

On 17 June 2014, the DCED organised a **Webinar on Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment**.

Fouzia Nasreen, manager of Making Markets Work for the Chars, and Helen Bradbury, manager of the Alliances Lesser Caucasus Programme, shared many insights and lessons learned from experience regarding measuring women's economic empowerment. A summary of the key points raised follows:

Market research

Fouzia explained that it had been essential for M4C to understand the different roles men and women play in the sectors they considered intervening in when the project was launched.

- Thorough market research allowed M4C to **select sectors which would provide opportunities for women**.
- It also provided **insights into the constraints women currently faced** in the selected sectors and potential solutions to them – for example through **the identification of service providers willing to consider doing business with women**.
- Producing value chains with boxes showing the different activities of men and women at each level provided a helpful **visual mapping of this research for project staff**.

Helen also noted that **fully gendered market research** (undertaken according to each supporting function, core market and rule appropriate to the programme) was very important in helping projects to **understand the context** in which they were operating and thereby what could be considered a **positive or negative change in women's economic empowerment** following an intervention.

Selecting indicators

Helen emphasised **that using indicators closely related to the goals of the project** – in the case of ALCP, for example, the number of decisions taken over livestock activities – could provide further clarification of whether a change was positive or negative according to the underlying project logic. **Attribution** to a project's intervention may also be easier when using this type of indicator.

In general, household level indicators should be mainly comprised of qualitative indicators

- Fouzia noted that M4C, like the majority of PSD projects, **disaggregated key indicators such as changes in income at the enterprise level**. Since households often work together and pool incomes, it is therefore important to complement these with qualitative indicators to assess whether women become more economically empowered as a result.
- For Helen, the most important household level indicators were **agency over time use and control over income**. Control over income, however, can be a sensitive topic of inquiry. In Helen's experience, qualitative indicators – such as the ability to make decisions over programme relevant expenditures – provided a more neutral means to assess changes in control over income.

- Qualitative indicators allow teams to unpack complex issues such as decision-making capabilities, and to further probe and triangulate evidence.

Finally, Helen highlighted that **community level indicators**, such as women's participation in public decision making, could be both valuable proxies for changes in decision making at the household level as well as standalone indicators of WEE which do not necessarily require monitoring at the HH level.

Measuring changes in WEE

Fouzia emphasised that the importance of **good gender-responsive research practise**, including the use of proxy indicators for sensitive questions, was critical for accurate measurement of results. This form of results measurement, however, can be very time consuming. Fouzia noted that M4C has kept their results measurement manageable by **conducting a relatively small number of interviews, the findings of which are then presented to focus groups for validation.**

Staffing and Capacity Building: Fostering an enabling environment

Both Fouzia and Helen noted the importance of a skilled and experienced team for whom WEE is a central goal of their work. Helen noted that **WEE must be integrated into every aspect of the programme cycle, its management and instruments from the very beginning**, and that this includes the operational culture of the implementing organization.

- Providing staff with both the **tools** to enable them to achieve this and a **supportive and open environment** in which WEE is discussed as part of the everyday life of the programme is key.
- **Gender and WEE must be presented as essential to programme excellence** and the achievement of impact for all members of the target group.
- Notions of gender which may have been formed by past interactions and experience where men may have felt disenfranchised must be addressed, and the **value of the role of all staff members in achieving success in WEE** clearly fostered.