

Reflections on gender mainstreaming in M4P interventions¹

In an interesting short discussion, the scope, challenges and good practices in the field of gender mainstreaming in M4P projects were addressed on the basis of a short thesis paper prepared by Stefan Gamper (Bangladesh) reflecting recent experience of the “Katalyst”² project as well as experience from Mozambique and Tanzania, Nicaragua and the South Caucasus.

The experience of the SCO Dhaka with the “Katalyst” project appears to be typical for an SDC-funded M4P intervention. It underlines the importance to clarify the project’s mandate and the donor’s expectations in the field of gender mainstreaming as well as the limited expertise of SDC and many of its partners in this field.

Selection of value chains

M4P projects tend to focus on value chains with a particularly promising growth potential and to argue that selecting sub-sectors with a high women representation will compromise the income increase objective. This argument has also been used by the “Katalyst” project when explaining why it has to date not paid high attention to gender issues.

But M4P projects are often not in a position to assess whether the intended positive results for improved market performance entail unintended negative results for the involved women and children. In this context, it is also surprising that “Katalyst”, after two full-fledged project phases, has apparently failed to establish the practice of sex-disaggregated data collection, which deprives the project of the necessary instrument to mitigate unintended risks on the household level. Also in Tanzania, besides tracking the involvement of women in interventions, there was a lack of more “gendered analysis” of sectors and interventions. Gender mainstreaming efforts are now work in progress.

Mainstreaming methodologies

Addressing gender equality as a crosscutting theme is the minimum requirement and most obvious approach to gender mainstreaming in an M4P intervention. It is based on a “do no harm” approach and requires a minimum level of sensitization and technical skills within the implementing organization and the supervising SCO.

In the Latin America and South Caucasus portfolios the following elements of good practice have emerged:

- **Analysis:** Gather credible base-line data before engaging in project implementation. The data must be based on the same indicators which will later be measured during the recurrent monitoring and needs to be sex-disaggregated. This is costly and requires special techniques and skills, but it is indispensable. A thorough reflection on how target households and the dynamics within the selected value chains work, how the intervention will impact on men, women and children is next step of analysis (referred to as “analysis from a gender perspective” in the current discussion).
- **Planning:** Calculate and mitigate the risks of unintended detrimental results.

If increased inclusion of women is a distinct project objective, choose value chains with both a growth potential and significant gender relevance. For example, in Nicaragua the value chains of rural tourism and food processing have been selected because they allow substantial benefit for women. The application of M4P ensures avoidance of market distortion, allows crowding-in of indirect stakeholders and supports the sustainability of the intervention beyond the project cycle.

¹ Proceedings of a “coffee table” discussion between Carmen Alvarado (Nicaragua), Michel Evequoz (Mozambique), Marcus Jenal (consultant), Beka Tagauri and Derek Müller (both South Caucasus), 12 May 2011

² The pond fish intervention of the “Katalyst” project had earlier been introduced during the workshop and served as a reference for the development of results chains.

- **Steering:** Ensure recurrent monitoring of results along all “boxes” of the results chain with a particular emphasis on gender issues. Check whether the planning hypotheses are confirmed and the mechanisms to mitigate the risk of unintended negative consequences actually work. Adjust interventions if required.

The participants of the discussion concluded that the addressing of gender equality as a transversal theme in M4P interventions is a high priority but remains a challenge. The strongly recommend that this issue be further addressed within the E+I network.

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