



## Women's Economic Empowerment through Gender Transformative Approaches – Evidence from CARE's Experience in Middle East & North Africa



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### ***CARE's Regional Applied Economic Empowerment Hub***

[CARE International](#) is a global confederation of 14 member and four candidate/affiliate organizations working together to end poverty. In 2018, CARE worked in 95 countries around the world, implementing 965 poverty-fighting development and humanitarian aid projects. We reached more than 55 million people directly and 340 million people indirectly. Learn more about our reach and impact through [CARE's Impact Map](#).

In October 2017, CARE International members, the MENA regional management unit, and several Country Offices supported the establishment of the **REGIONAL APPLIED ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT HUB IN THE MENA REGION**. It supports CARE country offices (COs) to advance its impact in close proximity to our impact groups through three core pillars;

- 1) Ground-up thought leadership on Nexus programming, Women's economic empowerment, and Leveraging market and business forces for social impact (e.g. through resilient market systems in fragile settings, social entrepreneurship).
- 2) Applied innovation, building on the diverse expertise of COs in the region and beyond.
- 3) Technical support with project design and capacity building on specific themes (demand-driven).

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## Acronyms

COs	Country Offices
CMPs	CARE Member Partners
EMB	Engaging Men and Boys
GEF	Gender Equality Framework
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GTA	Gender Transformative Approaches
IT	Information Technology
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MENA	Middle East North Africa
MSME	Micro Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
PS	Private Sector
VC	Value Chain
RMU	CARE Regional Management Unit
GBV	Gender Based Violence
UN	United Nations
VC	Value Chain
VSLAs	Village Saving and Loan Associations
WEE	Women’s Economic Empowerment

## Photos Legend

Photo on cover page	<b>Women leaders (local council and cooperative members) from Palestine</b> (photo courtesy of CARE Palestine (WBG))
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CARE defines women’s economic empowerment (WEE) as the process by which women increase their right to economic resources and the power to make decisions that benefit themselves, their families and their communities. Our Theory of Change (as discussed in [CARE’s WEE Strategy Document](#)) outlines three conditions necessary for genuine and sustainable economic empowerment for women: increased capabilities, decision-making power and an enabling environment. An integrated approach across all three conditions is required to achieve genuine and sustainable change. Increasing individual women’s capabilities can lead to temporary increases in their economic opportunities and income. However, women’s economic empowerment can only be achieved through also transforming unequal power relations and discriminatory structures.

This *Learning Brief* is created to provide practical learning and present existing tools applied by CARE Country Offices (COs) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to encourage a more gender transformative approach to WEE and livelihood programming. This is highly relevant for practitioners from the whole sector working on economic empowerment and livelihood programming in fragile settings anywhere in the world. This document can aid a better understanding of *gender transformative concepts* by livelihood staff, as well as better understanding of the principles of sound economic empowerment by gender staff. This Learning Brief contains many practical insights and allows practitioners to understand how theory and frameworks can have an impact on the actual programming and results on the ground. The Hub encourages teams and practitioners to use this Brief, and the different overviews and examples provided, to reflect on their own work on gender integration, and take steps to move beyond gender responsive programming towards a truly transformative approach for our impact groups.

Learning insights incorporated in the document are based on the learning accumulated by CARE MENA Country Offices (COs) in the last five years under our women's economic empowerment/livelihood programming. It focuses on two main components of WEE gender transformative programming: economic advancement and gender equality, along with approaches related to engaging men and boys. The evidence of these lessons learned is based on: 1) revision of documentation of more than 12 long term and short term WEE/livelihood programs implemented by CARE in Jordan, Syria, Egypt, West Bank & Gaza, Caucasus and the Balkans<sup>1</sup>, 2) interviews with key informants including gender champions from these COs along with other global CARE gender experts who collectively searched for answers to questions in the themes of gender transformative approaches in WEE programming.<sup>2</sup>

This document is presented in four main sections:

1. Section One is a short *Theoretical Section*, highlighting the theory underpinning CARE's WEE programming and how this is reflected in MENA.
2. Section Two is entitled *From Theory to Practice* and provides practical examples from MENA to illustrate how CARE integrates gender transformative approaches into its WEE holistic programming. This section is complemented by an Annex that provides a simplified tool to help Country Offices reflect on the level of gender integration within their own WEE/livelihood programs.
3. Section Three, *Thematic Learning Insights*, provides practical tools, examples and lessons that can assist practitioners to move their WEE/livelihood programming from gender neutral or sensitive towards being gender responsive and transformative. This section covers six thematic areas: agency building, engaging men and boys, gender based violence, local private sector engagement, capturing transformative change, advocacy and governance. These areas were prioritized based on regional learning and due to the fact that they were also highlighted consistently during the consultation process with regional teams and global experts as key areas for change. Even though many more WEE aspects exist, these six were identified as the most pressing topics for sectoral learning.
4. Section Four presents *Conclusions and Recommendations* and encourages practitioners and teams to continue with implementation in their own practice.

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***CARE's Regional Hub aims to contribute their organizational learning to sectoral innovation and greater impact for the women and men who we work with. When done thoroughly, such collective learning has the potential to increase our efficiency and avoid unnecessary failures or repeated trials.***

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<sup>1</sup> This includes the review of tested tools, reports, projects assessments (including final evaluations, market and value chain analyses, needs assessments, context analyses, relevant gender analyses (both integrated or stand-alone).

<sup>2</sup> The document was finalized and shared with gender, livelihood and WEE teams in 24 COs, CMPs CIs and the CARE Secretariat. Based on the document a training module was developed and 2 workshops were carried out with around 47 participants from around the globe.



# 1. Theory Underpinning our Work

CARE’s Gender Equality Framework (GEF)<sup>3</sup> is an overarching approach for all of CARE’s work. It was developed to assist CARE staff in conceptualizing and planning gender equality programming. It builds on existing CARE frameworks and tools, in particular the **Women’s Empowerment Framework** that defines women’s empowerment as the sum total of changes needed for a woman to realize her full human rights in:

- Agency: her own aspirations and capabilities,
- Structure: the environment that surrounds and conditions her choices,
- Relations: the power relations through which she negotiates her path.

The GEF updates CARE’s previous Women’s Empowerment Framework to capture learning that our women and girls’ empowerment approaches must be synchronised with and complementary to how we engage men and boys for gender equality<sup>4</sup>. The aim is to build agency of people of all genders and life stages, change relations between them and transform structures in order that they realise full potential in their public and private lives and are able to contribute equally to, and benefit equally from, social, political and economic development:

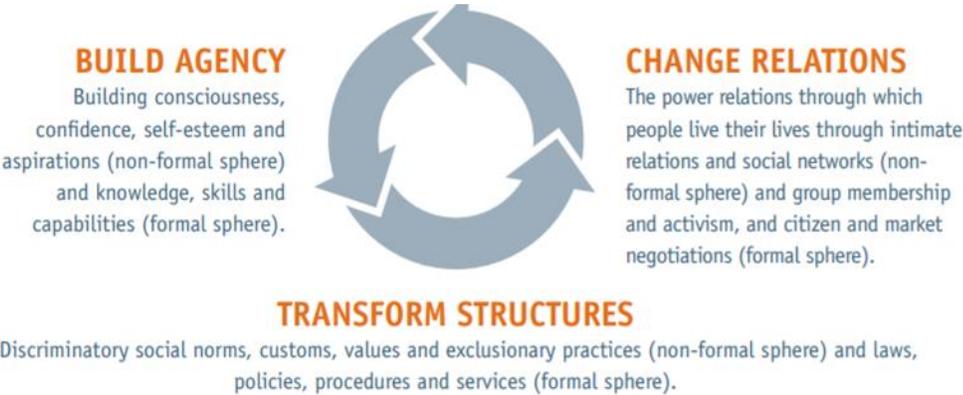


Figure 1 CARE Gender Equality Framework

<sup>3</sup> For further information, please see CARE’s [GEVV Guidance Note 2018](#)

<sup>4</sup> For more background on this key component of our strategy, read [CARE’s Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality Series, Brief 1](#).

For CARE, Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) is a core component of women’s empowerment and a crucial tool to fight both poverty and gender inequality<sup>5</sup>. CARE’s global **Women’s Economic Empowerment** programming<sup>6</sup> builds upon and implements this Gender Equality Framework. The WEE Theory of Change (see Introduction) is thus closely aligned to the GEF – with ‘capability’ aligned to agency, ‘decision-making’ aligned to relations, and ‘enabling environment’ aligned to structures. This means that in our work to empower women economically we recognize that we have to address structural and social barriers, decision-making as well as invest in the capability, agency and business opportunities for women in order to have a sustainable impact on both gender equality and the economic status of women.

*“At its roots, poverty is caused by unequal power relations that result in the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities between women and men, between power-holders and marginalized communities and between countries. CARE believes that poverty cannot be overcome without addressing those underlying power imbalances.”*

**CARE’s 2020 Program Strategy**

Specifically in the MENA region, recognizing the opportunities and threats common to these countries, CARE’s MENA Regional Management Unit developed (in close cooperation with COs) the [CARE MENA Social & Gender Justice Framework](#) that builds on the forementioned framework and WEE strategy. Its WEE programming pushes for transformative change in terms of women’s economic empowerment and livelihoods. This programming aims at creating an enabling ecosystem; not only by reducing *structural barriers* to WEE, but also by addressing the *root causes of relevant social barriers*<sup>7</sup>, while simultaneously working to increase the *agency and business opportunities of women* to successfully start-up, sustain, manage and grow resilient and sustainable businesses.

A key tool for improving the gender integration in any program is the [Gender Transformative Continuum or the Gender Marker](#). This simple overview and [checklist](#) presents the different levels of gender integration along a continuum from gender harmful to gender transformative (see Figure 1). This not only assists teams with the assessment of their current programs and practices, but can also serve to provide direction on how teams may improve their gender integration into programs to make it more gender transformative. This Learning Brief will be using this tool to this end (see also Annex 1).

Gender Harmful	Gender Neutral	Gender Sensitive	Gender Responsive	Gender Transformative
Program approaches reinforce inequitable gender stereotypes, or disempower certain groups in the process of achieving program goals.	Program approaches or activities do not actively address gender stereotypes and discrimination. Gender-neutral programming is a step ahead on the continuum because such approaches at least do no harm. However, they often are less than effective because they fail to respond to gender-specific needs.	Program approaches/ activities recognize and respond to needs and constraints. They significantly improve access to services but by themselves they do little to change the larger contextual issues that lie at the root of gender inequities; they are not sufficient to fundamentally alter the balance of power in gender relations	Program approaches or activities help men and women examine societal gender expectations, stereotypes, and discrimination, and their impact on male and female’s roles, rights, and relationships	Program approaches or activities actively seek to build equitable social norms, structures, and agency as well as individual gender-equitable behavior

Figure 2 Gender Marker or Gender Transformative Continuum - adapted by the Hub, 2018

<sup>5</sup> For a look at the other components of CARE’s strategy to fight gender inequality and injustice, read the [CARE’s Primer on Gender and Justice](#) (December 2017).

<sup>6</sup> For more on how CARE’s WEE programming makes a difference see [CARE’s WEE Impact report for 2018](#) (published February 2019)

<sup>7</sup> The first entry point in WEE/livelihood programming is family structure, where impact is tracked on the position of the wife in terms of decision making, workload, change in roles’ perception, and domestic violence.



### 3. From Theory to Practice

*In this section an initial oversight is given how the Gender Equality Framework can be translated into practice in women’s economic empowerment programming. A detailed list of examples is provided in Annex 1, building on the Gender Transformative Continuum/Gender Marker, that will guide practitioners in their reflection and planning for a more transformative approach in their WEE/livelihood programming.*

The most important lesson shared by all informants was that if WEE/livelihood programs are properly implemented, they can be considered as main entry points to gender equality. This means addressing the aforementioned dimensions of WEE in close alignment with GEF and the right strategy for engaging men and boys (EMB), while also paying close attention to the sound economic/business planning of activities. Without smart integration of all components (successful economic advancement, women’s empowerment/GEF and EMB), projects risk either achieving only short term results, or being harmful to women as well as men.

A weakness in any of these **components** will most likely lead to failure in reaching lasting women’s economic empowerment and be potentially even harmful. In our sector we still find examples of projects that focus on **women’s economic advancement** without considering **women’s empowerment** or their **relations with men and boys** – making economic growth a goal separated from gender equality. Likewise, we have seen projects focus on women economic advancement with amazing integration of the women empowerment framework but without properly engaging men and boys - leaving empowered women to deal with social constraints on their own (which in some context even became harsher due to the shifts in power dynamics).

Lastly, the sector has also seen many initiatives that integrate **women’s empowerment** and **engagement with men and boys** but do not base the interventions on **solid, viable and market-driven business planning**. This can not only lead to businesses that become a financial liability for the woman and her family, but also entrench prejudices around women as unsuccessful business actors.

*Since the late 1990s, CARE has worked with men and boys as allies for gender equality. Our experience demonstrates that achieving real and lasting progress toward gender equality requires proactive work with men and boys, alongside work with women and girls. This strategy of Engaging Men and Boys (EMB) will be discussed in more detail in **Section 4 Header 2 Engaging Men and Boys for Women Economic Empowerment**.*

On the other hand, programs implemented by CARE and its partners in MENA have achieved amazing results, changing women's lives as well as those of their families, communities and even improving whole value chains and market systems. These successful projects applied the Gender Equality Framework as the core to their WEE work, not as an addition. The power lies in an early and consistent application of the GEF, starting from the analysis to design stage and ending with the evaluation of the project. Below are some of the implications of a consistent application of the GEF to illustrate what this framework can mean for programs and activities.

➤ For instance, **agency-building activities** were fully informed by thorough analyses that combined both gender equality and market and value chain components. These looked at existing gender roles at each stage of the value chains and integrated a power analysis to make sure that we understand the context, social norms, and behaviors of power-holders at the different levels (including men at communities and household level, private sector, relevant government actors, local authorities, etc.). Agency was then implemented to incorporate soft life and aspiration related skills, coupled with hard business and technical skills/knowledge (that incorporated skills for women in non-traditional roles at the value chain, e.g. marketers/ extension agents/ importers, etc. and not only workers or traditional processors). In addition, such activities were not restricted to women but involved men and boys and main community actors to ensure buy-in from different parts of the power equation (in households and society) and to collectively learn, grow and adjust existing norms and practices.

➤ **Relations** were changed and impacted at three levels: family, community and markets (including stakeholders such as private sector, inputs providers, marketers, dealers, etc.). From the design stage, the work on this component focused on facilitating women's access to resources, markets and employment opportunities beyond traditional roles. Successful WEE activities that worked with both women and men were not only able to increase household income, but also initiated family dialogue on different issues. For instance, in some countries, teams were able to work at the household level to analyse and redistribute household tasks among family members. Another example is the introduction of semi-automized machines in home-based businesses such as small-holders of livestock that alleviated the huge workload placed on women through e.g. traditional food processing. Some other dialogue topics included: access to land, inheritance rights, workload, women decision making and roles they play at the family and beyond. While this is a hard change to be attained, several COs have seen actual change in some of the most conservative communities in MENA.

➤ At the level of **structure**, women were encouraged to form their own groups or to join existing community bodies (as equal partners). Several initiatives have used local evidence and worked with women collectives to change national policies around crucial gender topics such as access to and control over resources and services, decision making at community levels and enabling environment policies (e.g. financial inclusion, business environment). At the same time, social norms were challenged through campaigning and promoting women as role models and economic and community leaders. Men and women were convinced that if women are given the opportunity, they can become successful change agents with benefits felt for all, not just women. Different programs also influenced the information and extension services provided by government and private sector actors, increasing women's access to such programs. Inheritance rights also improved in some of the communities through public rights awareness, working with localized actors, and engaging men and boys throughout. This is in addition to supporting women leaders who excelled in their groups to run for elections at local and governmental levels.

The above provides a short overview of the possible gender equality changes in MENA under WEE programming and stresses the importance and possibility of a consistent and full integration of the Gender Equality Framework in our economic empowerment/livelihood programming. The Obader project (see Figure 2) case study also gives a first illustration of how this can be done during project design. The following section, Thematic Learning Insights, provides concrete insights along with tested tools generated by more than 12 programs.

The **Obader Project** (implemented by CARE Palestine (WBG) starting 2018) illustrates how the components of agency, relations and structure are integrated in the design and placed at the core of WEE programming.

This project targets young women entrepreneurs in traditional and non-traditional sectors (e.g. agribusiness, embroidery and Information Technology (IT)) and is designed to work with many actors: women's groups, young female entrepreneurs, business development and enabling organizations, business women fora, relevant ministries, private sector and market actors, chambers of commerce, finance institutes (MFI and banks), communities and men and boys.

The project aims to work with female actors to build their agency and technical knowledge. This will be achieved by working with enabling organizations to integrate and customize their packages to address structural barriers and restrictive social norms faced by women. The project also links these young entrepreneurs and women's groups with successful female business leaders who were already able to overcome the social norms and excel in their careers.

The project further expands women's space for dialogue at different levels, at the household, community and business sector level. Engaging men and boys is integrated and addressed through activities that allow for joint understanding and addressing of behaviours that help reduce gender gaps. On community and sector levels, young entrepreneurs are linked with chambers of commerce, private sector actors, finance institutes and governments to discuss services and policies and ways to change/adapt these to allow for a more flexible and supportive entrepreneurship environment that works also for women.



*This section covers six thematic areas: agency building, engaging men and boys, gender-based violence, local private sector engagement, capturing transformative change, advocacy and governance. Please note that although we are aware of the fact that these areas do not reflect all aspects of WEE programming, these areas were selected as priorities to highlight in this guidance document based on the feedback received by practitioners during the consultation process.*

Besides the learning captured under each theme, this section also highlights existing tools that have been tested and proven to be successful in many contexts. These can be shared upon request, to be further adapted should the context require this. The six major learning themes can be summarized as follows (Figure 2):

<b>Agency Building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MENA agency development frame work</li> <li>• Main components of the holistic approach</li> <li>• Training manual and materials are available</li> </ul>
<b>Engaging Men &amp; Boys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do No Harm - analysis and understand dynamics, why and how</li> <li>• Family Dynamics - consider opportunities for positive impact</li> <li>• Understanding and addressing men roles and vulnerabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Gender Based Violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness - using WEE as entry point</li> <li>• Holistic response through partnering with relevant actors</li> </ul>
<b>Local Private Sector Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making the business case: women as business partners</li> <li>• Transferring needs into business opportunities</li> <li>• Stimulating private sector investment for WEE.</li> </ul>
<b>Capturing Transformative Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender Analysis</li> <li>• MEAL systems to capture transformative change</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy and Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of advocacy work in WEE programming in MENA</li> <li>• Successful examples from the field</li> </ul>

Figure 2 Learning Areas for Gender Transformative work by the Hub, 2018

## 1. AGENCY BUILDING

The CARE MENA agency building framework was built upon evidence from programming in fragile contexts and learning (including [CARE Palestine \(WBG\)'s National Skills Gaps research](#), CARE Palestine (WBG)'s gender insights platform) as well as numerous research pieces on Gender in Agriculture and Markets from different countries across the region. It includes not only technical and practical skills, but also soft skills (crucial to improve women's position socially, improve their relationships and mitigate any pushback or restrictions arising from social norms), business/entrepreneurial skills, increasing women's aspirations (tapping into these can be a starting point for unlocking women's full potential that they might not see unless exposed to new experiences and role models), rights awareness and increased connections with and support from social, economic and political networks.

When working on women's aspirations it is crucial to keep in mind that interventions should also give women the capacity and tools to match their increased aspirations with the capability to achieve them. Connecting them with new ideas will be a great step, but without the needed capacity this can lead to failure -e.g. when aspirations are not accompanied by practical business training, leading to unsuccessful business expansion. In this case a further negative unintended consequence would be that such failure reinforces the idea of women as unsuccessful in business.

### MAIN COMPONENTS OF AN AGENCY BUILDING PACKAGE:

The agency building package adopts a learner-centred approach that does not only provide technical and theoretical information, but also practical and experimental space for different actors to test their potential. It provides targeted women with real-life learning spheres that go beyond what society accepts for women; and that deal with them as capable actors having (non-traditional) socio-economic roles. The combination of tools can be summarized as follows:

1. Attending a series of training sessions, making use of agency-building manuals or training guides such as the training material (incl. manual and simplified training handouts for the participants) developed by CARE Palestine (WBG) (tested and proven agribusiness producers and cooperatives). These sessions should interweave both technical (eg., agricultural methods) and soft skills (eg., negotiation, leadership) that encourage women to play non-traditional roles within a value chain (e.g. new cropping, pricing, entrepreneurship, management, standards and negotiation).
2. Participating in rights awareness raising sessions (decision-making at all levels, GBV, inheritance rights, socio-economic rights – including equal access to resources and services, legal context, etc.) that are held for women only, for communities (combining women and men, girls and boys) and with decision makers.
3. Attending practical technical and non-technical activities including field days, exchange visits, selected relevant public meetings, and participation in discussions with shadow councils/female-led community structures.
4. Participating in a role-modelling program that allows women to learn from inspiring and successful socio-economic female leaders who have not only advanced economically but also introduced change at their family and community levels.
5. Learning by doing through testing of gained skills in real life meetings with decision makers, local authority representatives, ministry of agriculture agents, private sector actors and even dealers. This step is an advanced one that should come after working with women on their negotiation and communication skills. This is important as otherwise, as mentioned above, it may have a harmful impact (e.g. if women fail to negotiate their rights/demands/business-related conditions) and strengthen negative stereotypes of women's capabilities as negotiators).



Figure 3 Framework of the Agency Building Package by the Hub, 2018



### Available tools that can be shared:

- Agency building training materials for women as individuals and for women led CBOs
- Awareness raising sessions outline and list of questions (including inheritance rights, GBV)
- Gender Equality MEAL tools

## 2. ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS FOR WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Engaging men and boys (EMB) is a crucial component of gender transformative programming as it contributes to more sustainable, long-lasting improvements at the different levels that impact women’s lives. It is more than just securing “buy-in” of male counterparts. It is about collectively seeking and determining that men and boys have as much to gain from gender equality as women and girls do. Building on years of learning and testing, CARE has adopted a framework that covers the key aspects of a successful strategy for the engagement men and boys<sup>8</sup> in women economic empowerment programming. The four principles below are important to take into account on four different levels that the projects target when engaging men and boys (household, community, value chain (VC) and policy):

1. **Do No Harm**; context and gender analysis should bring insights into how and why male attitudes and behaviours can influence women’s lives to contribute to positive change and avoid doing harm. This should be part of the inception and design stage as results might shape the final selection of project activities. Baseline tools and samples are available upon request.
2. **Family dynamics**; when working with women it is crucial to understand family dynamics and the perceptions of their fathers/husbands/brothers/sons prior to actual implementation of the activities. Project teams sensitize male family members to the projects’ ideas, explain the impact on women, assess barriers within families and smartly address the same during implementation (please see gender transformative continuum learning in Section Two).
3. **Men’s different roles**; men with a wide range of roles can become supporters and even role models and champions. This includes community leaders, fathers, husbands, policy makers, market actors, local business owners, owners of means of production and land, but also influential personalities like religious leaders, artists and others.
4. **Men’s vulnerability**; this should be part of project analysis economically, financially as well as socially. This is especially valid when women’s roles change either during a crisis, at early recovery stages and even during resilient and



Figure 1 Practical examples of successful EMB activities on the four levels for livelihood projects (Source: CARE Palestine West Bank & Gaza)

developmental programming. Being aware of how men and boys are affected by social expectations and norms is crucial to ensure both women’s and men’s wellbeing (to reduce GBV, backlash from the community and possible male competitors in the market, VC or household due to changes in women roles). An important aspect of effective dialogue

<sup>8</sup> The original framework is also discussed in [the Engaging Men and Boys Learning Brief from CARE \(2014\)](#) or read [more on CARE’s website](#) on EMB.

processes at different levels is to support development/use of critical consciousness amongst participants – namely participants’ ability to critically analyze and deconstruct the reasons why social norms and practices exist and how these affect WEE at the 4 different levels in Figure 2



**Available tools that can be shared:**

- CARE’s Engaging Men and Boys Manual
- Baseline relevant questions
- Private Sector (PS) mapping tool including gender related aspects (e.g. perceptions on women)

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### **3. INTEGRATING PREVENTION OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS**

Gender Based Violence (GBV) in public and private spheres is still all too common. The risk of GBV can increase when women start to claim and practice their economic rights and when household dynamics are challenged, such as when women start to earn an income or express their voices in public. Also, in public spheres women can experience increased GBV; in the workplace, when using public services or when participating in community structures. CARE therefore incorporates GBV prevention components proactively and not simply reactively when negative GBV trends are observed. This is done at different levels with the aim of achieving a positive impact on the reduction of acceptance for GBV, a reduction of acts of GBV and an increase in support, services and justice for women. Below is an illustrative list of activities integrated into WEE gender transformative programming in MENA:

➤ **Work with women directly**, a variety of activities can be integrated - depending on context, common threats identified to women and the urgency of these challenges - that work on the awareness among women, supportive social structure and tools present in the community and services available for women. Often, GBV awareness can be integrated as part of the agency building package that women receive. In a very sensitive manner, such activities try to address and change women’s personal perceptions of GBV and domestic violence (as very often women find excuses and accept domestic violence from male family members). Moreover, CARE has had success with the involvement of trusted female community animators (who act as trainers, social workers or group leaders). They are equipped by the team to capture any signs of potential GBV. In many cases these animators build trust-relations with women and create either a group environment or personal setting where women can open up, share their personal experience and offer each other support. Another possible tool is the development of women safe spaces or houses, where awareness, counselling, support groups and rehabilitation activities can be combined for victims of GBV or women under threat of GBV.

One such example can be found in Jordan, where GBV protection and awareness raising mechanisms are integrated as part of women economic empowerment programming, including among refugee communities. These activities are implemented by connecting women to “women safe spaces” that provide a range of services, including capacity building and counselling interventions for survivors of GBV. Moreover, thematic community awareness sessions are adapted to address concrete challenges for this target groups such as Child, early or forced marriage (CEFM)<sup>9</sup>. These safe places can even serve as livelihood centres by offering e.g. incubation services to women with ideas for micro, small or medium enterprises (MSMEs) or training activities to equip women to find dignified work on the job market. CARE Balkan works with women safe houses, mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they support women to start their own income-generating activities. These safe houses serve as a learning base for female victims of violence, and support them with a range of services that not only work on GBV prevention and rehabilitation, but can also guide the women to self-reliant livelihoods through business development or dignified employment.

➤ **Work with male members at household and community level** under WEE/livelihood programs should aim to change the environment for women’s economic engagement; with a clear understanding by all stakeholders that there is no successful societal development without women’s equal inclusion. Many projects have utilized social relations and

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<sup>9</sup> An insight in more activities related to CEFM in fragile or humanitarian settings can be found in [this overview published by Girls Not Brides \(2017\)](#).

existing networks in the community, such as religious or community members or leaders, and engaged them as male champions, role models and advocates at community level. These community-level activities are complemented by (awareness-raising) workshops and other support groups for men as well as women. In these sessions, groups acknowledge behaviours and attitudes to be changed, and assume their active role as supportive partners (along with women) to achieve joint goals. Other engagement activities can be designed, depending on context, that directly work on reducing the presence of GBV in society and decreasing its acceptance, such as campaigns that promote respectful treatment of women in public spaces and making use of public services.

Successful examples come e.g. from CARE Egypt which worked with male business owners, male tuk-tuk drivers and other men in the community to reduce the acceptance of public harassment and GBV in public spaces. A CARE Palestine (WBG) project created linkages with a National Forum combating violence against women, which is composed of specialized women's organizations that offer excellent services in different areas such as awareness raising, counselling, legal advice, protection and referral. Through engaging this network in specific contexts, the project could increase its impact (without itself offering these services, but directly connecting the communities and women).

➤ **Working with value chain (VC) and market actors** is another crucial dimension to achieving success in WEE and becoming aware of any threats women might encounter when exercising their economic rights. In addition to the activities with community members (who can also be VC actors), a gender analysis can assist the team's understanding of potential partners for WEE and reduced GBV. CARE has developed simplified gender analysis criteria as part of the private sector (PS) assessment tools that allow teams to indicate attitude of PS actors with whom women will interact. Through such analysis, practices can become apparent that have an impact on women when exercising their economic rights such as workplace harassment, GBV when using public places or services, or inequality enshrined in policies. Addressing these practices can be successfully done though e.g. directly connecting with private sector actors (see section 4 below) as well as advocacy campaigns focusing on stronger protection against GBV.

- **Integration of GBV prevention and response plan as part of the WEE projects** which includes 1) effective monitoring of underlying levels of household/community tensions as well as actual GBV rates, 2) planning for GBV response, especially immediate support and referral resources



**Available tools that can be shared:**

- Private Sector (PS) mapping tool including gender related aspects (e.g. perceptions of women)
- Women in sheep and goat dairy value chain project design

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#### 4. LOCAL PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STIMULATION

The aim of engaging with local private sector (PS) actors in gender transformative WEE programming is to make market system more equal, open and beneficial for female producers in a sustainable manner. Understanding from both sides -the markets and women - can lead to interventions creating sustainable shifts in market relations, roles and responsibilities and a better position for women within them. Therefore, a good understanding is needed from both the markets (needs, gaps, opportunities) as well as from the women and other relevant PS actors (needs, gaps and opportunities). The right language should be adopted to show the benefits and importance of why PS actors should cooperate and co-invest in gender transformative solutions.

A first important step in the engagement with PS actors is an adapted market systems and VC analysis. This can be adapted to facilitate strong gender integration, and assist with evidence for the selection of market actors (based on criteria such as existing skills of PS actors to address existing needs and their will to engage with both women and men). An example of such

analysis, and the activities that were designed based on the collected data, is given in Figure 6 and were used in an agricultural value chain.

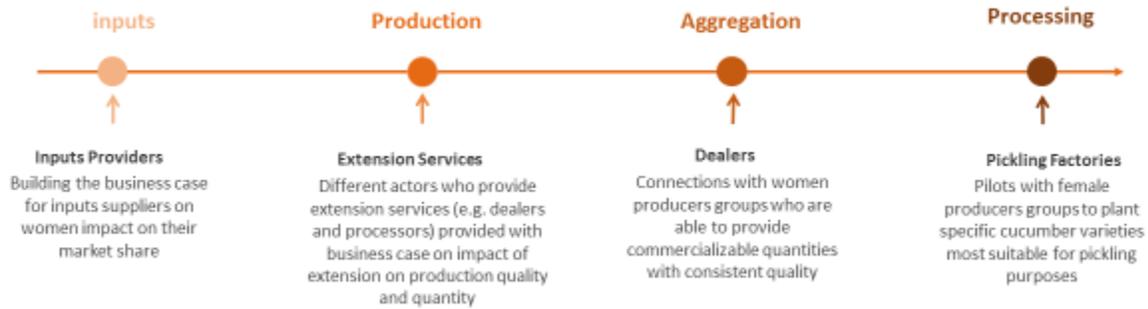


Figure 6 Sample of private sector actors along the different stages of the value chain.

A second important step for engagement with PS actors is the development of investment or business cases, with data and evidence on both the financial and the social relevance and impact of the proposed initiative or action. For PS actors, it is important to understand that change can happen both in a financially and socially sustainable manner - thus presenting the win-win of the business case. This can be either done based on information collected in market analysis studies, or more elaborate feasibility studies. In some contexts, an actual pilot can trigger a (co-)investment from a PS actor. The win for women would be enhanced agency and income, while the win for the private sector would be an increase in financial benefits, better market position or utilization of innovations. Regional experience has shown that this win for PS actors can take several forms including the following examples:

1. **Increase of companies’/private sector’s market share.** In the vegetable value chain, CARE was able to convince input suppliers to invest in demonstrations led by women to try new innovative techniques such as mono fertilizers and balanced drip irrigation networks. At the farmers’ level – especially for female farmers - the two innovations aim to reduce production costs and increase net income due to reduced use of water and fertilizers. The private sector benefitted through an increased market share by convincing farmers to shift their practices and use their new products and techniques. Traditionally, such PS actors would invest in pilots led by large-scale (male) farmers. However, through CARE’s intervention the private sector carried out women-led demonstrations to facilitate women’s access to the innovations and show their potential impact on their families when women are seen as meaningful economic actors!
2. **Reduce customers’ acquisition cost** (as businesses connect more easily with new customers). In the livestock/dairy value chain, CARE was able to convince one of the existing animal feed factories to produce a special high-protein mix to be incorporated into sheep and goat fodder. At farmers’ level this mix would increase milk productivity by 30%, providing greater financial benefits to the household. For the animal feed factory, being connected to CARE and the Ministry of Agriculture’s field -school farms will hugely reduce the cost of marketing and customer acquisition. Female farmers were the first to be convinced, as they are the ones responsible for the milking task. They were able to see and track the increase in productivity which was key for the farmers to adopting this new mix in their livestock’s diet. In this case, women’s groups received reduced prices from the factory given the role women played as influential economic partners.
3. **Enhanced quality/quantity of PS actors’ production.** In Egypt, CARE identified a vegetable processing factory as a potential large employer of women in one of CARE’s targeted locations. The factory was willing to expand their hiring of staff. A gender assessment however showed that the factory did not provide women-friendly working conditions (e.g. no toilets for females, no day-care for children, no female representative in workers’ committee). The project team showed a strong correlation with the high turnover of female staff, which again linked to higher costs for the factory (due to costs of hiring, orientation training and overall low productivity of workers). During a pilot phase, the resulting project showed a higher return on the factory’s investment as workers stayed, were more committed and more

productive. In addition, the factory started to introduce incentives for female workers who excelled in their positions, resulting in higher quality and quantity of the factory daily production.

4. **PS engagement can give NGOs a means of influencing PS policy & practice.** Engagement at this level is based on the understanding of how policies/practices improve PS financial viability and is part of their “core business”. This moves beyond traditional views that PS engagement with community/NGOs is mostly about Corporate Social Responsibility (“being good corporate citizens”) but instead about making the business more efficient/competitive/profitable.

When private sector actors are convinced, they will not only adapt their services to become more women-oriented or inclusive; but they will also be willing to invest and pay for the potential impact anticipated. Some examples are as follows:

- As a result of a detailed investment case by CARE, one of the largest investors in MENA is currently financing the opening a national animal feed factory with a total investment that reached USD \$15 million (no further information is available at this point due to confidentiality). This factory will facilitate female and male farmers’ access to high-quality affordable animal feed that consists one of their major production constraints (inconsistent quality with high prices that consists in some locations 75% of production cost). This investment was triggered through an investment case and business dialogue that cost the project about \$10,000, but clearly spoke a language that the private sector would understand.
- One of the national dairy processing companies was willing to invest in milk collection hubs led by women and youth to launch a sheep and goat dairy production line. The investment was triggered based on one pilot (milk collected from 60 farmers in one location) where the factory received one shipment of milk to test the quality, the hygiene and the attributes of products produced using this milk. Establishing the milk collection hub did not only guarantee fair prices of milk for the farmers; but it also reduced the women’s workload as they no longer needed to process milk into cheese (in addition to Value addition from aggregation rather than from small-scale processing).
- In the sheep and goat dairy VC, PS actors are engaged to invest in the production of a semi- automatic milk pressing machine. In the project, CARE invested in the prototype and promoted it among dairy processing families as a simple affordable tool that would hugely reduce efforts needed to process milk (a task mostly done by women). Traditionally, women would be lifting huge rocks to press the milk into cheese. This machine is more efficient and requires no lifting action at all. The machine is currently widely used in the Palestinian market, reducing women’s workload and securing benefits for the factory as a piece of equipment that solved an existing challenge.



**Available tools that can be shared:**

- Sample gendered VC and market system assessment
- Sample analysis on PS engagement
- Intervention design model: engaging inputs providers in providing extension to female farmers
- Sample investment case

## 5. CAPTURING TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE: GENDER ANALYSIS AND LEARNING

Capturing transformative change through organizational Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems in WEE programs should be done simultaneously on interconnected aspects: gender equity, potential risks (e.g. increased GBV) and economic advancement. Since transformative change requires working with diverse actors on a variety of levels, learning should be perceived as a comprehensive process that captures change on all levels.

It is very important to note that both programming and MEL with the different stakeholders must take into account all three domains of the Women's Empowerment Framework - agency, relations and structure. In fact, smart design and implementation of any given activity will have ripple effect starting from women in centre of the intervention and reaching out to national level through different enabling institutions.

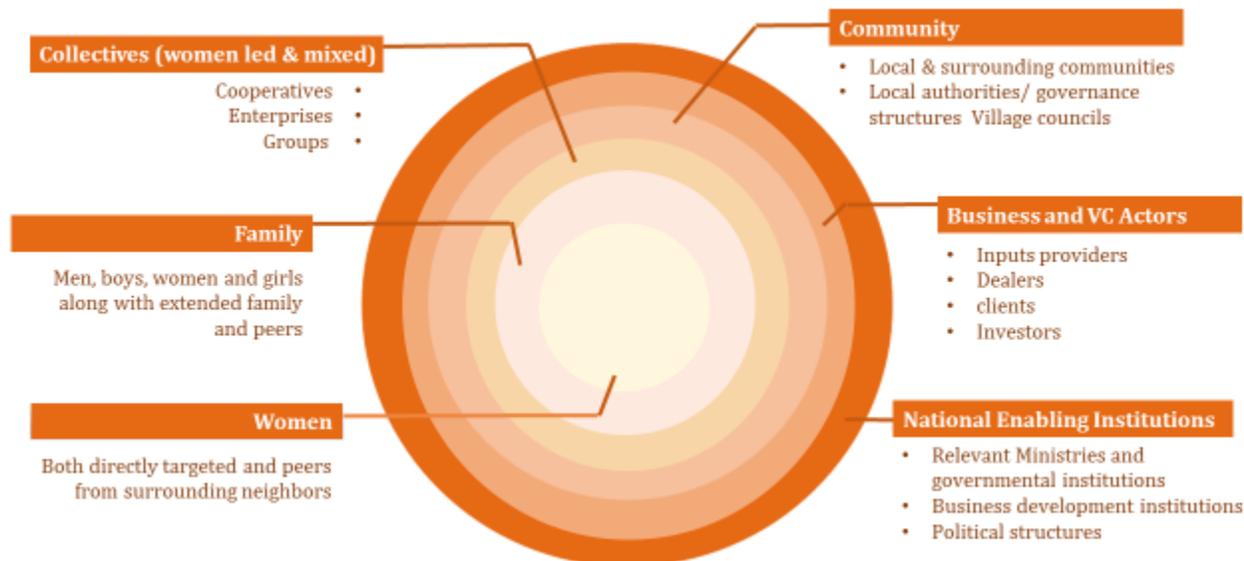


Figure 7 Levels of transformative change in women economic empowerment programming (Source: CARE Palestine (West Bank & Gaza))

A closer look at one of the successful WEE initiatives in the West Bank illustrates the variety of levels such M&E systems should look at. Restricting capturing the impact of the below discussed dried herbs unit to merely the impact on income, family livelihood or viability of women-led businesses would miss the huge social impact and social change introduced by the project. A more complex vision and multi-layered M&E system is needed to measure the wide impact of such initiatives.

The **TATWEER project**, implemented by CARE Palestine (WBG) in the Northern West Bank, invested in a women-led dried herbs unit. The business plan of the initiative built upon market analysis including consumer preferences. Besides co-investment in the production unit, a capacity building package was provided to women that included technical skills (planting, harvesting, post harvesting and drying techniques), business management skills, and life skills (negotiation, self-esteem, communication, etc.). The project also raised awareness in communities on women rights - especially on GBV and inheritance rights - and established a women's committee so that women could collectively voice their opinions at the community level and in the village council. The intervention was complemented by facilitating connections with private sector actors (such as herbs seedling companies and traders who packaged and sold dried herbs in premium markets). The project also facilitated connections with the Ministry of Agriculture who dedicated a part-time female extension agent to give them continuous technical support. Throughout the program, outstanding female role models were identified and supported through women organizations, with one of these women even being elected to the community council (a huge accomplishment in a male-dominated council).

Case Study of TATWEER project showing the different levels of transformative change.

Below is an illustrative list of changes that occurred in the aforementioned case study of the Dried Herbs unit, with generalizations made based on the other reviewed MENA programs:

- **Women/enterprise level:** in addition to tracking the increase in income and viability of their business, tracked changes includes women capacities, acquired and applied new technical, business and life skills; self-esteem and confidence to play new economic roles, awareness of their rights, and their perceptions of GBV.
- **Family level:** in addition to assessing the impact on family livelihoods; the learning focused on changes introduced and men and boys' perceptions and actions with regard to the following: 1) gender roles in the household, 2) women's enhanced mobility, 3) recognition of women as economic actors, 4) joint decision making (including decisions related to assets transfer and income).
- **Collectives, CBO or enterprise levels:** change evidenced with regard to women's quality of production, enhanced attributes, ability to negotiate deals with other business actors (including inputs providers, clients, dealers, investors, etc.), and with members part of the same collective (especially in mixed collectives).
- **Communities level:** change in community perceptions towards women (and their collectives) as economic actors who can play non-traditional roles, community awareness and respect for women rights (including those related to inheritance rights and GBV), and community acknowledge and consult with women on their needs in public community plans (roads, schools, health facilities, etc.).
- **Business and value chain actors:** perceptions of PS actors of women's roles, development of inclusive packages/ services they provide, change they introduce in their workplace (policies on sexual harassment, equal wages, etc.).
- **National enabling institutions:** any change introduced on inclusive policies by government (e.g. facilitating women's access to extension services), customized gender sensitive services or capacity building packages by business development institutions or micro finance institutions, acceptance of women playing non-traditional roles as socio-economic actors – including at political level (both at community village councils or in political parties).

#### **Sample of non-economic specific indicators from projects:**

- % Communities and families actively supporting enterprises established with women as main players
- Number of women reporting improvements in the access they have to agricultural services/inputs/resources
- Women reporting improvements to the terms and conditions of their work in agricultural value chains
- Positive changes in perceptions of private sector actors towards women's economic roles
- Positive changes in perceptions of women and men towards the economic and social roles of women in targeted value chains
- Women's participation in and influence of public decision making (advocacy indicator to be included)
- Number of women using technologies and innovative productive assets
- Number of women reporting greater mobility within agricultural value chains
- % of targeted households report joint decision-making involving women.

#### Integrated Gender Transformative Analysis:

In order to ensure transparent tracking of such multi-layered information, CARE incorporates gender transformative components as part of different project assessments. They are summarized in the following list. It is acknowledged that this is not a complete list but that it instead focuses on key points where a gendered analysis has shown great added value:

- **Baseline assessment:** complemented by a root causes analysis behind gender inequity, the gendered baseline assessment includes a full section on aforementioned topics along with specific components for analysis

- dedicated to communities (including norms, attitudes, behaviours, cultural sensitivities and power holders), men and boys (please see learning on engaging men and boys under Header 2 on p12).
- Market system and value chain analysis are gendered ensuring that learning on women's roles, constraints and opportunities are captured at every stage of the value chain. These assessments also incorporate a gendered analysis of the enabling environment, service providers and market actors; looking at for example sensitive their services are towards women as a target group.
- Partner mapping and analysis include gender analysis components that document their perceptions, policies, skills and willingness to work with women. Partners include community-based organizations, enterprises and private sector actors and companies. Also, this should include mapping and possibly the selection of non-traditional partners (to complement economic partners) who can push the agenda for gender transformative change, including those that work on GBV protection, safe spaces, media partners who can scale-up changing perceptions at a national level, women's rights organizations, etc.
- Rolling profiles: Qualitative tool to track change in perceptions/attitudes of stakeholders specifically relating to gender equality and women's role in the economic sphere.

*All the aforementioned components of the learning process are aligned with CARE's Gender Equality Framework; however, they are implemented (and should thus be monitored) in an integrated and practical manner with no clear division between its three interconnected domains: agency, relations and structure. Working on enhancing women technical and business skills (agency) will allow them to enhance the quality and quantity of production; and would lead to more recognition from their families and communities (relations); and that will be translated into fair business deals with private sector actors (structure). Thus, teams should build their own analysis and monitoring activities in such a way as well.*



#### Available tools that can be shared:

- Sample logical framework and results chain
- Sample indicators to measure gender transformative approaches
- Sample baseline indicators
- Sample case studies summarizing gender transformative approaches integration in a selected VC
- Rolling profiles tool: Qualitative tool to track change in perceptions/attitudes of stakeholders specifically relating to gender equality and women's role in the economic sphere.

## 6. ADVOCACY

Advocacy is highlighted as a key means for CARE to multiply impact<sup>10</sup>. It should further be recognized as a critical approach in WEE programming - especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Many countries in MENA deal with conflict, displacement, occupation, lack of accountable governments, corruption, unstable governmental systems, and loss of institutional capacities and service providers, to name but a few. Coupled with male dominated sectors and social norms, this has left women to suffer from worsening access to information, business development, job opportunities, and access to and control over financial resources and markets, in addition to violations of their rights, gender-based violence with all its forms and types, and lack of women's participation in decision-making processes and forums.

Fragility and crises present significant challenges but also opportunities for (gender) change due to more fluid social norms, changing power dynamics, and sometimes shifting institutions and leadership. Key areas of opportunities for advocacy in WEE programming, which teams are encouraged to make more bold use of, are listed below:

- **Women's participation and voice at ALL levels.** Especially in the economic sphere, we have seen that humanitarian and development actors mostly work with male dominated partners, governmental actors, cooperatives, and private sector. Including women's voices and women-led partners is crucial and this again does NOT only include economic partners but also non-economic ones.
- **Programmatic and evidenced-based advocacy** has significant opportunities. Our experience has provided many examples of advocacy initiatives that were successful because they were built on evidence coming from programmatic analysis and evidence on the ground. An excellent example is the way in which the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture improved extension services to women (by hiring more female extension agents) based on a gendered market system analysis by CARE, showcasing the loss in productivity to many agriculture sectors as a result of ignoring women's access to information and extension. Another strong example is CARE's work

<sup>10</sup> For general insights on Advocacy see [CARE's International Guidebook on Advocacy](#) (2014)

on bridging the skills gap between the output of the educational system and the demand of the market, which is a significant gap in many countries in MENA. Addressing the gap included the development of a national knowledge product, convening national campaigns, triggering dialogue, and producing several policy briefs (available upon request). The lesson is to develop and leverage programmatic evidence and data that can be used to influence local actors in MENA and beyond.

- ***Engaging/mobilizing local actors and amplifying their voices*** is a strong tool that has been successful in advocating on behalf of women's rights. CARE Egypt's initiative of Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLAs) to facilitate women access to financial resources is one example. The VSLAs expanded and it became clear that they could benefit from more systematic management and sustainable financial inclusion. Therefore, women representatives, along with CARE and other actors, established a platform to mobilize the Central Bank of Egypt and other financial institutions to amend the law and enhance women's financial inclusion through linking VSLAs with banks. As a result of this work, the Bank of Alexandria has launched a pilot with established women's groups to make it happen.
- ***Advocacy oriented towards private sector*** to influence policies and practices that block (or could enable) women's engagement. Things like pay equality, childcare, women's representation in management, etc.
- ***Advocacy to encourage government or civil society*** actors to take on convener/facilitator role in market system development



## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This Learning Brief was triggered by a lack of documented evidence in the sector on what works when it comes to gender transformative programming in WEE. At the same time, it was recognized that many case studies and lessons were being captured at project and Country Office level and that using these for collective learning purposes is an important cornerstone for growing our collective impact. CARE's Regional Hub aims to capitalize on this opportunity and gather some of the many impact stories together to encourage teams to reflect on their own gender integration. The Hub and thought leaders reimagine a future where impact and learning systems produce much more impact evidence (beyond merely output monitoring) and share stories, case studies, and data to build clear answers to strategic WEE questions.

This Learning Brief provides readers with a stepping stone towards a longer (and ongoing) reflection process on the type of gender integration that is relevant and needed in their contexts. Many of the topics discussed in the Brief could be addressed in a much more elaborate manner than is possible in such a compact overview (such as women and financial inclusion, gender and private sector engagement, gender and Nexus programming). However, this Brief also aims to provide crucial insights into the different ways gender transformative programming *can* be successfully integrated into WEE programming – even in contexts suffering from prolonged fragility and persistent, restrictive social norms.

Practitioners are encouraged to build on the approaches, tools and experience available in the organization and the whole sector in order to improve the impact and effectiveness of their programming for women and girls. This document shows how the Gender Equality Framework can be integrated into WEE programming more effectively, while aiming for both sustainable economic advancement and lasting empowerment and (more) equality. It makes the case that it should be integrated as early as possible and consistently at each step of the project cycle in order to achieve the best results. The Gender Marker is a great tool for both learning and reflection on better ways to make activities reach for more women's empowerment. This whole Learning Brief, including the crucial Annex 1, can therefore be used by practitioners, managers and teams to reflect on existing practices and programs, and even more so, to uncover new opportunities for even more gender transformative programming.

## Annex I

**Gender Transformative Continuum or Gender Marker – A key resource to help teams understand the quality of WEE programming.**

CARE has developed several tools to help teams reflect on the extent to which our programming is gender transformative, one of which is the gender transformative continuum (GTC)<sup>11</sup> also called the [Gender Marker](#). GTC is a conceptual framework that encompasses several points along the continuum, from harmful on the left to transformative on the right:

### CARE Gender Transformative Continuum

Gender Harmful	Gender Neutral	Gender Sensitive	Gender Responsive	Gender Transformative
Program approaches reinforce inequitable gender stereotypes, or disempower certain groups in the process of achieving program goals.	Program approaches or activities do not actively address gender stereotypes and discrimination. Gender-neutral programming is a step ahead on the continuum because such approaches at least do no harm. However, they often are less than effective because they fail to respond to gender-specific needs.	Program approaches/ activities recognize and respond to needs and constraints. They significantly improve access to services but by themselves they do little to change the larger contextual issues that lie at the root of gender inequities; they are not sufficient to fundamentally alter the balance of power in gender relations	Program approaches or activities help men and women examine societal gender expectations, stereotypes, and discrimination, and their impact on male and female's roles, rights, and relationships	Program approaches or activities actively seek to build equitable social norms, structures, and agency as well as individual gender-equitable behavior.

This simple tool shows how programs can achieve different levels of gender integration. Some contexts and programs enable a gender sensitive approach (where no attempts are made to transform root causes of gender inequality) while other contexts (and more often than currently utilized) are ready for a gender transformative approach that seeks to actively contribute to equal social norms, structures and agency – thus addressing root causes of gender inequality. To equip practitioners with a full understanding of these different approaches *and* enable them to move their programming and country presence towards more gender transformative work, the below Table provides a very rich overview of cases and practices of each approach.

<sup>11</sup> Please refer to the Explanatory Note on CARE's Gender Focus, 2012, for more details on the original framework, or the revised [Gender Marker Guidance Note](#) (2019).

Stage	When might this happen?	Learning and Insights	Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning
<p><b>Harmful</b></p> <p>Program approaches reinforce inequitable gender stereotypes, or disempower certain people in the process of achieving program goals.</p>	<p>1. <b>Introducing income generating activities that turn into a financial burden/liability for women and their families, leading to strengthening stereotypes about women as unsuccessful economic actors or entrepreneurs:</b> Examples include projects that provided traditional business packages for women in a way that flooded a certain village or market with the same skill, where the market lacked the demand for the size of services (e.g. provide hairdressing capacity building to 20 women in the same village). Other example was the re-introduction of non-profit generating ideas (e.g. in embroidery) when the packaging and design were poor, leading to women not being able to sell their products at fair prices.</p> <p>2. <b>Pushing women to play economic roles that are traditional mainly small scale, enforcing ‘at home’ stereotypes:</b> this can happen when projects limit women’s income generation opportunities for backyard and unpaid activities (e.g. micro-scale food processing or home gardening). This enforce the image of women as small scale,</p>	<p>In designing your programs make sure to pay attention to all dimensions needed for lasting WEE, as identified in Chapter 3 (meaning having an economic feasible advancement strategy, strong women’s empowerment and engaging men and boys). A solid gender-economic analysis will ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The selection of viable and feasible business opportunities that are market and demand driven.</li> <li>- An understanding the impact of suggested activities on women’s health, and the potential impact on men and women’s workloads</li> <li>- Capturing of who does what type of work (e.g. traditional roles), who derives financial benefit from the work they do, and how decisions are taken.</li> <li>- A collective understanding of community dynamics, men and boys’ behaviours and vulnerabilities, existing cultural constraints and opportunities. This will allow you to understand potential risks e.g. community backlash or increase in gender-based violence due to changes in power dynamics.</li> </ul> <p>Such a holistic analysis will allow the project team to introduce a solid gender strategy/plan that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) clearly sets integrated socio-economic interventions under agency, relation and structure;</li> <li>2) maps most suitable methods to engage men and boys (collectively with the community) for attaining gender equality in terms of access – to knowledge, skills, resources, etc.- decision making, women playing non-traditional roles, and workload;</li> </ol>	<p>The following learning shows how some of these pitfalls can be avoided. The <b>Ayadi project</b> adopted a mix between humanitarian and resilient markets approaches. It was implemented in West Bank and Gaza between 2015- 2018. Based on its thorough gender and business analysis, the project focused on targeting women in groups rather than targeting them individually.</p> <p>Focus groups, end line, and community assessments showed that working through groups allowed the women to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- share the risk and tap into non-traditional products (e.g. ecological farming);</li> <li>- be perceived as non-risky market actor, able to attract e.g. the attention of one of the major aggregators in the area who was well connected to national market (and who had no interest in being connected to kitchen/garden, small scale, scattered producers);</li> <li>- overcome cultural constraints (e.g. mobility and access, or negotiation with other male actors like traders/logisticians/inputs providers);</li> <li>- be relieved of home garden tasks, as group had a well-organized and clear division of labor that ensured a reduced workload for group members;</li> <li>- obtain family support and challenge community perceptions of women’s roles at both household and community level.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to relevant analyses, the project took important steps to ensure that women’s needs, feedback and open communication were considered during project design and implementation, especially</p>

risky economic actors not capable of success beyond the 'backyard' level. This in turn re-enforces women's roles as caregivers and directly affects women's decision-making power at household and community levels.

3. **Selecting activities/projects without assessing potential risks to women:** This for example includes projects that promote activities with negative impact on women health (e.g. back pain), increase daily workload (e.g. planting baby cucumbers that should be picked twice a day to ensure compliance with market requirements size), or neglecting potential increases in GBV due to change in women's powers).
4. **Focusing projects interventions to address women with minimal engagement of men and boys as main actors in WEE processes.**

- 3) identifies and takes into account potential risks and introduces mitigation measures at early stages of the interventions;
- 4) encourages women to tap into non-traditional, innovative and feasible business models that go beyond 'backyard' level activities and that promote women as successful leaders and equal socio- economic partners.

Throughout, teams should be aware of potential women's sensitivities around reporting cases of gender-based violence in the household, community, and the workplace. It is important to try and introduce innovative reporting channels and mechanisms that are acceptable to both women and men.

those related to GBV. For example it used the following approaches:

- In addition to strong dialogue and complaints mechanisms, Ayadi project recruited female **community facilitators** who were trusted and well perceived by women. The role of these female facilitators was not only to serve as focal points for the projects; but also to act as a trusted communication channel for women to raise their anonymous concerns, share feedback and report GBV cases without hesitation.
- Moreover, the project partnered with key actors part of the **violence against women national referral system** who ensured that the project communities were integrated into their awareness raising and psycho social support programming.

Stage	When might this happen?	Learning and Insights	Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning
<p><b>Neutral</b></p> <p>Approaches or activities do not actively address gender stereotypes and discrimination. Gender-neutral programming is considered a step ahead on the continuum because such approaches at least do no harm. However, they often are less than effective because they fail to respond to gender-specific needs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Interventions that aim to increase women’s participation and livelihood but are known to create additional workload and burden, without seeking to support women with their unpaid care work, or change stereotypes regarding women’s and men’s roles.</b></li> <li><b>Projects that specifically target women with the aim of increasing productivity, income, or employment but not considering of women’s agency building, or other specific barriers to WEE.</b></li> <li><b>Projects that focus on women economic advancements and integrate actions under women empowerment framework (mainly agency), but do not engage with men and boys to support new economic roles of women.</b></li> </ol>	<p>The key learning here is to pay close attention to sound/sustainable economic advancement as well as women’s empowerment within WEE programming, coupled with engaging men and boys.</p> <p>As previously stated, when designing projects; identify and analyse current gender roles and responsibilities at both household (family dynamics) and throughout the value chain or local economy, and assess how introducing economic projects change these roles and whether they positively or negatively affect women; their workload, their resources, their positions vs other actors.</p> <p>While most teams at CARE aim to implement gender responsive/transformational programming, minimum actions that should be integrated into neutral programming (e.g. supporting value chains with women in traditional economic roles as processors or workers) would use a combination of the following approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce semi-automatic processing units to increase women productivity whilst reducing workload for women</li> <li>- Encourage working through women collectives/cooperatives/groups.</li> <li>- Help women negotiate with others in the same household to reduce the unpaid careburden (through their families, children, extended family members, etc.)</li> <li>- Work with women and men to think about what is happening, if they want it to change and what they think needs to happen to effect change.</li> </ul>	<p>In order to encourage women to find time to access information, knowledge, skills and markets, the <b>Souqona project</b> incorporates ‘enabling environment activities’ as part of its value chain interventions. These activities helped women and men find options for women to reduce their unpaid care work hours (mainly children’s home education). Souqona supported the establishment of community kindergartens, after school learning centres, etc.</p> <p>The <b>Tatweer project</b> is a livelihood/food security project that was implemented in West Bank during 2009- 2015. It targeted women in very conservative communities that did not allow women to form their own community based organisations (CBOs). As an entry point at early stages of the program, women were encouraged to join mixed CBOs. In some communities only strong women were able to voice their needs and demands, while other women did not feel able to do the same in mixed groups. After gaining the trust of the community, and through engaging men and boys in all projects’ activities, the project succeeded in encouraging female producers to join/form women led CBOs/collectives. These women led collectives were able to provide the space for more women to engage, benefit and meet their demands, while maintaining more equitable socio-economic connections with existing male supporters and structures. However, it is very important to note that evidence from West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Balkan programming showed that women’s participation in mixed CBOs/collectives can be harmful if implemented without having agency building component. Without comprehensive agency building for women (including life skills like negotiation and communication); male members will control mixed</p>

- Where the issue is lack of childcare centres in the same community, promote the investment in or creation of care centres where feasible.

Understanding and engaging men and boys in project activities proved to be among the most effective strategies to changing social norms, gender relations and structural barriers.

In such projects teams can make use of innovative techniques to engage men and boys for gender equality. An entry point can be “conditional agreements” with both men and women in the household to ensure women’s access to skills, markets and services. These conditional agreements can be also used as an entry point to facilitate women’s access to agency trainings that go beyond technical skills and focus, at a minimum, on women’s rights, aspirations, negotiation skills and communication needs.

Increasing women’s awareness about their rights without targeting men is considered gender neutral and can sometimes be harmful if it produces backlash and increased GBV from male family and community members.

groups and women socio-economic participation will not be effective.

**CARE Balkan’s** approach to shifting community perceptions – especially in rural conservative areas- can be summarized as follows: WEE/livelihood activities focused on increasing the awareness of the community on the benefits of women’s economic inclusion, whilst also addressing the concerns of men and engaging them in a sensitive manner. Examples:

- Prior to community meetings, door-to-door meetings were organized with targeted families. These visits addressed the entire family and served as a first contact, rather than reaching them to them only through public events.
- These family visits were then followed with sessions with only men, and eventually mixed sessions, according to need. The reported impact was very positive and helped to properly identify, address and integrate male family members’ needs as part of the project.

**CARE Egypt’s** approach in capacity building also goes beyond training and coaching sessions with women only. In most conservative locations awareness raising sessions using theatre of oppressed techniques is implemented for communities (involving women, men, young men and young women) to tackle the role and work of women in agribusiness. These sessions not only raised awareness of communities, but also provided a space for public discussions between women and men in a very constructive manner. These public sessions were then coupled with discussions at household level with families of targeted women about redistribution of tasks among family members to allow women’s participation in work outside the families’ farms (e.g. food processing in neighboring factories).

Stage	When might this happen?	Learning and Insights	Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning
<p><b>Sensitive</b></p> <p>Program approaches recognize and respond to the different needs and constraints.</p> <p>These activities significantly improve women’s (or men’s) access to inputs, services and skills, but they do little to change the larger contextual issues that lie at the root of gender inequities.</p> <p>They are not sufficient to fundamentally alter the balance of power in gender relations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Increasing women’s access to inputs with a focus on enhancing women’s efficiency as smallholders or workers.</b></li> <li><b>2. Strengthening technical skills for activities that women perform, along with improving their access to information and markets.</b></li> <li><b>3. Coping with constraints that restrict women’s participation and engagement.</b></li> </ol>	<p>Traditional distribution of inputs to women does not contribute to sustainable social change and gender equality. However, facilitating women’s access to financial services and/or business deals with inputs suppliers and building women capacities on business management contributes to change in private sector perceptions on women as equal actors and partners.</p> <p>While practitioners should respect women’s choices in the selection of the value chain they want to work in, they can still affect the roles they are playing through facilitating their access to a wider range of skills development and a focus on new technical knowledge related to new crops, breeding and farming. Evidence showed that this will achieve better sustainable economic and gender equality results (preparing women to play non-traditional economic roles) if business and financial skills, management skills, quality assurance and standards skills are integrated into the skills development package.</p> <p>Coping with women constraints without addressing the root causes of gender inequities will lead to no advancement on gender equality. There is no one solution that fits all contexts when it comes to addressing constraints facing women. Projects will need to find the right balance of how to address constraints within communities (i.e. what is acceptable and what may be more challenging). Conservative communities may require women only meetings with female facilitators, providing them with a safe space to participate and voice their opinions freely. In other cases, it may be possibly to hold a public debate with non-traditional female leaders</p>	<p>The <b>Souqona project</b> facilitated women’s access to innovative selected inputs (e.g. water saving drip irrigation and safe fertilizers) through business deals with input providers’ companies. These companies originally were not interested in targeting women as they did not trust their financial and purchasing power. Simple demonstrations helped the knowledge to spread among women farmers and they organized themselves into collectives that negotiated reduced prices and coordinated on e.g. the required quantity and delivery.</p> <p>This activity achieved three objectives: the financial benefit (reduced prices and use of resources), a shifted private sector perception of women, a changed community’ perception of women as decision makers and as business actors.</p> <p>The capacity building package that was provided to these women groups did not only focus on technical skills, it included negotiation, communication, self-esteem, business and financial management. All were crucial for the new role that women started to play within the value chain.</p> <p><b>Syria Resilience Programme by CARE Syria</b> targets women in sheep and goat dairy value chain- mostly in conservative Bedouin communities. Prior to the implementation of any of the activities, the team developed a capacity building package for the partners to ensure that they are aware of gender sensitivities, but most importantly how to identify potential solution to solve women constraints jointly with the communities. One of the major constraints facing women was access to skills and trainings. The agency package not only targeted women, but also men.</p> <p>Women processors and their husbands attended a series of trainings on flock management, milking, productivity and veterinary services (which most of the</p>

		<p>talking to men and boys on potential power changes at household level.</p> <p>Equally, make sure that the project captures women’s own perceptions of what they accept or not (through focus groups, community participatory research, etc.) and use the results to customize the activities (e.g. capacity building and community awareness raising).</p> <p>While this is very important during the inception phase, it is highly recommended that cultural related checking is integrated throughout the implementation and prior to any major interventions as part of the Do No Harm approach. Where possible, it is also important to include male community members in these discussions to ensure that women’s engagement and empowerment needs are integrated in the community agenda. This can be as simple as ensuring that the timings work for both men and women.</p>	<p>female farmers received for the first time), and business skills. It was crucial women’s attendance was facilitated by this approach, so that information with relevant value for women was not lost but actually received by the female farmers themselves so they could benefit (if only men attended, they are unlikely to share information with their female household members).</p> <p>This approach gained the trust of male members of the community. They was the impact on their business, the change in women’s business and negotiation capacities and started to accept that women play non-traditional roles – including the decision making at household level on the selection of e.g. animal feed, the dealer, and prices to obtain. Most importantly, women had more flexibility in mobility to attend and access trainings, services and markets inside and outside their communities.</p>
Stage	When might this happen?	Learning and Insights	Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning
<p><b>Responsive</b></p> <p>Program activities help men and women examine societal gender expectations, stereotypes, and discrimination, and their impact on male and female</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Trigger positive change in discourse and perceptions about economic role of women.</b></li> <li><b>2. Facilitate women access to markets through encouraging them to produce new marketable products, supported with contracts with marketing companies/aggregators.</b></li> <li><b>3. Convincing private sector actors or investors to contribute/invest</b></li> </ol>	<p>Political or crisis situations can provide a space for change in gender roles. This space, if smartly used, is a huge chance to make lasting gender equality changes to women roles, decision making, and mobility. This can be further achieved at community level through public discussions, role modelling of women leaders and supportive male family members.</p> <p>Investors and private sector actors are willing to invest in gender equality (e.g. enhanced workplace</p>	<p>In Jordan, the <b>Baderi project</b> used role modelling activities to raise community awareness of women playing non-traditional and leadership roles. The impact of these role modelling activities was not only on other women; but informed the project’s target communities’ perceptions in general. Constructive interactive discussions were facilitated with these women leaders across the country; addressing: 1) the impact of women’s new roles on household dynamics; 2) the challenges facing women and how they were overcome by the different actors – including their male family members.</p> <p>In the sheep and goat dairy value chain, the <b>Rawasi project</b> was looking for a way to alleviate women’s workload in cheese processing without affecting its</p>

<p><b>rights and relationships.</b></p>	<p><b>in services/products customized to women needs.</b></p>	<p>safety or accessibility or introducing new products that respond to women’s needs or signing contracts for new products made by women) if they are addressed in the right way. We should stop promoting WEE activities as part of corporate social responsibility. We should focus on demonstrating potential benefits of engaging women as economic leaders whose contribution goes beyond small scale participation, and who are further potential customers and consumers.</p>	<p>attributes that consumers prefer. An analysis of the process with women was launched to assess where we can intervene to alleviate the workload. Women engaged with the private sector to design semi-automated machines that would hugely reduce their workload and (physical) efforts. The project invested in the cost of the prototype and was able to demonstrate the potential size of market. The machines are currently produced at commercial scale at affordable prices with the potential to reduce women’s workload and save time at a national level.</p> <p>Based on a market analysis, the <b>Souqona project</b> was able to create market demand for a new product: safe vegetables. The team was able to leverage investment to pilot and train selected women to produce safer products. The project facilitated the engagement in the training of the Ministry of Agriculture which then developed guidelines based on working with women. Women were not promoted as simple workers but as leader farmers, able to manage and run farms according to specific guidelines and produce high quality products. The investor is now signing contracts with these female farmers to aggregate their produce throughout the year at fair prices.</p>
<p><b>Stage</b></p>	<p><b>When might this happen?</b></p>	<p><b>Learning and Insights</b></p>	<p><b>Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning</b></p>
<p><b>Transformative projects “actively” seek to build equitable social norms and structures</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Women engage in community structures to increase their active participation and decision-making (especially in male-dominated settings).</b></li> <li><b>Women act as role models and leaders in non-traditional roles (as extension agents, aggregators, supervisors, marketers and trainers).</b></li> </ol>	<p>Economic empowerment is an entry point for broader social change at both household and community level. Projects should aim to work with women to identify potential leaders and encourage them to run for local elections.</p> <p>Ensure that women’s voices and needs are channelled in decision-making structures at community level as part of the governance of each project. This provides the space for women</p>	<p>This section highlights a few n some selected examples of Gender transformative approaches (GTA) in WEE programming, building on the explanation in Section 3: From Theory to Practice. Clearly WEE gender transformative programming is not restricted to these selected examples only. GTA in WEE programming is covered throughout the document and under the different sections, including the thematic learning section.</p> <p>Throughout the last five years <b>WEE programming in Jordan, West Bank and Gaza, Bosnia, Herzegovina and</b></p>

<p><b>in addition to individual gender-equitable behavior.</b></p>	<p><b>3. Real change in household economic decision-making and control over income or assets.</b></p> <p><b>4. Influencing private sector policies or practices towards serving the interests/needs of women. this includes encouraging private sector actors to change product/service offerings to meet the needs of female consumers (as expressed by consumer demand surveys)</b></p>	<p>to learn, test their potential and channel their demands not only at CBO, but also at community level.</p> <p>While changing decision-making at household level requires a long time, it is very important to track how WEE programming is contributing to changes in the decision-making process (e.g. Joint decision making or women being consulted). This can be achieved through engaging men and boys throughout project activities and through activities that addressed them specifically.</p>	<p><b>Serbia</b> has contributed to change relevant policies affecting women as economic leaders. Through partnering with women organizations, several women reached decision-making positions at local and district levels, ensuring that women’s voices are heard. These women were mainly elected by their peers who trusted their abilities and wanted to ensure that their needs and demands are effectively voiced in local structures and fora.</p> <p>Through the <b>Obader project</b>, female entrepreneurs are not only accessing customized service packages, but are also forming national advocacy sectoral bodies that are connected to decision makers so as to channel their demands for more pro-women business enabling environment policies.</p> <p>In <b>CARE Balkans</b> the project team combined public decision-making power with WEE in a very innovative way. In one of the projects, women were requested to return a portion of their start up grant (usually 20%) back to the community, once their business made a profit. Normally this money would be given to the municipality. However, CARE Balkans decided to put women themselves in charge of allocating these community contributions. Women discussed and decided on potential beneficiaries’ selection criteria, poverty lines, social aspects, gender aspects, etc. This not only built women’s confidence but also contributed to a change in perception around their roles (from being seen as vulnerable seasonal agricultural workers to effective community decision makers).</p> <p><b>CARE Georgia</b> targeted women with special needs not as aid recipients but as agents of change. The project designed income generating activities for women to increase their income and build their agency. They were fully in charge of the project management.</p>
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Work was followed up with other actors including their families, private sector, municipalities, finance institutions, etc. The community's perception of women with special needs shifted completely. The group's social enterprise products are in demand and consumers are very happy with the quality. Women are sought after as key speakers at public events, speaking on topics such as their demands and needs. They further decide with municipalities on which community projects to prioritize.

In Souqona project and within the vegetables value chains the baselines showed that only 3% of women take decisions related to the value chain; and 18% take household decisions. Men initially held the view that women lacked the skills and knowledge required to take decisions. **Souqona** implemented women led school farms aimed at demonstrating women's skills and potentials in initiating, managing and deciding on business and innovation techniques to be adopted. These successful demonstrations not only served to change perceptions about women's skills, capabilities and knowledge as business actors, but they also proved that women can drive and own innovations. These workshops were accompanied by agency training that addressed both women and men. The documented impact of this activity showed an increase in women's decision-making power at household level not only in relation to the selection of inputs, but also to decisions related to other household matters.