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### Inclusive business models

*Empowering women in urban agriculture in Burkina Faso*

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# Chapter 7

**WSEs/WFEs, Individual Capabilities  
and Business Strategies in the Urban  
Food Chains of Ouagadougou**

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter answers the research sub-question 4: How do current business strategies of WSEs/WFEs contribute to building their capabilities individually? It contributes to testing the hypothesis (*H1*) (see 3.1.1). Section 7.2 introduces WSEs/WFE's socio-demographic characteristics (as part of their agency, see 3.1.1) including their household size, marital status, and education level. Section 7.3 focuses on WSEs/WFE's individual capabilities by describing the individual resources and capacities. Section 7.4 introduces WSEs/WFE's life story insights and how they became engaged in the current business (food production). It particularly describes the situation before engaging in the business and the situation now by focusing on the resources at their disposal (capacities). It ends by discussing the business strategies individually adopted by WSE/WFE's. Section 7.5 discusses the individual agency of WSEs/WFEs and section 7.6 concludes by answering the research sub-question.

## 7.2 Socio-demographic characteristics

This section describes the socio-demographic characteristics of WSEs/WFEs in the three sites, such as the head of household, age, gender, marital status, religion, household size, and education level. First, the data show that WSE/WFE's households are mainly headed by men: 66.95% (of the 118 interviewed) are men-led households and 33.05% are women-led (widows) (see Table 11b, Annex1).

Second, while 86.23% of the interviewees are females and 13.77% are males, most of the WSEs/WFEs on the three sites are aging. Only 8.47% can be considered as young (less than 30 years old) and 16.95% are elderly (more than 60 years old). Near to these extremes, more than 55.07% are aged between 40 and 60 years (27.97% will be more than 60 years in ten years, making them less active as their physical capacities will have decreased while a new generation will arise) (see Table 12b, Annex1).

Third, a significant portion of WSEs/WFEs are Christian, probably explaining why monogamy is dominant within this population of food producers. Indeed, the data show that 55.93% of the interviewees are Christian and 44.07% are Muslim (see Table 13b, Annex1). In addition, almost all the interviewees are or have been married: 66.95% are currently married and 32.24% are widows (see Table 14b, Annex1); 71.93% (of the 114 interviewed) are in monogamy against 28.07% in polygamy (see Table 15b, Annex1).

Fourth, the data show a relatively high household size on average. Indeed, the household of each interviewed woman contains 10.8 members (around 11 per household) (see Table 16b, Annex1). Details per production site show that on average, each woman's household counts 12.4 members in Tampouy, 8.9 members in Kossodo and 9.9 in Tanghin. In particular, each WSE/WFE household counts 5.9 children on average. There are 6.3 children per woman in Tampouy, 5.7 children per woman in Kossodo, and 5.6 per woman in Tanghin. The surveyed women have a higher number of children on average compared to existing data at the city level estimated at 5.4 children per woman (INSD, 2020, p.32). The data show that the household's burden is significantly high, particularly for women-led households.

Fifth, in terms of education, overall, the majority of women food producers (116 respondents) are not educated. Indeed, 50.85% of them are illiterate and 33.05% have some training or education in the national language (literate). About 12.71% have a primary school level, 2.54% the secondary level and only one person (0.85%) reached the university level (see Table 17b, Annex1). However, national data show that there is an increase in female's education. For example, girls' schooling rate has increased between 2015 and 2016 respectively from 65.5% to 71.0% (Ministry of Woman, National Solidarity and Family-MFSNF 2017, p.34). The data indicate that the level of human capital (formal education is part of), is low among the interviewed women.

### **7.3 WSE/WFE's socio-economic characteristics or capacities**

#### ***7.3.1 WSE/WFE's household resources: production related characteristics***

Using the baseline dataset (see 4.6.1), this subsection is a cross-sectional description of the characteristics of WSE/WFE individually and in relation to their entire household. These characteristics include the income source (of the household), land tenure, land acreage, main crops produced, food and nutrition issues. For a better understanding, two main groups of characteristics are set up: business related characteristics (source of income, land tenure, main crops, labour source, product destination, duration in the business) and food and nutrition security issues. This is because food intake is also an important part of these business activities.

#### *Income source in the WSE/WFE's household*

The main income source of interviewed WSE/WFE (118 respondents) is gardening carried out by 98.31%. The other 1.69% represent women with food (vegetable) reselling as her main activity (Table 18b, Annex1). In addition, the principal

income source of WSE/WFE's partners (husbands) is varied: gardening (13.64% of 66 respondents); masonry work (12.12%); retailing (10.61%); cereal production (10.61%), working as a private security agent (6.06%); labourer (4.55%), mechanic (4.55%), painter (3.03%), designer/tailor (3.03%), driver (3.03%). As the dominant activity in the household is gardening, there is a clear need to understand the type of issues related to land ownership.

#### *Land ownership*

All the women respondents (100% of 118 interviewed) have access to a plot of land within the three sites, with usufructuary rights. The acreage of this land varies as follows: on average, each woman's household (for all the three sites considered) exploits 9.5 plots of land per annum (see 6.3.5 for the dimensions of each plot). Furthermore, in Kossodo, each woman exploits 6.8 plots (around 37.4 m<sup>2</sup>) on average, with a minimum of 3 (16.5 m<sup>2</sup>) and a maximum of 8 plots (44m<sup>2</sup>); 50% of women have less than 7 plots (38.5 m<sup>2</sup>) each. In Tampouy, an average of 4 plots (42m<sup>2</sup>) are exploited by each woman per annum, with a minimum of 1 plot (6m<sup>2</sup>) and 11 plots (66m<sup>2</sup>) as a maximum. In addition, 50% have more than 3 plots (18m<sup>2</sup>). In Tanghin, each woman exploits 16 plots per annum, minimum 3 plots and maximum 45 plots. 50% of them exploit more than 14 plots (Table 19b, Annex 1).

From these data, it stands out that WSE/WFE's households have access to land through the members of the household (wife or spouse). However, these cross-sectional data are less informative when it comes to the process of acquiring the land, and the land ownership is discussable as will be shown in subsection 7.3.2. In addition, these data allow us to get an understanding of the type of crops cultivated and the number of production seasons (harvests).

#### *Main crops and production seasons*

Two main classifications of the cultivated crops per woman were identified in the baseline data. In the first class, the prime (or main) crop grown by WSEs/WFEs is lettuce (61.21% of the 116 women interviewed from the 3 sites). This is followed by amaranth (35.34%) (see Table 20b, Annex 1). In the second class, Amaranth is the main grown crop with 47.17% (of 106 interviewed), followed by lettuce (22.64%), *Corchorus olitorius* and Cleome Leaves (10.38% respectively) (See Table 21b, Annex 1).

Moreover, most women food producers have at least three production seasons per year. Indeed, 96.55% of them (116 interviewed) produce their main crops three times per year (see Table 22b, Annex1). The second main crop is also produced at most 3 seasons per year for 90.83% of the 109 interviewed (see Table 23b, Annex1). In light of the cultivated crops and the number of harvests, it is worth looking at the labour source to appreciate the effort provided by each woman in her business.

#### *Labour source*

Overall, WSE/WFE use their own labour to conduct their business activities. However, when possible, 82.76% of the 116 interviewed can resort to their family for labour as additional or occasional manpower in their activities in the field (see Table 24b). Only 17.24% resort to temporal hired labour, specifically men are hired to dig their plots.

#### *Destination of produced food*

The main usage or destination of the food produced by women is for direct sales or the marketplace. Indeed, 16.38% of the 116 interviewees confirmed only selling their produced crops, whereas 83.62% mainly sell the crops and also consume a tiny part of their production (see Table 25, Annex1). However, even if all the producers supply their food to the market, this does not mean that they bring their food to the marketplaces. Some do so, but most of the sales take place on their production sites (the case of Kossodo and Tampouy).

#### *Experience or duration in the activities*

Overall, most women producers have been involved in these activities of the site for more than 7 years (73.73% of 118 interviewed in the baseline). 14.41% started working there 6 years ago, and 11.02% 4 years ago. This means that they have a certain experience working on those sites as well as within their groups. Such an experience has reinforced women's knowledge and improved their business strategies in order to enhance their production, cope with their environment and adapt to the social life.

### ***7.3.2 Food and nutrition security in WSE/WFE's household***

As part of WSE/WFE's functioning, the state of food and nutrition security is analysed in this subsection. First, there is still a challenge to address in terms of the number of meals per day. In the interviewed women's households, most of the

adults (73.73%) eat twice per day, 16.95% three times per day and 9.32% only once per day (see Table 27b, Annex1). In contrast, children in these households mostly eat three times per day (74.78%), 11.30% eat four times per day. Only 13.04% of household's children eat twice per day (see Table 28b, Annex1).

Second, there is still uncertainty around the access to food for WSE/WFE's. Indeed, 42.86% of women against 26.32% of men (of the 118 interviewed) sometimes fear a lack of food in their own household; 31.09% of women against 26.32% of men fear of it often; 15.13% of women against 31.58% of men assert to experience it rarely and 11.02% of women against 15.59% of men think it has never happened (see Table 29b, Annex1). Such results show that men seem to be more confident in their capabilities to ensure food security in their households than women (perhaps because they are wealthier than women). However, the results may show that women are more sensitive (emotional) to the need of ensuring their household (at least) has access to food intake. Also, women are more conscious of the uncertainty around food if they are the ones who are securing and providing the food for their children. Consequently, these worries make women search for solution by themselves.

Third, it is difficult for WSE/WFE's households to get access to their preferred food. Data shows that of the 118 interviewees 50.42% of women against 31.58% of men assert to have been sometimes unable to eat the food preferred in their households (see Table 30b, Annex1). For 33.45% of women against 31.58% of men it has often happened; 11.02% of women against 36.84% of men assert to have experienced it rarely; and only 4.24% of women against 0.00% of men attest that they have never experienced it (see Table 30b, Annex1). In other words, around 85% of women's households against 63% of men's households sometimes or often cannot get their preferred food, because of lack of money. While most of the interviewed men and women's households are poor, the results show that majority women's households are poorer than men's ones (only 4.20% of women's households seem not to be poor as they can always get their preferred food). This may explain why men seem to be confident in ensuring their household food intake.

Fourth, it is difficult for WSE/WFE's to regularly get access to quality food, which means that they resort to low quality food. Most women (63.03% against 36.84% of men of the 118 interviewed) claim to sometimes consume low-quality food (variety) in their households because they lack money; 21.01% of women against 26.32% of men's households experience it often; 11.76% of women against 36.84% of men's households experience it rarely (see Table 31b, Annex1). Only 4.24% of

women's households have never experienced it. Such a result also confirms that the great majority of women's households are poorer than men's, and as such, they experience resorting to low-quality food the most.

Fifth, 51.26% of women against 47.37% of the 118 interviewed men claim that they have sometimes consumed unwanted or non-desired food in their households because they lacked money (see Table 32b, Annex1). 26.05% of women against 26.32% of men's households have often consumed it; whereas 19.33% of women against 36.32% of men's households have rarely experienced it. Only 3.36% of women's households have never experienced it. These results are similar to those related to the access to preferred food. Indeed, when we cannot access our preferred food, it is almost obvious that we resort to the non-desired one. This is the typical case in poor households, where much of the time people eat non-desired food.

Sixth, WSE/WFE's households continue to experience food shortages or unavailability. Indeed, 52.10% of women against 26.32% of men (of the 118 interviewed) assert to have sometimes consumed low quantity food in their households because of insufficient available food; 11.76% of women against 15.79% of men's households have often consumed low quantity food (see Table 33b). In addition, 25.21% of women against 21.05% of men's households have rarely experienced it. Only 10.92% of women against 36.84% of men's household have never experienced it. These results also confirm that men's households appear to be wealthier than women's households.

Finally, some WSE/WFE's households experience nutritional diseases. Of the 117 respondents, only 13.68% assert that a member of their household had suffered from nutritional disease such as a stomach ache, vitamin deficiency, malnutrition, undernutrition, food intoxication, diarrhoea and stomach ache, typhoid fever, and diarrhoea.

Hence, the described functioning (state of food and nutrition security) of WSEs/WFEs themselves and their households sheds light on the need to better understand their individual life stories as this can help show the evolution of their resources and capacities. Indeed, food and nutrition security are among the first goals or expectations of women in survival or necessity entrepreneurship. They conduct subsistence entrepreneurial activities as highlighted by many authors (Fuentelasz et al., 2015; Schoar, 2010), and expect to earn money to primarily feed



their children. Women are more sensitive to the needs of the children (household members) in term of food access. Thus, it is worth considering food and nutrition security as key functioning of WSEs/WFEs.

## 7.4 Histories and engagement in current businesses

This section uses the life story data collected from 67 women interviewed in Kossodo, Tanghin and Tampouy, and 2 men interviewed in Tanghin. Due to the limited number of men interviewed, the analysis only focuses on women and weakens through the gender lens. It describes the main life situations experienced before being engaged in the current professional activity, evolution of women's resources, their understanding of business and the business strategies they have adopted.

### 7.4.1 Life story

Many women interviewed on their life story have experienced extreme poverty conditions with all related problems. Four quotes<sup>52</sup> from different women are proposed to capture this as follows.

First, a woman named OR from Tanghin stated:

*"Life has not been easy at all. The misery [extreme poverty condition] has been an inheritance since my parents were poor. Even to get food to eat was very problematic. It was very complicated for us to have one meal per day. I used to collect wood from the wild for selling, before coming on our site" (OR from Tanghin).*

Second a woman named ZC from Tanghin stated:

*"When my father died and my uncle (from my father's side) received me and my brother in his home, our suffering began. Afterwards, I got married. My situation worsened when I lost my husband as my husband's family refused to take care of me and my children, (they) requested that I get married to my husband's brother, and since I refused, they decided not to take care of my children. They even wanted to take our house away from us, that they would have sold later. It was so difficult, because after refusing all these requests from my family-in-law, I also gave birth to my last child three days after my husband's death: we lacked food, we had health problems, and faced schooling problems as my children grew up. It is thanks to this job that I have succeeded in managing everything" (ZC from Tanghin).*

Third, a woman named YB from Tampouy stated:

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52 Because of the ethical issues agreed with the Ethical Board of UvA, we only used the name initials as the codes of the interviewees to preserve their identity in this research.

*“I am the second wife of my husband. I have experienced suffering in my life. First, I could not get enough food to eat in my marriage compared to when I was not married. When I got my children, the situation worsened. Second, I only had one set of clothes, which I used to wash at night, expecting it to be dry the next morning so that I could wear it again. At a certain moment, I asked myself, why should I count on a man who gives me nothing? Then, I started to cook (Vigna subterranean or Jugo bean) to sell my food. Later, I got the opportunity to integrate into the women’s group; I just asked the responsible and they accepted me on board” (YB from Tampouy).*

Fourth: A woman named KE from Tampouy stated:

*“Life has been hard. My mother died when I was 4. She died pregnant. I have no brother, but sisters only. When I had grown up a bit, I was given to my aunt where I suffered a lot. Then, I was given to my husband and we have six children. Following that, my husband died and the house where we lived was no longer ours [from the husband’s family perspective]. Thus, I came in Ouagadougou with my children. There was no one to help me. I used to collect the sand to sell in order to take care of my children as well as schooling them. Some of them dropped out of school, and only the last one is still pursuing his studies, because someone has come to take him to school. I had nothing to buy food or clothing. When the sun rose and I had 100 FCFA, then I would buy 50 FCFA worth of food and the remainder I used for cola nut or tobacco for consumption. If your husband has nothing, and dies, it is extreme poverty that follows. In my house, when it was raining, I was obliged to pick up all my stuff and work the water out of the house. There was no one to help, even when my house was not in a good state. My life depends on God. I have come here, and I was helping Mm Dao to work. She gave me a plot and when I sell my crops, she gives me some additional money. With my age, my place should be at home as I am tired, but if I stop doing something, how will I manage? I do not even wish my enemy to experience what has occurred during my life. We used to eat just some leaves and other kind of less esteemed food as we did not have any choice” (KE from Tampouy).*

These quotes reveal the hard living conditions of these women before they got the opportunity to work within their current groups. First, many women have experienced poverty (misery): 58.46% (of 65 respondents) have experienced poverty conditions in their life before being engaged in the current business, against 41.54% who did not experience such hard conditions (see Table 34b, Annex1). Second, a relatively high share of the interviewees lacked food security in their household before joining the business. Indeed, 51.56% have suffered from the lack of food, whereas 48.44% had not experienced this (see Table 35b, Annex1). Third, most

of the women individually suffered from the lack of income in their household, before being engaged in the current business. 75% (64 respondents) have lacked income against 25% (see Table 36b, Annex1).

Fourth, most of the women have not suffered from carrying (feeding) their children only when engaging in the business. 79.69% (of 64 interviewees) have experienced this in their life before joining the business group (on the three sites); against 20.31% (see Table 37b, Annex1). Fifth, a relatively low proportion (9.38%) of the interviewees have experienced serious health problems before being engaged in the business (and some throughout the business operating moment) (see Table 38b, Annex1). Sixth, the proportion of women who lost their husband before being engaged in the current business is low: 18.46% (of 65 interviewees) against 90.63% who still had their husband when becoming involved in their business (see Table 39b, Annex1). Finally, a low proportion of women reported experiencing gender-based violence and/or physical violence in their household before joining the business groups. 4.92% (of the 61 interviewees) against 95.08% who reported that they never experienced this (see Table 40b, Annex1).

These data may not reflect women's current reality as the data has just captured women's assessments of their past; from one year to more than 35 years before engaging in the business (depending on the woman). As such, this needs to be considered in this context when making comparison with the national level data.

#### ***7.4.2 Most valued expectations from their business***

This subsection describes the most valued expectations (their 'functioning' in Sen's perspective) of the interviewed WSEs/WFEs resulting from engaging in the business groups. WSEs/WFEs had three sets of most valued expectations when they engaged in their current business. First, women hoped to be able to earn enough money to feed, support, school, and provide health care to their children. Second, women expected to reduce their poverty conditions or improve their living conditions. Third, these women expected to make money only. Other expectations of women from their business were, among others, the success of their children, to be able to invest in their children, to purchase something valuable for their children, to see their children grow up, empowered and purchase a motorbike through this activity.

Thus, even if earning income is obvious, women were more interested in what their money can buy: food for the children (and the household in general), school fees and related expenses, health care, and covering the other needs of the children. This income is invested in their children's future, and that the children will help

their mothers in return. This brings us to a discussion of the dynamics of access to time, space, materials, finances, human capital, relational and natural resources for each of the interviewees (their engagement in business).

### **7.4.3 Dynamics of the resources**

This subsection addresses the dynamics of WSEs/WFEs' resources. Resources are the changes in capabilities that these women in the business activities have experienced (see 3.1.1). The change from these resources constitutes the functioning which is also expressed in terms of resources (see 3.1.1). Capturing such information helps with assessing the contribution of women's business to the functioning as an outcome of their empowerment.

#### *Time resource*

The three main ways of using time resources are investigated in this dichotomy between "before" and "now", namely time for sleeping (i.e., rest and bed), time for production or income generating activities, and time dedicated to domestic work i.e., activities carried out by women: in the kitchen, cleaning, dish and clothes washing as well as taking care of family members. Table 41b (Annex1) gives details on the dynamics of the resources.

For the first use of the resource time, interviewees slept on average 9.41 hours per day before their engagement in business. The minimum sleeping time was 3 and the maximum 20 with a standard deviation (sd) of 3.70. Now, the sleeping time is on average 7.60 hours (6-12; sd 1.40) per interviewee and per day. This means that there has been a decrease in the sleeping time of these women after getting involved in their current business activities.

For the second use, the production time back then per person was 6.21 hours (0-13; sd 5.06) on average per day and per interviewee. Now, the production time is 10.15 hours (4-15; sd 2.56) on average per person and per day. Consequently, there has been an increase in the time dedicated to these income-generating activities for the three studied sites.

Finally, the time spent on domestic work used to be 8.37 hours (0-16; sd 3.45) on average per person and per day. Now, the domestic time is 6.22 hours (0-12; sd 2.37) per person and per day. This means that the domestic work time has decreased in favour of women (see 8.3.2).

In terms of time control, women without any income-generating activity, who were doing domestic work, have no control of their time. Indeed, before being engaged in this business, of the 50 women in the sample, only 16% fully controlled their time against 28% who did not control their time at all. The other 56% partially controlled their time (see Table 42b, Annex1). They essentially have no control of their time when their husbands are in charge of household spending, and they control their time partially when they carry out certain income-earning activities. Women fully controlling their time are widows or unmarried.

Now, however, the business activities carried out by women has contributed to increasing their control over time. Only 3 out of 66 women respondents still cannot control their time at all, against 78.79% who fully control their time. In addition, 16.67% of women interviewed still partially control their time (see Table 43b, Annex1). This means that the husbands of those women, even if engaged in business activities, still influence their time usage (when she is at home for instance), and those women are still the key actors of all domestic work. For example, a woman in Kossodo said: "My husband does not have any word to say. Often, he talks about the schedule, but I don't listen to him because thanks to my effort we can eat" (MK from Kossodo). Another woman said: "My husband sometimes has a look at my time spent, but not a lot (I partly control my time)" (AG from Tanghin). A last woman said: "*My husband controls my time: leaving the house, coming home and the nature of my activities. Often, he asks me why I spent so much time before coming home*" (AS from Kossodo).

#### *Space resources access*

First, the access to space (land particularly) was difficult for WSEs/WFEs before being engaged in the current business. Only 32.84% (of the 67 respondents) had access to such resources back then (see Table 44b, Annex1). Most of those who had access to land are from Tanghin and some others come from villages where they had a family farm. In Tanghin, the access of women to land is due to their inheritance rights from their parents, but the control over this space is another issue. However, within the context of the current business, all the women (100%) have access to space.

Second, the data from these individual interviews show that few interviewees have property rights or control the spaces they exploit. Only 5.97% (of the 67 interviewees) had control on the space they exploit against 26.87% who do not control the space they had access to (see Table 45b, Annex1). Now, only 4.48% (3 out of 67) of the producers control their space (see Table 46b, Annex1). These

results show the persisting lack of access and control over property rights on land by women in the city, and this may highlight the pre-eminence of cultural and social customs regarding gender issues. These results also contrast with what is said in the characteristics of WSE/WFE's as there is a confusion between exploiting land and owning it.

#### *Material resources*

Overall, before their business activities, most interviewees had no access to material resources such as equipment (both for work and the household). 70.31% (of 64 respondents) did not have access to such resources. The remaining 29.69% had control over the material resources they had access to (see Table 47b, Annex1).

However, with the current business, all the interviewees have access to these material resources, the materials for production and some equipment for household needs. About, 89.55% now fully control the material resources; 8.96% partially control the material resources they have access to since these materials belongs to the group or to their households (some women used to bring some material from household to work with them on the production site) (see Table 48b, Annex1). For example, A woman in Tanghin stated: *“from the rewards I got from my activity, I bought first a bike, then a motorbike (P50), then another motorbike (Yamaha Mate), a motorbike (i8) for my brother, and a motorbike (Sirius)”* (JB from Tanghin). Another woman in Kossodo said: *“The material I use has been given to us (aid-support). I have not been able to buy such material”* (TB from Kossodo).

#### *Financial resources*

Access to financial resources, income particularly, was a main challenge faced by WSE/WFEs. Before being engaged in the current business, 62.5% of women did not have access to a regular income; they depended on their husbands or resorted to the collection of natural resources such as grit, sand or wood to sell, requiring long distance travelling by foot (See Table 49b, Annex1). For the 37.5% who had access to financial resources, they were already dealing with certain income generating activities such as selling dolo (local beer), cleaning people's houses, washing people's clothes and dishes, or selling condiments in front of the households, or farming in their village. However, now, all these women have access to regular income due to their business activities, even if it is not sufficient to cover all their needs. They produce crops over the entire year, and then continuously earn money that allows them to cover their household's and their own needs.

Furthermore, 60.94% of women who did not have access to financial resources before, even if they sometimes got money from their husband, had only partial control over such resources. Only 39.06% of women fully controlled the income they earned through their activities previously described (see Table 50b, Annex1). In contrast, now all women fully control the income or financial resources they earn through the business they are engaged in.

### *Human capital*

Access to human capital was the big challenge for all the interviewed producers from the three sites as 98.51% did not have access to this resource (see Table 51b, Annex). In contrast, now only 4.48% of the 67 interviewees lack access to capacity building resources such as trainings in production techniques, marketing strategies such as reception and selling techniques (see Table 52b, Annex1). This means the business in which women participate provides opportunities to them to reinforce their capabilities (capacities).

### *Relational resources*

In terms of relational resources in the past, 77.61% of the interviewees did not have the opportunity to tie such relationships in their working environment (domestic work, natural resources collection as well as other income generating activities presented above). As relations are also about a good relationship between the producers' family and the neighbourhood, the results indicate that only 22.39% had access to relational resources (see Table 53b, Annex1).

However, now, only one person (1.49% of the 67 interviewees) still does not have access to relational resources or has not been able to build up a relationship within his or her social and work environment. In contrast, 98.51% (of the 67 interviewees) have built or improved their relational resources both in their group and neighbourhood, and inside their household (see Table 54b, Annex1). For example, the following quotes emphasise the mechanism through which their activities contribute to sustaining or improving such relationships. SID, a woman from Kossodo, argued: *"With the money I earn, I can choose to give 500 FCFA to my father or mother to go drink some dolo (local beer)"* (SID from Kossodo). Another woman from Tampouy who used to be beaten by her husband said: *"In my household, when I go back home (from work) now, everyone wants to know how my day was. It is much better than in the past. What I gain helps us a lot, as through the job, I can offer lettuce, for instance, to people I know"* (YB from Tampouy). Finally, a woman from Tanghin said: *"The money/income also helps us to attend the various social*

*events in my neighbourhood. Through this activity, we meet a lot of people here. We have built friendly relationships with our buyers. I collaborate with other women who help me in my activity, as well as my children often” (FZ from Tanghin).*

#### *Natural resources*

About 22.73% of the interviewees (66 women) used to resort to natural resources to make their living (see Table 55b, Annex1). They collected grit, sand, wood and shea nuts from the surroundings of Ouagadougou to sell in order to earn some money. The other 77.27% did not access these natural resources, not because they did not exist, but probably because their living conditions did not require that.

However, now WSE/WFEs have a greater dependence on and there is an increase in the access to natural resources. Indeed, 40.91% of them now use natural resources against 59.09% who do not (see Table 56b, Annex1). This can be explained by the particular case of the women’s group in Tampouy, who hold a small forest and practice forestry at their site. Sometimes, they are allowed (by the person responsible of the group) to collect the wood and fruits, and benefit from tree’s shadow and biodiversity (ecosystem services).

Hence, WSEs/WFEs have changed to a different extent depending on their personal life story. This can be seen through the dynamics of their resources and social relations that have overall seen some improvement. As such, the results complement and better explain the characteristics of the WSEs/WFEs individually as well as their households. Consequently, the perception of each woman of their activities can be worth considering due to their experiences and the reasons that brought them to doing such activities.

#### **7.4.4 Business concept and strategies**

This subsection discusses the concept of business and the business strategies developed by each woman and/or group to sustain their activities. Indeed, women as individual business agents may also develop individual and parallel business strategies to what their group does in order to increase their individual functioning (see 3.1.1). Thus, it contributes to testing the hypothesis (**H1**) (see 3.1.1). It first gives the perceived literal meaning of (doing) business. Second, it captures how women see themselves (as someone who runs a business or not). Third, it identifies the business strategies.



First, the interviewees have varied definition of business: 25.37% of the interviewees positively define business as market related activities; whereas 29.85% negatively perceive business. 44.78% of the interviews have no proper definition of the concept (see Table 57b, Annex1). The following quotes illustrate these definitions. For example, an interviewee from Tampouy asserted: *“To me, doing “business” means carrying out an activity to feed oneself. Here, we do business because there are people who come and take the vegetables to resell them and to get their share. Our work is business because it is our responsible who helps us to get what we have, thus, it is business”* (AT from Tampouy). Another interviewee said: *“Business means when you are able to earn money by selling things. For instance, if a good costs you 50,000 FCFA<sup>53</sup> and if you are able to sell it at 100,000 FCFA, this is a good business. Business is not doing bad things for getting money. It means, earning income by interacting with the market”* (SD from Tampouy). Besides this positive perception of business, another woman defined the concept as follows: *“To me, a business means doing dishonest thing”* (HS from Tampouy). The same woman said: *“To me, doing business means lying (betraying) people; telling what is not true to make oneself a living”* (HS from Tampouy).

Second, WSEs/WFEs use various strategies to sustain their activities. Of the 31 respondents, crop diversification is the strategy that comes first at 38.71%, followed by activity diversification. In this latter case, there are women who carry out other jobs in combination with the production activity (see Table 58b, Annex1). For example, in Tanghin, there are producers and semi-wholesalers, producers and retailers at the marketplaces (they sell their crops themselves to end consumers). Other women combine food production and a boutique (small shop of other goods), gardening and cleaning other people’s homes, and selling traditional medicine.

Women also grow their crops in regard to the period in the year. For example, almost all of them produce lettuce between October and March, as water is available during this period which coincides with festivities of the end of the year. Women alternate their crops in function of the market trends; they tend to produce more of the same crop when they observe that the demand at that moment is interesting, sometimes creating overproduction with consequently a collapsing price for this crop.

Finally, there are women whose strategies rely on their production techniques. In Kossodo and Tampouy they are specialised in organic food production using organic manure and organic pesticides (see 6.3.4). Moreover, marketing techniques,

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53 FCFA means XOF

including how to receive a buyer as well as a collective selling system, are used as well particularly by women in Kossodo and Tampouy to sustain their activities. The following quotes describe some strategies used by women.

*“When [a] buyer calls us to order some food or when they come to the site for specific products, if I am there and we lack that product at the site, I manage to get them on other sites first and resell them at Tampouy, with my margins. This is to keep our buyers coming, as they will stop if the products continuously lack” (SD from Tampouy), explained a woman in Tampouy. The woman pursued by saying: “Now, we have some strategies: a good reception (and management) of the buyer, and our organic production brand.”*

These quotes illustrate that these strategies have changed over time. Most of all the interviewed women did not have business strategies per se. However, with the capacity building activities obtained, they have acquired knowledge about production and marketing techniques.

Hence, the concept of business appears to be misunderstood by the majority of WSEs/WFEs, particularly those who only produce (cultivation of the crops). This is probably due to the fact that agricultural activities reflect the common image of less-valued activities as commerce, services or industry in the country and only carried out by poor people (both urban and rural) by most people. This general mindset contributes to the feeling of some women to be carrying out activities that are not much esteemed, and they do not recognise themselves as businesswomen. That may also be justified by the fact that this sector has been left aside by urban policies for a long time (see chapter 5). However, with the current agricultural policies directed towards the modernisation of agriculture (see 5.3) and operational department in charge of agricultural entrepreneurship, women’s activities are business per se. Indeed, they fulfil the conditions that define an agribusiness (man or woman) as someone who sells at least 60% of his or her agricultural production (Kini, 2016). Of course, women consume a share of their production, but most of the vegetables they produce are cash crops which are for sale. That is the reason the concept of business is still used in the work.

## **7.5 WSEs/WFEs’ individual agency**

This section addresses the issue of individual agency (i.e., behaviours) of WSE/WFE as members of society and in the business sphere, and how both overlap. Women as members of society primarily play key roles within their households and, as such, social and cultural norms constitute the central determinants of women’s agency or behaviours. These behaviours are also influenced by social and economic development policies that contribute to entirely shaping the society norms and

vice-versa. For the specific case of WSE/WFE in Ouagadougou, their individual and household characteristics presented in section 7.1 and 7.2, in addition to their life story, clearly show that most of these women experienced very difficult living conditions such as extreme and relative poverty. These hard conditions can also be understood as “contextual institutions”, as they structurally shape the behaviour of each member of the household, and particularly the behaviour of women who have the heavy responsibility of children to take care of—they should be putting food on the table, educating their children and assuring health care in the case of disease.

These heavy responsibilities of women in poverty conditions contribute to changing their behaviour. Instead of enduring these conditions, the interviewed women have struggled to fulfil the duties that society as a whole and the household have “assigned” them. Therefore, some women have taken low esteemed jobs, such as grit or sand collection. Others walk long distances across Ouagadougou to search for cleaning and washing jobs in other households, which comes with high risks of being abused and encountering physical violence (insecurity). As such, the most valued achievement for women as a member of society is to “be able to ensure the food, health care and education of their children” as stated by many women respondents. This achievement is the key driver of WSE/WFE’s behaviour in society, and they continuously seek for opportunities to achieve this highly valued goal. Consequently, the women are sometimes not adhering to the cultural norms such as, for example, fully obeying their husband. A quote previously cited summarises well how women can behave in such conditions: *“My husband does not have any word to say. Often, he talks about my schedule, but I don’t listen to him because thanks to my effort we can eat”* (MK from Kossodo).

Besides these societal considerations, the roles and the behaviour of women in the business sphere are central to achieving this most valued goal. Various highly valued expectations drive the women engaged in food entrepreneurship (see 7.3.2). The main expectation many women have is taking care of their children (investing in them). Only few women individually behave as entrepreneurs in the conventional sense of the word, aiming at making more profit and generating wealth in itself (see 7.3.2). However, most of these women’s behaviour in their business sphere is still dominated by their role and household tasks and the social responsibilities they take upon themselves or are expected to fulfil. For example, the women in Tanghin and Tampouy have, to a certain extent, freedom to produce and sell their food products themselves to their own buyers, as the governance of the group is not very rigorous.

In contrast, in the group with rigorous governance, there is less freedom of behaviour as the group holds its own rules which cannot be violated by any individual or else, they risk being excluded. An excluded woman would lose the opportunity to access the resources needed to achieve the most valued goal—taking care of the children. Women's agency as members of society can be incompatible with their agency as someone who runs a business, particularly when they are members of a business group where governance is rigorous. However, both types of agency can be compatible when the women belong to a group that is not rigorously governed. Consequently, there is a high probability that individual behaviours lead to a certain competition between the women, and this can create perverse incentives for the less powerful actors in their business value chain. This last case can heavily hinder the empowerment of women as their most valued goals might not be achieved.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the interaction between women's collective agency and capabilities and their rewards from participating in urban food value chains from a gender lens.

First, WSEs/WFEs' individual business strategies are various and comprise a) crop diversification; b) activity diversification (a combination of cultivation and other jobs); c) adoption of different production and marketing techniques; d) production of the most demanded crops during annual festivities; and e) growing adapted crops to the hot/water stress period. Each of these strategies is part of women's individual resources capable of building their individual functioning (social relations, profit, food and nutrition security), changing their agency (behaviour and mindset in society). It enhances their sense of self esteem and control.

Second, WSEs/WFEs' socio-demographic characteristics such as household burden, religious status, sex and age of the interviewees shed light on the state of mindset or agency of these WSEs/WFEs. These characteristics are part of the gender differences which emerge from cultural norms and religious laws and practices.

As such, the hypothesis *H1* is partly confirmed, as WSEs/WFEs' individual capabilities, agency and business strategies contribute to shape women's business models. However, this qualitative result needs to be confirmed by the quantitative analysis in the next chapters.