

ENGAGING AND WORKING WITH MEN: PROGRAM INSIGHTS AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

INTRODUCTION

This technical brief presents guidance on the effective engagement of men in programming to achieve women's economic empowerment (WEE) and gender equality outcomes in the agricultural sector using a market systems approach. The brief establishes five key considerations for this engagement, drawing upon relevant literature and case studies from both within and outside the agricultural sector. The brief concludes with a list of useful resource materials for readers interested in investigating further. The brief is supported by The Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) project, which seeks to enhance USAID programs, projects, and activities focused on creating inclusive market systems.¹ The topic for the brief emerged from discussions with practitioners through the SEEP Network's Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEEWG).² Its audience is inclusive market systems development programs and practitioners.

RATIONALE

Engaging male community members in initiatives to advance gender equality and market viability is both an ethical imperative and a market imperative. Looking first at the ethics, we see significant evidence that failing to engage thoughtfully with men can lead to negative unintended consequences in agricultural initiatives, including co-option of women's resources, assets, and other program benefits, and even—in some cases—a measurable increase in domestic violence or sexual harassment and coercion experienced by program participants.³ Furthermore, choosing not to engage with men in WEE initiatives may continue an unfortunate trend whereby initiatives to advance gender equality require women and girls to make all the changes and do all the work or risk gender-based violence (GBV). Women and girls do play a role in perpetuating certain gender-related inequalities, yet many of these inequalities occur as a result of men's attitudes and actions. As such, unraveling these inequalities requires men to make meaningful changes – both in their own lives and across the systems they operate in. It is unlikely that men will make these changes if they are ignored in development programming. Leaving men and boys out of efforts to advance gender equality and WEE also underutilizes the potential positive influence of the many men who recognize the benefits of more inclusive and equal families, societies, and market systems.⁴

With a market lens, it is also essential to acknowledge that women and men exist in constant relation and interaction with one another; they do not live in sex-segregated vacuums. In many rural locations, it is the

¹ Leveraging Economic Opportunities website: <https://www.microlinks.org/activities/leveraging-economic-opportunities-leo>. 2016.

² The SEEP WEE working group aims to improve the ability of market systems and other economic development practitioners to facilitate inclusive, empowering and sustainable services to women across the globe. Working group members contributed case studies and research documents, and served as technical reviewers. WEEWG website: <http://www.seepnetwork.org/women-s-economic-empowerment--working-group-pages-20723.php>. 2016.

³ Barker, Gary and Jennifer Schulte. *Engaging Men as Allies in Women's Economic Empowerment: Strategies and Recommendations for CARE Country Offices*. CARE. 2010.

⁴ Heilman, Brian, Luciana Hebert, and Nastasia Paul-Gera. *The Making of Sexual Violence: How Does a Boy Grow Up to Commit Rape? Evidence from Five IMAGES Countries*. International Center for Research on Women. 2014. <http://menandboys.ids.ac.uk/files/making-sexual-violence-how-does-boy-grow-commit-rape-evidence-five-images-countries>.

household that functions as the relevant economic unit, requiring meaningful contributions from all family members regardless of gender. In these settings, engaging with only one gender stands upon a mistaken understanding of program participants' actual economic realities, and as a result, may have unanticipated negative implications on household economics and roles.

LEO WEE MARKET SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

LEO's framework for understanding WEE in inclusive markets rests on five key considerations, all relevant to engaging men and boys:

1. Enhanced access and agency are key indicators of empowerment.
2. Gendered rules are a key determinant of access and agency.
3. Rules influence and are influenced by multiple subsystems in market systems.
4. Noneconomic factors are important influencers of access and agency.
5. Combined effects of both structural transformation and bottom-up change interventions lead to sustained empowerment for women.

Source: Markel, Erin and Lindsey Jones. *Women's Economic Empowerment: Pushing the Frontiers of Inclusive Market Development*. USAID. 2015.

Additionally, evidence shows that when any value chain becomes more inclusive, it tends to show more sustainable growth, increased employment, flourishing entrepreneurship, and growing incomes in rural areas. These benefits are natural consequences of the addition of more creative, productive, collaborative forces in any market, and they accrue to individuals, to families, to communities, and to whole markets. Sometimes it is essential to take active steps to decrease men's unequal dominance of certain value chains or productive roles in order to improve the equality of income-earning opportunities among men, women, and other genders. This means addressing gender disparities in women's and men's control of resources, assets, and leadership roles within and across value chains.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This brief aims to advance the following objectives:

- To demonstrate the importance of engaging men in WEE and gender equality activities;
- To document and highlight promising approaches for engaging men in WEE activities, particularly at the market level and in the agricultural sector; and
- To establish guidance and share relevant tools and other resources, based on evidence and key considerations, which can increase the effectiveness of future initiatives to engage men in WEE and agricultural sector initiatives.

The methodology for preparing this brief included three main steps. We first conducted a literature review of tools, trainings, research reports, workbooks, journal articles, and other resources to establish key considerations of engaging men in gender equality, WEE, and agricultural initiatives. We then expanded the literature review to include initiative-specific documents, including those submitted by WEEWG members, to deepen the set of case studies included and further inform the key considerations. Third and finally, we conducted a series of discussions with practitioners/experts to vet and expand upon the main research findings.

FINDINGS

Our findings coalesce around the following five key considerations for more effective and ethical engagement of men in agricultural sector initiatives.

A. KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENGAGING MEN

1. **Help men identify and act as allies.** If we keep telling men that they are obstacles to gender equality, they will be more likely to remain as obstacles. However, if we start telling and showing them that they have powerful roles to play as allies, they will embrace this self-fulfilling prophecy just as eagerly. In situations where men wield inequitable power or financial resources, use violence, perpetuate regressive social norms, and exhibit other harmful behaviors, men can be crucial obstacles. However, implementers of WEE and agricultural sector initiatives gain little by taking the stance—and broadcasting to communities and market actors—that men have no positive role to play in WEE efforts. Instead, programmers should question their own blanket assumptions about what men believe, and harness the power of self-fulfilling prophecies by including positive images of men in any campaign materials or handouts. Using empowering, open-ended aspirational messaging and appreciative inquiry techniques will help men—whether as employees, employers, traders, association members, leaders, regulators, agro-dealers, or otherwise—identify as allies and envision positive ways to promote market viability, gender equality, and community well-being in their lives.⁵

Case Study: Cascading Training in Afghanistan

Women for Women International’s (WfWI) Men’s Engagement Programme (MEP) in Afghanistan uses a cascading training model where influential male community leaders and religious leaders complete a three-month training program prior to facilitating their own ongoing discussion groups with groups of men. Themes of the program include women’s property and inheritance rights among other financial elements but also address women’s broader human rights. Rather than taking the viewpoint that Islam—and male religious leaders—are necessarily obstacles to women’s greater economic empowerment, the MEP curriculum centers Islam and verses from the Qur’an to support women’s rights. This powerful step is a core component of the program’s effectiveness, according to WfWI. “The influence of Islam and religious leaders in changing attitudes and behavior toward women in Afghan villages cannot be underestimated,” report authors write.^{6,7}

2. **Address gender directly.** Men, like women, are gendered. The behaviors, expectations, attitudes and presumptions they carry are gendered, as are those carried by members of all genders. Initiatives will be far less likely to succeed in shifting harmful gender norms and rules if they do not work directly to transform male participants’ understanding and definition of what it means to be a man, providing clear, empowering pathways toward healthier, less violent, more cooperative definitions. The days of associating “gender” exclusively with women and girls are fading into the past. Programmers and policymakers increasingly recognize the urgency and necessity of involving men, boys and members of other genders in initiatives to achieve gender equality. But even amid this helpful trend, not enough “gender equality” initiatives actually address *gender* directly. Evidence also shows that it is not enough to simply be *aware* of gender—programs must address it directly. An influential meta-evaluation of 58 programs to engage men and boys in health and gender equality initiatives found that “programmes with men and boys that include deliberate discussions of gender and masculinity and clear efforts to transform such gender norms seemed to be more effective than

⁵ Namy, Sophie, et al. “Changing What It Means to ‘become a Man’: Participants’ Reflections on a School-Based Programme to Redefine Masculinity in the Balkans,” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 17, no. sup2 (October 16, 2015): 206–22, doi:10.1080/13691058.2015.1070434.

⁶ *Engaging Men as Allies to Promote Women’s Empowerment in Afghanistan*, WfWI Afghanistan Policy Brief. Women for Women International. 2016.

⁷ *Afghanistan Learning Brief: Engaging Men as Allies to Promote Women’s Empowerment*. Women for Women International. 2016.

programmes that merely acknowledge or mention gender norms and roles.”⁸ Being “gender transformative” is particularly essential for financial sector initiatives because of the ubiquitous, strongly held norms linking “manhood” with financial provision or “breadwinning.”

Case Study: Group Education for Men in Rwanda

The “Journeys of Transformation” initiative in Rwanda, coordinated by the Rwanda Men’s Resource Center (RWAMREC), CARE International-Rwanda, and Promundo-US, includes a group education curriculum for men whose wives participate in CARE’s VSL groups. The 17 activities in the group training curriculum (available online and included as a key resource below) tackle gender norms directly, in addition to imparting business management and negotiation skills, discussing couples’ decision-making processes, and addressing topics of health, sexuality, and gender-based violence. The workshop sessions were informed by thorough formative research, which found that “traditional gender norms dominate the way VSL benefits are used: the women are instructed by their husbands about the use of loans...with the majority of household financial decisions made by men.”⁹ Because these traditional norms are so essential to inequitable household dynamics, including household finances, the group sessions take them on directly.

Case Study: Masculinity Workshops in Honduras

Feed the Future’s “ACCESS to Markets” initiative in Honduras recently facilitated a “masculinity workshop series,” using a curriculum focused on: social norms for men and women, the division of household responsibilities, gender stereotypes, gender inequality, male role models, consequences of *machismo* and how men can contribute to gender equality. As one participant, a producer, shared, “[I learned] to recognize that I have provoked bad situations in my home. [I want] to not look for someone to blame, but to look for solutions.”¹⁰

- 3. Work through cooperation, not only through isolation.** Rather than—or in addition to—separating men’s and women’s groups to pursue gender equality objectives in isolation from one another, consider asking market participants of all genders, ages, and roles to come together and address shared issues as a creative collective. It is important not to conflate “engaging men and boys” with “working with men and boys *separately* or *alone*.” Separating groups/initiatives based on sex is sometimes essential, to be sure, especially when emerging from a desire to maintain safe space for members of a particular sex to discuss sensitive topics (see Key Consideration 5 below). At the same time, *only* working through single-sex groups can, if not done thoughtfully, introduce or exacerbate unnecessary distances and differences between the sexes. By contrast, some of the most compelling recent initiatives that have drastically shifted gender norms have done so by interacting with—and empowering—whole communities to direct their own process of gender norm change.^{11,12}

⁸ *Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health: Evidence from Programme Interventions*. World Health Organization. 2007. http://www.who.int/gender/documents/Engaging_men_boys.pdf.

⁹ *Journeys of Transformation: A Training Manual for Engaging Men as Allies in Women’s Economic Empowerment*. CARE International - Rwanda and Promundo-US. 2012. <http://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Journeys-of-Transformation.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Enlisting Men to Empower Women*. Fintrac Inc. 2016.

¹¹ Abramsky, Tanya, et al. “Findings from the SASA! Study: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial to Assess the Impact of a Community Mobilization Intervention to Prevent Violence against Women and Reduce HIV Risk in Kampala, Uganda,” *BMC Medicine* 12, no. 1 (July 31, 2014): 122, doi:10.1186/s12916-014-0122-5.

¹² Kyegombe, Nambusi, et al. “The Impact of SASA!, a Community Mobilization Intervention, on Reported HIV-Related Risk Behaviours and Relationship Dynamics in Kampala, Uganda,” *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 17, no. 1 (November 5, 2014), doi:10.7448/IAS.17.1.19232.

In a very real way, a “gender-synchronized approach” more closely mirrors the open, inclusive markets WEE initiatives seek to advance.¹³ Depending on the particular setting and goal of any initiative, programmers may decide to start by engaging women and men separately *or* by engaging the community as a whole. Where a certain gender-related issue affects all members of a market, for instance, a program team shouldn’t arbitrarily separate male and female market participants in order to effectively “engage men and boys.” Rather, they could work to facilitate connections and collaborations across the value chain as a whole. On the other hand, in a setting where producer associations are already divided on gendered lines, an initiative might begin by addressing men’s and women’s associations separately, but then plan to align these activities thoughtfully over the course of the initiative.

Case Study: Integrated Agriculture Activities in Nepal

Feed the Future’s “Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition” (KISAN) project, a collaboration with the Government of Nepal, seeks to improve food security and increase incomes through integrated agriculture activities in rural Nepal. The initiative has proven successful at boosting individual entrepreneurs’ connections across their communities, with meaningful WEE outcomes. One KISAN “success story” presents the initiative’s effort to expand one female agrovet’s connections across her marketplace. Rather than *seclude* female program participants, the initiative made deliberate efforts to strengthen this agrovet’s *connections* with: fellow agroverts who share knowledge with her; wholesalers who sell her quality products; sub-agents who sell the supplies she stocks; and nearby farmer’s groups who now rely on her technical expertise in seed varieties, sowing times, and other valuable technical areas. By facilitating connections and collaborations across these market roles without any restrictions based on gender identity, the initiative was able to significantly boost the viability of this participant’s agrovet business and family livelihood. Simultaneously and reciprocally, these male agroverts, wholesalers, subagents, and farmers benefit from access to this technical expert and her business as well.¹⁴

- 4. Amplify the influence of role models.** A relatable, influential messenger can make all the difference in nudging men into new ways of thinking and acting. Social science research shows that it is difficult for many people to embrace new ways of thinking, believing, and being—especially related to such deeply felt themes as gender, livelihood, work, and family—if they cannot see people they trust embracing the same changes. For this reason, many successful initiatives to engage men and boys in gender equality initiatives attempt to embrace and amplify the influence of male role models. Male role models in market systems can take many forms, but program designs tend to incorporate one or another of two distinct styles: the **peer educator** (a rank-and-file member of a producer association, for instance, who embraces more equitable family financial arrangements and unabashedly shares his positive experiences with his colleagues) and the **gender equality champion** (a high profile regulator, employer, or chief of a traders’ association, for instance, who uses his platform and authority to emphasize gender equality principles to his constituents and support base). These messengers can also assist program teams dramatically by devising more locally salient ways of communicating gender equality objectives and ideas. Gender equality messages are likely to resonate much more powerfully with traders, association members, regulators, agro-dealers, and other male market participants when they are adapted for their specific reality *by someone relatable within that reality*.

¹³ Greene, Margaret E. and Andrew Leveck. *Synchronizing Gender Strategies: A Cooperative Model for Improving Reproductive Health and Transforming Gender Relations*. Population Reference Bureau. 2010. https://www.engenderhealth.org/files/pubs/gender/synchronizing_gender_strategies.pdf.

¹⁴ Case study shared in private correspondence between Winrock International and Banyan Global, August 15, 2016.

Case Study: Gender Animation Trainings for Farmers in Mozambique

As part of the USAID/Southern Africa Trade Hub, Banyan Global collaborated with local NGO, HOPEM, to conduct 3-day “gender animation” trainings for lead farmers of smallholder farmer groups in Mozambique. Lead farmers, almost entirely male, had found prior trainings on gender and agriculture useful and specifically requested additional trainings. The gender animation trainings went beyond promoting an understanding of gender issues to equip lead farmers with knowledge, skills, and resources to promote gender equality with other farmers in their smallholder groups and within their communities more broadly. Training participants had been invited to initial trainings precisely because of the high level of respect and influence they wielded in their workplaces, associations, and communities. They are perfect examples of potential “gender equality champions,” and as such, the design of the training initiative embodies Key Consideration 4 due to the ongoing influence these role models will have on their wider networks after the training.

5. **Do no harm.** Considerations of potential harm or unintended negative consequences are essential for any initiative that attempts to introduce changes into sensitive areas such as market systems, family finances, and intimate partnerships. Engagement of men and boys in market-based initiatives to boost WEE and gender equality should be thoughtfully designed and implemented to minimize harm in two important, complementary ways. First, failing to engage men and boys thoughtfully in WEE programming can itself be harmful, as evidence has shown. For example, there are numerous examples of men co-opting income-earning roles in traditionally women’s oriented value chains that had been strengthened by WEE initiatives that failed to account for this risk. Second, and equally crucial, any effort to involve men more thoroughly in initiatives that purport to help women must *only* take place with local women’s guidance, support, leadership, and safety considerations fundamentally prioritized. If women in your community, market, neighborhood, or initiative don’t feel safe involving, for instance, the male-dominated traders’ union, then it would be reckless and dangerous to forge forward simply because you’ve been told to “engage men and boys.” It is absolutely essential that women maintain the central autonomy for determining their own safety; without women’s affirmative interest in bringing men and boys into market-sector initiatives to advance gender equality and WEE, all of the other key considerations in this document are moot.

Case Study: Male Outreach in the Dairy Value Chain in Pakistan

MEDA’s work with women producers in the dairy value chain in Pakistan involved outreach to predominantly male “doodhis,” an influential group who provides loans to women producers during the lean season and negotiate the sale and distribution of milk from producers to milk factories. In one location where the doodhis expressed public suspicion of MEDA’s work with women producers, MEDA staff held a series of meetings with them to discuss the relevant activities and how a safer, more equitable market would stand to benefit the doodhis as well. In the end, although the doodhis didn’t *join* the project, these conversations led to mutual understanding between MEDA and this powerful group, and the doodhis stopped their prior practice of warning women producers not to participate in MEDA’s program. These conversations point to a helpful awareness of safety risks coming to women participants among MEDA staff.¹⁵

¹⁵ Case study shared in private correspondence between MEDA and Banyan Global, August 4, 2016.

Case Study: Identifying and Addressing Risks in Kenya

A 2012 study of banana production in Kenya found that initiatives to establish and expand farmers' groups, though well intentioned, had the unintended result of facilitating men's takeover of what had traditionally been a "women's crop."¹⁶ The authors of this particular study conclude that, owing to this risk, it would be advantageous to limit participation in these farmers' groups to women specifically, though these types of decisions would necessarily fluctuate from crop to crop and setting to setting.

B. KEY CONSIDERATIONS MOVING FORWARD

While the brief has drawn upon relevant case studies of best practices for engaging men and boys in the agricultural sector, it is essential to note that there are very few long-term or comprehensive initiatives to effectively involve men and boys in agricultural WEE. Most of the initiatives that do exist tend to be short-term and not evaluated for their relevance or effectiveness. In order to continue building the knowledge base and advancing these essential outcomes, there is a need for longer-term and comprehensive initiatives to engage men and boys in WEE, gender equality and agricultural-sector work. These efforts should be gender-synchronized, context-specific, rigorously evaluated, and in line with the considerations established herein.

CONCLUSION

This technical brief presented guidance on the effective engagement of men to achieve WEE and gender equality outcomes in the agricultural sector and using a market systems approach. The main findings establish five key considerations for the effective engagement of men and boys in this work:

1. *Help men identify and act as allies*
2. *Address gender directly*
3. *Work through cooperation, not only through isolation*
4. *Amplify the influence of role models*
5. *Do no harm*

KEY RESOURCES

Resources specifically focused on agricultural, market-level, and/or economic empowerment insights and initiatives:

"Journeys of Transformation" Training Manual, Promundo/Rwamrec

<http://promundoglobal.org/resources/journeys-of-transformation-a-training-manual-for-engaging-men-as-allies-in-womens-economic-empowerment/>

"Engaging Men as Allies in Women's Economic Empowerment: Strategies and Recommendations for CARE Country Offices." International Center for Research on Women. <http://bit.ly/28LUOJZ>

"Working with Men and Boys to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Approaches, Challenges, and Lessons | Sector Brief: Economic Growth, Trade, and Agriculture," USAID
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/Sector-1-Econ_MenandBoys.pdf

Practical guidance, workbooks, and resources from other sectors whose insights can readily be adapted:

"Synchronizing Gender Strategies: A Cooperative Model for Improving Reproductive Health and Transforming Gender Relations," EngenderHealth
https://www.engenderhealth.org/files/pubs/gender/synchronizing_gender_strategies.pdf

¹⁶ Fischer, Elisabeth and Matin Qaim, "Gender, Agricultural Commercialization, and Collective Action in Kenya," *Food Security* 4, no. 3 (July 18, 2012): 441–53, doi:10.1007/s12571-012-0199-7.

“Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequity in health: Evidence from programme interventions,” World Health Organization

http://www.who.int/gender/documents/Engaging_men_boys.pdf

“Program HMD: A Toolkit For Action,” Promundo <http://promundoglobal.org/resources/program-hmd-a-toolkit-for-action/>

Selections from November 2015 special issue of the journal “Culture, Health, and Sexuality” on the theme “Beyond Working with Men and Boys,” including this article co-written the technical brief lead author:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13691058.2015.1070434>

“Mobilizing Communities To Prevent Domestic Violence: A Resource Guide for Organizations in East and Southern Africa,” Raising Voices <http://raisingvoices.org/innovation/creating-methodologies/mobilizing-communities/>

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