

Title: Understanding gender relations in livestock value chains

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ABSTRACT

The livestock sector plays a vital role in developing economies and particularly in Africa where pastoralism constitutes a significant share of gross domestic product (GDP) in many countries and livestock production is extensive but unevenly distributed across the continent (Livestock Data Innovation in Africa (LDIA), 2010; Behnke and Muthami, 2011). In rural Africa, livestock is a key livelihood resource for many communities who depend directly or indirectly on livestock for sustenance (milk and meat), crop production (animal traction and manure), income generation and asset building (FAO, 2012). Rural women contribute to livestock production and management systems; as small livestock keepers but also with their involvement in various activities necessary to bring livestock products to final consumers (IDRC, 2000; FAO, 2011).

While women's role in livestock-related activities is no longer a matter of debate, the fact remains that men still dominate farming and livestock-related markets in rural areas across Africa. Gender inequality continuously hinders women's participation along the entire livestock value chain. This can be primarily attributed to multiple constraints (e.g. access to capital, cultural values and norms, limited skills, decision power and mobility, etc.) faced by women in accessing, managing and controlling livestock assets and production (see Mupawaenda *et al.* 2009; Njuki and Sanginga, 2013; Jeckoniah *et al.* 2013). Additionally, the limited participation of rural women in livestock value chain activities results from a fundamental misunderstanding of gender relationships but also the socio-economic and cultural roles of livestock at the household and community levels (Laven *et al.* 2009; Coles and Mitchell, 2011).

Promoting inclusive and equitable growth of the livestock sector is critical to create and sustain livelihoods in rural communities. This requires formulating a policy agenda that contributes to facilitating a greater participation of disadvantaged population groups, particularly women in livestock value chains. A range of policy approaches have emerged; suggesting different options for providing smallholder farmers with basic production inputs, for facilitating their access to services and output markets and for supporting their sustainability and competitiveness in the long term (Dorward *et al.* 2004a,b; Pica-Ciamarra, 2005; Pica-Ciamarra and Robinson, 2008). While these are imperatives for improving livestock contribution to household incomes, livestock policies may not be fully effective without accounting for the gender dimensions at stake (gender-aware approach) and integrating gender equality goals (gender-centered approach) in the policy design process (Njuki and Miller, 2013). This is particularly challenging for policy makers and key stakeholders in the sector owing to the scarcity of sex-disaggregated data to show on the one hand, gender disparities in access, control and management of livestock assets; and on the other, distinctive but complementary roles in livestock production and marketing.

This paper aims to analyze the livestock value chain with a gender lens; specifically identifying gaps and critical constraints for gender groups. This will be achieved using a gender-sensitive value chain analysis as a tool for conceptualizing potential interactions of men and women with livestock-related markets based on the various dimensions on which gender inequalities and opportunities operate (World Bank & IFAD, 2008). Ultimately, the conceptual framework should provide an avenue for simulating policy alternatives that will best address gender inequities in livestock production and marketing systems (Coles and Mitchell, 2011).

Keywords: Gender, livestock, value chain, policy design

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