

# FAIR *for* ALL



INCLUSIVE AND  
SUSTAINABLE  
AGRICULTURAL TRADE  
AND VALUE CHAINS

Strengthening Grassroots rural  
women's participation and benefit  
in Agri business value chains

ISSUE BRIEF





## BACKGROUND

International and domestic agricultural trade and value chains are recognised as potential crucial engines for developing countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (WTO, 2018). As a commercial model, agri-business value chains create opportunities for everyone to fight poverty and fulfil their economic potential. It provides opportunities to increase incomes, for employment and overall economic growth. For the last two decades, there has been a growing move in developing countries like Uganda to align agriculture with the value-chain model to enhance efficiency in the sector.

The idea of value chains in agriculture illustrates all the activities necessary to move an agricultural

product from production to final consumption.

It is characterised by three main stages: production, distribution, and consumption. On one end are producers – the farmers who grow crops and on the other end are the consumers who “eat, drink, wear and use the final products.” In between are “many thousands of men and women, and small and large businesses” performing distinct but interconnected roles along the value chain by “buying, selling, processing, transporting, storing, checking, value addition, and packaging” the product. In those different value chain stages, there are several actors, with grassroots rural women actively engaging as producers in the production stages of agricultural value chain.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Grassroots rural women play critical role and contribution in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty. Indeed, rural women play a key role in advancing sustainable development goals.

According to the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) report, the agricultural sector continues to be the most important sector in Uganda employing approximately 72% of the population and contributing 32% of the Gross Domestic Product and rural women small holder farmers provide 87 percent the labour in agricultural sector in Uganda (UBOS 2022).

In agricultural value chain process, Grassroots rural women play a very critical role in the pre-production and production stages of the value chain which includes land preparation, planting, weeding, and harvesting. These stages, though very critical, consume a lot of time and energy and reap fewer financial benefits.

The subsequent processes in the value chain relegate grassroots rural women small holder farmers to the margins as the men take over all the final stages that reap financial benefits. Decisions at the post-production phases including for example marketing, price negotiations as well as decisions on what to produce, the quantity to be sold and the use of the proceeds from the sale are usually male dominated.

Unfortunately, the emergence of international trade and global value chains has not created opportunities for many people in the developing world especially the poor, living and working on small agricultural land plots smaller than two

hectares of land, most of these being rural women. Despite their effort in agriculture, rural women continue to face a number of challenges that limit their effective participation and benefit in agricultural trade and value chains including for instance;

- ❖ Existing harmful and discriminatory social and gender norms and practices against women and girls
- ❖ Limited access, ownership and decision making on key productive assets like land or proceeds from the land.
- ❖ Climate change, whose associated disasters like floods and prolonged droughts have adverse effects on their agricultural productivity and livelihoods.
- ❖ They have limited access to markets for their produce, have low bargaining power, low and fluctuating prices for their produce,
- ❖ Exclusion from digital economy
- ❖ Limited access to financial resources like credit, and other productive farm inputs like quality seeds and fertilisers/ counterfeit farm inputs
- ❖ Burden of care work which is largely unrecognized, counted as important to the development of our economies
- ❖ Limited knowledge, skill and capacities in agricultural trade and value chains
- ❖ Unfair and restrictive fiscal laws and policies.





# PROJECT INITIATIVES

To contribute to the mitigation of the above challenges and in order to promote inclusive and sustainable agricultural trade and value chains, Huairou Commission members in Uganda including UCOBAC, together with other grassroots women led organizations in Uganda, facilitated under the OXFAM Novib FAIR for ALL – Power of Voices Partnership, are connecting, empowering and positioning grassroots rural women led civil society to play diverse roles as educators, advocates, monitors, watchdogs etc with the goal of making trade and value chains FAIR for ALL. Over six hundred (600) grassroots rural women farmers, organized in over 30 grassroots women’s groups are engaged in interventions with a goal to (i) Scale up sustainable and inclusive women centered agri-businesses and co creation of alternative business models/practices and (ii) advocate to strengthening regulatory frameworks that prevent rights violation in agricultural trade and value chain and promote women’s empowerment. The interventions include for example;

- ❖ **Capacity building** interventions for grassroots rural women in leadership skills, advocacy and lobbying skills, systemic barriers to women’s economic empowerment like gender and social norms, women’s land rights, resilient agri business and entrepreneurship skills, value addition skilling, market analysis, climate smart agro business practices, financial literacy skills, budget processes, monitoring and advocacy,
- ❖ **Evidence based advocacy and awareness raising** interventions through grassroots women’s action led research, gender audits using tools like the Gender Evaluation Criteria, stakeholder mapping and joint advocacy planning and strategizing,
- ❖ **collective advocacy multi stakeholder engagements** through local-to-local dialogues, grassroots women assemblies, media engagements, development and dissemination of policy position papers, policy briefs, public dialogues, rallies etc
- ❖ **Securing women’s land rights** through documentation and registration of customary land rights using pro poor and gender transformative tools and approaches like the social tenure Domain Model (STDM)
- ❖ **Movement building, partnerships and alliances** through connecting with likeminded groups, organizations, etc for peer learning and collective advocacy.





## POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

It is thus important to promote inclusive and sustainable agricultural trade and value chains that are FAIR for ALL and respect human rights, protect the environment and promote women's economic empowerment. Government, development partners, private sector and other stakeholders should;

- ❖ Increase investment in local and national value chains that benefit grassroots rural women farmers.
- ❖ Promote development programs that extend financial incentives to grassroots rural women farmers to facilitate their effective participation and benefit in agri business value chains.
- ❖ Capacity building and skilling of grassroots rural women in agribusiness value chains.
- ❖ Strengthen grassroots rural women's access to key productive resources like land and other quality inputs like seeds, fertilisers, farm equipment etc
- ❖ Enact and implement fairer fiscal laws and policies as changes in trade, tax and investment policies can allow small scale producers to engage in markets on a more equal footing and fulfil their economic potential
- ❖ Invest in social and gender norms transformation programs to enable communities to adopt more progressive norms and cultures that advance women's rights.
- ❖ Strengthen grassroots rural women's voice and decision making in agribusiness value chain discourse. Grassroots rural women farmers should have spaces and opportunity to actively engage in ways that inform and influence policies/laws, programming, and financing models to be responsive and supportive to their priorities.
- ❖ Promote local practices, build capacities and extend climate action finances and technologies to communities to be resilience to effects of climate change
- ❖ Decrease country's dependency on primary export commodities, and rebuild inclusive, national economies where value is added locally

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

<b>Name of Project</b>	'FAIR for ALL' - Power of Voices Partnership programme
<b>Goal of the Project</b>	Build a civic movement to advocate and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable trade and value chains that respect human rights, protect the environment and promote women's economic empowerment.
<b>How to achieve the Project Goal</b>	Strengthening grassroots rural women's participation, voice and benefit in agri-business value chains
<b>Funding Partners</b>	OXFAM Novib and Huairou Commission

## IMPLEMENTING ORGNISATIONS



**Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare (UCOBAC)** works to promote human rights and improve welfare of vulnerable women and children in Uganda using community-based initiatives.

**UCOBAC is a member of Huairou Commission**, a women-led social movement of grassroots women's groups from poor urban, rural, and indigenous communities, working to position grassroots women leaders and their groups at the centre of decision-making and development.

UCOBAC is partnering with other grassroots women led organisations in Uganda including Slum Women Initiative for Development (SWID) and Action for Women and Awakening in Rural Environment (AWARE Uganda).

