

Title: Social and Economic Empowerment in Agricultural Entrepreneurship.
A Case Study of Rural Farmers in Cameroon.

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Objectives:

1. To assess how Agricultural Entrepreneurship (being part of a farming cooperative, taking part to training programs and improving one's commercial/agricultural techniques) results in social, political and economic empowerment among women farmers.

2. To compare the empowerment process in farming cooperatives with the empowerment process in Industrial Entrepreneurship (small business owners, petty traders, tailors, etc.) to draw implications for economic development and policy-making.

Methods:

In-depth interviews have been conducted with 79 study participants (of which: 48 ICENECDEV farmers, 18 farmers from other cooperatives, and 13 entrepreneurs in the industrial sector). The interviews have taken 25 to 40 minutes each, have been administered with the help of trained interpreters, and have consisted of 5 phases: a general introduction of the participant, an excursus on the agricultural and commercial techniques she has learned, and how these techniques have resulted in well-being in economic, social and political terms, respectively. In addition, the primary data collected from the participants has been combined with daily field notes, expert interviews and archival information.

The data collected, amounting to 559 pages [182410 words] (of which: participant interviews – 478 pages [147844 words], and field notes – 81 pages [34566 words]), has been analyzed through the software for qualitative analysis MAXQDA 2018. The analysis has involved a coding procedure in three steps: Open Coding (the annotation of relevant concept as mentioned by the participant), Axial Coding (the aggregation of relevant concepts mentioned by different participants under overarching categories), and Selective Coding (the refinement of codes and categories to better reflect the nature of the data and

the insights emerging from new cases). For detailed information on the coding procedure, please refer to Corbin and Strauss's manual "Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory" (SAGE Publications, 2008).

Findings:

1. Women farmers in ICENECDEV are, on average, more economically empowered than women farmers in other farming groups. This can be attributed to the many donations received (wheelbarrow, spray can, clash, etc.), the trainings and the hard work.

2. Economic Empowerment of women farmers results in positive spillovers at the societal level. Empowered women may raise their status within the community, at times allowing them to cover positions within the council and take decisions with the men.

3. Women farmers in ICENECDEV are also more socially empowered than women farmers in other farming groups. This can be attributed to the group features of ICENECDEV beneficiaries (self-organizing communities, composed mostly of women) and some interventions dedicated to women rights (e.g. instructions on how to avoid upsetting the husband).

4. However, Social Empowerment is still rare among ICENECDEV beneficiaries. It is more common among women farmers who have positions of leadership within their ICENECDEV group, live closer to urban areas, happen to be widowed, are married to a non-farmer husband, or boast a high level of education.

5. Unlike Economic Empowerment, Social Empowerment is to some extent at odds with traditional logics. While a woman who works hard, raises her status, and sponsors her closed ones is well-seen within the community, a woman who speaks out, challenges the husband's authority, or takes men's tasks is likely to face negative prejudices from her peers.

6. On a policy level, Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Buea results in more Economic Empowerment than Industrial Entrepreneurship. Farmers who join a cooperative can see remarkable improvements in food security and daily working capital after only 3 months. However, business owners face more difficulties in achieving financial sustainability for themselves and their families. This can be attributed to the fertile land in

Buea, the little risk involved in agriculture and the overall non-competitive business environment in the agricultural sector.

7. Nevertheless, Agricultural Entrepreneurship results in less Social Empowerment than Industrial Entrepreneurship. While farming requires hard work and limits the opportunities to connect with people or participate in quarter life, commercial activities involve more free time and social interactions. In addition, Industrial Entrepreneurship exposes women to less restrictive logics and more opportunities to speak out and take responsibilities on-the-job.

Embeddedness

While discussing of empowerment and entrepreneurship in rural Cameroon, one has to account for several historical and societal contingencies that constrain agricultural women entrepreneurs and prohibit them to achieve performance comparable to their male and urban counterparts.

Starting in 2015, south-west Cameroon and the region of Buea has been seeing a civil war between the independents Anglophone rebels and the central Francophone government. The civil war takes the form of guerrilla warfare, with the rebels hiding in bushes and forests before launching surprise attacks on governmental targets. As such, communities living in rural farming villages are the ones most affected by the crisis and most frequently targeted by rebel raids. Among the economic consequences of the political crisis are the restriction of transport in and out of major cities, the limitation of private consumption by Cameroonian families and the issuing of frequent curfews that prohibit any commercial activity and cancel market days. When consumption falls, cash crops and expensive agricultural products are the most affected, hitting badly those farmers who decided to diversify and invest in high-margin crops, as exemplified by Emily in the quote below:

“This year I don’t see possibilities for investment. Last year the harvest was bad, we were selling tomatoes for 1500 CFA (3\$) a basket, but [due to the crisis] no one

bought. We borrowed money to sponsor the tomatoes, but were unable to pay the credit union back. Now we have no money and we cannot borrow again because we are in debt. We have our house as a collateral, they can take it any time. We [the majority of our group] were supposed to harvest and sell but the market was bad, so many of us are not paying the credit house. If you don't comply, they take whatsoever you have put as a collateral."

The political crisis aggravates the already difficult conditions of rural farmers in Cameroon.

Most farmers are uneducated and unaware of correct farming techniques, carrying out work in their farm randomly and investing considerable effort to obtain poor yields. Thus, farming is perceived negatively within the Cameroonian society, especially within urban and modern areas, where farming is considered a low job for the Poorest.

Farmers are indeed the most vulnerable segment within the Cameroonian society and they are easily affected by climate variability and economic distress. Due to their lack of financial means and general illiteracy, they are unable to face basic daily challenges such as conserving food, selling at a fair price, or transporting their produce from the farm to the market. For instance, some individuals tend to look down on farmer and often exploit them for their own ends, as in the case of wholesalers who buy in bulk at very low fares and resell in the main market at triple the purchasing price. Due to uneducation and financial illiteracy, farmers prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability, leading to the paradox of selling their whole produce at a discount and reducing themselves to buy over-priced food they already produce. This results in serious financial struggles, not only in one's economic activities, but also in securing food, shelter, basic health and education.

The situation of women who choose a farming career is further aggravated by societal prejudices and historically strong gendered stereotypes. In the Bantu culture, from which

most Cameroonian tribes descend, the women are traditionally responsible for looking after the farm while the men would generally go out hunting or providing income for the family. Thus, since women farming is common and well-accepted within the society, it does little to challenge gender stereotypes and change the perception of women.

The Bantu culture is predominantly masculine, with men being the head of the household and women being excluded from ownership and decision-making. Since women cannot own land or assets, it is impossible for them to obtain a loan at the bank as they lack collateral. In addition, wives are submitted to their husbands and forbidden to spend money or carry out any activity on their own without marital consent. Discrimination used to be so severe that women could not eat certain parts of meat considered “impure” or carry out specific tasks in the farm that are “for men only”.

Alcoholism and violence are common in the house, where women are considered their husband’s property. Even today, the legal system in most villages is administered by the traditional chief and does not grant any women rights. Women and farmers have long been excluded by village politics and decision-making, as roles of power are reserved for men and individuals with a high reputation in the community. To make matters worse, Cameroon’s cultural fragmentation, with more than 50 tribes and frequent migrations for political conflicts and economic opportunities, tends to exclude migrants from the local decision-making and power structures.

As a consequence, women disempowerment is embedded within Cameroonian culture and each woman’s beliefs, to the extent that imagining an alternative reality where women have rights, own assets and participate in decision-making is not possible for most rural farmers. Instead, the pervasive negative view of women is reinforced by the general level of uneducation and manifests in a sense of discouragement, helplessness and self-exclusion, as

highlighted in the following answers by Penny and Samantha when asked about decisions they do not approve:

“At my level, there is nothing I can do.”

“As an individual, who am I to oppose the council? I would just pay to avoid problems.”

Agricultural Entrepreneurship

Empowerment

In operationalizing empowerment, we follow (Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009)'s definition of overcoming one's problems through life. It follows that one can be empowered only if he or she has experienced disempowerment, discrimination or major challenges in his or her daily routines. In (Rindova et al., 2009), the empowerment process goes through three main steps: awareness of one's disempowerment, acquisition of resources and making public declarations concerning one's new position.

Indeed, when women enter farming groups, they most often do so because of awareness of their condition of poverty and desire to change. By coming together to learn agricultural techniques, women can raise their income and gain control of their economic life. From their initial position of marginalization and low self-esteem, they may develop passion for their job and re-consider themselves as empowered farmers, rather than poor peasants.

The re-definition of self is apparent in Loubna's comment.

“At first I did not like my life. Since farming was a burden, I could stay at home a week without doing anything. Then, the training in agricultural techniques has opened my mind by showing that one can make a living out of farming. Now I can go to the farm with more focus and do more.”

While all of the women farmers in our sample experienced economic disempowerment in terms of lack of income and funds to fulfill their vital functions, some of them were not aware of their social disempowerment in terms of job segregation and lack of independence from their husband. The embeddedness in Cameroonian culture acts as a deterrent in our case because some women who have always been in a socially accepted subordinate position to their husbands fail to see alternative possibilities and identify the constraints they face in everyday life. Thus, although those women are disempowered according to human rights frameworks and international standards, they do not gain empowerment as they are fully embedded and satisfied in a cultural environment that reinforces gender stereotypes. Fanny exemplifies this point:

“We are taught that a woman must submit to her husband. It’s a societal norm, group farming or increases in income cannot change it. Even if my husband is old, sick and retired, I still submit to him.”

However, when conflicts in the house occur or the wife is not happy with her marital life, group farming can offer a way out of misery. The group offers a safe place for discussion, friendship and sharing knowledge among women, not only concerning technical and agricultural issues, but also about one’s private and social life. By seeing how others have gained empowerment, women can gain confidence in their personal skills, imitate what their friends have done and break free of the husband’s joke. Through group farming and observation of other women, individuals can develop a desire for change, push themselves towards their objectives and attain a sense of ownership and responsibility for their lives. Hala states this clearly.

“Before I was not encouraged, I had no one pushing me, but the group gave me confidence so that I can talk. When you see your stronger friends, you want to be like them and work for it. Group farming has made me more ambitious.”

Notably, Loubna’s and Hala’s empowerment processes are not only different in terms of outcome, but also distinct in terms of preconditions and facilitators that may reinforce one while hampering the other. For instance, Loubna’s process of economic empowerment is reinforced if the husband works the farm with her, so that she may benefit from additional physical strength and ideas. Yet, working the farm together will also reinforce the bond and relationship with her husband, making her unlikely to challenge his dominant position in the family. In addition, if Loubna aims to thrive economically, she would have to treat group farming merely as an instrument to achieve her objectives, limiting the time she invests in socializing and the opportunities for positive discussion with her peers. This quote by Karla exemplifies.

“I joined the farming group because I knew it would be advantageous. I must learn new things and develop techniques I did not know. That’s why I am here.”

Conversely, Hala is most likely to achieve social empowerment if her husband is not working in the farm, granting her freedom to decide on agricultural investments and a role of responsibility within the household. Yet, if Hala’s husband is not a farmer, she would lose his extra workforce and mental prowess, reducing her potential for economic growth. Similarly, the frequent participation to group farming meetings and the affiliation to multiple groups may come with the disadvantages of bearing an excessive cost, both in terms of time and financial contributions, absorbing resources that may otherwise be invested in the farm. In addition, if Hala joins her group mostly because of non-economic rationales, she will be less likely to grasp the technical content of the discussions and may become unable to obtain

economic independence, remaining reliant on the group for her sustenance. This happened in the case of Caroline.

“One cannot live alone. You need to be in the group so that, if tomorrow you’ll have a problem, there will be someone there to help you.”

Since the processes of economic and social empowerment have emerged as distinct and competing phenomena, we present the subsequent institution-building practices separately for each process. In the following two sections, we illustrate how agricultural entrepreneurship can lead to changes in societal beliefs through taking positions and taking roles, respectively.

Taking Positions

The first pattern of institution-building resembles the structuralist arguments of (Mosse, 2010), in which agricultural entrepreneurship can lead to acquire positions of power within the community and subsequently exercise one’s interests. We find that this pattern of institution-building is common across farmers and is driven mostly by economic mechanisms.

We notice that, due to feeling economically empowered and securing access to basic needs, women farmers are motivated to go the extra mile and invest further in their agricultural activities. In other words, the emancipation achieved through personal economic empowerment can serve as awareness in the subsequent process of institution-building, enabling farmers to visualize economic opportunities and challenge societal norms that relegate them in a subordinate position of poverty. The link is clear in Emily’s comment.

“I used to farm just to sell and support the house. But now I can invest in tomatoes and cash crops. I need to go ahead, be somebody and help others. [...] I can support others, even by telling them my success story, how I managed to sponsor cash crops

and vegetables from my own income. One can start from nowhere and become somebody through farming.”

Although Emily eventually failed in her entrepreneurial attempt due to the crisis and the collapse of market prices for tomatoes, her thoughts reflect the self-redefinition which is at the nexus of empowering oneself and changing institutional beliefs.

The process of taking positions also shares many similarities with the theory of entrepreneurship as discussed in classic economic theory. By seeing opportunities and being in the position to successfully exploit them, entrepreneurs can contribute to value for the broader society. Opportunities in the economic sense are seen as discrepancies between demand and supply, inefficiencies in the production process, or means to innovate the processing and distribution of goods. In the context of farming in Buea, the most frequently mentioned opportunities are extension of the product portfolio with cash crops, vertical integration into food processing and horizontal diversification in unrelated businesses. When enacted successfully, opportunities result in improved well-being, accumulation of resources and a higher reputation within society. Agricultural entrepreneurs can prove that farming is a valid mean to make a living, earning more and yielding higher satisfaction than occupations in non-agricultural domains. Within the community, empowered farmers become known for their farming activity and change the commonplace perception of farming in rural areas as an activity for the Poor and underprivileged. This quote from Molly is exemplary of the powerful branding effect farmers are subject to.

“They call me many names. When I am in the farm, Mama Farm. When I am rearing chickens, Mama Poultry. When I am growing vegetables, Mama Huckleberry. They know I am growing through farming and I can succeed in many activities.”

As argued in (Mosse, 2010), branding and acquisition of resources can lead individuals to positions of power they would not cover before. In turn, these newly acquired positions enable individuals to better leverage their resources, reach out to decision-makers and make their voices heard. This is remarkable, since farmers have been traditionally discriminated and excluded from most political activities, even at the village level. We find that women farmers are capable not only of standing in front of government delegates and present their arguments but also of enforcing their views and turn decisions in their favor. Fatima, a woman living and farming in the bishop's compound, explains how agricultural entrepreneurship has raised her status within the community, granted her political approval and secured resources she would not access before.

"The people in the compound used to look down on us farmers. The bishop would restrict access to the farms, since it was seen as a dirty and unproductive activity. Yet, when they saw how much I was producing, they changed their mind. We have convinced the bishop and the community of our potential. Today, they allow us to farm freely and have consecrated us new land that was formerly covered with grasses."

One of the implications of empowerment through agricultural entrepreneurship is that, due to the embeddedness in Cameroonian culture and the accepted norm of ubuntu, giving back to society and empowering others are commonplace within and outside farmers group. Thus, the process of economic empowerment for one individual often spills over to neighbors and the community at large. Many women reported empowering others economically, either through borrowing materials and money, sponsoring friends and relatives who desire starting a business on their own, or hiring workforce to collaborate in one's farms. The quotes from Bernice and Zena illustrate this point.

“With my earnings, I support many friends and relatives. I lent some money to my child who wanted to start a business and sponsored the construction of my other child’s house. Even when someone asks for smaller contributions, such as traveling to Douala [the capital of the south west region], I would give him or her. I am trying very hard to comply with my grandma’s responsibilities.”

“I love seeing farms and enjoy doing business in agriculture. By doing business, I can earn a lot of money and employ others in my farm. In this way I’ll be assisting people who can live and eat through me. My dream is to have a big farm so that I can empower 10 rather than 3 people [as I do now].”

The careful observer would notice that institution building by taking positions within society does not happen automatically, but is rather constrained within some boundary conditions. First and foremost, the acquisition of resources and ability to exercise power within the community strictly resembles the entrepreneurial process of economic value creation. As such, not all individuals will choose to accumulate and leverage resources in the political sphere, but some would content themselves with a satisfactory level of economic well-being for themselves and their families. In the case of Mariah, economic opportunities in farming have improved her financial position and reflected in higher living standards for her household, yet she has preferred a reasonable work-life balance to the accumulation of wealth and power.

“After improving my agricultural techniques, there is less stress in our economic life. At first, my husband was obsessed with taxi-driving. Just doing that, focused on making money. Now, we are more relaxed. At times we work the farm together. I have more time to dedicate to my business [corn roasting] while he works the farm.”

Secondly, ubuntu, the widespread norm of giving back to the community and aiding each other in case of social or financial issues, does not only bring about spillovers of empowerment from one individual to the others but also contributes to building that individual's position of respect within the community. By helping others, Cameroonian farmers gain reputation and leverage within the village, displaying their wealth and attracting supporters for their cause. Luke's phrasing is exemplary of how one's position within the Cameroonian society is enhanced by making economic contributions and using one's wealth to the advantage of the community.

*"When I go to meetings and events, I am now able to contribute to the cause they are asking money for. Since I can contribute a lot, **like someone who has money** (emphasis in original), my status within the community has improved."*

Finally, those individuals who were experiencing less financial difficulties in the beginning are also those who are most likely to have the means necessary to expand their business and build up their position within the society. For instance, Bernice- the aforementioned woman sponsoring her children's venture and house - is a widow living by herself and having grown-up kids who have a job and some income of their own. In addition, she was involved in politics as a village elder and enjoyed a privileged position before initiating agricultural entrepreneurship, which enabled her to make the most out of her investments in the farm.

As such, institution-building through taking positions is embedded within rural values and traditional beliefs. Ladder-climbing, ubuntu and the favor of traditional leaders are prerequisites that may help succeed in agricultural entrepreneurship and reaching a high position within the community. This drastically differs from empowerment through taking

roles, which springs from the rejection of traditional roles of submission and the desire to change institutionalized rural beliefs.

In addition, position-building may lead to disempowerment in the social sphere, by causing economically empowered women to isolate from their farming group, spur jealousy among their peers or live increasingly instrumental social relationships, thus inhibiting the women's potential for role-building. The sentences of Susanne and FSerenarica make the point.

“At times I am not in my friends’ hearth. Now that I have plenty, many of my former friends are jealous. Some like to come and beg for money and tools, even though the idea of begging from a farmer is repellent. Some others would like to be me, but since they cannot afford money to rent the farm, they are just jealous.”

“After joining the farming group, I have realized that politics is a matter of faith and illusion, unlike farming. The farm is always there waiting and it never deludes you. So now I just focus on my agricultural business and let go of politics.”

Taking Roles

The second pattern of institution-building found among entrepreneurial women farmers has more to do with tasks and responsibilities of the women and less with positions of power within the community. By taking new roles and responsibilities that are traditionally considered masculine, women can overcome gendered norms and acquire the necessary confidence to challenge commonplace beliefs about the role of women in society. While the pattern shares many similarities with “taking positions” as highlighted above, it is distinct in terms of the processual preconditions, outcomes and facilitators.

As in “taking positions”, the social empowerment achieved through group farming can serve as a basis for desiring more and pushing oneself to obtain improved rights and human conditions. Thus, the self-redefinition gained from the empowerment process at the

individual level manifests as self-confidence in one's means and encourages individuals to seek change in society and become aware of possibilities for improvements on a larger scale. In Luna's words,

"On the very first day we got interviewed by representatives of the organization. That opened my eyes since."

As in the pattern of "taking positions", the women farmers have been exposed to opportunities for changing institutions. However, unlike in "taking positions", the women farmers speak out to challenge gendered societal norms, rather than exercising their influence on their peers. In the pattern of "taking roles", a position of power of the entrepreneurial farmer is not required, but self-confidence and opportunities to make one's voice heard suffice. This quote from Karla explains further.

"When I am in a meeting, I always try to contribute ideas and share part of what I have learned from the farming group. I aim to change people's mentality and the way they reason. If I can, I always give positive ideas to improve things."

Another similarity is that the women are free to decide whether they want to pursue an opportunity to change institutions or not. Since the reward for pursuing institutional change is lower and less immediate than that for pursuing personal wealth, fewer women have engaged in this pattern to institution-building. This implies that some women may not pursue a socio-political opportunity due to fear of failure, while others might fail in the process of pursuing it, for instance because of the impossibility to persuade relevant stakeholders in the community or insufficient social resources. When such a phenomenon happens, a sense of personal discouragement is likely to prevail over the self-confidence necessary to bring about institutional change, as highlighted in Marta's words.

“If there is something I do not like; I just have to accept it. That’s what the village leaders have decided, you alone cannot defeat them. You can only accept what the village has decided.”

Furthermore, unlike economic opportunities, which in the context of agriculture in Cameroon can be easily seen, imitated among farmers and acted upon, opportunities for institutional change are subtler and might not be perceived equally by all farmers. From classic entrepreneurial economics, we know that individuals who have been exposed to a variety of experiences and different cultural or technical backgrounds are most likely to recognize gaps in the market. The same applies to socio-political opportunities, where the individuals who have been most exposed to roles contradicting societal beliefs are the ones most likely to develop a desire to change institutions.

An attentive reader would recall Mariah, the woman who chose to pursue personal work-life balance over economic enrichment. From a sociological perspective, Mariah is an interesting case because, although she lives in a semi-urban area where she conducts her business and boasts many friends and contacts, she develops a personal strong oppositional discourse to urban values and lifestyle that enable her to challenge societal norms discriminating women.

“My friends would say I work too much. A young girl like me, how can I go to the farm and get dirty every day. They would like me to sit, cross my legs and talk nonsense, as any other housewife. But I don’t want, that’s not part of who I am.”

Not only the women living close to urban areas, but also those covering roles of responsibility within their farming group (such as president, treasurer or secretary) and those experiencing difficulties in their private lives are most likely to develop oppositional

discourses to the mainstream societal beliefs that in turn enable them to advocate for more rights within the community. Elisabeth elucidates the reasoning.

“When I come together with people, now I have so many things to say. Wherever I am, I can stand and talk. Being a leader, one must have courage. It’s about opposing prejudices, being open and knowing how to confront people.”

As when discovering economic opportunities, an individual must have the right background, knowledge and intuition to visualize and enact alternative possible value systems in institution-building. Given the manifold similarities between economic and socio-political opportunities, it seems appropriate to depart from the economic conceptualization of market gaps and explain institutional change through socio-political discrepancies, as differences between the entrepreneur’s ideal values and norms and the current state of affairs within her society. From our data, institutional change by taking roles is possible only when multiple historical and contextual contingencies lead the individual to doubt of the established value system and take actions to change it. We name these socio-political discrepancies institutional dissonance, the departure from established beliefs by one or multiple individuals that, in turn, enable those individuals to change the institutionalized beliefs. The construct is clear from this quote of Barbara, a young woman tour guide.

“When we got together at the foundation and I saw so many women like me, some of them dropped out of school, the majority had kids in spite of their young age, I realized this country is moving backwards. There are no rights for women, some girls are left on their own by their families and start prostituting early in their life. The only hope is to enroll in some vocational center for secretaries and wait for the government to provide you a job.”

Looking at the history of Barbara, a young woman whose father used to beat the mother and whose sister experienced a pregnancy early in her teenage life, one can see how receptivity to socio-political opportunities (in her case, by direct exposure to difficulties experienced by loved ones) can condition individuals' thoughts and courses of action. In Barbara's case, the training only contributed to make her more entrepreneurial and give her instruments to change institutions, but she self-selected into the training because of her personal hardship that created mental dissonance with the dominant institutionalized beliefs. In addition, Barbara's awareness of the dissonance enables her to articulate her desire to change and plan to re-structure societal norms.

"I don't want my place to be in the kitchen, as I learned I can be entrepreneurial, become independent and do men's jobs. I wish to start my own foundation to help street children who are orphans or abandoned by their parents so that they may not end up like my friends and sister."

Alike to institution-building by taking positions, institution-building by taking roles also entail spillovers in the empowerment of community members in a disadvantaged position. After seeing the improvement in one's own living conditions, women entrepreneurs share their experience with their fellow farmers and become a role model to imitate. Positive spillovers in the process of taking roles take most frequently the form of advocacy, explicitly advising other women to defer the authority of their husbands, or stewardship, defending women who have been exposed to social injustice, gendered violence or abuses of power. Jana and Lana's sentences provide two examples of this.

"We call the women in the community and educate them that it's not good to sit idle, there are so many things one can do. One can start a business with as little as 10k

CFA (\$20). There's no need to be dependent on your husband, as a woman you can be someone on your own."

"There needs to be a person in political meetings to speak out when someone brings trouble, the leaders mismanage our interests or members go against the constitution. I am the one who steps in to set matters right and act as a peacemaker."

However, the kind of encouragement brought about by "taking roles" differs from the one related to "taking positions" in important ways. While taking positions most often focuses on the economic aspects of empowerment and rehabilitating the image of farmers within the Cameroonian society, taking roles instead builds on the role of women and gaining control on one's life against gender stereotypes or power abuses. As such, taking roles is drastically against societal beliefs and norms, while taking positions is facilitated when individuals follow the rules of the game and the local customs and traditions. In addition, while economically empowered women can show tangible signs of their achievements, socially empowered women can demonstrate the improvement in their life only by words or emotions. Therefore, positive spillovers from the process of taking roles are less likely to arise and succeed than those from the process of taking positions.