

Linking Women to Markets: A Closer Look at Women's Market Readiness

Date: July 24, 2018

Time: 9:30 – 10:30 am (EST)

SPEAKERS

Heather Bateman, Associate Director of Partnerships & Investments, *ACDI/VOCA*

Reham Gharbiyeh, Jordan Country Director, *Arab Women's Enterprise Fund*

Anna Mori, SheTrades Partnership Coordinator, *International Trade Centre*

MODERATOR

Fiona Shera, Technical Director, *Arab Women's Enterprise Fund*

QUESTIONS

Heather's Presentation

Q: When you talk about private sector, how much of that is related to producer organizations/cooperatives and how much through private service providers?

A: The community agro-dealers (CADs) that ACDI/VOCA helped establish in Zambia through the USAID Zambia PROFIT+ project are private service providers that have last mile distribution networks and provide extension services to producer groups made up of smallholder farmers in rural Zambia. The CADs have relationships with large, private sector input supply companies (such as Syngenta, Dupont Pioneer, and others) to supply high-quality seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs to farmers. CADs also have relationships with larger traders/buyers (such as Cargill, Export Trading Group, and others) and serve as post-harvest aggregators of harvested crops so that buyers can more easily access commodities in rural areas, and so that farmers have opportunities to sell their produce to larger markets. The references that I made to the "private sector" were in reference to CADs, buyers/traders, and/or input suppliers.

Q: Is the proportion of CADs (32%) who are women similar to the proportion of farmers who are women? And can you say more about the existing local structures that you built upon to create the demonstration farmer network? Where women participating in those existing structures and if not, how did you shift that as you repurposed them?

A: (1) The proportion of female to male farmers is more around 50-50, if not even (significantly) more female field workers than male depending on the season. So, while the gender breakdown of female vs. male CADs is not directly proportionate to the population of farmers, it has provided more leadership and business opportunities for women than originally thought

available. For future work in Zambia, we would hope to continue to increase this figure. (2) Some of the existing local structures built upon were semi-developed distribution networks of larger input suppliers and independent retail shops. (3) There were a few women participating in those structures, but at an estimated proportion of <10%. To attract more women to become demonstration host farmers (the highest performing of which would “graduate” to become CADs), we targeted women’s producer organizations and other women’s groups in our target geographic area with information about the project. We also conducted gender workshops for men and women to help increase sensitization and open discussion among men and women on norms in women’s business leadership.

Q: With your CAD are you expecting these to be farmers women or men or independent non-farmers. If farmers want the business activities to become a conflict of interest with the farming activity that are already well over extended?

A: As ACDI/VOCA implemented USAID Zambia’s PROFIT+ project, our aim for CADs was for them to become successful entrepreneurs providing agricultural products and services that are of value to the farming households in their communities. We did not force any individuals to become CADs—the process included being nominated by their local communities, and accepting such nomination to become demonstration host farmers (DHF) (of which the highest performing could be supported to become CADs if they were willing). While ACDI/VOCA provided some information as to what venturing down the path of becoming a CAD could look like in terms of returns, it was ultimately the individual’s and his/her household’s own decision whether s/he would be more financially, economically, and socially better off continuing to farm or investing the time and resources toward starting a new potential income stream as a CAD.

Reham’s Presentation

Q: The ‘traditional’ production sectors for women - handicrafts, preserved goods, etc. - appear to me to be high labor with lower ROI. Are there any examples out there of women involved in some ‘non-traditional’ production and sales, such as mobile phone repair, shoe repair, sewing machine repair, plumbing, etc.? These arenas may have greater return. If there isn't any so far, what's the plan to link women with these skill and market?

A: In Jordan, we have few examples of women working in sectors listed in the question, but numbers very limited and from our research doesn’t exceed more than 100 women’s. At AWEF Jordan, we are engaging in ICT sector and working with our partners to design interventions that address main social and economic constrains, this will be always part of our mandate we always strives to engage women in functional upgrading-schemes that will not only increase their earnings but that will also change perceptions and attitudes around women in non-traditional roles producing role models and champions for other women.

Q: Were technologies and machinery introduced to reduce women's work burden?

A: Yes defiantly, particularly in food processing.

Q: If 50% of women are university-educated in Jordan, what are the blockers to them entering higher-paying sectors and businesses?

A: In most cases top priority for girls after finishing university is to get married and once they do unfortunately, poor transportation infrastructure makes commuting challenging and limited proper daycare facilities. But also, our economy is struggling to create sufficient number of jobs and usually men more preferably to win it. Our work in ICT sector, enable us to identify that perhaps one of the greatest hindrances to improved female participation in ICT (for example the online economic activity) not yet discussed comes from a dearth of role models. If women do not see others pursuing skills training, and digital-technology based employment opportunities, it is unlikely for them to envision their own participation in the digital economy. For this reason, AWEF's activities working not only on creating opportunities for targeted women to participate, but also to encourage them to adopt a leadership and mentorship role amongst women within their own communities to provide a model and a vision for others to pursue similar opportunities, as an engine for greater, sustainable change.

Q: Do you find men in these communities supporting these women and their business ventures?

A: Once women start to earn money, it's remarkable how men step out of the way and become more of a supporting role. Therefore, they will become engaged in activities that will support women ventures.