Voluntary Sustainability Standards and Gender Equality in Global Value Chains

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Abbreviations

4Cs	Common Code for the Coffee Community
BSR	Business for Social Responsibility
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLAC	Fair Trade Producer Network for LA and the Caribbean
CmiA	Cotton Made in Africa
CSO	civil society organisation
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
FLA	The Fair Labour Association
GADN	Gender and Development Network
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCP	Global Coffee Platform
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GE	gender equality
GVC	global value chain
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFOAM	International Federation for Organic Agricultural Movements
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITC	International Trade Centre
KII	key informant interview
MSME	micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise
NRI	Natural Resources Institute
PEFC	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
PGE	Partnership for Gender Equity
PO	producer organisation
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
RTA	regional trade agreement
RTRS	Round Table on Responsible Soy
SAI	Social Accountability International
SAN/RA	Sustainable Agriculture Network /Rainforest Alliance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	small and medium enterprise
SSI	State of Sustainability Initiatives
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNFSS	United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
VSS	voluntary sustainability standard
WEP	Women's Empowerment Principles
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

Voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) have proliferated over the last two decades and increasingly shape global value chains (GVCs), coordinated by lead firms across international borders. While most VSS are not designed with a focus on women or to ensure gender equality, there are a small number of gender issues in VSS and an increasing number of gender focused VSS being developed and used by business. We note a trend towards a deeper integration of a gender perspective among the more established VSS systems, though it is unclear how widespread this trend is and how effective it will be.

Based on the evidence which is currently available, VSS have been associated with a range of positive impacts for at least some groups of women in GVCs. However, the effects are highly context specific and are not consistent or systematic, and VSS (and the auditing processes) have typically failed to address structural issues which underpin gender inequalities, including: unequal power relations within households which influence access to and distribution of resources and income; social norms and practices which constrain women's opportunities and voice; sexual harassment and other forms of gender based violence (GBV); and institutionalised forms of discrimination which undermine and undervalue women's work (paid and unpaid). The review also found no concrete evidence on the extent to which women in low income countries participate in the regulatory processes of VSS, such as agenda setting and development of VSS content, policies and strategies.

There is growing understanding that trade policy is not gender neutral, and, like VSS, can work to both support and undermine gender equality. While there is no current evidence of a direct link between gender inclusive VSS and increased competitiveness, VSS that improve women's empowerment and gender equality would contribute to increased country competitiveness, though this may not extend to the lowest supply chain tiers or to smallholder producers.

In recent years there have been a number of commitments at national and international levels to use trade policy instruments to promote gender equality. This could open opportunities to raise gender issues in trade discourse, to engage CSOs and businesses in implementation, and to strengthen cooperation and capacity building around gender equality. VSS with gender criteria are not Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and could qualify as legitimate under international trade law in that gender objectives could fall under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Article XX on public morals.

Women's rights and civil society organisations argue that these recent moves will do little to counter the negative consequences of wider policy making framed around trade liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation, and reduced public spending; and that the detrimental impacts of core business practices for women, including purchasing practices which drive down wages and fuel informalisation, and tax avoidance schemes which reduce the resources available to government to fund public services. Nevertheless, VSS can be used to change business practice for the better if a more transformational and long-term approach is adopted.

Recommendations

All actors are recommended to: take a strategic approach based on thorough analysis of the root causes of gender inequality in GVCs, which are context specific and mostly structural in nature; frame issues and objectives around global conventions and frameworks for women's rights; and monitor progress, measure results and share learning to address the current lack of evidence on how VSS are affecting different groups of women in different types of GVCs, and for understanding how VSS and trade can best be utilized to advance gender equality.

VSS bodies and implementing firms are recommended to: make a commitment to gender equality at the highest level of the organisation (VSS system or business) and ensure adequate resources are set aside for

investment in core business and supply chain improvements; Integrate a gender perspective across all aspects of the VSS system, including governance, standard setting, assurance, technical assistance and projects, and progress monitoring; ensure the interests of women business owners, producers and workers are represented by credible organisations in key forums and processes, paying attention to differences between women within each of these categories; develop specific principles, criteria and guidance related to gender equality which responds to the context of countries and sectors where the VSS is applied; adopt a 'do no harm' approach and take proactive measures to prevent and address sexual harassment; and find ways to work at the level of households and lower tiers of GVCs, as this is where many gender issues are concentrated.

Policy makers and international organisations are recommended to: include VSS with gender specific requirements as part of their overall trade and equitable economic growth strategy and use to address generalised constraints to women's participation in GVCs; ensure both trade policy and VSS are gender responsive and do not exacerbate gender inequalities and the marginalisation of women from the benefits of trade; lobby and support governments to implement national commitments and laws (particularly those based on CEDAW and ILO) that protect women's rights and encourage gender equality; engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue and action around gender equality in GVCs, bringing together actors focused on sustainability standards with actors focused on trade policy; develop trade policies and systems which enable suppliers with gender inclusive practices, and women led businesses, to get preferential access to markets, using GATT Article XX on public morals.

1. Introduction

This paper is focused on gender and voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) in global value chains (GVCs). GVCs now encompass 80 percent of world trade. VSS have been developed as a way of upholding and monitoring sustainability, human rights and workers' rights within global value chains. They are necessary because international and national laws are not always implemented to the same standard in every country and global companies are under increasing pressure from their customers and their home countries to apply international law and standards.

GVCs are gendered and reflect the social norms and culture of the countries within which they operate. Particular tasks and stages in the value chain are dominated by women or men, and the gendered power dynamics within and between companies and their suppliers influence the extent to which women are able to benefit from international trade. Gender equality is an essential component to the participation, competitiveness, and upgrading of developing and least developed countries in these value chains. VSS can be used to ensure better benefits for women and this paper explores how this is currently working and what more can be done. While the gender dimension[1] of VSS has been largely unexplored, we know that women's response to potential trade opportunities is limited by their unequal access to productive resources such as land, credit, education, skills, infrastructure, utilities and services, information and networks (Bamber and Staritz 2016).

In this paper we explore the following policy research questions:

- What is the role of VSS in promoting gender-inclusive opportunities in GVCs?
    - Are gender-inclusive VSS schemes effective in supporting Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5)?
    - How do concerns regarding fragmentation, overlaps, multiplicity, credibility, and transparency in VSS (Abbott and Snidal 2009) affect female producers and workers?
- What is the nature of women's participation in the regulatory process, namely agenda-setting, negotiation of standards, implementation, monitoring and enforcement (Abbott and Snidal 2009)?
- Are there best practices in standards driven by international organisations, firms, and/or NGOs?
- How can we mainstream gender issues more and better?

The paper has two objectives, with the following sub-objectives explored in the paper:

1. Provide evidence-based analysis on the role of VSS in promoting developing countries' participation in GVCs and gender equality;
    - Explore what VSS are doing on gender and how gender sensitive VSS application or implementation is
    - Examine the impact that VSS is having on gender equality and on women—including the current and potential role of VSS in promoting gender inclusive opportunities in GVCs and in supporting SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment
    - Discuss new gender equality or women focused initiatives.
    - Explore the nature of women's participation in the regulatory processes of VSS, including agenda setting and negotiation of standards.
2. Formulate gender-responsive policy options for policymakers and relevant stakeholders.

We focus on adoption of consumer-facing sustainability standards in the agricultural sector in the developing world, such as certification to Fair Trade amongst cocoa farmers in Africa. The paper surveys

[1] Although this paper refers primarily to women as a group, we do understand that other factors (e.g. sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, disability, age, poverty etc.) intersect with gender, and each other, to exacerbate inequalities in the contexts VSS work in. We also understand that gender inequality can have negative effects for men and other genders, and these are both areas that will need to be explored further in the context of VSS, but this is beyond the scope of this review.

examples of VSS adoption and makes recommendations on how to promote gender integration within VSS design, implementation, monitoring and regulatory processes, as well as recommendations for policymakers, for stakeholder cooperation, and for further research. The analysis draws on a literature review of peer reviewed sources and publications by standard bodies, civil society and UN agencies, and a small number of key informant interviews, in addition to the experience of the authors in this field.[2]

The paper is structured as follows. Section two provides a background to VSS and their drivers and limitations. Section three explores how VSS integrate gender and to what extent they impact on women's opportunities, rights and gender equality in GVCs, with subsections on the social norms and structural barriers that have been found to affect VSS' ability to promote gender equality, and on women's participation in regulatory processes. Section four discusses the implications of the analysis, reflecting on the links between gender, VSS, competitiveness and trade policy. Section five presents recommendations aimed at VSS bodies and at regulatory actors and outlines a number of opportunities for collaboration with other stakeholders, as well as suggestions for future research.

[2] Limitations of the methodology and analysis can be found in Annex 2.

2. Background

2.1 What are Voluntary Sustainability Standards?

VSS have proliferated over the last two decades, and increasingly shape trade in global value chains coordinated by lead firms across international borders (Barrientos 2014; Kaplinsky 2016). VSS are defined as "standards specifying requirements that producers, traders, manufacturers, retailers or service providers may be asked to meet, relating to a wide range of sustainability metrics, including respect for basic human rights, worker health and safety, environmental impacts, community relations, land-use planning and others" (UNFSS 2012). VSS have been developed by a wide range of stakeholders, for different end purposes, though broadly speaking are supposed to provide a market incentive for sustainable processes (Ha and Morrison 2016). Varying greatly in terms of scope, content and focus, they can be: multisectoral or only for a single sector; influence a product's whole life cycle, or focus on specific range of production; include social, environmental, economic, ethical, production and/or quality considerations; and be associated with a consumer-facing product or relevant only within business-to-business relationships. The International Trade Centre database includes 247 different sustainability standards, the majority (138) with some focus on agriculture[3].

Ownership and governance models of VSS vary greatly, with different degrees of inclusion in institutional structures that govern or implement them. For example, GlobalGAP, who offer three main certification products, has an equal number of producers and retailers on its board; Fairtrade is co-owned by Fairtrade Producer Networks and National Fairtrade Organisations (responsible for marketing); the UK's Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) has companies, NGOs and trade unions in all decision-making bodies; and corporate supplier codes are company owned and overseen by company boards. VSS organisations adopt a range of approaches to standard setting, providing support to enable implementation, assessing compliance, and measuring results and promoting best practice. This is often done in collaboration with development agencies, the private sector, government and auditors.

Although the definition of VSS is broad, within this paper we will focus on standards for which there is information and/or evidence related to gender, which largely relates to those with social issues as a key, or sole, focus area. These mostly involve requirements related to labour hired at supplier sites (farms and factories) and/or smallholder producers, with different standards for each group, and take one of two forms:

Certification schemes, such as Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance, which use independent accreditation to vouch for supply chain practices and typically have a building and/or consumer facing orientation; business-to-business (B2B) standards which buyers require their suppliers to adhere to, in some cases applicable to all suppliers and in others specific to particular product categories, such as cocoa and palm oil, with compliance verified through a mix of self-reporting, checks by buyers, and third-party auditing.

Although private and voluntary, these types of VSS often reference internationally agreed rights and principles, such as the International Bill of Human Rights and International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and require compliance with national laws and regulations. B2B standards are also increasingly linked to global reference frameworks, such as the UN's Global Compact (UNGC) and the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). Many certification schemes are

[3] As of September 2018. The database is available at: https://sustainabilitymap.org/standard-identify. Of these 247, 184 are private standards (the entity that is in charge of developing the standard initiative, code of conduct or audit protocol is a private entity - e.g. an NGO, an industry association, a company); 36 are public (the entity is a public entity - e.g. governmental agency); 7 are international (the entity is an international/ multilateral organisation - e.g. United Nations, OECD, ILO, ISO).

members of ISEAL Alliance, which requires compliance with codes of good practice for setting standards, assessing compliance, and measuring progress.

2.2 Drivers and limitations of VSS

Many of the early VSS (e.g. fair trade schemes, organic) were initiated with the aim of developing alternative ways of using markets and trade to achieve economic, social and environmental justice. In contrast, B2B standards were initially developed to manage corporate risk and reputational damage, although in some cases "enlightened self-interest" also played a role. In recent years a number of large corporations have taken a more proactive position on a range of sustainability related issues, and are now seen by governments and international organisations as key partners in achieving the SDGs. This has brought opportunities for collaboration between governments, businesses and civil society around common agendas, including in the context of VSS.

Research suggests that VSS can have a role in setting the bar for minimum requirements in supply chains and can help fill gaps where government and international regulations are absent or poorly implemented (Potts et al 2014). They can also play a role in advocating for investment in sustainable practices and outcomes. VSS may enhance producers' position in GVCs in a way which promotes social and environmental objectives and have potential to contribute to achieving the SDGs. VSS adoption may facilitate access to price premiums, but evidence suggests that is not always the case; and even when it is the case, premiums are sometimes not passed on to female-gendered roles in the VC (e.g. labour). Yet VSS can be important in facilitating access to premium markets so is important for stable market access in the long term (Chohin-Kuper and Kemmoun 2010); the adoption process can improve long-term capacity to be competitive, especially through B2B standards (Ruben and Zuniga 2011; Henson and Jaffee 2008); and in agricultural GVCs can improve soil health and sustainability of production processes to make long-term production more viable. However, population coverage is variable (McCullough, Pingali & Stamoulis, 2008), with many small farmers and micro-entrepreneurs either excluded from or unempowered in the GVC. The available evidence indicates that outcomes are complex and not universally positive (Kaplinsky and Morris 2017a).

The effectiveness of VSS can be stalled by the increase in number of, sometimes competing, VSS, and competitive pressures which limit the depth of interventions and improvements that firms are willing to commit to (Hoffmann and Grothaus 2015). The "sustainability standards paradox" is also a limit to VSS effectiveness: on the one hand VSS may aim to assure that those most in need have the ability to access markets, while on the other market forces push towards reliance on supply from those who are able to provide compliant goods at lowest cost, who have therefore already been able to put themselves in a better position (Potts et al. 2014). This means VSS may be more likely to gain traction in regions and markets where they are needed least, with analysis suggesting a concentration of standard compliant production in more developed, export oriented economies (Potts et al. 2014).

There are also questions around the ability of VSS to deal with the root causes of social and environmental issues in supply chains, which often have deep-seated and complex social, economic and political dimensions (Memkeen et al. 2017; Oya et al. 2017; Sexsmith 2017; Terstappen et al. 2012). For example, while VSS can provide technical guidance in areas like safe use of pesticides and acceptable working hours, the reality is that non-compliance is often linked to a host of contextual factors, ranging from the quality of education, to average household incomes, to buyers' purchasing practices. In addition, compliance with some VSS components is easier to assess than others, with sensitive and less tangible issues like discrimination, harassment and freedom of association particularly challenging to detect through conventional auditing practices. Although a growing number of companies and VSS systems provide tailored support to suppliers and work collaboratively with local stakeholders to address these systemic issues, the resources invested in this typically fall well short of what is needed to bring about transformative change.

Finally, there are concerns around the transparency and credibility of VSS, as they are both voluntary and unregulated, and can therefore promote a marketing message that exaggerates the ability to promote social and environmental outcomes. VSS have focused on building markets, while less focus has been put on measuring the market performance of their initiatives; and for many years there has been no common metric to measure and compare impacts (Potts et al. 2014). VSS are often created by NGOs in developed countries, and as such often address the concerns of consumers and businesses there, ignoring the environmental and economic priorities in producer countries. In recent years the Committee on Sustainability Assessments (COSA) has made significant progress in building such common metrics, though inclusion of producers from low income countries is limited.

The paper is structured as follows. Section two provides a background to VSS and their drivers and limitations. Section three explores how VSS integrate gender and to what extent they impact on women's opportunities, rights and gender equality in GVCs, with subsections on the social norms and structural barriers that have been found to affect VSS' ability to promote gender equality, and on women's participation in regulatory processes. Section four discusses the implications of the analysis, reflecting on the links between gender, VSS, competitiveness and trade policy. Section 5 presents recommendations aimed at VSS bodies and at regulatory actors and outlines a number of opportunities for collaboration with other stakeholders, as well as suggestions for future research.

3. Gender in VSS

3.1 Focus on Gender in VSS

VSS are generally not designed with a focus on women or gender equality. The International Trade Centre's Standards Map analyses 247 private standards with sustainability objectives. Our review of the VSS listed on the Standards Map revealed that only 40 percent (99 of 247) include criteria relating to gender issues. The UN Forum on Sustainability Standards, in their Third Flagship Report, finds that just nine out of the 122 VSS schemes which are private, transnational, market-based, and have a discernible implementation system directly speaks to SDG 5 and its associated targets (UNFSS 2018). A gender filter that is being introduced into the Standards Map portal that clarifies which standards include such provisions. The clauses that relate to gender include general non-discrimination requirements, as well as a number of other specific clauses and criteria ranging such as:

- General principles addressing gender, including commitments to gender equality and possibly disaggregation of data
- Process requirements (gender policies, which could be overarching or specific human resource management policies; gender impact and risk assessments, usually associated with the specific workplace and procurement activities and risks that are analysed in a gender sensitive way),
- Specific criteria around women's work rights and protection from sexual harassment, which might include transparent grievance mechanisms and structures, membership and representation in unions and workers associations.

In-depth reviews of seven of the most prominent VSS[4] found that although all of them stipulate equal rights through nondiscrimination clauses, there are considerable differences both in how gender is integrated in standards documents and in how this translated into practice (KPMG 2013; Sexsmith 2017). Topics such as earnings and employment are better covered, and to a lesser extent access to productive resources. But there are some common blind spots, particularly around land rights, unpaid care work, and representation in decision-making bodies. VSS that do integrate gender in texts, rules, and policies can lack depth and either ignore crucial issues—such as maternal rights (Tallontire et al. 2005; Lyon 2008).

The success or failure of VSS in addressing gender inequalities in a meaningful way ultimately depends on the way they are implemented on the ground (KPMG 2013; Sexsmith 2017) and some are characterised by low compliance.

In recent years there has been an upsurge in gender-focused VSS initiatives including new business level certification and commitment pledges, such as EDGE Certification, the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP) and the Gender Equality Seal (GES), and gender mainstreaming and targeted gender initiatives within existing VSS (see Annex 1 for details). This increased focus has been motivated by growing interest in gender issues in the international community and development agenda (including safeguarding from sexual harassment and from modern day slavery), as well as evidence of the economic gains that can be reaped from gender equality (McKinsey 2016). Members of VSS bodies and global businesses are increasingly aware of the importance of gender equality for sustainable development and economic growth and are also keen to avoid reputational and legal risks (ISEAL 2015).

Examples of measures undertaken by VSS bodies include: strengthening standards and publishing guidance and resources on specific aspects of gender inequality in GVCs, and on how to implement and

[4] The schemes reviewed were: Fairtrade, UTZ Certified (UTZ), Sustainable Agriculture Network/Rainforest Alliance (SAN/RA), Common Code for the Coffee Community (4C), Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), Cotton made in Africa (CmiA), and International Federation for Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM).

assess compliance with VSS in a gender responsive way; gender audits, development of gender strategies and internal awareness raising and capacity building; and targeted projects and technical assistance to address gender issues in supplier countries (see Box 1 for examples). In addition, the alliance of VSS systems, ISEAL, recently launched a Gender Working Group jointly with Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) to develop and promote strategies, tools and systems to integrate gender considerations in VSS and other multi-stakeholder platforms, and to tackle systemic gender inequalities. As most of these initiatives are relatively new, it is too early to say what impact they will have, but we reflect on potential impacts in Section 4.

BOX 1: EXAMPLES OF GENDER INITIATIVES BEING UNDERTAKEN IN RELATION TO VSS SCHEMES

Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)

ETI's 2020 strategy makes a strong commitment to driving gender equality in global supply chains. As part of delivering on that strategy the ETI has taken forward several key activities aimed at strengthening the ETI secretariat and ETI members' capability and commitment to gender equality. This has included an internal gender audit and gender analysis with selected members; a gender guidance note for the ETI Base Code; and secretariat capacity building and internal awareness raising activities. ETI also works with its members on initiatives specifically targeted at women workers, such as homeworkers and garments workers, and has run supervisor training on sexual harassment in the workplace, See more on ETI's website.

Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)

BSR has been engaging with business to integrate gender considerations into firm-level codes of conduct and sustainability standards. They have published guidance on how to include gender consideration in codes of conduct and in social auditing processes. Furthermore, BSR has launched partnerships with several critical supply chain initiatives and companies to embed gender inequality into their codes of conduct. As a result, several companies and standard holders have started to review their standards and audit checklists from a gender perspective. For example, the Ethical Toy Programme and Responsible Jewellery Council have conducted a review of their Codes and embedded new gender checks, while Sedex, one of the world's largest collaborative platforms for sharing responsible sourcing data on supply chains, is finalising a new self-assessment questionnaire for social audits that asks gender-relevant questions of suppliers.

Fairtrade International and its member organisations

Gender considerations within Fairtrade standards include requiring plantations to establish and implement a sexual harassment policy and provide childcare facilities, as well as capacity building specifically targeting women. It has developed a global gender strategy, and Fairtrade Producer Networks have responsibility for taking this forward, with a number of initiatives underway. For example, the Fair Trade Producer Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (CLAC) has set up a Commission for Inclusion within the Board of Directors, and has a policy of integrating gender and inclusion across all activities (see website). CLAC is currently implementing youth and gender strategies with certified producer organisations, in collaboration with TRIAS.

3.2 VSS impact on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

In general, evidence on the socioeconomic impacts of VSS is limited and mixed; research has paid less attention to some key areas, including, among others, gender equality and women's participation, poverty and reaching the most marginalised (NRI 2013; Molenaar et al. 2013; Memkeen et al. 2017). The evidence that does exist points to the fact that, broadly speaking, VSS do not pay enough attention to, or do not meaningfully impact, crucial sustainability areas that are required to bring about transformative impacts to effectively address existing inequalities, poverty, employment and environmental challenges

for the long term (NRI 2013; Molenaar et al. 2013). This is not to say that VSS have not achieved positive results in other areas, and impacts have been reported in: incomes and livelihoods, through effects on prices, risk, food supply, land security, and education; health, through occupational health and safety measures and safer use of chemicals; and access to social services (Molenaar et al 2013; Memkeen et al. 2017; ITC 2012).

The literature reviewed for this paper points to a similar conclusion for gender equality, though there are a number of methodological challenges in drawing conclusions (see Annex 2). While positive results have been reported in a number of country specific studies, the wider evidence available suggests that the impact of VSS on gender inequality has been limited or non-existent, and sometimes negative, and in general terms, VSS that do not take gender considerations and risks into account at best perpetuate the status quo, and at worst exacerbate gender inequalities (discussed below and see Annex 3 for details). There is often an assumption that there is a trickle-down effect of income and benefits from male heads of household to women, while in reality men tend to capture a larger share or don't share profit from sales even when women are heavily involved in production (Nelson et al. 2002; Shreck 2002; Sexsmith 2017; Terstappen et al. 2012).

The limitations of VSS impact on gender equality are often related to pre-existing inequalities in access to productive assets and resources (Sexsmith 2017). For example, in agriculture women's unequal access to land means they are often excluded from services (inputs, financial, technical) and organisations through which VSS are implemented. Those with land to farm are also less likely to be able to afford, or have access to financial services to pay for, the additional costs associated with compliance. However, there are some examples of VSS facilitating women's access to land, either through standards' requirements that women should own and manage land under certification, or through targeted projects to enable women to access land and productive resources (see Box 2 for an example).

BOX 2: SUPPORTING KENYAN SMALLHOLDERS AND HIRED LABOUR

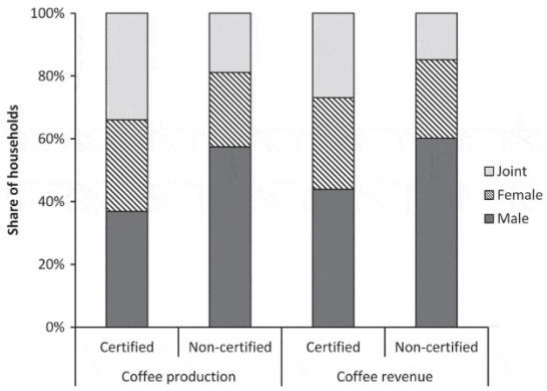
The two case studies in Kenya showed some positive results for both smallholders and hired labour/outgrowers in tea production, with some positive results for women's empowerment and gender equality. For example, among smallholders, women's representation increased in Producer Organisation (PO) collection centre committees (Fair Trade (FT) & Rainforest Alliance (RA) certified); while among RA certified, there were some reported cases of increase in joint decision-making regarding bonus payments from tea production. Women are still less than 30 percent of PO members, but there have been instances of women receiving tea bushes from husbands of fathers, allowing them to register as members (these were however not formal land ownership changes).
On tea estates, childcare arrangements were set up following RA certification, while closer weighing points allow women to spend less time reaching those, with women reporting now having more energy for childcare. Women are more represented in workers' committees (although not yet in the same numbers as men), which, combined with the open management-worker relationships that are promoted through RA certification, has meant that women have had more influence on decision making.
Workers on RA certified estates have also reported reduction in domestic violence, adopting some of the RA values in their private lives (ex: equal rights, no harassment, and no alcohol during working hours). However, it has been noted that the introduction of mechanised plucking on some estates has reduced the number of manual pluckers needed to perform the work. Women on estates are mostly manual pluckers, as other jobs such as factory workers, pruners and drivers are seen as male jobs. The loss of jobs has primarily affected women, teams that were previously composed of three men and one woman have seen the woman's role cut. For more results and information on these case studies see NRI, 2013.

Other successes include specific requirements and targeted measures to increase women's participation and leadership in producer organisations, their access to training, credit and agricultural inputs, and their influence over productive resources and household income. For example, Chiputwa & Qaim (2016) used

survey data from Ugandan coffee farms certified under Fairtrade, Organic, and UTZ and compared them with data for noncertified farms to understand impacts on control of coffee production and revenues.

They found a significantly higher proportion of female or joint control in households of certified farmers. They also analysed the relationship between duration of certification and control, and found that over time male control decreases, while joint control increases. These changes were attributed to actions taken by certified cooperatives including gender equity workshops, hiring women extension workers, fostering equal representation in leadership, and requiring both spouses to be present for payments.

FIGURE 1: GENDER AND HOUSEHOLD CONTROL ON UGANDAN COFFEE FARMS



However, in general women's participation in certified organisations as farmers and workers remains lower than men's, except in sectors which are dominated by women (e.g. garments and textiles), and VSS have done little to address this. For example, the proportion of workers and farmers registered in the Fairtrade system who are women has remained stable at around 24 percent for several years (Fairtrade 2018). Strengthening of producer groups and cooperatives is one of the most effective ways of supporting transformational impacts for men and women. However, it is not a given that women will have equal benefits to men and that gender relationships and power dynamics will be transformed. Producer groups and cooperatives can also mirror or reproduce the social norms of the context where gender inequality is the norm.

Some studies have found that VSS can increase workloads for smallholder farmers, and this often relates to tasks which women are involved in, such as weeding, harvesting and post-harvest processing, meaning women's workload increases disproportionately in comparison to men's (KPMG 2013). Although the situation may be mitigated by VSS premiums, which are sometimes invested in labour-saving technologies and other long-term benefits for women, this depends on women's influence over decision making processes around premium or increased profit use, which in turn is a problematic area (Lyon 2008; Dilley 2011).

When it comes to hired labour, research has found a range of positive impacts on working conditions which can bring particular benefits to women, including payment of minimum wages, improvements in occupational health and safety, and more regular working hours (Barrientos and Smith 2006). In addition, VSS have also sometimes led to the formalisation of wage employment, moving workers from repeated casual or temporary contracts to permanent worker status (Sexsmith 2017). Workers on indefinite contracts are more likely to receive legislated employment benefits such as paid leave (annual, sick, maternity), social security and redundancy payments. Given that in many sectors women represent the majority of informal or temporary workers, impacts in this area can have a strong gender dimension (Rossi 2013). However, the benefits of more secure and better-quality work may only be available in the top tier of supply chains, as companies have finite resources to reach all levels of all of their supply chains with VSS.

A fundamental problem for the compliance-based model of VSS when it comes to gender is that because gender norms and inequality are complex and intangible, and often involve sensitive issues and power relations which women either accept as normal or are unwilling to disclose, it is common that gender issues are not picked up during auditing processes. Audits rarely report accurately on discrimination and issues such as sexual harassment, intimidation and exploitation are typically not picked up (AFL-CIO 2013). While this is in part because of the sensitive nature of these issues, there are also structural constraints within the social auditing industry that may prevent the reporting of such instances in final

auditing reports (BSR, Gender Equality in Social Auditing Guidance, 2018). Studies have found that certified plantations are no different than non-certified plantations in terms of levels of sexual harassment (CESU 2012 and Cramer et al. 2014 in Oya et al. 2017), and that serious issues including forced labour are not being prevented by VSS (see Box 3).

BOX 3: FORCED LABOUR

Research shows that ethical certification initiatives have been ineffective in addressing the widespread issue of forced labour and labour exploitation in tea and cocoa supply chains (the study included data collection in farms certified through Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, ETI, and Trustea). Some of the worst cases of exploitation were found on certified teas plantations; while most workers were not aware of the fact they were engaged in a certified farm in both sectors. The study also found practices of 'cheating' audit processes; and highlighted the fact that all schemes have loopholes. Women find it particularly difficult to escape exploitative conditions, and there were cases of human trafficking of women from tea plantations into domestic and sex work (LeBaron 2018).

3.3 Structural constraints affecting the ability of VSS to promote gender equality

While there are some positive changes resulting from gender specific requirements and interventions like gender equality training, gender committees and targeted support for women, it is clear that underlying gender norms and structural factors create barriers to women's full participation and gain from VSS, and there are significant inequalities which are not challenged by VSS (NRI 2013).

A key issue is that VSS rarely challenge unequal power relations or gender norms and roles at household and community levels, and this affects both women's ability to participate and engage with VSS and associated activities, as well as the distribution of benefits. In many contexts, men are unwilling to share resources and household responsibilities with women or are constrained from doing so by social norms. This means that the responsibility for unpaid care work largely lies with women and remains unchanged and invisible, even though it is major constraint on women's ability to engage in economic activities. In agriculture, even though they are doing much of the work, women are often excluded from key value-added parts of the GVC, or from high value GVCs, because of social norms around the types of crops they can be responsible for and customary laws and practices around land rights. Women are often not the titular holders of land and so cannot access financial service or make investments in the farm.

Certification may bring an increase in profit and income earning potential, which can be captured by men even if the crop is traditionally a woman's crop. There can also be low trust in women's abilities and disapproval if women make certain economic choices. This has a knock-on effect in terms of their wider inclusion in decision making. Women are often not the titular holders of land; they can't get the loans necessary to undertake the investments in farm/MSME that are part of VSS implementation.

Other norms and structural issues that impact women's economic and political participation generally, including opportunities related to VSS, include women's lower levels of education, limited access to skills development and knowledge, lack of access to resources and finance, experience of violence, and restrictions on their mobility. Women's age and marital status also play a role, with social norms affecting participation particularly after marriage. This often leaves women de facto excluded.

In waged work, women's contribution is typically less valued and/or they are relegated to low skilled, low paid roles. They are often considered more as "helpers" than workers, particularly in family owned enterprises, and, as employees, are less likely to be involved in supervisory, management and technical roles or in marketing and sales. For instance, on Fairtrade banana plantations women remain concentrated in processing and administrative positions and gender assumptions around women's abilities are

internalised by both women and men (Smith 2010), while in tea plantations in Tanzania, technical skills required to fill positions supporting increased mechanisation exclude women who have less access to education (Leavens and Leigh 2011).

More broadly, the structure of economies, the extent of informal employment, means that VSS are more likely to work with first tier organisations, where employment tends to be more formal. In the apparel sector, many women work in formal-sector jobs that are affected by private sector standards (Rossi 2013). However, much female employment is informal and in the lower tiers of GVCs, so VSS often do not reach large populations of the most vulnerable women. Even at the top tiers, buyer's purchasing practices can also undermine suppliers' efforts to comply with VSS, particularly in relation to pressures to reduce costs and demands for just in time production, which can drive compulsory overtime and use of casual labour (Barrientos and Smith 2007; WIEGO). These issues are linked to the wider macroeconomic policy environment, including trade policy, which we will come back to in Section 4.

BOX 4: ADDRESSING THE LOCAL GENDERED ECONOMY FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF CODES OF PRACTICE

Given that in many sectors women represent the majority of informal or temporary workers, impacts in this area can have a strong gender dimension. An analysis of the value chain of African horticulture found that women are marginalised and that implementation of codes has not led to similar outcomes for men and women; concluding that only by addressing the local gendered economy that codes of practice can effectively improve working conditions for all. Authors also recommend ensuring that multi-stakeholder local mechanism have a role in multi-stakeholder implementation; and using participatory social auditing as a tool to in identifying issues in the workplace (Tallontire et al. 2007). Similarly, an impact assessment focused on codes operated by the UK Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), found that in one case casual workers (mostly women) had least access to labour and organising rights; while more generally codes had little or no impact on discrimination (based on gender and ethnicity) (Barrientos and Smith 2007).

3.4 Women's participation in regulatory processes of VSS

This review has found no concrete evidence on the extent to which women in low income countries participate in the regulatory processes of VSS, such as agenda setting and development of VSS content, policies and strategies. Clearly standard-setting organisations do employ women, but there is no literature even reporting gender balance in this respect. This is an area where there is a clear gap in research which needs filling. UNECE has reported that anecdotal evidence suggests standard setting processes are male dominated, with insufficient consideration of women specificities in the outputs, but this was with reference to all standards which are applied by private and public entities (UNECE 2017). Some authors argue that the process of setting a standard is an opportunity for advocacy and awareness raising, and increased participatory governance through multi-stakeholder dialogue (Kessler et al. 2012 in Molenaar et al. 2013); while, according to ISEAL Alliance, VSS regulatory processes have potential to integrate stakeholders that would traditionally not have a voice (ISEAL 2012 in Potts et al. 2014). Indeed, ISEAL's Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards (2014) requires identification of, and consultation with, stakeholders, and recommends that the VSS take steps to proactively seek the contributions of groups that are not adequately represented. It does not, however, provide guidance on categories of stakeholders that may be at risk of exclusion.

Whether or not women's voices are heard within regulatory processes is likely to be influenced by the governance model used. Analysis of 16 leading VSS schemes found that almost all use membership models and that one of the achievements of VSS has been their ability to provide meaningful

representation to supply chain stakeholders across national jurisdictions (Potts et al., 2014). In addition, all the VSS reviewed carry out stakeholder consultation during standard setting processes. Although the analysis found that industry and the private sector had greater representation at board level than producers and CSOs (including worker associations/unions), as did organisations in developed countries compared to those in developing countries, there was a considerable degree of variation between schemes and almost all were multi-stakeholder. However, the wider literature on gender inequality makes clear that women are underrepresented at senior levels of businesses, producer organisations and worker organisations (McKinsey 2017). In light of this, it is perhaps revealing that there is no gender disaggregated available for VSS organisations' boards and employees, and that only two of the 16 VSS reviewed included criteria to promote the inclusion of women in management and boards at producer level[5].

Ensuring adequate representation of women's voices in the way VSS are designed, implemented and monitored is important for many reasons, not least because women's needs and priorities differ from those of men, and their attitudes towards VSS also vary. For example, a study with coffee farmers in Uganda found that although both men and women farmers have positive attitudes towards VSS, there is a higher preference for VSS among women, and that women are particularly interested in VSS which offer gender policies, agricultural training and access to credit (Memkeen et al. 2017). Similarly, research with women workers on horticulture and flower plantations in Zambia, Kenya and South Africa found that many of the issues they raised as problematic were strongly gendered, including job security, compulsory overtime, maternity rights, access to childcare, and sexual harassment, few of which were adequately covered by standards at that time (Smith et al. 2004). These issues were particularly acute for women in casual and temporary employment, who were not represented in worker organisations, had few channels to communicate grievances, and were often not protected by law. If women who are producers in low income countries, are included more in VSS design and implementation the VSS are more likely to include issues that limit women's competitiveness and access to resources and assets.

[5] The other criteria assessed for inclusion were 'women's labour rights', which only four VSS covered, and 'women's health and safety', which only three VSS covered.

4. Discussion

4.1 Are voluntary sustainability standards an effective instrument for promoting gender equality in GVCs?

Based on the evidence which is currently available, it is clear that VSS have been associated with a range of positive impacts for at least some groups of women in GVCs. Outcomes vary across VSS, sectors, geographies and categories of women, but for women smallholder farmers, they can include improved participation in farmer organisations and access to productive resources and training, while women workers may benefit from better working conditions and access to statutory benefits, including minimum wages. However, the effects are highly context specific and are not consistent or systematic, and VSS have typically failed to address structural issues which underpin gender inequalities, including: unequal power relations within households which influence access to and distribution of resources and income; social norms and practices which constrain women's opportunities and voice; and institutionalised forms of discrimination which undermine and undervalue women's work (paid and unpaid). In doing so, VSS have sometimes inadvertently made things worse for women by reinforcing existing patterns of inequality, or by adding to women's already heavy burden of work. There are also serious concerns around the prevalence of sexual harassment, and other forms of gender based violence, which audits are regularly failing to detect. This indicates that at minimum VSS bodies need to adopt a 'do no harm' approach, by incorporating gendered risk assessments and monitoring into their systems, as well as risk mitigation and remedy processes.

The limitations of VSS as an instrument for promoting gender equality can arise in several areas, from gender imbalances in governance structures and processes for establishing the content of VSS, to approaches and methodologies for assessing compliance and monitoring progress, to the type and level of support provided to enable improvements at different levels of supply chains. Gender has not been sufficiently taken into consideration across all these areas: women's needs and interests have not been adequately reflected in the content of VSS; audits have not picked up on critical gender issues, including systemic discrimination and sexual harassment; and women have been side-lined in capacity building interventions. There are some notable exceptions where more substantive and transformative change has occurred, some of which have been highlighted in this report (detail in Annex 1). This usually involves VSS bodies working in conjunction with suppliers or producer organisations and external actors and using project funding to tackle gender issues in a holistic way. Common elements of effective approaches include:

- participatory analysis of gender inequalities, and their root causes, in the local context;
- combining gender mainstreaming with affirmative action to redress imbalances;
- engaging with men at different levels of businesses, organisations and communities to bring them onboard with the process of change; and
- ensuring women have space and effective channels to articulate their needs and interests.

Having in-country offices is also an advantage, as this allows VSS staff to build long term relationships and trust with suppliers and producers organisations. This can be particularly useful for enabling discussions and action around sensitive issues like sexual harassment. There are also VSS that are developed inside producer countries, for the countries themselves.

We note a trend towards a deeper integration of a gender perspective among the more established VSS systems, though it is unclear how widespread this trend is and how effective it will be. VSS have been found to play a useful role as management frameworks, providing suppliers and producers with guidance on what is expected of them and what good practice looks like. As such, efforts to embed gender into the

language and content of VSS and to provide guidance on implementing codes in a gender sensitive way is an important starting point, not least for making gender issues more visible than they have been to date. Similarly, providing guidance and training for auditors, and introducing requirements for gender-related data collection and reporting, should enable more effective assessment of compliance with VSS (BSR 2018). In addition, VSS systems and leading companies[6] have long understood that a top down, compliance focused approach to sustainability issues will only get you so far. They have established support programmes and collaborative initiatives to build the capacity of suppliers and producers to adopt sustainability related practices, and to address context-based structural issues which are barriers to progress. But this requires a substantial investment of resources, and the degree to which these are available has both economic and political dimensions.

VSS normally aim to be financially sustainable (at least to a significant degree) using the resources they raise from certification and membership arrangements to fund their activities. They are under pressure to keep costs down, both in terms of limiting the added cost to end products and (sometimes) having to compete with each other for market share. As such, how much of VSS resources are spent on gender compared to other themes and activities comes down to a process of negotiation and the interests of influential stakeholders. Funding partners and large companies exert a strong influence in many cases, as well as producer and worker representatives in systems where they are included in the governance structure (e.g. Fairtrade, ETI, GlobalGAP). To ensure that B2B sustainability standards take an interest in gender, member companies and other stakeholders have to raise it to the top of their agendas. Ensuring that women's interests are represented within VSS regulatory processes and multi-stakeholder forums is therefore critically important to outcomes. Initiatives such as the ISEAL/BSR Gender Working Group are a step in the right direction, but they will need to be accompanied by significant lobbying activities within and across standard systems.

4.2 Can gender inclusive VSS improve competitiveness in GVCs?

We found no evidence directly linking gender inclusive VSS with increased competitiveness, but a number of arguments have been made for how VSS in general can help countries compete in global markets, while also contributing to national policy objectives related to the SDGs (UNFSS, 2016). For example, governments may work with VSS as a way to outsource some of the more burdensome aspects of policy making, while aligning with internationally agreed norms and best practice which provide credibility (Carey and Guttenstein 2008 in Ha and Morrison 2016). Some governments (e.g. Laos, India and Indonesia) have already engaged extensively with VSS with a view to increasing market access for products and services (Ha and Morrison 2016). With lead firms showing growing interest and motivation to address gender issues in their supply chains, particularly those linked to risks to future supply and violations of human rights, it can be argued that taking a proactive approach to address embedded gender issues will enable suppliers to meet market demands more effectively.

There is also evidence linking women's economic empowerment to improved economic growth and competitiveness, as well as achievement of sustainable development goals. For example, a widely cited McKinsey Global Institute report calculated that up to $28 trillion could be added to global GDP by 2025 by advancing gender equality (McKinsey 2016). Similarly, the World Bank has suggested that per capita productivity would increase by 40 percent if all forms of discrimination against women were eliminated (World Bank, 2017). Using arguments commonly put forward as the 'business case' for gender equality, we can hypothesise that if VSS better integrated a gender and inclusion angle, women would be more included in value chain tasks, and suppliers and producers would increase their productivity and become more competitive and able to access markets, in turn fostering sector competitiveness and growth. More

[6] By this we mean companies which are leading the way on tackling sustainability related issues, usually because this is key to their business strategy (from a market and/or supply perspective).

generally, it is widely acknowledged that supporting women to earn an independent income typically results in improved social and economic outcomes for them and their families.

VSS can become a form of non-tariff barrier and a major determinant of market access which can make it more difficult for less well-resourced enterprises or producers to participate in GVCs (Kaplinsky 2010 in Ngarachu et al. 2017). Given that women smallholder farmers often face greater constraints to accessing finance, productive resources, labour and training, and are also less likely to be members of producer organisations, VSS which are not gender sensitive may introduce additional challenges for women farmers to compete. Similarly, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) owned by women may be disproportionately disadvantaged due to the range of challenges they face in developing their businesses (e.g. access to finance, information and networks; inadequate business and managerial skills and experience; time constraints) which may make it harder for them to comply with VSS. Women traders and SMEs in developing countries also face higher barriers to access to information about VSS (WTO 2017 in Ngarachu et al. 2017). Although almost 40 percent of businesses worldwide are owned by women, only 15 percent of exporting businesses are women owned (ICT 2017 in WTO 2017). By making VSS more gender sensitive, women owned SMEs and smallholder farmers should be better able to participate in GVCs.

However, suppliers may draw on cheap, female labour as a strategy to keep costs down, which may make them more competitive in GVCs where price is still the deciding factor for buyers. Critical factors for whether or not gender-inclusive VSS enable competitiveness may therefore include the degree of price pressure in the value chain and the interest of buyers in sourcing from suppliers which demonstrate gender equitable practices. Company perspectives vary according to factors such as their brand strategy, profile of their customer base and position in markets, what their competitors are doing, the interests of major investors, the degree to which they are scrutinised by CSOs, and how much of a threat to future supply sustainability issues represent. Some have little incentive to do much more than inform suppliers of their requirements, while others are investing heavily in sustainable sourcing. It is as yet unclear the extent to which gender equality is considered a priority for global businesses and whether they are willing to invest in it.

4.3 Linking VSS, gender and trade policy

Due to the de facto mandatory[7] nature of VSS, policymakers must discuss their roles, their weaknesses, and their current and potential impacts in GVCs. It has been argued that, if left alone by state actors in handling sustainability issues, businesses and CSOs 'cannot see the bigger picture in relation to the welfare losses potentially caused by the operation of private standard schemes, while also running the risk of being captured by sectoral interests' (Meliado 2017: p.viii). As we have seen, governments can also take a proactive approach to using VSS as a way to gain an advantage in markets and this should be considered as part of their overall trade and equitable economic growth strategy. The same formula can be used in relation to gender-specific requirements in VSS and to address generalised constraints to women's participation in GVCs.

At the same time, there is growing understanding that trade policy is not gender neutral, and, like VSS, can work to both support and undermine gender equality. Gender equality in trade must be seen from a systemic perspective, in which the social, cultural and political roots of inequality are meshed with the economic rules, structures and practices (both mandatory and voluntary) which characterise domestic policy and implementation of the law, as well as trade relationships and outcomes. Therefore, any discussion around the role of VSS should be integrated within the wider discussion around the need for a

[7] Meliado argues that as producers must meet certain standards to be able to access buyers' market, even voluntary standards become in a way mandatory, and can turn into barriers to accessing markets (Meliado, 2017).

gender responsive trade approach, which takes into account the gendered nature of the economy and international trade (ISEAL 2015; Smith 2013).

From a trade perspective, when low and middle-income country governments do not invest in implementing the internationally agreed standards and legal frameworks that they have signed up to (which include agreements around gender equality and women's rights), they can be seen to be gaining an unfair trade advantage in comparison to countries who are investing in these standards and laws. Higher income countries have objected to the price advantages of exploiting the workforce—and so free trade would appear to advantage countries who are not willing to invest in protecting workers (and particularly women's rights). In practice the benefit from this inequality accrues to consumer countries (through low prices to the consumer and high markups and profits to corporate buyers), and to the elites and business leaders in low and middle-income countries (through the increased level of business that they receive). Poor and vulnerable men and women, particularly in the informal sector, do not appear to benefit from the cost advantages that their countries have.

Low-income countries would need to invest heavily in their legal and accountability frameworks and make sure that the law and international standards are implemented to increase worker rights and benefits. There could be great benefit from addressing the gendered division of labour in terms of improving quality of produce from LDCs, improving productivity through more feedback across GVC nodes, higher work contentment, and long-term sustainability of production. So, Aid for Trade that assists in the implementation of gender criteria of VSS, and trains auditors to look for it, can help.

In recent years there have been a number of commitments at national and international levels to use trade policy instruments to promote gender equality. Examples include the WTO's Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment, the EU Parliament's call on the EU Commission and the Council to support the inclusion of a specific gender chapter in all future EU trade agreements, and the inclusion of trade and gender chapters in the Chile-Uruguay Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Canada-Chile FTA. This has the potential for opening up opportunities to raise gender issues in trade discourse, to engage CSOs and businesses in implementation, and to strengthen cooperation and capacity building around gender equality (UNCTAD, 2017). VSS with gender criteria are not NTBs and could qualify as legitimate under international trade law in that gender objectives could fall under GATT article XXa on public morals.

However, some women's rights organisations and CSOs argue that these recent moves will do little to counter the negative consequences of wider policy making framed around trade liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation, and reduced public spending[8]. They likewise question whether companies are engaging with the SDGs in a way that is effective and meaningful and highlight risks of relying on private sector rather than governments as key drivers to achieve SDGs (Argawal et al. 2017; Oxfam 2018). They point to the detrimental impacts of core business practices for women, including purchasing practices which drive down wages and fuel informalisation, and tax avoidance schemes which reduce the resources available to government to fund public services (GADN 2018). Nevertheless, VSS can be used to change business practice for the better if a more transformational and long-term approach is adopted. These are critical issues which both VSS systems and policymakers need to grapple with.

[8] For a recent example, see the unity statement of the Gender and Trade Coalition: https://sites.google.com/regionsrefocus.org/gtc/unity-statement?authuser=0.

5. Discussion

Going forward it will be important to closely monitor the impact of the emerging commitments and dynamics described in this paper for different groups of women (business owners, traders, formal and informal workers, small-scale farmers) and to assess their merits and limitations for achieving gender inequality. It will also be important to continue discussions around how the interface between trade policy and VSS can best be leveraged to maximise their mutual contribution to SDG 5. In accordance with this line of thinking, in this section we set out our recommendations for VSS stakeholders and policymakers over the short to medium term.

5.1 General recommendations for all actors

1. ***Take a strategic approach based on thorough analysis of the root causes of gender inequality in GVCs***, which are context specific and mostly structural in nature. In doing so, seek opportunities for collaboration, cooperation and influence, making use of the existing connections between actors in the system (illustrated in Figure 1) and identifying where new ones need to be made.
2. ***Frame issues and objectives around global conventions and frameworks for women's rights***, particularly the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG 5 and SDG 8), and ILO Conventions (especially conventions 110 on equal remuneration, 111 on discrimination, 156 on workers with family responsibilities, and 183 on maternal protection). Regional agreements such as the Maputo Protocol (African Union) and the Convention of Belém do Pará (Organisation of American States) should also be referenced. This gives legitimacy to VSS requirements around gender equality and will enable convergence of approaches, thereby avoid confusion and competition between VSS.
3. ***Monitor progress, measure results and share learning***. This is critical for addressing the current lack of evidence on how VSS are affecting different groups of women in different types of GVCs, and for understanding how VSS and trade can best be utilized to advance gender equality.

5.2 Recommendations for VSS bodies and implementing firms

1. ***Make a commitment to gender equality at the highest level of the organisation (VSS system or business)*** and ensure adequate resources are set aside for investment in improvements. For lead firms this commitment should include ensuring that core business practices support, and not undermine, achievement of gender equality in supply chains.
2. ***Integrate a gender perspective across all aspects of the VSS system, including governance, standard setting, assurance, technical assistance and projects, and progress monitoring.*** The first step may be for VSS organisations to form a gender working group and undertake a gender audit, to assess current performance and internal capacity, and then build on this to develop a gender strategy. The strategy should draw on existing tools and guidance for gender-sensitive implementation of VSS, such as those developed by ISEAL, BSR, and ETI.
3. ***Ensure the interests of women business owners, producers and workers are represented by credible organisations in key forums and processes***, paying attention to differences between women within each of these categories. This includes inter alia representation in VSS governance structures, consultation during standard setting processes, and participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects. Engage with women's right organisations, the women's divisions of relevant trade unions, informal workers associations, and other organisations that

represent and support women (e.g. women's business associations), and wherever possible involve them in governance and advisory roles.

4. ***Develop specific principles, criteria and guidance related to gender equality which responds to the context of countries and sectors where the VSS is applied***. As well as international and regional conventions and agreements, the Women's Empowerment Principles and the Gender Equality Seal can be used to strengthen the content and language of standard(s). Include criteria which are known to be effective, such as having a gender balance in decision-making bodies, establishing gender committees, and ensuring women farmers are paid directly, and back this up with technical assistance to facilitate compliance.
5. ***Adopt a 'do no harm' approach and take proactive measures to address sexual harassment.*** This applies equally to VSS bodies and lead firms and should include gendered risk assessments and monitoring, as well as risk mitigation and remedy processes.
6. ***Support lead firms and suppliers to apply VSS in a gender sensitive way, and to comply with gender specific requirements***. Initially this may mean building awareness and getting decision makers onboard with taking further action, then following up with a programme of action designed around the specific issues to be addressed.
7. ***Find ways to work at the level of households and lower tiers of GVCs***, as this is where many gender issues are concentrated. Use of household methodologies, such as the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), community dialogue, edutainment and social media can be used to address unequal gender relations and harmful social norms.
8. ***Create evidence and visibility on gender***: Collect sex disaggregated data and carry out research (particularly on critical gender issues like land rights and gender based violence) to better understand the contexts of VSS application and better target interventions to promote equality. Share emerging knowledge through a range of media and forums, and work with others to build momentum around gender.

5.3 Recommendations for policymakers and international organisations

1. ***Ensure both trade policy and VSS are gender responsive and do not exacerbate gender inequalities and the marginalisation of women from the benefits of trade.*** The priority for policymakers should be to ensure trade policy is gender responsive, which means that trade negotiations and agreements should be transparent and participatory, and grounded in international human rights obligations and development frameworks, while ensuring a focus on building gender capacity within government, conducting gender assessments as part of trade and investment agreements, ensuring consultation and participation of women's rights organisations, and setting up accessible grievance mechanisms (GADN, 2018). Trade policymakers should also take into consideration the role of VSS in addressing inequalities and reaching those who are most excluded from GVC (women in informal work for example), and the risk of VSS potentially creating trade barriers for the most marginalised, and of reinforcing some of the gender norms and inequalities that already exist. Governments and international organisations already support VSS schemes in various ways, including promoting their use and funding some of their activities, including gender focused projects. They are therefore in a strong position to influence and enable VSS to take a more structured, systematic approach to gender.
2. ***Lobby and support governments to implement national commitments and laws (particularly those based on CEDAW and ILO) that protect women's rights and encourage gender equality.*** The aim is to build a gender equal and inclusive business practice across countries, not just in international supply chains. This would enable harmonisation of approaches at national levels. This may cover policy areas such as: action to support women led businesses (e.g. women's funds; targeted technical assistance on VSS requirements) and women farmers (e.g. reforming laws and regulations to give

women access to land, credit and producer organisations); making changes to employment law to support women's rights at work (e.g. rights for part time, temporary and seasonal workers; requirements that businesses over a certain size provide crèche facilities); investments in social services and water and energy infrastructure in rural areas to free up women's time for paid work; education and vocational training which enables women to take up skilled work in export industries; targeted services for survivors of gender based violence; and public awareness campaigns aimed at shifting harmful social norms.

3. ***Engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue and action around gender equality in GVCs, bringing together actors focused on sustainability standards with actors focused on trade policy.*** Currently there is often an artificial divide between public and private regulation of trade, in spite of often using the same reference frameworks (such as international conventions and national laws) and facing common challenges. Dialogue and collaboration is particularly important when it comes to sustainability goals like gender equality, which are embedded in complex socio-political and economic systems not easily addressed through technical specifications. This dialogue is already starting to happen in forums like the UNFSS. Use this dialogue to ensure trade negotiators better understand the work that companies and local NGOs and unions are doing to increase gender equality, so that trade deals can be supportive of this work.
4. ***Develop trade policies and systems which enable suppliers with gender inclusive practices, and women led businesses, to get preferential access to markets.*** Clarify and publicise that VSS with gender criteria would qualify as legitimate under international trade law in that gender objectives could fall under GATT article XXa on public morals. Trade negotiations need to explore these kinds of issues in more depth and also use negotiations to structure trade benefits in such a way as to ensure that elites are not capturing all of the benefits for example:
    - trade preferences for cooperatives and employee owned organisations with good levels of female participation, or for companies certified by EDGE or signed up to WEP).
    - Preferential treatment for firms that adopt gender-sensitive VSS could be granted in RTAs, and government procurement, provided multilateral trade rules allowed for that. But for RTAs and government procurement to point to gender-sensitive VSS, such VSS would have to be identified.
    - There might be potential for a stand-alone gender label of certification scheme that departs from the compliance model towards one of engagement and continual improvement, that could be recognised in RTAs.
5. ***Support suppliers, women led businesses and small-scale producers to achieve gender sensitive VSS compliance.*** Use this support to build the evidence around business benefits of gender equality.

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Annex 1: Evidence on Gender in VSS

TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF GENDER FOCUSED INITIATIVES RELATED TO VOLUNTARY SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS IN GVCS

Lead organisation(s)	Main activities	Gender-focus in Standards - Activities and Initiatives
Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)	BSR is a global nonprofit business network (250 member companies and other partners) and consultancy dedicated to sustainability (BRS, website).	BSR has published a Gender Equality in Codes of Conduct Guidance; it provides a framework for companies to integrate gender equality considerations into the standards they use to set supply chain ethical requirements (Svarer et al. 2017). It also recently published gender focused guidance for auditing processes. BSR, in collaboration with ISEAL, set up a gender working group (see below).
Fairtrade International and its member organisations	Fairtrade sets social, economic and environmental standards for both companies and the farmers and workers in agriculture (Fairtrade Foundation website).	Gender considerations within standards include: In Section 3.1.2 of the HLS, Fairtrade (2017) introduced training against sexual harassment, requiring companies to establish and implement a policy. Standard 2.2.9 includes supporting provision of childcare facilities. Some Fairtrade Standards also encourage capacity building amongst women. There is also a Fairtrade's 'Gender Strategy' (2016-2020) (Fairtrade Foundation, 2015) Fairtrade has a number of initiatives in place to promote women's empowerment (see Fairtrade Foundation, 2015), but acknowledges the need to do more. Member organisations are also increasingly focusing on gender. For example the Fair Trade Producer Network for LA and the Caribbean (CLAC, part of the Fair Trade Network) are putting gender and inclusion at the heart of their work, and implements youth and gender strategies, in collaboration with TRIAS (See more on CLAC's website – in Spanish only). A Commission for Inclusion within the Board of Directors has been set up, and a policy of integrating gender and inclusion across activities in in place (see website).
Ethical Trading Initiative	The ETI has a Base Code, based on ILO conventions, that companies can sign up to. They also support companies to comply with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights	ETI's 2020 strategy makes a strong commitment to driving gender equality in global supply chains. As part of delivering on that strategy the ETI has taken forward several key activities aimed at strengthening the ETI secretariat and ETI members' capability and commitment to gender equality (this has included a gender analysis with selected members; a Base Code gender guidance note, secretariat capacity building, internal awareness raising activities). ETI also works with its members on initiatives specifically targeted at women workers (for example, targeted at homeworkers, garments workers, or supervisors, see more on ETI's website)
The Fair Labor Association	FLA is a collaborative effort of universities, civil society organisations and socially responsible companies dedicated to protecting workers' rights around the world. FLA works through standard setting, monitoring and evaluation and provides support (FLA, website).	FLA published a report to raise awareness on pregnancy discrimination (FLA, 2018)

Lead organisation(s)	Main activities	Gender-focus in Standards - Activities and Initiatives
The Global Coffee Platform (GCP)	GCP is a sustainable coffee platform that engages coffee industry actors to collectively improve the livelihoods of coffee farming communities and natural environment of coffee production areas (PGE and GCP, 2017)	GCP recently published, in collaboration with the Partnership for Gender Equity, an Engagement Guide for Gender Equity in Coffee and a Common Measurement Framework (PGE and GCP, 2017)
The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH)	IDH convenes companies, CSOs, governments and others in public-private partnerships, for joint design, co-funding and prototyping of new economically viable approaches to realize green & inclusive growth at scale in commodity sectors and sourcing areas. This includes a number of codes and policies (IDH, website).	Gender is a key impact theme in IDH's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. Several resources have been published on the website, these include a podcast, and a number of toolkits, case studies. (IDH, webpage, accessed on 29 August 2018)
ISEAL Alliance	ISEAL is a global membership association for credible sustainability standards. Members are sustainability standards that meet ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice and promote measurable change through open, rigorous and accessible certification systems. They are supported by international accreditation bodies, which are required to meet accepted international best practice (ISEAL Alliance, website)	ISEAL has drafted guidance on gender for ISEAL members (ISEAL Alliance, 2015) Also drafted a number of research agendas, including one on gender. The main emerging research questions look at 'outcomes and impacts of standards on gender dynamics in production units and processes' as well as standards' impact on gender equality. (ISEAL Alliance, 2016) In addition, ISEAL, in collaboration with BRS, has set up a gender working group. The wg will promote a range of strategies to improve women's working conditions in the textile and apparel industries. (ISEAL Alliance, website)
Rainforest Alliance/ UTZ	The Rainforest Alliance and UTZ announced their intention to merge in 2017.The new organisation, named the Rainforest Alliance, will aim to tackle environmental and social issues around the world; and is in the process of creating a single global certification standard that will simplify certification for farmers and empower companies to build more responsible supply chains, more efficiently. It will also work to expand advocacy efforts and through new partnerships. (Rainforest Alliance, 2017b)	In partnership with the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), published an updated additional social auditing methods for sexual and psychological violence against women (Rainforest Alliance, 2017a). UTZ has a gender strategy, pillars include internal capacity building. Some gender focused work is being implemented through the Sector Partnerships Program (KII with UTZ). UTZ has developed a checklist for gender mainstreaming to ensure gender sensitive development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of field activities, training in particular. (ISEAL, 2015)
Social Accountability International (SAI)	SAI is a global NGO working on human rights at work. It implements the SA8000 multi industry standard, as well as Social Fingerprint®, TenSquared, and other training and capacity building programs. (SAI, no date)	Published two guidance documents on gender equity: Co-authored UN Women Gender Equity Seal Certification System and Implementation Strategy (Moss, Lewis and Hwang, 2012) (see below); Published an auditing guidance focusing on gender discrimination in the readymade garment sector (SAI, 2013)
UN Women Empowerment	Drafted in collaboration by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality, UN Women and the United	The WEP were adapted from the Calvert Women's Principles® and offer seven steps to guide business on

Lead organisation(s)	Main activities	Gender-focus in Standards - Activities and Initiatives
Principles (WEP)	Nations Global Compact (UNGC) (UN Women, no date).	how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community (UN Women, no date)
EDGE	EDGE Certification is a global, independent and **third-party certification system**. EDGE Certification has chosen to use certification as an impactful tool to close the gender gap	EDGE certifications have three core characteristics: Based on **objective and measurable evidence** of a current status within an organisation. It provides the opportunity to clearly measure progress 'what gets measured gets done' Establish a **global standard of excellence.** Organisations need to establish 'what does success look like' Sustainable instrument to create change, which is uniquely based on **transparency, accountability and recurring processes**
UN Gender Equity Seal	The Gender Equality Seal for Public and Private Enterprises (GES) is a collective effort involving national governments, private sector companies and civil society to establish and achieve standards that empower women. (Women Deliver, no date)	The goal of the Gender Equity Seal Certification System is to spur companies to promote, improve on and monitor the position of women in their workforce. (Moss, Lewis and Hwang, 2012)
UNECE Working party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardisation of Policies (WP6)	WP6 works to increase regulatory cooperation in specific sectors that have a critical impact on sustainability and on resilience to natural and man-made hazards. It also works to promote the use of standards by policy-makers and business as a tool for reducing technical barriers to trade, promote increased resilience to disasters, foster innovation and good governance; to promote the use of standards in the implementation of UN-wide goals, including the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the Sendai framework for action (UNECE, no date).	The *Gender-responsive standards initiative* aims at promoting the integration of a gender dimension into standards and regulation and pays particular attention to women's participation and voice in standards' development, as well as to the better inclusion of gender considerations in the development and implementation of standards. Specific actions include actively promoting women's participation; developing and sharing of best practices; developing gender indicators and criteria that can be integrated in standards; identifying action to improve standards' contributions to gender equality. (UNECE, 2017)

Annex 2. Challenges and limitations of methodology and evidence

This review has not attempted to assess the quality of the evidence referenced and does not represent a comprehensive or systematic review of the evidence. Furthermore, the literature is biased towards a limited number of VSS and sectors, with Fairtrade and agriculture over-represented. Due to time limitations the findings sometimes rely on discussion from third party reviews, rather than going back to individual studies mentioned.

Most studies focus on the standard(s) as a whole, rather than specific aspects of that standard, making it difficult to understand which specific attribute(s) have a positive or negative effect. This also applies to whether VSS have included gender considerations and whether it's the level of gender integration that has any effect on positive gender outcomes, although some of the positive results are clearly due to purposeful action and requirements.

Where gender dimensions are analysed, little further disaggregation is available (by type of work, role in the supply chain, or factors such as ethnicity, marital status, economic status etc.), which precludes a deeper analysis of gender impacts and factors that affect participation and benefits for women. Moreover, gender is sometimes analysed in a fairly simplistic and superficial manner, often because it is just one of many different sustainability themes being researched. More focused studies are able to take a more comprehensive approach to understanding the gender dynamics of VSS and supply chain practices and outcomes, including issues affecting different categories of women (and men), but these studies are unfortunately rare.

To address the gaps in the evidence base, we ***recommend the following as key areas for future research***.

Research on the gendered impact of VSS

- Gender focused impact assessments on a wide range of VSS, contexts, and sectors. Although some gender focused data and content is currently available, few studies focus just on gender and inclusion, and most of these are on Fairtrade.
- Research on the impact of current gender focused initiatives by VSS bodies.

Research on women's voice and participation within VSS regulatory processes

- Research around women's participation in VSS regulatory processes, to better understand whether standards and processes are designed in a way that is accessible and responds to their needs.

Wider research on norms and barriers that impact women's access to VSS

- Research around specific barriers and how these impact on women's access to VSS and benefits, focusing on some of the trends highlighted by the existing evidence (for instance: land access; unpaid care; etc.)

Methodologies and other considerations:

Action research or participatory qualitative methods should be employed to ensure that findings are nuanced and provide in depth analysis of gender barriers and impacts. Action research may be particularly useful to ensure that gender awareness and improved practice within companies and work environments is a result of the research itself.

Ensure different types of workers are included in the research. Women are not a homogenous group, and it is crucial to consider other intersectional factors that may impact access to standards and benefits (age, ethnicity, education, geography etc.).

Research should also include different types of workers, to better understand the reach of standards and the gaps to address to ensure benefits are more equally shared. Depending on the sector and type of GVC, this may include: regularly employed workers (full and part time), temporary and seasonal workers, casual/informal workers, homeworkers, informal enterprises, and smallholders.

Research should include men as well as women, and analysis of their attitudes, concerns, etc.

Annex 3: Evidence of VSS impacts on gender equality and equity

1. Economic and work-related benefits		
Economic Benefits	Mixed evidence	▪ **Increase in income** (COSA, 2013 in Sexsmith, 2017) **can be offset by additional costs to smallholders.** Women are less likely to be able to cover these, which has important financial implications (Sexsmith, 2017) ▪ **Unequitable distribution of benefits:** Where findings are disaggregated, studies (Arce 2009 (Fairtrade); Bacon et al. 2008 (Fairtrade); Bacon 2010a (Fairtrade); Dolan 2008 (Fairtrade); Lyon 2007a (Fairtrade); Nelson et al. 2002; Shreck 2002 (Fairtrade, Organic)- in Terstappen, Hansen and Mcloughlin, 2012; and Lyon, 2008 (Fairtrade), Bolwig, 2012, Sen, 2014 (Fairtrade), Loconto, 2015—in Memkeen, Veetil and Qaim, 2017) report unequal distribution of benefits, including income. Nelson et al. 2002; Shreck 2002 (Fairtrade, Organic) highlight the assumption that there is a trickle-down effect of income and benefits from male heads of household and male producers to women. (in Terstappen, Hansen and Mcloughlin, 2012); however, men tend to capture a larger share or don't share profit from sales (Bacon et al., 2008, Fairtrade coffee, in Sexsmith, 2017) Research carried out by the Fair Trade organisation Twin Trading found that although women carry out much of the labour in coffee production including essential tasks which determine quality and food safety, men take over when it comes to completing the sale of the crop and often retaining the income. (Twin 2013)
Direct and indirect effect on ownership and control of resources	Some positive evidence	▪ **Direct and indirect effect on land access and ownership.** Direct effects are observed when these are specified in standards' requirements—this may be requirements for women to manage and own land under the certification (KIT, AgriProFocus and IIRR, 2012 in Sexsmith, 2017). Land rights can also be impacted indirectly, for example in cases of male migration, where ownership is transferred to wives to retain certification (although it is unclear whether women also obtain decision making rights over this land) (Lyon et al., 2010, on Fairtrade, in Sexsmith, 2017).
Access to inputs, credit and training,	Mixed evidence. Positive results linked to affirmative action	▪ **Increased access to credit and production inputs,** as female farmers benefit from Fairtrade pre-financing activities (Bacon et al., 2008 (Fairtrade), and Hoskyns, 2006 (Fairtrade), in Sexsmith 2017), and access to improved-production technology (Lyon et al., 2010, Fairtrade, in Sexsmith); although women's access to finance is lower than men (COSA, 2013, in Sexsmith, 2017) and poorest groups (often women) may be unable to buy tools necessary to meet standards in the first place (Farnworth & Hutchings, 2009 in Sexsmith, 2017) ▪ **Access to training:** when women's participation in training is a requirement, access does increase (KIT et al, 2012 and Bolwig & Odeke, 2007–in Sexsmith, 2017)
Impact on workload, and unpaid care and domestic work	Negative	▪ **Increased workload burden disproportionately affecting women–**the KPMG (2013) review observes that although women's participation in certified farms increased (see finding above), and although workload increases for both men and women, women tend to carry a higher workload than men, and generally tend to carry out the heaviest and most time-consuming work. ▪ Hanson et al, 2012 (on Fairtrade, in Oya et al 2017) suggest that certification results in double burden for women, as their unpaid care and household work remains unchanged. ▪ However, there are cases where Fairtrade premiums have been spent on longer term investments that can reduce production and domestic workload, however this is not without difficulties (Dilley, 2011 (Fairtrade), Lyon, 2008 (Fairtrade) and Sexsmith, 2008 (Fairtade)—in Sexsmith, 2017)

2. Changes in workplace conditions		
Changes in working conditions – waged workers	Mixed evidence	▪ **Formalisation of waged labour and access to employment benefits.** There is evidence that standards have in some cases resulted in formalisation of waged labour, moving workers from repeated casual or temporary contracts to permanent worker status (COSA, 2008 and HIVOS, 2014 in Sexsmith, 2017). When workers are hired on indefinite contracts they are more likely to benefit from employment benefits such as access to paid leave, redundancy payments, and social security. Given that in many sectors women represent the majority of informal or temporary workers, impacts in this area can have a strong gender dimension. However standards can fail to reach informal workers, and, because of lack of information about the whole entire chain, companies (in the apparel chain for example) can fail to detect informal work beyond Tier 1 suppliers (Svarer et al. 2017; Mezzadri 2012), while often most workers involved beyond Tier 1 companies are women (in Indian garment industry for instance) (Mezzadri, 2012). ▪ **Improved occupational health and safety**. Several studies have shown that standards have brought improvements in health and safety provisions (Tallontire et al, 2005; Barrientos and Smith, 2006; COSA, 2008 in Terstappen, Hansen and McLaughlin, 2012. This can also trickle down to noncertified farms because of increased awareness (Center for Evaluation, 2012, on Fairtrade, in Sexsmith, 2017). While not a gender-specific impact, there are gendered aspects to health and safety risks, due to biological and physical differences between men and women. However, evidence on the extent to which certification has protected pregnant women from exposure to harmful chemicals is mixed (UZZ Certified, 2016; COSA, 2013—in Sexsmith, 2017). ▪ **Some instances of benefits trickling down to workers hired on certified smallholders' farm** (day rates, social security and health checks, opportunity for financial support for health and education, improved accommodation, residency permits for migrant workers), although not all workers in smallholder production benefit (Smith, 2010 (Fairtrade), Nelson and Martin, 2013 (Fairtrade, RA)—in Oya et al 2017) ▪ **Negative effects of purchasing practices and business cycles** can exacerbate gender issues (e.g. short lead times and production peaks can lead to mandatory and excessive overtime, pressures on prices can lead to casualisation of labour, etc.) (Barrientos and Smith, 2006). For example, in Turkey, a study found that certain purchasing practices had direct, negative impact on working conditions, (for example the critical path analysis (CPA) tool was found to be one of the key factors affecting overtime hours in the garment industry); concluding that 'evidence is that the fashion and garment industry's way of working drives poor working conditions and an increasing informalization of labour' (WIEGO, no date). ▪ Kaplinsky and Morris (2017b) also suggest that voluntary standards can lead to segmentation of producers (between a number of registered workers meeting standard's requirement, and a number of casualised, migrant or informal workers or enterprises) ▪ **Failure to detect discrimination during audits.** Audits rarely report non-compliance on discrimination clauses, which means that companies do not see it as a major issue. Audits fail to report a number of issues, including freedom of association, discrimination, wages, working hours, stable and direct employment, and abuse (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2005 in AFL-CIO, 2013); auditors' capacity to identify these issues varies and is influenced by a number of factors, including their experience and training (Short et al, 2014); audits vary in quality (AFL-CIO 2013; Pruett, 2005 in Locke et al 2007) and focus, and there is debate on whether, because of these diversity, audits can be accurate or fully independent (Locke et al, 2013). LeBaron's research on forced labour (2018) also suggests that it is possible to alter working practices to pass auditing processes but return to exploitative conditions once the auditing process is concluded.
Addressing forced labour	No evidence of impact	▪ **Research shows that ethical certification initiatives are generally ineffective in addressing the widespread issue of forced labour and labour exploitation** in tea and cocoa supply chains (the study included data collection in farms certified through Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, ETI, and Trustea, and cocoa producer

		members of Kuapa Kokoo). Some of the worst cases of exploitation were found on certified teas plantations; while most workers were not aware of the fact they were engaged in a certified farm in both sectors(95% of cocoa workers). The study also found practices of 'cheating' audit processes; and highlighted the fact that all schemes have loopholes. Women find it particularly difficult to escape exploitative conditions, and there were cases of human trafficking of women from tea plantations to into domestic and sex work (LeBaron, 2018).
Addressing sexual harassment	No evidence of impact	▪ **Failure to address sexual harassment—**there is no evidence around impact on sexual harassment; additionally, two studies (CESU, 2012:28; Cramer et al, 2014a—both on Fairtrade, in Oya et al 2017) report that certified plantations are no different than noncertified plantations in terms of sexual harassment.
3. Impact on women's participation		
Participation in certified farms, cooperatives, producer organisations (POs)	Mixed evidence	▪ **Some cases of increased women's participation in certified farms, and cooperatives/Producer Organisations (POs)**—increased participation has meant both increased involvement on farm income, with increases in farm ownership and membership of cooperative. (KPMG, 2013 and ITC, 2012). For example, in Fairtrade certified cooperatives it is suggested that producers are experiencing a certain degree of empowerment (Utting-Chamorro, 2007, on Fairtrade). It is argued that external actors (including ngos and certifiers) have a crucial role in positively influencing increased participation of women, and increased acceptance of women in authority positions among men (Sexsmith 2017). For example, in cotton, where Fairtrade requirements includes direct payment to women, women's membership and revenues increased (Nelson and Smith, 2011 , on Fairtrade, in Sexsmith 2017) . However, these results may be misleading (as may be due to male migration or, female membership may be just on paper to enable access tp POs benefits, see Ronchi, 2001 and Lyon et al, 2010 (both on Fairtrade)—in Oya et al, 2017) ▪ **In some cases women's position and participation either is unchanged (**Utting-Chamorro, 2005 (Fairtrade); Lyon, 2008 (Fairtrade); Lyon et al., 2010 (Fairtrade); Ronchi, 2002 (Fairtrade); Ruben, 2008 (Fairtrade); Shreck, 2002 (Fairtrade, Organic); Hughell & Newsom, 2013 (RA)—in Sexsmith, 2017) **or is negatively affected** by increase in workload (KPMG, 2013); and overall, women's participation remains low (22 percent of fairtrade certified small POs, for example, Fairtrade Foundation, 2015, in Sexsmith, 2017), with male bias creating a vicious cycle of discouragement to participation (Smith, 2013, on Fairtade, in Sexsmith, 2017) ▪ **There is mixed evidence around women's decision-making roles within producer groups,** as found by a meta review of 129 studies on Fairtrade (Verstappen et al., 2012, in Sexsmith, 2017). Two studies focused on UTZ certification reported some positive results (UTZ Certified, 2014, and Riisgaard et al., 2009, in Sexsmith, 2017); while other studies report n significant results in primary cooperatives (see Ronchi, 2002 in Sexsmith, 2017) ▪ **There is also mixed evidence on the effectiveness of Joint Bodies** (Fairtrade) **as mechanisms of empowerment and their role in creating opportunities of participation:** see reports of opportunity for female participation in Nelson and Martin, 2013 (Fairtrade, RA, cited in Oya et al, 2017), and questions around their effectiveness in 3 papers (Smith, 2010 (Fairtrade), Said-Allsopp and Tallontire, 2014 (Fairtrade), and Sen, 2009 (Fairtrade, Organic)—in Oya et al, 2017). Said-Allsopp and Tallontire (2014, on Fairtrade, in Oya et al, 2017) argue that Joint Bodies are often male dominated and may offset empowerment; while 'gender committees' instituted outside Fairtrade interventions may be more effective.
Control over standards' processes	Some evidence, although not gender focused	▪ **Increased control over processes**—It is argued that distribution of responsibilities to recipients can enable marginalised groups to increase control over institutional transformation processes (MacDonald, 2007 in ITC, 2012). However, this review has found no information on how much of this has included women. ▪ **Nevertheless, authors also argue the company bottom line has dominated agendas of groups** such as FLA and SAI, marginalising workers (AFL-CIO, 2013).
4. Changes in household dynamics		

Decision Making power within household	Mixed evidence	▪ **Promotion of women's decision making at household level**—ITC, 2012 cites IDS 2006 study that shows that in cotton, application of the labour code has promoted results in women's decision making at the household level among garment sector workers. ▪ In Uganda, data from certified smallholder farm workers' households, suggests that women in those households have increased control over both production and income sales (Chiputwa, Qaim, 2016). ▪ Kasente, 2012 (Fairtrade, Organic), Ruben, 2008 (Fairtrade) and Hoskyns, 2006 (Fairtrade) (in Sexsmith, 2017) also reports case study positive results in household decision making. Although, some of these effects may be unintended, when certification purposefully includes participation of women in production, marketing and/or sales, it has been observed that gender inequalities within households decrease (Sexsmith, 2017) ▪ **No effect on** household **decision making in some cases—**(Ruben and Zúñiga, 2011, and Nelson and Smith 2011 (Fairtrade)—in Sexsmith, 2017) ▪ **Loss of decision-making power for some women:** some case studies present evidence of reinforcement of male control in some household decision making areas, even when women increasingly contribute to household income (Ruben, 2008 in Sexsmith (fairtrade banana), 2017; and Ruben, Fort and Zúñiga-Arias, 2009 (banana and coffee)). In some cases, men responded negatively by withdrawing financial support or taking on new wives (Nelson and Smith, 2011, on Fairtrade, in Sexsmith, 2017)
Other household dynamics	Some evidence	▪ **Other changes in household dynamics:** Bacon's (2010) research in Nicaragua also found that household gender relations improved in a Fairtrade organic cooperative, with women leaving their houses to participate in activities in the community more often, and that the male spouses of a women-only cooperative supported their wives' right to organize. Dilley (2011) also found that participation in a Fairtrade cooperative led to improvements in the balance of household work between women and men, although not to equality in domestic tasks (both sources cited in Sexsmith, 2017)

Annex 4: Structural constraints affecting VSS ability to promote gender equality

Only publications that discuss these barriers specifically in relation to voluntary standards and certifications have been referenced in the table.

Norms and structural barriers identified	Evidence Available
Household unequal power relations	**Standards do not challenge household unequal power relations, and assume trickle down effects from men to women; however, this unequal power distribution affects both women's ability to participate and engage with standards, as well as a disproportionate distribution of benefits (favouring men)** NRI, 2013 highlighted possible negative effects due to the way that income benefits were designed, which did not take into accounts factors such as income control within the household. In some contexts, male members of the household control and distribute profits *(*Pongratz-Chander, 2007, on Fairtrade and Organic, in Oya et al 2017). Terstappen, Hansen and McLaughlin, 2012 summarise a number of studies that highlight how men maintain control over decision making or unequal household relations where not changed (Fridell et al. 2008 (Fairtrade); Le Mare 2008 (Fairtrade); Lyon 2008 (Fairtrade); McEwan and Bek 2006; Ruben et al. n.d (Fairtrade); Taylor 2002 (Fairtrade)–in Terstappen, Hansen and McLaughlin, 2012); and lack of support from men on a number of issues, including sharing resources and women's household responsibilities (Arce 2009 (Fairtrade); Bacon et al. 2008 (Fairtrade); Bacon 2010a (Fairtrade); Chi 2002; Elias and Carney 2007; Lyon 2008 (Fairtrade); Lyon et al. 2010 (Fairtrade); Utting-Chamorro 2005 (Fairtrade)–in Terstappen, Hansen and McLaughlin, 2012).
Women's voice and participation	**Various social norms that impact women's voice and political participation also affect women's ability to participate in cooperatives and certified farms and producers' organisations, cutting them out of potentially benefitting from standards' implementation altogether. Women can also be excluded from decision making processes around standards implementation and leadership positions** Studies suggest that women's participation is largely limited by both structural barriers and operational issues (see: Blowfield and Dolan, 2010 (Fairtrade); Lyon et al., 2010 (Fairtrade); Nelson and Pound, 2010, in ITC, 2012). Women's representation in these organisations is very low, for example 80% of members of Fairtrade certified organisations are men (Fairtrade International, 2009 in Memkeen, Veetil and Qaim, 2017) Oya et al, 2017 systematic review highlights that women's domestic work and care role, and unpaid labour impact time and availability to attend meetings, and therefore their participation in certification-related activities (Hanson et al, 2012 (Fairtrade), Nelson and Martin, 2013 (Fairtrade, RA), TWIN, 2013 (Fairtrade), Stenn, 2015 (Fairtrade)—in Oya et al, 2017) Studies reviewed by KPMG, 2013 and Oya et al, 2017 also point out that women can be excluded from decision making around certification premium payment allocation, as well as in leadership positions. Women's lower education rates, and access to skills and knowledge affect participation, particularly in leadership positions, of certified POs (Sutton, 2014 (Fairtrade), Terstappen, 2010 (Fairtrade), Pongratz-Chander, 2007 (on Fairtrade and Organic)—in Oya et al, 2017), as do other gender discrimination issues including violence, mobility restrictions, lack of financial support for travel, and perception of women's roles and abilities (Pollack, 2006 (Fairtrade, organic), Sen, 2009 (Fairtrade, Organic), Pongrat-Chander, 2007 (Fairtrade, Organic), Fairtrade, 2015, Stenn, 2015 (Fairtrade), Lyon et al, 2010 (Fairtrade)—in Oya et al 2017), women's marital status, with social norms affecting participation particularly

Norms and structural barriers identified	Evidence Available
	after marriage (TWIN, 2012 (Fairtrade), Sen, 2009 (Fairtrade, Organic), Sutton, 2014 (Fairtrade)–in Oya 2017), and unequal access to land (Sexsmith, 2017). Gender blind standards affect women's ability to participate in economic activities and standards' implementation Meetings and trainings may not be designed to meet women's needs, affecting their ability to participate (Bergeron, 2012; Riisgard et al, 2009; Fairtrade, 2015—in Also issues around women in standards setting and regulation (see section 2d for further info)
Access to economic resources and inputs	**Women's unequal access to economic opportunities, resources and inputs (such as land, knowledge and information, technology etc.) limits their access to standards processes and benefits** In particular, access to land is a key underlying barrier NRI, 2013 states that hired labourers, smallholder farmers and women were less able to participate in VSS because of unequal land access and access to other resources. Training in certification schemes is often provided to landowners only, most often men (COSA, 2013 in Sexsmith, 2017), based on the assumption that knowledge will be transferred automatically, which is not always the case (Bolwig & Odeke, 2007; Farnworth & Goodman, 2006—in Sexsmith, 2017) Lyon et al, 2010 (in Sexsmith 2017) suggest that privatization through certification could be detrimental to customary land rights (particularly if it affects the collective land that women rely on) Land ownership inequalities significantly exclude women from POs membership and leadership/decision-making roles, and sometimes (tea in Kenya for example) from receiving payment (Fairtrade Foundation, 2015 and Blowfield & Dolan, 2010, in Sexsmith, 2017) Unequal access to types of crops, knowledge and information also excludes women NRI, 2013 found unequal access and control of certain types of crops (tree cash crops for example), which in turn affects access to VSS. Krain et al, 2011 (in KPMG, 2013) also cites women's exclusion from cash crops in Ivory Coast, due to traditional roles. Women's lower access to information has meant that they have less knowledge and information about production and agricultural practices, as well as certification (Blowfield & Dolan, 2010, p. 156 (Fairtrade); Hoskyns, 2006 (Fairtrade); KIT et al., 2012—in Sexsmith, 2017) Women can face disapproval regarding economic choices, as well as lack of trust in their abilities and are often excluded from social economic benefits, even though their work contributions are significant (Pollack, 2006 (Fairtrade, Organic); Sen, 2009 (Fairtrade, Organic); Pongratz-Chander, 2007 (Fairtrade, Organic); Fairtrade, 2015 – in Oya et al, 2017). While cultural factors and assumptions around womens' abilities are a barrier to participating in decision making in cooperatives (Fairtrade Foundation, 2015; Luetchford, 2008 (Fairtrade)—in Sexsmith, 2017) Gender pay gaps persist Studies (Smith, 2010 (fairtrade) and Walsh, 2004 (Fairtrade, Organic) in Oya et al. 2017) show that women tend to be paid less, particularly when employed in nonpermanent contracts; while other studies (Smith et al 2004 (EurepGAP), and Stathers and Gathuthi, 2013 (Fairtrade, RA) in Oya et al, 2017), identified cases of different remuneration scales for men and women. Women are disproportionately hired as temporary workers (Smith, 2004 (EurepGAP) and Mekaraaenm 2009 (Fairtrade)–in Oya et al. 2017)

Norms and structural barriers identified	Evidence Available
Traditional roles within sectors' value chains and unpaid family labour	**Women's contributions are often less visible and less valued** In smallholder farms, women can be considered 'helpers' rather than workers (Pongratz-Chander, 2007 (Fairtrade, Organic) in Oya et al. 2017); men tend to be involved with off farm activities (meetings, loands, etc.) while women are often responsible for manual tasks, such as planting and post harvesting (Stenn, 2015 (on Fairtrade) and Nelson et al. 2002 (Fairtrade)–in Oya et al, 2017). In Coffee farming, for example, post-harvest tasks, aimed at improving quality to meet standards, are usually done closer to producers' residences, and therefore mainly carried out by women, while men undertake plot maintenance tasks. (Jaffee, 2006, on Fairtrade and Organic, in Oya et al. 2017) Women are also less likely to be involved in sales transactions (Memkeen, Veetil and Qaim, 2017) and in marketing of crops (Lyon, 2008 (Fairtrade), Sen, 2014 (Fairtrade), Chiputwa & Qaim, 2016—in Memkeen, Veetil and Qaim, 2017) Land rights also affect women's work visibility, as they may work on land which is not registered in their name (Sen, 2009, on Fairtrade, Organic) or to which they have no entitlement (Ellery, 2010 (Fairtrade, Organic); Nelson and Martin, 2013 (Fairtrade, RA); Sutton, 2014 (Fairtrade); CESU, 2012 (Fairtrade), TWIN 2013 (Fairtrade)–in Oya et al 2017). Among hired labour, gender discriminations and divisions remain, more so among certified plantations than in smallholder production (Smith, 2013, on Fairtrade, in Sexsmith, 2017) For instance, in Fairtrade banana plantations, Smith (2010, on Fairtrade in Sexsmith, 2017) found that women remained concentrated in processing and administrative positions and that gender assumptions around women's abilities were internalised by both women and men; while in tea plantations in Tanzania, technical skills required to fill positions supporting increased in mechanisation, excluded women who had less access to education (Loconto, 2015 in Sexsmith, 2017). Although women dominate in the apparel sector (68% of the garment and 48 percent of the textile workforce), they are also the majority of low skilled and low paid workers in this sector, and are more exposed to risks related to health and safety and other workers' rights and conditions (Svarer et al. 2017) Women's dominate among informal workers and unpaid family workers, as well as among temporary workers (Smith, 2004 (EurepGAP) and Mekaraaenm 2009 (Fairtrade)– in Oya et al. 2017), categories that are less visible and cannot engage with standards in the same way as registered workers For example, standards such as certifications have been shown not to put enough attention on workers hired in smallholders' farms, in comparison to workers hired on certified farms (Cramer et al, 2014a (Fairtrade); Shreck, 2002 (Fairtade, Organic); Trauger, 2014 (Fairtrade, Organic); Heller, 2010 (Fairtrade, organic, UTZ, C.A.F.E Practices)– in Oya et al 2017) Although some benefits do trickle down to this category of workers, they do no reach all of those working on smallholder farms (Smith, 2010 (Fairtrade), and Nelson and Martin, 2013 (Fairtrade, RA) in Oya et al, 2017). Studies found that certain categories of workers on certified farms (temporary/seasonal, migrant workers, ethnically discriminated groups) also may not benefit in the same way as others, which can create tensions among the workforce (Smith, 2010 (Fairtrade); Trauger, 2014 (Fairtrade, Organic); Smith et al, 2004 (EurepGAP)—in Oya et al, 2017) Traditional divisions of labour mean that women disproportionately shoulder additional workload derived by involvement with standards Studies reviewed by KPMG, 2013, indicated that women carried a higher workload than men. Division of labour seems to impact women's participation in cooperatives. Traditional roles also have an impact on which types of crops women will be involved with. ITC, 2012, cites 2 studies (ITC, 2011 and Kessler et al, 2012) that show that in the cotton sector, the additional labour that is required due to certification is done mainly by women. Similarly, 7 papers cited in Sexsmith 2017 (Verstappen et al., 2012 (Fairtrade), Bacon et al., 2008 (Fairtrade), Gibbon et al 2008, Bolwig, 2012, Kasente 2012 (Fairtrade, Organic), van

Norms and structural barriers identified	Evidence Available
	Druten-Vos, n.d., Bolwig & Odeke, 2007) point to increased workload particularly for women. In one case (Kasente, 2012, on Fairtrade and Organic, in Sexsmith 2017) women reported not being able to participate in commercialisation activities because of this increase. Poorer women with heavier workloads are more likely to be excluded from participation in certified POs (Sen, 2009, on Fairtrade, Organic, in Oya, 2017). Other requirements, such as banning herbicides, can also increase women's workload (Bolwig, 2012, in Sexsmith, 2017).
Unpaid care and household roles and responsibilities	**Unpaid care work burden on women remains unchanged and invisible** Although certification is associated with increased workload for both men and women, this disproportionately affect women because of unpaid domestic and care work that women are responsible for, and that remains unchanged and unchallenged (several citations in Oya et al. 2017) In order to meet increased work and care burden, women are often forced to bring children with them in the absence of other child care, while older children who would normally help on the farm, may go to work outside to gain extra family income as they cannot work on the farm due to child labour regulations (Sexsmith, 2017).