

INNOVATION AND MOBILIZATION INITIATIVE FOR FOOD SECURITY (IMSA) PROJECT CASE STUDY REPORT

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About the FSPG Case Study Series

In 2019, the Canadian Food Security Policy Group (FSPG) commissioned a series of six case studies to understand how Canadian investments in agriculture support sustainable development outcomes in West Africa. Six case studies of projects supported by Canadian civil society organizations were selected. These projects showcase how such investments support broad sustainable development outcomes such as gender equality, environmental sustainability and climate resilience, improved livelihoods, and enhanced food security. Case studies were informed by literature reviews of project documentation and interviews and focus group discussions carried out in impacted communities with research carried out by local research teams supported by Canadian and local partners.

The FSPG is a network of Canadian development and humanitarian organizations with expertise in global food systems, and food security in the Global South.

Project at a Glance: Investments in agriculture transform lives

Canadian partner: Mission inclusion (formerly L'OEUVRE LÉGER)¹

¹ In 2019, OEUVRE LEGER became mission inclusion.

Local partners: Action pour la Promotion des Initiatives Locales (APIL), Union des Sociétés Coopératives pour la Commercialisation des Produits Agricoles de la Boucle du Mouhoun (USCCPA/BM) and Association pour la Formation le Développement et la Ruralité (AFDR).

Total project budget for Burkina Faso: CAD \$5,927,672

Duration: 2015 - 2020

Location: Central North, North and Mouhoun Region, Burkina Faso

Current Research location: Central North (Ziniare), North (Ouayigouya) and Mouhoun (Dedougou) Region

Participants: More than 3,000 farmers cultivating cowpeas, sorghum, millet, onions, or livestock in rural Burkina Faso.

Value chains: Cowpeas, sorghum, millet, onions, and tomatoes.

Key objectives: Strengthen agriculture value chains by supporting growth in production through innovative agro environmental practices; increase profitability of activities through more efficient marketing; and strengthen governance and capacity of organizations to increase producers' access to production inputs and efficient start-up systems, especially for women and youth.

Sustainable development objectives addressed: Women's economic empowerment and gender equality, sustainable livelihoods, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience.

Status of the project: The project was still in progress when research was carried out.

BURKINA FASO: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT FOR INVESTMENTS IN AGRICULTURE

The agricultural sector accounts for 40% of Burkina Faso's GDP and employs around 86% of the labor force (PNDS 2016-2020). It occupies a central position in Burkina Faso's socio-economic development, while facing several challenges that limit its full potential. Like many of its African peers, Burkina Faso suffers from underinvestment in this sector in addition to unequal access to agricultural resources and practices. Burkina Faso has limited capacity to make agriculture a lever for socio-economic development. The sector has been unable to attract enough investment to meet nutritional challenges. Land-related issues, particularly with respect to its ownership, present challenges for improved gender equality outcomes, as women are still lagging behind when it comes to its access and/or ownership.

Efforts to improve gender equality have been characterized by investments from development partners, initially largely in education, the creation of dedicated institutional mechanisms and inclusion of gender as part of national development plans. Indeed, initial positive changes in gender mainstreaming resulted from programs funded through bilateral North-South and multilateral cooperation (Ouoba R; Tani. M. Touré, Z, 2003). Given the cross-cutting nature of gender mainstreaming in the development process, the Permanent Secretariat for the Coordination of Agricultural Sector Policies (SP/CPSA) was

set up in 2003 with the aim of coordinating efforts related to gender equality at the institutional level. This included three aspects:

1. the institutionalization of the gender approach through capacity building;
2. support for mainstreaming gender in the development and implementation of action plans; and,
3. taking gender into account in structured partnerships such as between the government and civil society (Ouoba, Tani and Touré, 2003).

Finally, the National Program for Economic and Social Development (PNDES 2016-2020) serves as the overarching development plan for Burkina Faso. It considers gender through its broad objective pursuing sustainable development that accounts for regional specificities, including by promoting local potential for greater spatial equity and social peace.

The organization of rural women has focused on women's economic empowerment. Gender inequality in access to factors of production including land, credit and agricultural inputs has hindered the empowerment of rural women. While research shows that changes are occurring in terms of gender norms around decision-making (Thiombiano, 2014), challenges persist with respect to ensuring men and women benefit from improvements in sustainable agriculture (Veronique et al. 2017).

About IMSA

The Innovation and Mobilization Initiative for Food Security (IMSA) is a five-year initiative by mission inclusion (formerly L'ŒUVRE LÉGER) to support sustainable agriculture in Burkina Faso, Bolivia, and Peru.² With a total budget of CAD \$5,927,672 for activities in Burkina Faso,³ mission inclusion is partnering with three local partners, Action pour la Promotion des Initiatives Locales (APIL), Union des Sociétés Coopératives pour la Commercialisation des Produits Agricoles de la Boucle du Mouhoun (USCCPA/BM) and Association pour la Formation le Développement et la Ruralité (AFDR), to support sustainable rural livelihoods in arid zones in the country. In the regions of North, Boucle du Mouhoun, and North Center and Central Plateau, the project supported the adoption of innovative practices inspired by local priorities through interventions in the cowpea, sorghum, onion and millet value chains, in addition to livestock.

The project takes a holistic approach, drawing on local knowledge and know-how to increase food security for 40% of women, against 60% of men as a target. Mission inclusion's solidarity partnership model strengthens existing farm structures and promotes innovation and mobilization for food security. The model is based on the premise that innovation should build on traditional and local practices and systems that are adapted by producers based on their own analysis of the adaptive potential of new approaches and technologies.

IMSA includes four underlying components for achieving food security:

² L'ŒUVRE LÉGER, recently renamed mission inclusion, is a Canadian civil society organization based in Quebec. The organization supports innovative solutions to sustainable development challenges and mobilizes efforts for the well-being of vulnerable or marginalized people around the world.

³ IMSA's overall budget is \$22 667 670.

- 1) strengthening the value chain through productions, transformation and marketing of agricultural products;
- 2) improving farmers' agricultural practices so that they become resilient to climate change and reduce their vulnerability by increasing their productivity and thus food security;
- 3) strengthening farmer associations in order to better diffuse innovations within these association and ensure their sustainable use;
- 4) strengthening women's roles and position within farmer organizations so that they become leaders in their communities;
- 5) promoting agro-environmental practices among targeted populations so that they can increase their productivity.

Through these underlying components, IMSA aims to empower women and girls by distributing plows, carts and animals (ewes and goats) to women only, enabling them to build up capital. Furthermore, women will have lower input reimbursement costs in comparison to men benefiting from the initiative. This approach takes into account differences in abilities.

IMSA includes a range of specific activities to support its four underlying components.

- Access to inputs:
 - Provision of asset loans such as for poultry, non-mechanized equipment or small consumer durables to encourage joint ownership within families.
 - Subsidized inputs to poor farmers (men and women).⁴
- Access to finance:
 - Financial loans and credit support⁵ available between partner institutions and farmers, both men and women. These loans are made as packages (for seed and other inputs) given to farmers to be fully reimbursed after harvest.
 - Creation of a group bank account to facilitate access to finances from banks, largely for women benefiting from the project.
- Access to new technology and agricultural practices:
 - Facilitating access to biodigester technology systems. The biodigester system utilizes organic waste, particularly animal excreta, to produce fertilizer and biogas. The biodigester aims to produce energy fertilizer for farmlands, and biogas intended for use as fuel for cooking food.
 - Developing accessible and easily replicable farming solutions within the communities. This consists of promoting community-based technology in addition to new technologies and training from technical agents.
- Activities to promote value-addition:

⁴ For example, farmers will give 1,000 CFA (\$2) in return for seed.

⁵ This is a business mechanism which gives credit to the sustainability of the project, the process of given loan, making the company run even after the project

- Developing entrepreneurship through processing. Activities were carried out to promote value-addition for two main products, peanuts and tomatoes, to enable women to increase their incomes.
 - Promotion of activities to stimulate additional income such as livestock rearing; accumulating post-harvest savings; farming out of the rainy season; gardening; and selling compost and agricultural products⁶ to pay for food, health, education, and other expenses.

In addition to these efforts, IMSA also supported water drilling so that rural communities have access clean water. Overall, as it is framed, the project is in line with the country's national economic development plan in relation to food security for all and in particular for children. While IMSA does not specifically target children, it has led to increased food security for women, young people and men in rural areas, in keeping with government priorities.

Research approach and focus

This case study is informed by the ongoing project documentation in addition to surveys, interviews, focus groups and observations in the Central North (Ziniare), Mouhoun regions (Dedougou), and in the North (Ouahigouya). The research team carried out a survey of 240 households.⁷ Among these 240 households, 50% of respondents were female and all respondents were beneficiaries of IMSA, in some way having received loans, a biodigester, or donations. In addition, nine focus group discussions (3 per region) and observations were carried out. Focus groups were mixed with direct and non-direct beneficiaries. The number of participants per focus group was between 10 and 17 people. To better document the impacts of the project, particularly in terms of empowerment of beneficiaries, focus groups were used to unpack the results of the project and document success stories and lessons learned. While the government is not formally involved in IMSA, the research team invited government representatives to provide input on the case study. However, limited availability meant that the research team was unable to meet with government representatives.

Finally, it is worth noting that at the national level, Burkina Faso has been facing increasing issues related to security. This has occurred during initial and ongoing stages of project activities. Nevertheless, the three local partners in different regions are working to ensure activities continue.

The following section outlines innovative and distinguishing features of the project, including how the project was gender transformative, operated according to transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and undertook innovative approaches to partnership and implementation. This research unpacked the reasoning behind why and how changes occurred and to what extent they are sustainable.

⁶ This sale can be done by a group of individuals or individually, depending on the arrangement in the community.

⁷ Including 80 households surveyed by Action pour la Promotion des Initiatives Locales (APIL), 80 households by the Union des Sociétés Coopératives pour la Commercialisation des Produits Agricoles de la Boucle du Mouhoun (USCCPA/BM), and 80 households by the Association pour la Formation le Développement et la Ruralité (AFDR).

Investments in agriculture transform lives

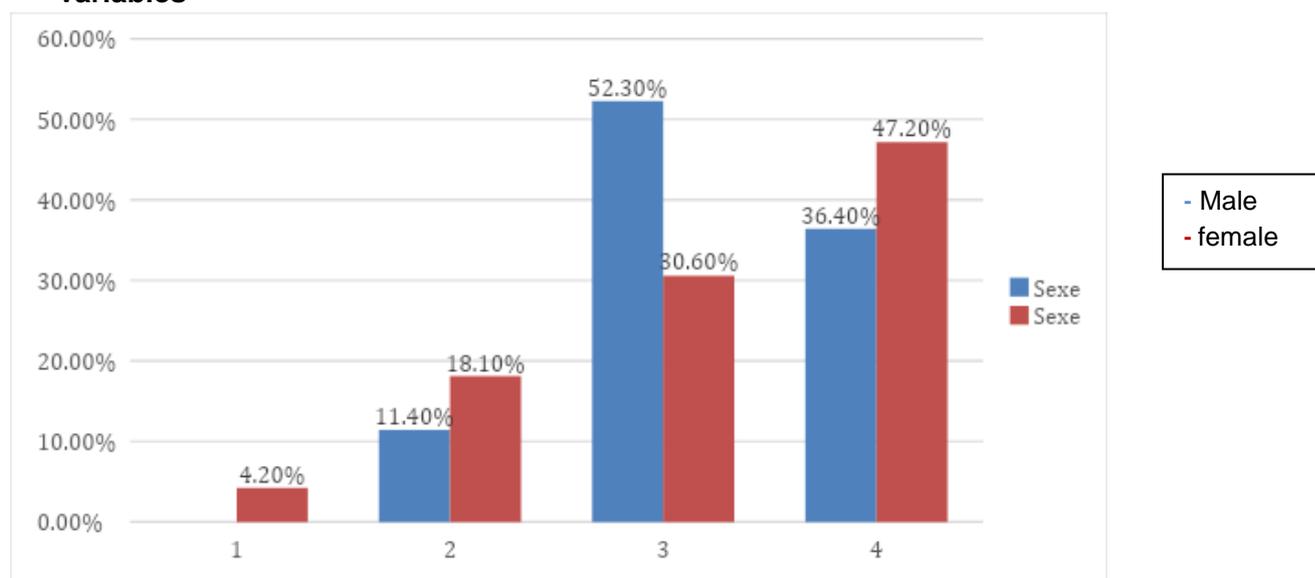
Realizing gender equality and women's economic empowerment and improving livelihoods

Overall, IMSA empowered women and men

The research looked at four variables to understand how project participants, specifically women, were empowered. These included: decision making, access to land and credit, capacities in contributing to family expenses, and being an active member of farmers' organizations. The survey of 240 farmers (see Annex) was intended to evaluate the level of empowerment of participants, recognizing that the four components serve as core issues underpinning the potential of agricultural development for transformative change.

Through the different models of innovation and mobilizations, IMSA brought about some success stories and overall positive outcomes. Training, group discussions, loans, the provision of free inputs, building infrastructure, etc. helped beneficiaries. When asked if they had seen gains on each component, nearly half of the women who responded noted gains in all four areas. Overall, 47 women (20%), compared to 36 men (40%), indicated that they had gained capacities in decision-making, improved access to land and credit, contributed to family expenses, and participated in farmers' organizations. Women highlighted gains in their ability to contribute to family expenses and involvement with farmers' groups in particular. In addition, 30.6% of women indicated there had been improvements in at least three of the areas noted above, while 52.3% of men indicated the same. These results suggest that the project's focus on empowering women was successful overall, with the majority of respondents noting gains in three or more of the four components examined, namely decision-making, access to land and credit, contributions to family expenses, and participation in farmer organizations.

Graph 1: Percentage in terms of empowerment according to selected above variables



Number of areas of empowerment for which gains occurred⁸

Among the 4 capacities cited above, 4.2% of women are empowered with only one capacity, such as decision making or access to land, compared to 0% of men. Only 18.10% of women, compared to 11.4% of men, noted empowerment in only two areas.

Focus group discussions and observations in communities confirmed the overall positive findings in terms of empowerment. Women confirmed that there had been positive changes in their leadership roles in terms of self-confidence, access to facilities such as clean water, means of production, and capacity development through training. Efforts in these areas strengthened their self-confidence. One of the women farmer group leaders confirmed: *“We are now better off than before, however, we need to keep focus on our husbands, respecting them [laugh] so that they support us and we all benefit.”*

In terms of observations in communities, the research team noted that some of the women appeared to have seen gains in their overall livelihoods. For instance, in the peanut butter value chain, a woman made use of biodigester energy to successfully open a restaurant (discussed further below). These achievements were possible with project support and women’s own initiatives.

Finally, project partners reported that about 85% of farmers taking part in IMSA belong to farmers’ organizations and consequently the skillset developed within the farmers’ organizations remains important for every group member, as group settings allow experience and knowledge sharing. One of the respondents noted that *“since the beginning of the project we can see the difference. Yes, we are taking better care of our lands and products. As you can see we have learned about processing groundnuts, we have a unit, we see the benefit [...]”*.

IMSA supported women to navigate local cultural and gender norms to achieve gains in decision-making

The project involved women who brought in their household heads (husbands) as project participants. Cultural norms and practices meant that success for women participants required their husbands to buy into their participation in the project through engagement and support. For example, women who were provided with a biodigester required technical and manual support from their husbands. Material items gained from the project were used in the family households as well as on small agricultural plots. Since livestock rearing is normally a male-dominated domain, it was important for men to be involved in livestock-related activities to ensure efficiencies.

In focus group discussions and individual interviews, women indicated that they wanted their husbands to be part of the greater outcomes sought by the project. Most women who received grants confirmed that they involved their husbands in the process to maximize the loans they received. By bringing in their husbands as project participants, women increased their chances of getting their support and thus promoted teamwork within the

⁸ Includes: 1) decision-making, 2) access to land and credit, 3) contributions to family expenses, and 4) active participation in farmers’ organizations.

family. These men, who are indirect beneficiaries, see in this an opportunity to share the loan and work as a team in the family plot as well as in the women's individual small plots. The loan was seen as an opportunity for both husband and wife to achieve food security and family well-being. Even though husbands were not directly involved in the project as participants, at some point the credit/loans women received from the project partner were used in the family farm, and thus required collaborative efforts between husbands and wives. Such collaborative effort was a success for some families.

While women are now earning their own money and have control over its use, they also know that they are limited by cultural norms within their community. As a result, their position as committed and obedient wives remain the same. In other words, even though women have developed their capacities, and can now take a greater role in decision-making in their homes and can now make money, they remain subordinated and cautious regarding the traditional roles assigned to them. Breaching normative gender rules can lead to an unhappy marriage. Nevertheless, focus group discussions showed that women feel that they are in greater positions of power, where many possible futures are available with respect to decision-making, access to land, access to credits, capacities in contributing into family expenses and being active members of farmers' organizations.

IMSA improved ownership over small and large assets for women

As noted, IMSA has different levels of interventions, including the provision of subsidized seeds and livestock, making financial loans and credit available, facilitating access to biogas technology systems, developing entrepreneurship through processes, and drilling water wells so that rural communities can access clean water for the whole family. These interventions have increased women's ownership, either solely or jointly, over small assets such as poultry, non-mechanized equipment, and consumer durables. Women farmers' groups benefited from joint ownership of large assets for their members such as cows and donkeys. Members can, at any time and according to availability, borrow these assets for immediate and short-term use. In contrast to men, who are heads of households and thus owners of family assets, women are obliged to earn their own money, solely or jointly, to acquire both small and large assets. Overall, IMSA increased the possibility for women to borrow large assets that belong to the group to which they are members, and made it possible for them to own small assets.

IMSA Enabled women to access and manage credit within the household

Another target of the project was access to credit through loans. In Dédougou for instance, USCCPA/BM is facilitating the financial loans and credit support⁹ from partner institutions to farmers, both men and women. IMSA aimed for a target of 40% women participants in this process. Women who were interested were selected from households to be given the loan at the beginning of the rainy season. As a result, women were engaged in the process and responsible for loan reimbursement. Like male beneficiaries, women were trained so that they could effectively manage their loan.

⁹ This is a business mechanism which gives credit to the sustainability of the project.

Most of the women benefiting from financial loans expressed satisfaction at the increase of their overall involvement in household decision-making as well as in overall discussions regarding loans and finances. As the principal beneficiaries, women become a direct point of contact within their families with regards to the loans. Using a local adage, a participant noted: *"It is together that we can lift and place the shimmy,"* meaning that women's involvement is important in supporting their husbands in this aspect to smoothly run the family. Loans were sometimes distributed for both small plots farmed by individuals and family plots. Some women even negotiated loans for their husbands in Dedougou as noted by one participant in the research: *"The loan does help us [a] lot, but some time, it is not enough. We want more and USCCPA/BM refused. We are entitled to half hectare credit. This is not enough [...] this year I negotiated with them and was able to have half [a] hectare more for my husband. We can see the advantage from it."* Rather than only contributing to farming, women were financially empowered, to the benefit of the households and themselves, by bringing their husbands on board.

IMSA increased group membership and collective decision-making despite cautious approaches to women's empowerment in impacted communities

Women involved in tasks such as peanut processing in Ouahigouya or tomato processing in Korsimoro are members of farmers' groups. These groups are very important as they give space for interaction, networking and sharing experiences and strategies.

Sometime, men do not let their wives get involved in these groups, as they are seen as places of 'empowerment and revolt' according to some traditional thinking. One respondent confirmed this: *"You know, one lady from [...] was doing so well and has become empowered. She was travelling all over for training other women [...]. She ended up leaving her husband for another man during one of her training travels and she never came back [...]. You see, that's why no one wants to let his wife gain [a] certain level of empowerment."* This one example negatively impacted women's empowerment in the relevant community with community members still recalling what is regarded as a cautionary tale.

However, IMSA was able to address perceptions and regain a certain level of confidence from project participants in the value of women's empowerment and inclusion in farmers' groups. The approach of the project is to engage with both men and women and to bring them together. For instance, discussions are organized by the local partner, APIL, to discuss collective decision-making and share responsibilities within the families.

Women have participated in different training and interacted through their community and group work. The approach under IMSA has worked well because all the women's farmers' groups put in place are led by women. They value such interactions and group work related to processing and farming. In addition, women played a leading role in drilling water. It appears that women are better water managers than men. According to one village leader, *"When we gave the responsibility of the drilling water management to women, we don't have issue anymore. They are doing very well."*

The women farmers' group for processing, for instance, necessitated finances and management. This brought on more challenges for women, which called for IMSA to provide more capacity building. In Ouayigouya, the local partner, AFDR, put in place a peanut butter processing unit for a women's association, which has now grown and has its own account and manages decisions related to spending. Decisions regarding the use of income generated by the unit are made collectively.

Most of the results from focus groups show that when women generate income from processing, they contribute to household expenses. This collective action from the association is possible due to husbands' understanding and support. Thus, it increases women's opportunities to contribute to the decisions within their families too. *"When you can contribute financially, you become important [...], but you should always remember that you are not household head or this can turn up to a bad result for the household [laugh] we are complementing."* Thus, IMSA helped to empower women, and through this increased their contributions to group work and decision-making as well as improving their participation within households.

Improving livelihoods

Overall, IMSA supported an increase in production (increase in the quantity and quality of products, genetic improvement of livestock); the strengthening of collection and storage techniques (thus reducing losses and obtaining better prices through conservation); and processing and group marketing. The project has also seen gains in savings, achieved through the use of local seeds, natural fertilizers via biodigesters and other technologies, natural phytosanitary products (agroecological), market garden products for consumption, and sales.

IMSA built infrastructure and stimulated income earning to the benefit of communities and individuals

Drilling water wells within communities led to better access to clean water and improved living conditions with less time spent on getting clean water for the whole family. Entrepreneurship activities related to processing contributed to community-based infrastructure. Processing infrastructure is collectively owned and exclusively operated by women, generating additional cash earnings within communities. In addition, by developing accessible and easily replicable farming solutions within the communities, the project has increased sustainability because solutions are endogenous. These solutions consist of promoting community-based technology such as zaï pits, and training from the technical agents. Finally, the promotion of activities to stimulate additional income such as raising livestock; post-harvest savings; farming during the dry season; gardening; and the sale of compost and agricultural products¹⁰ to meet the needs related to food, health, education and other expenses, has helped boost overall living conditions in communities.

At the individual level, while biodigestors produce manure for use in crop farming, the gas (primarily methane) is mainly used as a source of energy for cooking at the household level. As shown below in Table 2, among 240 households, 89 individuals were managing a biodigester, 51 of them women and 38 men, based on the sample of the present survey. The project provided more integrated technology to women than to men. However, despite women being more proactive in managing the technology, the overall upkeep of the biodigesters is the responsibility of both men and women within the household, as noted

¹⁰ This sale can be done in team or individually depending on the arrangement.

above. This mutual ownership of infrastructure at the household level empowers women and augments their self-confidence in engaging with agricultural technologies, which were previously seen as male-only tasks: *“I always [thought] that this [was a man’s] job. I used to see it at Mr [...]’s house. It never attracted my attention at all until now. I became a participant in this project and I was given a biodigester, then I began to take care of it. I see it’s a good thing.”*

Owning a biodigester	Men	Women
Total	38	51

Table 2: The number of women and men owners of a biodigester

A successful case study in Ouayigouya showed a woman who was using the biodigester to produce energy for cooking in her restaurant. She highlighted her appreciation for the contribution of such technology, primarily used to boost farming, in her own non-farming business.

The biodigester, as an integrated technology, could really contribute to making a difference in the agricultural sector, if the technology is well appropriated and enrolls both men and women within households. In this way, they could support each other and benefit from the biodigester at the farm level, as well as at household level by reducing the use of firewood.

IMSA increased access to improved seed varieties and better farming techniques

Project activities led to an increase in access to, and use of, new seed varieties and farming methods and behavior. In addition to increasing resilience in relation to the environment and climate change, discussed further below, the increase in the number of men and women farmers with access to new varieties of seeds improved productivity, both in terms of quantity and quality. Indeed, more women and men can access these seeds through loans or through gifts. Therefore, the different partners are ensuring that the seed varieties they are receiving are released from research and/or are declared quality seeds. In terms of techniques and new ways of managing the farms, in Dedougou for instance, many households have a *Family Farm Notebook* (CEF) in which they note inputs received, the area under cultivation, the cost of inputs, and an operating account that shows the yield produced per producer. The CEF provides information on the gross margin. Overall, techniques and methods have changed. As can be seen in the Table 3 below, the number of women who use improved varieties of seed is higher than those who do not. This clearly shows to what extent women are increasingly adopting improved varieties of seed. Most of the time they are those who have the needed inputs and fertilizers, compared to men.

		Use of phytosanitary product		
		No	Yes	
Use of improved varieties	No	Women	19	5
		Men	16	1
	Yes	Women	69	58
		Men	33	39

Table 3: Number of women compared to men using improved seeds and phytosanitary products

Women and youth were also specifically targeted for training sessions on farming techniques and management. IMSA’s strategy accounts for the domestic, productive and social workload of women, with the aim of improving their participation in training sessions. For the beneficiaries, the focus was on women, resulting in a quota of about 51% of women out of the 1,000 participants, rather than 40% as initially planned in project targets. Strategies were put in place to facilitate women’s full participation in these trainings through childcare sessions.

IMSA also sought the integration of young people in activities in the central North in activities related to the production of tomatoes and onions. The youth benefited from training on seed production to respond to their specific needs and those of the future: *“It’s quite the beginning, but it’s good! We think next year we will better be performed again”* says one young man.

IMSA supported value addition in agricultural value chains

In Boussouma, a tomato processing unit was set up. The purpose of this unit is to allow market gardeners, who are members of the IMSA project partners, to be able to sell their tomatoes easily, and at a fair price. The tomato processing is necessary for the tomato sector, as it gives added value to the product and at the same time allows the beneficiary farmer group to generate revenue for its operations and fight against low pricing. Indeed, as one of the women testifies, *“Our tomato production gives us some returns, thanks to the different technical support we receive from IMSA. [A]t harvest we come out [the] losers when it comes [time] to sell. Ghanaians come to the market and buy at low cost. We are forced to sell off our production because we have no way of keeping them. Now we process [the tomatoes] and we hope to sell [them] at a better price.”* As a result, IMSA has contributed by empowering participants with the choice of when to sell through processing.

Ensuring environmental sustainability and climate change resilience

After four years of implementation, local partners are seeing significant changes in the behavior of rural communities, including those that do not directly benefit from IMSA. This social improvement lies in one of the approaches used for the implementation of the project. The integration of agriculture, livestock and the environment has developed a more efficient production system. Overall, the approach makes better use of natural processes to increase the productivity of the farm while helping to maintain the ecosystem where it occurs.

IMSA supported the adoption of environmentally sound agricultural practices and technologies

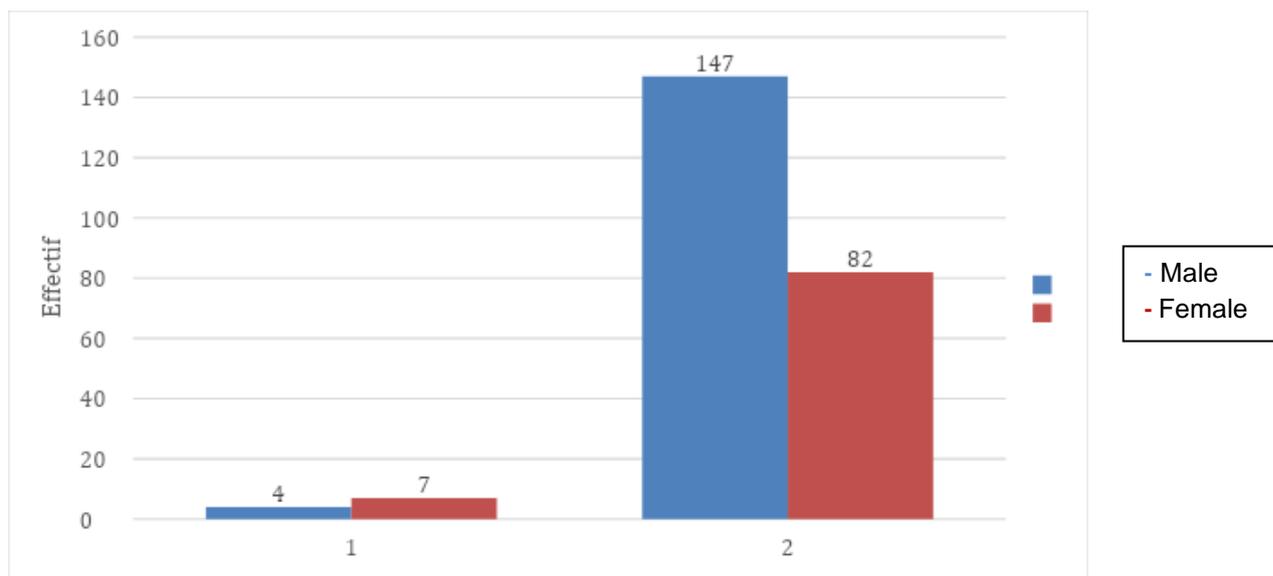
The appropriation of agro-ecological practices by rural communities (soil erosion/water conservation practices, reforestation, etc.), is a major factor in sustainability and in the long-term sustainability of project results. Increasingly, the populations that local partners accompany are showing interest in these practices. All argue that the improvement of yields and the achievement of sustainable food security depends on the well-being of the soil; the better the soil is the more profitable it is. In the area of Bousouma, 50 women have joined forces to overcome degraded lands that are unsuitable for crops in their villages since 2017. This is also the case in the Pissila area, where several producers have come together to recover almost 30 hectares of degraded land. These actions are currently spreading and are showing positive results of the project. The sustainability of these achievements requires the strengthening of materials and equipment adapted for endogenous trainers, who are the relays for the extension agents after the IMSA project ends.

A second factor of viability and sustainability is the biodigester. This technology is becoming more common in the villages. A total of about 300 biodigesters have been set up by the project, and about 100 of these are in non-beneficiary communities. The high up-take of this environmentally sound technology is related to its many benefits (biogas, compost, lighting, animal feed, biopesticide, etc.). The support agents are also model producers who own and use the technology and have distinguished themselves by the proper use and maintenance of the biodigester. During focus group discussions, it was explained that the technology is climate-smart technology which is environmentally sound and technically user-friendly for both men and women. It creates a perfect systemic cycle; nothing is lost, nothing is created, and everything is transformed. One challenge noted, however, is that while biodigesters are deemed useful and of great potential benefit, not all biodigesters work well due to lack of the necessary elements needed (cow dung) to make it run continually. As a result, some biodigesters are not working due to the users' abilities to handle the technology (Table 4).

			Is the technology working?	
			No	Yes
Received Biodigester technology	No	Women	-	-
		Men	-	-
	Yes	Women	9	41
		Men	10	19

Table 4. Experience with biodigester technology

Finally, IMSA supported training in eco-agricultural practices such as zaï and traditional compost, as shown in graph 2:



Graph 2: The number of women who benefited from technical training compared to men

Overall, it appears that new ways of doing and acting are emerging. Climate constraints have led farmers to be resilient. Women are showing that they are motivated to get engaged in climate-smart agriculture and environment protection. The survey revealed increased use of organic inputs (Table 5), improved agricultural practices (Table 6), and decreased use of non-appropriate phytosanitary products (Table 7).

Table 5. Use of organic inputs		
	No	Yes
Women	27	124
Men	17	72

Table 7. Use of non appropriate phytosanitary products		
	No	Yes
Women	88	63
Men	49	40

Table 6. Agricultural best practices		
	No	Yes
Women	66	85
Men	39	50

IMSA's grounded efforts to address climate change impacts in local knowledge and practices

Project partners developed various strategies to address climate change challenges and build adaptive capacity. The approach was based on an innovation process originating within the community and on the improvement and dissemination of traditional knowledge and techniques derived from the experience of several generations of farmers. Implementing partners are thus working on the systematization of technical itineraries adapted to new climate issues, with the aim of developing accessible and easily replicable solutions within the basic communities, so that they benefit the greatest number of people. The focus groups and interviews have shown that farmers are engaged in climate-smart agriculture and that communities are adopting agro-ecological techniques.

IMSA's support for agro-ecological approaches led to improved livelihoods

Through the agro-ecological center of Bissiga, local partners experimented in the 2018 campaign on a new variety of sorghum called "Sariasso 15" which is nutritious for consumption and for feeding animals. One of the leading partner organizations confirmed that *"IMSA gave us opportunities to revisit agro-ecological methods with farmers, ... mostly ... women, who are now more engaged in experimenting many agro ecological methods and practices."*

One of the producers explained how her farming life has changed. *"Last year, in addition to the 0.5 ha where I produced cowpeas, I had 0.25 ha of degraded land that I have worked using agro-ecological methods using organic inputs and practicing techniques as you can see. I obtained about 700 kg of maize and 400 kg of cowpeas. I usually get less."*

Contributions to other development objectives

IMSA supported improved food security for impacted communities

Since the beginning of the project, partner organizations have testified that the populations supported by IMSA are improving their diet by introducing a diversity of healthy and nutritious foods, such as garden produce. Overall, the different innovations developed and implemented during the last 4 years under IMSA contributed to food security in terms of increasing productivity, incomes, and access to nutritious food; increasing resilience to climate change; and developing methods of processing perishable good such tomatoes and peanuts.

IMSA contributed to positive health outcomes

The IMSA project has built enterprises for peanut processing, tomatoes processing, and clean water infrastructure such as drilling water wells. This infrastructure given to targeted communities was also accessible to everyone from nearby villages, increasing IMSA's reach overall. A woman at a drilling site noted that since the well had been put in the community was very pleased because fetching clean water was no longer a task requiring extensive travel. This simultaneously allowed pregnant women easier access to water, as local health centres were advising pregnant women to only consume clean water.

Furthermore, many women believe their family members are in better health than before, especially young children: *“This young man, when he was a child, I used to go to [the] health centre very frequently...now with this [pointing to the water well] his brother never [has to] go to [the] health center”.*

Good practices in project implementation

IMSA worked with local partners to ensure long-term sustainability

The sustainability of the project required a systematic approach. By working closely with partner institutions, IMSA aims to ensure that initiatives will continue. In addition, the project, by building into the existing initiatives, ensures that participants take part in the planning.

IMSA activities were replicated by others

This strategy used by the project was replicable and had an unexpected outcome. Neighboring communities to those supported by the IMSA project have adopted some of the strategies and behaviors of project communities. For example, some producers in neighbouring communities are making use of biodigester technology at their own expense, as revealed in interviews. Indeed, despite project support, the government has been promoting biodigester technologies and their price has been reduced to increase uptake. Biodigesters remain difficult to operate due to the need for large quantities of cow dung to allow the biodigester technology to run smoothly. The project supported some farmers by providing large assets such as cows, but cows were given to project beneficiaries only. Those who are not beneficiaries sometimes find it hard to afford animal dung to run the biodigester. However, with the government support, building the technology itself is almost free of charge.

Lessons Learned

- ***Gender sensitive capacity development approaches and strategies should support the ambitions and concerns of both women and men within their communities.***

As noted throughout, IMSA saw gains in a number of areas of women’s empowerment. However, these gains were also situated in the context of gender norms within the home, including the relationship between husbands and wives and the community. Women understand that their well-being requires that they recognize the fact that their empowerment should not be competitive but complementary. As a result, they took steps to be able to fully enjoy a smooth life change from the project for the benefit of the family by engaging with their husbands and household heads in the project. Indeed, IMSA supported strategies that provided space for women’s empowerment in line with the realities women face from assigned gender roles. The nuanced approach taken by women under the project helped to support decision making by women in the home, the collective and individual ownership of assets, participation in women’s farmer groups, and success stories regarding the right mix of training and inputs. Overall, women were able

to engage their husbands on the project to the benefit of the family while maintaining harmony within their home, a priority for many participants.

- ***Community and individually owned infrastructure are important pathways to improved livelihoods.***

IMSA's investments in community and individually owned infrastructure led to a number of positive impacts on individuals and communities. Access to clean water improved health outcomes and reduced time burdens for women in beneficiary and neighbouring communities. Processing units provided opportunities for value addition in agriculture, increasing earnings and empowering women as collective owners and decision-makers. The biodigesters, individually owned, provided necessary inputs for successful management of the household and farms.

- ***Effective community responses to climate change require local ownership.***

By drawing on new and traditional wisdom and technologies, active ownership over climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability by the community and women has increased. IMSA saw expansion in the use of traditional knowledge as well as the incorporation of new technologies, in particular the biodigester.

- ***The establishment of baselines is critical for understanding the scale and scope of change from investments in agriculture.***

IMSA did not establish clear baselines at the project start. Such information is important for understanding the scope of impacts from such projects. Nevertheless, focus group discussions, interviews, and literature reviews suggest that IMSA has indeed had significant impacts on gender equality, livelihoods, and climate resilience.

- ***The project would have benefited from a systemic approach that sought greater mobilization of national government officers and other partners, particularly in research.***

Given the timeframe of the project and its overall aim, it was expected that the Ministry of Agriculture and the ministry for women be directly associated with IMSA through mission inclusion. Their involvement depends then on the national project partners (Action pour la Promotion des Initiatives Locales (APIL), Union des Sociétés Coopératives pour la Commercialisation des Produits Agricoles de la Boucle du Mouhoun (USCCPA/BM), and Association pour la Formation le Développement et la Ruralité (AFDR). The local partners did not create a systematic strong partnership with the relevant ministries. They sometimes informally invited some local ministry representatives.

Mobilizing national research institutions and universities with expertise in agriculture would have benefited the project, particularly at the inception stage, to establish baselines and support ongoing learning in collaboration with international research partners involved in the project. National partners are very important to bring on board to enhance project sustainability and impact.

Overall, investments in agriculture can benefit significantly by complementing bottom-up approaches (as was the case in IMSA) with more systemic approaches that ensure sustainability.

Recommendations

Several recommendations arise from the research with implications for civil society organizations.

- **Adopt integrated approaches to women's economic empowerment that include men.**

Women still recognize that their well-being requires that they recognize that their empowerment should not compete with men, but be complementary. This was a very important lesson under IMSA. The project sought to be inclusive of both men and women and provided space for women to determine how they can best benefit and engage with husbands. In this sense, IMSA was cognizant of gender dynamics and potential negative impacts that women's empowerment would bring about in an unintended way, particularly in the home. Interventions that aim for inclusive approaches must work to ensure complementarity between men and women in the implementation process. In addition, affording flexibility in projects for women to determine their best path to empowerment within their homes and communities contributes to sustainable results.

- **Enable women to benefit from opportunities for empowerment by identifying and addressing the barriers that prevent participation.**

The investments in community and individual infrastructure that addressed household and community needs supported women's ability to participate in the project. Drilling wells not only led to improved health outcomes, but reduced time burdens faced by women in fetching water, freeing up their time for other activities. The provision of childcare at training sessions recognized an important constraint to participation given that women are responsible for childcare. Finally, the processing units were a practical intervention that also reduced the workload of women and improved their well-being. Interventions in agriculture should not overlook the basic constraints women face, as addressing them is essential for successful farming.

- **Take a holistic approach to agriculture investments including through activities that improve access to inputs, technology, finance, strengthen capacities and add value to agricultural products.**

IMSA included a range of activities that supported overall improvements in livelihoods. Subsidized inputs, access to finance, and technology and training supported improved productivity and quality in agricultural products. The creation of processing units improved the market position for farmers, allowing them to ensure agricultural products were sold at a fair price and created products of higher value.

- **As part of agricultural programming, promote locally relevant technologies and approaches to address the impacts of climate change and assure that approaches and technologies adopted are sustainable.**

Due to climate change and natural disasters, continued support for climate resilient agricultural best practices is not only a very important aspect but also the number one priority for many rural communities. This means that efforts need to be made to use appropriate phytosanitary products and functional biodigestors for ongoing positive results.

- **Couple bottom-up and systemic approaches to transformations in agriculture by mobilizing local communities, partners, government and research partners to ensure sustainability.**

National partners should be brought on board from the conception stage of agricultural projects to enhance the project sustainability. Greater engagement by a range of stakeholders through systemic approaches creates opportunities for synergies with government initiatives and those of other partners. Such approaches also lend further credibility to projects and increase the likelihood of sustainable results.

Validation

After the drafting of a study report, a validation exercise was conducted with participants of the study in respective communities between the 7th and the 20th of January 2020 to provide a summary of key findings. Given that the study was conducted within their respective settings, the community members felt no changes were required. Partner monitoring and evaluation teams from APIL, AFDR and USCCPA/BM were also engaged to confirm the validity of the findings drawn from the study; no changes as a result of this process were requested. An English and French debrief were provided for reference.

Concluding remarks

The field missions for this research study examined the IMSA project model and approach to provide robust evidence on strengths, positive outcomes, and lessons learned. The research assessed the changes and outcomes observed as a result of the project and to what extent these changes or outcomes can be attributed to the project. Overall, the project has contributed to innovations in farming and processing that supported gender equality, improved livelihoods, climate resilience, food security and improved health outcomes. Nevertheless, a key conclusion of the research team is that progress also requires engagement at the systemic level within **farming systems**. This means focusing on the overarching system rather than individual farmers who belong to a specific farming system.

Finally, it must also be kept in mind that women's empowerment is about choice. In rural areas too, women consider a range of factors as they navigate their empowerment. Family life matters. When women's empowerment confronts tensions in the home, some may decide to limit their participation in projects for their benefit. Understanding these dynamics and providing space for smooth, women-owned transitions in homes and communities is key for the success of agricultural programs.

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ANNEX

Focus group guide implemented in French for the actual work

1	Name of village	
2	Types de FGDs (1=male ;2=female)	
3	Date (dd,mm,yyyy)	
4	Facilitator name	
5	Note taker name	
6	Observer name	
7	Profiles of participants and ground reflection on the process of FGD	

Introduction

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak with you today. We are conducting a study on the IMSA project and we are interested in learning more about your experiences with this project in terms of capacity development, climate resilient, empowerment, technics good practices etc.... We ask your permission to record our discussions and take pictures. We assure you that the information you provide to us will be used exclusively for the evaluation purposes. This is not a test and there is no right or wrong answer. The most important thing is that you share what you know freely. Feel free to express opinions and thoughts.

Do you consent to speak with us? Yes No

Background information on FGD participants

N°	Name of participants	Sex (1=male ; 2=female)	Age	Household headship (1=yes ; 0=no)	Marital Status (1=single, 2=married, 3=widow, 4=divorced)	Level of education	Main occupation
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							

Checklist

Major themes	Questions
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What restrictions do people face in your community?

Setting discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1. Restrictions faced by women ✓ 2. Restrictions .faced by men ✓ 3. Restrictions faced by female youth ✓ 4 Restrictions faced by male youth <p>What is IMSA project ?</p>
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Key points for discussions during focus groups

Power and norms

Agency and leadership

Access to innovation

Partnership

Financial inclusion

Market access

Knowledge on Climate change

Tecniques knowned and learn from IMSA

Local ownership over the response to climate change

Climate resilient technology and solutions

Resilience to shocks

Conservation

Food security

Health and nutrition

Inclusion/Leaving no one behind

Questionnaire

Merci de nous avoir donné l'occasion de vous parler aujourd'hui. Nous menons une étude sur le projet IMSA et nous sommes intéressés à en savoir plus sur vos expériences avec ce projet en termes de développement des capacités, résilient au climat, autonomisation, bonnes pratiques techniques etc.... Nous vous demandons la permission d'enregistrer nos discussions et de prendre des photos. Nous vous assurons que les informations que vous nous fournissez seront utilisées exclusivement à des fins d'évaluation. Ce n'est pas un test et il n'y a pas de bonne ou de mauvaise réponse. La chose la plus importante est que vous partagez librement ce que vous savez. N'hésitez pas à exprimer des opinions et des pensées.

Acceptez-vous de nous parler? Oui Non

Caractéristiques du bénéficiaire

Union :

USCCPA/BM
APIL
AFDR

Q11. Nom et Prénoms

.....

Q12. Sexe : 1. Masculin / / 2. Féminin / /

Q13. Age : / / /

Q14. Chef d'exploitation : 1. Oui / / 2. Non / /

Q15. Code du bénéficiaire : / / / / / / / / / / /

Q16. Nombre Hommes dans le ménage: / / /

Q17. Nombre de Femmes dans le ménage: / / /

1100. Augmentation de la production et résilience aux changements climatiques

Mesure de l'utilisation des facteurs de production

Q1. Quels sont les types d'intrants que vous avez reçus au cours de cette campagne?
(Vous pouvez cocher plusieurs cases.)

1. Semence (Niébé, Sorgho) 2. NPK / / 3. UREE / / 4. Produits phytosanitaires / /

Q2. Êtes-vous satisfaits des intrants reçus? (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Peu satisfait / / 2. Satisfait / / 3. Très satisfaits / /

Q3. Quels sont les types d'équipements que vous avez reçus (matériels et outils de production)?

(Vous pouvez cocher plusieurs cases.)

1. Brouettes / / 2. Pelles et Pics / / 3. Charrettes / / 5. Charrue / /

Q4. Êtes-vous satisfaits de l'utilisation de vos équipements? (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Peu satisfait / / 2. Satisfait / / 3. Très satisfaits / /

Q5. Votre satisfaction quant à leurs qualités? (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Peu satisfait / / 2. Satisfait / / 3. Très satisfaits / /

Q6. Y a-t-il eu un Forage mis en place par IMSA auquel vous avez accès ?

1. Oui / / 2. Non / /

Q7. Êtes-vous satisfait de ce système d'abduction d'eau mis en place ? (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Peu satisfait / / 2. Satisfait / / 3. Très satisfaits / /

Commentaire par rapport au système d'abduction d'eau mis en place ?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Mesure de l'augmentation de la production et de la productivité

Q8. Quels sont les spéculations que vous aviez cultivées cette campagne dans le cadre du projet (*Vous pouvez cocher plusieurs cases.*)

1. Niébé/___/

2. Sorgho/___/

Q9. Superficie emblavée et **production** par spéculation

Spéculation	1=Niébé	2=Sorgho
Superficie (Ha)		
Quantité produite (kg)		

Q10. Etes-vous satisfaits quant à votre production de cette campagne (*Vous cochez une seule case.*)

1. Peu satisfait/___/

2. Satisfait/___/

3. Très satisfaits/___/

Q11. Quels sont les facteurs qui ont favorisés cette satisfaction ou cette insatisfaction? :

.....
.....
.....
.....

Mesure de la résilience aux changements climatiques

Q12. Quelles sont les nouvelles pratiques agricoles que vous avez adoptées au sein de votre exploitation? (*Vous pouvez cocher plusieurs cases.*)

1. Utilisation des variétés améliorées/___/ ; 2. Utilisation raisonnée des produits phytosanitaires homologués/___/

3. Utilisation de la fumure organique/___/ ; 4. Pratique de système de fertilisation du sol (plantule, Agriculture de conservation) /___/

5. Pratique du système de drainage des eaux et sol/___/ ; 6. Autres pratiques à préciser...../___/

Q13. Quels sont les technologies/techniques agroenvironnementales qui ont été mises à votre disposition? (*Vous pouvez cocher plusieurs cases.*)

1. Biodigesteurs/___/

2. Fosses fumières/___/

3.

Plantules/___/

Q14. Êtes-vous satisfaits de l'utilisation de ces technologies reçues? (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Peu satisfait / ___ / 2. Satisfait / ___ / 3. Très satisfait / ___ /

Commentaire par rapport à la technologie mise en place ?

.....

1200 Augmentation des revenus des producteurs et productrices

Mesure de l'augmentation des revenus

Q1. La proportion des quantités produites destinée à la consommation du ménage par spéculation [Mettez une croix dans la case correspondante à votre réponse]

Proportion	1=Niébé	2=Sorgho
Moins de 25%		
50%		
Plus de 75%		

Q2. Estimer votre revenu monétaire à l'hectare dans la production du niébé et /ou du sorgho

Spéculation	Niébé	Sorgho
Valeur en FCFA/ha		

Q3. Utilisation de votre revenu issue de la production du niébé et du sorgho (Vous pouvez cocher plusieurs cases.)

Achat des aliments / ___ / Santé / ___ / Scolarité / ___ /

Habillement / ___ /

Construction bâtiment et matériels roulants / ___ / Remboursement de crédit / ___ /

Production agricole (équipement et intrants) / ___ / Achat animaux / ___ /

Événements sociaux (fête, mariage, funérailles) / ___ / Participation communautaire/Dons / ___ /

Q4. Est-ce que votre revenu net après vos dépenses a augmenté par rapport à la campagne dernière?

1. Oui / ___ / 2. Non / ___ /

Q5. Êtes-vous satisfaits de votre revenu au cours de la campagne (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Peu satisfait / ___ / 2. Satisfait / ___ / 3. Très satisfait / ___ /

Q26.1211. Avez-vous reçus de nouveaux équipements pour la collecte et conservation? (Vous pouvez cocher plusieurs cases.)

1. Magasins/___/

2. Sacs à triple fonds/___/

Q6.1210. Etes-vous satisfaits de l'utilisation des techniques de collecte, de conservation ? (*Vous cochez une seule case.*)

1. Peu satisfait/___/ satisfais/___/

2. Satisfait/___/

3. Très

Q7.1220 (Rim). Aviez-vous participé à la commercialisation groupée?

1. Oui/___/

2. Non/___/

Q8.1220. Êtes-vous satisfaits de ces mécanismes de commercialisation mis en place pour favoriser votre participation? (*Vous cochez une seule case.*)

1. Peu satisfait/___/ satisfais/___/

2. Satisfait/___/

3. Très

Q9.1224. Est-ce que la commercialisation groupée a permis d'augmenter votre revenu?

1. Oui/___/

2. Non/___/

1300 Réponse équitable aux besoins des Membres (Femmes et jeunes)

Services offerts aux membres (jeunes et femmes)

Q1.1300. Êtes-vous satisfaits des services offert par l'union au cours de la campagne ? (*Vous cochez une seule case.*)

1. Peu satisfait/___/

2. Satisfait/___/

3. Très satisfaits/___/

1310. Compétence accrue des femmes et des jeunes pour participer aux instances de décision et avoir accès aux ressources

Q2. Dite nous comment vous trouvez votre niveau d'aisance pour participer et faire entendre votre voix au sein de votre union/ comité/coopérative/groupement? (*Vous cochez une seule case.*)

1. Mal à l'aise/___/ l'aise/___/

2. Peu à l'aise/___/

3. Très bien à

Si vous êtes très bien à l'aise, pouvez-vous donner les facteurs qui expliquent cela ?

.....
.....
.....
.....

1310. a. Qualité de participions des membres dans les rencontres/réunions

Q3. Comment trouviez-vous la qualité de la participation des femmes dans les réunions? (*Vous cochez une seule case.*)

1. Participation forte/___/

2. Participation faible/___/

Q4. Comment trouviez-vous la qualité de la participation des jeunes dans les réunions? (*Vous cochez une seule case.*)

1. Participation forte/___/

2. Participation faible/___/

1310. b. Influence des membres sur la prise de décision au sein des structures Q5. Comment qualifieriez-vous l'influence que les femmes exercent sur les décisions prises au sein de votre réunion/comité/ coopérative /groupement? (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Influence forte/___/

2. Influence très faible/___/

Q6. Comment qualifieriez-vous l'influence que les jeunes exercent sur les décisions prises au sein de votre réunion/comité/coopérative /groupement? (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Influence forte/___/

2. Influence très faible/___/

Ex

1310. c. Initiative prise pour promouvoir la participation des femmes et jeune Q7. Selon vous, y a-t-il eu des changements dans la manière dont les décisions sont prises? (Vous pouvez cocher plusieurs cases.)

1. Au sein de votre ménage/___/; 2. Au sein de la communauté/___/ ; 3. Au sein de votre union/ coopérative/___/ Expliquez

pourquoi :.....
.....
.....
.....

1320. Capacité d'encadrement et d'appui technique

Q8. Aviez reçu des appuis des techniciens au cours de cette campagne?

1. Oui/___/

2. Non/___/

Q9 : Pourquoi?

Q : 10. Êtes-vous satisfaits de l'encadrement technique reçu ? (Vous cochez une seule case.)

1. Peu satisfait/___/

2. Satisfait/___/

3. Très satisfaits/___/