

GENDER AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

A framework for strengthening gender integration in market systems development

Market systems development (MSD) is an approach towards poverty alleviation that facilitates change in market systems to benefit the poor. But who, ultimately, ends up benefiting? To promote inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, gender must be integrated into MSD approaches.



Corinna Robbins/Mercy Corps

The Business Case

Women and men experience market systems differently, and gender can define their unique constraints and opportunities. MSD interventions that work to realign the incentives, behaviors and functions of market actors with these gender-based variations in mind can make markets operate more efficiently. Conversely, interventions that do not consider gender differentials miss out on opportunities to make markets work for *both* poor women and men. Furthermore, increasing women's access to resources and their agency to utilize these resources can also improve the profitability of private sector partners.

Why gender matters for private sector development:

- Removing constraints restricting women to low-productivity sectors could increase output per worker by 3 - 25% (World Bank).¹
- Women are an underserved consumer segment. In Uganda, Mercy Corps found that 81% of female household heads and 55% of female spouses in the Karamoja region made key decisions on agriculture/health purchases.²

Why gender matters for poverty reduction:

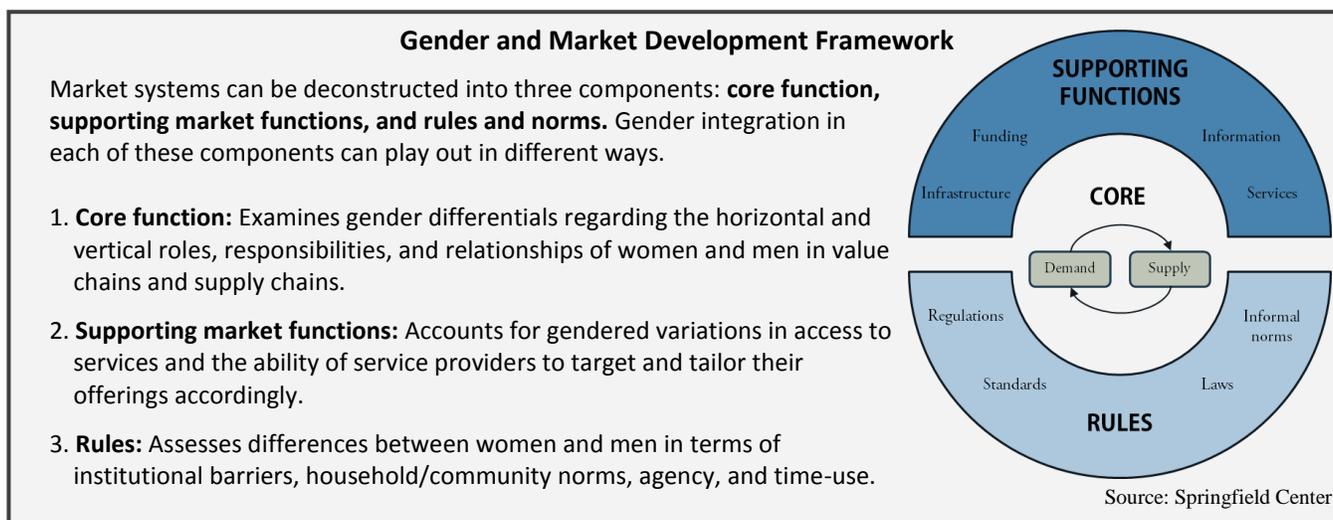
- If women and men had equal access to agricultural inputs in Sub-Saharan Africa, crop yields could increase by 6 - 20% (World Bank).³

¹ Cuberes, D., & Teignier-Baquet, M. (2011). Gender Inequality and Economic Growth. World Bank.

² Power of the Purse: Making the Business Case for Women as Consumers in Uganda. Mercy Corps 2015.

³ Leveling the Field: Improving Opportunities for Women Farmers in Africa (2014). World Bank.

Gender and Market Development Framework



Through experience in over 40 countries with innovative market system development programming, primarily in fragile contexts, Mercy Corps has developed key recommendations for integrating gender into market systems development. Below we divide key findings by those directed at individual interventions and those that apply program-wide. Recommended steps to address findings follow.

Intervention-level Findings and Recommendations

KEY FINDINGS

» **In the absence of a gender lens, actors working within the market system build inefficient market relationships**

Women and men hold gender-specific market knowledge. If private sector partners do not account for these differences, they can experience significant losses. Mercy Corps Uganda found that a sesame processor’s unintentional exclusion of women contract farmers – who are the primary person in the household responsible for post-harvest handling – resulted in a post-harvest loss of 70%, 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, Mercy Corps found that seed retailers were largely uninformed about women farmers’ preferences for short-term maturing crops, procuring long-cycle crop seeds instead. As a result, women did not have access to services that suited their needs and service providers lost 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. These nonmarket constraints 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 a lower share of household and market bargaining power (e.g., 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 and/or decision-making bodies**

Women have lower levels of participation in collective groups or decision-making roles because of 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.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MARKET SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

Present the business or political case

Make the case to partners on the market opportunity for gender integration. This means collecting and/or disseminating accurate market and gender data on gender roles, responsibilities, and relationships and/or gender-disaggregated consumer behavior. In Georgia, Mercy Corps presented evidence to milk collection centers on the significant role women played as livestock caretakers, which led to increased participation of women in trainings.

Provide trainings and options to partners on gender integration

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, Mercy Corps Uganda worked with a sesame seed processor to deliberately hire more female lead farmers to better reach female producers.

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

Work with market partners in women-dominated sectors to strengthen their capacity through cost-sharing on infrastructure and skills upgrading. In Ethiopia, Mercy Corps is partnering with dairy companies to share the costs of building new collection centers in pastoral areas. This gives women's dairy groups increased access to markets and private sectors partners access to higher quality products.

Facilitate the design of gender-responsive services

Work with service providers to adapt the design, marketing and distribution of their offerings based on gender. Examples 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 tailoring payment plans or financial products to varying asset levels or income schedules.

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

Create mechanisms to ensure that women are able to retain control over their earnings. Best practices include verifying that women's names are on production contracts (either alone or with their spouse); creating bank accounts in women's names for direct transfer of payments; or providing cash payments directly 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

Increase women's and men's accessibility by considering nonmarket constraints. This may include setting training times and locations with women's needs in mind; expanding the program's network of satellite offices; and hiring a more gender-balanced group of field agents. Programs should also work to facilitate linkages between market actors. Mercy Corps Ethiopia partnered with a trade association to host a women traders' fair to increase their visibility.

Facilitate women's participation in collectives and decision-making bodies

Encourage women's active participation in collective and decision-making groups. This includes working with partners to reduce their membership criteria; installing gender-based quotas for leadership positions; or targeting women in meetings to ensure their active participation.

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. This can cause inconsistencies throughout the program cycle and prevent programs from understanding how their gender integration objectives relate to their overall program goals.



Sumaya Agha for Mercy Corps

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

For program staff to understand their points of intervention in market systems, they must have appropriate gender and market data available. If not, programs may disproportionately diagnose constraints that are exclusively facing men. Mercy Corps Georgia’s assessments helped to reverse preconceived ideas that men were the key decision-makers around cattle feed. 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.

» **Monitoring sex-and-age disaggregated data (SADD) can help programs detect irregular gender imbalances**

By analyzing sex-and-age disaggregated data (SADD), programs have been able to uncover situations where market actors were disproportionately benefiting from certain interventions based on their sex. As an example, in Indonesia, Mercy Corps discovered that 98% of users of a mobile platform intervention were men.

» **Ensuring a gender balance in program staff can be challenging**

Programs report difficulty in sourcing and retaining enough qualified female staff. Insufficient numbers of women meet the skills requirements and female staff turnover rates can be high.

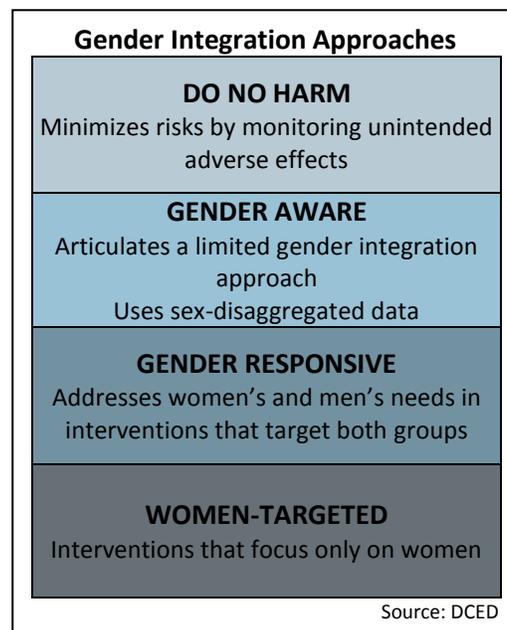
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MARKET SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Develop a gender integration strategy

Programs should develop a clear strategy for their gender integration approach and plan for integrating gender throughout the program cycle. Gender integration approaches include gender-responsive, women-targeted, gender-aware or do-no-harm. Programs should also 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 to fully understand differences in participation, constraints and opportunities between women and men, as well as critical intervention points to create gender-equitable outcomes. To facilitate this, ask 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 affect women’s and men’s market participation differently.





Conduct a gender assessment

Programs should conduct a gender assessment to better understand issues, such as intra-household 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 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 (SADD)

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

Include women's economic empowerment (WEE) 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 teams to effectively reach female market actors and to demonstrate to public and private partners their commitment to gender integration. Successful strategies include over-targeting women to account for potential turnover and advertising positions through locations or channels frequented or used most often by women.

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 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' – *Donor Committee for Economic Development*

'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*



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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 reported 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?