

CSIR-STEPRI POLICY BRIEF



Inclusive development and empowerment outcomes by agricultural partnerships
C. Osei-Amponsah and Annemarie van Paassen

Introduction

Agricultural partnerships are perceived to have the potential to stimulate innovations and improve performance of value chains for development. However, marginalised people (women, migrants, aged and youth) are likely to be excluded from development, because they do not have the capability to partake in partnership interventions. There is concern about the exclusiveness of partnerships, particularly, the lack of involvement and empowerment of resource-poor smallholders. There is a gap in knowledge on how agricultural partnerships in Ghana empower the marginalised and create inclusive development.

To address this gap, a study was conducted under the research project, ‘*Partnership Arrangements as Strategic Action for Inclusive Development: Practice and Outcome*’, implemented by the Wageningen University, CSIR-Science and Technology Policy Research Institute and Institute of Statistical and Social Research, University of Ghana. The study sought to generate insights on the intentions and actual enactment of inclusive development, as well as the empowerment outcomes generated for and by various smallholders from four (4) agricultural partnership cases, in export (cocoa) and food (cassava and soybeans) value chains.

Conceptualisation and Methods

Inclusive development implies building the capacities of the historically marginalised group to expand their assets and capabilities to benefit from development activities in a way that impacts positively their livelihoods. Empowerment is the improved capacity of a person to make effective choices. This is determined by the inclusiveness of the opportunity structure of an agricultural partnership, and the human agency (skills and assets) of smallholders. The analytical framework (Figure 1) provides the definitions of the key concepts used to generate insights on inclusive development.

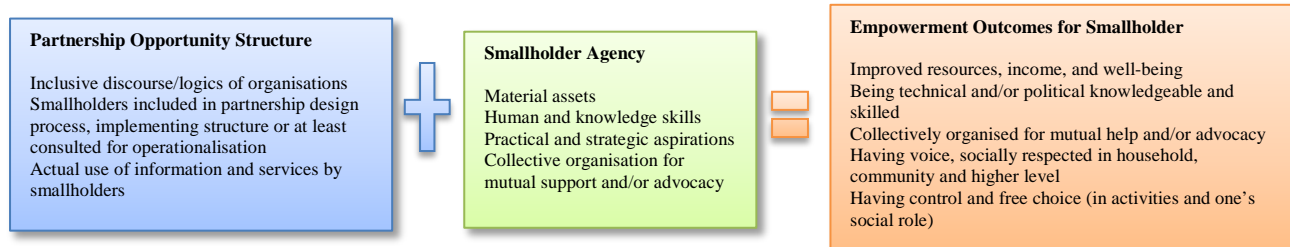


Figure 1: Analytical framework (adapted from Heeks et al 2013; Alsop and Heinsohn 2005)

The study used qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect empirical data during April 2015 to December 2016, and then February to March 2018. The partnership cases were purposively selected: the farmers had benefitted from the partnership and comprised relatively marginalised smallholders. For CORIP-EMFED, CoS-SIS, 2SCALE-SEND and DONATA the following communities were studied respectively: Assin Fosu, Kuano, Kpandai and Wenchi. Data were collected through desk reviews, personal interviews, focus group discussions and surveys using semi-structured questionnaires. The data collected were analysed based on the main concepts to show the opportunity structure implemented by the different partnerships, the agencies of the beneficiary smallholders and subsequent empowerment outcomes that evolves. CORIP-EMFED and 2SCALE-SEND formed public-private partnerships (PPPs), while CoS-SIS and DONATA¹ operated on the basis of innovation platforms (IPs).

¹ CORIP (www.solidaridadnetwork.org/regions/west-africa); 2SCALE (www.ifdc.org/ghana); CoS-SIS (www.cos-sis.org); DONATA (www.fara-africa.org/donata)

Analytical tables of the findings

Opportunity structure of the 4 partnerships

	Cocoa export sector		Food sector	
	PPP CORIP/EMFED	IP CoS SIS	PPP 2SCALE/SEND	IP DONATA
<i>Logics leading organisations, and subsequent partnership aim</i>	Sustainable sourcing through outreach services to smallholders. Implied focus on fair benefits to smallholders, but no explicit focus on marginalised.	Institutional change to increase space for manoeuvre for smallholders, but not specific to the marginalised	Grassroots development coupled with market clustering. Special attention to bottom-of-pyramid and the marginalised.	Agricultural development food sector through multi-stakeholder learning approach. No explicit focus on the marginalised. Food sector is more of interest to poor subsistence farmers.
<i>Inclusion smallholders in design, organisation partnership, and need consultation</i>	Focus on mobilisation of cocoa companies. No inclusion in design or structure. No explicit consultation smallholder needs, but project managers at the local level have contact with them	No inclusion in design; obligatory inclusion in IP and consultation during scoping study and multi-stakeholder workshop to define priorities.	No inclusion in design; envisioned inclusion in partnership not possible due to weak capacity of producer organisations (FBOs). NGOs took leaders of FBOs in planning workshops.	No inclusion in design; IP for problem identification and learning at local level mainly consisted of poor smallholders.
<i>Use benefits by marginalised</i>	Most partner companies catered for cocoa farmers willing to pay for services. EMFED farm maintenance approach benefitted old-aged poor and female smallholders, luring rural unemployed youth into the agriculture to provide labour services.	Larger and smaller farmers benefitted from price increase and transparency, but larger and more specialised farmers benefit relatively more.	Commercial and subsistence farmers, male and female benefit from price and service arrangements. Women benefit from soybean khebab training and family gender programme.	Autochthone farmers more interested in cashew production; hence migrant farmers mostly benefit. Attention for cassava processing is especially beneficial for women.

Smallholder agency

	CORIP/EMFED	CoS SIS	2SCALE/SEND	DONATA
<i>Material assets Human and knowledge skills</i>	Community with limited land (< 2 acres) and many internal migrant, old-aged and with poor health.	Mostly internal migrant farmers with fragmented farms, and limited access to inputs.	Relatively young farmers, with considerable access to land for shifting cultivation.	Migrant community with limited land rights. Little education or extension.
<i>Collective organisation for mutual support and/or advocacy</i>	Farmers were not organised for mutual support, or advocacy.	No farmer organisation	Due to previous projects, FBOs with leaders who connect with outsiders to negotiate better services and prices.	Farmers organised themselves in a group to attract attention for outside support
<i>Practical and strategic aspirations</i>	The smallholders involved in the interventions of the partnership aspire to attain high incomes and farm expansion.	Males aspire to attain high productivity for farm investment, housing and transport; while the women aspire household food security and education for their children.	The smallholders engaged with the partnership, aspire for improved productivity for income, food, children needs and school fees.	The smallholders aspire to attain higher incomes to be able to pay children's school fees, to get decent house and transport, and expand their farm and non-farm enterprises.

Empowerment outcomes

	CORIP/EMFED	CoS SIS	2SCALE/SEND	DONATA
<i>Improved resources, income, and well-being</i>	Improved yields and income for old-aged poor smallholders; income for rural youth	Higher off-farm prices provide higher income smallholders	Increased access to services, credit & resources (processing site & equipment) led to higher yields, income, household nutrition and capital investment for men, but mainly women	Access and use of improved cassava cultivars, labour saving production and processing. Leading to more income, to pay for land and labour (by men, but especially women)
<i>Being technical and/or political</i>	Rural unemployed youth get skilled in modern agricultural techniques	-	Male and female farmers have more knowledge & skills related to agricultural production, marketing,	More knowledge and skills on agricultural production and processing practices (for men, but

<i>knowledgeable and skilled</i>			finance, business management	with women benefitting more on training in good practices of gari processing)
<i>Collectively organised for mutual help and/or advocacy</i>	-	-	FBOs internal service delivery is well-structured and leaders know how to negotiate with buyers, local NGOs and credit union leaders.	Processing cooperative has started, and payments of dues initiated for social support and family welfare.
<i>Having voice, socially respected in household, community and higher level</i>	Old-aged male and female farmers as well as youth contribute more to household income, and get respect and voice in household decision-making	Higher income gives more respect in household and community, but resource endowed farmers remain leaders.	More respect and voice for women in household through household financial contribution. More respect and voice (for men, but especially women) in community	Male and females increasingly contribute money and get more respect in the household (especially women). Women have more processing/marketing linkages and respect in the community
<i>Having control and free choice (in activities and one's social role)</i>	Old-aged poor male and female farmers have control over work schedule and choice for leisure, child care or other income generating activity	Women use increased cocoa revenue to pay field labour and start petty trade and processing or take more leisure to care for children.	Less household chores for women. Increased income enough to diversify economic activities or attain more leisure	Ability to pay for labour services in production and processing (mainly for women), to have time for other remunerative activities, childcare, leisure.



Conclusion

The discourse of the diverse partnership initiators showed gender and marginalised-neutral stances, which means one might overlook the marginalised. In our study, CORIP and DONATA initiators primarily focussed on agricultural development, rather than (resource-poor) smallholder empowerment. CoS SIS and 2SCALE initiators explicitly aimed 'to improve the space of manoeuvre for smallholder development' and 'grassroots development' respectively, but it was only 2SCALE that added a concern for bottom-of-pyramid, gender and the marginalised. None of the initiating organisations invited (poor) smallholder representatives to join the project design deliberations. This means that project goals and methodologies were set without smallholder inclusion. However, in line with their discourse/logics CoS-SIS and 2 SCALE tried to include FBOs representatives in their IP and cluster structure. As there are no strong FBOs in the villages of Ghana, this was a challenge for both partnerships. They tried to resolve this through the mobilisation of committed leaders of weak FBOs or inclusion of FBOs supporting NGOs. In the end DONATA was most successful with respect to poor smallholder representation in their IPs, as a logical consequence of their local multi-stakeholder learning approach in the informal food sector. The CoS-SIS and DONATA IPs started with participatory scoping studies and stakeholder deliberation, while the 2SCALE PPP consulted smallholder perspectives via participation of FBO leaders in planning meetings. CORIP initiators based their project design on an expert assessment, and engaged with private companies and public policy officers in the cocoa sector to get their commitment. Through a scoping study they consulted cocoa smallholders, to understand their production challenges. In sum, some efforts for smallholder inclusion in decision-making was done but at a relative late stage, and due to weak smallholder representation their influence was limited.

Community level studies showed that all four partnerships had an eye for and served smallholder incomes, including the resource-poor migrants. CoS-SIS managed to influence the cocoa price setting mechanism for increased prices and therewith farm revenues, while the other partnerships provided opportunities for sustained smallholders access to inputs and agricultural training to improve agricultural productivity. These general measures usually benefit resource-endowed commercial farmers somewhat more than marginalised farmers with a diversified livelihood. The partnerships in the food sector had to tackle marketing constraints and both launched food processing initiatives that specifically benefitted women. They also explicitly worked on farmers capacity building and organisation (strategic empowerment), as a way to create

more sustainable market structures. CORIP (EMFED), as a service delivery model was an intriguing exception, as their innovative farm maintenance services benefitted poor, old-aged farmers (male and especially females), while luring the large cohort of poor unemployed youth into the agricultural profession.

Interviewed smallholders were mainly migrants, with very limited access to land and inputs. They had no strategic political but only practical material aspirations such as improved income, farm expansion, payment of school fees and decent housing. If they organise themselves in groups, it is mainly to attract outsider support. However, 2SCALE showed that capacity-building for a well-structured FBO with leaders negotiating service and market-relations is feasible. Especially when farmers know it is critical, like in the informal domestic food sector, which lacks processing capacity and stable market relations. With increased access to inputs, skills and remunerative prices, male and female farmers attain higher income and more social respect and voice. They reinvested part of the increased income in agriculture (males), processing and petty trade (females), or child care and leisure (old aged). This means that due to the partnerships most smallholder beneficiaries, though poor, experienced room for manoeuvre, to exert effective choice and control over one's life.



Trained soybean kebab processors in branded apron and T-shirts



School children buying soybean kebab



Promoting the eating of soybean kebab in primary schools



Recommendations to policy makers

- When organisational discourses do not explicitly integrate concerns for gender and the marginalised, it is easily possible to overlook these aspects during the design, in the partnership structure and focus. Inclusive development requires us to remain explicit, alert and creative in integrating considerations of inclusion in partnership activities. In-depth knowledge of a situation, coupled with creativity may lead to innovative approaches like the farm maintenance services offered by CORIP (EMFED).
- FBOs capacity building and representation at partnership design, organisation and implementation remains a long-term challenging but important process. It is not an end in itself, but a means to ensure partnerships provide the fair support for smallholders to increase income and effective choice within one's life. Committed, integer 'spokesmen' may help out on an ad-hoc basis, but their voice gets powerful when backed by a strong smallholder constituency. Ghana does not have many strong FBOs, but they are needed for inclusive partnerships and the creation of stable and fair market relations.
- FBOs capacity building does not automatically serve the interest of the marginalised smallholders, as the larger commercial farmers tend to take the lead. It is therefore essential that diversity of position and interests are discussed and well-catered for in the FBO structure. Gender and inclusive development should be made explicit.
- The creation of an enabling context (off-farm price increase, provision of inputs, knowledge and services) supports smallholder development, though the resource-endowed farmers might benefit relatively more than the resource-poor. Explicit attention to sectors or economic activities of the marginalised (e.g. food crops and processing for the women) might strike the balance. Note that smallholders, if possible, re-invest profit in agriculture (old and young males), processing and petty trade (females), or child care and leisure (females and old aged). Due to the partnerships most smallholder beneficiaries, though poor, experienced some room for manoeuvre, to exert effective choice and control over one's life.

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Corresponding contact: cdosei72@gmail.com; CSIR-STEPRI Box CT 519, Cantonments, Accra, Ghana; www.csir-stepri.com