

 Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Value Chain Development: A Complementary Guide



► Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Value Chain Development: A Complementary Guide Copyright © International Labour Organization 2022 First published 2022

Publications of the International Labour Organization (ILO) enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to ILO Publishing (Rights and Licensing), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: rights@ilo.org. The ILO welcomes such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered with a reproduction rights organization may make copies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose. Visit www.ifrro.org to find the reproduction rights organization in your country.

ISBN: 978-92-2-036943-2 (web PDF)

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ILO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the ILO of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the ILO, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

Information on ILO publications and digital products can be found at: www.ilo.org/publns.

Produced by the Document and Publications Production, Printing and Distribution Unit (PRODOC) of the ILO.

Graphic and typographic design, layout and composition, printing, electronic publishing and distribution.

PRODOC endeavours to use paper sourced from forests managed in an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible manner.

Code: MAS-PMSERV

Acknowledgements

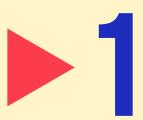
This guide was commissioned by the International Labour Organization's Women's Entrepreneurship Development programme (https://ilo.org/wed) and authored by Aatif Somji, with valuable inputs from Amelie Duval, Steve Hartritch, Eva Majurin, Virginia Rose-Losada and Adriana Sierra Leal. Appreciation is extended to the projects, both internal and external to the ILO, that are implementing gender-responsive market-systems development interventions and practitioners who have taken the time to share their approaches and results to inform this guide. To you reader, we thank you for being here and hope that with this guide you find inspiration and practical recommendations to support women's meaningful participation in value chains.

► Table of Contents

•	Acknowledgements	3
>	1. Introduction: Value Chain Development and Gender Equality	6
>	2. Strategy: Select Sectors and Decent Work Objectives	8
	2.1 Define the target group and the decent work objectives	9
	2.2 Establish sector selection criteria	13
	2.3 Shortlist sectors	18
	2.4 Scope sectors	20
	2.5 Stakeholder engagement and participatory decision-making	23
>	3. Analysis: Understand the Root Causes of Decent Work Deficits	24
	3.1 Map core value chain and understand decent work deficits	25
	3.2 Analyse constraints to sector performance	30
	3.3 Develop a systemic change vision and validate with stakeholders	34
>	4. Action: Intervene to Improve Value Chain Performance	35
	4.1 Design interventions	36
	4.2 Find partners for initial pilots	39
	4.3 Measure, learn and adapt	42
	4.4 Embed systems change	45
>	Conclusion	46
	Bibliography	48

List of boxes

Box 1:	What is a gender-sensitive approach?	6
Box 2:	Gender and decent work deficits	. 11
Box 3:	Gender roles and decent work in the construction sector	.12
Box 4:	Women in the renewable energy sector in Somalia	. 13
Box 5:	Peace and gender-responsive value chain development in fragile settings	.18
Box 6:	Research team competencies for a gender-sensitive approach	.19
Box 7:	A gender-sensitive approach to data collection – checklist	.21
Box 8:	Gender-sensitive sector selection in practice, Ghana	.22
Box 9:	Guiding questions for gender-sensitive value chain mapping	.26
Box 10:	Disaster resilience and gender-responsive VCD	.29
Box 11:	Getting to the root cause of a gender-based constraint – an example from Ethiopia	.32
Box 12:	Value chain development and unpaid care work	.33
Box 13:	Gender equality and women's economic empowerment	.37
Box 14:	Guiding questions for gender-sensitive programme implementation	.38
Box 15:	Partnerships and commercial incentives – an example for Pakistan	.40
Box 16:	Partnerships and political incentives – an example from Georgia	.41
Box 17:	Six dimensions of women's economic empowerment	.42
Box 18:	An example: Strengthening the capacity of women led cooperatives in selected value chair to become agents of peacebuilding in post-conflict Sri Lanka	



Introduction: Value Chain Development and Gender Equality

Value chain development and gender equality: two goals that are deeply intertwined, yet often understood separately by international development organisations. Improvements in gender equality and value chain development can be mutually reinforcing, as gender relations shape – and are shaped by – value chain functions at all levels, including at the supply and demand dynamics, supporting functions, and rules and regulations.

In reality, value chain development – by enhancing the potential for growth, job creation and poverty reduction within a sector – can shape the way that resources and power are distributed across and within communities. Without proper attention to gender dynamics, this can risk exacerbating gender inequalities and causing harm. Conversely, a **gender-sensitive approach** to value chain development seeks to proactively improve gender equality.

Box 1: What is a gendersensitive approach? 1

A gender-sensitive approach to value chain development is one that acknowledges gender norms, roles and relations for women and men, and how these affect access to and control over resources. It considers women's and men's specific needs and seeks to promote progressive changes in gender relations towards the ultimate goal of gender equality.

Throughout the text are symbols that provide users with a quick reference on:



Key tips and tricks, based on past experiences



Real life examples and case studies to illustrate concepts and tools



Suggestions for further reading



Key skills and competencies for value chain development²

¹ WHO (2011)

² Based on the BEAM Exchange framework, which is a catalogue of the full range of knowledge, skills and aptitudes found in high-performing teams that use the market systems approach.

There are at least three convincing arguments why we should adopt a gender-sensitive approach to value chain development. ³

- Good Practice: Inclusive growth and poverty alleviation are often the overarching goals of value chain development programmes and international development organisations. Failing to consider large subsets of the population – most notably women – simply makes it less likely to achieve these goals. Gender-sensitive programming is good programming.
- 2. Social Justice: All people should have equal rights and equal opportunities to thrive, regardless of their gender. Following this logic, value chain interventions should seek at the very least to benefit men and women equally, if not to prioritise those groups who have historically been marginalised. Gendersensitive programming is the right thing to do.
- 3. Business Case: Gender inequalities are effectively a missed business opportunity for enterprises within the value chain, whether from a consumer, producer or employee perspective. Moreover, women often play a critical role, visible or invisible, in value chains and therefore have a key part in their upgrading strategies. Gender-sensitive programming makes business sense.

The purpose of this short guide is to help value chain development practitioners implement such a gender-sensitive approach, providing practical guidance and recommendations that are grounded in previous experiences. It serves as a complementary guide, intended to be used in tandem with the ILO's *Value Chain Development for Decent Work (VCD) Guide* ⁴ – which itself gives a comprehensive overview of the entire value chain development process.

While a fully gender-sensitive approach to value chain development should seek to understand the specific gendered challenges encountered by women <u>and</u> men, **this guide will focus primarily on women**. This is because in the absence of a gender-sensitive approach (i.e. in gender-blind interventions, or interventions that ignore the different roles, responsibilities, needs and priorities of women and men), **the default reference point is often based on men** and ignores the differences in resources and opportunities that women have available to them, as well as the specific constraints they might face.

The structure of this guidance document closely mirrors that of the *VCD Guide*. For this reason, the two are best read in parallel – using the *VCD Guide* as your core reference document and supplementing it with this gender-sensitive guidance. However, if you are short on time or already familiar with the contents of the *VCD Guide*, you may want to use the specific sections here as a stand-alone guide.

This guide focuses on each of the three key stages of the value chain development process: Strategy, Analysis and Action. The numbering of the different sections in this complementary guide correspond to those of the VCD Guide to make it easier for the reader to follow. Section two on **Strategy** looks at sector selection and the different ways this can be done to promote gender equality objectives. Section three on **Analysis** delves deeper into the specifics of conducting a gender-sensitive market systems analysis for a given sector. And finally, section four on **Action** considers the gender-related practicalities of the implementation phase.

³ Agri-ProFocus (2014)

⁴ ILO (2021a)



Strategy: Select Sectors and Decent Work Objectives

Sector selection, as the initial phase where projects decide which sectors to invest their time and financial resources into, is arguably the most important stage of the value chain development process at which to ensure a solid gender analysis. At each intermediate step, conscious action can be taken to promote a gender-sensitive approach.

2.1 Define the target group and the decent work objectives

Sometimes the target group and decent work objectives have already been decided by the programme donors. Other times, this is left for the programme to narrow down itself. Either way, it is worth keeping in mind how to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout.

Target group

If a specific, gender-based group, such as 'women', 'young men' or 'women refugees', is explicitly identified as the target, then it is important to make this group the key reference point for any decisions relating to sector selection. It is not enough simply to choose an economically promising sector without due regard to how its development might impact the target group, or what strategies might ensure the latter's positive inclusion in the value chain.

Even when women are not explicitly identified as the target group or where gender equality is not an explicit objective, for instance in projects focusing on 'youth' more generally, programmes should still aim to understand how gender norms, roles and power structures influence how women and men engage in different sectors and industries more broadly.

In either case, what can often be helpful to gather this level of detail is to include an overview profiling women's roles - both generally and within the sector or industry of study - and contrast it to that of men. Women's roles in a certain sector or value chain can be paid and unpaid, and can be productive (i.e. activities related to the production of goods for consumption or trade and income generation) and reproductive (i.e. activities associated with the maintenance and reproduction of labour and continuity of the family and community). While women's paid and productive roles might be more visible, it is also important to take into account their unpaid and reproductive roles, as these activities are also essential to the functioning of a value chain or economic sector.

For example, in a joint ILO-CAMFED market assessment of agricultural value chains in Northern Ghana⁵, a short chapter (see p.15) preceding sector selection explores the role of women in agriculture and across the various stages of agricultural value chains, from production to processing and selling in markets – gathered through a combination of desk and field research.



in Somalia⁶ uses available primary and secondary data to develop a profile of women entrepreneurs within the economy (see p.3): comparing women's and men's labour force participation; business ownership; levels of informality; and educational attainment; as well as specific gender-based constraints affecting women entrepreneurs such as family roles and discriminatory laws and institutions.



It's important to state here that 'women' are clearly not a single homogenous group. Women within a given region will often have different resources, needs, aspirations, and constraints. However, at this initial sector selection stage, it can be helpful to explore broader trends as they relate to men and women to provide a 'big picture' and help narrow down the selection process, before conducting a more thorough gender analysis in the Section 3.

Similarly, sometimes two or more groups are put together as a single target group, such as 'women and youth' or 'women and persons with disabilities'. If this is the case, it is important to make the distinction between these different groups by not treating them as one homogenous group and by considering the intersecting factors that make these groups have unique experiences, opportunities and challenges.

Decent work objectives

Decent work can be understood as the aspiration that all women and men are able to work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. In turn, **decent work deficits** are situations where this aspiration is not being met, and can include the following: ⁷

- 1. Lack of employment opportunities
- 2. Inadequate earnings and unproductive work
- 3. Indecent hours
- 4. Inability to combine work, family and personal life
- 5. Engaged in work that should be abolished
- 6. Lack of stability and security of work
- Unequal opportunity and treatment in employment
- 8. Unsafe work environment
- 9. Lack of social safety nets
- Lack of voice through workers' representation

While the overarching decent work objective of many value chain development programmes is primarily job creation or improved income, it is important that we do not encourage the creation or scaling up of low-quality jobs. The above list demonstrates the range of different ways that work can be indecent. As with the target group, programmes should try to understand how decent work deficits can have differential impacts across women and men.

▶ Box 2: Gender and decent work deficits

Below are some examples of how decent work deficits can affect women differently to men, which we should keep in mind when thinking about our decent work objectives:

1. Lack of employment opportunities

Women's rate of employment across the world averages just 42 per cent, compared to the corresponding men's figure of 68 per cent – a 26 percentage point gender gap.⁷

2. Inadequate earnings and unproductive work

Occupational segregation sees women who are employed over-represented in the lowest paid jobs, with women also more likely than men to live in extreme working poverty.⁸

4. Inability to combine work, family and personal life

Globally, women perform more than three times as much unpaid care work as men, which makes it more difficult to combine paid work with these other responsibilities.⁹

6. Lack of stability and security of work

Atypical hours and low-quality part-time work – including those taken on to accommodate family responsibilities – disproportionately penalise women. Women are more likely to be working fewer hours than men, and also more likely to work short hours against their choice (ILO, 2017).

8. Unsafe working environment

In a global survey conducted across 127 countries, more than one in ten women reported *abuse*, *harassment and discrimination* as a key challenge to their labour force participation – the second most important constraint behind work and family balance (ILO, 2017).

9. Lack of social safety nets

Across low and lower-middle income countries, a higher proportion of women are in informal employment than men. These women are often found in the most vulnerable employment situations, for instance as domestic workers, home-based workers or contributing family workers, which is compounded by the fact that they lack effective access to social protection and income security (ILO, 2018b).



Box 3: Gender roles and decent work in the construction sector

Gender norms, roles and relations often mean that women and men engage differently within sectors and value chains. For example, in the construction sector, men tend to be more involved in physical labour, making them more likely to experience workplace accidents. This means that the most important decent work deficits to address for **men** in this sector could include **occupational safety and health** and **access to social protection**. Women in the construction sector, meanwhile, are more likely to experience barriers to entry to jobs in the sector – and where they are able to enter, they are less likely to be engaged in the same type of physical labour as men. This means that the decent work deficits of most importance to address for **women** in this sector could include **availability of jobs**, **job security** and potentially the risk of **violence and harassment in the workplace**.

As with all development programmes, resources are finite – so it's unlikely that we can target all the decent work deficits that are identified. What is important is to recognise the different deficits at stake and how they affect women and men (see Box 3), in order to prioritise those deficits deemed most important for the programme, partners and donors.

By this step, programmes should be able to establish a clear understanding of their target group, a high-level analysis of the different roles played by women and men in the area of study, and an appreciation for how decent work deficits may affect these groups differently.

2.2 Establish sector selection criteria

The next step is to develop criteria in order to select which sector(s) to work in. Before diving into the specific criteria, it's worth considering the broader gender equality objectives of the programme. In some instances, programmes might not have any specific gender equality objectives, focusing on broader goals such as 'more and better jobs' or 'spurring growth in more productive sectors'. In these cases, it is still good practice to consider how the choice of sector might impact women and men differently – which would require taking a gender-sensitive approach to sector selection.

In cases where programmes do have a specific gender equality focus, the dominant objective (either explicit or implied) tends to be promoting growth in existing, 'feminised' value chains - as this links easily to the 'traditional' value chain development methodology. However, alternative strategies can also be pursued, with corresponding implications for sector selection. For example, the initial scoping study on renewable energy in Somalia⁸, which served as a precursor to the sectoral women's entrepreneurship development assessment, highlighted the lack of skills in this new sector as an opportunity to promote the inclusion of women in technical and business skills training (see Box 4).



Box 4: Women in the renewable energy sector in Somalia

The power sector has traditionally been a male-dominated domain, but Somalia's renewable energy sector is in the unique position that skills need to be developed from the ground up. Gender disparities can therefore be minimised from the outset by promoting the inclusion of women in technical and business skills training, while giving due consideration to socio-cultural norms, arrangements and behaviours.

Key considerations for sector selection according to gender equality objective

The below table outlines some of the key sector selection considerations based on different gender equality objectives.

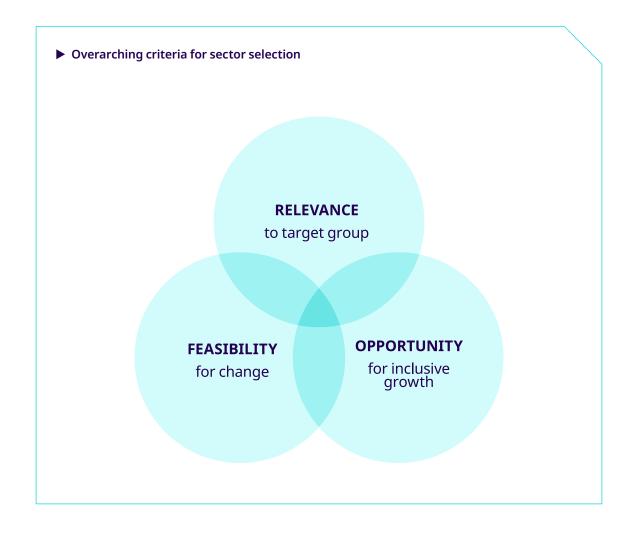
Gender equality objective	Sector selection considerations
Promote growth in existing, female dominated sector	The sector selection should short-list sectors whose growth will continue to have a net-positive impact on female-dominated sectors. Selection criteria should then look at which of these sectors holds the highest potential for creating decent work.
Encourage female employment in male dominated sector	The sector selection should short-list high growth potential sectors that are currently male dominated, assessing the opportunity to increase female participation by, for example, taking into account entry barriers and capital requirements, and flagging sectors where gender roles and norms might make it too difficult for women to enter.
3. Improve value addition to women in mixed sector	The sector selection should target high-potential sectors where women & men are both involved in the value chain, but most value addition accrues to male-dominated roles (e.g., aggregation or processing of agricultural products).
4. Promote female employment in a 'new' sector	Sector selection should identify 'new' or emergent sectors where norms around gender roles may not yet be established / are fluid enough to be shaped by market actors – and try to promote decent work for women in these sectors.

Moving on to the sector selection criteria, the *VCD Guide* suggests value chain projects use three overarching criteria:

- ▶ Relevance to the target group: potential for the target group in the sector, and the nature of the decent work challenges they are facing.
- ▶ **Opportunity** for inclusive growth: opportunities to create more and better jobs in the core value chain through growth in the sector and access to new markets.
- ▶ **Feasibility** for change: the extent to which a project will be able to facilitate change given the sector and country context.

The *Guide* notes the considerable flexibility these overarching criteria afford programmes in shaping them to their own objectives. For each of the three criteria, specific sub-criteria and guiding questions can be used to mainstream a gender-sensitive approach, based on the particular gender equality objective(s) outlined above.

To provide programmes with some practical guidance on how to take a more gender-sensitive approach to the sector selection process, the below table provides a **menu of guiding questions** across the three core criteria outlined above, along with some suggested sub-criteria. The goal is that these guiding questions can be used as a starting point for practitioners to develop their own research plan, based on the scope of the programme.



Guiding Questions for Gender-Sensitive Sector Selection Criteria

CRITERIA	GUIDING QUESTIONS
Relevance	
1. Presence of target group	How many women are employed within the sector; what proportion does this represent of total employment in the sector?
	► How do women participate in the sector?
	Where are women positioned in the sector and what are their main roles (i.e. paid, unpaid, productive, reproductive).
2. Aspirations	➤ To what extent do women aspire to work in this sector?
	What are the gender-specific barriers faced in this regard (e.g., social norms)?
Opportunity	
3. Impact and scale	What are growth expectations for the sector, what's driving those trends?
	What impact would development of the value chain have on the employment of women and the economy (if possible, consider women's unpaid work)?
	If agricultural focus, are there good climatic conditions for the sector, including whether it will help build climate resilience or mitigate the effects of climate change, including for women?
	Will the sector be a driver of broader growth through investment in complementary sectors/ services, including sectors that have high participation of women?
	Are there strong opportunities to link the sector to wider markets (regional, national, international)?
4. Decent work	Is there potential to create quality jobs for women and improve income and/or quality of existing jobs?
	► How soon could that impact be achieved?
	To what extent can more jobs be created in this sector for the women, e.g., as farmers, microentrepreneurs, employees?

Feasibility

5. Capacity of market actors

- Do market actors have the required skills and resources to stimulate positive change towards gender equality in the market system?
- ► Have there been significant investments and/or innovations in the sector, or any significant investments towards women's economic inclusion?
- Are there any potential negative consequences of selecting this sector (e.g., distortion of food security, greater unpaid work burden for women) that would need to be mitigated?
- ➤ What are the market access barriers, especially for **women** (i.e. are market actors willing to hire / source from / support women?

6. Willingness to change

- Do market actors have the right incentives to change their behaviour, and particularly towards women's economic inclusion?
- > Are there market system players that can facilitate large-scale change?
- ► How realistic is it that addressing constraints leads to other market actors adopting similar approaches to create positive systemic change?

7. Existing programmes

- ▶ Which donor-funded programmes are present, and are there any targeting women's economic inclusion?
- > Are they complementary to the programme?
- If so, is there potential to leverage these?
- ► If not, are they distorting the market system to a point where the sector should not be selected?

At the end of this step, programmes should be able to articulate their gender equality objective(s) and clearly define a set of gender-sensitive selection criteria along the overarching criteria of relevance, opportunity and feasibility with which to score potential sectors.

▶ Box 5: Peace and gender-responsive value chain development in fragile settings

In fragile and conflict-affected settings, it is essential that value chain development is done in a conflict-sensitive and peace and gender-responsive way. Initiatives that are based on a good understanding of peace, conflict and gender dynamics are more likely to achieve their decent work and employment goals, and also contribute to gender equality and peacebuilding. On the other hand, programming that is not well informed will find it hard to make a concrete contribution to gender equality, peace and decent work, and is likely to fail.

- **Peace-responsiveness** refers to the ability of actors operating in conflict-affected or fragile contexts to be conflict sensitive and deliberately contribute to sustainable peace through their technical programming, in accordance with their mandates. This means deliberately addressing drivers of conflict and strengthening capacities for peace. A peace-responsive approach intentionally supports inclusive and locally-led change and strengthens societal resilience to conflict and violence.
- ▶ Example of a conflict and gender insensitive VCD programme: The programme focuses on economic sectors dominated by men from one ethnicity, thus inadvertently increasing their dominance of the political economy, reinforcing gender inequalities and resentment and a sense of exclusion and grievance among other groups.
- ▶ Example of a peace and genderresponsive VCD programme: Sectors for value chain programmes are chosen because they offer opportunities for employment and business development for women and men from all ethnic groups, including those currently marginalized in the economy, and take into account the gender-sensitive sector selection criteria in table 2.

2.3 Shortlist sectors

The next step is to apply our established gendersensitive selection criteria and sub-criteria, gathering preliminary information to go from a long list of potential sectors to a shortlist.

For the long list, it can be useful to **leverage local knowledge from your research team**, as well as relevant secondary data, to list the set of possible sectors your target group could be involved in based on what is feasible in the geographical region of study.

For example, in the Ghana market assessment of agricultural value chains for young women, which focused predominantly on promoting growth in existing, female dominant sectors (gender equality objective 1) while also considering improving value addition to females in mixed sector (objective 3), the research team established a long list of twenty-five agricultural value chains (or sub-sectors) relevant to young women in the north of the country. This long list was then narrowed down to a shortlist of three through a review of the relative pros and cons of the different sub-sectors as they related to the gender-sensitive selection criteria – with information being gathered through key informant interviews, local knowledge of the team and desk research (see Box 8 for further information on this example).



Box 6: Research team competencies for a gender-sensitive approach

There are a few simple steps you can take when forming your research team to ensure a good spread of competencies to improve the potential for a gender-sensitive approach:

Local knowledge

Do you have team members who are part of the local community?

This will help facilitate access to different members of the community during your research. Having people on your team who can speak the language will also make communication easier and will often mean there is a shared culture and understanding – which can then be 'translated' or made clear to the rest of the team to improve the overall quality of the research.

Gender balance

Do you have a diverse and gender balanced research team?

This will encourage a gender-sensitive approach by allowing the team to better understand the gender dynamics at play – especially relevant in gender-segregated societies where a lack of gender balance in the team will significantly restrict access to collecting data from both women and men.

Expertise on Gender

Do you have some level of gender expertise amongst the team? If not, can you draw on expertise from other colleagues?

This will allow the team to draw on specific technical expertise to combine insights from the data gathering process with a clear analytical framework for assessing gender relations. If this is not possible, there should at least be an awareness amongst the team of the importance of taking a gender-sensitive approach and colleagues outside of the research team that can be consulted on such matters.

At the end of this step, programmes should have a gender-sensitive, evidence-based shortlist of sectors deemed most promising for further investigation.

2.4 Scope sectors

This step entails carrying out a more thorough review of the shortlisted sectors to determine which hold the greatest potential for improved decent work outcomes for your target group. Often, this takes the form of a Rapid Market **Assessment (RMA).** A rapid market assessment goes deeper than the initial shortlisting in terms of level of detail and consists of assessing which sectors are most likely to fulfil the specific sector selection criteria and project objectives. Its purpose is to narrow down the shortlisted sectors, concluding with an evidence-based justification for the choice of sector(s), and even specific subsectors, for intervention. An RMA uses various data sources: desk research, interviews and group discussions with a wide range of market actors.

It is important that a **gender-sensitive approach to data collection** is taken throughout, which can be done by factoring in a few basic considerations, outlined in the checklist below. Note that these considerations are equally important for the analysis section going forward.

It's a good idea to keep your gender-sensitive sector selection criteria and guiding questions at hand when you collect your data to help focus your research during the RMA and dig deeper into gender norms, roles and relations. Once you have collected the relevant data, you can analyse your findings against these criteria to determine the final selection of value chains and even identify emergent constraints within their market systems.



A gender-sensitive approach to data collection – checklist

Sexdisaggregated

For secondary data sources, have you sought out statistics separated by sex (i.e., male and female, and where culturally appropriate and data is available, including non-binary or other options)? If these are not available, have you tried looking for similar data from comparable sectors in the same country, or data from the same sector in neighbouring countries as a proxy?

This helps us understand the differential situations that may be experienced by women and men within the sector.

For **primary data** collection, have you recorded whether the information you collect is coming from men or women?

A simple M/F can help code your data and enable a basic gender-based analysis.

Analysis of gender roles

Have you tried to understand how women and men are affected differently within and across sectors?

For instance, women and men might be concentrated at different stages of the value chain, or they might even experience different challenges within the same roles. If in doubt, ask women and men! You might start by asking what the overall representation is of women and men in the sector; whether the roles commonly carried out by women and men differ, and if so how; and what the key challenges to decent work faced by women and men in the sector are.

Diverse viewpoints

Have you proactively sought a diverse set of views which accurately represent the women and men you are targeting in your programme?

Engaging with diverse groups will reveal different lived realities. Intersectionality is also important here – recognising that it is not enough simply to ask men and women per se, but also to solicit the views of people across different social strata like age, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, etc.

Mixed methods

Have you used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data?

This is good practice in general, but even more important from a gender perspective because it helps us to go beyond the 'what' to understand the 'how' and 'why' of gender relations.

Practical considerations

Have you considered the more practical aspects which may restrict participation along gender lines and bias the data collected?

For instance, taking into account the potential time and mobility constraints faced by men and (more often) women when planning the timing and location of interviews and focus group discussions.

What potential actions can you take to overcome these constraints?

Such as providing transport to the meeting venue and organising free on-site childcare so those with care responsibilities can also meaningfully participate.



Box 8: Gender-sensitive sector selection in practice - an example from Ghana

Continuing with the ILO-CAMFED market assessment of agricultural value chains for young women in northern Ghana, based on the initial assessment the research team narrowed the long list of 25 potential 'sub-sectors' within the agricultural sector down to three: **shea nut**, **groundnut**, and a **vegetable** portfolio including tomato, chilli, onion and okra.

Based on this initial shortlisting, a scoping exercise took place using desk and field research. For the field research, a team of two local Ghanaians – one male and one female – conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions with a diverse range of stakeholders including government staff; university researchers; current and prospective female value chain participants including farmers, processors and retailers; women's producers associations and cooperatives; women's village savings and loan associations (VSLAs).

The team sought diverse opinions from men and women working in the value chains. For most of their discussions, the research team organised in advance with respondents to meet them at their place of work at a convenient hour, thereby mitigating potential time and mobility constraints. Based on the detailed scoping exercise, each prospective value chain was then given a score of 1-3 by the research team across the three criteria, similar to a red-amber-green rating system, with the subsequent ranking of sectors reflected in table below.

Value Chain	Relevance	Opportunity	Feasibility	TOTAL
Shea Nut	3	3	2	8
Groundnut	2	2	2	6
Vegetables	1	2	2	5

Data collected showed **Shea Nut** was highly <u>relevant</u> to the target group, as a 'feminised' sector with many success stories of women-owned MSMEs that positively shaped the aspirations of young women to work in the sector. There were good growth opportunities given the demand for Ghanaian shea, particularly valued for its high stearin and total fat content in international cosmetic markets. A large number of intermediaries adding cost rather than value presented a potential challenge to development of the value chain related to the <u>opportunity</u> criteria, while the high number of donor programmes also represented a potential <u>feasibility</u> risk depending on whether these would complement a value chain development approach or effectively distort the local market.

Groundnut, meanwhile, was also traditionally regarded as a 'women's crop' and had large aggregate production in the north. However, plot sizes tended to be very small which could limit scale due to high search and aggregation costs. Women are also challenged at times of planting and harvesting because predominantly 'male' cereal crops (e.g., millet, sorghum) are customarily planted and harvested first, resulting in overwork for the women as well as potential post-harvest losses due to their limited time available to process groundnuts during the coinciding planting season for cereal crops.

Finally, **vegetables** was a relatively mixed sector with women and men both participating in similar roles. However, few young women aspired to work in the sector – which they deemed to be associated with poverty – and the opportunities for value addition were limited compared with the other two value chains. Quick returns could be made due to short gestation periods, though this was tempered by the limited shelf life of fresh produce without adequate cold storage facilities which could lead to significant post-harvest losses.

From this sector scoping exercise, the programme decided to explore the **shea nut and** groundnut as the most promising value chains for further analysis and action.

By this step, programmes should have developed a gender-sensitive, evidence-based justification for the selected sector(s) built around the key findings of the rapid market assessment.

2.5 Stakeholder engagement and participatory decision-making

The final step of the sector selection process is to validate the choice of sector(s) with local stakeholders. It provides an opportunity to present the key findings of the analysis and build consensus around the final selection. From a gender perspective, two key questions are important to consider: who attends the meeting and who gets a say during it?

The first part is about the invitees. Be deliberate about who you want to be present at the validation workshop, and consider inviting various groups that represent women within the sector and beyond. Have invitations been extended to all those who were consulted during the research? Does this include women entrepreneurs, women's business associations/cooperatives, women's groups and gender specialists from international development organisations?

Looking beyond invitations, have you made additional considerations to encourage actual attendance – such as timing, location,

Here, it is good to tap into the local knowledge of your research team to help organise the logistics of the workshop.

transport and childcare (as discussed in Box 7)?

The second part is about the discussion. It's important not to let certain groups dominate the discussion and steer it into their favour. Oftentimes, men will dominate the conversation so even if women are in attendance their voices and opinions may not be heard. This is where facilitation skills come in, with an accomplished facilitator being able to encourage genderbalanced participation in discussions and create space for women (and men) to share their opinions. This could be through smaller breakout groups to encourage active participation, or different ways of collecting feedback - such as using written as well as verbal inputs. In some contexts, particularly those with more socially conservative norms, it may even be appropriate to conduct separate sessions with men and women to elicit their full feedback.

At the conclusion of this step, programmes should have built consensus around the final choice of sector(s) and generated buy-in from local stakeholders.



Analysis: Understand the Root Causes of Decent Work Deficits

The analysis phase drills down on how to conduct a gender-sensitive market systems analysis of a given sector. In many ways, the steps taken in this section follow those of the previous one on sector selection, but with greater detail on mapping the value chain, understanding the wider market system and analysing the key constraints to sector performance. For each of these steps, additional considerations can be taken into account to promote a gender-sensitive approach.

3.1 Map core value chain and understand decent work deficits

The first step is a value chain mapping exercise. This helps provide a clearer picture of the value chain by unpacking the end-to-end transactions and relationships involved for a given product or service, from raw materials and producers all the way through to final retail and end-users.

A gender-sensitive value chain mapping uncovers key insights into the gendered division of labour along the value chain. When done properly, it also helps to make women's work visible: given that much of the labour women contribute to value chains may be unpaid, unrecognised, or 'hidden' in the informal economy.¹⁰

To do this, you can follow the same procedure outlined in the VCD Guide, considering the:

- ▶ **Process** through which the product/service goes until it reaches the end customer.
- ▶ **Key market actors** involved in the core value chain transactions.
- ▶ Value addition that takes place at each step in the chain.
- ▶ Market channels through which the product/ service gets to the end user.
- ▶ **Relationships between actors** in the core value chain and their characteristics.
- ► Information about prices and financial flows at and between different levels.

Before and during your consideration of these elements, we recommend you use the following quiding questions relating to gender.

You may be able to find some of this information from secondary sources, particularly if other organisations have conducted similar studies. However, given that a lot of the information we are trying to uncover is not so evident - such as the 'invisible' labour women provide – it may be **best** to have questions formulated and prepared on these topics and talk to women and men along the value chain to get this information firsthand.

The mapping can be presented as a narrative text, but is far more effective when shown visually in the form of a value chain map. Gender-based differences can then be highlighted by using different icons and/or colours to represent men and women, with different sizes signifying the different proportions present at each stage. This makes it immediately clear whether women are equally involved at each stage of the value chain or whether they are concentrated only in certain parts within it.11

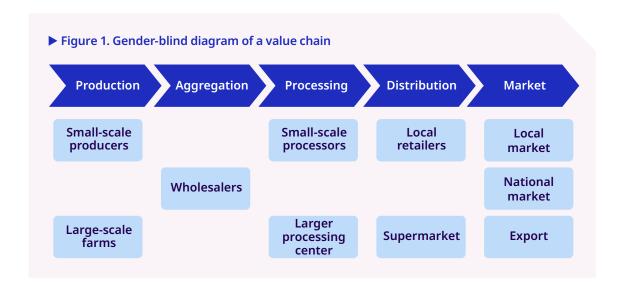
There is no hard and fast rule on how to visually represent a value chain map in a gendersensitive way, so this is an opportunity for the team to get creative! For inspiration, here is an illustrative example from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (in red), contrasted with the same value chain illustrated with a basic, gender-blind mapping (in blue).

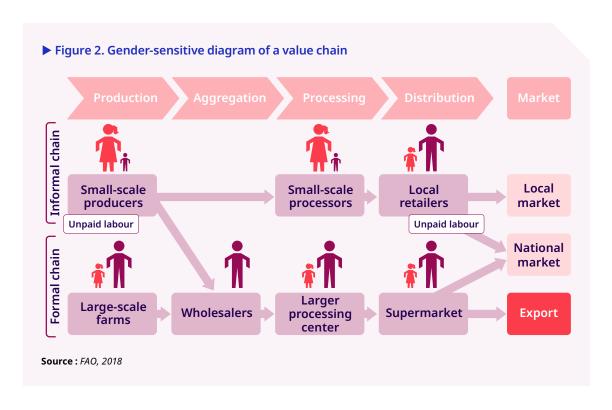


Guiding questions for gender-sensitive value chain mapping

What is the proportion of women and	l men employed	d at each stage in the chain?
-------------------------------------	----------------	-------------------------------

- ▶ Roughly what proportion of the businesses involved at each stage are owned by women and men?
- ► Are women and men paid equally for tasks of equal value?
- ▶ Are there gender differences relating to value addition? For instance, are women generally concentrated in lower value-added stages or lower-paying positions?
- ► Are women more likely to be in informal employment?
- ▶ Which market actors have the greatest market power across sector, such as price setters, and is this to the detriment of women working in the chain?
- ▶ Do women and men working in the value chain have different channels to market? If so, what are some of the key differences in their characteristics (e.g., size of market, number of competitors, quality requirements)?
- ► To what extent does women's unpaid labour (e.g., as family labourers or contributing to a family business) influence the value chain?





As is clear in the gender-sensitive mapping, women and men are represented with red and **black icons** respectively, with the **size of the icons** depicting the relative proportion of women and men at each stage. Notice how the value chain has also been separated into a formal and **informal chain**, with men dominating the former and women the latter. The different channels to **market** are shown through the different arrows. Finally, women's unpaid labour* has been taken into account, demonstrating where women are not remunerated for their work and have little or no control over the income generated.¹²

A secondary part to this step is to refer back to the **decent work deficits** first explored in section 2.1. Now that the focus is firmly on a given sector, it's important to revisit the potential decent work deficits at stake as well as try to understand how women and men at the different steps along the value chain may be experiencing different work deficits. Use your initial gender-sensitive research and analysis, as well as the guidance in boxes 2 and 9, to explore how women and men may be facing particular additional decent work deficits due to their unique position within the value chain, or perhaps because of prevalent social norms relating to gender.

As with sector selection, the point here is not to address all the deficits, but rather to recognise the extent to which different decent work deficits are affecting women and men differently across the value chain so that the programme can 'zero in' on those deemed of greatest priority.

Women's unpaid labour refers here to unremunerated work contributing directly to the value chain – for instance as a family labourer or contributing to a family business - rather than the unpaid care and domestic work that underpins all value chains and indeed society as a whole.

At the end of this step, programmes should have a clear understanding of the main actors, transactions and processes involved across the value chain, and how gender relations and decent work deficits intersect these.



Box 10: Disaster resilience and gender-responsive VCD

Women are often the hardest hit in terms of socio-economic impacts of both sudden-or slow-onset disasters and climate change. This disproportionate exposure and vulnerability is explained by several factors, including lower levels of access to economic resources, education and information. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and responses to disasters also have gender dimensions, as women's needs and preferences may be neglected in the planning and provision of support. Taking into account gender in disaster responses is essential given not only the gendered vulnerabilities in such crises, but also to leverage women's knowledge, skills and experiences as a means of enhancing the equitability and effectiveness of disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Calls to enhance gender mainstreaming in responding and building resilience to disasters are increasing. ILO Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience (2017) highlights the need to recognize that crises affect women and men differently, and the critical importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in preventing and responding to crises, enabling recovery and building resilience. Similarly, the 2021 UN joint study on gender equality and women's empowerment and leadership in DRR highlights, as one of its key recommendations, the need for innovation in supporting women's economic resilience.

In disaster-affected contexts, gender-responsive value chain development can be an essential mechanism for promoting resilience.

When designing and implementing value chain analysis/development interventions in such contexts, it is thus important to consider, among others:

- ▶ The relative disaster vulnerability and preparedness of sectors in which women's businesses operate, including support services, business networks and logistics;
- ▶ The availability of and access of women's businesses to BDS and other services for incorporating disaster risk management, including risk analyses for business location, disaster-resilient practices in the construction of workplaces, safe practices in business operations and procedures, and business continuity management in order to enable enterprises to prepare for and stay in operation in a sustainable manner in crisis situations.
- ▶ The availability of and access of women's businesses to financial services and risk transfer mechanisms such as insurance against extreme weather events.

3.2 Analyse constraints to sector performance

Once the value chain mapping is complete, the next step is to take a holistic view of the wider **market system**. This entails identifying the important *actors* and *factors*, beyond the core value chain, which strongly influence the sector.

The *VCD Guide* shows how the market systems diagram – the so-called 'doughnut' – can be used to outline the various **supporting functions** and **rules** surrounding the core value chain. This helps us identify which are not working well and represent **key constraints** to the sector.

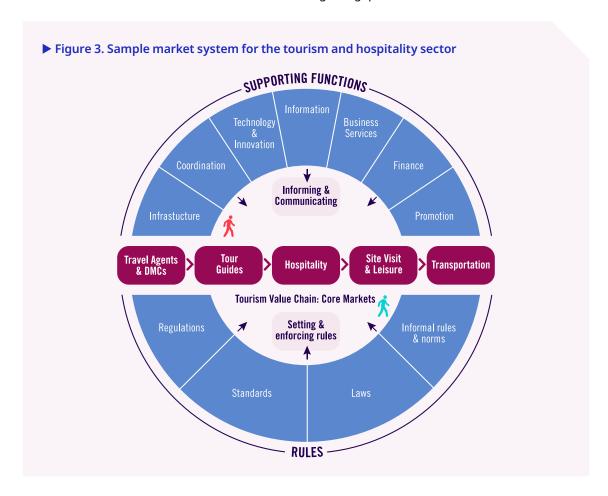
A gender-sensitive approach adds another dimension to this in the form of **gender-based constraints**: restrictions on women's access to resources and opportunities resulting from gender-based discrimination.¹³

Ultimately, this comes down to **access** and **agency**: Do women have equal <u>access</u> to skills, resources and economic institutions to compete

in markets, or are they confined to lower status, lower paying (or even unpaid) roles? Do they have the <u>agency</u> to make and act on decisions, control resources and manage their own time and total workload?

Gender-based constraints (GBCs) can manifest themselves across different parts of the market system. Just as for sector selection, it's important here to take a gender-sensitive approach to data collection – talking to women and men; seeking diverse viewpoints; disaggregating data by sex; analysing gender roles; having a gender-balanced research team and adapting the practical considerations of the research to encourage female participation (see Box 7).

The augmented 'doughnut' diagram below suggests some of the key areas in the market system where GBCs may exist, and what sort of quiding questions we can ask to determine them.



▶ Figure 4. Considering gender in elements of a market system

Technology and Innovation

- ▶ What is the gendered distribution of mobile phones and smartphone ownership?
- Do women have equal access to the relevant technology and training required to access key sector information and to develop their businesses (e.g., internet, smartphone, social media, etc.)

Infrastructure

- Do women have equal access to different modes of transport?
- Are women less likely to have their own means of transport?
- Are women limited in their mobility? Are they discouraged from travelling alone? How does this impact their access to markets and other critical functions for their work?
- Is there easy access to drinking water? What is the gendered distribution of labour for collecting water? How does this impact on women's time and total work?
- Is there sufficient social infrastructure, such as care services for children/the elderly?
- ► If not, who is carrying out these societal functions? Women or men? Paid or unpaid?

Coordination and Information

- ► What are the main coordination mechanisms within the sector or industry?
- What is the allocation of women and men in such associations? If not gender-balanced, why is this the case? Is it depriving women of access to important information and agency over decisions made around coordination?
- Are women present in leadership positions within industry coordination mechanisms in order to help voice their specific needs?

SUPPORTING FUNCTIONS Information Coordination **Promotion** Technology **Business** & Innovation Services & Skills Infrastructure **Finance** CORE VALUE CHAIN **Producers Processors** Retailers Consumers **Standards** Regulations Informal Laws rules & norms **RULES & REGULATIONS**

Informal Rules and Norms

- What are the social norms regarding gender roles and how might this adversely impact women and men across the market system? For instance, prevailing customs around interactions between men and women which means women are neglected as a market?
- Are gender stereotypes prevalent, such as those of men as breadwinners and women are caregivers?
- Do women face additional time and mobility constraints which prevent them from accessing critical services to grow their business in the sector?
- ▶ How is unpaid care and domestic work shared between women and men?
- ► Taking this work into account, is there a gender gap in total work (paid + unpaid) between men and women?
- Are women more likely to face violence and harassment in their work in the sector?
- ▶ Do women face other forms of gender-based discrimination?

Laws

- ▶ Do women have equal access to the sector and broader labour market under the law?
- ► Is this the case in practice? If not, what is limiting women's increased participation?
- Do women have equal rights to property, land and inheritance under the law?
- Is this the case in practice? If not, what may be causing gender gaps in ownership?
- Do women face any additional, gender-specific barriers to business registration and licensing? What are they and why might this be the case?
- Do women have the right to maternity leave and pay, and access to public childcare?

Business Services and Skills

- ▶ Who are the main clients of core business development support services such as: coaching; mentoring; consultancy services; entrepreneurship training; business management training; technical assistance and capacity building; business upgrading; financial literacy training; market linkages; and trade facilitation?
- If mostly men, what are some of the reasons why this is the case?
- ► Are the specific needs and constraints faced by women entrepreneurs catered to in these mainstream business services? Are there specific female-focused business development support service providers?
- ▶ Are there gender gaps in education and skill levels? For example, do men generally have higher skill levels for those most relevant to the sector? If so, why is this the case?

Finance

- ▶ Do women and men have equal access to finance?
- What proportion of clients of financial service providers that are female vs. male? How does this compare to the estimated proportion of women and men in the sector? Is it representative? If not, why might this be the case?
- What is the gendered division of loan requests (i.e., those asking for loans, rather than approved as clients)? Is this proportion similar? If not, why are disproportionately more women than men refused finance?
- What is stopping more women for attaining finance: are there common trends such as collateral requirements, ownership of business, financing only for larger businesses?

As with all constraints, it is important to understand and address the underlying root causes of gender-based constraints. Ultimately, this comes down to continually asking 'why' a certain situation is the case to get a deeper

understanding of what factors are causing it to occur – before establishing a plan of action for addressing the situation alongside existing market actors.



Box 11: Getting to the root cause of a gender-based constraint – an example from Ethiopia

The LI-WAY project in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia implemented by SNV and funded by SIDA aims to contribute to the joint goals of sustainable poverty reduction and social stability for women and youth through a market systems approach. During the project's initial market analysis, the research team identified a **cross-cutting gender-based constraint of women's limited participation in labour markets.**

One of the key contributing factors to this was women's **unpaid care and domestic responsibilities**. For instance, after giving birth, many women would drop out of the labour force to look after their child until they began primary school, a period of around four years – which would be repeated each time they had a baby. Meanwhile, those women who remained in work would engage in 'occupational downgrading' in order to balance their paid and unpaid work – resulting in poorer labour market outcomes.

Asking 'why' this was the case led the team to identify a lack of affordable social infrastructure for low-income women, particularly in the form of childcare services. Analysing the childcare market system, in turn, led them to a number of constraints in the supporting functions. For example, the high cost of childcare centres was linked to expensive rental prices in the capital city, with these costs being passed on to end consumers and effectively pricing out low-income groups.

Moreover, there was a **low supply of trained childcare professionals**, with most of these workers being snapped up as private nannies by richer families. The **low take-up of childcare training courses** was due to their high cost, again a function of **high rental prices**, and the fact that **adequate finance options for upskilling** were not available to the target group.

Based on this extensive constraints analysis, the LI-WAY team were able to propose **targeted interventions** addressing the root causes of the initial labour market constraint, focusing on how to facilitate affordable childcare services for young, low-income women by addressing the **infrastructure**, **skills**, and **finance** constraints identified in the childcare market system.

Labour Market System

Gender-based constraint:

- Women's unpaid care work
- Lack of social infrastructure (care services)

Childcare Market System

Key constraints:

- ► Infrastructure
- Skills
- ▶ Finance

Targeted Interventions

- ► Public-private partnerships for affordable rent
- ► Promotion and support for childcare training centers
- Engagement with financial service providers



Box 12: Value chain development and unpaid care work

One recurring constraint that appears in gender-sensitive value chain analyses is women's **unpaid care work**. This refers to unpaid services provided by an individual within a household or community for the benefit of its members, and includes elements such as cooking, washing, cleaning, looking after children and caring for elderly, sick or less able dependents. Globally, **women carry out more than three-quarters of all unpaid care work**, 3.2 times more than men.¹⁹

This gender gap in unpaid work has significant implications for value chain development programmes across their different stages. Beyond committing to undertaking a gender-sensitive market analysis, there are at least three ways programmes can consider unpaid care: ²⁰

1. Adapt programme delivery to take account for unpaid care work

This is about being aware of the unpaid care work constraints that women may have and their impact on their ability to participate in programme activities: from sector selection stage all the way through to analysis and implementation. By understanding these time and mobility constraints, programme activities can be designed to be more accessible to women.

Note: examples are given in the 'Practical Considerations' section of Box 7.

2. Design interventions to address specific constraints

This goes one step further: rather than simply *accommodating* unpaid care work in activities, programmes can design interventions specifically *targeting* the constraint. For instance, programmes may look at how they can facilitate improvements in the provision of and access to physical and social infrastructure (e.g., running water, cooking fuel, efficient cookstoves, childcare services).

Focus on unpaid care as a strategic market sector

Here, specific products or services related to care can be treated as systems in themselves, with a corresponding set of actors and factors in the core market, supporting functions and rules. These strategic sectors could then be a key focus of the programme, which would proactively be addressing gender-based constraints relating to women's unpaid care work through market solutions to them. Examples could include a local community electricity supply or childcare services.²¹

Source: BEAM Exchange (2016) Market Systems Approaches to Enabling Women's Economic Empowerment through Addressing Unpaid Care Work: Conceptual Framework.

By the end of this step, programmes should be able to analyse the wider market system, articulate the key gender-based constraints limiting women's access and agency in the sector and assess the potential root causes for them.

- 14 ILO (2018a)
- 15 BEAM Exchange (2016a)
- 16 For more on childcare services and market systems development, see ILO (2020d)

3.3 Develop a systemic change vision and validate with stakeholders

The final step of the analysis phase is about developing a vision for how the value chain can function better, based on a prioritisation of the key constraints you've identified. Prioritisation is important to ensuring that the programme is realistic in what it seeks to achieve and maintains a focus on its overall goals. This prioritisation is usually confirmed through a validation workshop, where the main stakeholders provide a 'sense check' of the findings uncovered through the analysis.

The VCD Guide covers the process well, but two additional factors are worth considering to ensure a gender perspective throughout the development of the vision.

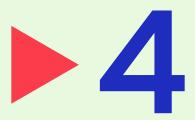
Firstly, it's important to consider the key questions of who attends and who gets a say, as explored in greater detail in section 2.4 on validation of sector choice. This is particularly important when presenting gender-based constraints in order to ensure they are given the attention they deserve by attendees. Aim to dedicate a specific session within the validation workshop to gender-based constraints in order to avoid that they are dismissed or 'glossed over' during discussions.

Moreover, an active, gender-balanced participation may help identify **gender 'blind spots'** – aspects that may have been overlooked during analysis. It also allows the programme to **test initial assumptions about the relative willingness and capacity** of different market system actors to engage in the proposed changes.

Secondly, the validation workshop is a space where all the important stakeholders from the sector are ideally present – which provides a unique opportunity for the programme to highlight and raise awareness of systemic gender-based constraints affecting women in the sector. By using this platform to raise such issues, key stakeholders such as government, employers and workers – as well as donors and international organisations – will be made aware of these constraints and hopefully commit to addressing them.

The end result is a clear vision of **who** are the key market actors that need to play new or improved roles; **what** specific behaviours or practices need to be introduced; and **how** these might come about.¹⁷

At the conclusion of this final step, programmes should have generated agreement with key stakeholders on the selected systemic constraints, including gender-based constraints, that the programme will seek to address, as well as the corresponding vision for systemic change.



Action: Intervene to Improve Value Chain Performance

This section takes us from analysis to action, covering the implementation phase where programmes aim to help bring about new practices, behaviours, and products to the benefit of the target group. This stage is incredibly context-specific, based on the findings and analysis of the value chain and market system assessments, the key constraints and their underlying root causes. For this reason, there is no step-by-step methodology or one-size-fits-all solution for implementation. However, a number of considerations can be made to ensure that a gender-sensitive approach is maintained throughout this important phase.

4.1 Design interventions

The first step in the implementation phase is designing specific interventions that seek to address the identified root causes. From a gender perspective, there are two distinct sets of interventions that can be employed.¹⁸

Gender mainstreamed interventions

These refer to instances where gender has been 'mainstreamed' across broader interventions that may not necessarily be targeting a specific *gender-based* constraint. They include taking into consideration the prevailing gender roles that women and men play within the community, the relative constraints they may face, and how the programme can adapt its activities to ensure that they reach women to an equal extent as men – using the gender-sensitive market analysis as the core knowledge base.

If we consider agricultural value chains, two examples of gender mainstreamed interventions

linked to the underlying constraint of **lack of information and access to inputs** are:

- Promotion and advertising of agricultural inputs (such as seeds, seedlings, biofertilizer) targeted specifically at women through different media channels (e.g., magazines, radio stations, TV channels) to those traditionally used for men.
- ii. Use of women sales agents to encourage women's equal access to inputs, information, services and markets compared with men – as was the case in the GROW project in Northern Ghana and PRISMA in Indonesia.

Gender overt interventions

These refer to targeted interventions aimed specifically at addressing key *gender-based* constraints. Sometimes, they are cross-cutting in nature – targeting constraints that adversely affect women across sectors and value chains. For this reason, these interventions tend to focus entirely on women as their target group.



Box 13: Gender equality and women's economic empowerment

The ultimate goal of a gender-sensitive approach is to facilitate progressive changes in gender relations in order to promote greater gender equality. Gender inequalities in the world of work, which manifest themselves as gender gaps, are invariably to the detriment of women.

Women's economic empowerment initiatives target improvements in the opportunities available to women (access) as well as their ability to take advantage of these opportunities (agency), both of which seek to reduce gender gaps and contribute to gender equality. 24

This is why women's economic empowerment is typically a core goal of gender-sensitive value chain and market systems development programmes, as a means to gender equality.

A good example of a gender overt intervention comes from the ALCP project in Georgia, a value chain development programme operating in the livestock sector. Based on their gendersensitive market analyses, the team identified women's lack of access to decision-making processes as a cross-cutting gender-based constraint - potentially **limiting women's** economic empowerment across all their **other interventions**. They therefore set about designing a gender overt intervention to positively influence women's participation within community and municipal meetings (see Box 16 for further details).

Other examples of gender overt interventions that programmes could implement include:

▶ Jointly commissioning market research on the business case for investing in the women's market segment, alongside businesses in the core value chain, business

- development service (BDS) providers and skills & educational institutions;
- ► Co-investment for piloting new ways of working which benefit women and de-risk these innovations for the market actors involved

While gender equality and women's empowerment are goals in and of themselves, the market systems development approach relies on working with partner incentives. Therefore, programmes should consider how best to make the case to existing market actors for gender-sensitive interventions. The Women's Empowerment and Market Systems framework¹⁹ provides a helpful set of guiding questions for programmes to consider when applying a gender-sensitive lens across the programme implementation phase (see box 14 below).

At the end of this step, programmes should be able to outline how their proposed interventions are responding to the systemic constraints identified during analysis and contributing to gender equality, either through gender mainstreamed or gender overt interventions.



Guiding questions for gender-sensitive programme implementation

- ▶ What is the business case for working with women in the sector, what is their value and contribution as customers, suppliers and service providers?
- ▶ Would engaging with women present a new business opportunity to partners? How can a programme incentivise partners to work with women?
- ➤ Is there value to the sector and to women if they take on enhanced or new roles?
- What are the challenges and risks for partners to engage with women? What can the programme do to mitigate the challenges and risks and create a demonstration effect in which partners can demonstrate positive results from engaging with women and encourage behavioural change across the market system?
- ► How will women's empowerment be impacted by involvement in the interventions? Will they have higher incomes, better jobs, improved access, increased control and decision-making, greater return on labour, more manageable workloads?
- ▶ What implementation challenges is the intervention likely to face? Are there critical barriers or challenges for women that will need to be addressed?
- ▶ What implementation opportunities will the intervention be able to leverage? Are there social norms that will facilitate the intervention (e.g., women's current roles and social attitudes that support women's work in the sector)?

Source: BEAM Exchange (2016) Women's Empowerment and Markets Systems: Concepts, Practical Guidance and Tools

4.2 Find partners for initial pilots

Having outlined your potential interventions, the next step is to identify whom to partner with in order to achieve these goals through 'pilots'. The task of the pilot phase is to test different innovations at small-scale and rapidly learning which are gaining most traction in order to scale up these interventions.

Ultimately, finding the right partners comes down to incentives: what are the motivations of market system actors to drive the desired positive change, and indeed sustain it beyond the programme's intervention period? You are already likely to have a good idea of many of the sector players' 'will' and 'skill' based on your interactions with them starting all the way back at sector selection and through the value chain, market system, and constraints analysis. Start by shortlisting potential partners based on this assessment.

From the perspective of gender-sensitive interventions, additional considerations should be reflected when considering will and skill. In terms of will, consider looking for partners who are already engaging with women or those who have clearly demonstrated that they are willing to include women in their interventions. Note that market actors tend to be aware of donor exigencies - including gender equality - and can therefore 'talk the talk' in this regard. So it is crucial to prioritise partners who also 'walk the walk' and have demonstrated their commitment through tangible action.

For this reason, you might also need to look beyond the usual market actors and consider women-specific groups such as women's cooperatives, business associations, and other actors with a focus on women. Sometimes, this may mean selecting partners who have relatively lower **skill**, particularly in terms of their capacity (human and financial resources) to adopt an innovation. This clearly has implications on the initial level of support required to boost capacity and get interventions off the ground. However, this should not deter programmes from engaging with such partners given their strong incentives to continue these practices, allowing successful innovations to be sustained beyond the programme intervention period.

'Incentives' in value chain development programming tend to be synonymous with 'profits', but this is not necessarily always the case. Other incentives might include better reputation, improving corporate sustainability and responsibility, and attracting a more diverse workforce. When considering the motivations of market system actors, it's important to recognise government as a key player: setting the 'rules of the game' and having a wide-ranging mandate critical for scale and sustainability.²⁰

Thus, you might be able to find intervention partners based not just on commercial incentives (see Box 15) but also on political incentives (see Box 16). Similarly, you might find other motivations such as the social incentives of a women's cooperative to provide additional services for its members. In sum, keep an open mind and be led by your discussions with diverse market system actors.

3

Box 15: Partnerships and commercial incentives – an example from Pakistan

The MDF programme is a value chain development project that works in the leather sector, amongst others, in Pakistan. Their gender-sensitive market analysis of the sector recognised:

- ▶ A labour constraint faced by leather companies due to the high turnover of the largely male workforce, leading to higher costs to attract, hire and train new personnel who may in turn also leave.
- ▶ **Gender-based constraints** faced by women that limit their participation in the sector, including socially conservative norms on their involvement in paid work, mixing with men in the maledominated workplace, and their unpaid care work responsibilities.

The MDF team identified the potential 'win-win' intervention of targeting female workers to join the leather sector: providing employment opportunities for women and mitigating the labour constraint that many companies in the sector were experiencing.

They sought to test this **business case** for hiring women with a large leather shoe manufacturer and exporter – based on the dual commercial incentives of **business benefits for retention of staff** as well as **improved compliance scores** for socially responsible practices, which could potentially open up new opportunities with international buyers. As a 'lead firm' in the industry, the company had strong **capacity** to invest in this intervention, along with the **incentives** to trial a new way of working to overcome their labour constraint.

MDF's offer was to help cost share the procurement of machinery for a **women-only stitching unit**, reducing the total investment made by the large shoe manufacturer which in turn covered all the costs associated with hiring and training new female workers, as well as providing an on-site childcare facility to alleviate their unpaid care responsibilities.



Box 16: Partnerships and political incentives – an example from Georgia

The ALCP programme, first introduced in the previous section, identified **women's lack of access to decision-making processes** as a key, cross-cutting gender-based constraint. Their proposed intervention to encourage greater political participation by women was to facilitate the introduction of **'Women's Rooms'**, dedicated spaces for women situated within the municipal building and funded by the municipal budget.

This was feasible due to the project **exploiting the political incentives of local municipal officials** from 'above' and 'below'. For the former, local officials felt **pressure from national government to put into practice pre-existing gender laws** and demonstrate positive impact on gender equality, given that Georgia was positioning itself for an Association Agreement with the European Union and had to report progress on indicators as a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). For the latter, local municipal officials were also motivated by the **potential to shore up additional votes from women** who viewed them as openly addressing their needs.

The ALCP offer of assistance in setting up the women's rooms combined with guidance for municipal representatives on how to include women in meetings was therefore **strongly aligned with the prevailing political incentives** and welcomed by the three local government municipalities identified for a pilot.

This step should end with the identification of initial pilot partners and a clearly defined offer of support or collaboration with them based on the alignment of incentives.

4.3 Measure, learn and adapt

Having established pilot interventions with market system actors, it's important to measure their intended effects. This is critical to ensure we are on the right track before attempting to take an innovation to scale, or to provide direction in how to **pivot** if we are not.

Based on your own intervention logic, you should already have a good idea of what you are seeking to improve. It's good practice to articulate this in a **results chain** – which shows the step-by-step process through which activities are expected to lead to outputs, outcomes and ultimately impact, including on women's economic empowerment and gender equality (see VCD Guide, p.68).

The multi-dimensional nature of decent work is well documented in the VCD Guide, and the same is true of gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Without a holistic understanding of what these mean, we risk failing to capture additional positive (or indeed negative) outcomes resulting from our intervention. At the same time, however, we cannot feasibly measure everything.

So what sort of data should we prioritise to monitor progress with regard to gender-based outcomes? Naturally, it depends on the intervention. At a minimum, monitoring and results data should be disaggregated by sex for all interventions. Beyond this, a few helpful themes can be drawn from the MDF programme's six dimensions of women's economic empowerment (see box 17 below).21

▶ Box 17: Six dimensions of women's economic empowerment

- 1. Influence on social norms: Changing perceptions of what women can and cannot do
- 2. Economic advancement: Increased incomes
- 3. Decision-making: Do women have freedom and authority over household income, workload, and
- 4. Functions and workloads: Can women take up new economic functions or improve existing ones; can they reconcile this with their existing workload; can their workload be reduced?
- 5. Access to opportunities: Do women have access to jobs and skills?
- 6. Access to assets, services: Do women have access to assets, services and other supports?

Source: MDF (2018) Beyond Income: A Critical Analysis of Agency Measurement in Economic Programming

Similarly, the ALCP programme in Georgia included indicators like the ability to input in decision-making on household expenditure; time use and the ability to make decisions regarding use of time; women and men's attitudes towards gender roles; and women's subjective well-being.²²

Put simply, we should aim to go beyond simple job creation and income metrics to get a better understanding of shifts in women's time, mobility, access and agency. This often requires going down to the household level, and collecting a combination of quantitative and qualitative data from women and men to understand not

only 'what' is changing but also 'how' and 'why' important both for attribution and to appreciate the pathways to change.

A final point to note here is on the importance of social norms: the attitudes and behaviours which influence gender relations. These are often identified as a constraint to greater gender equality in value chain analyses, yet interventions rarely seek to explicitly influence them. Even still, acknowledging them and tracking them over time could reveal significant improvements in gender equality and women's economic empowerment that may not have been foreseen by the programme.



Box 18: An example: Strengthening the capacity of women led cooperatives in selected value chains to become agents of peacebuilding in post-conflict Sri Lanka

The ILO-WFP 2018 project "Empower: Building Peace through the Economic Empowerment of Women in Northern Sri Lanka", funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, aims to enhance economic empowerment, social integration, and resilience of female former combatants and other disadvantaged and conflict-affected women in Northern Sri Lanka by increasing their participation in economic livelihood and peacebuilding activities. The project supports these women by connecting their cooperative enterprises with new markets, networks and opportunities that have opened up as a result of an improved post-conflict environment. The project endeavoured to achieve three main outcomes:

- 1. Ensure that former female combatants and other conflict-affected women in Northern Sri Lanka increase their economic contribution by effectively accessing new market opportunities, resources and information.
- 2. Leverage former female combatants' social status, derived from enhanced economic empowerment, to be a leading voice in the region's private sector contribution to peacebuilding. Under this outcome, the project engaged specifically in trainings on conflict resolution, the Sri Lankan peace process and possibilities for cooperatives to contribute actively to the peacebuilding process.

As a result of these gender-sensitive value chain development interventions, these war-affected women are now engaged in income generating activities, cooperatives and businesses with partners beyond their own communities and ethnic groups. This had led to reinforced contact and social cohesion within the community and between cooperatives from previously conflicting zones (North and South). Through these results, women are therefore more likely to gain greater decision-making roles in their community and to be more involved in reconciliation and conflict risk mitigation.



For more information and guidance, see for example:

- ▶ The Peace and conflict guidance note for ILO's programming in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (2021)
- ► The ILO's Handbook: How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes (2019)
- ▶ The ILO guide Gender equality and women's empowerment in the world of work in fragile, conflict and disaster settings (forthcoming 2022)

By the end of this step, programmes should be able to demonstrate a robust monitoring and results measurement system that captures key data points for the different dimensions they seek to influence on gender equality and WEE

4.4 Embed systems change

Assuming your initial pilots are successful, the final step in this journey is about how to reach sustainability and scale. This is unlikely to happen spontaneously and will require some additional effort from the programme.

The *VCD Guide* outlines three potential strategies for scale:

▶ Achieve scale through big actors to positively impact a large number of women Working with market actors that by themselves have the ability to reach large numbers, for instance by working through government as was the case with the ALCP programme in Georgia.

- Work with 'first movers' to create a demonstration effect for adopting gendersensitive approaches
 - Demonstrating the viability of an innovation to other market actors, such as documenting the rapid expansion of women sales agent models for agricultural extension services, similar to the GROW project in Ghana.
- ▶ Actively support 'second movers' to scale up practices encouraging gender equality
 Providing more direct support to help encourage other actors to crowd-in, as was the case for MDF Pakistan and the womenonly stitching lines they sought smaller firms to replicate.

By the end of this step, programmes should have a strategy for embedding systemic change based on a series of complementary interventions.

Conclusion

This guide has sought to provide practical advice and recommendations to programmes seeking to adopt a more gender-sensitive approach to value chain development.

There are at least three convincing arguments – as outlined in the Introduction – for why we should adopt a gender-sensitive approach, based on good programmatic practice; social justice; and the business case for gender equality. Yet despite these overwhelming arguments, a growing push from donors to 'do' gender, and the wealth of relevant guidance and tools, **too many value chain development programmes** are still **not adequately factoring gender-sensitivity into their approach**.

So, why might this be the case?

Gender-sensitive programming adds complexity

Analysing gender relations is complex: they are rooted in a network of economic, social and cultural interactions and shift over time. But the same can be said of value chains and markets. The value chain development approach considers markets as **complex adaptive systems** and recognises their interconnectedness and dynamic nature. In this regard, **value chain development projects are well-suited to understanding and exploring the complexity of a gender-sensitive approach.**

Gender-sensitive programming presents a risk

Gender-sensitive programming marks a significant step away from the traditional, 'business as usual' value chain development approach, which tends to focus more broadly on job creation and greater income levels. Given the risks involved of adopting a 'new' way of working, projects could start by **trialling new analytical methods and subsequent interventions**, similar to a piloting stage: seeing what works well and scaling this up in both instances.

Finding viable pathways to change will require time, curiosity and experimentation. **Adaptive management is critical** to provide the flexibility of an iterative, 'trial and error' methodology to finding these pathways to systemic change, alongside a commitment to ongoing measurement and learning.

The potential learnings and benefits of adopting more inclusive approaches for every member of society, regardless of their gender, make it a risk work taking.

Gender-sensitive programming requires additional resources, or a different allocation of resources

A proper gender-sensitive value chain analysis undoubtedly requires more resources than the alternative, 'gender-blind' approach. If a programme is resource constrained and has not factored in the additional costs linked to these activities, they simply will not be done. It's therefore **essential that donors and programme managers plan to allocate sufficient funds to this budget line**, and that any allocation is used specifically for this purpose!

Similarly, a gender-sensitive approach may take additional time given the greater diversity of opinions that will be sought out. This should be reflected in project workplans, and expectations managed accordingly.

Finally, if the project team does not feel confident in carrying out a gender-sensitive analysis, resources should be set aside to engage a gender specialist to work alongside the team – providing guidance throughout the process. To be clear, this does not mean outsourcing responsibility for gender to others. Rather, projects should leverage this external expertise to develop capacity and confidence within the team.

Ultimately, as value chain development practitioners, we have a simple choice. Do we want to truly understand the differential situations, needs and constraints faced by half of the population we seek to serve, and be part of the paradigm shift needed to transform longstanding organisational cultures?

The value chain development methodology and toolkit already provide a great starting point for adopting a gender-sensitive approach. Use the guidance, knowledge and lessons generated by existing programmes to help you take the next step towards a brighter future of work for all women and men.

The ILO Inclusive Markets and Value Chains team, which includes the Women's Entrepreneurship Development programme (ILO-WED), is committed to creating conducive conditions for inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies.

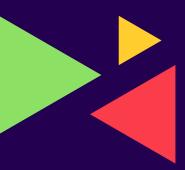
For more information on ILO-WED, visit: https://www.ilo.org/wed or contact: wed@ilo.org

Bibliography

- Agri-ProFocus (2014) Gender in Value Chains: Practical toolkit to integrate a gender perspective in agricultural value chain development
- BEAM Exchange (2016a) Market systems approaches to enabling women's economic empowerment through addressing unpaid care work: Conceptual Framework
- BEAM Exchange (2016b) Women's Empowerment and Markets Systems: Concepts, practical guidance and tools (WEAMS Framework)
- DCED (2014) Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment in Private Sector Development: Guidelines for Practitioners
- DCED (2016) How to put Gender and WEE into practice in M4P: A Description of the Ethos, Systems and Tools used in the Alliances Programme in Georgia
- FAO (2018) Developing gender-sensitive value chains Guidelines for practitioners
- ICRW (2018). Understanding & Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework & Indicators
- ILO (2008) Tripartite Meeting of Experts on the Measurement of Decent Work: Framework of Decent Work Indicators
- ILO (2016) Scoping study for a Renewable Energy Skills Development Public Private Development Partnership (PPDP) in Somalia
- ILO (2017) World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2017
- ILO (2018a) Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work
- ILO (2018b) Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture
- ILO (2020a) Sectoral Assessment of Women's Entrepreneurship Development in the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Sectors in Somalia
- ILO (2020b) World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2020
- ILO (2020c) Getting Africa's Youth Working: Taking a systems approach to create more and better jobs for young people in sub-Saharan Africa
- ILO (2020d) Child's Play: The case for developing childcare services to boost women's economic empowerment
- ILO (2020e) Bending the rules: How to use a systemic approach to improve the rules of the game
- ILO (2021a) Value Chain Development for Decent Work: A systems approach for creating more and better jobs
- ILO (2021b) World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2021
- ILO and CAMFED (2021) Taking a Systems Approach to Young Africa Works Ghana: A Rapid Market Assessment of Agricultural Value Chains and Decent Work for Young Women in Northern Ghana
- MDF (2018) Beyond Income: A Critical Analysis of Agency Measurement in Economic Programming
- WHO (2011) Gender Mainstreaming for Health Managers: A Practical Approach

Other resources consulted

- ILO (2007) Making the Strongest Links: A practical guide to mainstreaming gender analysis in value chain development
- ILO (2020) Market Systems Analysis for Decent Work: A User-friendly Guide
- USAID (2009) Promoting Gender Equitable Opportunities in Agricultural Value Chains: A Handbook



► Contact:

International Labour Organization

Route des Morillons 4 CH-1211 Genève 22 Switzerland

wed@ilo.org ilo.org