

Gender and Market Development

A framework for strengthening gender integration in market systems development at Mercy Corps

Market systems development is an approach that works to make markets function more effectively and sustainably for the poor by facilitating interventions that modify the rules, relationships and incentives of market players. The goal of gender integration in MSD approaches is to facilitate gender-equal opportunities within the market in order to promote more inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction.

The business case

Women and men encounter different experiences in market systems, as gender can define their unique constraints and opportunities. MSD interventions that work to realign the incentives, behaviors and functions of market actors to account for these gender-based variations can make markets operate more efficiently. Interventions that do not consider gender differentials can miss out on opportunities to make markets work for both poor women and men. Further, reducing gender inequality in terms of access to resources and agency to utilize these resources can increase the profitability of private sector partners while also lead to improved economic development and poverty reduction outcomes.



Photo: Mercy Corps

Why gender matters for private sector development:

- Removing constraints restricting women to low-productivity sectors could increase output per worker by 3 to 25% (World Bank).
- Women are an underserved consumer segment. MC Uganda found that 81% of female household heads and 55% of female spouses in the Karamoja region made key decisions on agriculture/health purchases.

Why gender matters for poverty reduction:

- If women and men had equal access to agricultural inputs in Sub-Saharan Africa, crop yields could increase by 6 to 20% (World Bank).

Intervention-level findings and recommendations

Key Findings:

Core and supporting function actors build inefficient market relationships in the absence of a gender lens.

Women and men hold gender-specific market knowledge. If private sector partners do not account for these differences, they can experience significant losses. MC Uganda found that a sesame processor's unintentional exclusion of women contract farmers, who are primarily responsible for post-harvest handling, resulted in a post-harvest loss of 70 percent, valued at \$290,000.

Core and supporting function actors do not employ gender-integrated strategies.

Market players often see women as secondary recipients of information and do not integrate gender-differentiated needs and constraints into their services. In Uganda, seed retailers were found to be largely uninformed about women farmers' preferences for short-term maturing crops and had instead procured long-cycle crop seeds. Consequently, women may not have access to services that suit their needs while service providers lose out on sales opportunities.

Women-dominant sectors remain relatively weak.

In comparison to men, women occupy low-value sectors that struggle from lack of investment and strong supporting services. These constraints can inhibit sector

profitability and wider opportunities for both women and men in markets.

Gender differences in nonmarket constraints affect exposure levels to market activities.

Women face higher time and mobility constraints and limitations on mixed-sex interactions that negatively affect their ability to develop trusted commercial networks and access productive resources.

The distribution of decision-making power can impact market incentives.

Women traditionally have less share of household and market bargaining power, meaning they can be excluded from production contracts or do not exercise direct control over their earnings. As a result, women have few incentives to maximize production quality and output.

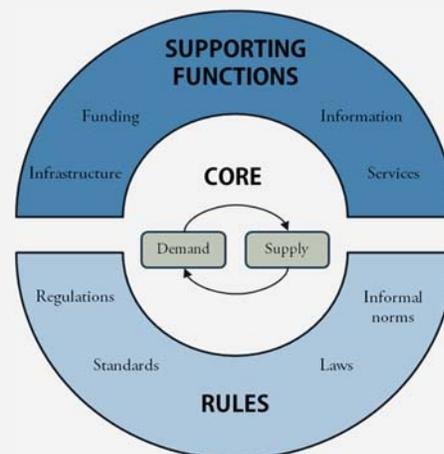
Women are underrepresented in collective or decision-making bodies.

Women have lower levels of participation in collective groups or decision-making roles due to gender bias regarding women's roles in public spaces and high membership criteria. Consequently, women lack access to mechanisms that could significantly improve their terms of participation in market systems.

Gender and market development framework

Market systems can be deconstructed into three components: **core function, supporting market functions, and rules and norms.** Gender integration in each of these components can play out in different ways.

1. **Core function:** Examines gender differentials regarding the horizontal and vertical roles, responsibilities, and relationships of women and men in value chains and supply chains.
2. **Supporting market functions:** Accounts for gendered variations in access to services and the ability of service providers to target and tailor their offerings accordingly.
3. **Rules:** Assesses differences between women and men in terms of institutional barriers, household/community norms, agency, and time-use.



Source: Springfield Center

Key Recommendations for MC programs:

Present the business or political case.

Programs should make the case to partners on the market opportunity for gender integration. This means having the correct market and gender data available on gender roles, responsibilities, and relationships and/or gender-disaggregated consumer behavior. MC Georgia presented evidence to milk collection centers on the significant roles that women were playing as livestock caretakers, which led to increased efforts to include women in trainings.

Provide trainings and options to partner on gender integration.

Programs should work with partners to develop their gender integration strategies. Key gender-based constraints that partners should consider include differences in travel patterns, time use, terms defining public interactions, income schedules, asset levels, and bargaining power. For example, MC Uganda worked with a sesame processor to deliberately hire more female lead farmers in order to better reach female producers.

Work with partners in women-dominated sectors to share the costs of infrastructure and skills upgrading.

Programs should work with market partners in women-dominated sectors to strengthen their capacity through cost-sharing on infrastructure and skills upgrading. MC Ethiopia is planning to partner with dairy companies to share the costs of building new collections centers in pastoral areas. This means women's dairy groups will have increased access to markets and private sectors partners will have higher access to quality products.

Facilitate the design of gender-responsive services.

Programs should work with service providers to adapt the design, marketing and distribution of their offerings according to gender. Strategies include adjusting the physical accessibility of services, promoting products based on different benefits valued by women and men, carrying products that consider gender-differentiated needs, and adapting payment plans or financial products to be considerate of varying asset levels or income schedules.



Photo: Mercy Corps

Develop mechanisms that encourage more gender-equitable distribution of decision-making power.

Programs should create mechanisms to ensure that women are able to retain control over their earnings. Best practices include ensuring that women's names are on production contracts (either alone or with their spouse), creating bank accounts on behalf of women to facilitate noncash payments, or providing direct cash to women. Increased control over income can augment women's decision-making power and provide them with the correct incentives to maximize work quality and output.

Facilitate activities and linkages between market actors that increase women's market exposure.

Programs should increase their accessibility to both women and men by considering their nonmarket constraints. This includes adjusting the times and locations of trainings with women's needs in mind, expanding their network of satellite offices, and hiring a more gender-balanced group of field agents. Programs should also work to facilitate linkages between market actors. MC Ethiopia partnered with a trade association to host a women traders fair to increase their visibility.

Facilitate women's participation in collective or decision-making bodies.

Programs should find ways to better encourage women's active participation in collective or decision-making groups. This include working with partners to reduce their membership criteria, install gender-based quotas for leadership positions, or target women in meetings to ensure their active participation. This can help women to improve their terms of participation in markets.

Program-level findings and recommendations

Key Findings:

Gender integration can be an unsystematic process.

Gender is often not systematically integrated by market programs. Even when programs make gender integration a priority in their proposals, its translation into practice can depend on the commitment and capacity level of staff. Programs may also lack of a clear definition of gender integration, which can cause inconsistencies throughout the program cycle and prevent programs from understanding how their gender integration objectives relate to the overall program goals.

The absence of gender and market data can result in misguided interventions.

In order for programs to understand their points of intervention in market systems, they need to have the appropriate gender and market data available. If not, programs may disproportionately diagnose constraints that are exclusively facing men. MC Georgia assessments helped to reverse preconceived ideas that men were the key decision-makers around cattle feed, when in reality women held significant control in making purchases. The correct indicators should also be in place to gauge gender-disaggregated changes in market and nonmarket outcomes.

Gender integration can be easier in women-dominated sectors or processes.

Intervening in sectors where women have traditionally had a large presence can make it easier for private sector partners to buy into the business case for gender integration. Since men tend to benefit more than women under a gender-neutral lens, businesses may feel that it is not worth their time to integrate gender if women have low participation rates in a given sector. It can also be easier to garner staff buy-in on gender integration. MC Ethiopia reported that program staff were more easily able to understand gender integration in practical terms when applied to small livestock value chains, where women have a large presence, in comparison to male-dominated large livestock value chains.

Monitoring sex-and-age disaggregated data can help programs detect irregular gender imbalances.

By looking through sex-and-age disaggregated data (SADD), programs have been able to discover situations where market actors were disproportionately benefiting based on their sex. For example, MC Indonesia discovered that 98 percent of users for a mobile platform intervention under the AgriFin program were men.

Ensuring a gender balance in program staff can be challenging.

Programs reported that it has been difficult trying to find enough qualified female staff, as there can be high female turnover rates or not enough women who meet the skills requirement.

Key Recommendations for MC programs:

Develop a gender integration strategy

Programs should develop a clear strategy of their gender integration approach and their plan for integrating gender throughout the program cycle. Gender integration

Gender integration approaches

DO NO HARM Minimizes risks by monitoring unintended adverse effects
GENDER AWARE Articulates a limited gender integration approach Uses sex-disaggregated data
GENDER RESPONSIVE Addresses women's needs in interventions that target both women and men
WOMEN-TARGETED Interventions that focus only on women

Source: DCED

approaches include gender-responsive, women-targeted, gender aware or do-no-harm. It is also important for programs to link their gender objectives back to their overall goals.

Conduct a market analysis with a gender lens.

Programs should place a gender lens in their market analyses in order to understand differences in participation, constraints and opportunities between women and men and critical points of intervention for creating gender-equitable outcomes. This includes asking questions about: gender roles, responsibilities and relationships; gender-differentiated consumer needs and the ability of service providers to meet these demands; and formal and informal rules that can differentially affect women's and men's terms of participation in markets.

Conduct a gender assessment.

Programs should conduct a gender assessment. To better understand issues, such as intrahousehold power structures and time use, and how they contribute to gender gaps in market systems

Build a gender-integrated results chain.

Programs should develop a gender-integrated results chain that separately maps out the expected outcomes of women and men within the overall program results chain. This can allow programs to better link the findings from their market and gender analyses into the design of interventions and the development of impact indicators.

Monitor incoming sex-and-age disaggregated data.

Tracking incoming SADD data can help programs to understand whether the sex ratio of beneficiaries aligns with expectations. If there are red flags, programs should accordingly adapt to be more gender inclusive.

Include women's economic empowerment indicators.

Programs should include WEE indicators to measure whether their interventions are fundamentally affecting gender structures. These indicators can include changes in time-use, decision-making, physical mobility, household dynamics, gender norms and attitudes, and self-confidence.

Implement gender-targeted recruitment strategies.

Programs should undertake efforts to create a gender-balance in their program staff to better reach out to female market actors as well as demonstrate to public and private partners their commitment to gender integration. Methods utilized by market programs include over-targeting women to account for potential turnover and advertising positions through locations or channels where women often frequent.

Build program staff buy-in for gender integration.

Programs should implement activities to build the buy-in of their staff. This can help to increase their investment in gender integration, recognize risks, and ensure that gender is properly integrated. Examples of ways to encourage staff buy-in on gender integration include conducting gender trainings for staff, holding meetings that reflect on gender-related progress, and involving staff in the development of gender-integrated results chains.

Tools for gender integration

'Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment in Private Sector Development' - DCED

'M4P and Women's Economic Empowerment' - DFID; Coffey International

'Behavior Change Perspectives on Gender and Value Chain Development' - ACDI/VOCA; USAID; FHI 360

'Gender Mainstreaming in Value Chain Development' - SNV

About the research

This brief was compiled based on research and analyses conducted by Pitchaya Indravudh, Master's Candidate at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. The report was submitted to Mercy Corps as part of the Capstone Policy Analysis requirement by the Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University.

The research process consisted of a thorough review of internal and external documents as well as interviews with program and technical support unit staff. The analysis aimed to address the following question: how might Mercy Corps strengthen gender integration in its market systems development approaches?