

## SYNTHESIS REPORT

# VALUE4HER

AGRA Country office in Uganda launched the Value 4Her initiative on 7th May 2021 in Kampala. A total of one hundred and twenty-five (11M, 114 W) participants took part in the hybrid networking event. The event brought together leading women in Agri-enterprise, agricultural finance, and policy to foster stronger networks, identifying needs and opportunities to strengthen women's involvement in agribusiness and increase awareness of the VALUE4HER initiative.



## Background

Women account for 56% of agricultural labor nationally in Uganda and an estimated 60% of labor in the production of roots, tubers, and legumes<sup>1</sup>. Despite their significant role in agricultural production and post-harvest processing, Ugandan women lag men in the agribusiness sector. Most women are engaged in production-related enterprises that serve local markets, with relatively few women owning businesses that access high-value markets. The gender gap in agribusiness in Uganda is attributed to constraints and barriers women face in accessing productive resources (land, labor, technologies), which results in women's lower productivity, and their limited access to finances to start and expand their business, markets, information and technical and business support. While male entrepreneurs face most of these structural constraints, women are subject to additional constraints and barriers rooted in how they are socialized and how society perceives them, which restrict their opportunities.

## Underlying constraints and barriers to women's involvement in agribusiness

**Low business acumen:** In Uganda like most African Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, stereotyping of gender roles is contributing to low aspiration about Agripreneurship. This is attributed to the way women are socialized in terms of their ability to choose and act (agency), which partly reflects foundations laid earlier in their lives. Consequently, Ugandan women have low confidence and reluctance to take risks which limits them to smaller, less profitable enterprises and prevents them from targeting larger and high-value markets. Lack of confidence and knowledge makes women Agripreneurs less likely to register and formalize their business and less successful in engaging with market actors and business support services.

Importantly, women's reproductive roles leave them with little time to devote to establishing and expanding agribusinesses. Further, they have limited mobility due to cultural institutions and suffer gender discrimination and sexual harassment when they venture into the business environment. These have negative impacts on women's Agripreneurship performance.

**Limited technical skills:** Women particularly in rural Uganda have limited skills such as financial literacy, negotiation, market assessment, risk management among others. Thus, they are not able to adhere to product quality standards that are required to engage in Agripreneurship.

<sup>1</sup> Palacios-Lopez A, Christiaensen L, Kilic T. 2017. How much of the labor in African agriculture is provided by women? *Food Policy*. 67:52-63.

**Limited access to productive assets and resources:** Ugandan women often have limited opportunities to engage in commercial production because they are unable to own land, have access to small landholdings, and are pushed out by men when an enterprise becomes commercialized. Notably, women producers tend to be neglected by extension and rural advisory services which curtail their access to agro-advisory services, technologies, exchange of knowledge, and value addition.

**Limited access to finance:** women Agri-enterprises tend to earn lesser incomes, translating to smaller savings to invest in Agripreneurship, and are less likely to apply for loans from financial institutions due to lack of collateral and stringent requirements by the formal financial institutions. Most Ugandan women rely on savings-led microfinance approaches which only provide small amounts of capital.

**Limited access to networks and information:** Women's groups and collectives are widespread in Uganda and provide space for women to share experiences and platforms for savings, welfare, training, and other activities. However, these groups often do not have vertical networks high tier SMEs, they lack the collective bargaining power and resources enjoyed by larger producer associations which tend to be dominated by men. Women Agripreneurs are often unable to access market information or even engage with high-tier SMEs who lack awareness and access to communication technologies and channels. Fewer Ugandan women compared to men own smartphones, and in 2019, 13% of Ugandan women compared to 34% of men used mobile internet<sup>2</sup>. A recent increase in the cost of internet use is likely to reduce rural women's access to the internet and market information.

**Limited government support:** unfavorable policy and regulatory framework that does not support the agricultural sector to transform into Agri-enterprises such as extension, incentives to access to digital technologies, and affirmative action for access to markets towards women in agribusiness.

## Opportunities

While many initiatives exist in Uganda to support women in agribusiness, particularly at the production level, participants identified the following areas of opportunities:

- Beyond production opportunities in agricultural value chains for women such as input provision, aggregation of agricultural products (milk collection centers, animal feed factories), service provision such as post-harvest operations, supply of post-harvest equipment, wholesale, and formalized cross border trade.
- Resource-saving and digital technologies such as hydroponics and greenhouses to address women's limited access to land, labor, and information.
- New ways of organizing women producers to access and use production and post-harvest equipment and technologies such as renting equipment from service centers.
- Strengthening women's groups in all areas networking with other groups and producer associations and engaging with market actors and service providers.
- Supporting women to join and play a stronger role in mixed-sex producer associations and trade and business associations.

<sup>2</sup> GSMA, 2020. Connected women: the mobile gender gap report, 2020. <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/GSMA-The-Mobile-Gender-Gap-Report-2020.pdf>.

## What needs to happen?

**Capacity development:** Develop the capacity of women entrepreneurs in technical, business (business management, market intelligence, customer service,) and “soft skills” such as confidence, and public speaking which will take a long-term approach that goes beyond training. Based on the experience of initiatives like the Gudie Leisure Farm<sup>3</sup>, capacity development may take 7-10 years, focusing on mentoring, skills development, handholding, and follow-up.

**Aggregation:** Strengthen women producer groups by providing training and support on group management and dynamics, while also creating a critical mass of women entrepreneurs with increased bargaining power within groups, producer associations, or through networks; Furthermore, mentor women Agripreneurs into participating in both local and regional markets profitably.

**Gender-responsive financial and business support services:** Encourage financial institutions to develop packages and products to meet the specific needs of agribusinesses and women entrepreneurs by making deliberate efforts to integrate gender in product design, for example, providing concessional financing at serviceable rates. More so, expose women agripreneurs to friendly financing and credit opportunities that exist.

**Policy implementation:** Assess how policy implementation, or lack of it thereof, disadvantages women entrepreneurs and where they exist, remove legal constraints and regulatory implementation impediments to women’s involvement in the business arena. Enact specific policies to support women’s greater involvement in agribusiness e.g. public procurement quotas, incentives such as tax rebates for women-owned businesses.

**Advocacy:** Promote “courageous female leadership” to advocate for women Agripreneurs.

## #VALUE4HER

VALUE4HER is AGRA’s continental initiative, aimed at strengthening women’s agribusiness enterprises and enhancing voice and advocacy across Africa. The initiative is powered by [VALUE4HERConnect](#), Africa’s first Women in Agribusiness digital marketplace, offering integrated business solutions to women companies, to enable them to build visibility, business networks, and collective capital across the continent while facilitating easier connections with buyers, financiers, and other service providers. To join this growing community of women agribusinesses, CLICK on the link <https://value4her.hivebrite.com/signup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://gudieleisurefarm.org/>