

Increasing women's access to reliable markets through collective marketing

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Context

To improve the performance of the bean value chain, gender mainstreaming must take place. Hence, this was a core element in the implementation of the *Precooked beans for food, nutrition, and income in Kenya and Uganda* project in 2015. A gender baseline investigation was conducted in project areas to identify hindrances to women's participation in bean marketing. Findings showed that participation by women – either individually or jointly with a male decision-maker – occurred in only 50.4% of bean farming households, compared to 70.8% for men.

Participation in agricultural marketing and access to reliable markets is important for both men and women producers as it helps generate income and build social networks. Group marketing has been identified as one of the most viable ways of increasing women's participation in agricultural marketing and improving their access to market information, as well as strengthening their bargaining power (Lothore and Delmas, 2009; Markelova *et al.*, 2009; Waithanji *et al.*, 2013). Felix (2015) noted that collective marketing can help women access reliable markets – where timely purchase is guaranteed – and overcome gender specific barriers that constrain them from participating in the market.

It is against this background that the precooked beans project adopted the strategy of working with men and women farmers, organized in groups, and introduced them to collective marketing to enhance the inclusion of women. The project identified 65 mixed farmer groups and linked them to the Community Enterprise

Key messages

- Over the course of the precooked beans project, women's participation in bean marketing increased from 50.4% in 2014 to 55% in 2016.
- Women's average incomes from bean sales increased from US\$126 in 2014 to US\$170 in 2016.
- The volume of beans sold by women increased by 8.3%, from 290 kg in 2014 to 314.07 kg in 2016.
- Qualitative data from 12 focus group discussions (four mixed, four women-only and four men-only groups), with 176 women and 174 men, reveals that collective marketing improves women's access to agricultural production and market information.

Development Organization (CEDO), a project partner and private seed company. CEDO deals in bean seed production and supplies bean seed on credit to farmer groups to produce grain on a written contract basis. Farmers undertake bean production individually but sell them collectively. At the time of marketing, CEDO recovers the money for seed lent to farmers and buys any excess grain.

Emerging outcomes

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the project's interventions in improving women's access to and participation in bean marketing, an end line study was conducted to collect data on men and women's participation in bean production and marketing, and their access to market information. Twelve focus group discussions (FGDs) – four mixed, four women-only and four men-only groups – with 176 women and 174 men were also held. Individual interviews were sought with women who had embraced the idea of collective marketing in order to gain deeper insights into their project experiences.

Collective marketing increases bean sales and income for women

After promoting collective marketing and aggregation at farmer group level, there was a noticeable improvement in women's participation – both individually and with men of the same household – in bean marketing, which increased from 50.4% to 55% (Figure 1).

The beans were sold at UGX 2,000 (US\$0.55) per kg (UGX 300 [US\$0.10] higher than the market price) and payments were instantly made to each of the farmers as owners of the beans. Women who had participated in bean marketing or sold their beans all together for a higher price, said during the FGDs that they were very happy with this system. Furthermore, there was a general consensus during the sex disaggregated and mixed FGDs that women would now participate in bean marketing.

"I am so thankful to the precooked bean project. Before, I used to sell my beans individually at farm gate to middlemen, since there were no other buyers. The best price I ever received from a bean sale to a middleman was UGX 1,000 (US\$0.27) using inaccurate weighing scales. But now, I sell beans at UGX 2,000 (US\$0.55) which has enabled me to meet my household needs and due to these benefits, I have adopted bean farming as my business."

— Mrs. Annet Namirimu, 40 year old farmer, Mubende district

Enhancing the dissemination of best agronomic practices among women farmers

Through face-to-face interactions, live broadcasts and recorded radio programs, the project provided training to men and women farmers on the best agronomic practices for bean production, and on post-harvest handling and marketing techniques. The recorded radio programs enabled women – who could not always listen to live programs due to time constraints and limited radio access – to access the information. Through group meetings and exchange visits, farmers were also able to share their own experiences. This greatly helped women farmers with constrained access to extension services to receive information on best agronomic practices. For example, the number of women using fertilizers (mostly



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The volume of beans sold by women increased by 8.3% between 2014 and 2016

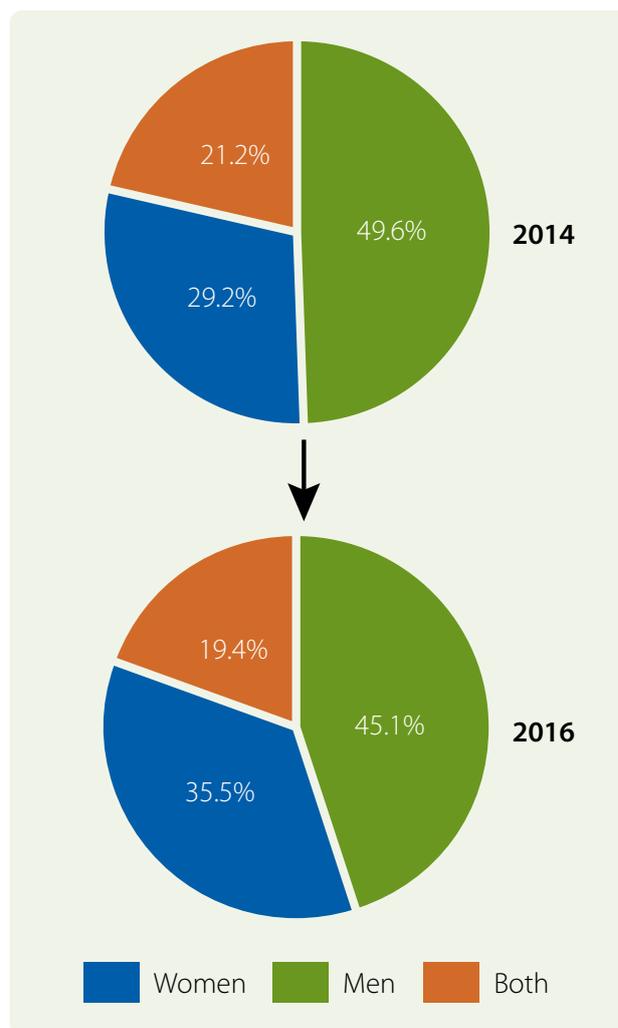


Figure 1: Sex disaggregated analysis of men's and women's participation in bean marketing in 2014 and 2016

foliar fertilizers) and those undertaking pest and disease management increased from 27.8% and 38.3% prior to project interventions, to 64.24% and 70.88%, respectively.

“Before I started selling through the group it was hard for me to access information and my harvest was not good, but now I can easily interact or consult with fellow members and instantly get the information I require. This has resulted in an increase in my harvest.”

— Nabikolo Monica, 29 year old farmer, Kirangira farmers group, Kiboga district

Improved access to and ownership of resources

With the increased income from bean sales through collective marketing groups, women have been able to acquire agricultural assets and do more with them. They have purchased and rented plots of land for production, and are able to buy and own large livestock such as cattle. This has become possible due to women’s increased self-sufficiency, improved bargaining power within the household, and greater control over their income.

“When women have money and control over it, they can easily buy whatever they want.”

— Ms. Rose Nansamba, farmer, Mubende district

Other women farmers shared similar perspectives. For example, Ms. Florence Nakanwagi, a project beneficiary, said she was able to buy a cow from bean proceeds; she says the cow will provide additional income from milk sales and also milk for the family.

Although there are clear benefits of women’s increased participation in bean marketing, there were some challenges that emerged within households. From the gender disaggregated and mixed FGDs, it was understood that in many households where women sold their beans through the group, men withdrew

financial support to their wives. In such cases, women were forced to pay for outgoings usually covered by men including school fees, hospital bills and general household needs. In other instances, men borrowed money from their wives and never paid them back. During men-only FGDs, the farmers claimed to intentionally ignore their monetary responsibilities to ensure their wives spent the money they earned on requirements concerning all household members.

Conclusion

While some household challenges emerged from collective marketing, women were able to participate in this male-dominated activity and were able to benefit from the income generated from bean marketing. For those women empowered to manage an increased income, they were able to purchase and own additional agricultural resources such as land and livestock. Therefore, the modalities of replicating and increasing women’s participation in marketing, and enhancing the benefits of collective marketing – especially for women – need to be further explored.

A gender responsive seed credit model allowing fair access to quality bean seed whenever required, coupled with collective marketing and the promotion of farming as a family business, will create even greater benefits to women farmers and their households. For collective marketing to become a sustainable practice and to maintain harmony within households, more men should be encouraged to join groups, promote bean growing as a family business, and support intra-household cooperation and sharing of responsibilities among men and women. Additionally, there is a need to sensitize men and women farmers to the important roles women can play in a household if they are given the opportunity and empowered economically.



Researchers screened beans that cook faster and selected 12 for production



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Women's average incomes from the sale of beans increased from US\$126 to US\$170 between 2014 and 2016

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