

Training Guidelines to the VCA4D Social Profile

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List of Acronyms

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization	
FNS: Food and nutrition security	
ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	
ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	
ILO: International Labour Organization	
LSLA: Large-scale land acquisition	
VC: Value chain	
VGGT: Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests	

Introduction

Welcome to the Training Guidelines to the Social Profile, which is the tool supporting and structuring the social analysis component of the VCA4D methodology. These training guidelines are born from the experience of four senior VCA4D social experts that have collectively participated to more than 10 VCA4D analyses in different countries and contexts, and from the expertise of the Project Management Unit overseeing the implementation and quality of all VCA4D studies.

As capacity strengthening activities are of increasing importance in VCA4D, the project is asked to disseminate and transmit methods and know-how to an increasing number of experts – as well as to document the lessons learnt throughout the implementation of the project. While the Project Management Unit has typically had direct contact with the social experts involved in VCA4D studies, this direct link and guidance is going to be weaker as capacity strengthening activities are spread out. Thus came the need to provide consistent guidelines to the way that the Social Analysis (and the Social Profile) are transmitted and explained to other social experts, also given that the social analysis of VCA4D is not structured upon consolidated methods of analysis, but was innovatively put together by a team of practitioners and researchers within the European Commission.

These guidelines are not prescriptive, as true expertise relies on the capacity to adapt the method to the situation and not contrary. Yet this document is a precious collection of knowledge, practical know-how and tips to facilitate and speed up the reach of a quality expertise level in relations to the objective of a VCA4D study. This for the social analysis means to discern and identify the social opportunities, bottlenecks and risks that decision-makers are to act upon within the sphere of a value chain intervention.

After consulting these Training Guidelines on the VCA4D Social profile, the trainee or expert will be able to:

1. Understand the scope of the social analysis within the VCA4D methodology
2. Recognize the necessary steps to be undertaken to perform the social analysis (including through the social profile)
3. Identify and understand the key concepts necessary for performing a quality social analysis

1. The scope of the social analysis within the Value Chain methodology

The literature establishing the linkages between the development of agrifood value chains (VCs) and social upgrading (Barrientos et al., 2011; Gereffi & Lee, 2016; Kissi & Herzig, 2024; Marslev et al., 2022) states that VCs may improve knowledge, working conditions, wages, and broader social well-being, as well as distribute value with equity, favoring the most vulnerable people, leading to poverty reduction, smallholder empowerment, increased equality for women and youth, and overall social development. Yet, there is also the risk that VCs amplify existing

inequalities, by rewarding actors that already have power, capital and technology, while keeping those at the bottom in vulnerable positions.

Social sustainability in an agrifood VC as intended in the VCA4D methodology means making sure that the actors involved in every step of the chain — from input provision, production to consumption — are treated fairly and have opportunities for better livelihoods over time. The VCA4D model, assessing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability, goes beyond the conventional approach of analysing VCs solely in terms of their capacity to generate income, and introduces several other aspects aimed at understanding whether different actors involved at different stages are in a satisfactory situation, or at risk, and thus requiring mitigation measures for greater inclusion and sustainability.

As a VCA4D social expert, one will be working together with a team formed by an economist, and environmental and a national Value Chain expert. The social expert will contribute to writing the Value Chain Analysis Report for what concerns social issues in different parts of the report, namely the functional analysis, questions related to inclusiveness and also on human health on the environmental analysis, and to the assessment on social sustainability. The purpose of a VCA4D report is to provide evidence-based, interdisciplinary information to decision-makers (in particular from EU Delegations and from partner countries) and stakeholders, as a baseline and independent source of information for policy dialogue and project management.

Keeping in mind that the beneficiaries of VCA4D Reports are in the first place decision makers, the elements contained in the social analysis shall therefore make to the point reflections on which are within the six domains those that may require attention and why — all of this on the basis of a solid, evidence-based analysis and knowledge of both the value chain and the country social and cultural background.

Social sustainability can be examined by looking at people's lives and livelihoods through many different lenses. The VCA4D framework to analyse social sustainability proposes to capture the main outcomes of Value Chain (VC) activities through six Core Questions referring to six "domains". Every domain assembles several "sub-domains" that can be seen as the building blocks of the social analysis.

For every sub-domain, a list of questions helps guide the analytical process. The list is part of the Social Profile tool. These questions reflect development concerns that may apply when appraising VC operations. They ensure that no important wide-ranging concern is left aside. They target particular social impacts of the VC activities.

In order to appraise the actual impact of the VC activities, the interactions between the actors of the VC and the general environment must be understood. It is often a tricky, and sometimes sensitive, issue to discern the main factors at work and whether the outcomes arise from VC operations or from the context. This can sometimes be clarified by comparing with another situation where the farm, the business or the zone is not involved in the VC activities. As a matter of fact, situations are typically complex, especially when actors are engaged in several VCs. In any case, the social experts have to incorporate the VCA4D Social Profile and its questions within their own working practices in order to assess these six domains.

The team's expertise is called to outline and appraise the key benefits and disadvantages and the social sustainability of the VC operations. The background of their judgement is based on the actual national situation and strategies and on the widely shared international development standards (such as the guidelines on land tenure or SDGs).

Investigation is fed by common data collection tools (statistics, surveys, focus groups, interviews, secondary sources...). In some cases, conclusions may point to areas requiring more information or in-depth study.

The present Training Guidelines are thus coming from the necessity to have an informed and technical feedback to the application of the social analysis within the VCA4D experience, in order to give new experts that are being trained on the VCA4D methodology a common approach, both theoretical and practical. These guidelines may be useful also to senior experts making a VCA4D study for the first time, to have some quick wins and feedback from fellow practitioners, without once again being prescriptive.

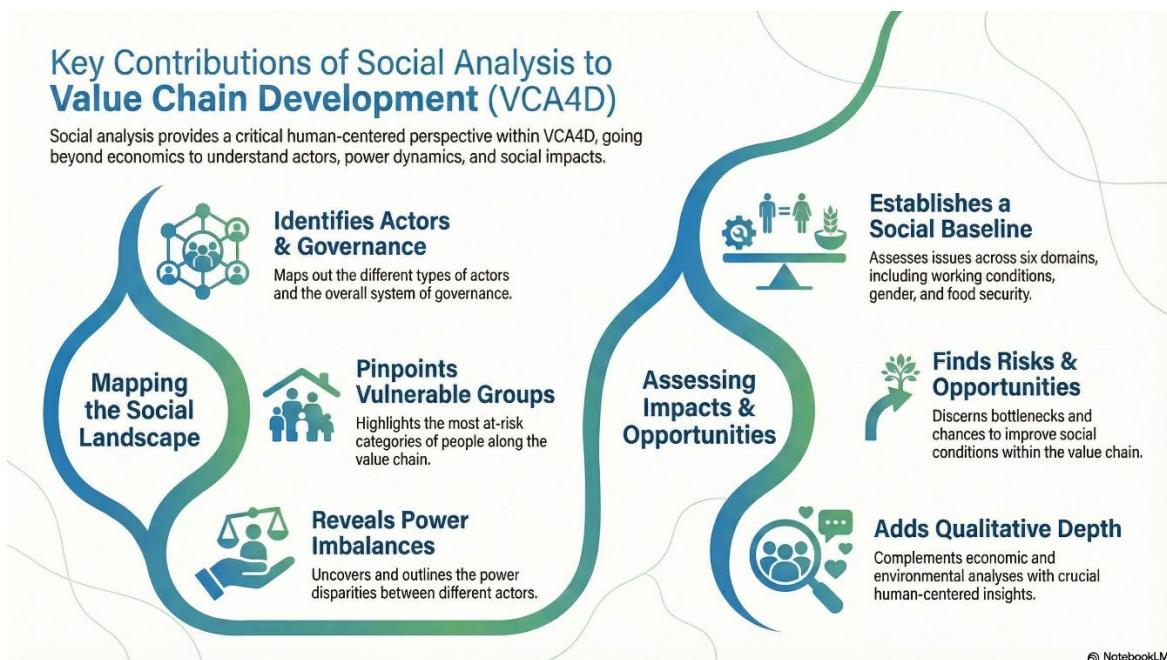
The foundations of VCA4D methodology as a whole can be summarised as follows:

- An interdisciplinary approach to value chain analysis, that brings to interconnect and analyse trade-offs between economic, environmental and social aspects of the value chain
- An independent analysis built to provide decision-makers with evidence-based analysis for better projects and policies and for managing reputational risks A revamp of quantitative analysis, in particular in the economic and environmental analysis – also through selected data collection
- A focus on inclusiveness, and thus on the most vulnerable populations and to the objectives of reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.
- A more qualitative analysis – in particular the social analysis that complements evidence-based data with context and cultural aspects necessary for an inclusive and sustainable approach to value chain development

The key contributions of the social analysis to the VCA4D methodology can be summarised as follows:

1. Identification and Baseline Setting
 - **Actor Identification and Governance:** Supporting the identification of the typology of actors and the governance system within the VC.
 - **Vulnerability Mapping:** Identifying the most vulnerable categories of actors along the VC and at its different stages.
 - **Power Dynamics:** Outlining the power imbalances that exist among the actors of the VC.
 - **Baseline setting:** Providing a baseline assessment of the main issues across six specific social domains: working conditions, land and water rights, gender, food and nutrition security, social capital, and living conditions.
2. Analysis and Complementarity

- **Relating Issues to Vulnerability:** Putting the main issues identified in the six domains in relation to the typology of actors, particularly focusing on the most vulnerable ones.
- **Change Assessment:** Discerning the opportunities, bottlenecks, and risks associated with either degrading or improving social aspects through value chain development.
- **Qualitative Complements:** Providing qualitative depth to other analyses:
 - It offers a qualitative complement to the economic analysis regarding inclusiveness.
 - It provides a qualitative complement to the environmental analysis, such as assessing risks for human health for certain types of actors or ensuring the respect of local traditions and practises.



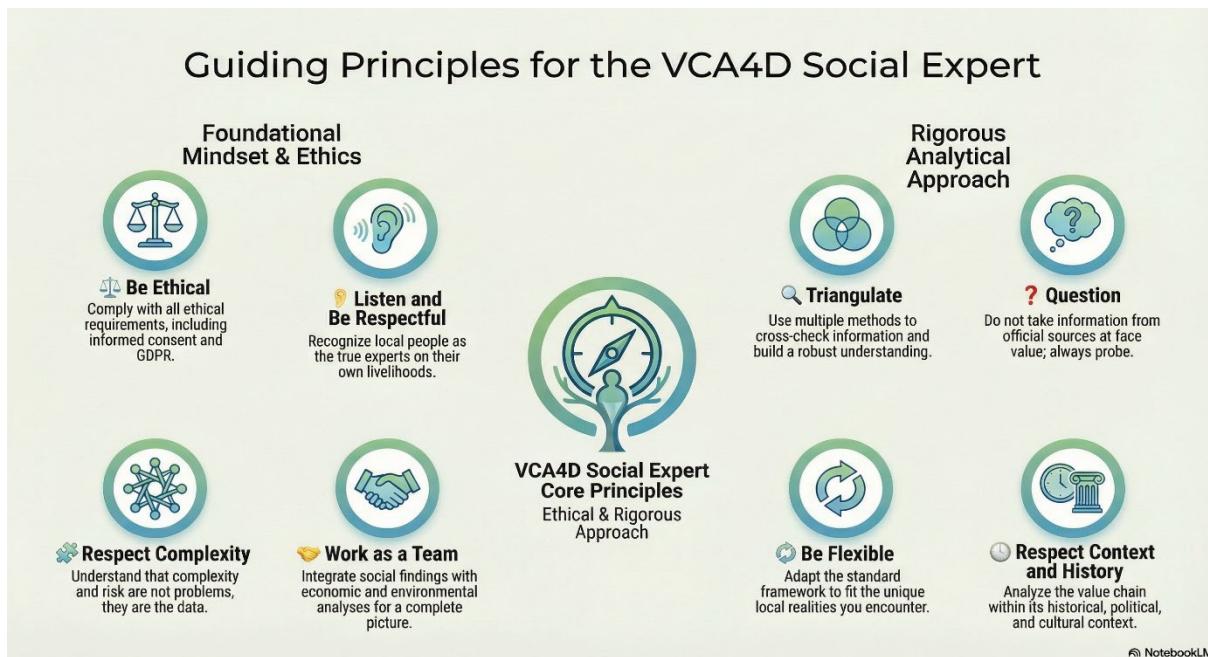
2. Being the social expert in the VCA4D team

Working for Agrinatura, you are expected to undertake your work according to the following general principles:

- **⚖️ Be Ethical:** Comply with institutional ethical requirements, including obtaining and documenting informed consent and respecting GDPR. Beyond compliance, view your inquiry as ethically positive: it can give voice to the circumstances and perspectives of poor, vulnerable, and marginalised people.
- **🎧 Listen and Be Respectful:** Recognise people as experts on their own livelihoods. Give them the space to speak, and avoid correcting them or imposing a “right” interpretation of their situation or solutions.
- **🔍 Triangulate:** You can draw on multiple methods—focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews with farmers and stakeholders, reviews of secondary data and

literature, and in some cases structured questionnaires. Combine these approaches to cross-check information and build a well-rounded understanding.

- **⌚ Be Flexible:** The VCA4D Social Profile is designed for use across Low- and Middle-Income Countries but it is to be adapted to local realities. Issues that matter to value-chain stakeholders may not always fit neatly into predefined questions—use the narrative report to explore them in greater depth.
- **⌚ Respect Context and History:** Take into account the historical, social, political, and cultural contexts in which the value chain operates. These dimensions are often crucial and should be carefully explored in the report.
- **❓ Question:** Do not take information from official sources or key informants at face value. Probe responses and triangulate them with other methods and sources to strengthen your analysis.
- **✳ Respect Complexity:** Rural societies are often “complex, diverse and risk-prone” (Chambers, Pacey and Thrupp, 1989). They involve intricate mixes of crops, livestock, and off-farm income, show diversity within and between communities, and face multiple risks—from individual ill-health to climate shocks. Remember: complexity, diversity, and risk are not problems in the data—very often, they are the data.
- **🤝 Work as a Team:** Interdisciplinarity is central to a VCA4D study. The social analysis should be fully integrated within the value chain assessment and closely linked to economic and environmental findings, providing a coherent and comprehensive picture of the value chain.



The goal of the VCA4D methodology is to provide evidence-based elements (i.e. supported by indicators measured quantitatively or based on explicit expert assessment) to answer the four framing questions: 1) What is the contribution of the VC to economic growth; 2) Is this economic growth inclusive?; 3) Is the VC socially sustainable?; 4) Is the VC environmentally sustainable? The analytical process to answer these four framing questions relies on four types of analysis: functional, economic, environmental and social analysis.

The team of VCA4D experts is composed of four members: an economic expert, a social expert, an environmental expert and a national VC expert.

The social expert is expected to provide inputs related to these four types of analysis and should thus:

- a. Contribute to the functional analysis, including to the governance analysis section and the SWOT analysis
- b. Respond to two framing questions: Is this (e.g. the VC's) economic growth inclusive? Is the VC socially sustainable?
- c. Complete the Social Profile Excel file
- d. Contribute to the general cross-sectional and risk assessment analysis

How should the social expert contribute to the functional analysis?

The process to answer the four framing questions is based on four types of analysis: functional, economic, environmental and social analyses.

The functional analysis is the starting point of a VCA4D value chain analysis. It is refined throughout the study by the whole team and benefitting from the other types of analyses (economic, social and environmental). It is the analysis in which the social and the other experts should reach a common understanding of the VC operations and their key-components.

The functional analysis defines the contours of the VC to be studied (types of production, VC functions and actors), identifies the flows and prices of products at every step of the VC, and provides an analysis of the governance. The social expert is expected to actively contribute to the characterisation of the typology of actors, and how these actors are organised in sub-chains - as well as to identify the elements that define VC governance at different levels.

To be able to define a common basis from which to develop the specific analyses, the team of experts will delimit the boundaries of the VC, agreeing on its scope (location of activities, definition of the different operations along the VC, identification of the agents involved) and also on the sub-chains to be studied.

The typology of actors and the system of sub-chains shall be common to all analyses, to facilitate understanding and reading of findings by the beneficiaries (decision-makers but also value chain stakeholders). The typology of actors is a synthesis of the work of the economic, environmental and social experts, thus there is a need to consider criteria relevant also to the economic and environmental analyses and reach a compromise within the team. Yet, it is important to consider social criteria in the design of the typology of actors, particularly working conditions, land rights, gender and social capital.

Moreover, for each of the analyses, the experts may decide to work with a more refined typology of actors. This is especially the case of the social expert, that may need to further describe different sub-categories of actors, especially if they are vulnerable (e.g. migrants, youth, rural workers, women, etc.) and may thus need further investigation.

Concerning the analysis of the governance structure of the VC, the social expert contributes by identifying the structure and relationships among VC actors. This is crucial for assessing stakeholder strategies (particularly those of farmers) and the potential for horizontal and vertical coordination among them. These components of VC organisation and governance form the foundation for analysing social capital within the VC.

The functional analysis shapes eventual directions for carrying out social analysis by outlining priority information to be collected and the overall strategy for answering the framing questions.

The framing question 2: “*Is this economic growth inclusive?*”

To answer this framing question, the economist and the social expert look at the distribution of incomes, employment and social benefits across the VC and the different sub-chains at all stages, as sub-chains may have mixed outcomes on inclusiveness. In addition, they should investigate stakeholders' involvement in the VC organisation and governance, particularly in decision-making processes, and pay attention to the impact of the VC on vulnerable groups such as poor farmers, women, young people and marginalized workers such as migrants.

The social expert provides relevant elements on horizontal and vertical coordination, along with the analysis of the social capital domain, to describe and explain differences in participation in collective governance, access to services and production indicators.

Regarding income and employment, the social expert can use the results of the economic analysis to compare the outcomes related to each group of the typology with other indicators, such as minimum wages and/or decent wages.

The framing question 3: “*Is the value chain socially sustainable?*”

To effectively address the framing question “Is the value chain socially sustainable?”, the social expert applies a social analysis approach that examines the key social dimensions influencing the value chain.

What is the social analysis?

The Social Analysis is a comprehensive analysis of the social benefits or disadvantages of the functioning of the VC. It aims to identify potential negative effects or social risks associated with the development of the VC, with the goal of avoiding them in future investment decisions. It also aims to identify virtuous opportunities in social aspects that shall be captured and spilled over to other value chains and that may (or may not) be strengthened by policy or project intervention.

Why is providing social information to decision makers important?

Collecting reliable information on different social aspects of the VC is key to getting a full picture of the VC's overall operations, so that decision makers can intervene and invest in the VC in ways that not only boost production but also promote inclusive and sustainable social solutions.

Are there other stakeholders who may benefit from the Social Analysis?

Although mainly targeted to inform national decision-makers, it should be stressed that the social analysis will also provide important information to other stakeholders: local community representatives, farmers and producers organizations, investors and financial institutions, NGOs and civil society organizations, international organizations, academia and research institutions.

Should the social analysis be limited to the scope of the VC?

The social analysis framework was designed to remain, when possible, within the scope of the VC analysis. This approach is essential for making informed decisions about VC operations. It is, therefore, important to discern the information concerning the societal context from the VC specific one.

To be able to understand the interaction between the value chain and social aspects, it is necessary for the social expert to master and the broader understanding of the social environments in which the VC operates, including social norms, cultural values, historical trends, governance structures and power dynamics, all of which influence its overall sustainability. This shall be described to set the scene for the readers and beneficiaries of the analyses in order to provide context to the VC analysis.

What is the Social Profile?

The Social Profile is a tool developed to structure and guide the social analysis. It is built around six key social domains: Working Conditions, Land and Water Rights, Gender Equality, Food and Nutrition Security, Social Capital, and Living Conditions.

Within each of these domains, the social expert is expected to explore and answer a set of core questions:

- Are **working conditions** throughout the VC socially acceptable and sustainable?
Do VC operations contribute to improving them?
- Are the **land and water rights** implemented throughout the VC socially acceptable and sustainable?
- Throughout the VC, do actors foster and put into practice **gender equality**?
- Do VC activities contribute to upgrading and securing the **food and nutrition conditions**?
- Is **social capital** enhanced by VC operations and equitably distributed throughout the VC?
- Do the VC activities contribute to improving the **living conditions** of the households through acceptable facilities and services?

How to get the information?

To answer the core questions, information should be gathered through a combination of literature review, legal analysis, and close collaboration with key stakeholders along the VC. In addition, it is essential to collect the perspectives of populations directly involved in or affected by VC operations within the relevant territories through on-the-ground fieldwork.

How to use the Social Profile tool?

The Social Profile's six domains are divided into 22 subdomains, comprising a total of 63 questions.

The process of applying the Social Profile to the overall Social Analysis of the VC may be presented as several main-steps:

1. **Understand the domains and sub-domains, but then use the questions to build your analysis** The social profile is to be used as a checklist and as a support to the social expert. It helps you build your arguments on the six social domains of the value chain (all of which are expected to be informed). You are not expected to reply to all of the 63 questions – neither their formulation may be adapted to your context. It is thus suggested to first read all questions in order to understand each of them and their complementarity- as each of them wants to help you reflect to a specific aspect that you may not want to overlook. See if the subdomains' questions are applicable to your VC in question.
2. **Be creative, critical and sensitive to the VC's own context.** You may choose to overlook some questions if they are not relevant to the VC-specific case. Also, it may be appropriate to address questions not covered by the social profile. Remember that the social profile was built to be applied to any VC in any country – thus it is up to the expert to use it intelligently to provide an evidence-based overview of the social aspects of the VC.
3. **Collect all data and information required.** The Social Profile is not prescriptive neither in terms of methods. It is the responsibility of the social expert to identify the most appropriate sources and methods, bearing in mind that the availability of secondary data differs from one country to another, as do fieldwork conditions and challenges.
4. **Make the analysis per domain.** Summarize the findings per domain in order to make a comprehensive analysis of the social benefits of the VC.
5. **Fill in the Social Profile Excel sheets.** Provide a score to the questions in the *Questionnaire*. Finalize by filling the fields in the *Register* sheet. By doing so, assess the major risks concerning each domain and identify the potential consequences in the Register. This will make it possible to build the overall picture of the Social Profile (Social Profile radar chart) and contribute to the answer to two framing questions. Contribute to the general cross-sectional and risk assessment analysis.

Note: Note that it is possible to reverse the order of points 4 and 5. For some experts, it is easier to start by filling in the scores of the Social Profile and then describing the various domains for the report that combines the three analytical methodologies; for others, the scores only become clear after completing the full description by domain and subdomain in the overall report.

Note: The social expert is expected to produce a single Social Profile, which may, however, be complemented by sub-Profiles by actor type or geographical region (although not suggested).

What are the main challenges the social expert faces?

1. *Discerning the general information on social environments* from the VC information. This means considering different dimensions of the VC and combining the interactions between:
 - *Various types of actors*: including producers of different scales, input suppliers, intermediaries, processors, distributors and retailers, consumers.
 - *Different regions where the VC operates*: depending on the type of VC (small or big VC, national/ domestic VC, export VC, etc.)
2. *Adopting a holistic understanding of these different interactions*, including different scopes and dynamics, to give policy makers a complete picture of the VC social impact.
3. *Discerning different VC actors and regional configurations* and helping understand the interactions between different actors operating within different territorial environments.

How to score the questions?

The social expert is asked to put a score to a majority of the 63 questions covering the six domains. The scores on a scale of “low/not at all” to “high” enable answers to be treated in a roughly quantitative manner and combined into the Profile:

- High
- Substantial
- Moderate/ low
- Low/ not at all
- Not applicable

Colours (green, light green, orange and red) are respectively assigned to the four scores (high, substantial, moderate/low, low/not at all).

The social expert should refer to the source used to achieve the score - i.e. the column “Source”. For the benefit of future experts working on the same VC, it is important to document and share all the sources you used to get the information.

The update of the studies is also foreseen as a VCA4D activity to capture evolution over the years since the reference year of the study as well as ongoing processes of change: This is why a column is included to display the results of previous analyses - i.e. the column “Previous Analysis”.

Example: The coffee VC in Angola¹.

- Domain 1. Working conditions
- Sub-domain 1.1. Respect for labour rights.

¹ All specific country examples are from VCA4D reports unless specified otherwise.

- Question: 1.1.1 To what extent do companies involved in the value chain respect the standards elaborated in the 8 fundamental ILO international labour conventions and in the ICESCR and ICCPR?
- Score: Moderate/ low.
- Comment: Almost all work related to the VC is informal and/or occasional, with conditions negotiated on a case-by-case basis. In cases where wage labour exists, the legal minimum required by agreements signed by the government is observed.
- Source: Literature review, interviews with stakeholders, focus groups with farmers.

Challenges and tips for filling in the Social Profile Excel sheets

- Make sure all types of actors are targeted by the question (all VC actors and not only producers). At what level (national, regional, local)? → Answering at the VC level is the default, but specify at what level you are formulating the answer.
- Sometimes the responses to the questions are completely different depending on the VC actors targeted (i.e. small producers vs. large-scale producers; producers vs. processing industries; formal farm workers vs. informal farm workers) → Disaggregate the analysis: keep the diversity of actors and standpoint by referring to key elements of the Functional Analysis (typology of actors; sub-chains). Diversity improves the quality of the analysis.
- Take into account the history of the conflicts and power dynamics existing in the VC (try to see these processes beyond the VC, take into account the broader background) → Consult, include literature on the historical background.
- Take into account vulnerable groups (women, youth, migrants, minority ethnic groups) → Since they are many, you need to be specific. Disaggregate the analysis (keep the diversity of actors and standpoints). Diversity is not a problem; it is central to the analysis.
- Consistency with the economic and environment analysis → Make sure that all the experts use the same basic typologies. Make sure that all the framing questions are addressed together to reinforce the final assessment and recommendations' consistency.

How flexible is the scoring process?

The Social Profile tool was not designed to limit the overall Social Analysis. It should be regarded as a checklist. It is not problematic if some questions are not applicable to your VC. Yet, in the end, we need to have an idea of the most important points of the VC.

- *The social expert may choose “not applicable”*
If the question is not applicable to the VC case or if the social expert cannot give a reliable answer, it is always possible to choose not applicable, and comment.
- *The social expert may manually alter the “Average” score*
The average score per subdomain combines the scores from all related questions. If the social expert considers a particular aspect of the subdomain—addressed in one of the questions—crucial to the final assessment and believes that the average does not accurately reflect their observations, this aspect may be highlighted. In

such cases, the subdomain average can be changed manually, with an explanation provided in the "Comments" section.

- *The social expert may add Comments to explain his/her scores*
There is a place for Comments for each of the 63 questions.
- *The social expert may introduce complexity and be more critical and sophisticated than the questions proposed by the Social Profile in the overall Social Analysis:*

The social expert may go beyond the scores in the Social Profile if she/he needs to consider differences between types of actors or across geographical regions. There is always room to include additional information that supports a holistic understanding of the societal conditions in which the VC actors operate.

The Excel spreadsheet - Register

This sheet automatically presents the scores per domain and subdomain that the social expert has recorded in the questionnaire. The social expert is encouraged to identify for each subdomain, the major risks and negative consequences, to propose mitigation measures, and to fill a column with comments that may be presented as recommendations.

The Excel spreadsheet - Profile

The average scores per domain are automatically converted into a radar chart. A *Comments* section is provided to allow for interpretation of this final concise data. It is important to note that, once again, complexity can be introduced here to enrich the analysis and prevent overly rigid or simplistic interpretations.

From the hierarchy of information set in the Register sheet, a consolidated and very synthetic presentation of the overall recommendation and the major issues, risks and mitigating measures are formulated by the social expert.

This disaggregated analysis will make it possible to contribute in an accurate and reliable way to the final conclusions and recommendations of the social analysis.

How should the social expert contribute to the general cross-sectional and risk assessment analysis?

The social expert plays a critical role in a cross-sectional analysis of VC sustainability (social, economic, environment), by ensuring that along its operations social issues are recognised and individual and community dimensions are fully integrated in the economic and environmental assessments.

What is the risk assessment analysis?

Social sustainability is largely related to the prevention and management of social risks. Assessing the social sustainability of a VC requires a structured and comprehensive approach

that considers both positive social impacts and actual or potential risks. The Social Profile framework provides this essential structure.

By following the scoring and analysis steps, the social expert is asked to evaluate whether the risks outweigh the potential gains within each domain.

The social sustainability of the VC is considered at risk when a review across all domains reveals that significant social constraints and risks persist or have intensified.

Example from the field: risks arising in the Mali rice VC

- Workers receiving inadequate wages for their labour, vulnerability of unprotected workers in the event of illness or accident.
- Exclusion of producers from their land by multinational and national private enterprises.
- Disparity between public land policies and the reality on the ground. Exclusion of women from certain activities (transport, marketing), marginalisation for economic decisions (production, marketing), limited autonomy in deciding how to use household resources, persistence of women's poverty.
- Dependence on external finances for food security, deterioration in consumers' purchasing power, malnourishment among the most vulnerable, especially poor and rural households.
- High number of poor households deprived of care, and marginalisation of communities in the decision-making processes affecting their livelihoods.

Even though social sustainability of a VC may be assessed as being generally satisfactory; the social expert is expected to emphasize the aspects that can be improved per domain. For the case of the pineapple VC in Benin, the VC shows signs of social sustainability. However, this sustainability could be improved if attention is given to the main constraints in the following domains: access to productive resources and credit, availability of labour at farm level, financing of processing and packaging equipment for pineapple juice and logistics conditions for the export of the fruit.

When analysing the social sustainability of the VC, it is essential to adopt a historical perspective that considers processes of change over time. How have risks been mitigated? What was the situation before, and how has it evolved? In the Mali cashew VC, food and nutritional security in the cashew-producing areas has significantly improved in recent years, thanks to the increase in local food production (cereals, tubers, vegetables, fruits, and legumes) and the supply of food products in local markets, as well as partially from cashew income.

3.The questionnaire of the Social Profile

3.1 Working conditions

Understanding the domain: Agriculture has been still contributing significantly to the global economy, accounting for 3.4% of GDP (World Bank, 2025) and employing 27% of the global workforce (World Bank (2025); FAO (2024)). New labour opportunities have emerged in agrifood VCs, particularly in processing, trade, service provision, and production activities. However, these labour opportunities have not always been for everyone or accompanied by improved working conditions (Hickey & Du Toit, 2013). A recent systematic literature review on labour in agriculture and in agrifood VCs (Malanski et al., 2022) sheds light on the role of agrifood VCs in creating jobs, with a specific highlight on decent work issues. It particularly shows that labour in agrifood VCs is not just about the quantity of labour created by the VCs (which can be evaluated through an economic lens by the VCA4D economic expert), but also about labour conditions (Dedieu et al., 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze how VC actually influences working conditions or how it can potentially impact them. Assessing VCs should thus allow us to understand who is employed, formally or informally, in what operation at all steps of the VC and under what conditions, referring to international labour standards in particular. Upgrading in agrifood VCs (Ponte et al., 2023) should therefore contribute to achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth. The VCA4D methodology adopts the internationally recognized definitions of ILO regarding labour rights (including formal and informal labour contracts and agreements), child labour, job safety and globally aims at assessing attractiveness in terms of level of wages and working conditions compared to national standards and the inclusion of youth in VC labour opportunities.

3.1.1 Respect of labour rights

Understanding the subdomain: This subdomain refers to the labour issues at all the steps of the VC. The assumption is that compliance with labour rights and international labour standards have positive implications for VC sustainability and inclusiveness.

This subdomain is assessed with the help of 5 questions:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
1.1.1 To what extent do companies involved in the value chain respect the standards elaborated in the 10 fundamental ILO international labour conventions and in the ICESCR and ICCPR?	Has the State signed and ratified the fundamental labour international conventions? Do companies respect the general principles behind the labour conventions as well as the details? And to what extent are the formal VC actors/companies monitored by the national labour authorities/labour unions/ market actors?	The 10 fundamental ILO international labour conventions are the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) • Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) • Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) • Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) • Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) • Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) • Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) • Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) • Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) • Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)
1.1.2 Is freedom of association allowed and effective (collective bargaining)?		The right of workers and employers to form and join organisations of their own choosing
1.1.3 To what extent do workers benefit from enforceable and fair contracts?	Contracts can be intended both as formal or informal	X
1.1.4 To what extent are risks of forced labour in any segment of the value chain minimised?	Is there any form of forced labour observed at any step of the VC? What are the measures taken by the State and companies to reduce/minimise forced labour?	"All work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily." https://www.ilo.org/topics/forced-labour-modern-slavery-and-trafficking-persons/what-forced-labour
1.1.5 To what extent are any risks of discrimination in employment for specific categories of the population minimised?	Are there vulnerable categories of actors in the VC (e.g. informal/temporary workers, migrants, woman, youth, etc)? Do they suffer from discrimination? Are dynamics in the VC contributing to minimise these discriminations (or the contrary)? Are there differences across sub-chains or in different steps of the VC?	The core of ILO's definition of discrimination is "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation" https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn

Tip: The social expert should first analyse concrete measures taken by the State. When a State has signed and ratified international human rights conventions, it is legally committed to implementing and monitoring labour rights domestically. Accountability ensures that these are

not just symbolic gestures, but binding responsibilities. Second, the social expert should take into account that informality is dominating the agricultural production stage in many countries (with exceptions sometimes in large-scale production units). S/he should consider both formal labour and informal labour, including agreements that are intermediate but with rules that are socially accepted (customary laws and norms). The social expert should also differentiate assessment depending on the VC stages (processing may engage large-scale companies with specific issues on labour rights). The expert should contact trade unions and other associations (e.g. human rights associations) and see if they receive international and national support. The expert should finally triangulate information (interviews, including with international and local NGOs + local newspaper articles).

Examples from the field. During the Mongolian cashmere VCA4D study, an interview with a senior leader of the well-established Mongolian Industrial Trade Union Federation (MITUF) generated insights across most of the questions of the Working Conditions subdomain, including on freedom of association (where there are important differences between sub-chains), collective bargaining, contracts, attractiveness of work, and Occupational Safety and Health. The safety and health situation in light industry including cashmere processing is problematic, but MITUF is currently organising, with ILO support, a Mongolian translation of ILO's Code of Practice on Safety and Health for textiles, which will be a resource for the whole VC. By contrast, during the Eswatini Beef study, leaders of the Swaziland Agricultural, Plantation and Allied Workers Union (SAPAWU) mentioned cases of harassment of union members and officials, though this was not linked to enterprises in the beef VC, a political climate that is anti-union, and health and safety violations in another natural resources-linked VC (though not in the beef VC).

Resources to be consulted :

- Which fundamental ILO conventions any given country has ratified can be checked at https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:11001.
- The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations publishes an annual report covering all member states, arranged thematically but searchable by country. Current and recent Annual Reports can be found at <https://www.ilo.org/international-labour-standards/ilo-supervisory-system-regular-supervision/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/committee-experts-application-conventions-and-recommendations-ceacr>. Issues arising in a country can be flagged by the CEACR as of "concern" or "deep concern".

3.1.2 Child Labour

Understanding the subdomain: This subdomain refers to child labour, which is defined as "work that is inappropriate for a child's age, affects children's education, or is likely to harm their health, safety or morals. It is work that impairs children's well-being or hinders their education, development and future livelihoods" (FAO, 2020). Indeed, "worldwide, the majority of child labour is found in the agriculture sector (70 percent). Today, 112 million boys and girls are engaged in child labour in crop production, livestock, forestry, fisheries or aquaculture, often working long hours and in hazardous conditions. Child labour violates the rights of children. By endangering the health and education of the young, it also forms an obstacle to sustainable agriculture

development and food security. To remedy this, FAO works to address the root causes of child labour in agriculture such as rural poverty and the lack of social protection.” (FAO, 2020).

This subdomain is assessed with 2 questions, as following:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
1.2.1 Degree of school attendance in case children are working (in any segment of the value chain)?	To what extent does the VC promote/discourage children's school attendance?	
1.2.2 Are children protected from exposure to harmful jobs (in any segment of the VC)?		

Tips. The social expert should first examine who is engaged in labour at all steps of the VC. When children do work in the VC, the expert should differentiate children's engagement in economic activities (for instance: light activities compatible with education, that are socially and culturally accepted), children's labour, the “worst forms of child labour”² and hazardous work³. The social expert must take into consideration local norms but be able to identify forms of child labour that are incompatible with the sustainable development of the VC.

Example from the field: In the Nicaragua cocoa VC, children generally accompany adults to agricultural plots and perform light work, such as assisting with pod picking. However, a large proportion of children attend school, and these activities do not appear to interfere with their education. The social expert confirmed with representatives of human rights associations that such involvement does not pose a risk to the children's safety or well-being. In this case, it is important to identify the specific tasks across the VC in which children may be involved. Certain certifications, such as Fair Trade, can also be indicators of the absence of children's engagement within the VC. It was also useful for the expert to compare school enrolment rates in the cocoa production regions with the national averages and their trends over time to support the assessment.

Resources to be consulted:

- The two ILO Conventions on child labour are Convention No.138 on Minimum Age and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. These Conventions are “fundamental” Conventions. This means that, under the [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#), all ILO member States have an obligation to respect, promote and realize the abolition of child labour, even if they have not ratified the Conventions in question.

3.1.3 Job safety

Understanding the subdomain: This subdomain refers to employment safety, as sustainable development of VCs cannot be conceived without the protection of workers against death,

² i.e. all forms of slavery like sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including forced recruitment of children.

³ i.e. work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of a child.

disease, and injury arising out of work. Indeed, target 8.8 of SDG 8 focuses on the “*promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.*” Accident-at-work or employment-related diseases refers to sickness, temporary incapacity for work resulting from such a condition, total or partial loss of earning capacity, likely to be permanent, and the loss of support suffered by dependents as the result of the death of the breadwinner.

This subdomain is assessed with one question, as following:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
1.3.1 Degree of protection from accidents and health damages (in any segment of the value chain)?	<p>Need to assess all the professional risks of accident and health damage and the measures implemented to prevent these risks, for instance related to the protection of farmers and farm wage labourers from injuries related to the use of equipment and machineries or phytopharmaceutical products.</p> <p>This needs to be assessed in the different segments of the VC (production, processing, etc).</p>	X

Tip. The social expert must first identify the most sensitive activities and links in terms of workplace safety. Indeed, the handling of tools, equipment, machinery, chemicals, and heavy loads, for example, are tasks for which employers must implement worker protection measures. Attention can be given to occupational safety and health issues (hazards⁴ and risks⁵ as well as prevention, protection, promotion and compensation practices) for each step and type of actor of the VC. It may be useful to consult, when available, national statistics on accidents at work or employment-related diseases in the country and in agriculture and related industries.

The analysis of this sub-domain needs to be linked to the environmental analysis (cf. VCA4D Methodological Brief). Both the environmental and social experts share the responsibility of detecting risks to health through visits and data collection (interviews, surveys, secondary documents...). The environmental expert collects information on practices as much as on molecules and quantities used. The social expert inquires on the working conditions which include job safety, the workers’ protection and particularly the exposure of children to unsafe practices.

Example from the field: In the Dominican Republic, several types of activities in the processed fruits VCs are likely to cause workplace accidents or injuries, in particular in the processing steps, but also, as elsewhere, linked to the use of agrochemicals. Indeed, interviews showed that handling plant protection products, machinery in processing lines, and harvesting (especially pineapples, given their very sharp leaves) were sensitive activities.

⁴ A physical situation with a potential for human injury, damage to property, damage to the environment or some combination of these

⁵ The likelihood of an undesired event with specified consequences occurring within a specified period or in specified circumstances. It may be expressed either as a frequency (the number of specified events in unit time) or as a probability (the probability of a specified event following a prior event), depending on the circumstances.

Resources to be consulted :

- Chan, Man-Kwun. 2012. Making Agricultural Value Chain Programmes Work for Workers: A Practical Guide for Development Donors and Practitioners. WIEGO Technical Brief (Global Trade) No 4. Available at: https://www.wiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Chan_WIEGO_TB4.pdf
- ILO. 2015. Value chain development for decent work: how to create employment and improve working conditions in targeted sectors. International Labour Office.- 2nd ed. - Geneva: ILO. Available at:
- https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_766283.pdf

3.1.4 Attractiveness

Understanding the subdomain: The future of a VC is at risk if the work is not sufficiently remunerative, especially if young people see little incentive to get involved in VC activities. Social sustainability in VC activities is therefore closely linked to economic sustainability: wages must be compared to local wage standards, both within agriculture and in other economic sectors. The attractiveness of VC labour must also consider dimensions other than direct remuneration, such as the provision of goods in kind and food to workers, that can be given after completing a task, the frequency of payments, arduousness of tasks, etc. Access to training and innovation are also topics that must be addressed because they can promote the inclusion of younger generations.

This subdomain is assessed with 2 questions, as following:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
1.4.1 To what extent are remunerations in accordance with local standards?	Need to assess the effective wages of farm labourers in the VC	Local standards of farm wages may be estimated at the national level and through interviews
1.4.2 Are conditions of activities attractive for youth?	Although attractiveness refer to a broad concept, the question should be understood in particular regarding to wages/incomes and working conditions specifically for young peoples	

Challenge: Attractiveness is a broad concept, and the social expert should focus on the different dimensions (not only economic dimension) of labour to be able to correctly assess this subdomain.

Tip. The social expert can approach the question of attractiveness in different ways, by examining the economic conditions faced by workers, as well as by exploring how VC activities relate to migration, both in and out-migration. Attractive VCs can help retain local populations, especially young people, by offering them viable economic opportunities and discouraging out-migration.

Examples from the field: The VCA4D study on processed fruits in the Dominican Republic showed that in agricultural production, manual work in the plots is not attractive (low wages, arduousness of tasks). Moreover, few young people engage in agricultural studies and training

at the national level. Contrasting with this situation, employment in packing plants and processing agribusinesses is very attractive to young people (it is only permitted for those of legal age) given the lack of other economic opportunities in rural areas and thanks to the generally higher wages compared to what free trade zones can offer. In packing plants that operate on a seasonal basis, it is worth mentioning that university students were also employed as full-time workers during harvest peaks. The interviews also showed low staff turnover in the companies visited, indicating a tendency to retain workers and, consequently, an aging workforce that limits young people's access to these jobs. In the Mongolian cashmere VC, the social analysis found a significant issue of the attractiveness for youth, and especially for girls, of cashmere production in rural areas with traditional mobility, compared to urban employment.

3.2 Land and water rights

Understanding the domain⁶: VC actors hold “bundles of rights” in land and natural resources (water, wildlife, trees, soil, etc.), which can include the rights of access, withdrawal, management, exclusion and alienation.⁷ This domain focuses on the prevailing land tenure systems and systems of water rights (which raise very different issues) within which VC actors, particularly producers, operate as well as the specific risks stemming from large-scale land acquisition (LSLAs) - often referred to as “land-grabs”. Issues for water include: inequity between head-enders and tail-enders, and government policies that favour large-scale over small-scale irrigation.

Resources to be consulted:

- INTPA (2022) EU Support to Responsible and Inclusive Land Governance: State of Play 2021 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4783f23e-b25f-11ed-8912-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
- Land Portal <https://landportal.org/> is a global platform that collects and shares data and information on land issues. It is searchable by country.
- Morton, J. and Kumar, R. (2023) The Interactions of Land Tenure and Agricultural Value Chain Development in Africa: Some Findings from Case-Studies. Paper presented to the VCA4D Conference: Value Chain Analysis for Development: providing evidence for better policies and operations in agricultural value chains https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/vca4d_conference-session3-land_tenure_vcs_in_africa_0.pdf
- Peters, P. E. (2009). Challenges in land tenure and land reform in Africa: Anthropological contributions. *World Development*, 37(8), 1317-1325.
- As the field of land tenure has its own very specialist and mainly legal terminology, the following is highly recommended: R. Leonard and J. Longbottom (2000) Land Tenure Lexicon: A glossary of terms from English and French speaking West Africa, IIED, London <https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/7411IIED.pdf>

⁶ For this domain, a revised set of subdomains and questions has been used, as agreed between VCA4D Project Management Unit (PMU) and the authors

⁷ https://www.ifad.org/documents/d/new-ifad.org/ips_land-pdf

3.2.1 Equity and security of land and water tenure

Understanding the subdomain: While the more recent developments of LSLAs are undoubtedly important, it is an equally important and prior step to understand the prevailing land tenure arrangements. “Land tenure” is used here in the sense of Quan and Dyer (2008): “the terms under which land and natural resources are held by individuals, households or social groups” and includes rights over agricultural land but also rights over rangeland, pastureland, trees, forests, and fishing areas. Some of the tenure systems that may be found (as predominant or in combination with others) may be: freehold rights; customary land allocation by traditional authorities, or modifications of such systems dating from colonial or postcolonial times; and land rental arrangements with payment of rent or a share of the harvest (arrangements that may in some cases be outrightly exploitative). In some countries the expert may find binary land tenure systems inherited from settler colonialism, with freehold or leasehold for larger farms and modified customary tenure elsewhere. Where VCs are based on extensive livestock production, fishing or forest use, rangelands, fishing grounds and forests may be subject to various forms of communal or open-access systems, that may themselves be subject to encroachment by governments, protected areas or private companies. In some cases, rights over trees may be separate from rights over the land they grow on.

This subdomain is assessed with five questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
2.1.1 Does the prevailing land and water tenure system ensure equitable and secure access to land for actors in the VC, particularly those from vulnerable groups?	What is or are the land tenure systems of the country and in the VC (both in legal system or used)? Does the land tenure system allow VC actors to access land to produce the commodity in question for a reasonable period and without being subject to exploitation?	For a general definition of land tenure, see above. The question covers rights over agricultural land, rangeland, pastureland, trees, forests, and fishing areas.
2.1.2 To what extent do VC operations in a given land and water tenure system favour good environmental practises?	To what extent does the land tenure system allow actors in the VC to invest in agricultural practises that maintain and improve land/soil quality and reduce land use change? Social experts should answer the question based on an awareness of the different views in the development literature and evidence from the VC under consideration.	
2.1.3 Does government policy towards land and water tenure in the VC favour equity, tenure security favourable to sustainable development approaches?	Government policy can take many forms, including land reform in favour of small farmers, conversion of customary tenure to individual freehold or intermediate titling initiatives, or support to LSLAs. Conclusions on the likely	

	impacts on equity, tenure security and environmental sustainability should be based on evidence from the VC under consideration.	
2.1.4 Do the public institutions act to prevent and manage tenure disputes, violent conflicts and corruption related to the VC operations?		
2.1.5 In the case of group, communal or common land, do all members of the community have the right to take part in decision-making on land-use?		

Challenges: The issue of how land tenure influences environmental sustainability requires both awareness of how this has been treated in the development literature and attention to the detail of the VC in question. The earlier assumption that customary and modified customary tenure systems cannot provide the security for long-term investment in e.g. long-term soil fertility or tree planting, has now been widely challenged (Lawry et al., 2014; Holden et al., 2023). The assumption that communal management of e.g. rangelands or fishing rights necessarily leads to overexploitation has been even more widely critiqued. Social experts should take care to answer this question based on evidence from the VC under consideration.

Tip: Especially but not solely in VCs involving forms of group, common or open-access tenure (e.g. of rangelands or fishing grounds), or some form of seasonal mobility, participatory mapping exercises with focus groups may provide rich data. The map itself may not be the most important output, rather the exercise gives the social expert the chance to ask supplementary questions on how different rights over resources are negotiated, upheld or threatened, and with what impacts.

Examples from the field: In Eswatini, 60% of land is designated as the Swazi National Land (SNL) in contradistinction to the Title Deed Land (TDL) which is held by commercial farmers and companies under freehold. The dual system of SNL and TDL does not appear to be a particularly live political issue. Grazing land in the SNL is in principle open-access for the cattle of all ethnic Swazi, though in practice cattle are generally herded within the area of one Chiefdom (there are 392 in the country) and the obligation to register cattle with a dip-tank and dip them weekly also keeps movements of cattle for grazing relatively short-distance. The animals of relatively large-scale herdowners are regarded as having an equal right to use the range as the cattle or the goats of poorer households. The communal aspect of the grazing system is a source of considerable concern, associated by small-scale cattle producers and many outside observers with overgrazing and land degradation, both a general decline in grazing availability and in gullyling and point erosion as tracks between homesteads, diptanks and grazing areas become overused. Interviews and reference to academic literature both suggested that at least as important as the supposedly open access system was encroachment on grazing land by homesteads (family homes and immediately adjoining fields) as families relocated the short distances from towns to the rural areas to avoid urban property taxes.

In the fisheries VC in Comoros, the creation of coastal national parks and reserves has represented a significant evolution of the fishing areas from open commons with free access towards administered areas with new rules of use that generate problems of acceptance on the part of the population. In other parts of the coast, the adoption and implementation of local co-management agreements concerning the coastal resources facilitated a better management of the resource and the adoption of new techniques (e.g. octopus pot installation through collective investments). But at the same time, they limit the use of the coastal shelf during periods when shore gathering is closed, with negative impact on vulnerable groups. They can also cause conflicts between communities that are members of these agreements and neighbouring communities, who do not feel bound by the new standards.

Resources to be consulted:

- Lawry, S., Samii, C., Hall, R., Leopold, A., Hornby, D., & Mtero, F. (2014). The impact of land property rights interventions on investment and agricultural productivity in developing countries: a systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 10(1), 1-104. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2014.1>
- Holden, S. T. (2023). Fifty Years of Research on Land Tenure Policies and Land Markets: What Are the Major Lessons? In Estudillo, J.P., Kijima, Y. and Sonobe, T. (eds.) *Agricultural Development in Asia and Africa Essays in Honor of Keijiro Otsuka*. pp.115-126. Springer Nature, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5542-6_9

3.2.2 Respect of Water rights

Understanding the subdomain: This subdomain covers rights in water use (surface or ground and different scales of irrigation) and threats to them.

This subdomain is assessed with three questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
2.2.1 Do existing systems of water distribution promote equitable and secure rights to water for actors of the VC, particularly for those from vulnerable groups?	Covers issues in water distribution including water charges to farmers and fisherman, and inequality between head-enders and tail enders	
2.2.2 Do existing systems of water distribution promote sustainable use of water?	Covers incentives/disincentives for over-extraction, soil salinisation etc.	
2.2.3 Does government policy towards water distribution in the VC favour equity and environmental sustainability?	Covers reform (if any) of water rights, or government policy that favours large irrigation schemes over small farmers or vice-versa	

Challenges: Analysing this subdomain may require investigating the details of irrigation rights, including rights to sink and operate tubewells, systems of allocating water in canal systems, and the way charges are designed and applied in both cases, as well as the technical principles of

the water needs of different crops, the risks of over-extraction and over-irrigation. It may also require investigation of the situation at both water-user/community level and at policy level.

Tip: As with land tenure systems, participatory mapping exercises with focus groups may allow investigation of spatial differences in water rights, in actual delivery of water and in water charges, as well as allowing for supplementary questions on how different rights over resources are negotiated, upheld or threatened, and with what impacts.

Example from the field:

In the sorghum VC in Ghana, "Irrigation is not common among the sorghum smallholder farmers so they only have access to rainwater and some to nearby natural water sources like a lake and river. Generally, the farmers adjust their cropping pattern to the season (rainy/dry season) which limits them in their possibilities and makes them also very vulnerable and dependent on external weather circumstances. It also emerged from consultations with commercial farmers, aggregators and plant breeders that dry season sorghum cultivation under irrigation is not very viable financially. This is not only because of the higher cost of production due to the use of irrigation but also high pre-harvest losses as birds prey on the crop, especially when it is the only crop growing in a rather dry environment."

Resources to be consulted:

- African Development Bank (2010) *Water Governance in Africa: Volume 2, Assessment Guidelines* https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Vol_2_WATER_SECTOR_GOVERNANCE.pdf
- UNDP et al. (2013) *User's Guide on Assessing Water Governance*. https://www.watergovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/20058-UNDP-Assessing-water_web.pdf?t=444221

3.2.3 VGGT compliant Large-Scale Land Acquisition

Understanding the subdomain: There has been serious policy concern, and a very large academic literature on large-scale land acquisition (LSLA) or “land-grabbing”, in Africa and elsewhere in the global South, since the 2007-2008 food price spike. A significant view has been that of De Schutter (at the time the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food) in 2011, who warned that LSLAs could: be less effective in poverty reduction than support to smallholder farming; make farmers more vulnerable to food price shocks by favouring export agriculture; and accelerate the development of a market for land, with negative impacts on smallholders and other small-scale land users.

Reliable information on the actual extent of LSLAs, and the relative contributions of large-scale international corporations and medium-scale domestic investment, is difficult to obtain, but one option is to use the Land Matrix Project (<https://landmatrix.org/>) to identify large-scale acquisition in the country of interest - known transactions are listed by data and land area, and classified as Intended (at Expression of Interest, Negotiation or Memorandum of Understanding stage) or Completed (at Oral Agreement, Contract or Change of Ownership stage).

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) form an important document backed by

a number of international donors and largely concern the governance of LSLAs. Some of the most important principles are: to recognize and respect all legitimate tenure right holders and their rights; to safeguard legitimate tenure rights against threats and infringements; to promote and facilitate the enjoyment of legitimate tenure rights; to provide access to justice to deal with infringements of legitimate tenure rights; to prevent tenure disputes, violent conflicts and corruption. The VGGT also uphold the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, particularly where Indigenous Peoples are involved. However, it is relevant to investigate whether the *principles* of the VGGT are observed, even if stakeholders are unaware of the document itself.

This subdomain is assessed with four questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
2.3.1 Do government departments and agencies, companies and other institutions involved in the VC safeguard legitimate tenure rights against threats and infringements and provide access to justice where requested?	This question includes key wording from paragraphs 3.1.2 and 3.1.4 of the VGGT	
2.3.2 Do stakeholders in the VC including farmers have access to information about their rights in cases of potential LSLA and to information on specific planned LSLAs that affect them?		
2.3.3 Do affected groups participate in decision-making on LSLA and is the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent observed?		
2.3.4 Where expropriation or disruption of livelihoods is considered justified, is a system for ensuring fair and prompt compensation in place (in accordance with the national law and publicly acknowledged as being fair)?		

Challenge: Investigating LSLAs may be difficult as information on them may be hard to source, or even deliberately concealed.

Example from the field: In the Côte d'Ivoire cassava VC study, LSLAs for the cultivation of lucrative plantation crops such as rubber, oil palm and cocoa are having indirect impacts on the cassava VC for domestic consumption. Although Côte d'Ivoire has adopted the VGGT, the VCA4D team found through interview and document review that stakeholders were not observing the guidelines, and that cassava producers were therefore not protected from expropriation. This has led to a geographical shift of cassava production. Production in the south and southeast of the country is increasingly being replaced by plantation crops, leading to cultivation on smaller plots with inadequate allowance for fallow. Production is being displaced towards the central and central-west regions, where cassava is often cultivated on fallow land for rent or otherwise temporarily allocated. The study repeatedly draws attention to the general lack of tenure security.

Resources to be consulted:

- Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) <http://www.fao.org/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/> (French version at <http://www.fao.org/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/fr/>)
- De Schutter, O., 2011: How not to think of land-grabbing: Three critiques of large-scale investments in farmland. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38, 249–279. <https://doi:10.1080/03066150.2011.559008>
- Knapman, C., Silici, L., Cotula, L. and J. Meyers (2017) Africa's Farmland in Changing Hands: A review of literature and case studies from sub-Saharan Africa. IIED. <https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/17598IIED.pdf>
- Oberlack, C., Giger, M., Anseeuw, W., Adelle, C., Bourblanc, M., Burnod, P., ... & Messerli, P. (2021). Why do large-scale agricultural investments induce different socio-economic, food security, and environmental impacts? Evidence from Kenya, Madagascar, and Mozambique. *Ecology and Society* 26(4):18. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-12653-260418>
- The Land Matrix Project (<https://landmatrix.org/>)

3.3 Gender equality

Understanding the subdomain. Gender equality is about equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for both women and men. This implies the recognition of the different interests, needs, and priorities of the different genders. Gender inequality is, therefore, about unequal social relations and hierarchies, rather than individual characteristics of men or women, or concerning only women (Pyburn and Van Eerdewijk, 2021). The VCA4D social analysis in this domain will focus mainly on women's (and girls') rights, which include women's full and effective participation in the different segments of the VC. Women (and in particular those living in rural areas) are amongst the more vulnerable groups - sometime also across VC actors. Women's vulnerability is mainly due to their limited access to resources, legal or cultural barriers, unequal workload and unpaid labour, lower income and weak market position, limited voice in decision-making and vulnerability to shocks such as climate change, economic crisis or market fluctuations, which considered to impact women more severely, as they have fewer savings, weaker networks, and less institutional support.

In the VCA4D Social Profile, the gender equality domain includes the five subdomains: women's participation in economic activities, access to resources and services, decision-making, leadership and empowerment, hardship and division of labour. Each of these subdomains is subdivided into specific questions, making a total of 17 specific questions.

Challenges related to assessing gender equality:

- All domains of the Social Profile and of the VCA4D analysis should, whenever possible, integrate gender equity considerations into their frameworks.
- Male experts may encounter specific challenges in accessing information about women's realities. To overcome this, it is advisable to complement fieldwork with literature reviews and interviews with national organizations specialized in gender issues.

- All gender questions should be assessed combining positive vs negative responses (women empowerment vs. women disempowerment), and positive and negative trends.
- All gender questions should be assessed with regard to the difference between women of different marital statuses, and between *de jure* heads of households, *de facto* heads of households, and others.
- There needs to be careful reflection on norms and practices, including prevailing beliefs. Experts must also be cautious of their own cultural bias, avoiding to project their own ideas about gender equality onto a community without understanding its complexities or dynamics.
- The expert may encounter a lack of gender-disaggregated statistics at the national level. To address this gap, the expert should use the literature available and work closely with the economic and environmental experts, who may provide valuable insights to help complete the missing information.
- There are gendered patterns of cropping and other agriculture related activities, but the expert should be aware that they may change over time and have diverse causes.
- Shifting power dynamics must also be taken into account. Women's roles in agriculture and asset ownership may be evolving, especially with changes in policies, education, and women's mobility. Experts must keep up with these dynamic shifts and track how trends are changing over time.
- Empowerment vs. Ownership: Ownership of assets may not always correlate with empowerment. A woman may technically own assets, but societal, familial, or economic pressures may still limit her decision-making power. Experts need to consider how "empowerment" plays out in practice.

Tips: To fully understand women's roles in value chains, experts must adopt a holistic, transformative gender lens—linking well-being, empowerment, and change. This means recognizing both progress and setbacks, identifying drivers of autonomy or dependence, and moving beyond productivity-focused views to include women's decision-making and long-term transformative potential.

Examples from the field: Women are more actively engaged in the production of goods that they can sell independently in local markets, such as aquaculture, food crops, fisheries, fruits, and horticultural products. If one takes commercial crops, in the cocoa value chains (Ecuador, São Tome and Principe, Nicaragua, Cameroon), women are involved in both production and processing activities, but their participation is more noticeable in harvesting and processing (fermentation and drying), and in the process of chocolate making, especially in Ecuador. In Nicaragua, women are also employed in the warehouses of the large trading companies. In the coffee value chains (Ecuador, Tanzania, Honduras), women are involved in all segments of the VC, from primary production to post-harvest work, marketing and processing industries (that is not the case of Angola in which women are mostly involved in the coffee production). In Honduras, women participate in all links of the chain, in varying proportions.

Resources to be consulted:

- CEDAW 1979. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>

- Pyburn, Rhiannon, and Anouka Van Eerdewijk (eds) 2021. Advancing Gender Equality through Agricultural and Environmental Research: Past, Present, and Future. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/cecae40b-1026-479c-9579-46cbcd4507c2>
- Commission on the Status of Women (CSW - UN): <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women>
- Fabre P., Dabat M.H., Orlandoni O. 2021. Methodological brief for agri-based value chain analysis. Frame and Tools – Key features, Version 2 – February 2021, 44p <https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/VCA4D%20Methodological%20Brief%20-%20Frame%20and%20Tools.pdf>
- FAO. 2018. Developing gender-sensitive value-chains – guidelines for practitioners. <https://www.fao.org/3/i9212en/I9212EN.pdf>
- FAO. 2021. Using gender sex-disaggregated data to better understand gender gaps in agriculture. Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb8934en/cb8934en.pdf~>
- FAO. 2023. The Status of women in agrifood systems <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/cc5343en>
- UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/un-women-strategic-plan-2022-2025>
- UN Women WATCH. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- World Fish, CGIAR, CARE. 2015. Measuring gender-transformative change. A review of literature and promising practice https://care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/working_paper_aas_gt_change_measurement_fa_lowres.pdf

3.3.1 Economic activities

Understanding the subdomain: Across VCs, women are predominantly engaged in productive activities, while few participate in the more profitable sectors of transport and wholesale trade. These activities are largely dominated by men, partly because they demand greater capital investment, higher mobility, and frequent interactions with external actors." (FAO, 2023).

This subdomain is assessed with 2 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
3.1.1 Are risks of women being excluded from certain segments of the value chain minimized?	<p>The expert should seek to identify the value chain activities in which women participate, as well as the barriers that prevent them from accessing some segments of the VC.</p> <p>Good reasons for restrictions (e.g. not allowing women to undertake hazardous/strenuous work within the VC) make the question non applicable.</p>	<p>Many international commitments support women's economic empowerment, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of International Labour Organization conventions on gender equality.</p> <p>UNWOMEN https://www.unwomen.org/en</p>

3.1.2 To what extent are women active in the value chain (as producers, processors, workers, traders...)?	This question is linked to the previous one, yet it brings women's participation to another level of engagement and control over activities' resources, inputs, and income.	
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Challenge: To collect information from the different steps of the VC.

Tips: Disaggregate VC roles and interview women in processing, trade, or market situations. Explore beyond typical production roles to find examples of women broader participation or leadership. Consult NGOs, and national gender policies to identify factors driving women's empowerment across different value chain segments.

Examples from the field: Some VCA4D reports recognize women's agency over some VC products. This happens mainly in the case of specialized short value chains in which women have control over the whole stages of the VC, even if it is a short VC (i.e. control over lime juice in Guinea-Bissau, cashew processing in Sierra Leone, milk in Kenya, *pito* brewing in Ghana). A notable example is groundnut, a high-calorie crop that is easily stored and preserved for times of food scarcity. In Ghana, it is known as the 'women's crop' due to the significant roles women play in its cultivation, processing, and trading. Social experts highlight that groundnut cultivation offers valuable lessons in promoting women's empowerment. By managing their own plots, processing the harvest, and engaging in trade independently, women gain substantial control over their income. Experts also emphasize that groundnut farming fosters both self-esteem and financial independence for women."

Resources to be consulted:

- FAO. Status of Women in Agrifood System. Chapter 4 – Women's Agency and Policies in Agrofood Systems. <https://www.fao.org/gender/the-status-of-women-in-agrifood-systems/en>
- FAO. (2011). *The role of women in agriculture*. FAO ESA working papers. <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/273446/>

3.3.2 Access to resources and services

Understanding the subdomain: Equal access to and control over land and resources is key to gender equality in agrifood systems. Women face major disadvantages in land rights, ownership, management, inheritance, and representation. This limits access to finance and other economic inputs. Strengthening land rights boosts women's income, decision-making power, and social status.

This subdomain is assessed with the aid of 4 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
3.2.1 Do women have ownership of assets (other than land)?	<p>The question aims to assess the extent to which women possess and control resources mobilised in the VC other than land, such as equipment, machinery, livestock, or financial assets. The question also aims to understand whether women have the power to manage, control, or decide how those assets are used.</p>	<p>Sustainable Development Goals 5 - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Target 5b - Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#targets_and_indicators</p>
3.2.2 Do women have equal land rights to men?	<p>The question asks whether women and men have the same legal, social, and economic rights when it comes to owning, using, controlling, and inheriting land.</p>	<p>Target 5a - Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#targets_and_indicators</p>
3.2.3 Do women have access to credit?	<p>The question addresses whether rural women are able to obtain financial resources through formal or informal credit such as banks, microfinance institutions, community savings groups, or private lenders, in order to fund their agricultural activities or personal businesses.</p>	
3.2.4 Do women have access to other services (extension services, inputs...)?	<p>The question aims to assess the availability and accessibility of support services and resources that are crucial for agricultural productivity and economic empowerment for rural women. These services may include extension services, access to agricultural inputs, training, etc. This question is linked to the subdomain Education from the domain Living Conditions of the Social Profile.</p>	

Challenges: The question involves navigating complex social, legal, economic, and cultural factors. It also involves taking into account legal framework vs. cultural norms: while most

countries have laws that guarantee women equal land rights, customary practices often contradict these legal protections.

Tip: Access to resources and services does not link directly with legal empowerment. Women may face societal or economic pressures that limit decision-making despite legal rights. The expert should assess women's land rights in legal frameworks, including inheritance, land registration, and access, and should investigate challenges women face in accessing formal or informal sources of credit.

Examples from the field: In the Cameroon cotton VC women have limited access to ownership and control of productive assets and technologies. Women do not normally own equipment such as carts, ploughs and oxen, thus depend on the mercy of their husbands. Some of the VCA4D reports relate women's access to credit to legally recognized land ownership. Some studies indicate that in some countries/regions women are considered more reliable than men by financial institutions. There are also examples of women organized around some productive activities and using an informal credit system (e.g. coffee traders in Angola). In Ecuador, in terms of access to credit, men and women have the same legal rights, but financial institutions consider that women are more punctual in their payments and therefore prefer them as borrowers. In most other countries, women have little access to credit.

Resources to be consulted:

- FAO. 2019. Women's access to rural finance: challenges and opportunities. Rome. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=http://openknowledge.fao.org/items/f91d2d19-00f9-4393-a6c5-03d9f3fe2747&ved=2ahUKEwjksXchv2MAxV0fKQEHUa0D7wQFnoECBYQAQ&usg=AOvVaw0Gy6BpCS2pK3TykPqSdICY>
- FAO. 2023. Gender Inequalities in Resources in Agrifood Systems – Chapter 3 – Gender Inequalities in resources in Agrifood Systems. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/317db554-c763-4654-a0d3-24a8488bbc3a/content/status-women-agrifood-systems-2023/gender-inequalities-resources-agrifood.html>
- FAO. GENDER AND LAND RIGHTS DATABASE (GLRD) <https://www.fao.org/land-water/land/land-governance/land-resources-planning-toolbox/category/details/fr/c/1047633/>
- Jackson, Cecile. Gender Analysis of Land: Beyond Land Rights for Women? Journal of Agrarian Change. 3 No. 4, October 2003, pp. 453–480 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1471-0366.00062>
- [Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index \(WEAI\)](#) or the [Women's Empowerment Metric for National Statistical System \(WEMNS\)](#) provide indicators that can be applied to specific aspects of women's land rights; WEMNS even has a full module on rights and security of tenure for land and dwellings.

3.3.3 Decision making

Understanding the subdomain: For women, most positive impacts on instrumental agency came from increased control over income, asset ownership and access to credit. This is related to the subdomain of social capital such as women collective agency, through group memberships and other horizontal networks.

This subdomain is assessed with 5 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
3.3.1 To what extent do women take part in the decisions related to production?	The question aims to assess women's involvement in the decision-making processes with direct impact in production activities within households or communities.	Sustainable Development Goals 5 - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Target 5.7. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5_targets_and_indicators
3.3.2 To what extent are women autonomous in the organisation of their work (within vs outside the VC)?	The question aims to assess the level of autonomy women have in the management and coordination of their tasks and responsibilities in relations to the role in the VC. How they manage time, allocate resources, and moreover how they make choices that affect their productivity and livelihoods.	
3.3.3 Do women have control over income?	This question examines financial autonomy and decision-making power specifically regarding how women use the income generated through agricultural activities (productive or market-based). It aims also at understanding whether the participation of women in the VC favours or not control of income and in which of its segments	
3.3.4 Do women earn independent income?	The question refers to whether women are able to generate their own income through economic activities without relying on others (such as male family members) for financial support. It aims also at understanding whether the participation of women in the VC is	

	a source of independent income and in which of its segments	
3.3.5 Do women take part in decisions on the purchase, sale or transfer of assets?	This question examines financial autonomy and decision-making power within households or communities, specifically regarding the use of income generated through productive or market-based activities. The answer shall focus on the VC activities	

Challenge: The challenge is to understand how much control women have over the planning, structuring, and execution of their work, particularly in agricultural or productive settings; and whether their participation in the VC activities is favouring their equality. It will be important to take into account cultural norms. In many societies, gender roles dictate how tasks are assigned, and women's work may be undervalued or limited by societal expectations. These norms can restrict women's ability to organize their work independently or make autonomous decisions.

Tip: The social expert should explore barriers to women's participation in VC's decisions, considering gendered social structures, economic constraints, and legal limitations. Interviews with women and men in rural communities will provide insights into women's control over tasks, income, and decision-making, while also examining cultural norms, legal rights, access to education, and other drivers of women empowerment or disempowerment. It is suggested that all enquiries should take into account women's marital status.

Examples from the field: In the Cambodia aquaculture VC, women who own their own ponds and cages make their own production decisions. Decisions are also made jointly by the woman and her husband. With regard to decisions about trade in the market, women are more influential. With regard to autonomy, women have more or less autonomy in the organisation of their work, depending on the level of specialization. When women are fully active in aquaculture, they organise their work themselves, but they are influenced by social and family norms that impose certain constraints. In the Cameroon cocoa VC, the farm belongs to the man, as do the decisions. Women are not autonomous; they have to follow the work schedule and have no choice in the organisation of the work. In Zambia maize production, female heads of household are autonomous in organising their work, including maize production. In Burundi, women working in the banana sector are actively involved in production decisions and are consistently consulted on decisions concerning the purchase, sale or transfer of goods. However, women are only partially autonomous when it comes to organising their own work. This is largely because they participate in almost all the tasks carried out by their husbands within the sector, which limits their autonomy in decision-making.

Resources to be consulted:

- Alam, M. Sultana. 2011. Factors Effect on Women Autonomy and Decision-Making Power within the Household in Rural Communities. *Journal of Applied Sciences Research* 7(1):18-22. January. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228505951_Factors_Effect_on_Women_Auton

omy and Decision-Making Power within the Household in Rural Communities#fullTextFileContent

- FAO ECA WPW. 2018. Consulted on line in 29.04.25: "Challenges Facing Rural Women in the Next Decade and Their Participation in the Decision-Making Process" by Patricia Ohara.
https://www.fao.org/UNFAO/Bodies/ECA/WPW/9WPWkey.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- FAO. 2023. Status of Women in Agrifood System. Chapter 4 – Women’s Agency and Policies in Agrofood Systems.
<https://www.fao.org/gender/the-status-of-women-in-agrifood-systems/en>
- UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/un-women-strategic-plan-2022-2025>
- World Bank, FAO, 2018. Male Outmigration and Women’s Work and Empowerment in Agriculture – the case of Nepal and Senegal.
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/653481530195848293/pdf/Male-outmigration-and-womens-work-and-empowerment-in-agriculture-the-case-of-Nepal-and-Senegal.pdf>
- World Bank, FAO, IFAD. 2013. Gender Equality and Food Security: Women’s Empowerment as a Tool Against Hunger.
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30315/gender-equality-and-food-security.pdf>

3.3.4 Leadership and empowerment

Understanding the subdomain: Leadership roles reflect gender equality within organizations. When women have agency and power, it enables them to shape policies, challenge norms, and influence change. Women’s leadership promotes empowerment, autonomy, and influence. However, low education levels limit women’s power in services, territorial, and political decision-making processes.

This subdomain is assessed with 4 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
3.4.1 Are women members of groups, trade unions, farmers' organisations?	The question asks whether women that participate in the VC activities are also members of the organisation and institutions that regulate and support the VC.	Engagement with gender equality advocates helps strengthen their skills to influence public decision-making and hold governments accountable. At the UN General Assembly, the UN Commission on the Status of Women and elsewhere, we play central roles in supporting a stronger normative framework for financing for gender equality, and strengthened public sector capacity and accountability. UNWOMEN https://www.unwomen.org/en

3.4.2 Do women have leadership positions within the organisations they are part of?	The question seeks to understand the extent to which women hold powerful roles or decision-making positions in the groups, organizations, or associations they belong to, in relation to their role within the VC.	
3.4.3 Do women have the power to influence services, territorial power and policy decision making?		
3.4.4 Do women speak in public?	The question explores whether women are visible and vocal in public spaces and forums, and whether they participate in public discourse, in activities related to the VC.	

Challenge: The challenges are to assess whether VC's organizations provide resources, knowledge, and opportunities to women to enhance their agency and socioeconomic status; to examine legal and cultural barriers limiting participation; and to determine if women can shape decisions, direction, and policies, beyond simply being members.

Tip: The social expert should: consult community networks, NGOs, and organizations offering training, mentorship, and advocacy in relation to the VC; interview women involved in organizations like cooperatives, trade unions, and community groups; explore processes of change and identify barriers preventing women's participation in these organizations.

Examples from the field: For cotton in Ethiopia, the weakness of institutional structures supporting women's cooperatives and microfinance institutions, the lack of gender mainstreaming in the planning and implementation of women's support activities, and the low number of women leaders in these institutions are the factors that prevent women from organizing. In the sorghum VC in Ghana, women can and do belong to groups and unions. The existence of formal groups, unions and associations is, nevertheless, low. At the production stage, smallholder farmers are organised in groups. However, with a few exceptions, women are not very active because it is time consuming and an additional activity to all the tasks they already have. Women can take up leadership positions. Due to cultural norms and constraints, lower levels of education and limited time available for tasks and activities outside the domestic sphere, their frequency of public speaking is low compared to men.

Resources to be consulted:

- FAO. 2023. Status of Women in Agrifood System. Chapter 4 – Women's Agency and Policies in Agrofood Systems. <https://www.fao.org/gender/the-status-of-women-in-agrifood-systems/en>
- IFPRI. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE INDEX <https://www.ifpri.org/project/weai/>

- FAO. GENDER AND LAND RIGHTS DATABASE (GLRD)
<https://www.fao.org/land-water/land/land-governance/land-resources-planning-toolbox/category/details/fr/c/1047633/>
- Gender Climate Tracker. 2015. Women's voice and leadership in decision-making. Assessing the evidence (Report). By Domingo, Pilar, Holmes, Rebecca, O'Neil, Tam, Jones, Nicola, Bird, Kate, Larson, Anna Larson, Presler-Marshall, Elizabeth I and Valters, Craig
<https://genderclimatetracker.org/sites/default/files/Resources/Women%20and%20leadership%20in%20decision-making-Assessing%20the%20evidence.pdf>

3.3.5 Hardship and division of labour

Understanding the subdomain: The general observation, in all value chains, is that one of the constraints to women's economic development is the extent of their working time, especially domestic work combined with agricultural food activities, which prevents them from being fully involved in wage-earning activities or from having full autonomy to carry out their income-generating activities. The subdomain also introduces the women's access to labour-saving technologies promoted to replace traditionally female tasks.

This subdomain is assessed with 4 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
3.5.1 To what extent are the overall work loads of men and women equal (including domestic work and childcare)?	The question explores the distribution of labour between men and women working in the VC, both in paid and unpaid work. Specifically, it is asking whether men and women share an equal burden in terms of their total workload, which includes paid employment and household responsibilities such as domestic chores and childcare.	Sustainable Development Goals 5 - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Target 5.4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5
3.5.2 Are risks of women being subject to strenuous work minimised (i.e. using labour saving technologies...)?	The question aims to evaluate whether women's exposure to physically demanding or risky work in the VC is being actively reduced or managed. Labour saving technologies include tools, equipment, or innovations designed to reduce manual effort.	

Challenge: The social expert should consider that there are invisible labour and gender roles. Due to cultural norms domestic responsibilities may be defined as "normal". It will be a challenge

to find reliable and up to date data, and to identify cultural, economic, or social reasons for imbalances in domestic burdens.

Tip: The social expert may use time-use surveys (TUSs). S/he should: take into consideration seasonal work; triangulate to avoid gender bias; contact NGOs; use case studies to support the analysis; give evidence for statements when referring to risks being minimized (e.g. women who previously carried water manually now use carts).

Examples from the field: In the Tanzania coffee VC, women have a heavy workload, taking care of the family and daily household needs, in addition to contributing up to 80% of the labour required for coffee production, as well as other agricultural work. The social expert reports about “time poverty” referring to women’s workload. In fruit VCs (Burkina Faso mango, Togo pineapple, Dominican Republic banana), most women who work in factories are responsible for children and household chores. They are responsible for preparing the midday meal, and the evening meal, in most cases for the extended family. In Guinea-Bissau, a male lime producer expressed a preference for the manually produced juice by women over the mechanically produced one, despite having the necessary mechanical equipment.

Resources to be consulted:

- Pyburn, Rhiannon, and Anouka Van Eerdewijk (eds). Advancing Gender Equality through Agricultural and Environmental Research: Past, Present, and Future. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.
<https://cgospace.cgiar.org/items/cecae40b-1026-479c-9579-46cbcd4507c2>
- UNWOMEN.2023. FORECASTING TIME SPENT IN UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK TECHNICAL BRIEF. Taylor Hanna, Collin Meisel, Jonathan Moyer (Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures) and Ginette Azcona, Antra Bhatt and Sara Duerto Valero (UN Women)
<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/technical-brief-forecasting-time-spent-in-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-en.pdf>
- Njuki, J. Parkins, J.R. and Kaler, A. 2016.Transforming Gender and Food Security in the Global South. Routledge.
https://www.routledge.com/Transforming-Gender-and-Food-Security-in-the-Global-South/Njuki-Parkins-Kaler/p/book/9780367227678?srsltid=AfmBOoocELc_GDcthQXI63NV6Pdz9UV2657rtdzvyuRz6Tw99k8tDudz
- ILO. Site consulted in 29.04.2025. Why measuring unpaid domestic and care work matters
https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_898173.pdf
- Hyde, E., Greene, M., Darmstadt, G. (2020). Time poverty: Obstacle to women’s human rights, health and sustainable development. Journal Global Health. 2020. Dec: 10(2): 020313, published online 2020 Nov 8. doi: 10.7189/jogh10_020313
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7688061/>

- UNWOMEN.2023. FORECASTING TIME SPENT IN UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK TECHNICAL BRIEF. Taylor Hanna, Collin Meisel, Jonathan Moyer (Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures) and Ginette Azcona, Antra Bhatt and Sara Duerto Valero (UN Women)

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/technical-brief-forecasting-time-spent-in-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-en.pdf>

3.4 Food and nutrition security

Understanding the domain: The links between agrifood VCs and food security are intrinsic. A well-functioning agrifood VC will contribute to the food and nutrition security (FNS) of those who participate in it and beyond, directly through consumption or indirectly through generating income for food purchase. The methodology adopts the internationally recognized definition of food security (also referred to as food and nutrition security) as proposed by the FAO: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (1996 World Food Summit). From this definition, four subdomains of food security can be identified: food availability, access, utilisation and stability. For food security objectives to be realized, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously ([FAO, 2008](#)). In the methodology, FNS is to be assessed as an output at all steps of the VC (for producers, traders, processors, waged farm and processing industries workers) and as a global output of the VC (for the population as a whole).

Resources to be consulted:

- Infographic CPF2030 : Sustainability in Action

https://www.cpfworldwide.com/en/sustainability/performance/CPF2030_Sustainability_Strategy_Handbook.pdf
- Committee on World Food Security, 2014, Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems <https://www.fao.org/cfs/policy-products/rai/en/>
- Committee on World Food Security, CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, [CFS VGs Food Systems and Nutrition Strategy EN.pdf](#)

3.4.1 Availability of food

Understanding the subdomain: Physical availability of food produced by the VC as defined by the FAO : Physical food availability addresses the “supply side” of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade.

This subdomain is assessed with 2 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
4.1.1 Does the local production of food increase?	To what extent does the VC contribute to ensure physical availability of food at the local and at the national level? Is food more	

	available to VC actors than to comparable populations not in the VC?	
4.1.2 Are food supplies increasing on local markets?	To what extent does the VC contribute to ensure physical access to food, increasing food quantities in local markets? What are the repercussions at the national level?	

Challenge : The social expert can be challenged when the product of the VC is an agricultural commodity that is not eatable or directly eatable. However, in some cases (like coffee and cocoa VCs), these commodities might be produced with co-products, in particular in agroforestry systems including fruit trees and bananas or annual crops when the plot is planted, and consequently, the VC contributes indirectly to the production of food.

Tip: The social expert should understand the consumption patterns of the local populations

Examples from the field: Addressing the questions of this subdomain can be challenging when the target product of the VC being studied is not directly consumable as a staple food. However, it may be relevant to consider co-products. This was the case in the Nicaragua study where cocoa is produced in agroforestry systems, particularly with citrus fruits and bananas, which are an important food source. Milk and some meat from culled goats are by-products of cashmere production in Mongolia.

3.4.2 Accessibility of food

Understanding the subdomain: Economic and physical access to food: An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices in achieving food security objectives.

This subdomain is assessed with 2 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
4.2.1 Do people have more income to allocate to food?	To what extent does the VC contribute to ensure economic access to food, increasing incomes to allocate to food consumption? Do VC actors have more income to allocate to food than comparable populations not in the VC?	
4.2.2 Are (relative) consumer food prices decreasing?	To what extent does the VC contribute to ensure economic access to food, reducing food prices on local markets? at the national level?	

Challenge: There is no particular difficulty in these questions, which are easily understood.

Examples from the field: VC studies that concern cash crops or, more broadly, high value-added products are particularly interesting for addressing this question and considering the links

with food purchasing. This is particularly true for export crops such as cocoa or coffee, and livestock products such as beef or cashmere for export, which generate income that can be allocated to household consumption. However, this dimension must be considered with the spread of income over time, as a single annual income is difficult to use for daily food purchases.

3.4.3 Utilisation of food and nutritional adequacy

Understanding the subdomain: Utilisation is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food. Combined with good biological utilization of food consumed, this determines the nutritional status of individuals.

This subdomain is assessed with 3 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
4.3.1 Is the nutritional quality of available food improving?	To what extent does the VC contribute to improving the quality of the diet, in terms of its compliance with international nutritional recommendations and standards (diversity of food groups)?	
4.3.2 Are nutritional practices being improved?	Overlaps the first question of this subdomain	
4.3.3 Is dietary diversity increased?	Overlaps the first question of this subdomain	

Challenge: The social expert needs to access nutrition information of products and should be able to understand diets and the specific contribution of the products of the VC in the local diets.

3.4.4 Stability

Understanding the subdomain: Stability of food intake. Stability refers to the other three dimensions over time. Even if food intake is adequate today, one is still considered to be food insecure if s/he has inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of his/her nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on your food security status.

This subdomain is assessed with 2 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
4.4.1 Is the risk of periodic food shortage for households reduced?	To what extent does the VC contribute to reducing the risk of periodic food shortage?	
4.4.2 Is excessive food price variation reduced?	To what extent does the VC contribute to reducing excessive food price variation?	

Challenge: The subdomain may refer only indirectly to diets related to the studied VC, as the products may not be edible, for instance in the case of commodities like coffee or cocoa.

Tip: The social expert may assess this subdomain working with the economist and the environmental expert, as the cropping calendar is usually established in the functional analysis and may allow to identify when the VC produces and consequently, provide food or money all around the year or not. Sales of VC products also contribute to food stability of producing families and actors in the VC.

Examples from the field: Despite the fact that the cocoa VC does not produce food as such, producer households particularly appreciate this crop because it delivers an almost continuous income stream, in particular at crucial periods (i.e. the months of paying children's school fees, which also correspond to the peak of production). The sale of pods to coyotes also allows producer families to obtain cash for current expenses, particularly food, throughout the year, which contributes to the stability of food.

3.5 Social capital

Understanding the domain: Social capital has emerged as a key concept in the social sciences in general and social policy over the last decades. Understood by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the socio-economic benefits for both individuals and communities that result from the every-day functioning of social networks, social capital can be approached as part of human development and resilience, as well as linked to community-based governance, conflict prevention, and inclusive growth. Social cohesion, Trust and Participation are generally considered as its three pillars at European Commission (EC) level.

At VC level, these pillars are addressed by the VCA4D methodology under the three subdomains: Strength of producer organisations, Information and confidence, and Social involvement, that are connected to the functional analysis through the examination of the VC's organization and governance, particularly the horizontal and vertical coordination among actors, as well as to vocational training (subdomain Education and training of the Living Conditions domain).

Social capital can have a strong impact on the process of decision-making, the formulation and implementation of public policies related to the VC, the efficiency of the VC, the development of innovation and skills, the resilience and adaptability to crisis, as well as on the access to services and the attractiveness of the VC. Coordination between VC actors can be a key to analyzing each of the three subdomains.

Challenges: It is important to assess social capital in close relation to the governance analysis. Specific attention should be paid to the particularities of the social capital within each sub-chain, as well as to the links between the forms of coordination (horizontal and vertical) and the assessment of each subdomain.

Tip: The social expert should start analysing the participation of the identified organisations, both formal and informal, in the governance, and assess how they intervene in the VC operations during fieldwork interviews. The characterization of the way in which each organisation or type of organisation carries out its different functions, their modes of operation, their weight and their

influence in the functioning of the VC, helps considerably to understand the interplay of the different actors.

Example from the field: From the pineapple VCA4D study in Benin: “At the village level, Village Cooperatives of Pineapple Producers were established; at the municipal level, Municipal Unions; at the departmental level in the Atlantic region, the Departmental Union; and at the national level, the National Federation of Pineapple Producer Cooperatives. All were officially recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries. The National Federation of Pineapple Producer Cooperatives, represents all pineapple producers within the interprofessional framework and participates in all meetings related to the development of the pineapple VC.”

Resources to be consulted:

- Kolade, O., Mafimisebi, O. P., & Aluko, O. (2019). Beyond the farm gate: can social capital help small-holders to overcome constraints in the agricultural value chain? (pp. 109–129). Palgrave Macmillan.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41513-6_6
- Sporleder, T. L., & Wu, S. Y. (2006). Social capital and vertical ties in agrifood supply chains. *Journal on Chain and Network Science*, 6(1), 1–7.
<https://doi.org/10.3920/JCNS2006.X060>

3.5.1 Strength of producer organisations

Understanding the subdomain: From the social point of view, this subdomain is a fundamental aspect of the VC functioning and performance. Many forms of organisations generally exist, either formal or informal, often with diverse legal statuses, that shape their internal mode of governance as well as the way they act and bargain within VC operations. It is therefore important to base the analysis on a solid mapping of the various organizations, identifying their legal statuses, degree of formality, importance and inclusiveness in terms of affiliation. The analysis of mapping should also consider their internal governance structures, leadership representativeness and accountability, the VC stages in which they are involved, and the nature of their specific actions, including their bargaining power.

The assessment of this subdomain should shed light on the contribution of producer organisations to social cohesion and inclusion, as well as to other aspects such as the access of members to services, attractiveness of the VC, risk management.

This subdomain is assessed with 3 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
5.1.1 Do formal and informal farmer organisations /cooperatives participate in the value chain?	To what extent is the VC organised into groups, networks, associations and cooperatives? Distinguish between formal and informal farmer organizations. Identify types and levels of participation. At what stages of the VC do these groups participate?	<p>UNDP focuses on social capital as part of human development and resilience. It links social capital to community-based governance, conflict prevention, and inclusive growth.</p> <p><i>Social capital promotes trust and cooperation, which are essential for effective democratic governance and sustainable development.</i> — UNDP Human Development Reports, e.g.</p> <p>https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/bosnianhdr2009summaryen.pdf?utm_source=chartgpt.com</p>
5.1.2 How inclusive is group/cooperative membership?	To what extent do VC organisations ensure social cohesion and inclusion among VC actors?	Inclusiveness refers to vulnerable and/or marginalized people. It generally considers women, young people, indigenous people, and marginalized workers such as migrants,
5.1.3 Do groups have representative and accountable leadership?	Leadership representativeness means that it reflects the diversity of the group's membership (e.g., gender, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity) and acts in their collective interest. Leaders are accountable when they are held responsible by members, transparent in their actions, and can be challenged or replaced by the members.	

Challenge: The social expert should identify all existing organizational forms at the different levels of the VC, characterize their way of intervention in the operations of the VC and prioritize them according to their influence on the governance of the VC or the sub-chains. Defining group boundaries can be challenging, as some informal groups engage in formal operations, and definitions of "formal" vary by country. Informal groups often lack documentation, and leadership may be symbolic with weak accountability. Cultural norms shape perceptions of leadership. Many farmer groups are small or fragmented, limiting bargaining power. Reliance on middlemen reduces farmers' leverage, and in markets dominated by powerful buyers or suppliers, even large cooperatives struggle to secure favorable terms.

Tip: The social expert should:

- assess how identified organisations participate in the VC governance and operations, distinguishing between formal and informal groups
- analyse participation types and country-specific norms
- disaggregate by structure, capacity, and recognition
- go beyond membership - evaluate influence, benefits, and decision-making power. Make inclusion explicit (e.g., women, youth, smallholders, migrants), noting seasonal or unreported participation
- assess leadership through observed behaviour and member feedback
- ask if groups influence terms, hold leverage, and have real negotiation power, rather than just asking if groups access markets.

Examples from the field: In the fisheries VC in Comoros, many organisations have been created to facilitate the implementation of specific fisheries policy actions, without there being any real ownership by their members. In the sub-chain of specialized coffee in Honduras, one cooperative has managed to have a very positive impact on the production of its members, to the point of extending its operations to processing and marketing and to internally organize its members' access to health and education services. In the Benin pineapple VC: "Inclusive membership in pineapple producers' groups and cooperatives means that there are no restrictions on joining. Whether a small or large producer, membership is free and open to all pineapple producers. The statutes and internal regulations clearly specify the conditions for joining". Despite this, a significant number of producers do not belong to any organization. The social expert referred to them as "isolated producers".

Resources to be consulted:

- Arcadia International, Areté, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (European Commission), ECORYS, ERGO, IHS Markit, 2023. Supporting producer organisations to contribute to strengthening farmer's position in the agri-food supply chain and improving the economic, social and environmental sustainability of farm : final study report
https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cmef/farmers-and-farming/establishing-operational-programme-supporting-producer-organisations-contribute-strengthening_en
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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377290264_Social_capital_in_cooperatives_A_typology_and_their_influence_on_performance

3.5.2 Information and confidence

Understanding the subdomain: Both information and confidence are fundamental for the VC development. Coordination among VC actors enhances information flow, improving farmers' access to and understanding of agricultural practices, policies, and markets. Strong VC organizations foster trust, solidarity, and collaboration. Mutual perceptions of reliability and honesty among actors are crucial for effective cooperation and sustainable VC functioning.

This subdomain is assessed with 2 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
5.2.1 Do farmers in the value chain have access to information on agricultural practices, agricultural policies, and market prices?	Refers to the ability of farmers to obtain, understand, and use relevant information related to agricultural practices, policies, and market conditions.	
5.2.2 To what extent is the relation between value chain actors perceived as trustworthy?	Refers to how actors in the value chain view each other's reliability, honesty, and reliability. Trust can be seen in business relationships, communication, and contract enforcement.	

Challenge: The social expert should capture the diversity of situations, by linking it to the typology of actors. Access to reliable agricultural and market information is limited in remote areas due to weak infrastructure and underfunded extension services. Information may be outdated or unreliable. Trust is hard to measure, it is shaped by perceptions and experiences, and people may hesitate to express doubts about VC actors they depend on.

Tip: The social expert should:

- look at the actions carried out by the various organisations of the VC
- look beyond availability, focus on the quality, accessibility, and impact of the information
- use triangulation - cross-check the data collected by interviewing different segments of the VC separately
- include women, youth, migrants and other vulnerable groups who might be excluded or affected differently
- consider that trust can be assessed in business relationships, communication, and contract enforcement.

Examples from the field: In the hard-to-reach coffee-growing territories of Ecuador, limited access to price information impacts the relationship between the producer and the intermediary. In the Ghana sorghum VC: "Information, price information, knowledge and quality advisory services are hardly available or accessible to smallholders. If they have information it is not sure whether the information is accurate and reliable. They often rely on the nucleus farmer who is in charge of (price) negotiations with the input-suppliers and the aggregators." In the Guinea-Bissau mango and lime VCs: "Normally, farmers join together either among themselves or in village community organizations (tabanca). Community organizations that work in the area of food production, such as the NGO Kafo, complain about a lack of political will. They try to establish partnerships with international organizations that can provide them with training. They also complain about competition from imported products that use stronger (more appealing to the consumer) strategies. Their bargaining power depends on scale. Small farmers who sell their produce in local markets negotiate prices among themselves. When outside traders get involved, there is little room for negotiation. In some cases, producers with greater bargaining power check the prices being charged in major markets before negotiating with foreign vendors."

Resources to be consulted:

- World Bank (2012). ICT in Agriculture: Connecting Smallholders to Knowledge, Networks, and Institutions. e-Sourcebook. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/455701468340165132/ict-in-agriculture-connecting-smallholders-to-knowledge-networks-and-institutions>

3.5.3 Social involvement

Understanding the subdomain: Social involvement is the aspect of social capital directly linked to community-based governance, conflict prevention, inclusive growth and social cohesion. It allows exploration of the territorial dimension of the VC, particularly at community level. Its analysis brings elements to decision-makers on how the VC supports territorial structuring, community participation in decisions, respect for traditional knowledge, and unpaid collective efforts. This includes evaluating community involvement in VC-related activities that impact livelihoods and how actively members contribute to shared goals and local development.

This subdomain is assessed with 3 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
5.3.1 Do communities participate in decisions that impact their livelihood?	To what extent VC coordination contributes to empowerment of VC actors ? To what extent does it contribute to ensure that VC actors participate in policy making affecting the VC ?	
5.3.2 Are there actions to ensure respect for traditional knowledge and resources?	To what extent does the organization of the VC allow for the preservation of traditional knowledge? (in the sense of maintaining traditional knowledge)	
5.3.3 Is there participation in voluntary communal activities for the benefit of the community?	To what extent voluntary work in communal activities shows cohesion at community level?	

Challenges: Top-down decisions can disrupt communities. Evaluate local participation in VC decisions and how power dynamics affect benefit distribution, especially for small producers and vulnerable groups.

Tip: The social expert should:

- interview local leaders and authorities to assess how the VC supports social cohesion and community involvement
- evaluate VC's actors' participation in VC planning, inclusion of traditional practices, and consultation on traditional knowledge use

- assess community satisfaction, inclusiveness of communal activities, and representation of women, youth, and marginalized groups.

Examples from the field: In the Comoros fisheries VC: social cohesion in the Comorian fishermen villages contributes to safety at sea and facilitates collective action. In the Ghana sorghum VC: “The village or community chief is sometimes accompanied by influential family heads. The traditional chief system is very important and influential. At household and farm level, people can decide how they want to live, what they want to cultivate. At village and community level, the chiefs have to be involved in all decisions impacting livelihoods and have the final say. Also in the Ghana sorghum VC: “There are actions and systems in place to respect traditional knowledge and resources. The main system is the traditional chief system as described earlier. There is a tradition of oral knowledge transfer which is highly esteemed. The *pito* brewing process is a traditional activity transferred from mother to daughter. *Pito* drinking is also a very important and respected social activity where information is shared, stories are told. It is a daily activity for the neighbours and people in the near environment whereby they not only enjoy their drink but also enjoy company, exchange news and information and have lively discussions.”

Resources to be consulted:

Liu, J., Qi, W., Yu, Y., Han, Y., & Zheng, D. (2024). *Exploring the Influence of Village Social Capital and Rural Development on Farmers' Entrepreneurial Decision-Making: Unveiling the Path to Local Entrepreneurship*. SAGE Open, 14(2).

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/21582440241249118>

3.6 Living conditions

Understanding the domain: Beyond their direct contribution to the livelihoods of VC actors (job creation and income generation, which can directly influence housing and access to health and education of VC actors), VCs can also contribute indirectly to living conditions of VC actors in producing areas, influencing overall rural development. One assumption is that VCs may influence investments (from the state, donors, or companies of the VC) in the provision and maintenance of infrastructures in producing regions, such as health, sanitation, and education infrastructures (schools and vocational training), but also roads, cold storage, and processing facilities that enhance local economies. Another assumption is that specific sub-chains may generate better living conditions than others.

Challenge: Focusing on the living conditions of VC actors is not always feasible due to limited data availability. It is therefore highly recommended to define the level at which the questions are assessed, whether national, sub-national, in production regions, or among VC actors. The experts should check secondary data sources and their availability and compare them with national benchmarks and international standards and recommendations. Lastly, it is important to complement this analysis by assessing the VC's impact on the different subdomains through interviews and focus groups discussions.

Tip: The social expert can combine different approaches to collect data, integrating primary data collection with the use of secondary data sources, such as the World Health Organisation and national statistics at the sub-national level, and grey literature on each subdomain.

Examples from the field: It is common for developing VCs to generate additional income for households, which quickly translates into visible improvements to housing (for example several bamboo sub-chains in the Lao PDR – Desbleds, 2021). In Honduras, the development and consolidation of a large cooperative active in fair trade has enabled the construction and implementation by the same organisation of a health center and an educational center. In Comoros the access to the original data of a specific survey on poverty, disaggregated by sector of activity, made possible to extend the analysis for the population active in fisheries.

Resources to be consulted

- Stoian, D.; Donovan, J.; Fisk, J.; Muldoon, M. (2016) Value-chain development for rural poverty reduction: a reality check and a warning. In: Devaux, A.; Torero, M.; Donovan, J.; Horton, D. (eds.). Innovation for inclusive value-chain development: successes and challenges. Washington, DC (USA): International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Chapter 2, p. 75-92. <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/81240>

3.6.1 Health services

Understanding the subdomain: Agrifood VCs may have impacts on health and sanitation services and infrastructures. This subdomain therefore addresses the effects of VC development on health, particularly in relation to the provision and quality of infrastructure and services.

This subdomain is assessed with 3 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
6.1.1 Do households have access to health facilities?	What are the health facilities available for the population and for VC actors in the production zones and at national level?	Health facilities refer to health centers, buildings and equipment. Density of health centers and number of beds per 10.000 inhabitants are good indicators.
6.1.2 Do households have access to health services?	Is the number of health personnel satisfactory compared to the recommendations of WHO? Are health services affordable for VC actors?	Health services refer to nurses and doctors. Number of doctors per 10.000 inhabitants is a good indicator.
6.1.3 Is there participation in voluntary communal activities for the benefit of the community?	To what extent does voluntary work at community level show the cohesion of the population?	

Challenge

In addition to the challenges at domain level, a difference can be made between access to public and private health services.

Tip

The social expert should visit a few health centres at the local level and talk to the health workers and the director of the centers.

Examples from the field

In Colombia, within the cheese VC in Cauca Department, only medium and large livestock farmers had access to private health services, public health being otherwise deficient.

3.6.2 Housing

Understanding the subdomain: Agrifood VCs may have impacts on housing both directly and indirectly through land use (urban expansion vs. farmland protection), economic factors (income and employment generation that can improve housing infrastructures and affordability), infrastructure (transportation and housing connectivity in previously remote areas), and migration patterns (both out-migration through agricultural displacement, as mechanization may reduce labour needs, pushing rural workers to migrate to cities, but also in-migration as VC development may increase labour needs).

This subdomain is assessed with 2 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
6.2.1 Do households have access to good quality accommodation?	Refers to building materials (roofs, walls, floors) and sources of energy for cooking and lighting. Also refers to affordability and types of access (ownership, rent, ...)	
6.2.2 Do households have access to good quality water and sanitation facilities?	Refers to water for human consumption: kind of access, quality, affordability. Sanitation refers to waste management, latrines and toilets, water drainage.	

Challenge

At domain level, the social expert should define the level(s) at which the question is answered and check for the availability of secondary data and international standards for comparison.

Tip

Simple observation of habitat can be more telling than statistics. The social expert should question easy assumptions about the inadequacy of traditional housing (e.g. the Mongolian *ger*, commonly referred to in English as a “tent”, is in fact a well-insulated, comfortable and culturally acceptable form of housing).

Examples from the field

In Honduras, the houses of families where at least one member has had an episode of migration to Spain or the United States of America are distinguished from the others by their condition and architecture.

3.6.3 Education and training

Understanding the subdomain: This subdomain focuses on assessing the impacts of VC development on education and training infrastructures and services, at the level of VC actors and in particular of the production regions. Has the VC contributed to improving the conditions of VC actors by building and strengthening their skills and capacities? In the narrative report, findings should be disaggregated by gender, as in many cases⁸, gender inequalities often disadvantage women and girls, and low levels of education limit women's power in services, territorial and political decision-making processes.

This subdomain is assessed with 3 questions, as follows:

Question	Understanding the question	Key definitions
6.3.1 Is primary education accessible to households?	Consider access, coverage by levels, costs, by gender where possible.	
6.3.2 Are secondary and/or vocational education accessible to households?	Consider access, coverage by levels, costs, by gender where possible.	
6.3.3 Existence and quality of in-service vocational training provided by the investors in the value chain?	Is vocational training available for actors of the VC? How does it work? Who funds it? How accessible is it? Disaggregate by gender where possible.	

Challenge

In addition to the challenges at domain level, specific attention must be paid to the existence and functioning of vocational training to the VC actors, in particular with regard to their mode of operation and management (specify the actors involved). One should underline that women and girls' low education levels limit women's power in services, territorial, and political decision-making processes.

Tip: Visit a few schools at the local level and talk to the teachers and the director of the educational centers.

Examples from the field

In Honduras, investments by the coffee interprofessional organisation in a differentiated system of vocational training (in farm administration, certification, quality control) have accompanied the efforts to develop the VC over the last decades, leading the country to become the 5th largest exporter in the world.

⁸ Rural Mongolia, as shown in the Cashmere VC report, is one exception, where gender differentials in education favour girls.

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