

Gender Sensitive Value Chain Selection: Which Provide Best Opportunities for Women, Fish, Banana or Cinnamon?

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Our main focus was to compare three selected value chains (fish, banana and cinnamon) to identify women's status in each value chain as the chain actor, activity integrator, chain partner and chain co-owner. The specific objectives were to select gender sensitive value chain(s) and to develop empowerment strategies to enhance women's status in each value chain. Rapid market chain analysis was adopted and interviewer administered pre-tested questionnaires, in-depth interviews with key informants and focus group discussions were used as key data collection tools and research was conducted in the Embilipitiya, Matara, Ratnapura and Kalutara districts. Producers (farmers/fishermen) and intermediaries (auctioneers, traders, collectors, wholesalers, different retailers, consumers etc.) of each value chain were considered for the sample as follows; 50 banana farmers and 50 intermediaries, 40 cinnamon farmers and 40 intermediaries and 25 fishermen and 75 intermediaries. Chain Empowerment Matrix was developed based on the activities and power within the value chain, on activities and power within the household and within society as a whole. Chi-square test confirmed significant associations between gender and income for fish and cinnamon value chains. There was no significant association found between gender and income for banana value chain. Female involvement in the fishery value chain was identified as chain actors and activity integrators while females attached to cinnamon value chain were recognized as activity integrators. Female participation in banana value chain was poor and consequently their status was not clearly defined. Fish and cinnamon value chains were discovered as gender sensitive value chains. Transformation of the traditional household caretaker role of women to business caretaker role through strong capacity building programs, developing chain partnerships through sensitization of men, encouragement of women's participation in decision-making through strengthening the organizational capacity of women's group, creating opportunities to co-own enterprises through building direct linkages with other chain actors (including consumer markets) were identified as the empowerment strategies to enhance women's position in the respective value chains.

Keywords: gender, value chain, opportunities, women