

Identifying farm-level pathways to household food security in West Africa: a qualitative case study in Côte d'Ivoire

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Background

- Linkages between agriculture and food security are widely recognized. However, little research analyses these relationships at farm-level
- A more systemic understanding on how small-scale farming systems and household-level food security interacts will help identify policy levers that reduce malnutrition in rural areas of West Africa

Objective

- Identifying farm-level pathways to household food security
- Pathways are defined in this study as linkages between farming systems and household level food security

Methods

Data collection

- The Sustainable Livelihood (SL) Framework was used to develop qualitative data collection tools
- Data was collected in four villages in south-central Côte d'Ivoire
- Data was obtained using participatory rural appraisal tools in:
 - 14 semi-structured interviews with farmers,
 - 4 focus group discussions,
 - 4 key informant interviews with health and rural development agents

Data analysis

- Interviews were recorded, transcribed and later coded using the SL categories as coding system, pathways were coded in a second step



Figure 1: Focus group discussion with smallholder farmers in Kotiessou

Results

Four farm-level pathways to food security were identified: (1) **source of food**, (2) **food crop marketed**, (3) **cash crops**, and (4) **women empowerment**.

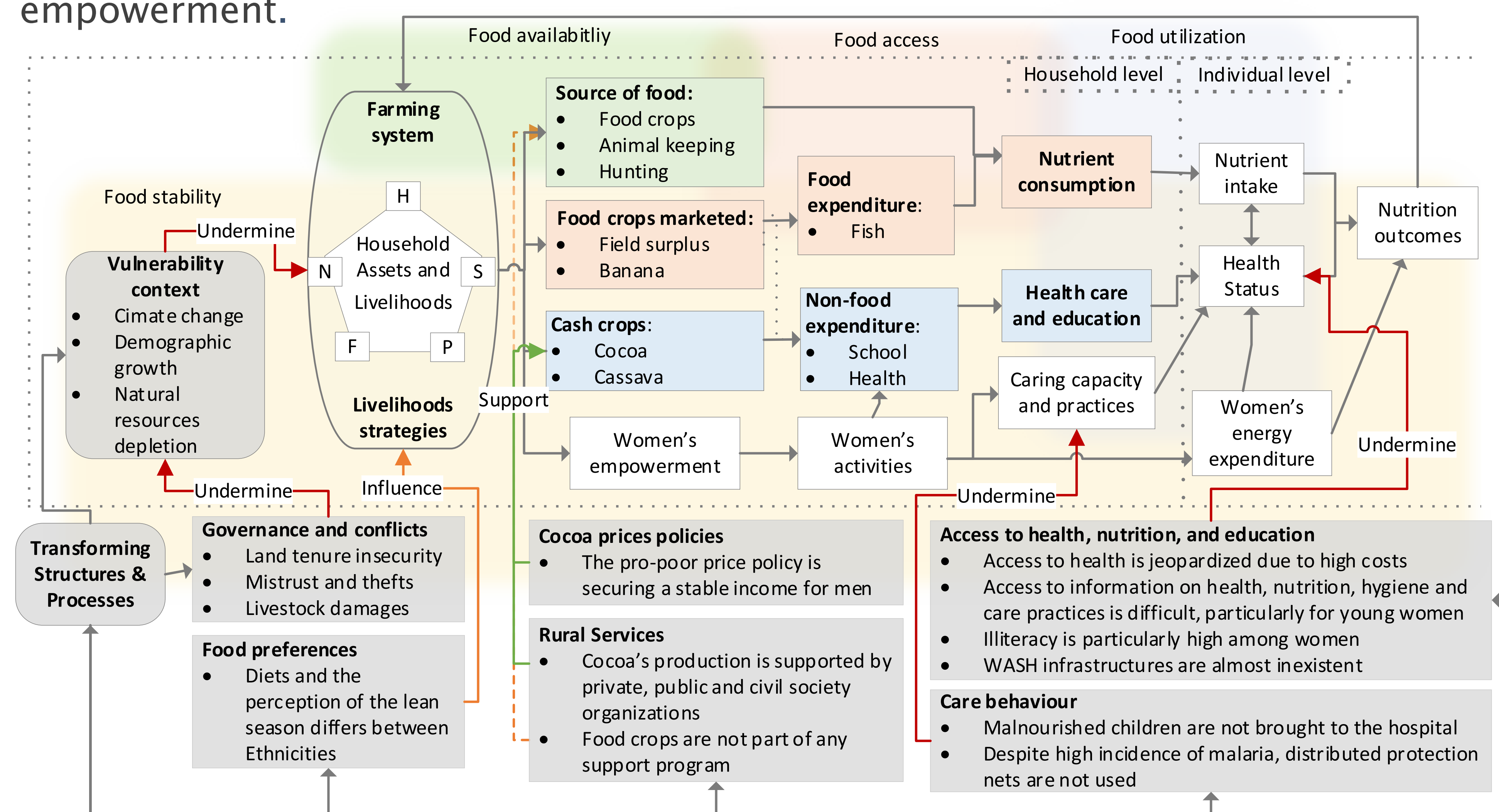


Figure: Conceptual framework of farm-level pathways to Household food security. Adapted from Kadiyala et al. adding key elements of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework by the author. Populated by results of current study.

(1) Source of Food – Food availability

- Staple crops and vegetables are primarily cultivated for household's own consumption. Food crops are under women responsibility.

(2) Food crop marketed – Food access

- Women sell field surplus on the weekly market. This income is primarily used to buy fish and additional foods.

(3) Cash crops – Food utilization

- Cocoa is an important source of income, which is under men's responsibility. This income is used to cover non-food expenditure.

(4) Women's empowerment - all dimensions

- Women play a central role across pathways bearing the main burden for **producing (availability)**, **procuring (access)**, and **preparing food (utilization)**.

Contextual factors affecting pathways to household level food security

- Difficult access to information and health services, unbalanced support to farming system components, land access and land tenure insecurity, low social cohesion, ethnicities and food preferences.

Policy implications

- Agricultural policies targeting food security should pay special attention to gender roles, intra-household dynamics and mental accounting
- Policy support for subsistence farming lead by women shall improve food availability, access and stability
- Improved access to health and education for women shall improve food utilization
- Women's responsibilities and constraints must be carefully considered to achieve food security which calls for more gender-sensitive food and health systems interventions
- Combining livelihoods approaches with the pathway's perspectives enables identifying and prioritizing relevant policies for improved nutrition



Figure 3: Young girl preparing foutou, a traditional dish, in Zougoussi



Figure 2: Interview with smallholder farmers in Zougoussi

