

Arab Women's Enterprise Fund (AWEF) & the SEEP Network Women's Economic Empowerment in Market Systems Learning Series

Background

Funded by the U.K. Department for International Development and working in Jordan, Egypt, and Palestine, the Arab Women's Enterprise Fund (AWEF) stimulates increased women's economic empowerment through a market systems approach. As part of its learning and knowledge management strategy, AWEF has partnered with the SEEP Network (SEEP) to conduct a two-year learning series on women's economic empowerment (WEE) in market systems development (MSD). The series consists of quarterly webinars and practitioner learning briefs, with the purpose of catalysing discussion and engagement on the topic and sharing current initiatives, good practices and lessons amongst and between donors and practitioners in WEE in MSD.

Webinar 1: Women's Economic Empowerment: Practical Tools for Gender-responsive Poverty Measurement

Date: March 6, 2018

Speakers:

Rachel Wells, a PPI Data Analyst with IPA

Sharon Bessell, Professor of Public Policy and Director of Gender Equity and Diversity, Australian National University, and the Lead on the Individual Deprivation Measure

Erin Markel, Principal Consultant at MarketShare Associates and technical adviser for the Arab Women's Enterprise (AWEF) project

Moderator:

Yomna Mustafa, Egypt Country Director with the Arab Women's Enterprise Fund

[Webinar Recording](#)

Summary of the Webinar

Measuring changes in poverty and empowerment is complex. Across many market systems development programmes, a monetary approach is often used to define and measure poverty. This is not unusual, given that monetary definitions and measures of poverty are the most tested and recognized. However in recent years a number of alternative poverty measurement tools have emerged that aim to capture the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty and intra-household dynamics. This topic was addressed in a recent webinar entitled "Women's Economic Empowerment: Practical Tools for Gender-responsive Poverty Measurement", the first event in a two-year learning series "In Practice: Women's Economic Empowerment in Market System" co-organised by the SEEP Network, and DFID-funded Arab Women's Enterprise Fund (AWEF), implemented by DAI Europe and MarketShare Associates. This webinar explored three poverty measurement tools – the Poverty Probability Index (PPI) developed by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), the Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) developed by the Australian National University and the Disadvantage Assessment developed by the

DFID-funded Arab Women's Enterprise Fund (AWEF). The webinar presenters included Rachel Wells, a PPI Data Analyst with IPA, Sharon Bessell, Professor of Public Policy and Director of Gender Equity and Diversity at the Australian National University and Erin Markel, a Principal Consultant at MarketShare Associates. The panel was moderated by Yomna Mustafa, Egypt Country Director for AWEF. The panel explored the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and discussed the practical implications for practitioners.

Rachel Wells from Innovations for Poverty Action introduced the [Poverty Probability Index \(PPI\)](#), a lean poverty measurement data tool that is statistically rigorous and easily administered through a 10-question survey derived from national income and expenditures surveys. A scoring system allows administrators of the survey to gauge the likelihood that the respondent is living under the international or national poverty line. The tool is free for anyone to use and available for 60 countries, covering 90% of the world's poor. While the PPI has become a global standard for simple poverty measurement, it currently doesn't capture intra-household dynamics and non-monetary aspects of poverty. One solution to this is to tailor the tool and use the same statistical methodology that's been used to develop the PPI to determine and add additional questions that correlate strongly with women's empowerment indicators. The PPI team is also currently working on developing a tool that will engage the same methodology to measure multidimensional poverty, based on the multidimensional poverty index (MPI). IPA also recommends using the PPI in conjunction with other metrics, examples of which were provided by the other two presenters.

Sharon Bessell from the Australian National University presented the [Individual Deprivation Measure \(IDM\)](#), which is a new gender-sensitive measure of multidimensional poverty. Sharon explained that many mainstream poverty measurement tools are not sensitive to gender or how poverty dynamics play out within households. The IDM, developed by Australian National University, in partnership with the International Women's Development Agency and funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, aims to address this problem by allowing practitioners to measure and understand the more complex dimensions of gendered poverty. The tool is gender-sensitive and captures material and non-material aspects of poverty at individual level across 15 different dimensions, such as education, employment, political power and control over decision-making. The 15 dimensions and accompanying indicators were identified based on participatory research with over 2000 women and men across 6 countries. The tool is particularly effective for revealing how different characteristics such as gender, age, geographic location and disability shape poverty. It's also intersectional and able to show how various dimensions of poverty interact with each other for people, illuminating the compounding effects of multiple deprivations. The IDM can also be used for measurement of progress towards several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that relate to gender, as it aligns with a quarter of the SDG indicators, many of which still don't have established methodologies for collecting data.

Erin Markel, Technical Adviser to AWEF and Principal Consultant with MarketShare Associates, showcased the [Disadvantage Assessment](#), a tool that was developed by the AWEF team and draws inspiration from both the PPI and the IDM. Because AWEF is a

market systems development (MSD) programme, accurate poverty measurement is critical to ensuring that the intended beneficiaries of the programme are correctly identified and reached. In addition to material measures of poverty, AWEF also measures other aspects of empowerment such as voice and agency at both individual and household levels. AWEF therefore needed to develop a tool that captured multidimensional aspects of poverty, identified women as the primary unit of analysis, was developed using a participatory approach responsive to the socio-cultural and religious context within which AWEF interventions operate, and was quick and easy to apply.

The process for development of AWEF's Disadvantage Assessment was highly participatory and makes the tool unique. For example, the AWEF team developed the initial list of dimensions of women's disadvantage and poverty that the tool would measure, but the list was further refined and the dimensions prioritised and defined through focus group discussions (FGDs) with potential beneficiaries of the programme. Each focus group represented different market subsectors, so that the participants were relatively homogenous and representative of potential beneficiaries for each market-based interventions. As a result, the team could construct survey questions unique to each group, subsector and country, which were in turn deployed as part of the baseline questionnaire for particular interventions, capturing the respondents' information against a range of dimensions selected and weighted to reflect their unique characteristics and priorities. The tool was rolled out gradually in the three AWEF countries (Palestine, Jordan and Egypt), allowing for testing and knowledge sharing between the teams. Lessons learned through the process included the need to develop guiding principles for determining which participants engage in FGDs for designing the tool, the challenge of including subjective questions with response bias, such as questions concerning decision-making, and the need to include certain dimensions that can only be measured at household level, such as the as the household's economic situation. Moving forward the AWEF team will further test and validate the tool and conducting analysis on how the data gathered can be used for programme design in addition to baseline measurement.

During the Webinar's Q&A session, the presenters shared some of the key lessons learned from applying their tools. They highlighted the need to understand how both men and women experience poverty and how this in turn affects their gender roles and clarified that all the tools can be applied to both men and women. They also reinforced the importance of applying highly localised participatory research approaches to development of multidimensional poverty measurement tools, to capture different types of vulnerability to poverty and local definitions of empowerment.