USAID Women’s Economic Empowerment and Equality (WE3) South/Southeast Asia Workshop Highlights: Bangkok, Thailand– December 2016

“Why are we so keen to create women leaders for patriarchal systems? Maybe we need new definitions of leadership and new systems.” – Workshop Participant

Background
On 7-9 December 2016, the USAID GenDev Office hosted the USAID Women’s Economic Empowerment and Equality (WE3) Multi-Stakeholder Asia Regional Workshop at the Plaza Athénée Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. The purpose of the workshop was to craft a collective vision and map out tangible, joint steps to increase women’s economic empowerment and equality in Asia. It brought together diverse WE3 and development experts from all over Asia, including USAID staff, regional leaders, women’s networks, businesswomen, implementing partners, and the private sector. The Self-Employed Women’s Association of India (SEWA), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and the Asia Foundation contributed to the organization and implementation of the event. This was the second in a series of Whole-System-in-the-Room (WSR) Workshops. The first was held in Washington D.C. in March 2016; the third will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa on 10-12 April 2017.

The USAID WE3 Asia Regional Workshop began with a half-day Asia Regional Women’s Caucus to provide participants with the opportunity to learn more about USAID’s new initiatives in women’s economic empowerment and equality, and to gain practical information on working with USAID. With assistance from the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) of India, the Caucus brought together 35 leaders from Bangladesh, Thailand, Myanmar, Pakistan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Nepal.

The full workshop began the following day with more than 90 participants from the region. Through panels, participants examined perspectives from women working on grassroots issues, promising practices in workforce development, and views on linking women more effectively into supply and value chains.

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1 The Asia Regional WE3 Workshop was part of an activity funded by USAID’s Office of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GenDev) through a buy-in to the Feed the Future Catalyzing Partnerships for Scale project. FHI 360 has been implementing this activity since 2015 and has assisted USAID with the research and development of USAID’s Framework to Promote Women’s Economic Empowerment and Equality (WE3).
There was also an interactive group mapping exercise that explored WE3 in terms of the past and present, and identified present barriers to future goals. The final day began with a look at risk mitigation in WE3, followed by breakout groups to discuss how best to use the WE3 framework for better programs and collaboration to promote WE3 across different sectors. Through these and other sessions, participants were able to provide recommendations and identify priorities.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

In much of Asia, businesses are recognizing the bottom-line benefits of having more women in leadership roles, including on boards and in management. To achieve this, several issues must be addressed.

- Upgrade work environments for better work-life balance (such as parental leave, breast-feeding policies, and flexible scheduling) and provide women with advancement opportunities under harassment-free policies.
- Develop talent pipelines and pathways for women and girls in “non-traditional” and high demand specialties.
- Provide education in the hard and soft skills needed to make information technology (IT) more accessible for girls, by focusing on social as well as technical aspects of coding.
- Require organizations that receive funding or assistance to have anti-harassment policies in place.

**SUPPLY CHAIN LINKAGES PRIORITIES**

When women connect to domestic and regional value chains, they increase overall returns and their own empowerment.

- Demonstrate the value-added opportunities for women beyond just production and sales to include the full range of value-added services, such as packaging, advertising, marketing, and even logistics. Demonstration helps to build confidence.
- When working with value chains, ensure that women are linked into market networks, for example, link women agro input dealers with registered networks.
- Base project assistance on solid assessments of market supply and demand, such as regional economic growth projections, and avoid over-emphasis on traditional markets, such as handicrafts, that may be oversaturated.

**Goal:** By 2020, Increase the number of women-owned companies in S/SE Asia producing green products for cross-border trade and using renewable energy sources across value chain by 20%

- Invest in green finance to support women-owned companies that produce green products
- Increase government procurement of women-led green products
- Raise awareness of affordable, accessible technology for women in green value chains
- Give incentive grants to women-led businesses and value-chain actors for use of renewable energy
- Enact SBCC and marketing plans in S/SE Asia to promote women-owned green business/value chains

**Building Women’s Jobs**

The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) of India found an effective solution to help a women’s construction cooperative access higher paying construction jobs traditionally reserved for men. They created a skill database, performed a job market assessment, and matched available and needed skill sets. They then enrolled women into masonry schools and helped them get certified. It took time for companies to accept a new fleet of women masons. Yet, the women were persistent. They presented their skills free of charge at first, to show they could accomplish complex tasks. Then, after landing a few contracts, they began to build a strong reputation. They now have over 800 skilled, trusted women masons who make 15k rupees a month, 7 ½ times more than their previous salaries.
TECHNOLOGY PRIORITIES
Technology can lower costs and increase market access for women entrepreneurs, if they have appropriate access to technology that meets their needs.

- Use human-centered design to create or adjust products to ensure they address women’s needs
- Before promoting or investing in technology, conduct a gender assessment
- Continue to support development and expansion of digital financial services (DFS)
- Recognize the knowledge gap for women in many countries and provide awareness and literacy training to reduce the gap
- Establish and hire women and girls as trainers in technology as role models
- Create and expand WE3 knowledge portals for youth (e.g., Making Cents library)

Goal: By 2020, 10,000 more women and girls will have connectivity and use smart technology to support WE3

- Conduct market analyses to determine what technologies women and girls demand, along with the existing supply of digital services and assets
- Strengthen and scale up technology training capacity for women and girls
  - Design tech training curriculums for women and girls that can be mass distributed
  - Map training institutions and facilitators
  - Facilitate job market linkages for trained women

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES
Women already lead in multiple walks of life, despite constraints. With assistance in removing constraints, they can be even more effective.

- Design capacity-building projects with specific cultural gender norms in mind
- Identify opportunities and set targets to promote women’s decision-making opportunities and leadership positions
- Target women entrepreneurs with comprehensive leadership development (technical assistance, mentoring, training, coaching, networking, exposure trips, peer support, finance)
- Invest in higher cost, more effective training, even if it means fewer total participants: effective training may cost more in the short run, but insufficient training costs more over time
- Invest in women leaders as trainers and mentors

Goal: By 2030, significant increase in S/SE Asia of women in leadership as agricultural producers and processors

- Define ag leadership for women, with indicators
- Map and profile women in ag leadership positions
- Expand use of gender analysis in value chains to identify and reduce barriers to women’s leadership
- Promote women’s access to and control of ag technology

Nursing New Markets
72% of Pakistanis live in rural areas, with 79% of women in those areas being involved in agriculture and husbandry. Through the USAID Pakistan Dairy Project, 7,000 women now work as livestock extension workers. Through a series of community, household and cluster meetings, both technical and leadership skills trainings, exams, practicums, field visits, and household, community and national sensitizations, a significant number of Pakistani women are now providing livestock services to their villages and feeling more empowered. It has also helped to convert a non-existent market to a commercial market, reduce costs, and increase both production and overall revenues.
• Make stories, practices and training available in local languages, both on line and in print
• Recognize regional opportunities for women’s agriculture roundtables
• Work with large membership groups to design outreach and capacity building for women

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Maximize WE3 Opportunities

• Engage men to accept and promote WE3, partnering with successful organizations such as MenEngage Alliance for community sensitization, men’s support groups, male champions, and other effective programs
• Work with USAID leadership to
  o orient and train USAID staff, especially regional Missions, on the WE3 Framework and how WE3 advances development objectives
  o integrate WE3 into the CDCS process
  o partner with the Global Development Lab to pilot WE3 innovations
  o engage Implementing Partners to build a local team of WE3 Champions
  o create incentives for integrating WE3 into projects
  o set and monitor budgetary targets for gender-related programming
  o incorporate WE3 into procurement by requiring bidders to address specific gender concerns in implementation, such as engaging men, adapting training for women’s needs, reducing GBV
• Highlight WE3 successes in the region through a series of WE3 Regional Case Studies
• Create WE3 regional learning exchanges through ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Coordination), YSEALI (Young Southeast Asia Leaders Initiative) and IVLP (International Visitor Leadership Program)
• Support existing regional networks, including World Bank sponsored Asia Women’s Economic Empowerment Network and ASEAN Women’s Entrepreneurship Network (AWEP)
• Engage with proven organizations such as Entrepreneurial Professional Women, BPW International, International Federation of Women, SEWA, Zonta, Seraptimist
• Leverage complementary programs
  o Embed WE3 into Let Girls Learn and Work Force Development
  o Connect gender analyses and environmental assessments
  o Collaborate on WE3 data collection and risk analysis with the Development Credit Authority and private sector partners
  o Build WE3 partnerships with local, regional, and international women’s organizations
  o Incorporate WE3 to meet SDG commitments with government and the private sector
• Produce research on and take stock of illustrative WE3 Framework indicators across 5 WE3 domains
• Translate the WE3 Framework into local languages, so that local organizations can engage
• Match gender analyses to the specific target populations, such as rural/urban, age and ethnic divides, not aggregate, general findings

Create Implementing Partner (IP) Guides, Resources and Capacity Building

• Design guides and resources
  o Integrate WE3 across sectors (e.g., health)
  o For IPs, create workshops and guides on How to Partner with USAID, and How to Partner with Women’s Organizations
• Link the WE3 Framework to the Program Cycle
• Develop case studies of promising WE3 practices and lessons learned
• Create illustrative results frameworks at activity/project level demonstrating integration of WE3
• Hold a Global Women’s Entrepreneurship Summit

Mitigate Risks

• Incorporate strong risk assessment into gender analyses, then integrate mitigation strategy into design
• Take a comprehensive approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence
  o Be prepared in advance to respond to gender-based violence in the community
  o Fund and partner with women’s organizations
  o Build skill sets for women/girls to protect themselves and know when and where to seek help
  o Work with men and boys to discuss and reduce violence
  o Plan for community-level awareness building with both women and men
  o Look at structured programs like SASA or Stepping Stones for program design guidance
• Design and implement assistance to enable safe, legal, documented migration of females
• Incorporate gender analyses and women participants into national disaster policies and plans

December 2016 USAID WE3 Bangkok Workshop Resources Folder: http://bit.ly/2IUgLx6

• PowerPoint presentations from the workshop
• Workshop agenda
• List of participants with contact information