Women's (Economic) Empowerment
Numerous definitions of women’s empowerment exist. A commonly used definition proposed by Kabeer is “an expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices, in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (1999).

The concept is frequently used within agricultural development programs, where women’s empowerment is linked with economic development. Women’s economic empowerment is assumed to have gains for women themselves as well as for the wider economy and general development. According to DCED “A woman is economically empowered when she has both: a) access to resources: the options to advance economically; and b) agency: the power to make and act on economic decisions”\(^1\).

Access to resources includes access to assets such as land and equipment, as well as to services such as agricultural and financial services. If only access to resources is addressed, women are not yet empowered, since women are also confronted with making decisions about the use of these resources, and with norms and traditions that need to be challenged. Agency is defined as the ability to make autonomous choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes. It includes control over resources and income, but also capabilities and self-confidence.\(^2\)

Making sure women participate in economic activities does not necessarily lead to their (economic) empowerment. However, it can be a necessary step towards empowerment.

The Reach – Benefit – Empower framework
The Reach – Benefit – Empower framework\(^3\) gives more clarity when designing value chain interventions and helps aligning intentions (goals) with tactics or strategies and monitoring indicators. The distinction between Reach, Benefits, and Empower points out that simply reaching women (e.g. by including them in meetings or trainings) does not ensure that they will benefit from a project. Even if women benefit (e.g. from increased income or access to services), that does not ensure that they will be empowered (e.g. in control over that income or assets). In general, projects should aim to go beyond merely reaching women. The framework can be used during the phase of designing interventions to check whether the planned actions would reach, benefit, or empower women and to ensure that the interventions are consistent with the monitoring indicators.

---

\(^1\) Golla, Malhotra, Nanda and Mehra, 2011
\(^2\) FAO, 2016, Developing gender sensitive value chains – a guiding framework, Rome
\(^3\) Meinzen-Dick et al., 2017 and Johnson et al, 2017
**Objectives**

- Include women in program activities
- Increase women’s well-being
- Strengthen ability of women to make strategic life choices and to put those choices into action

**Strategies**

- Inviting women as participants; seeking to reduce barriers to participation; implementing a quota system for participation in training events
- Designing project to consider gendered needs, preferences, and constraints to ensure that women benefit from project activities
- Enhancing women’s decision making power in households and communities; addressing key areas of disempowerment

**Indicators**

- Number or proportion of women participating in a project activity, e.g. attending training, joining a group, receiving extension advice, etc.
- Sex-disaggregated data for positive and negative outcome indicators such as productivity, income, assets, nutrition, time use, etc.
- Women’s decision making power e.g. over agricultural production, income, or household food consumption; reduction of outcomes associated with disempowerment, e.g. gender-based violence, time burden, restricted mobility

**Monitoring**

The following table summarizes the monitoring plan according to the reach-benefit-empower framework, under “reach” the indicators can be found related to #/% of women benefitting of services of POs, MFIs and other; additional indicators to measure benefits and empowerment are suggested at the middle and right columns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Empower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smallholders</td>
<td>% of female smallholders who participate in training and extension services on GAP (Good Agricultural Practices)</td>
<td>- Usefulness of trainings according to m/f participants</td>
<td>% of female smallholders reporting improved status in community, position in the household, participation in (productive) decision making; changes in division of work in the household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- # or % of women and men who apply new techniques after training and increase productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise development</td>
<td># or % of female managers which participate in project-facilitated training and advisory services</td>
<td>- # or % of female owned enterprises that increase profits, added value, diversify products etc.</td>
<td>% of female managers taking up new positions in the value chain - Women are involved in value chain governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women as employees/ workers</td>
<td># or % of new jobs created for women</td>
<td>- Sex-disaggregated data for types of jobs (permanent, full- or part-time, seasonal), - # or % female employees improving their skills</td>
<td>% female employees improving their position at work % of women in supervisory and management positions % of women in leadership positions of e.g. workers committees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Guide for practitioners:**

- Ensure that gender sensitive indicators are formulated for all program strategies
- Use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (like interviews, focus group discussions) of data collection at each level:
  - Reach: women’s participation in activities related to service provision
Benefit: how women make use of services and innovations
Empower: lasting changes in women’s position relative to men

See the table below for more elaborate suggestions of how to measure results at the various gender sensitive strategies

Collect sex-disaggregated data and use this to analyze whether the program/project has different benefits and impacts for men and women, why these differences between women and men occur, and formulate improved program activities. Sex-disaggregated data needs to be collected beyond the level of the head of the household to capture gender and intra-household dynamics

Start with base-line data collection followed by regular (e.g. yearly) updates in order to see the trend.

Compare figures for men and women. Be especially aware of differences in increase of income or productivity for men and women. If men benefit more from the program activities this implies that the already existing gender gap becomes even bigger!

Distinguish between different categories of men and women. Age is probably a relevant category. Make sure to distinguish between married women and single-widowed-divorced women, their positions are different.

Reflect on the results:
- How can positive and negative results be explained
- How can program activities leading to positive results be up-scaled?
- How can other program activities be adjusted/improved to better contribute to achieving program objectives?

Systematize lessons learned and share them within the program and with like-minded organizations.

Example indicators for different gender sensitive strategy in programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Empower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Training and extension on GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) | Number or proportion of women participating in a project activity, e.g. attending training, receiving extension advice, etc. | # or % of women and men who apply improved ways of planting and cultivation; productivity increase for male and female farmers | - Women’s intra household decision making power e.g. over agricultural production, income, or assets 
- Reduction of manifestations of disempowerment, e.g. gender-based violence, time burden, restricted mobility 
- # or % of women in leadership and management positions, women reporting improved position and status in community; increased support in community for female leadership and mobility |
<p>| Inputs | Number or proportion of women that have been provided with inputs | # or % of women and men who use inputs; productivity increase for male and female farmers who are using improved inputs |
| Credit | Number or proportion of women that have been provided with credits of different sizes | # or % of women and men who use the credit; productivity increase for male and female farmers and entrepreneurs who are using loans and loans of an increased size |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanization and technology</th>
<th>Number or proportion of women that have been provided with machinery and technology</th>
<th># or % of women and men who use machinery and technology; productivity increase for male and female farmers and entrepreneurs who are using new machinery and technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
<td>- Number or proportion of women’s groups targeted by the program &lt;br&gt; - Proportion of women in &quot;mixed&quot; groups that are targeted</td>
<td>- Increased capacities of women’s groups &lt;br&gt; - Increased # or % of women in leadership positions in mixed organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>