



SEEP Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group Promising Approaches: What is Working?

Measuring Gender Inclusivity of Businesses – *Lindsey Jones-Renaud, Value for Women*

The Gender Diagnostic Toolkit for Inclusive Businesses is a resource that allows organizations to assess their value chain and operations from a gender perspective. Engineered by Value for Women, the user-friendly tool allows for businesses to track improvements in gender inclusion through the adoption of new policies, systems and practices. The tool reveals gender imbalances and gaps at various levels of a business, including human capital, productivity management and market. The assessments provide an opportunity for businesses to learn about and adopt strategies to produce organizational change that will lead to greater gender balance and women's participation. In this session, Lindsey Jones-Renaud will describe how the tool has been working in our current pilot with 15 small and growing businesses in the Mexican agriculture sector, as part of a program funded by the Wal-Mart Foundation and implemented by the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs and Value for Women. Participants will engage in a discussion on how their organizations or partners can use the Toolkit to measure and advance gender inclusion.

Strengthening Organizational Capacity, Measurement and Learning to Promote Women's Economic Empowerment: The Minimum Standards for Gender Mainstreaming – *Jenn Williamson, ACDI/VOCA*

The Minimum Standards for Gender Equality Mainstreaming is an accessible and practical resource for organizations and programs to effectively collaborate with and meet the needs of people of all genders and ages. The Minimum Standards recommend key entry points for effective gender mainstreaming in organizations and programs, offering different pathways for a wide variety of organizations, from donors to NGOs, to mainstream gender and implement programs that are, at a minimum, gender-sensitive and ultimately, gender transformative. Members of the Gender Practitioners Collaborative (GPC), an informal group of U.S.-based gender advisors and technical experts will present the Minimum Standards and offer examples of how it can – and has been – applied to standalone WEE projects and support the WEE components of sectoral programs. Participants will be invited to engage in a discussion on how to implement the Standards as well as the interrelationship between the Standards, particularly those focused on monitoring, evaluation, learning, and adaptation.

Female Agents and the Financial Inclusion Gender Gap – *Jenifer Shapiro, MicroSave & Lauren Hendricks, Grameen Foundation*

Banking and mobile money agents can play a critical role in reaching women, particularly poor rural women, with access to financial services. Recent research indicates that access to female agents can make it easier for first-time women customers to adapt to more formal financial channels. While there are clear opportunities for providers to engage and include more women as agents, women also face significant barriers to becoming an agent. In this session Jenifer Shapiro from MicroSave will share findings from recent field studies that reveal that customer experience does vary, depending on whether the agent is a male or a female. She will share key insights on how gender can impact the customer experience. Lauren Hendricks from Grameen Foundation will then discuss their Community Agent Network (CAN) program in the Philippines, in which 75% of all agents recruited as digital payment agents are women, and the unique challenges that women face to become successful agents.

Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) Framework for Business Growth & Impact – *Majid Mirza, MEDA Canada*

There is growing global investor demand to direct investment capital towards enhancing the lives of women and girls while also delivering financial returns. Gender lens investing, a field that stands on the shoulders of



microfinance and impact investing, capitalizes on the mounting evidence from McKinsey, Investing in Women, USAID and others demonstrating the economic value that can be unlocked through empowering women. With a 65-year history in commercial impact investing, MEDA is an active participant and leader in the gender lens investing field. In 2018, MEDA tested and launched the Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) Framework, a practical toolkit for assessing gender equality, and identifying, implementing and measuring gender equality mainstreaming strategies within companies. Designed for organizations seeking financial and impact returns through investing or providing support to companies, the manual is applicable to a wide range of investors (e.g. private equity funds, government donors, foundations) and capacity builders (e.g. accelerators, technical assistance providers, NGOs). The ultimate aim of the framework is to transform companies to be more gender equitable while supporting business growth and impact. This session, conducted by Majid Mirza, Senior Project Manager, Global Programs at MEDA, will provide an overview of the GEM Framework and discuss lessons learned and case studies from piloting the framework with private equity funds and companies in South and Southeast Asia.

Opportunities in Tech Entrepreneurship for Cambodian Women and Girls - DAI – *Adam Fivenson, DAI*

Among the key barriers to women’s economic empowerment in Cambodia are a lack of female role models and mentors, and cultural expectations that steer girls toward more traditional roles. USAID Development Innovations (DI) addresses these barriers in two ways. 1) Collaboration with SHE, a local social enterprise that equips female entrepreneurs with practical business skills. SHE runs incubation and acceleration programs for women, facilitated by experienced mentors. Graduates of have reported increased monthly revenues, on average, of 155% percent; and one-third of participant businesses have doubled their monthly revenue. 2) DI also launched the Technovation program in Cambodia, which has helped more than 400 girls in Cambodia build businesses and apps to solve problems in their communities (since 2014). In 2017, from a pool of 1,110 teams around the world, a group of Cambodian girls—all 11 and 12-years-old—was chosen as a finalist and traveled to Silicon Valley to pitch their product. In addition to lessons learned and best practices from these two programs, this session will focus on the following key questions: How can we compare the experience of Development Innovations to other WEE programs elsewhere? Is technology creating or breaking down barriers to WEE and how? How can we effectively engage men in the drive for WEE?

Is ‘it’ gender enough? Why measuring agency is critical to program success - *Samira Saif and Maryam Piracha, Market Development Facility (MDF)*

How can we know if a program is ‘doing’ gender ‘enough’? To what extent does increasing household income mean that women are empowered? How do household dynamics affect the ability of women to make decisions and what does decision-making mean? Is it just about economic activity or beyond that? If a project impacts one of those components, is that meaningful? Empowerment has often been simplified to mean whether women have “money in their hands.” Is that that a simple relationship? In an effort to look out for economic empowerment, do we understate the importance of well-being and satisfaction? Agency is multi-dimensional and complex yet there is an inclination to make simplistic assumptions about household income on women’s agency. In this session, Samira Saif and Maryam Piracha will present the findings from a recent critical analysis of agency in economic programming that dives deeper into these questions and assumptions and share a conceptual framework that was used to conduct the analysis. Participants will be encouraged to consider the “missing middle” – where women play multiple support or invisible roles and the different ways in which program activities can have positive outcomes for women – and look at examples of how these have played out in a range of contexts in Asia Pacific. Finally, the group will be encouraged to evaluate how understanding these better will lead to better program interventions and program success.