the coping mechanisms adopted by communities in the face of poverty, neglect, and marginalization. Poverty and gender inequity are mutually reinforcing, and neither can be eradicated separately from the other, but communities cannot be expected to develop, and gender equity cannot be prioritized, in the face of poverty and struggling for survival. Therefore, gender must never be separated from developmental work, which must address the roots, not the symptoms, of problems.
- Palestinian and Syrian women are more vulnerable than Lebanese, as their social status puts them at an even greater disadvantage. Syrian women in particular are currently in an extremely fragile situation, having fled a conflict zone and settled in the poorest areas of Lebanon. Particular attention must be given to tailor projects to their needs, in consideration of protection concerns.
- The MoA's commitment to empower women agricultural workers must materialize as a concrete strategy detailing planned and/or potential interventions. NGOs and other non-governmental actors need to be involved, as they can implement such interventions in the field.
- The following diagram summarizes the suggested areas of intervention that were identified through this assessment.

Figure 37. Summary of areas of interventions



KEY ENTRY POINTS AS PER THE MARKET SYSTEM APPROACH

Figure 38 displays the key entry points worth highlighting and the various supporting functions of the marketing system in order to diminish GBCs and to upgrade the leafy green vegetable and potato value chains in Akkar.

The diagram emphasizes that addressing women's economic empowerment (WEE) through the market system approach will provide greater access for women to resources, services and legal provisions, leading to more opportunities for economic advancement. On the other hand, WEE through the market system offers greater power to make economic decisions. This covers issues such as time use, physical mobility and decision-making ability. Economic decisions refer to decisions regarding the enterprise, as well as those affecting the household (e.g. how income is spent).

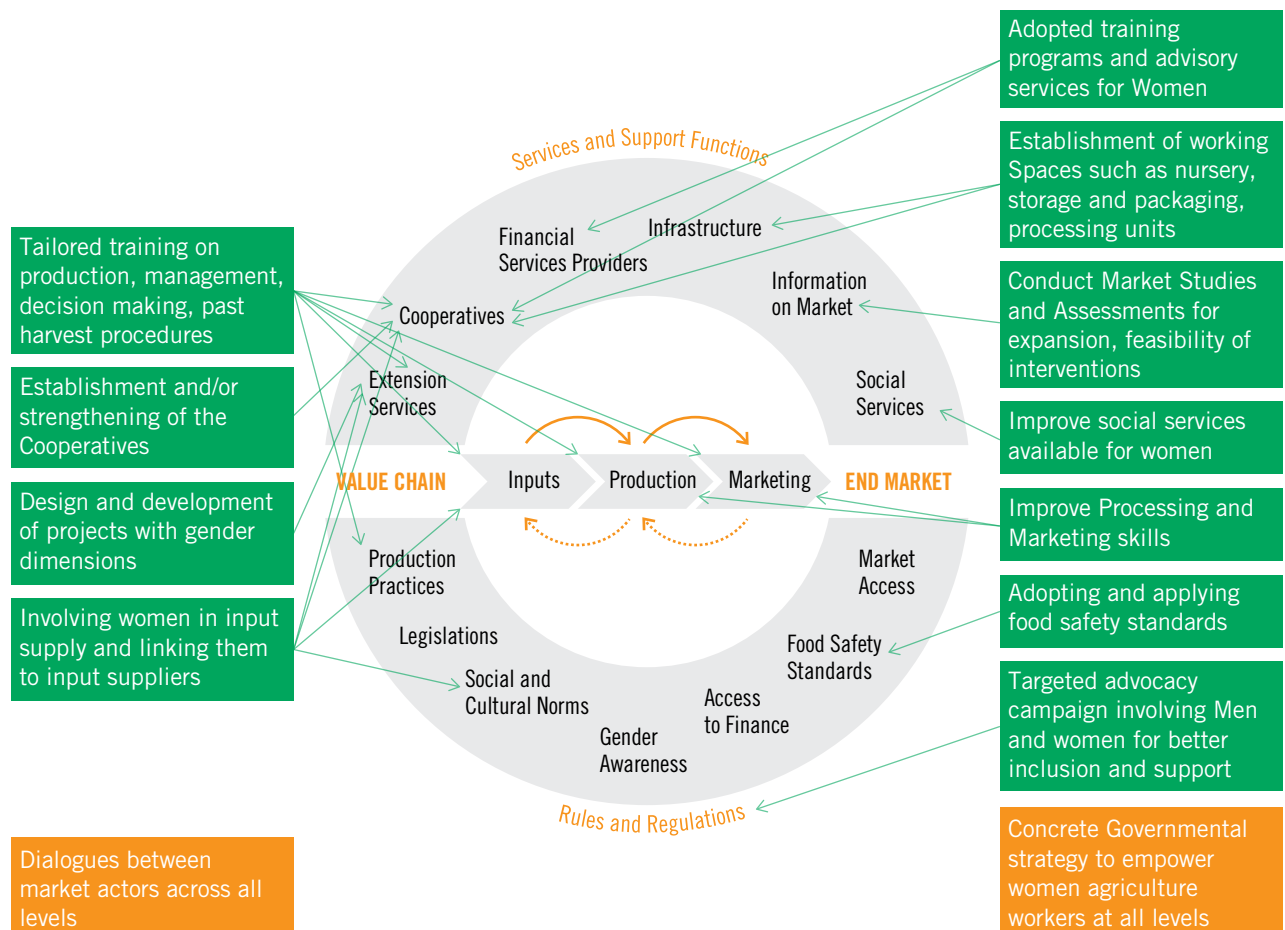
It cannot be assumed that equal access to economic and social opportunities exists. Interventions that contribute to women's economic empowerment include those that target men and women, as well as those that specifically target women. The goal is to equalize opportunities in the market system, not individual treatment by a project. Therefore, development agencies working to redress these economic and social aspects should have a better understanding of the systematic constraints that face women and men and have a better response in line with market system dynamics.

Integrating gender analysis into market system analyses is vital to mainstreaming WEE. This will eventually lead to systemic, sustainable change that affects many. Taking into account context factors, the analysis should consider rules and their implementation, such as legislation, or informal rules about what is culturally acceptable. This will enhance the potential for impact on larger numbers. Women's ability to make use of economic opportunities can be improved by considering interventions for constraints rooted in women's roles within the market system and beyond.

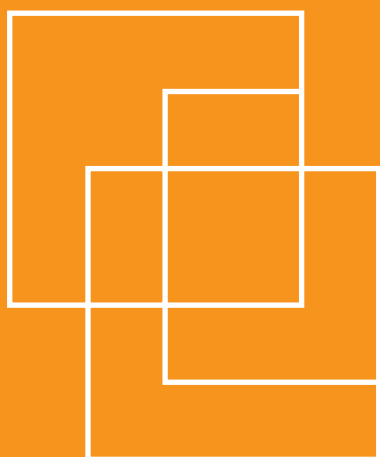
Greater involvement of key stakeholders brings in new perspectives and ideas. The process of making a choice whether for social or economic local development may be complex and challenging. Stakeholders have different interests, (political) power and positions, levels of knowledge and understandings of concepts. Constant dialogue should be in place to ensure consistency and complementarity of interventions and decisions to be made.

As with other market system interventions, it is important to make a business case for those that contribute to WEE. Market players may need to be given good incentives to employ or provide services to women, buy from women producers, or provide inputs to them. Women are often viewed as possessing desirable labour qualities and work ethics, and the fact that women are a large potential market underlies arguments of many of these incentives. If their skills or resources improve, women may contribute to improved productivity and product quality, which is another type of incentive.

Figure 38. Market system diagram for women's empowerment in potato and leafy green value chains

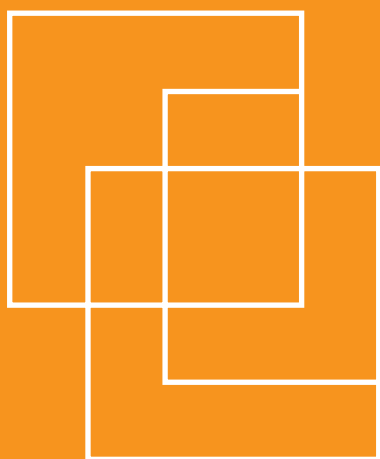


- Boxes in green represent the interventions relevant to each function, rules and regulations, and the core of the value chain
- Boxes in orange represent actions required at all levels of the market system and as an overall to support women's role in agriculture



CONCLUSION

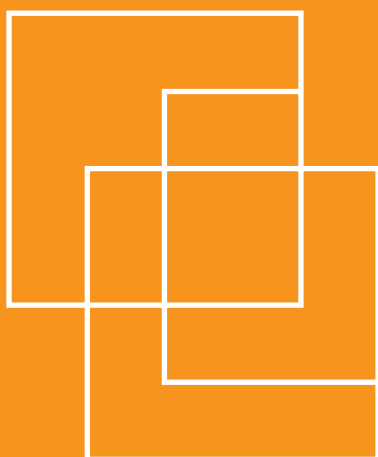
Narrowing the gender gap in the agricultural sector in Akkar will require the participation and commitment of a wide range of stakeholders, from the public and private sector to local and international organizations and donors. Gender issues must be approached and addressed in the wider social perspective – in this case characterized by poverty and marginalization. Furthermore, value chains and markets cannot be viewed as neutral spaces, but as structures shaped by power dynamics and inequalities. Only through a holistic perspective can interventions lead to real, long-term, incremental change rather than minor improvements. In order for the identified opportunities to be viable and beneficial, all community members must become aware of the importance of women's empowerment and, ultimately, of gender equity. Change is a long, ongoing process, and it starts with identifying causes and barriers, as well as the circumstances limiting access to opportunities. Individualistic, production-oriented approaches to development must be left behind to make space for relational interventions oriented towards well-being, in view of social dynamics, including gender, and of the wider political and economic factors that influence communities.



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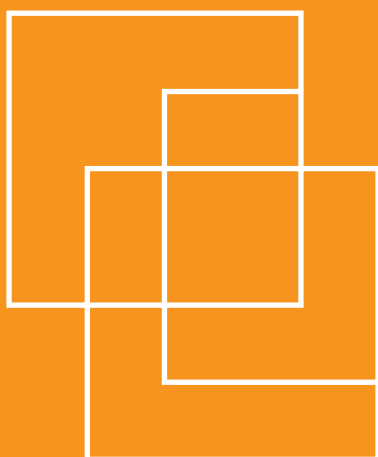
APPENDIX 2: MADA ASOCIATION & THE TEAM

A research team composed of two Field Researchers and a Rural Development Expert, supported by Mada Association's Executive Coordinator and Agriculture Team, conducted the assessment 'Mapping Potential Opportunities for Women Empowerment in the Potatoes and Leafy Green Vegetables Value Chains in Akkar, North Lebanon' as follow-on of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Value Chain Analysis of Potatoes and Leafy Green Vegetables in Akkar. The team members complemented each other in terms of experience and knowledge, and included both males and females for practicality purposes.

Mada Association is a non-partisan, non-sectarian Lebanese Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) which aims at reinforcing the relationship between local communities and their natural environment for the satisfaction of their needs. Over the past years, Mada Association has developed a "territorial approach", with a long-term focus on the Akkar, Hermel, and Donnieh regions of North Lebanon. Working across several fields, from agriculture to education and with a constant emphasis on women empowerment, Mada Association is acting as a local development agency in close cooperation with municipalities and local communities.

Mada Association's knowledge and experience of the Akkar region spans more than 15 years and a relationship of trust has been developed with local communities. In the framework of this assessment, Mada Association provided the research team with the required support and background information to facilitate access and ensure the success of this initiative.

Recently, Mada Association has undertaken several agricultural initiatives, including the European Union-funded project 'Improved Livelihoods for Small-Scale Farmers in Akkar, North Lebanon', which provided 200 farmers with training sessions on sustainable agriculture and 100 farmers with drip irrigation systems. Agriculture is now one of Mada Association's three sectors of focus, which also include Environmental Protection and Education.



APPENDIX 3: METHODOLOGY

Several quantitative and qualitative tools were applied under the assessment ‘Mapping Potential Opportunities for Women Empowerment in the Potatoes and Leafy Green Vegetables Value Chains in Akkar, North Lebanon’ as follow-on of the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) Value Chain Analysis of Potatoes and Leafy Green Vegetables in Akkar.

The methodology consisted of three main phases: (1) Data Collection, (2) Analysis, and (3) Mapping of Opportunities and Development of Recommendations. Throughout the assessment, the team adopted a participatory approach, involving the target groups and taking their opinions, values, and ideas into consideration. The reasoning behind the methodology was based on the findings of the value chain analysis conducted by the ILO and its partners. It looked at women’s role across the two value chains both horizontally (cooperation, links, and dynamics between individuals and groups on the same levels of the value chain) and vertically (cooperation, links, and dynamics between individual and groups in different value chain positions) and mapped opportunities.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary and secondary data collection was conducted through a desk study, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), questionnaires, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Mainly, the review of secondary data aimed at gathering information about the gender dimension of agriculture, as a topic gaining increasing recognition and importance. Moreover, secondary data collection looked at case studies of women empowerment in the agriculture sector around the world and in Lebanon in particular.

The collection of primary data was challenging, considering cultural and social barriers. However, Mada Association’s field teams and contacts, as well as its long-term presence in the region, facilitated the access to local communities. Prior to collecting primary data, a Stakeholder Analysis was conducted to identify individuals and groups both affected and affecting the value chains.

Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Qualitative data was gathered both through direct interaction with individuals on a one to one basis through KIIs and through FGDs. Moreover, observation was undertaken throughout the assessment to gain a better understanding of the physical environment, agricultural practices, attitudes, perceptions, and stereotypes. On the other hand, quantitative data was mostly gathered through questionnaires.

Data collection aimed at determining:

- The distribution of work by answering the question ‘Who does what?’
- The management of income by answering the question ‘Who controls what?’
- The balance of property ownership by answering the question ‘Who owns what?’
- Access to productive resources by answering the question ‘Who has access to what?’

DESK STUDY

The desk study consisted of collecting secondary data from the following categories:

- Background Literature on the gender dimension of agriculture; literature related to women empowerment and gender equality; relevant studies and/or projects conducted in Lebanon about the role of women in agriculture; and case studies from around the world about women empowerment in agriculture and the enhancement of their participation in value chains.
- Value Chain Manuals with components about women's role and women empowerment.
- Evaluations/Impact Assessments related to the incorporation of gender in value chain analyses.

QUESTIONNAIRES

A total of 59 questionnaires were conducted on field. The sampled individuals were selected based on the Stakeholder Analysis conducted in collaboration with Mada Association's Agriculture Team, as well as through local connections with authorities and communities and the snowball method. Visits were conducted to nurseries, agricultural fields, greenhouses, farms, and associations/cooperatives in order to obtain a representative sample. Moreover, agricultural workers employed by major famers and nurseries, as well as self-employed farmers and agricultural households were targeted. Additionally, the majority of the targeted individuals were Lebanese, as they represent the largest group.

The data collected was not only driven by the research questions but also by the context. The questionnaire was adapted to the specific socio-economic dynamics of the Akkar region. The resulting questions were culturally sensitive and relevant to the Akkar social realities. Furthermore, local gender relations guided the settings for undertaking the questionnaires. Women were targeted separately from men when it was observed that the men's presence would impact their answers. Furthermore, in order to increase the level of trust and comfort, women were mainly targeted by a woman interviewer.

Basic information was collected on the demographic and socio-economic situation of questionnaire respondents, while more focused and specific questions aimed at identifying challenges and uncovering opportunities. Both quantitative and qualitative information was gathered through both multiple choice and open ended questions.

Mainly the questionnaire aimed at determining:

- What men and women do on a daily basis?
- Gendered use of time, based on value systems.
- Benefits, level of knowledge and awareness of activities and their impacts.
- Who has access to resources and services, and who controls these assets, and makes the decisions on their use.
- The structural factors shaping activity, access, and control patterns (demographic, economic, etc.).
- Obstacles and opportunities.
- The target group's understanding of empowerment and gender equity.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Five KIIs were conducted under this assessment, forming the basis of data collection and providing formal, non-standardized (each respondent was asked different questions; the topics discussed differed between respondents) and semi-structured (they allow a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information while allowing respondents and interviewers the flexibility to pursue topics of interest) information.

The questions were open-ended in order to obtain as much information as possible. They were adapted based on the informants, but mainly focused on the role of women in agriculture, the challenges and constraints hindering their recognition and participation, and potential opportunities. Although open-ended, questions were specific, with a maximum of five main questions per interview, expanded with a list of secondary questions. The first questions were factual, in order to ensure a response and create trust. Questions which required opinions and judgments came second, once trust was established. Finally, questions that can be answered by simple yes and no were avoided, as deeper meanings and thorough explanations were required.

By the end of each interview, a KII Summary Sheet was filled in order to facilitate upcoming analysis.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Two FGDs were conducted on February 18 and 25, 2017 with 5 and 15 participants respectively. FGDs can be effective and efficient ways of gathering qualitative, descriptive data and shed light on experiences, relationships, and perceptions which are not reflected through a questionnaire. For instance, during the FGDs, the team can make sure to observe the participants and to take note of gender values, attitudes, and stereotypes, all crucial to shaping gender relations. These types of perceptions and attitudes can only be observed through this qualitative tool. The research team facilitated the discussion, took notes, and observed the dialogue.

Two main exercises were conducted:

- **Problem Tree Analysis:** participants were asked to (1) identify a problem related to women's roles in the relevant value chains; (2) list the root causes of the problems; and finally (3) identify the impacts and effects of the problem. This exercise is highly visual and facilitates discussion, while revealing causes and effects which might have not been previously recognized.
- **SWOT Analysis:** participants were asked to reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats when it comes to women's roles in the relevant value chains.

Following the FGD, the team conducted a debriefing session (FAO 2015) in order to highlight the principal findings of the day, review stories and information, and identify trends.

ANALYSIS

Data analysis involved organizing, categorizing, and investigating the information gathered. The results of the primary data collection were examined following data entry and analysis of the questionnaires. Trends and exceptions were highlighted and visual tools were developed through Microsoft Excel to emphasize them. These were backed and enriched with the data collected through the FGDs and KIIs.

The various tools used throughout the assessment allowed for cross-referencing and validation of results, as well as for the confirmation of findings and patterns. In this context, the results of the questionnaire were cross-checked with the statements and perceptions noted during the KIIs and FGDs. Moreover, the observations of the team were also considered.

The analysis aimed to:

- Map gender roles and responsibilities along the value chains and determine the benefits derived from participation.
- Determine GBCs and identify how these restrict women's access to resources and/or opportunities.
- Examine the consequences of GBCs.
- Identify entry points that can be taken to overcome GBCs and areas of opportunities for women.

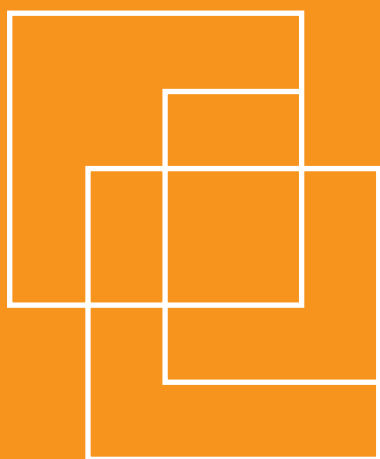
A Gender Analysis was conducted by examining two main dimensions, based mostly on the questionnaires and FGDs findings: (1) gender division of labor and (2) access, control, and ownership of resources, assets and services and decision-making power based on gender differences. Well-being and women's ability to make choices and take decisions was also addressed, although to a lesser extent, as it provided key information about constraints and opportunities. However, although this analysis provides substantial information on challenges and opportunities, it was also backed by research and studies conducted on the international level. Therefore, the secondary data collected through the desk study was used to further analyze findings and in turn proceed to the next step, which was the development of recommendations.

MAPPING OF OPPORTUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Opportunities were mapped by the team through two brainstorming sessions. The various opinions and ideas expressed by the stakeholders were considered and checked for feasibility, impact, efficiency, effectiveness, and gender sensitivity. Furthermore, case studies gathered through the desk study were used in order to determine further opportunities and adapt them to the target groups and their economic, social, and cultural realities. This exercise consisted of mapping opportunities based on the target group's perceptions and opinions, the team's observations, the reviewed case studies, and FGD/KII findings.

Based on the results of the analysis and the opportunities identified, a set of recommendations were developed, based on the reviewed national and international case studies and literature, as well as the primary data collected. Mainly, they focus on how to increase the visibility, participation, decision making capacities, and recognition of women across the value chains. These recommendations were developed in light of cultural and social realities, as well as the several socio-economic constraints of the region. Finally, the recommendations were made in view of the Value Chain Development (VCD) priority interventions for the potato and leafy greens vegetable sectors in Akkar identified by ILO.

Case studies and success stories and the concepts of Upgrading and Chain Empowerment were used as the basis for these recommendations. Upgrading refers to 'improvements that chain actors can make to receive better financial returns from their products', while Chain Empowerment occurs when 'participants add value to their products, and also increase their control over income and the processes involved in value creation (ActionAid 2014).



APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE

Name of Interviewer:

Date of Interview:

Location:

Interview Number:

I. INTERVIEWEE PROFILE

1. Name (optional):

2. Age:

3. Nationality:

4. Residence:

5. Gender:

6. Marital Status:

7. Education Level:

8. Number of Households Dependents:

9. Number of Children:

10. Number of Schooled Children:

11. Disabilities (if any):

II. GENERAL

1. How many years have you been working in the agriculture sector?

.....
.....

2. How many members in your household are involved in agricultural activities (by age, relation, and gender)?

.....
.....

3. Are any of your household members involved in agriculture not directly remunerated for their work? If yes, who and why?

.....
.....

III. LABOR AND TIME USE

1. Do you work in the potatoes or leafy greens sectors? Or both?
2. What activities do you undertake at the farm level? (Seeding, weeding, harvesting, etc.)
.....
3. How many hours do you work per day?
 - Less than 5
 - Between 5 and 10
 - More than 10
4. Does anyone supervise your work at the farm level? (Yes/No)
If yes, whom?
.....
.....
5. Do you engage in any other activities on a daily basis? (Yes/No).....
If yes, please specify.
 - Domestic
 - Leisure
 - Socio-economic
 - Public Service
 - Other (please specify)
6. Do you interact with stakeholders in the sector?
 - Input suppliers (Yes/No).....
 - Middlemen/Traders (Yes/No).....
 - Consumers (Yes/No).....
 - Cooperative/Association Representatives (Yes/No).....
 - Others (Please specify).....
7. Are you a member of any labor network? (Yes/No).....
 - Cooperative
 - Association
 - Informal Group
 - Other (please specify).....

8. Do you feel there are skills and knowledge that you have that could be explored and are not being applied in your daily work? Please specify.
.....
.....
9. How do you think your daily work could improve (time management, efficiency, impact, etc.)? Please specify.
.....
.....
10. Are there currently any opportunities that you do not have access to that would improve your work? If yes, what are they?
.....
.....

IV. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

1. What is your daily/monthly income from agriculture?
2. Are you self-employed or do you work for a salary/wage?
 - Self employed
 - Salary/Wage
3. If you work for a wage, what is the method of payment?
 - Cash
 - Agricultural Produce
 - Exchange for Accommodation
 - Other (please specify).....
4. If you were offered more work at the same daily rate, would you accept? (Yes/No).....
5. Did your salary/income increase through the years with experience? (Yes/No) If yes, on what basis and how?
.....
.....
6. If you are self-employed, what is your monthly average income?.....

7. Is agriculture your main source of income? (Yes/No).....
If yes, what is the share of this income?
- Less than 50%
 - Between 50-75%
 - More than 75%
 - 100%

If yes, how do you cover the rest if it is not sufficient?

- Loans
- Family Members
- External Assistance/Aid
- Other (please specify).....

8. Do you receive any governmental or nongovernmental financial support? (Yes/No) If yes, on what basis? How much does it contribute to monthly expenditures (in percentage)?
-
-

9. Who is the decision maker in terms of expenditures and other financial issues in your household?

Household Member	Myself	Spouse	Father	Mother	Siblings	Others (Please Specify)
Food						
School						
Work related						
Health						
Clothes						
House utilities						
Housing						
Others						
Comments if relative						

10. Do you manage your own income? (Yes/No) If not, who does?.....

V. ACCESS AND CONTROL TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

1. Which category do you belong to?

- Owner
- Share Cropper
- Renter
- Worker
- Other (please specify)

2. Can you own or inherit land? (Yes/No).....

3. Can you decide to sell the land you own, if any? (Yes/No).....

4. Do you decide how to use the land you own, if any? (Yes/No).....

5. Do you have easy access to irrigation sources and water harvesting? (Yes/No).....

6. Do you have access to agricultural inputs? (Yes/No).....

7. Do you have access to tools, machinery, and equipment? (Yes/No).....

8. Do you have access to agricultural technologies? (Yes/No).....

9. Do you have access to financial resources?.....

10. Do you feel you have access to information on agricultural practices/techniques? (Yes/No).....

11. Do you drive? (Yes/No).....

12. Do you have a phone? (Yes/No) If yes, what do you mainly use it for?.....

13. Do you have internet access? (Yes/No).....

14. Are you satisfied with the agricultural skills and knowledge you have? (Yes/No).....

15. Do you believe the skills and knowledge you have are sufficient and used efficiently? (Yes/No).....

16. Have you ever received any trainings/capacity building on agricultural practices/techniques relevant to your work? (Yes/No) If yes, by whom? If not, what kind of trainings/capacity building would you like to take part in?

VI. PROCESSING AND TRADING

1. Do you have experience in trading? (Yes/No).....
 - Potatoes
 - Leafy greens
 - Handcrafts
 - Processed Foods
 - Other
2. Did you ever market your own products? (Yes/No).....
 - Directly to the wholesale
 - Directly to retail
 - Both wholesale and retail
 - Other (Please Specify)
3. Are you familiar with the wholesale market? (Yes/No).....
4. Do you have a storage area or use a storage facility? (Yes/No).....
5. Do you think there are other options for the produce to increase revenue?
 - Other marketing channels
 - Packaging according to local market
 - Processing
 - Other (please specify).....

VII. STARTING A NEW BUSINESS

1. Are you motivated in engaging in agriculture or processing as a personal business? (Yes/No)
.....
2. What challenges are keeping you from starting the business before?
 - Land Access
 - Availability of Capital
 - Social Status
 - Domestic Engagements
 - Discrimination (please specify)

- Other (please specify).....

3. What are the challenges do you believe you would face in your own business?

4. Are you willing to face these challenges and take risks? (Yes/No).....

VIII. WELL-BEING, SELF-ESTEEM, DIGNITY

1. What are the barriers and challenges that you face and impact you on the professional level?

- Internal (family issues and pressures/children/domestic responsibilities/taking care of the elderly)

- External (social pressures from the community/racism/sexual discrimination/low salaries/long working hours and hard physical work)

- Personal (lack of skills and knowledge/traditions/beliefs/lack of interest in profession)

2. Do you feel that you are treated differently because of your gender in terms of:

- Workload (Yes/No).....
- Types of Tasks (Yes/No).....
- Working Hours (Yes/No).....
- Wages (Yes/No).....

3. Are you satisfied on the professional level? (Very/Fairly/Not at all).....

4. What are the main risks and shocks that you confront?

- Do they affect all households equally? (Yes/No).....
- Do they impact men and women differently? (Yes/No).....

IX. EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUITY

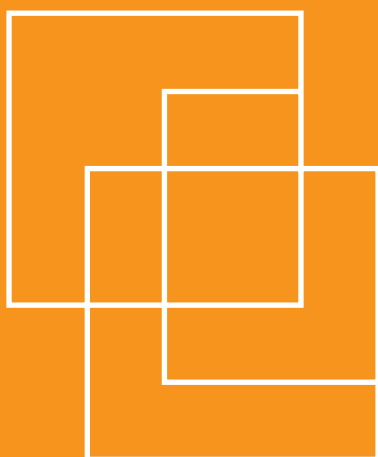
1. Are you familiar with the concept of gender equity? (Yes/No).....

2. Do you believe there is gender equity in your community? (Yes/No).....

3. Do you believe gender equity is important? (Yes/No).....

4. Do you believe women and men have different roles in the agricultural sector? (Yes/No)

5. Do you believe people are discriminated against based on their genders in the agricultural sector? (Yes/No).....
6. Do you think that there are some agricultural activities which women should not take part in? (Yes/No).....
7. Are there any agricultural activities women should be more involved in? (Yes/No).....
8. Is women's contribution to agriculture valuable? (Yes/No).....
9. Do you think women's contributions to agriculture are fairly recognized and visible? (Yes/No).....
10. Do you think it is appropriate for women to earn and manage household money? (Yes/No).....
11. Do you think women are underpaid for their work in agriculture? (Yes/No).....
12. Do you think it is appropriate for women to participate in trainings? (Yes/No).....
13. Do you think it is appropriate for women to make economic decisions in the household (e.g. selling crops, livestock or land, purchasing tools, asking for a loan)? (Yes/No).....
14. Do you think it is appropriate for women to work outside the house? (Yes/No).....
15. What main barriers prevent women from engaging in agricultural activities?
.....
.....
16. What do you think are some measure that could be taken to empower women in agricultural activities?
.....
.....



APPENDIX 5: CASE STUDIES

The following Case Studies reflect worldwide efforts to empower women agricultural workers/farmers and promote gender equity across agricultural value chains.

Kenya: Gender Mainstreaming in Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project (SHEP): A technical cooperation project titled the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Project (SHEP) was implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture, the Horticultural Crops Development Authority and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) from 2006 to 2009 in Kenya. The project sought to empower women farmers by working on already established farmer groups. Although some of these groups were successful, others had limited goals and remained largely focused on production alone, which hindered their market potential. Following a gender disaggregated study, SHEP concluded that women undertook approximately 80 per cent of the labor on food crops and 50–60 per cent of the labor on commercial crops, without fairly benefiting from this input. Several activities were therefore planned in order to integrate gender mainstreaming throughout the project, including:

- Setting gender and group empowerment indicators to reflect the qualitative and quantitative aspects of empowerment with disaggregated data.
- Linking women farmers to other stakeholders throughout the Value Chain.
- Training sessions targeting both women and men, covering a range of technical topics, including market surveys and crop selection, all in the framework of gender awareness raising. Gender awareness focused on the household as a ‘joint management unit’ in which men and women share roles and responsibilities.
- Demonstrations of several processing technologies and procedures through extension services, in order to build the skills required to upgrade products.

As a result of these activities, income doubled and workload became more gender balanced. These improvements were mainly attributed by both women and men themselves to the gender awareness sessions.

For more information about the SHEP project please go to:

https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/thematic_issues/agricultural/shep.html

NETHERLANDS DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (SNV) INITIATIVES

Sunflowers in Uganda: Sunflower production is a main source of income for small-scale farmers in the Bukedea district of Uganda. SNV supported a local farmer cooperative to redesign its extension services while addressing the different contributions and roles of men and women farmers. The cooperative’s chairperson being a woman was key to ensuring that GBCs were taken into consideration. Several modifications to extension services were made, including decentralizing training centers and shifting to community-based venues in order to encourage women to attend. By building the capacities of women and constantly striving to attain 60 per cent female participation in extension activities, SNV was able to empower women to become role models for other farmers.

Shea Nuts in Burkina Faso: In Burkina Faso, women play an important role in collecting shea nuts and processing them into shea butter. In order to provide a venue for processing, six collective production/processing centers were established by the Nunuma Federation. However, high production costs, poor management, and unreliable supplies were major constraints to meeting demand and ensure continuous quality. In 2009, with the support of SNV, the Nunuma Federation launched a strategic assessment and concluded that creating a single semi-industrial processing unit was a much more efficient and productive business model. With funding from the Agridius Foundation, a factory was

established, resulting in doubled production capacity and reduced costs. This significantly improved the women's income while also giving them the opportunity to become shareholders of the enterprise.

For more information about SNV initiatives please go to:

<http://www.snv.org/>

Housewives' Group in the Potato Chip Market in Thailand: Potato demand in Thailand has significantly increased due to the popularity of potato chips and tourism. Potatoes are mainly supplied to hotels, restaurants and supermarkets, or processed into potato chips, an activity which has expanded over the past ten years due to the rapidly increasing demand. All processing potatoes of acceptable quality are made into potato chips by two large firms, to be then distributed to middle/high level markets, making it extremely challenging for small farmers to play a role in this supply chain. However, a small group of housewives in the San Sai district of Chiang Mai has managed to find a way to participate in the production of potato chips and in turn, generate alternative income from substandard/unwanted/defective potatoes. This initiative served to highlight the role of women in potato production and processing. With governmental support, the group now represents a business model for community enterprise, with strong business management and product development.

For more information about this initiative please go to:

<http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G03266.pdf>

TechnoServe East Africa Coffee Initiative: The TechnoServe East Africa Coffee Initiative targets both male and female producers. However, having noted that women's attendance to trainings/extension services was low, the team made several efforts to ensure their participation. These efforts include emphasizing the importance of women's attendance at the community level through decision makers and leaders; household visits by the trainers themselves to encourage men to allow their wives to attend; and by making the trainings more comfortable for the women by providing childcare, scheduling them at convenient times, and allowing the women to sit separately and work in female-only small groups. Furthermore, from adapting the training material to organizing the trainings in safe, relatively close locations to the women, the team made several small, simple adjustments and women participation rates increased from 6 per cent to 42 per cent by the end of the initiative.

For more information about TechnoServe initiatives please go to:

<http://www.technoserve.org/>

The Kenya Maize Development Program II: Maize is the primary staple food crop in Kenya, with smallholder farming in rural Kenya revolving around it. However, maize is very vulnerable to fluctuating prices and production and post-harvest challenges. Therefore, from December 2010 to September 2012, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Kenya Maize Development Program II (KMDP) was implemented as follow-on of a previous program of the same name. In view of the fact that women and youth make up 80 per cent of labor in the maize sector, and recognizing gender disparities, activities which increased benefits to women were prioritized. A gender analysis was conducted and several efforts were made to involve women, including (1) functional business literacy training courses focused on leadership, attitude change, and decision making at the household level; (2) adapted training programs with comfortable schedules; and (3) the creation of a networks of extension agents working with both women cooperatives and individual women at the household level.

For more information about this program please go to:

http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacy454.pdf

Stimulating Markets and Rural Transformation (SMART) Program - Lebanon: Funded by USAID and in collaboration with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the SMART Program was implemented from 2002 to 2005, in collaboration with the YMCA of USA, ultimately benefiting 2,500 women and 36 rural and underdeveloped communities in Lebanon. Activities included generating opportunities for rural women through the establishment of food processing centers and production farms. Following intensive training programs, the women were able to run and manage the cooperatives. Supported in sales and marketing processes, the women identified opportunities in their villages and establish customer bases. One activity undertaken by certain cooperatives was the launching of catering services.

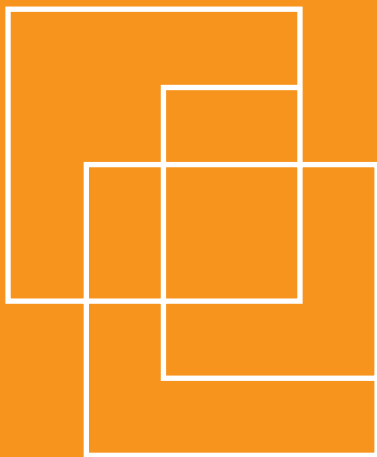
For more information about this program please go to:

<http://www.ymca-leb.org.lb/empowerment.htm>

Ongoing Dairy Production and Processing Activities by FAO in Lebanon: FAO in Lebanon implements several interventions in order to support dairy production and processing, with constant focus on women. The project "Enhance the Livelihood and Food Security of Vulnerable Lebanese Women through Improving their Dairy Production Practices and Supporting their Dairy Processing Activities" implemented by FAO and funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) aims at supporting small-scale farmers in poor rural areas hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees and targets 400 vulnerable beneficiaries, of whom half are women dairy processors. The project activities include training women on dairy processing techniques and hygienic and disinfection practices, focusing on safety and quality to improve profitability. Other interventions target women-headed households and cooperatives, supporting them with the provision of processing units and accessories to improve quality.

For more information about FAO activities in Lebanon please go to:

<http://www.fao.org/lebanon/en/>



APPENDIX 6: KEY INFORMATION INTERVIEWS SUMMARY SHEETS

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW (KII) #1

- Date of KII: Jan 17, 2017
- Name of Informant: Youssef Molass
- Title/Position of Informant: Nursery Owner
- Reason for Inclusion in the KIIs: Owner of a nursery providing leafy greens inputs.

Main Observations/Key Statements Made by Informant:

- The nursery employs both women and men at the same daily rate.
- Currently, the agriculture sector in general is witnessing significant slump in produce, mainly because of Syrian products being smuggled into Lebanon and especially through Akkar.
- A significant portion of farmers in Akkar are indebted to middlemen, with some debts reaching up to 40,000,000 LBP.
- The roles of women in Akkar are predominantly domestic (taking care of the house, raising children, cooking, etc.). Women are therefore mainly housewives.
- Some women in Akkar own land (inherited from relatives and husbands) although they do not cultivate it themselves but rather rent it out or partner with male farmers to cultivate it.
- He sees opportunities for women in processing and believes acting as a group will reduce the prices of inputs, in turn reducing production costs. Moreover, acting collectively would give women more influence at the market level.

Interviewer Assessment/Perceptions of the Informant (2-3 lines maximum):

The interviewee showed high levels of motivation for his work.

Any Relevant Insights/Ideas which Emerged during the KII:

The interviewee regarded the agricultural sector as facing immense burdens, with most farmers being in debt to middlemen and input suppliers.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW #2

- Date of KII: Jan 17, 2017
- Name of informant: Sarkis Bou Daher
- Title/Position of Informant: Cooperative Manager
- Reason for Inclusion in the KIIs: The Cooperative is working on both potatoes and leafy greens and has 11 members and 30 farmer beneficiaries.

Main Observations/Key Statements Made by Informant:

- Farmers are the weakest actors in the agriculture value chain, often being indebted to middlemen through a vicious cycle and constantly having to compete with cheaper imports.
- There is potential for improvement through collective action and cooperatives, although several cultural and societal factors limit the success of such initiatives. Presently, existing cooperatives are often not functional or dysfunctional.
- Women working in the agriculture in Akkar are predominantly Syrian. Often, due to cultural and societal factors, Lebanese women do not engage in agricultural activities.
- Women can play a key role in processing, as they have the required skills and knowledge, given that most process raw material for domestic consumption. A common kitchen would be an important initiative which would provide the space and equipment required for proper processing. The establishment of a cooperative to manage such a space would be extremely valuable, with the ultimate objective to respecting global food standards and obtaining a certification. Processing might include from frozen potatoes for restaurants and hotels and fresh cuts of leafy greens (example: pre-chopped parsley).

Interviewer Assessment/Perceptions of the Informant (2-3 lines maximum):

The interviewee was actively engaging in the discussion and showed motivation in regards to developing the agricultural sector in Akkar.

Any Relevant Insights/Ideas which Emerged during the KII:

The Cooperative has one female member who is an agricultural engineer.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW #3

- Date of KII: Jan 17, 2017
- Name of informant: Omar Awad
- Title/Position of Informant: Leafy Greens and Potatoes Key Farmer
- Reason for Inclusion in the KIIs: He is a key farmer in the region, owning more than 500 dunums and hosting 40 refugee families in his farm.

Main Observations/Key Statements Made by Informant:

- The main challenge faced by potato farmers in Akkar is marketing of produce. The potato harvesting period in Akkar is before that of the Bekaa, giving Akkar priority when it comes to determining prices. However, as the government does not assign tariffs, taxes and quotas on imported potatoes (especially from Egypt, Syria, and Jordan), Lebanese farmers are left with no choice but to lower prices. When large traders import potatoes during the harvest season in Akkar, prices drop automatically.
- Women play key roles in potato production in Akkar, including the preparation of tubers for planting, planting, weeding, harvesting, and packaging. Men are responsible for irrigation, applying fertilizers and pesticides, and plowing.
- Women farmers are faced with several challenges, including not being allowed to take loans, as it is not socially acceptable and having to work both in the fields and at home given their domestic duties.

Interviewer Assessment/Perceptions of the Informant (2-3 lines maximum):

The Informant was clear and straightforward. He is a big investor and claims that he is treating his laborers equally regardless of gender and nationality. He is trying new varieties of potato in order to increase marketing potential.

Any Relevant Insights/Ideas which Emerged during the KII:

The interviewee claimed that high labor costs impact production and he is looking to invest in machinery to reduce the need for labor.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW #4

- Date of KII: 28.02.2017
- Name of Informant: Mr. Michelle Issa
- Title/Position of Informant: The Lebanese Agriculture Research Institute (LARI) North Office Manager
- Reason for Inclusion in the KIIs: LARI is a governmental organization working under the Ministry of Agriculture, mainly involved in agricultural research.

Main Observations/Key Statements Made by Informant:

- Women in the agricultural sector in Akkar, and in Lebanon as a whole, are generally followers and laborers, not leaders.
- Women generally do not have decision making powers.
- The leafy greens sub-sector can offer more opportunities for women than the potato sub-sector.
- Farmers in Akkar in general have limited marketing skills and farmers only tend to sell to wholesalers in Akkar and Tripoli. Exacerbating this weakness is often the inability to transport their produce further and to a wider range of markets.
- It is very challenging for women to obtain credits/loans as land in Akkar is mainly inherited and owned by men, which does not provide women with collateral.
- Several attempts at the establishment of cooperatives have ended in failure across both sub-sectors, partly because farmers associate the concept of cooperatives with donations and external financial support. An important role of governmental institutions and NGOs would be to provide training on cooperative management, functions, and regulations.
- Women have the capacity and skills to process produce, an activity which greatly improves their livelihoods and brings an added value to the agricultural sector. One alternative to a processing cooperative would be a group of women led by an external manager of a company.

Interviewer Assessment/Perceptions of the Informant (2-3 lines maximum):

The interviewee had good insights regarding the agricultural sector in Akkar, but limited knowledge about women agricultural workers, which is an indication of the lack of interventions and initiatives targeting women.

Any Relevant Insights/Ideas which Emerged during the KII:

- The interviewee criticized current farmer cooperatives and claimed that they are doomed to failure. He claimed that capacity building on the management, functions, and regulations of cooperatives is needed.
- The interviewee stressed on women's capacity to process, such as drying leafy greens to increase shelf-life and add value to products.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW #5

- Date of KII: March 6, 2017
- Name of Informant: Emile Asmar
- Title/Position of Informant: Safadi Foundation Project Manager
- Reason for Inclusion in the KIIs: Safadi is a Lebanese NGO working towards fostering innovative strategies to rebuild the lives of Lebanese citizens in the aftermath of civil-war and the growing challenges resulting from the current refugee crisis. They have a prominent presence in Akkar, working on developing the Lebanese community.

Main Observations/Key Statements Made by Informant:

- Safadi Foundation is implementing several projects on Lebanese women empowerment in the agricultural sector, but their work is more focused in the mountainous region of Akkar. These projects mainly target women willing to participate in activities and surrounded by relatively tolerant/accepting communities. The projects provide women with access to land with financial support (provision of tools, inputs, irrigation systems, etc.) and capacity building. They seek to enhance the enabling environment.
- With time, women participation in project activity is increasing. For instance, women participate in more workshops and training sessions and advocate for the development of their farms. This can be attributed to awareness sessions and the empowerment of women community leaders. An increase in decision making has also been witnessed. In certain cases, women are also becoming more involved in activities such as spraying and using heavy machinery. However, access to land and resources remains a significant challenge.
- Women are involved in almost all agricultural activities. They have the skills, ability, and willingness to work but are often constrained by social pressures which keep them from being decision makers and gaining control over their work.
- Families in Akkar range from extremely conservative (viewing women only as housewives) to moderately conservative (viewing the man as the breadwinner but allowing women to participate in work) to more open to the idea of women becoming empowered.
- Women cooperatives would help women generate income through improved production and processing. Women have the skills and capacities required for the processing of several products, but capacity building would be needed to ensure quality and increase revenues.
- Gender awareness is necessary for communities to understand gender inequity and divisions of labor and responsibilities. Furthermore, communities must be made aware of the importance of women in the agricultural sector.
- Most cooperatives in the region failed due to a lack of understanding of the roles and functions of cooperatives. Capacity building would be required to ensure that women can manage and run a cooperative.

Interviewer Assessment/Perceptions of the Informant (2-3 lines maximum):

Interviewee has extensive knowledge about the current situation of Lebanese women agricultural workers in Akkar.

Any Relevant Insights/Ideas which Emerged during the KII:

Similarly to during other interviewees, he stressed on the importance of cooperatives and the presence of processing opportunities for women.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW #6

- Date of KII: March 6, 2017
- Name of Informant: Nabil Mouawad
- Title/Position of Informant: General Director at Rene Mouawad Foundation
- Reason for Inclusion in the KIIs: The Rene Mouawad Foundation is actively working in the agricultural sector in North Lebanon and implements several initiatives focused on women and income generation.

Main Observations/Key Statements Made by Informant:

- The main challenge it is faced by women working in the potatoes and leafy green vegetables value chains is land tenure; they rarely have access to land unless it is inherited. Moreover, they face societal and cultural pressures, as it is not common for Lebanese women to work in the agricultural sector unless to support their husbands.
- Women cannot have direct contact with input suppliers and their signatures are generally not recognized as trustable guarantees. This means that they have to work through their husbands.
- Women do not have access to loans or small credits.
- Syrian and Palestinian women face more challenges, as they are dependent on several external factors which add up to their poverty. For instance, inaccessibility to land and basic resources. Moreover, the majority are living in precarious conditions, mostly in tents.
- Syrian women face even more socio-cultural pressures than others, as the majority of their husbands are unemployed or in Syria.
- In March 2017, RMF launched a new project focused on linking a small potatoes processing unit in Akkar to Souk el Akel to insure better productivity along the potato value chain.
- The role of NGOs is first to identify needs and design sustainable projects to tackle those needs. Priority should be given to income generating projects to ensure sustainable incomes.
- Cooperatives empower women if women are allowed to be active members. Intensive training and capacity building are needed to ensure that cooperatives function properly. Moreover, cooperatives should have a well-defined plan and objectives to increase income.

Interviewer Assessment/Perceptions of the Informant (2-3 lines maximum):

Interviewee has extensive knowledge about the agricultural sector in North Lebanon (and Akkar) and has experience implementing women-focused initiatives, including the establishment and support of cooperatives/collectives.

Any Relevant Insights/Ideas which Emerged during the KII:

The interviewee stressed on the importance of supporting women to establish cooperatives and be active members.



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