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

Webinar 2 Summary

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 2: Linking Women to Markets: A closer look at women's market readiness
Date: July 24th 2018

Presenters:
Reham Gharbiyeh, Jordan Country Director, Arab Women's Enterprise Fund
Anna Mori, SheTrades Partnership Coordinator, International Trade Centre
Heather L. Bateman, Associate Director of Partnerships & Investments, ACDI/VOCA
Moderator:
Fiona Shera, Technical Director, Arab Women's Enterprise Fund

Webinar Recording Link

Summary of the Webinar
The webinar looked at different approaches to linking women to markets in the context of market systems and private sector development programming, and some of the examples and lessons coming out of the AWEF Jordan country programme, the International Trade Centre's SheTrades Platform, and ACDI/VOCA's programmes supporting women in agriculture.

Heather Bateman, from ACDI/VOCA presented on how the organization applies different inclusive market systems development approaches to diverse contexts. ACDI/VOCA engage USAID's 5R Framework (roles, relationships, resources, rules and results) to assess the market status quo and design thinking to come up with interventions that can create inclusive change that is sustainable beyond the intervention. As part of the design thinking process they also develop a gender strategy on how to consciously involve women and men equally as part of the intervention. Heather shared examples of two ways ACDI/VOCA has linked women to markets through different types of agro-dealer models as part of the USAID-funded Ghana ADVANCE II and the USAID-funded PROFIT+ programmes. In Ghana ACDI/VOCA identified female community leaders and provided them with leadership and entrepreneurship training to become outgrower business

leaders. As a result the number of female women-led outgrower businesses increased fivefold and female smallholder farmers linked to the outgrowers saw a threefold increase in yields. In Zambia the programme engaged existing women's organizations to identify potential female SHFs that could host demonstration plots and helped them graduate to community agrodealers. The result from the programme showed that female demonstration-holders outperformed men in terms of graduating to agro-dealer status and also observed an improvement in their decision-making and control over income within their households.

We were also joined by Anna Mori from the International Trade Centre, a joint agency of the UN and the WTO, working to empower SMEs and small producers from developing and transitioning economies to access international markets. The ITC Women and Trade Programme aims to address some of the obstacles faced by women-owned SMEs in terms of access to resources and finance, higher trade costs and legal barriers that prevent them from accessing regional and international markets. ITC's SheTrades initiative aims to convene multiple actors to take comprehensive actions on women's economic empowerment and connect 1 million women to market by 2020. This is done through close collaboration with partners such as the WTO, trade support institutions, government agencies and firms such as EBay, Barclays and Sidley Austin to: 1) champion sex-disaggregated data 2) develop gender-inclusive trade policies 3) promote gender-inclusive procurement policies 4) connect women to markets through B2B meetings and trade missions 5) provide capacity building on standards, quality certification to women 6) improve access to finance for women exporters and 7) promote IP rights of female entrepreneurs. All of this is managed through a web and smartphone application enabling women to connect directly to buyers, investors and partners, and supported by an e-learning SME academy, policy dialogue and advocacy, and global events and workshops. Since the programme's launch in 2016, ITC has connected 900,000 women to markets and over 120,000 users have accessed the SheTrades platform.

Reham Gharbiyeh, Country Director with the Arab Women's Enterprise Fund, spoke about the programmes work in Jordan. Even though women make up 50% of university graduates, female labour force participation in the country is below 15%, with majority of women concentrated in informal sectors and home-based employment. Through its market-based interventions AWEF has tackled issues of both women's access and agency in order to achieve transformational and sustainable change in terms of women's economic empowerment. Working in the dairy sector AWEF worked with one of leading dairy producers and retailers to develop a 'women-sourced product' brand, sourcing processed foods directly from female suppliers and improving the quality of their products through the provision of training on health & safety. In the embroidery industry AWEF has worked with a chain of retail shops to source small embroidered goods from women through women's associations and gender units at local municipalities and by assisting women to access licensing for their home-based businesses. Some of the lessons learned from the programme include the need to address the strong social constraints and norms preventing women from accessing markets, the importance of female role models in outreach to women and engaging the local government as an ally to overcome implementation challenges.