

Factsheet midterm findings Global Challenges Programme Call 2



WFE: Women Food Entrepreneurs

Summary

Women Food Entrepreneurs (WFEs) in Kenya and Burkina Faso city slums are found to play an important role in the food and nutrition security of vulnerable urban slum populations. Yet, their added value is low and they form a blind spot in urban food and nutrition policy and agribusiness value chains. They are stuck in survival entrepreneurship. Through building hybrid knowledge, strategic governance, and collective action, WFEs are seeking to advance their entrepreneurship. Co-creation activities initiated by the project involving diverse local stakeholder groups currently focus on: (i) soil and water improvement techniques (ii) new food processing opportunities and (iii) identifying market niches, as sustainable pathways towards more inclusive business models. Where WFEs in Kenya and Burkina Faso struggle with securing land access, yet working on fertile grounds, the WFEs are increasingly pushed to marginal land where water access is difficult.

Interim Research Findings

Mid-way the project the project has developed in-depth understanding of how inclusive business is conceptualized in the scientific literature and how an inclusive business model can be operationalized in a widespread poverty context. Gendered obstacles and constraints are 'external' (poverty conditions, lack of space, resources, secured access to land, farm inputs, potable water, mobility and access to markets, time and financial and physical capital) and 'internal' to the WFE groups (unequal relationships within groups). Opportunities to overcome these include women's indigenous and sensory knowledge of soil and food quality and cultural tastes, food processing and preservation techniques, and basic understanding of what a nutritious food plate contains. Current agricultural management practices range from inter-cropping to mixing chemical fertilizer with organic compost, prove ineffective. Challenges include WFEs incomplete knowledge of soil amendment practises and techniques (incompatible practises are applied to solve soil fertility problems; organic compost mixed with chemical fertilizer in wrong quantities), travelling of knowledge in small social circles, combining household chorus and childcare with farming and food business (esp. for single mothers), access to market information and durable business partners.

Best project practices

- Working with *pre-existing WFE groups* => through co-creation shift power of knowledge imbalances in urban food chain and policy;
- Co-creation by project and WFEs of *evidence-based capacity building and communication tools* of entrepreneurship courses;
- *Cross-fertilization* through site visits to show-case the work of WFEs and best practices by WFEs – esp. processors and sellers;
- The *role of local project and external partners* is critical in establishing longer-term relationships and thinking beyond the project;
- Making *contribution of WFEs* to urban food security visible and valued => filling-in the blind spot on urban policy agenda's & agribusiness sector;
- Affiliation with *local research institutions to share and validate test results* (labs. etc.) and creation of "*critical friends*" around the project.

Messages to

A) Actors from private sector:

- WFEs are largely survival-entrepreneurs, but many seek to transform into growth-oriented entrepreneurs.
- WFEs hold sensory and indigenous knowledge on soil management and food production

and processing techniques that is largely undocumented. Hybrid food processing techniques could resolve the problem of fresh foods going to waste.

- Strengthening WFEs in the value chain contributes to the local economy.
- Women in the local and regional markets could benefit from better-visited spots in local markets and lower market fees. Their small-scale initiative to turn market food waste into organic compost provides a business opportunity that can be upscaled.
- WFEs lack an inclusive business environment in which they can link-up with local institutions and businesses to market their produce and share their knowledge with.

B) Civil society and practitioners organizations:

- WFEs residing in informal urban settlements often engage in group processing and/or marketing to negotiate better access to land and markets, and manage risks.
- Groups of mixed composition (women and men) with women in leadership roles, facilitate awareness-raising of gender barriers and constraints and identification of joint opportunities and development of collective strategies beneficial at individual, household and group level.
- Exchange between WFEs enhances shared knowledge of soil management and food production, processing and marketing techniques that are innovative and sustainable.

C) Policy makers:

- WFEs experience gender specific barriers and constraints that hamper their business development. WFE's inclusive business development requires awareness, gender-aware policy measures and instruments.
- WFEs often produce food on marginalized and contested land plots – this hampers their business development and implies livelihood risks.
- Policies aiming for increasing quantity and quality of local food commodities produced, added value and income of WFEs contribute to food and nutrition security of vulnerable populations.
- Formality of WFE groups facilitates their access to market opportunities and finance
- Secure and formalized access to land, by individual WFEs and groups, contributes to food and nutrition security of vulnerable populations in the city and enable an orientation towards growth instead of survival-entrepreneurship.

Knowledge products

- [Policy Brief #1](#) (Jan 2018); [Policy Brief #2](#) (April 2018); [Policy Brief #3](#) (June 2018)
- [WFE Project Newsletter #1](#) (May 2018)
- [Scientific article Inclusive Business](#) (March 2017)
- [Stakeholder report Burkina Faso](#) (Feb 2017)
- Project surveys (2016 & 2017):
 - [Food and nutrition baseline survey report - Kisumu](#)
 - [Geochemical survey rocks and quarries around Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso](#)
 - [Geological survey rocks and quarries around Kisumu, Kenya](#)
- [Podcast "Hope in Kisumu"](#) (2017), [Seasonal Calendar #1](#) (2018), [Project brochure](#) (2018)
- [Five Master theses](#)

Knowledge networks

[EADI](#) - [INCLUDE](#) - [The Broker](#) - [AgriProFocus](#) - [NAFTC](#)

Co-creation

In the process of knowledge sharing and laying the foundations of co-creation, local government and private sector stakeholders have become more attuned to WFEs diversified priorities and needs to enhance food commodity added-value, food security and income opportunities. On their sides, WFE groups have become more aware of the commonality of the obstacles and constraints that are shared across different groups in producing, processing and marketing food commodities in the urban and peri-urban slums. This has induced them to seek strength in the collective by identifying and establishing new linkages, with other WFE groups, private business and local government stakeholders. Finally, it is fair to conclude that all stakeholders involved have developed new understanding about a range of sustainable soil amendments that can be locally sourced, either from organic manure that some WFEs self-produce already, or from local mines in the form of rock dust (that is now a waste product). The project is now in the process of testing these soil amendments, separately and in different combinations. Soil characterization and rock dust analysis results have been shared with the WFE groups and local government and business stakeholders.

Consortium Partners

- [Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research](#) (NL)
- [Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics](#), University of Amsterdam (NL)
- [Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship](#) (Kenya)
- Victoria Institute for Research on Environment and Development (Kenya)
- [Études Actions Conseils](#) (Burkina Faso)
- [Institute of Soil Science and Site Ecology](#), Technische Universität Dresden (Germany)
- [Royal Tropical Institute](#) (NL)
- [Institute de Recherche en Sciences de la Santé](#) (Burkina Faso)
- [Agro Food and Technology Centre Africa](#) (NL)
- [BodemBergsma](#) (NL)

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Project website

- [F&BKP Research Project page](#)