



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



GENDER INTEGRATION STRATEGY **MERCADO** JULY 2015



USAID
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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	1
SUMMARY	2
DEFINITION OF TERMS	3
INTRODUCTION	4
1. BACKGROUND	5
1.1 COUNTRY CONTEXT	5
1.2 USAID’S GENDER REQUIREMENTS	6
1.3 FINTRAC’S GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICY	7
2. RESEARCH AND RESULTS	7
2.1 WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE INDEX (WEAI).....	7
2.2 USAID-ACCESO EXPERIENCE	8
2.3 MERCADO DIAGNOSTIC SURVEY	8
2.4 FINDINGS.....	9
2.5 CONCLUSIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE MERCADO GIS	9
3. MERCADO GENDER INTEGRATION STRATEGY	12
3.1 TIME	12
3.2 KNOWLEDGE	13
3.3 ASSETS AND INPUTS.....	15
3.4 INCOME.....	16
3.5 DECISION-MAKING POWER.....	17
4. HEALTH AND NUTRITION	18
5. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	19
6. CREATING PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE GENDER INTEGRATION	20
7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION	20
8. MERCADO GIS IMPLEMENTATION	21

ACRONYMS

ADS	Automated Directives System
AIDAR	USAID Acquisition Regulation
BDS	Business development service(s)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CIRIS	Client Impact and Results Information System (Fintrac M&E system)
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EDA	Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores (Farmer Training and Development Program)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FTF	Feed the Future
FTF ZOI	Feed the Future Zone of Influence (Santa Bárbara, Copán, Ocotepeque, Intibucá, Lempira, La Paz)
GAP	Good agricultural practices
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Gender Integration Strategy
GMS	Gender Mainstreaming Strategy
ICM	Integrated crop management
INAM	National Institute for Women
INE	National Statistics Unit
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
LOP	Life of Project
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MFI	Microfinance institution
MSME	Micro, small, and medium-size enterprise
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NZOI	Northern Zone of Influence (Santa Bárbara, Copán, Ocotepeque)
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
SAG	Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería
SZOI	Southern Zone of Influence (Intibucá, Lempira, La Paz)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States government
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
ZOI	Zone of Influence (Santa Bárbara, Copán, Ocotepeque)

SUMMARY

By increasing incomes, expanding markets, and improving health and nutrition, the Feed the Future MERCADO activity will directly benefit 15,000 rural households. Activities that prioritize the engagement of the whole household will be central to Feed the Future MERCADO's income generation and food security strategies. MERCADO will target both men and women and conduct household-friendly activities that ensure equitable participation. This will include targeting women for engagement in agriculture-related activities in which they are typically marginalized, targeting men for engagement in health-related activities in which they are typically less involved, and promoting household decision making. Key activities will include:

- Introducing technologies that save households time and energy and increase yields and incomes.
- Transferring knowledge related to agriculture, health, and business practices to beneficiary farmers through trainings designed to target the whole household.
- Increasing household access to key inputs and assets.
- Increasing incomes for the whole household by engaging all productive family members in production and value-addition activities.
- Increasing women's decision making authority both on the farm and in the home.

The activity's focus will be to maximize gender impact throughout the life of the contract. Specifically, MERCADO will focus on:

- Targeting and encouraging whole household involvement in training and technical assistance to further ensure male and female engagement.
- Economically empowering household entrepreneurs, especially women, in processing and value addition enterprises.
- Expanding access to credit for all producers and micro, small, and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs).
- Promoting gender integration strategies and priorities to partners and counterparts through workshops and trainings.
- Addressing perceptions related to gender-based violence.

These and other interventions will address challenges to full family participation in MERCADO initiatives and ensure whole households benefit from activity support leading to increased incomes, expanded markets, and improved health and nutrition.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Data Disaggregated by Sex:** Data collected according to the physical characteristics of people (i.e. men and women). This allows data comparison, for example, between countries, regions, departments, municipalities, and communities, since it provides measurable and comparable data.¹
- **Discrimination:** The special treatment of individuals or groups who violate the justice principles in which all persons should be treated as equals.²
- **Female Empowerment:** Achieved when women and girls acquire the power to act freely, exercise their rights, and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society. Albeit empowerment often comes from within and individuals empower themselves, cultures, societies, and institutions create conditions that facilitate or undermine the possibilities for empowerment.³
- **Gender Equity:** The process of being fair to women and men. To ensure this justice, it is often necessary to arrange measures that compensate for historical and social disadvantages preventing men and women to act on equal terms.⁴
- **Gender:** Social attributes that are learned or acquired during socialization as a member of a given community. Gender is therefore an acquired identity. Because these attributes are learned behaviors, they are context and time-specific and changeable (with increasing rapidity as the rate of technological change intensifies), and vary across cultures. Gender therefore refers to the socially given attributes, roles, activities, responsibilities, and needs connected to being men (masculine) and women (feminine) in a given society at a given time, and as a member of a specific community within that society.⁵
- **Sex:** The biological characteristics between men and women, which are universal and do not change. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females. As race, class, age, ethnic group, etc. the notion of gender needs to be understood clearly as a cross-cutting socio-cultural variable.⁶
- **Gender-Based Violence:** Violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex, gender identity, or perceived adherence to socially defined norms of masculinity and femininity. It includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; threats; coercion; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and economic deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life.

¹ USAID. *Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains*, 2009.

² DFID. *The Gender Manual*. 2007.

³ USAID. *Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle. Policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment*, 2012.

⁴ ACDI, Canada. *Gender/Based Analysis, 1996: Guide for Policy Making, Status of Women*.

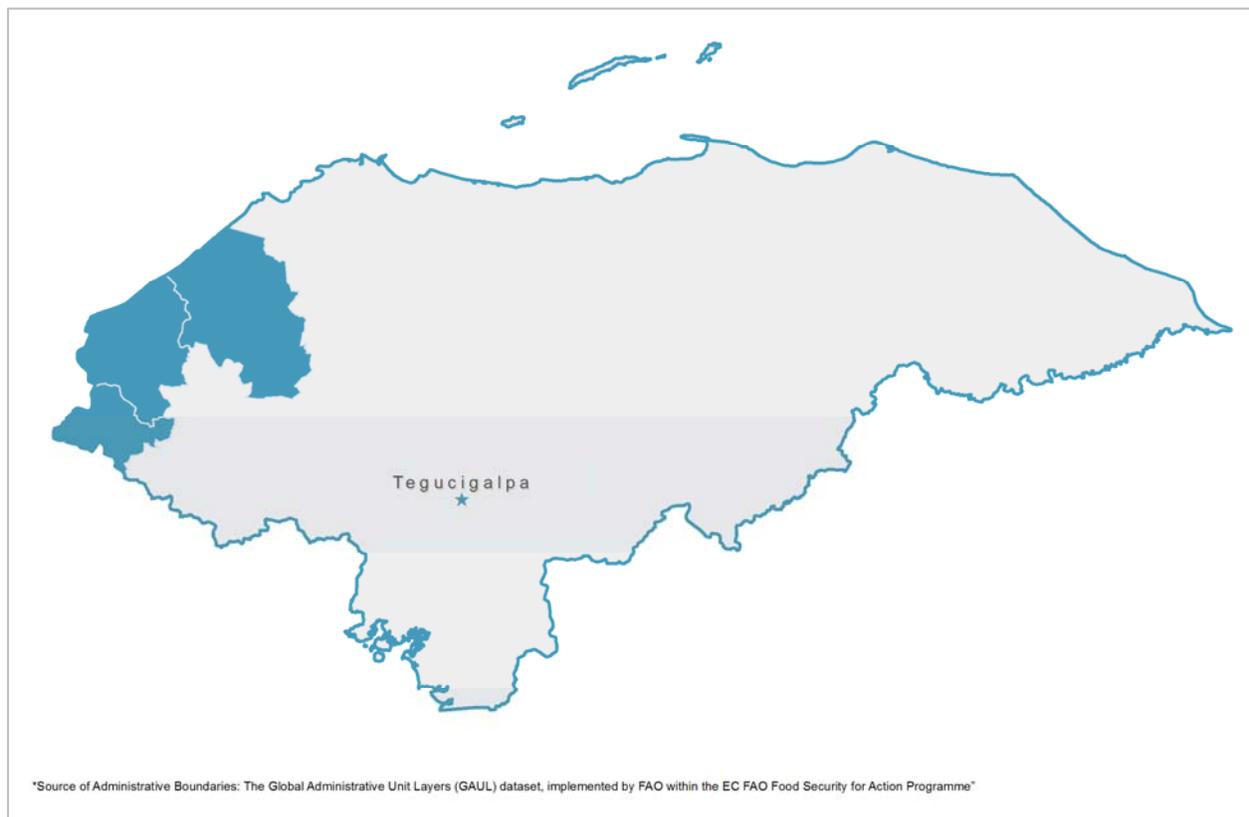
⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Glossary of Gender-related Terms. Compiled by Josie Christodoulou, August 2005 and updated by Anna Zobnina, August 2009.* http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/AdvocacyEducationTools/genderglossary_migs_aug2005.pdf

INTRODUCTION

MERCADO is a five-year activity supported by the American people through United States Agency of International Development (USAID) and the Feed the Future (FTF) initiative, which aims to break the cycle of hunger and poverty in the developing world. The activity will increase agriculture sector growth and improve nutrition in Western Honduras, primarily the departments of Santa Bárbara, Copán, and Ocotepeque.

The activity will benefit 15,000 rural families in these departments by transferring technologies to farmers to maximize productivity; raising rural incomes through expanded market access and employment opportunities; and improving nutrition through the promotion of healthy, diversified diets and proper hygiene and sanitation practices. Working with public and private sector partners in Honduras, MERCADO will introduce farmers to basic crop production practices and incorporate high-value and high-nutrition crops into production activities to sustainably increase incomes and food security.



Incorporating whole households into MERCADO activities is essential to its success. The following Gender Integration Strategy (GIS) incorporates experiences and lessons learned from the predecessor activity, USAID-ACCESO, and includes up-to-date information on gender norms in Honduras. The GIS seeks to address specific needs in target areas so that MERCADO can maximize benefits for entire families.

I. BACKGROUND

I.1 COUNTRY CONTEXT

In Honduras, a country of approximately 8.5 million people, more than half of the population (53.3 percent) lives in rural areas where agriculture is the dominant livelihood.⁷ Overall, 39.2 percent of the labor force is employed in the agriculture sector, which constitutes 14 percent of Honduras' Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁸

Life in remote areas of Honduras is challenging, with a total of 68.5 percent of rural households living in poverty.⁹ Women, who are typically responsible for caring for the home and family, often occupy a subordinate position when it comes to economic and agricultural activities. Just 29.6 percent of women in rural communities are economically active, compared to 77.2 percent of men.¹⁰ As a result, women have limited incomes and access to inputs, training, extension, and financial services. In addition, domestic violence continues to be a challenge in Honduran households and constrains women's contributions to the economy, with 22 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 having experienced domestic violence (psychological, physical, or sexual) within the past 12 months.¹¹

In recent decades, the reproductive, productive, social, and cultural roles of women in Honduras have changed gradually. Their participation in income generating activities has increased and 32 percent of them are now heads of households.¹² The vast majority of women in rural areas do not have access to extension services, but have continued working to support their families.

Engaging and empowering women is critical for economic growth. Gender integration has also been an integral part of the government of Honduras' national development strategies. In 1998, the government established the *Instituto Nacional de la Mujer* (INAM) to direct and coordinate the development of policies to support women in accordance with international agreements and national commitments. In 2010, INAM established the second Gender Equality and Equity Plan of Honduras (2010-2022), which set goals for achieving gender equality and incorporating these into the country's vision for the future. INAM has also implemented a legal framework that includes laws for equal opportunity and against domestic violence.

Despite these advances, developmental, cultural, and economic barriers continue to limit women's full participation in the agriculture sector. Throughout Honduras, women have limited access to critical resources and decision-making authority. Women are also time poor (compared to men) as a result of household responsibilities, leaving them with less time to spend on income generating activities. With respect to earning income in the formal sector, women are paid only 67.6 percent of the salaries of their male counterparts for the same work.¹³

As primary caretakers, women have decision-making power when it comes to family health care (83 percent) and household purchases (74 percent).¹⁴ This makes them important players in food security. However, the buy-in and involvement of men in these activities is essential to long-term sustainability and success. All activity undertakings must therefore integrate whole households into the planning and delivery

⁷ National Statistics Institute (INE) Honduras. *Resumen Ejecutivo XLIV Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples Mayo 2013*. 1.

⁸"The World Factbook." *CIA.gov*. Central Intelligence Agency, Web. 12 Jan. 2015.

⁹ National Statistics Institute (INE) Honduras. *Resumen Ejecutivo XLIV Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples Mayo 2013* 11.

¹⁰ Ibid. 6.

¹¹ Ibid. 1.

¹² National Statistics Institute (INE) Honduras. *Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples 2011, Mayo*.

¹³ Política Nacional de la Mujer. *II Plan de Igualdad y Equidad de Género de Honduras 2010-2022*. 16.

¹⁴ National Statistics Institute (INE) Honduras. *La Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud (ENDESA) 2011-2012. Situación de Las Mujeres y Violencia Doméstica*. 1.

of services that respond to the needs of target beneficiaries. Activities that prioritize the engagement of entire households will be central to MERCADO's income generation and food security strategies.

1.2 USAID'S GENDER REQUIREMENTS

USAID's gender policy works to advance equality between males and females by empowering women and girls to participate in program activities. The agency's integrated approach addresses gender gaps during strategic planning, project design and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The policy works to achieve three main outcomes across sectors:

1. Reduce gender disparities in access to, control over and benefit from resources, wealth, opportunities, and services.
2. Reduce gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals and communities.
3. Increase capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decision making in households, communities, and societies.¹⁵

USAID's operations manual specifically addresses gender equality and analysis through Chapter 205 of its Automated Directive System (ADS), which states that "promoting gender equality and advancing the status of all women and girls around the world is vital to achieving US foreign policy and development objectives."¹⁶ The requirements for gender integration in the ADS ensure gender integration is not a one-time accomplishment by any program or Mission. Gender integration is a continuous and variable process and an integral part of program design and implementation.

Honduras' multi-year Feed the Future strategy emphasizes the importance of gender integration in programmatic activities, stating:

Given the critical role that rural Honduran women play in household food security, this strategy prioritizes both economic opportunities for women and gender equity. For example, the program will adapt agricultural extension, business development, and financial services to the unique constraints faced by women. Off-farm and home-based business opportunities (processing, retail sales, services, etc.) will be identified and supported so that both women and men who are limited by household and cultural constraints can take advantage of new economic opportunities. The program will foster equitable participation, address the distinctive needs of women, support women's economic advancement, and promote gender-equitable, market-driven solutions.¹⁷

The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), developed by USAID, the International Food Policy Research Institute, and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, is the first to directly capture women's empowerment and inclusion levels in the agricultural sector. This innovative tool tracks women's engagement in agriculture in five areas: production, resources, income, leadership, and time.¹⁸ MERCADO will incorporate the WEAI indicators into its strategy to reduce gender gaps in project areas and strengthen the capacity of women and men.

MERCADO will identify and design interventions that address gender gaps in access to productive resources such as credit, income, assets, and employment. The activity will also survey attitudes toward gender-based violence among beneficiaries and will support efforts to alter these perceptions in target communities. In addition to focusing on involving women in economic activities, MERCADO will

¹⁵ USAID, *Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy* March 2012.

¹⁶ USAID, *ADS Chapter 205: Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's program Cycle*. 3.

¹⁷ Feed the Future. *Honduras FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy*. 16.

¹⁸ <http://feedthefuture.gov/lp/womens-empowerment-agriculture-index>

encourage men to participate in program interventions that have been traditionally dominated by women, such as health, nutrition, and household sanitation to maximize impact.

1.3 FINTRAC'S GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICY

Fintrac strives to create meaningful and accessible trainings, and devises creative, practical solutions to the challenges faced by men and women. A woman-owned company with a long legacy of promoting the participation, autonomy, and well-being of women in its projects, Fintrac employs a company-wide Gender Mainstreaming Strategy designed to invigorate each project's dedication to gender mainstreaming and ensure the full participation of households in the company's activities worldwide. Under MERCADO, Fintrac will tailor its gender mainstreaming approaches to the Zone of Influence (ZOI) and ensure **all** staff are equipped with the necessary tools to facilitate access to training and technical assistance for men and women, enabling maximum impact and creating sustainable success. The company's in-house gender specialists will provide support throughout implementation.

2. RESEARCH AND RESULTS

The MERCADO gender integration strategy draws from three primary sources: 1) an in-depth qualitative survey undertaken by MERCADO staff and consultants in the target ZOI in May 2015; 2) the quantitative baseline for the WEAI conducted in 2012; and 3) the successes and lessons learned from MERCADO's predecessor program, USAID-ACCESO. The complementary quantitative and qualitative data informs the overall strategy to ensure all household members will have the ability to succeed under MERCADO.

2.1 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AGRICULTURE INDEX (WEAI)

The WEAI measures the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agriculture sector in an effort to identify ways to overcome those obstacles and constraints.¹⁹ The first sub-index, called the five domains of empowerment (5DE) measures women's empowerment in five areas:

1. **Production decision making:** sole or joint decision making power over food or cash-crop farming, livestock, and fisheries, as well as autonomy in agricultural production.
2. **Access to productive resources:** ownership of, access to, and decision making power over productive resources such as land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables, and credit.
3. **Control over use of income:** sole or joint control over income and expenditures.
4. **Community leadership:** membership in economic or social groups and being comfortable speaking in public.
5. **Time allocation:** allocation of time to productive and domestic tasks, and satisfaction with the time available for leisure activities (IFPRI, USAID, and OPHI 2012).²⁰

In 2012, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) included Honduras in the WEAI baseline survey, and reported that the country's WEAI baseline score is 0.75. This means that just 31.5 percent of women are achieving empowerment and 41.9 are achieving gender parity in their households (based on comparing the 5DE scores between men and women in the same household).²¹ The baseline revealed that

¹⁹ IFPRI. *Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index*. 2012. 2.

²⁰ IFPRI. *Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index: Baseline Report*. 2014. 3.

²¹ Ibid. 16.

in the ZOI, women are more than twice as disempowered as men.²² The report identifies the key constraints to women's empowerment in Honduras as control over use of income, access to and decisions on credit, and purchase, sale, or transfer of assets. For men, constraints include access to and decisions on credit, group membership, and input in productive decisions.²³

2.2 USAID-ACCESO EXPERIENCE

MERCADO's GIS takes into account previous USAID and US government investment, most notably USAID-ACCESO, in Honduras and incorporates successful strategies and lessons learned to build upon and maximize impact. USAID-ACCESO was a 49-month project that moved rural Honduran households out of extreme poverty and under-nutrition by improving their incomes. USAID-ACCESO identified key constraints for women's participation in activities and promoted technical assistance, technologies, and crops that could narrow the gender gaps in these areas.

The nutrition component under USAID-ACCESO was dominated by female participation (86 percent of individuals trained) with limited male participation. The top income-generating activity area for women was processing (73 percent of all individuals trained were women), followed by animal production and business skills (both with 33 percent female participation). The area with the highest number of individual females trained was production (nearly 13,000). The production technologies with the highest impact on women's participation included drip irrigation, which saves farmers time in collecting and distributing water and also increases productivity by providing water efficiently to plant roots, and low-cost greenhouses, which allow farmers to produce crops close to the home.²⁴

2.3 MERCADO DIAGNOSTIC SURVEY

To build upon data from both the WEAI baseline and USAID-ACCESO findings, MERCADO conducted a qualitative diagnostic assessment in Ocotepeque, Copan, and Santa Barbara in May 2015. The methodology consisted of guided discussions with focus groups of men, women, and adolescents. In total, 15 focus group discussions were held with the participation of 249 potential project clients: 111 women (from women's groups), 23 young women (students), 83 men (producers), and 32 young men (students).

The objective of the diagnostic was to determine the roles of men and women in their homes, communities, and in agriculture, and their perceptions of gender-based violence. Questions included:

- What are the responsibilities of men and women at home, in the community, and in the field?
- How is household income earned by men/women?
- How is household income used?
- Who makes the principle decisions about how to use household income?
- In which productive activities are women/men involved?
- Which household items belong to women/men?

A section of each interview was dedicated to the discussion of gender-based violence (GBV) and participants were encouraged to share their interpretations of its manifestations and propose solutions to reduce or eliminate GBV in their homes and communities.

In addition to the focus groups, the gender consultants conducted training in each of the three departments for technical and administrative staff (8 women and 72 men) on ways to incorporate women in income-generating activities that help lift whole families out of poverty.

²² Ibid. 17.

²³ Ibid. 17.

²⁴ USAID. *Final Report USAID-ACCESO*. April 2011 – May 2015.

2.4 FINDINGS

The results from the MERCADO diagnostic survey were combined with the WEAI quantitative data and lessons learned under USAID-ACCESO to develop the MERCADO Gender Integration Strategy outlined in this document. Key findings illustrate that women face restricted access to productive participation in agriculture and income-generating activities when compared to men. Men, on the other hand, face limited participation in health, nutrition and other domestic activities. Findings are summarized against the five key resource categories in Table I.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE MERCADO GIS

Qualitative data obtained from the MERCADO gender diagnostic, previous experience from USAID-ACCESO, and highly quantitative data from the WEAI baseline report point to gender gaps in the ZOI that present opportunities for strategic activities and improvement. It is clear that women face more constraints than men when it comes to the ability to participate in income-generating activities, but it is essential to continue to promote action for the whole household to lift families and communities out of poverty.

MERCADO's gender strategy identifies activities that can help address these constraints. For women, priority strategies based on analysis of data from these three key sources include: promoting time- and labor-saving technologies; ensuring women have the knowledge and skills needed to grow crops, process products, and commercialize goods for sale; facilitating women's access to financial services and basic inputs needed for production and other businesses; engaging women in income-generating activities such as processing, animal production, and business administration; and promoting women's leadership and status within communities and families to improve their abilities to make decisions.

In addition to addressing the key constraint to men's empowerment – scarce access to credit – MERCADO will include men in activities that have been traditionally dominated by women, particularly around nutrition activities, so that the *entire* family is contributing to both the household's economic and physical health. By strategically promoting activities that encourage the contribution of both sexes in income generation and household health, MERCADO will empower the communities in which it works.

Table 1: Summary of Findings & Conclusions

Resource	WEAI Findings ²⁵	USAID-ACCESO Experience	MERCADO Diagnostic Findings	Conclusion
Time	Time allocation contributes 13.6 percent of women's disempowerment. "Workload" is one of the top three indicators with the largest gap between male and female achievement.	Women-owned or managed land accounted for 17 percent of the number of additional hectares under improved technologies or management practices.	Women are responsible for all household tasks including: food collection and preparation, cleaning kitchenware and the house, washing clothes, caring for children (bathing them, dressing them, taking them to school), and caring for household animals such as chickens. They are often working from as early as 5:00am until as late as 9:00pm. On the other hand, men typically work in the field in the mornings and afternoons, but have some free time to relax at home or play sports.	Women are "time constrained" when compared to men. MERCADO will introduce technologies that save women time and energy to give them the ability to take on other household and income-generating activities.
Knowledge	Production decision making, which includes input in productive decisions and autonomy in production, accounts for 7.2 percent of women's disempowerment.	Women made up 31 percent of participants in trainings overall: 20 percent production, 82 percent processing, 34 percent business skills, and 32 percent animal production. Men made up just 6 percent of nutrition and health trainees.	The majority of men in all six focus groups said that women did not participate in training sessions on agriculture. The majority of men in four groups said that they do not invite female members of their families to trainings. Reasons cited for women's inability to participate included that the women had to take care of the children.	Women have not traditionally participated at the same level as men in trainings that could result in increasing their incomes. MERCADO will target women to participate in production and processing trainings. MERCADO will also work to balance the disparity between men and women in nutrition trainings so that both men and women can contribute to the health of the household.
Assets and inputs	Access to productive resources contributes 31.9 percent to women's disempowerment. Access to and decisions on credit is the indicator with the second largest gap in male and female achievement.	Women-managed or owned land made up 13 percent of total area planted under ACCESO. Fewer women accessed less credit than men. Women received 11% of the total loan value, 16% of the number of loans, and made up 17% of the individuals with loans.	The majority of participants in all focus groups noted that men were often owners of productive (income generating) goods such as tools and fertilizers, while women owned the household-care items like kitchenware. No women mentioned credit opportunities for inputs in their towns and men mentioned this as one of the largest constraints.	Women have less access to productive agricultural assets and inputs when compared to men. MERCADO will increase women's access to and control over assets and inputs to increase overall household yields and incomes.

²⁵ Ibid. 17.

Table 1: Summary of Findings & Conclusions

Resource	WEAI Findings ²⁵	USAID-ACCESO Experience	MERCADO Diagnostic Findings	Conclusion
Income	Control over use of income accounts for 25.1 percent of women's disempowerment. It is the indicator with the highest disparity between men and women's achievement.	Of the households that started below the poverty line under ACCESO, female-headed households increased their daily income by 42 percent. Male-headed households increased their income by 58 percent.	The majority of female respondents in four out of the six groups of women said that they did not have any source of income and did not work outside of the house. The majority of male respondents in all six focus groups said that women in their community worked primarily in the house and did not have any other form of employment. In most cases, men give the women a portion of their incomes, which they primarily use to buy items for the house and children.	Women do not have the same opportunities to earn incomes as men do and have less control over the household income. MERCADO will focus on training women on topics that are relevant to them and have income potential. They will also work households on business skills and market linkages to improve incomes.
Decision-making power	Community leadership contributes 22.2 percent to women's disempowerment.	Women-led MSMEs made up 16 percent of MSMEs accessing new market opportunities through a broker and 17 percent of MSMEs entering formal preferred supplier or contract agreements with brokers.	Most of the women in the focus groups have not held leadership positions, although there was only one group that stated there were no female leaders in their community. The most common reasons the women had for not holding leadership positions were illiteracy and lack of time due to childrearing responsibilities. All male focus groups responded that they believed women could be good leaders in their communities, which presents an opportunity for MERCADO. Men are typically leaders in community organizations and spearhead community projects such as electricity and water projects.	There are few women in leadership and decision-making roles in the ZOI. Without representatives in local organizations and businesses, it is difficult for women to realize full empowerment in their communities and homes. MERCADO will work to build women's leadership and decision-making abilities so that they can be equal contributors in their households.

3. MERCADO GENDER INTEGRATION STRATEGY

Feed the Future MERCADO will provide gender-appropriate assistance that targets households to improve income generation, food security, and health and nutrition status, with a focus on closing gender gaps and potentially increasing women's participation. The activity will emphasize the equality of men and women as a guiding principle for all interventions and provide appropriate gender training where necessary for staff, clients, and partners. MERCADO will also recognize the varying social and cultural roles that men and women traditionally play in microenterprise and agriculture – based on societal norms, geographic location, economic status, and targeted sub-sectors – and ensure effective participation and subsequent realization of benefits by all.

MERCADO's gender strategy's primary objective is to create equal conditions for male and female participation. The project will focus on key intervention areas to reduce the gender gaps identified in the diagnostic with the following expected results:

- Whole families, and particularly women and children, will have more and better access to services provided by the project and its partners, including technical assistance in all areas of the agricultural value chain, health and nutrition monitoring, training, and leadership development.
- Gender equality and awareness will be integrated into all activities as a cross-cutting theme for rural economic development.

MERCADO has identified a number of intervention areas that address gender gaps in the ZOI to guarantee impact on whole families and reduce the social and economic vulnerabilities of women. While this strategy focuses on women, MERCADO recognizes that incorporating men into project activities is also crucial to the project's success and sustainability. This gender integration strategy (GIS) will serve as a conceptual and practical guide for the achievement of gender integration during the life of the project.

3.1 TIME

This GIS aims to increase food security and income generation by introducing technologies that save entire households time and energy. Women are especially time-constrained compared to men because of their many responsibilities in the home. By introducing the following practices and technologies that increase productivity while decreasing workloads and time commitments, MERCADO will free up women to engage in other household or income-generating activities.

Measuring progress (disaggregated by sex):

- Number of hectares under improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance.
- Number of farmers, processors and others who have adopted new technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance.

Improving water access and quality

Roughly 19 percent of rural households in Honduras do not have access to adequate water supply, making water access one of the top time and effort consuming activities carried out by women as well as the most significant constraint to agriculture production for smallholders.²⁶ Women are responsible for providing

²⁶ National Statistics Institute (INE) Honduras. *Resumen Ejecutivo XLIV Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples Mayo 2013*. 1.

the household with water on a daily basis, but typically do control whether it is used on the farm or in the household.²⁷ MERCADO will work with families and local governments to introduce techniques and technologies to improve water availability and quality, including water filters, the practice of boiling water, bringing water pipes from the garden to inside the house, and potable water/chlorination systems at the community level. Where appropriate, MERCADO will also introduce drip irrigation to help household members save time spent collecting water and to improve overall household and farm water management. Drip irrigation enables the most efficient distribution of water to crops and saves household members time and energy spent on water collection, freeing them to engage in implementing basic production practices. In addition to saving both men and women time and energy to ensure the family needs for water for cooking, cleaning, and bathing, such technologies will help also improve health and hygiene by preventing certain illnesses.

Eco-friendly stoves

Many rural families in the ZOI rely on traditional wood-burning stoves for food preparation. The daily time-consuming task of collecting firewood falls to the whole family, but women especially need the wood for cooking. The collection of firewood depletes environmental resources and also contributes to women's drudgery; if it is not collected it has to be purchased. Traditional stoves produce large amounts of smoke that pollute household air and can lead to family respiratory illness. MERCADO will continue the healthy household program begun under USAID-ACCESO to promote eco-stoves that burn less wood more efficiently thus freeing up the time used for wood collection and stove heating, and channel harmful smoke outside the home, improving family health. Where firewood is purchased, they also reduce costs.

Forestation

Because firewood is the most common source of fuel for cooking, MERCADO will promote the production of firewood trees near homes to help reduce the pressure on forests and also to reduce the time and costs of collecting or buying firewood for families.

Biodigesters

Biodigesters break down organic material and generate biogas and organic fertilizer. The gas can be used to power stoves and reduce the amount of time needed to light wood for food preparation. The renewable energy generated from biodigesters also eliminates the use of firewood, the collect time and costs associated with purchase. MERCADO will continue the biodigester program begun under USAID-ACCESO implemented in association with stabling of cows and milk production.

3.2 KNOWLEDGE

Women traditionally have less access to knowledge gained through extension services than men because of greater constraints on their time (including household responsibilities) and lesser ability or willingness to travel. In a survey of 97 countries, women received only 5 percent of agriculture extension services and comprised only 15 percent of extension agents.²⁸

Decentralized technical assistance and training allows men and women greater access to information. This is particularly helpful for women who do not attend trainings because they are unable to travel far from the duties of home and family. MERCADO recognizes that for trainings to be beneficial, they need to be tailored for the specific needs of female beneficiaries. By ensuring women attend trainings and field-days, MERCADO will guarantee access to knowledge for both men and women.

²⁷ Fintrac. Gender assessments for the MCC-funded Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores (EDA). 2006. Raw data. Honduras.

²⁸ "The Female Face of Farming." *FAO.org*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, n.d. Web. 10 Jan. 2014.

Measuring progress (disaggregated by sex)

- Number of individuals receiving USG-supported short-term agricultural productivity training.

Create appropriate training materials

Illiteracy is a problem for both men and women in Honduras, where 21.5 percent of the rural population over the age of 15 cannot read or write.²⁹ This has implications for the way messages and extension services should be delivered. MERCADO will adapt its technical information and training materials for delivery to clients with reading proficiencies ranging from basic to advanced levels to ensure the entire family has access to the services the activity provides.

Invite families to trainings

Past experiences from multiple projects have demonstrated that one of the most basic and effective ways to increase women's participation in training sessions is often as simple as inviting and encouraging them to attend. Under MERCADO, agronomists will explicitly invite entire families to trainings to increase the participation rate of women in income-generation activities and of men in nutrition activities. MERCADO will work with men to help them understand the importance of integrating women into trainings. To ensure women have the flexibility to attend events when invited, project staff will ensure trainings are given to other caregivers in the household and community so that women are able to work while their children are at home with trusted supervision. By encouraging both males and females to attend trainings on topics that are relevant to them, MERCADO will expand options and create new opportunities for men and women and will maximize the activity's impact.

Provide training and technical assistance in places and at times accessible to women

During focus group discussions conducted during the field assessment, women indicated a preference for short afternoon trainings that would allow them to complete their other duties. While afternoon trainings alone are not possible given the number of client beneficiaries (and commercial focus), MERCADO can maximize female participation by providing short trainings in convenient locations. On-farm and in-house technical assistance visits and field days will bring trainings directly to women making it easier to access assistance and information.

Deliver trainings on topics relevant to both men and women

Participation in agriculture in Honduras is determined by a variety of factors including geographical location, cultural influences, socioeconomic status, and physical ability. Generally, men participate in more labor-heavy activities such as land preparation, while women frequently have more responsibility for postharvest handling, processing, sales, and household health and nutrition, although this varies by community. MERCADO will implement a customized approach to deliver specialized trainings to women and men with a practical focus on topics that are most relevant to them. This includes integrating training topics so that there is something that appeals to each member of the family at training events. For example, nutrition information will be shared during value addition sessions. In addition to agriculture production, topics will include health, nutrition, business skills, marketing, and GBV.

Sharing successes

Successes highlighting the positive impact of women's involvement in previous and current interventions will be shared to ensure male buy-in and encourage further female involvement. Sharing successes and best practices will keep women engaged in interventions while demonstrating results in real terms. Activity staff will share best practices and successes with all beneficiaries, helping to inspire additional families.

²⁹ National Statistics Institute (INE) Honduras. *Resumen Ejecutivo XLIV Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples Mayo 2013*. 1.

3.3 ASSETS AND INPUTS

While access to assets and inputs is a problem for many smallholder farmers, women face even greater barriers due to limited decision-making authority, lack of collateral, time, and income. By expanding women's access to assets and inputs, MERCADO will increase overall household yields and incomes.

Measuring progress (disaggregated by sex):

- Value of agricultural and rural loans.

Increased access to agricultural inputs

According to the WEAI, lack of access to productive resources is the number one contributor to the disempowerment of women in Honduras. MERCADO will increase access to inputs for client households as part of its production package. These inputs include hybrid seed, fertilizer, equipment, and postharvest technologies. By training farmers in proper input selection and use, while linking them to agrodealers, MERCADO will ensure all beneficiary farmers have access to the inputs they need to produce higher yields and incomes. Access to inputs will be increased by:

- **Establishing input distribution sites in rural areas.** The MERCADO diagnostic found that women are often unable to travel or leave their homes for long periods of time due to household and childrearing responsibilities. Through strategic partnerships with input suppliers, agrodealers, and rural village banks, MERCADO will expand the availability of inputs in remote areas. This will allow greater access to high-quality inputs necessary to improve crop yields and quality, and is especially important to women who may not have the time or money to travel long distances to purchase inputs.
- **Offering input packages in appropriate sizes.** Because women often own and farm smaller plots of land, it is important to ensure input packages are available in package sizes that are appropriate to their needs. MERCADO will expand the availability of low-cost and small-scale input packages for commercial use by women on small plots.
- **Facilitating discounts for inputs.** Finding the capital to make an initial investment in agriculture inputs is a challenge faced by both male and female farmers in the ZOI. MERCADO will facilitate access to finance and credit to farmers accessing inputs through partnerships with agrodealers. Since women tend to have less control over income, lowering the initial cost of supplies will be instrumental to ensuring equal access to critical inputs.

Financial services

The WEAI cites access to and decisions on credit as one of the main constraints contributing to the disempowerment of both men and women in Honduras. The difficulty faced in securing financial services for the purchase of inputs and assets limits the ability to start new or expand existing businesses as well as the overall growth of the sector. To enable greater savings and access to credit, MERCADO will promote services that are accessible to women, such as mobile banking, grain pledging, loans with local government endorsement, equipment leasing agreements, and revolving loans for inputs. To ensure women can access these resources despite being unable to provide the traditional collateral often required by lenders, MERCADO will link women with *cajas rurales* and provide trainings on family budgeting, savings, how to build credit worthiness/scoring and finance options. In addition, the activity will promote *créditos solidarios* whereby a group of women or a family can guarantee each other's financing.

Healthy households

Under its healthy household program, MERCADO will promote improved floors and walls, eco-stoves, transparent roof sheeting, water filters, water inside of the kitchen, and household plots that improve hygiene and sanitary conditions with family-owned assets.

3.4 INCOME

Although women are traditionally not the principle actors in the agriculture sector in Honduras, they are increasingly involved in income-generating activities throughout the value chain. Considering that MERCADO is working with the household unit (benefiting men, women and children), it is imperative that women have access to economic opportunities. In many ZOI communities, women are active participants in microenterprises that add value to agriculture products, such as bakeries and processing companies. Income from these microenterprises on their own, will rarely lift families out of poverty. Opportunities in these types of businesses do increase the total household incomes, enable women to have more control over the income they earn, and will also allow them to reinvest earnings in the household. MERCADO's GIS focuses on female farmers, entrepreneurs, and groups, providing them with production and processing skills, market information, and financial and business training necessary to increase and better manage their income. MERCADO also recognizes the importance of the involvement of men and will work to increase their awareness of the potential value of women's contribution to the household economy.

Measuring progress (disaggregated by sex):

- Gross margin per hectare for commodities targeted by USG assistance.
- Number of jobs attributed to FTF implementation.

Value-added processing

In Honduras, women are typically active in value addition activities, and in the case of USAID-ACCESO comprised 86 percent of all processing clients. By facilitating access to and providing training on value-added processing, MERCADO will help women access new markets and increase their sales. Processed products include pickled vegetables, plantain chips, fruit concentrates, dried fruits, and baked goods. Processing technologies promoted by MERCADO (such as solar dryers) allow women to add significant value without significantly increasing their workloads. Processed products also typically have an extended shelf life and usually offer higher profit margins.

Small livestock management

In Honduras, small-scale livestock management is an income-generating activity primarily controlled by women.³⁰ Women are not only responsible for raising pigs, chickens, goats, fish, and other small livestock; they also retain control over the income that results from these activities. Because small livestock are kept close to the home and require day-to-day management, it is an area of comparative advantage for female farmers. By introducing improved technologies such as feed production and feeding systems, MERCADO will ensure beneficiaries maximize the health and production potential of small livestock. Small livestock will be promoted as a source of nutrition for families and an additional income source for rural women. Though to a lesser extent, women also care for dairy cows and can be responsible for milking them for home consumption. Training on dairy cows presents another opportunity to work with women, though it should be noted that commercial dairy operations are usually run by men.

Seedling nurseries and greenhouses

Nursery and greenhouse production presents opportunities for women since labor requirements are less exhaustive than traditional methods of cultivation. Nurseries and greenhouses can also be located close to the home. Seedlings can be used on family or community farming plots, or sold as an additional source of income. Seedling nurseries also ensure relatively high germination levels, especially with the use of hybrid seeds, and allow for more predictable production programming.

³⁰ USAID-ACCESO. *Gender Mainstreaming Strategy*. December 2011. 8.

Business development services

To ensure women have the skills needed to market and sell their products, MERCADO business development specialists will work with groups including both women and men to develop business plans and provide trainings on recordkeeping, budgeting, analyzing production costs, and determining profit margins and income. They will also provide training on packaging, labeling, and branding for sales to women and men involved in formal and informal retail activities.

Market and trade support

Finding reliable buyers and accessing markets is a common challenge for Honduran smallholders and processors. Marketing is especially difficult for women because of their inability to travel and a lack of access to formal market information. MERCADO will improve women's access to commercial markets by making direct links with buyers. The marketing component will also inform female farmers and processors about the requirements of buyers in their area. Women will receive further training on opportunities, volume requirements, delivery frequency, and quality standards. Connecting women to markets and incorporating them in production calendars for defined markets/buyers will enable them to control their income and make quality investments in their households.

3.5 DECISION-MAKING POWER

Gaining access to the power to make decisions is the most significant challenge facing women, both in the home and on the farm. Feed the Future MERCADO will ensure women benefit from interventions by demonstrating that involving women in the decisions leads to benefits for the whole family and community.

Measuring progress (disaggregated by sex):

- Who in your household decides which crops to plant?
- Who in your household decides when to plant?
- Who in your household decides to whom to sell?
- Who in your household decides when to sell?
- Who in your household decides what to do with sales income?
- Who in your household decides which inputs to use?

Conducting gender awareness training for activity staff, partners, counterparts and clients

To maximize the impact of training sessions and technical assistance visits, all activity staff members will be trained to deliver messages on gender equity and integration to clients. The training will also include gender sensitization for partners and counterparts so that all members of the extended MERCADO team can emphasize the importance of women's ability to make decisions for the benefit of the household.

Integrating gender messages

Gender messages, as well as information on health, nutrition, business skills, and GBV are fully integrated with central production activities to allow for a cohesive and well-rounded extension approach. Staff members have been trained to emphasize the benefits of whole-family involvement in income-generating activities. These messages not only encourage women to participate in activities, but also ensure male buy-in and impact their perceptions of youth and women's participation in economic activities. During MERCADO start-up, emphasis will be on staff training to build capacity in gender integration strategies as applied to all project activities.

4. HEALTH AND NUTRITION

A cornerstone of Feed the Future MERCADO's approach to improving food security in Honduras is integrating messages of health and nutrition with agriculture training. More than half of the children under 5 in the ZOI suffer from chronic under nutrition, compared to a 25 percent rate of prevalence in the rest of the country.³¹ Improving access to nutritious foods will be instrumental to their growth. Since women make most of the decisions around household nutrition, the activity will work with women to introduce high-nutrient crops and household plots to improve the health of the entire family. It will also be key to integrate men in health and nutrition activities so they support and accept the women's adoption of promoted practices.

Diversifying diets

MERCADO will introduce fast-growing, high-nutrient food security crops such as sweet potatoes, green leaves, plantains, and fruit trees to increase family food security while also generating new income. Crops that are both highly nutritious and high value can be grown for sale in local and export markets while crops that are highly nutritious but may not have the same market demand can be introduced in household plots. Most women are able to access small plots of land near their homes, giving them the freedom to choose to plant highly nutritious vegetable and fruit crops to feed their families or to generate income. MERCADO will train families on the cultivation of household plots near their homes to create a reliable source of seasonal fruits and vegetables to improve the nutrition of the entire household, as well as the potential to generate income by selling surplus production. These plots will serve as entry points for women's participation in technical assistance and training sessions.

Nutrition and hygiene education

In addition to continuing nutrition and hygiene trainings as conducted under ACCESO, which are primarily attended by women, MERCADO will integrate education on basic nutrition and hygiene topics into agriculture extension to improve men's awareness of their roles in ensuring the well-being of their families. Project extension workers have the most contact with client families, so incorporating nutrition messages into all levels of extension will lead to a higher adoption rate of the promoted practices. Special attention will be given to vulnerable communities. Topics will include household hygiene, anemia testing, disease awareness and prevention, family dietary needs, breastfeeding, and crop nutritional content.

Reproductive health education

Rural women in Honduras have an average of four children, with some women interviewed having as many as eight.³² It is difficult for a rural family to economically support this many children and young children require women to stay home to care for them, limiting their ability to participate in economic activities. It is also very difficult for large families to generate sufficient income to move above the poverty income thresholds. MERCADO will coordinate with health centers and hospitals at the local level and the Ministry of Health at the national level to empower women through education on reproductive and sexual health. The project will also work with men to sensitize them on the importance and benefits of sexual health. Trainings for both men and women will focus on maternal mortality, family planning, and reducing the instances of adolescent pregnancy.

Household improvements

Many households in MERCADO's ZOI are constructed with adobe, have dirt floors, and use traditional stoves, all of which expose occupants to health threats such as respiratory diseases and parasites. MERCADO will promote low-cost, environmentally-friendly home improvements to reduce these threats.

³¹ USAID. *USAID/Honduras Feed the Future Multi-Year Strategy (2011-2015)*. 17.

³² INE. *Encuesta de Demografía y Salud – ENDESA 2005-2006*.

These include eco-stoves that process fuel more efficiently, cement covered floors that are easier to clean and keep out unwanted pests, transparent roof sheets to allow more daytime light, water filters for drinking, water for household and personal hygiene, and where necessary the installation of latrines and water tanks.

5. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

USAID defines gender-based violence as “violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex, gender identity, or perceived adherence to socially defined norms of masculinity and femininity. It includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; threats; coercion; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and economic deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life.”³³

USAID strategically focuses on four areas to prevent and respond to GBV:

- Addressing the root causes of violence.
- Improving prevention and protection services.
- Responding to the health and economic needs of those affected.
- Supporting legislation and its enforcement against GBV.³⁴

MERCADO will address all types of GBV by working primarily in the first two areas to sensitize the populations (men, women, and children) of target communities and create more awareness of prevention strategies and resources available to affected families. Specific activities will include:

- Coordinating with organizations that specialize in GBV such as the National Institute for Women, the municipal offices for women, human rights NGOs, and other cooperating agencies.
- Training project staff on GBV so they can support and coordinate with community organizations and government institutions (both local and national) to reduce the cases of GBV.
- Working with local schools to provide children and parents with information about GBV (its causes and how to prevent it) and support strategies.
- Implementing awareness campaigns in target communities with communications materials highlighting the dangers of GBV and providing resources for more information and support.
- Identifying men and women that can work with the women’s offices in the municipalities to form support groups and work with GBV in their communities.
- Including women in all project activities as detailed in the GIS to strengthen women’s rights and eliminate gender discrimination and inequality.

By working in various levels of the community, MERCADO will be able to change perceptions about the acceptability of GBV and make communities safer for all members of the family.

³³ USAID. *United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally*. 2012 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 10.

6. CREATING PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE GENDER INTEGRATION

Working with municipalities, educational institutions, NGOs, international agencies, and private companies as strategic partners will be critical for the sustainability of gender integration in the activity's undertakings. MERCADO and its partners will draw on INAM's network to target rural women's groups for leadership training, on-farm technical assistance, and organizational strengthening. Technicians on the ground will also link community groups with the *Oficina Municipal de la Mujer* in their regions. Potential partnerships also include local theater groups to spread positive gender messaging.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Fintrac uses its proprietary monitoring and evaluation system, the Client Impact and Results Information System (CIRIS) to track indicators in the field and disaggregate all data by gender. Additionally, Fintrac's home office gender specialists work with the M&E and communications staff on each project to monitor gender activities on a quarterly basis. MERCADO includes a number of indicators to measure progress in the reduction of gender-based constraints, improvement of gender equality, and women's empowerment as promoted by the WEAI, including:

- Proportion of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment).
- Percentage of target population that views gender-based violence as less acceptable after participating in or being exposed to USG programming.

Income and financial management indicators are disaggregated by sex to ensure women's participation in these areas is measured. When women are able to utilize sound management principles and new technologies to increase their sales and net income, they are able to control resources and assets independently of their spouses. Additionally, women are able to use this income for investment in household nutrition as well as business growth. Sex-disaggregated indicators in the MERCADO Performance Management Plan (PMP) will measure the activity's progress against goals to address practical gender needs by creating new opportunities for men and women within existing social norms and gender roles including:

- Number of rural households benefiting directly from USG intervention.
- Gross margin per hectare for commodities targeted by USG assistance.
- Number of individuals receiving USG-supported short-term agricultural productivity training.
- Number of hectares under improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance.
- Number of farmers, processors and others who have adopted new technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance.
- Number of jobs attributed to FTF implementation.
- Value of agricultural and rural loans.
- Perception of gender-based violence (verbal).
- Perception of gender-based violence (physical).

Additionally, MERCADO will incorporate questions related to women's role in agricultural and household decision-making in its annual data collection survey to measure progress against strategic gender needs and understand and influence changing social norms and gender roles with the goal of improving overall gender equity. Establishing a baseline for and measuring progress against these questions will allow for a more thorough understanding of the activity's impact on women's ability to influence decisions, a key indicator in achieving women's empowerment. The data collected with these questions will contribute to MERCADO's knowledge and planning cycle and will influence gender activity emphasis throughout the life of the project. The questions include:

- Who in your household decides which crops to plant?
- Who in your household decides when to plant?
- Who in your household decides to whom to sell?
- Who in your household decides when to sell?
- Who in your household decides what to do with sales income?
- Who in your household decides which inputs to use?

A carefully designed PMP will provide detailed targets for all activity indicators, along with thorough plans for data collection and analysis. In addition to the PMP, MERCADO will implement an operational plan for gender integration which will serve as a planning tool for details during the execution of activities.

8. MERCADO GIS IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure successful implementation of the MERCADO GIS, it is essential that the staff and stakeholders have a toolkit of knowledge and information available to them as they work to incorporate women into their activities. The operational plan provides MERCADO implementers with the back-up they need to effectively carry out the specific activities detailed in the GIS. It recommends concrete mechanisms to ensure institutional commitment to gender integration in project activities. The operational plan consists of three strategic interventions that will: increase personnel's awareness of gender issues through capacity building; provide personnel with tools to identify and address gender gaps in the communities in which they work; and support personnel in the documentation and reporting of their progress in achieving gender indicators.

Strategic Intervention 1: Build staff capacity

The identification of the inherent challenges to the implementation of the GIS proposed by MERCADO requires that all staff members of the project adopt attitudes, knowledge, and practices that foster gender integration to achieve targets during the life of the project. MERCADO will take the following actions to ensure staff have the understanding and ability to implement the GIS:

- Designate a gender specialist to lead and manage gender activities. The gender specialist will organize staff trainings and serve as an advisor to managers on the implementation and monitoring of the GIS.
- Organize a management meeting with the gender specialist, COP, DCOPs, and other departmental and sectorial managers to present the GIS and its recommendations and finalize the operational plan for gender integration.
- Implement a staff capacity building plan for gender integration to transfer key messages to field and administrative personnel and refresh and deepen understanding of the role gender plays in project activities during the LOP. Trainings should be supported with specific case studies that demonstrate gender successes in production, commercialization, and organizational processes. Training topics may include: how to understand gender in personal and professional relationships,

how to apply tools in the field, information analysis, incorporating gender and health, and identification of gender gaps and how to convert them into opportunities.

- Integrate gender and social perspectives into all personnel trainings at the field level in coordination with departmental managers and the gender specialist. Social development trainings can be delivered with the support of INAM and SAG-DICTA with topics that include: negotiation, conflict resolution, and rural development.
- Include information to meet the gender integration needs of mid-level personnel in their regular meetings. Such topics include: trouble shooting, work plan review, and delivering gender messages. This information will help managers promote gender integration among their direct employees. All sessions will include a work plan to determine specific goals and follow-up strategies.

Strategic Intervention 2: Develop adaptable tools that promote gender awareness

Women in each community in the ZOI live with unique challenges and opportunities. MERCADO will design tools to help staff identify and analyze the gender gaps so they can facilitate whole-family participation catered to the needs of each individual community. The project will also promote tools to help staff monitor their progress in helping women access the five key resources. To promote sustainable gender integration, MERCADO will develop tools that allow field staff to identify the training needs of male and female clients, determine access and control of assets and income, and track progress against gender and GBV targets.

Standardized tools that generate and utilize data disaggregated by sex will allow MERCADO to assess the reality of women in target communities. M&E staff will have forms with questions that will disaggregate answers per sex and additional questions to determine empowerment of women in terms of their ability to make decisions. Through analysis of the information collected with specially-designed tools, the project will be able to facilitate gender-sensitive activities and promote staff awareness of issues that affect entire families. Becoming familiar with women's challenges and opportunities will allow staff members to approach planned activities with a gender focus.

Strategic Intervention 3: Manage information

MERCADO will efficiently generate and share information related to gender integration and the impact it has on reducing poverty among project clients to demonstrate the importance of women's participation in economic activities. To promote households' experiences, the project will:

- Develop case studies and snapshots of successful women in production, microenterprise, and health activities. Sharing successes motivates both staff and clients to continue to work for the same achievements gained by others.
- Develop case studies and snapshots that highlight men that have participated and led activities that are traditionally dominated by women, such as child and household nutrition activities.
- Include gender-specific information in quarterly reports to monitor progress.
- Conduct exchanges between clients to showcase successful women's experiences throughout the agricultural value chain and share lessons learned.

Successful information sharing and management will allow for follow-up and updates on opportunities and barriers women have in rural Honduras. It will lead to an ongoing dialogue on the state of gender equality in MERCADO communities, foster the development and replication of best practices in gender, and encourage further commitment to whole families on behalf of staff members and the communities. The three strategic interventions that comprise the operational plan will equip the team with the abilities to ensure women have access to the time, knowledge, assets and inputs, income, and decision-making power.

Table 2: MERCADO Operational Plan for Gender Integration

Objective	Actions	Timeline	Responsible
Strategic Intervention 1: Build staff capacity			
Foster gender support among management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct gender diagnostic Designate a gender specialist Organize management meeting to discuss GIS 	May-June 2015	Fintrac gender consultant, MERCADO management
Implement a Staff Capacity-Building Plan for Gender Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop plan Explain training to managers Conduct trainings 	July-August 2015 (trainings conducted through LOP)	MERCADO gender specialist, managers, personnel
Integrate gender and social perspectives into all personnel trainings at the field level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with INAM and SAG-DICTA and others Schedule topics and trainings 	September – October 2015 (themes incorporated into field meetings through LOP)	MERCADO gender specialist, managers, personnel
Hold regular informative meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create schedule and develop topics per department 	September 2015 (meetings held through LOP)	MERCADO gender specialist, managers, personnel
Strategic Intervention 2: Develop adaptable tools that promote gender awareness			
Promote tools that help the field team identify and track gender gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create tools Train staff on use of tools 	Tools implemented by September 2015 for use during LOP	MERCADO gender specialist, personnel
Strategic Intervention 3: Manage information			
Develop case studies and snapshots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify experiences Write case study Promote information 	One per quarter	MERCADO gender specialist, personnel, communications
Include gender-specific information in monthly reports and other regular updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaggregate data Write report 	All regular updates (monthlies, quarterlies, annuals, etc.) during LOP	MERCADO gender specialist, personnel, communications
Conduct exchanges between clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify cases Plan activities Organize logistics 	One per quarter	MERCADO gender specialist, personnel

The operational plan allows the project to track its progress and measure successes in gender. Ideally this plan will set timelines and priorities to implement trainings and develop and distribute tools and materials. The plan is a living document to be adjusted according to long, medium, and short-term needs of the project. It ensures the project's activities do not center only on identifying and describing gender relations, but also incentivize the team to include women in economic development activities to reduce poverty in client households.