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Inclusive business models

Empowering women in urban agriculture in Burkina Faso

Kini, J.

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Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework

To address the problem of gender inequality and women's exclusion from formal value chains, the current chapter proposes an operational framework that bridges both issues. Four main concepts and their interactions are involved: gender-aware inclusive value chain (GAIVC); gender-aware inclusive business (GAIB); WFEs' (WSEs) capabilities, functioning and agency; and WFEs' economic empowerment. Each main concept's components and the relationships between the concepts are described in the next sections. Thus, this chapter aims to answer the research question: How can value chains be conceptualised from a gender-aware and inclusive perspective? In doing so, although I use WFEs to refer also to WSEs in this work (see 2.3.1), I admit that there is a cut-off point from which a WSE in the food sector can become more than a survival entrepreneur. The concepts WSE or WFE are used interchangeably (i.e., WSE/WFE); but growth-oriented is added to WFE when women entrepreneurs become more than survival entrepreneurs. Chapter 8 provides an estimate of the cut-off point.

Building on chapter 2, this chapter defines the 'nature' of the main concepts. First, gender-aware inclusive value chain is a framework and process; whereas economic empowerment is a process. Second, gender-aware inclusive business is a set of activities happening in a gender-aware inclusive value chain aiming at achieving the economic empowerment. Third, capabilities, functioning and agency are concepts through which WSE/WFE's empowerment process can be assessed.

3.1 Gender-aware inclusive value chain (GAIVC) and its internal dynamics

Three components compose a GAIVC: WSEs/WFEs, gender-aware inclusive business (GAIB) and 'other components.

3.1.1 WSEs/WFEs as societal and economic entities

The capability approach and firm level economic wellbeing are individually limited to clearly explain WSEs/WFEs' behaviours (and their groups) both as individual members of society/communities/households and economic agents within their business groups (see 2.3, 2.5). Thus, I combine the capability approach with the firm level economic wellbeing framework (i.e., the resources, roles and activities in a business). I obtain information on agents (individual women) as members of a society and on how this influences their daily entrepreneurial activities. Second, I assess how an 'economic' agent makes the connection between his or her agency (behaviour) as a member of society and as an entrepreneur. I then assess how WSEs/WFEs as agents behave within their groups and how this influences their

gains from their activities. Interestingly, combining both approaches help with better understanding of what and how institutions, including groups' governance, affect the dynamics of GAIVC.

Three main elements are involved: a) WSEs/WFEs as societal and economic agents; b) capabilities; and c) functioning. First, WSEs/WFEs are involved in gardening who produce and sell or produce and/or buy their gardening products at the production site or marketplace. The self-consumption of their production exists, but is marginal because their prime objective is to sell their products and get revenue. In this framework, WSEs/WFEs are expected to drive the business model, and are among the key stakeholders/agents (nervous system) of the GAIVC. A better understanding of these agents requires a good examination of their socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., age, education, marital status, ethnic group, living place, access to food and so on). Thus, in this research, WSEs/WFEs or their 'agency' will be better described through these individual and collective characteristics.

Second, as '*capabilities*' is a concept difficult to operationalise, and it only focuses on WSEs/WFEs as societal agents, this research bridges the disconnection with the firm level approach. Thus, '*capabilities*' are the sets of valuable functioning, or the sets of resources (i.e., assets that include time, natural, space, human, relational and financial resources) at WSEs/WFEs' disposal (see 2.6). I also distinguish between individual (see Chapter 7) and collective resources (see Chapter 6) respectively for WSEs/WFE individually and WSEs/WFE groups. Moreover, I consider all changes in these resources due to WSEs/WFE's business model as '*capabilities*'.

Third, '*functioning*' refers to the achieved empowerment or achieved functioning according to the capability approach. I adopt the definition of the firm-level economic wellbeing by stating that '*functioning*' refers to the most valued changes in WSEs/WFEs' living conditions brought about by the changes in their capabilities (i.e., time, natural, space, human, relational and financial resources) due to the business. They are material and non-material including quality food, relations, reputations, control on resources and decision making. There are also collective valued resources and individual valued resources respectively for individuals and groups (see 3.2 and Chapter 9).

Thus, WSEs/WFEs' agency and capabilities are key elements affecting their business strategies and vice-versa. By adopting the definition of strategy as a set of plans or decisions made to help organisations achieve their objectives (see 2.3.2; Miller & Dess, 1996), *I assume that WSEs/WFEs' characteristics significantly determine*

these dynamic strategies and vice-versa. These strategies respond to the dynamics of the internal and external environment in which WSEs/WFEs evolve. Thus, my first hypothesis tested in chapters 7 and 8 is (**H1**) that “WSEs/WFEs’ individual and collective characteristics or agency, capabilities and strategies primarily shape their business model”.

3.1.2 Gender-aware inclusive business: dimensions, indicators and relationships

Gender-aware inclusive business alleviates both gender inequality and women’s exclusion from formal economic systems (see 2.2). It encompasses food production, processing and vending activities, whereby each activity is considered as innovative, adaptable, applicable, affordable and viable. It has five dimensions with several indicators or variables (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Conceptualising a gender-aware inclusive business (GAIB)

Components	Questions involved with respect to WFE’s
Innovative (I)	Does a (specific) market or place that creates successful business exist? Does the business induce opportunities? Are the tools used in the business built upon customary wisdom and environmental sustainability? Are the tools used in the business practices (techniques) built upon customary wisdom and environmental sustainability? Are there any social/cultural barriers? any ecological barriers? any geographic barriers? any economic barriers?
Credible (C)	How is the level of coordination or organization between producers? How is the relationship with retailers? Relationship with end-consumers? Relationship with restaurants/processors? What is the duration of the WSEs/WFEs’ group? How is the group’s governance dynamics? How is the dynamics of their relationship with retailers? How is the dynamics of their relationship with end-consumers? How is the dynamics of their relationship with restaurants/processors? To what extent (rate) are buyers attached to the business (site/place)? To what extent do gender barriers matter in the commercial relations (vertical)?
Affordable (A)	What is the proportion of low-income buyers (under the poverty line in Burkina Faso) who have access to these business products? How do buyers perceive the affordability of products? Are all actors in the value chain exposed to the risk (climate extreme, institutional)? What are the transportation costs for resellers (from farm to marketplace)? What are the transportation costs for end-consumers (from home to farm)? What is the responsibility of actors in the chain; is the business market-driven or producer-driven? What actors in the value chain do you perceive to be the most rewarded? Are there any gender barriers for buyers’ access to affordable food prices?

Adaptable (A)	<p>What is WSEs/WFEs' ability to cope with their business environment (i.e., competing with other value chains)? Is there any competition between WSEs/WFEs evolving in the same value chain?</p> <p>To what extent are WSEs/WFEs able to cope with buyers' requirements on food availability? Food diversification? And food quality?</p> <p>What is the degree of exposure and ability of WSEs/WFEs to cope with political change (land politics, urbanization politics)?</p> <p>How do you perceived WSEs/WFEs' ability to cope with the economic institutions and resources such as: access to credit? access to water? access to inputs/fertilizers? access to information? access to training/knowledge?</p> <p>How is the social environment of WSEs/WFEs? Are they able to cope with their norms over time?</p> <p>To what extent do gender barriers constrain WSEs/WFEs' in their business?</p> <p>To what extent are WSEs/WFEs able to cope with climate extremes such as flooding and drought?</p>
Viable (V)	<p>What is the frequency of buyers on the production sites per month?</p> <p>What is the value of the purchased food per buyer and month?</p> <p>What is the level of production cost per woman and per year?</p> <p>What is the level of revenue gained per woman and per year?</p> <p>What is the level of benefit (difference revenue and production cost) per woman and per year?</p> <p>What are the producers' perceived benefits/outcomes of their business?</p>

Source: The Author

Thus, how does a gender-aware inclusive business approach bring changes in WSEs/WFEs' various resources and agency (see 3.1.1)? To answer this question, I test in Chapter 9 a second hypothesis (H2): "an innovative, credible, affordable, adaptable and viable business is materialised by a significant increase in WSEs/WFEs' individual resources as well as positive change in their agency/behaviour".

3.1.3 'Other components'

My 'other components' of the gender-aware inclusive value chain comprise the *structures, non-WSE/WFE actors, environment and institutions*. The 'structures' refer to physical and non-physical elements. Physical elements are the infrastructures, such as buildings, roads, equipment, warehouses and so on. Non-physical elements comprise: a) the vertical linkages or vertical integration, that is, how actors at different nodes of the value chain are organised (e.g., are producers also vendors of their products at the market place?); b) the horizontal linkages or coordination, that is, how actors at the same node of the value chain are organised (e.g., are food producers organised into groups or not?). Thus, a third hypothesis (H3) tested in Chapter 6 is that "infrastructure, level of vertical integration and level of horizontal coordination in a value chain shape the capabilities, agency and strategies of WSEs/WFEs.

'Non-WSE/WFE actors' refer to the other people (food consumers or purchasers and other stakeholders such as service providers – NGOs, public services, financial services – intervening in the value chain) and how they communicate together with WSEs/WFEs. Communication refers to how information and knowledge flow among and between the stakeholders at the same node and across the nodes. For example, how public service providers reach WSEs/WFEs when there is a new technology available for adoption, or how consumers are informed of the availability of food products from gardens (see Chapter 6)?

'Environment' refers to natural environment (e.g., climate change risk, droughts and floods) and competitive environment (other value chains surrounding the ones which involve WSEs/WFEs environment). For example, how do conventional food value chains influence organic food value chains in an urban food system. Answers to this question are provided in chapter 6.

'Institutions' refers to all formal and informal political, economic and gender norms and rules in the business field (see 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). *'Political institutions'* refers to the formal and informal rules (laws, policies) adopted at state level to regulate social and political life. The idea is to understand how policies and the governance systems contribute to forging WSEs/WFEs' capabilities, agency and strategies as well as the business model involved. *'Economic institutions'* refer to formal and informal market rules that shape the business environment. The idea is to understand how these rules contribute to forging WSEs/WFEs' capabilities, agency and strategies as well as their business model. *'Gender'* refers to the formal and informal norms on how women and men's roles are perceived and how these cultural power-relations are displayed in the business. For example, how women culturally perceive themselves vis-à-vis to men; what is the power balance relationship between them and what future do they perceive in terms of gender equality? Gender policies addressing gender inequality and powerless people's empowerment can also shed light on gender issues. The analyses of how institutions influence WSEs/WFEs' capabilities, agency and strategies, as well as their business model, are contextual.

3.2 WSEs/WFEs' economic empowerment outcomes or valued functioning

WSEs/WFEs' economic empowerment as a process is analysed in this research by looking into the outcomes or achievements allowed by the implementation of a gender-aware inclusive business model in a gender-aware inclusive value chain. I define women's economic empowerment as any business intervention in the food value chain that focuses on improving or forging vertical linkages along the value

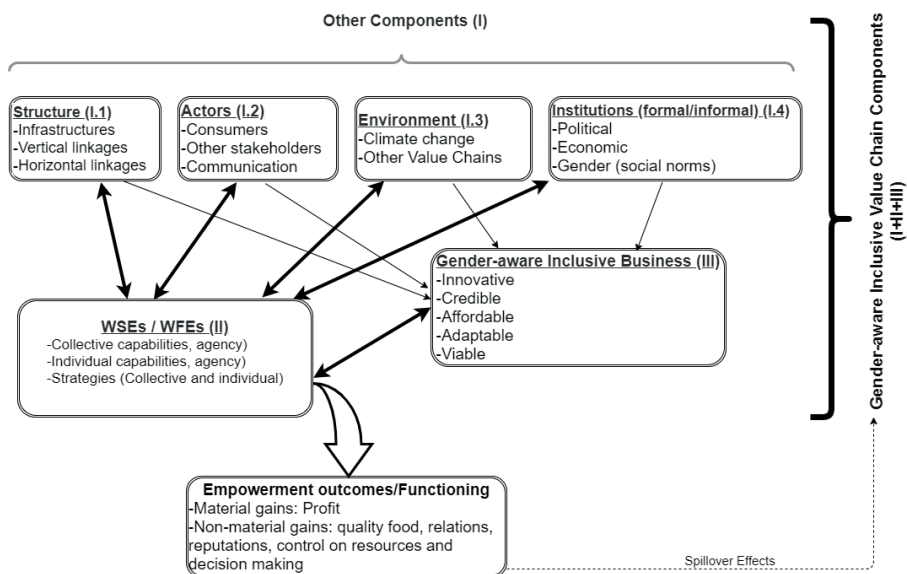
chain (in production, processing and trade functions) in order to improve their terms of participation and increase their capabilities, functioning and/or rewards from participating in value chains (Riisgaard et al., 2010).

This involves paying particular attention to all changes due to women’s participation in such business activities. I identify two levels of functioning: material and non-material gains generated by WSEs/WFEs’ involvement in gender-aware inclusive business (see 3.1.1). Thus, what key changes in natural, time, human, relational, financial, and space resources are made possible by gender-aware inclusive business for WSEs/WFEs and to what extent do such changes contribute to achieving WSEs/WFEs’ expected living conditions? Which changes appear to be significantly influential for WSEs/WFEs’ lives? To answer these questions, two hypotheses are involved:

Hypothesis (H4): *At least one change in resources or capabilities significantly determines WSEs/WFE’s functioning or expected living conditions (material and non-material) from their business.*

Hypothesis (H5): *At least one socio-demographic and economic characteristic of WSEs/WFEs is a significant factor determining their functioning (material gains) due to their business.*

Figure 3.1: Women’s economic empowerment conceptual framework



Source: The Author

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter further described and explained concepts and their operational elements drawn from the literature on value chain, inclusive business, gender awareness in business (including the institutions), capabilities, firm level economic wellbeing and women's economic empowerment in order to address the three gaps in knowledge (see 1.2.2 and 2.7).

In filling these gaps in knowledge, this research will provide two main sets of lessons based on the conceptual framework developed above. First, the research will showcase the specific conditions (necessary and sufficient) for a business model to be gender-aware and inclusive. Such conditions involve adapted institutions, structures and environment in regard to the capabilities of WSEs/WFEs. Second, the research will showcase the drivers of women's engagement in business and the channels through which their business activities contribute to their economic empowerment. This implies providing more details on the dynamics of their resources over time.