e+i | employment and income network

in cooperation with

M4PHUB Sharing knowledge on making markets work for the poor

Summary of the Discussion Paper for an M4P WEE Framework

Input-paper for the e-discussion of SDC's e+i network from March 19 to April 05, 2012

Introduction

"How can the Making Markets Work for the Poor Framework work for poor *women* and for poor *men*?" This is the underlying question of a discussion paper for an M4P Women's economic empowerment (WEE) framework prepared by Linda Jones on behalf of the M4P Hub.

The M4P Hub and SDC e+i network have agreed to collaborate on this initiative. The proposed e-debate will include the active M4P/PSD discussion group of SDC's e+i network as well as the broader practitioners' community working in M4P projects all over the world. The outcome of the e-debate will feed into a process that will produce widely consulted good practice guidelines on WEE in M4P. Other inputs will come from additional field research and a seminar on May 9-10, 2012 organised by SDC.

Background on the Discussion Paper

Promoting gender equality and empowering women (MDG 3) is one of the greatest challenges of the 'millennium project' and remains a priority for all donors. Women's economic empowerment (WEE) and access to markets and services is central to achieving MDG 3, and widely recognised as essential for sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. The M4P approach, with its focus on facilitating access for the poor to markets and services, offers a powerful framework for addressing access barriers faced by women and girls. However, the approach, as defined by the M4P Guides funded by SDC and DFID, has not tackled WEE explicitly and has attracted criticism that it paid insufficient attention to the gender-specific systemic constraints faced by poor women as well as men. The growth of the M4P portfolio along with increased implementation expertise offers a timely opportunity for the multi-donor (DFID, SDC, Sida) effort under the M4P Hub to revisit the M4P framework and to explore how the approach could address WEE aspects in more adequate manner.

In this process, the basic principles of M4P should, however, not be undermined. Most importantly, the systemic approach and the role of the project as facilitator and not as an actor should be maintained and not hamper the scalability and sustainability of M4P projects. Therefore, the objective of the WEE discussion paper was to find solutions that *support* market systems development.

Contents of the Paper

The paper first describes the M4P framework, followed by a review of gender and WEE literature and frameworks, in particular the policies of each of the primary M4P donors – SDC, DFID and Sida. It then presents an analysis of the M4P approach from a gendered perspective, and suggests ways in which the M4P approach could tackle and provide evidence of WEE.

Definitions of WEE

In order to achieve WEE, through M4P or any other approach, the paper recognises the need to define economic empowerment and its main elements as follows:

> **Common Elements Defining Women's Economic Empowerment:**
> ✓ Economic advancement – increased income and return on labour
> ✓ Access to opportunities and life chances such as skills development or job openings
> ✓ Access to assets, services and needed supports to advance economically
> ✓ Decision-making authority in different spheres including household finances

The first three elements: economic advancement, access to opportunities, and access to assets, services and needed supports are all key elements of the M4P framework. Although the analysis and programming for these

elements have not had explicit articulation for poor women, this shortcoming can be easily "remedied" through clear guidance on gender disaggregation and gendered approaches. The suggested M4P WEE framework elaborates on this point., The forth element of the definition, however, is more demanding for M4P as it usually does not tackle explicitly broader empowerment aspects like changes in decision-making authority in different spheres including household finances. This may demand additional requirements in monitoring and evaluation.

Principles of WEE:

The paper also examines key principles of WEE and how the M4P framework handles these principles. In broad brush strokes, WEE frameworks and the M4P framework are quite compatible, and M4P fulfils most of the WEE principles. For example, both frameworks put importance on context analysis, consider different spheres of engagement, analyse underlying barriers and opportunities, are based on a systems approach and underscore the need for partnerships. At this level of analysis, a larger shortcoming of M4P vis-a-vis women is that the approach is not explicit about differences in the lives of women and men, and the need for gender disaggregation. Moreover, the examination showed that there are two critical principles of WEE frameworks on which the M4P framework is challenged: First, the M4P framework does not explore women's unpaid work burden and how this will impact their ability to become economically empowered and to respond to programme interventions. Second, the framework does not provide guidelines on women's economic mainstreaming and how M4P programmes can adopt a gendered approach for economic development initiatives.

An M4P WEE Framework:

The paper proposed an M4P WEE framework as an adaptation of the M4P framework. It utilises the M4P intervention life cycle and its five components to organize, and to explain additions and adjustments to the current M4P framework in order to achieve gender mainstreaming. It suggests a number of guiding questions for each of the five components of the M4P intervention life cycle, as summarised below:

1.   Setting the strategic framework – vision and rationale

The lack of uniform impact of economic growth on women and men has implications for the M4P core rationale and the selection of sub-sectors. In an M4P WEE framework, all analytical questions and intervention design must consider the role of women within the system. In particular, women's unpaid work should be explored so that mitigation strategies can be put into place, e.g. the introduction of new technologies that can reduce women's household work.

2.   Understanding market systems – identification and research

By answering questions on the market system for women as well as men, we will learn about women's barriers to engage in markets including socio-cultural context, access issues and opportunities. This information will support us in identifying solutions and programme design.

3.   Defining sustainable outcomes – planning and design

A gender lens can be applied to assess the sustainability of a market system which integrates women at different levels. The analysis must take into considerations where appropriate women's ability to do and to pay, and to look at the context and socio-cultural constraints.

4.   Facilitating systemic change – implementation and adaptation

If a service is to work for women, this means that both the facilitator (programme staff) and the service provider (public or private sector) must understand the situation for women, and what will and will not be appropriate.

5.   Assessing change – monitoring and evaluation

The DCED Standard can be utilised for monitoring and evaluating WEE programmes with certain considerations. Gender disaggregation in data collection is important, but also appropriate indicators must be set to accurately measure the progress towards the desired change. These indicators should not be an addition to the monitoring framework but be integrated into the result chains where appropriate.

Conclusions

The M4P approach has always promoted analysis of different segments of the population, but has not been explicit about gender segregation. Because of the flexibility and inclusiveness of the approach, the M4P framework and tools can be adapted not only to advance women's economic development (income earning) but to also serve women's economic and broader empowerment. However, there is no easy fix. We have to take underlying empowerment aspects into consideration in order to be effective in women's economic advancement and most of all avoid detrimental effects on women.

March 2012