

CARE Regional Applied Economic Empowerment Hub



# Bringing Gender Equality Closer to Women's Economic Empowerment

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

plied Economic Empowerment Hub in the MENA region (the Hub), in collaboration with practitioners and thought leaders from CARE globally. In October 2017, CARE International members, the MENA regional management unit, and several Country Offices supported the establishment of the Hub. The Hub supports CARE country offices (COs) in close proximity to our impact groups by advancing three core pillars:

1) Ground-up thought leadership on Nexus programming, women's economic

empowerment, and leveraging market and business forces for social impact (e.g. through resilient market systems in fragile settings, social entrepreneurship, etc.).

2) Applied innovation, building on the diverse expertise of COs in the region and beyond.

3) Technical support with project design and capacity building on specific themes (demand-driven).

Recent publications from the Hub include the [UptekPreneur Guide: Social Entrepreneurship Lab](#) and [Doing Nexus Differently Guiding Principles](#).

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# Acronyms

<b>COs</b>	Country Offices
<b>CMPs</b>	CARE Member Partners
<b>EMB</b>	Engaging Men and Boys
<b>GEF</b>	Gender Equality Framework
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>GEA</b>	Gender Equal Approaches
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
<b>RMUVC</b>	CARE Regional Management Unit Value Chain
<b>RMU</b>	CARE Regional Management Unit
<b>VCUN</b>	Value Chain United Nations
<b>VSLA</b>	Village Saving and Loan Association
<b>WEEVC</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment Value Chain
<b>VSLAs</b>	Village Saving and Loan Associations
<b>WEE</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment

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All photos used in this document is for female farmers/producers who partnered with CARE International in MENA WEE/livelihood programs.



Women members of a local council and cooperative, in Palestine  
(photo courtesy of CARE Palestine (WBG))

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# 1. Introduction

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is critical if we are to change the forces that are aligned against low income households. Their families need their economic contribution to survive. Moreover, it is essential to equality between men and women.

CARE defines WEE as the process by which women increase their right to economic resources and the power to make decisions that benefit them, their families, and their communities. Our Theory of Change (as discussed in [CARE's WEE Strategy Document](#)) outlines three conditions necessary for genuine and sustainable economic empowerment for women: increased capabilities, decision-making power, and an enabling environment. An integrated approach across all three conditions is required to achieve genuine and sustainable change. Increasing individual women's capabilities can lead to temporary increases in their economic opportunities and income. However, women's economic empowerment can only be achieved by also transforming unequal power relations and discriminatory structures.

This detailed learning and reflection product is intended to provide practical learning and present selected existing tools being applied by CARE Country Offices (COs) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to bring gender equality closer to WEE and livelihood programming. It is also highly relevant for all practitioners working on economic empowerment and livelihood programming in fragile settings anywhere in the world. This product can aid a better understanding of gender equality concepts by livelihood programming staff, as well as better understanding of the principles of sound economic empowerment by gender staff. This detailed learning and reflection product contains many practical insights and allows practitioners to understand how theory and frameworks can have an impact on the actual programming and results on the ground. The Hub encourages teams and practitioners to use this product and the different overviews and examples provided, to reflect on their own work on gender integration, and to take steps to move beyond gender

responsive programming towards a truly transformative approach for those impacted through addressing root causes behind existing gender inequalities in WEE programs.

Insights incorporated in this product are based on the learning accumulated by CARE MENA country offices (COs) over the last five years through our WEE/ livelihood programming. It focuses on two main components of WEE gender equality programming: economic advancement and gender equality, along with approaches related to engaging men and boys. The evidence for these lessons learned is derived from: 1) reviews of documentation from more than 12 long-term and short-term WEE/ livelihood programs implemented by CARE in Jordan, Syria, Egypt, West Bank & Gaza, Caucasus and the Balkans<sup>1</sup> and 2) interviews with key informants, including gender champions at these COs, along with other global CARE gender experts who collectively searched for answers to questions related to gender equality approaches in WEE programming.<sup>2</sup>

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

2 This document was finalized and shared with gender, livelihood, and WEE teams in 24 COs, CMPs CIs and the CARE Secretariat. Based on the document, a training module was developed and two workshops were conducted with around 47 participants from around the globe.

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This document is presented in four main sections:

1. One, a short “Theory Underpinning Our Work,” highlights the theory underpinning CARE’s WEE programming and how it is reflected in MENA.

2. Section Two, entitled “From Theory to Practice,” provides practical examples from the MENA region to illustrate how CARE integrates gender equality approaches into its WEE holistic programming. This section seeks to help COs reflect on the level of gender integration within their own programs using a simplified adaptation that brings the gender equality continuum closer to WEE/livelihood programs.

3. Section Three, “Thematic Learning Insights,” provides practical tools, examples, and lessons that can assist prac-

tioners to move their WEE/livelihood programming from being gender-neutral or sensitive, towards being gender responsive and equal. This section covers six thematic areas: agency-build-ing, engaging men and boys, gender based violence (GBV), local private sector engagement, capturing transformative change, advocacy and governance. These areas were prioritized based on regional learning and due to the fact that they were also highlighted consistently during the consultation process by regional teams and global experts as key areas for change. Even though many more WEE aspects exist, these six were identified as the most pressing topics for sectoral learning.

4. Section Four presents “Conclusions” and encourages practitioners and teams to continue with implementation in their own programs.

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







Female bee-farmer from Georgia participating in the revolving loans fund  
(photo courtesy of CARE Caucasus)

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## 2. Theory Underpinning our Work

This section highlights the theory underpinning CARE's WEE programming and how it is reflected in MENA.

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

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

The GEF updates the former CARE Women's Empowerment Framework. It does so by incorporating our learning that women and girls' empowerment approaches must be synchronised with—and complementary to—how we engage men and boys for gender equality.<sup>4</sup> The aim, in other words, is to build the agency of women and girls in all their diversity and life stages, change relations between them, and transform structures in order that they are each able to realize their full potential in public and private lives, and are able to contribute equally to, and benefit equally from, social, political and economic development.

For CARE, WEE is a core component of women's empowerment and a crucial

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

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

**CARE's 2020 Program Strategy**

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3 For further information, please see CARE's [GEWV Guidance Note 2018](#)

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

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

6 For more on how CARE's WEE programming makes a difference see [CARE's WEE Impact Report for 2018](#) (published February 2019)

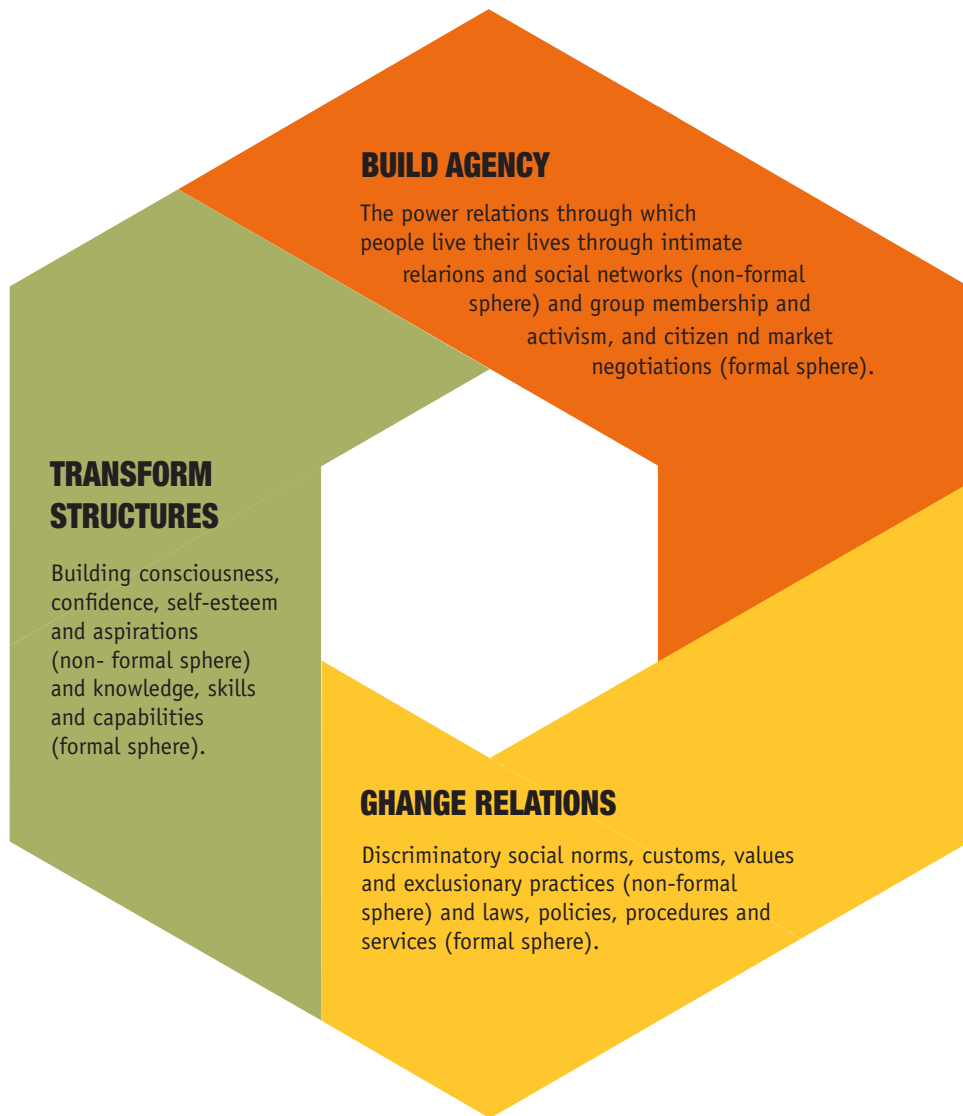
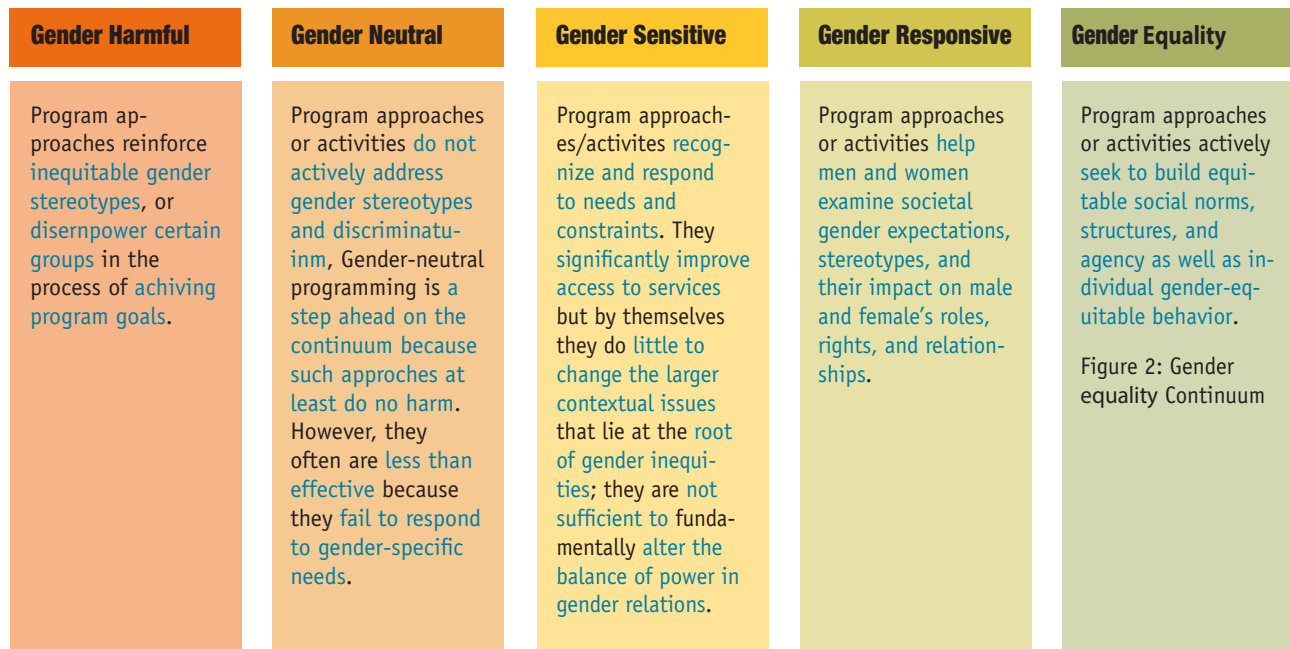


Figure 1: CARE Gender Equality Framework

Specifically in the MENA region, recognizing the opportunities and threats common to these countries, CARE’s MENA Regional Management Unit developed (in close cooperation with COs) the [CARE MENA Social & Gender Justice Framework](#) that builds on the forementioned framework and WEE strategy. Its WEE programming pushes for transformative change in terms of women’s economic empowerment and livelihoods. This programming aims at creating an enabling ecosystem—not only by reducing

structural barriers to WEE, but also by addressing the root causes of relevant social barriers,<sup>7</sup> while simultaneously working to increase the agency and business opportunities of women to successfully start-up, sustain, manage and grow resilient and sustainable businesses. A key tool for improving the gender integration in any program is the [Gender Equality Continuum or the Gender Marker](#). This simple overview (figure 2) and [checklist](#) presents the different levels of gender integration along a con-

tinuum from “gender harmful” to “gender equality”. This not only assists teams with the assessment of their current programs and practices, but can also serve to provide direction on how teams may improve their gender integration to make them more gender equality. The gender equality continuum was adapted to WEE/ livelihood programs as in Annex 1, which will be used to illustrate concrete examples in section 2 under the title WEE gender equality continuum.



<sup>7</sup> The first entry point in WEE/livelihood programming is family structure, where impact is tracked in terms of women’s decision making, workload, changes in role perception, and the presence of domestic violence.



Syrian women in a vocational training class by CARE Jordan (photo courtesy of CARE Jordan)

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## 3. From Theory to Practice

This section provides practical examples from the MENA region to illustrate how CARE integrates gender equality approaches into its WEE/livelihood holistic programming. The detailed list of examples is presented over two areas:

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- 1) Translation of the Gender Equality Framework into practice in women's economic empowerment/livelihood programming:
  - 2) A simplified tool adapted from the Gender Equality Continuum to guide practitioners in their reflection and planning, for a more transformative approach in their WEE/livelihoods programming.
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### 1. Gender Equality Framework in Practice:

The most important lesson shared by all informants was that if WEE/livelihood programs are properly implemented, they can be considered main entry points to gender equality. This means addressing the aforementioned

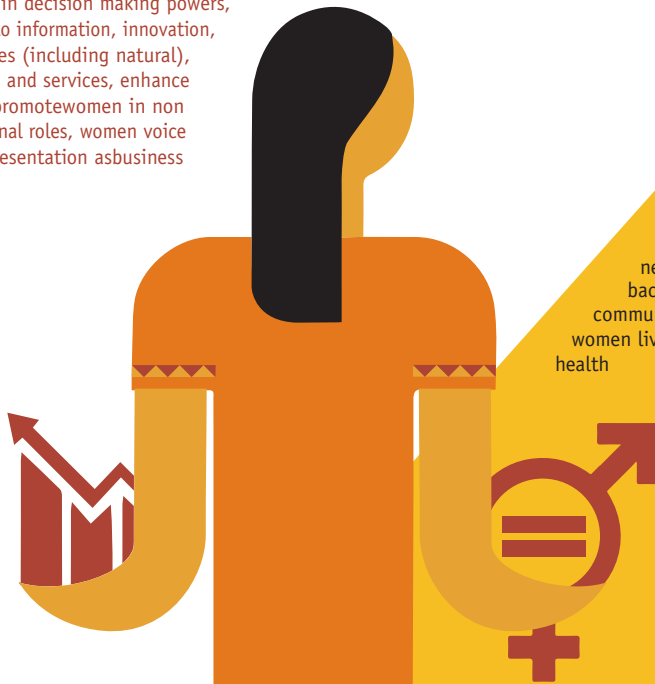
dimensions of WEE in close alignment with GEF and the right strategy for engaging men and boys (EMB), while also paying close attention to the sound economic/business planning of activities. Without smart integration of

all components (successful economic advancement, women's empowerment/GEF, and EMB), projects risk either achieving only short-term results, or being harmful to women as well as men.



### Economic advancement / livelihood activities:

through leveraging private sector powers and inclusive business models that aim at creating jobs, and livelihoods, but also enhance women in decision making powers, access to information, innovation, resources (including natural), markets and services, enhance skills, promote women in non traditional roles, women voice and representation as business actors



### Integrating approaches:

**1. Engaging Men & Boys:** beyond buy in, but as active change makers towards gender equality

**2. Do no Harm:** work load, negative perception, potential backlash at house hold and community levels, risk of GBV, women livelihood and physical health



**Gender Equality** through building women and men agency to change relations and transform structures and enabling environment for gender equality

A weakness in any of these components will most likely lead to failure in reaching lasting women's economic empowerment & be potentially even harmful.

Figure 3: WEE through Gender Equality Programming.



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

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

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

- **Agency-building activities** were fully informed by thorough analyses that combined both gender equality and market and value chain components. These looked at existing gender roles at

each stage of the VCs and integrated a power analysis to make sure that we understood the context, social norms, and behaviors of power-holders at different levels (including men at the community and household level, in the private sector, relevant government actors, local authorities, etc.). Agency was then implemented to incorporate soft life and aspiration-related skills, coupled with hard business and technical skills/knowledge (skills for women in non-traditional roles at the value chain, e.g. marketers/extension agents/ importers, etc. and not only as workers or traditional processors). In addition, such activities were not restricted to women but involved men and boys and main community actors to not only ensure buy-in from different parts of the power equation (in households and society) but to make them stakeholders and change agents in collectively learning, growth, and adjustments to existing norms and practices.

- **Relations** were changed and impacted at three levels: in the family, the community and in markets (including stakeholders such as the private sector, input providers, marketers, dealers, etc.). From the design stage, the work on this component focused on facilitating women's access to resources, markets, and employment opportunities beyond traditional roles. Successful WEE activities that worked with both women and men were not only able to increase household income, but also initiated family dialogue on specific issues. For instance, in some countries, teams were able to work at the household level to analyze and redistribute household tasks among family members. Another example is the introduction of semi-automized machines in home-based businesses such as smallholders of livestock that alleviated the immense workload placed on women by traditional food processing carried out alongside the bulk of household duties. Some other

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dialogue topics included: access to land, inheritance rights, workload, women's decision-making and the roles they play in the family and beyond. While this is a difficult change to achieve, several COs have seen actual change in some of the most conservative communities in MENA.

- Addressing **structure**, women were encouraged to form their own groups or to join existing community bodies (as equal partners). Several initiatives have used local evidence and worked with women's collectives to change national policies

around crucial gender topics such as access to and control over resources and services, decision-making at community levels and enabling environment policies (e.g. financial inclusion and the business environment). At the same time, social norms were challenged through campaigning and promoting women as role models and economic and community leaders. Men and women were convinced that if women are given the opportunity, they can become successful change agents with benefits felt for all, not only women. Different projects also influenced the information

and extension services provided by government and private sector actors, increasing women's access to such programs. Access to inheritance rights also improved in some communities through public rights awareness, working with localized actors, and engaging men and boys throughout. This is in addition to supporting women leaders who excelled in their groups to run for local and national elections.

**The Obader project case study also gives a first illustration of how this can be done during project design.**



## Case From Palestine: Obader Project

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

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

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

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



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## 2. WEE Gender Equality Continuum:

We have just provided a short overview of the gender equality changes in MENA that we have seen are possible under WEE/ livelihood programming while emphasizing the importance and possibility of a consistent and full integration of the GEF into economic empowerment/livelihood programming. The following table goes on to provide a simplified tool adapted from the Gender Equality Continuum—moving from “Harmful” to “Transformative” that lists examples from the region to assist different teams in determining where a project stands in pursuing gender equality in WEE/ livelihood programming. It also suggests what practitioners can do to improve programming and advance women’s rights on this scale by presenting practical approaches from documented MENA learning.

### Harmful

Program approaches reinforce inequitable gender stereotypes, or disempower certain people in the process of achieving program goals.

#### When Does This Happen?

**1. When income-generating activities become a financial burden/liability for women and their families, strengthening stereotypes about women as unsuccessful economic actors or entrepreneurs.**

Examples: Flooding small markets with the same skills, i.e., teaching hairdressing to 20 women in the same village). Reintroducing ideas that were proven economic failures (e.g. embroidery with poor design and packaging that can’t be sold at fair prices).

#### Learning & Insights

**Program design should pay equal attention to all dimensions needed for lasting WEE: a feasible economic advancement strategy, strong women’s empowerment, and engagement of men and boys.**

1. A **solid gender-economic analysis** ensures:

- Market- and demand-driven viable business opportunities.
- Assessment of the impact of proposed activities on health, wellbeing, and time.
- Understanding existing household gender roles, who benefits financially, and who makes household decisions.

#### Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning

##### **Example 1: Ayadi Project (West Bank & Gaza, 2015-2018)**

Ayadi Project targeted women in groups rather than as individuals. Working in groups allowed the women to:

- share the risk and tap into non-traditional products (e.g. ecological farming);
- be perceived as a non-risky market actor able to attract a major aggregator connected to national markets (and who had no interest in being connected to kitchen/garden, small-scale, scattered producers);
- overcome cultural constraints (e.g. mobility and access, or negotiations with other male actors);

## When Does This Happen?

### 2. When women are pushed to play economic roles that are traditional or small scale and reinforce 'at home' stereotypes.

Examples: Limiting women's income generation opportunities to backyard and unpaid activities (e.g. micro-scale food processing or home gardening), reinforcing the perception of women as small-scale, risky economic actors limited to domestic duties.

### 3. When activities/projects are selected without assessing potential risks to women.

Examples: Promoting activities that negatively impact women's health (e.g. back pain), increase their daily workload (e.g. planting baby cucumbers that should be picked twice a day to ensure compliance with market requirement size), or neglect the potential for GBV due to changes in women's roles.

### 4. When project interventions address women with minimal engagement of men and boys as main actors in the WEE processes.

## Learning & Insights

- Assessment of potential backlash or GBV by understanding community dynamics, men and boys' behaviors and vulnerabilities, and existing cultural constraints and opportunities.

### 2. Based on this analysis, a **multifaceted gender strategy** should:

- Clearly establish which activities fall under the framework of agency, relation and structure.

- Map the most suitable methods for collectively engaging men and boys on gender equality, decision-making, women in non-traditional roles, and workload;

- Identify and plan to mitigate potential risks early on; and

- Encourage women to tap into non-traditional, innovative, and feasible business models that go beyond "backyard" level activities and promote women as successful leaders and equal socio-economic partners.

3. Women's sensitivities around reporting cases of GBV in the household, community, and workplace require the establishment of innovative outreach and reporting channels acceptable to both women and men.

## Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning

- be relieved of additional tasks, as the group had an organized and clear division of labor that ensured a reduced workload for group members; and

- obtain family support and challenge community perceptions of women's roles at home and in the community.

Women's needs, feedback, and open communication were considered during project design and implementation, especially those related to GBV:

**Female community facilitators** trusted and respected by women were recruited to serve as a communications channel and trained in receiving GBV concerns.

Key actors in a national **violence against women national referral system** ensured that project communities were integrated into their awareness-raising and psychosocial support programming.

# Neutral

Approaches or activities do not actively address gender stereotypes and discrimination. Gender-neutral programming is considered a step ahead on the continuum because such approaches at least do no harm. However, they often are less than effective because they fail to respond to gender-specific needs.

## When Does This Happen?

1. When interventions seek to increase women's participation and livelihood but also create additional workload and burden, without additional support or role changes.

2. When projects specifically target women in order to increase productivity, income, or employment but do not consider women's agency-building, or other specific barriers to WEE.

## Learning & Insights

Teams should pay close attention to sound/sustainable economic advancement as well as women's empowerment within WEE programming, coupled with engaging men and boys.

1. **Identify and analyze current gender roles and responsibilities** in the household and throughout the VC or local economy, and assess how introducing economic projects changes these roles positively or negatively—women's workload, resources, and position.

2. While gender responsive/equality programming is most desirable, **the minimum actions that should be integrated into neutral programming** combines the following:

- Efforts through automation or semi-automation to increase productivity and reduce workload.
- Working when possible through women's collectives/cooperatives/groups.
- Helping women negotiate with others in the same household to reduce unpaid care burdens.
- Working with women and men to think about changes underway, if they are desirable, and what they think needs to happen for positive outcomes.

## Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning

### Example 1: Souqona Project (West Bank & Gaza)

Souqona incorporated “**enabling environment activities**” as part of its value chain interventions, helping women and men find ways for women to reduce their unpaid care work hours (mainly children's home education). The project supported the establishment of community kindergartens, after school learning centers, etc.

### Example 2: Tatweer Project (West Bank & Gaza, 2009-15)

A livelihood/food security project, Tatweer targeted women in very conservative communities that did not allow them to form their own community-based organizations (CBOs).

- At early stages of the program, women were encouraged to join mixed CBOs despite that only this limited women's full participation to those who were outspoken, and those who were not restricted by their families.
- After gaining the trust of the community, and by engaging men and boys in all project activities, the project succeeded in encouraging female producers to join/form women-led CBOs/collectives.
- The women-led collectives offered a safer space for previously excluded women to meet and benefit, while maintaining more equitable socio-economic connections with existing male supporters and structures.
- Broad evidence shows, however, that **women's participation in mixed CBOs/**

### When Does This Happen?

**3. When projects focus on women's economic advancements and integrate actions under the WEF (mainly agency), but do not engage with men and boys to support women's new economic roles.**

### Learning & Insights

- Promoting investment in or creation of care centers where needed and feasible.

**3. Engaging men and boys in project activities** has proved to be among the most effective strategies to address changing social norms, gender relations, and structural barriers.

- **Use "conditional agreements"** (where family members are asked to do something as a condition of the household's participation in the livelihoods project) with both men and women in the household to ensure women's access to skills, markets, and services.
- **Training to increase women's agency** should focus, at a minimum, on women's rights, aspirations, negotiation skills and communication needs.
- **Increasing women's awareness about their rights without targeting men is considered gender neutral** and can sometimes be harmful if it produces backlash and increased GBV.

### Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning

**collectives can be harmful if implemented without a component for building up women's agency.** Without comprehensive agency-building for women (including life skills such as negotiation and communication), male members control mixed groups and women's socio-economic participation is not effective.

**Example 3: CARE Balkan** approached shifting community perceptions—especially in rural conservative areas—by supporting WEE/livelihood activities focused on increasing community awareness of the benefits of women's economic inclusion, while also sensitively addressing and engaging the concerns of men. Prior to community meetings, door-to-door meetings were organized with targeted families. These visits addressed the entire family and served as a first contact. Family visits were then followed by sessions with men alone, and then mixed sessions, as needed. The impact was very positive and helped to properly identify, address, and integrate male family members' needs as part of the project.

**Example 4: CARE Egypt** approached awareness-raising in conservative locations using theatre of oppressed techniques (a method where theatre becomes a vehicle for people to act in their own lives) to enable communities—women, men, young men and young women—to tackle the role and work of women in agribusiness. These sessions not only raise community awareness, but also **provide a space for constructive public discussions between women and men.** These public sessions were then coupled with discussions with families of targeted women about the redistribution of tasks among family members to allow women's participation in work outside family farms (e.g. in neighboring factories).

# Sensitive

Program approaches recognize and respond to various needs and constraints. These activities significantly improve women's (or men's) access to inputs, services and skills, but they do little to change the larger contextual issues that lie at the root of gender inequities. They are not sufficient to fundamentally alter the balance of power in gender relations.

## When Does This Happen?

1. When women's access to inputs are increased with a focus on enhancing women's efficiency as smallholders or workers.

2. When technical skills in activities that women perform are strengthened, while their access to information and markets is improved.

## Learning & Insights

Unlike the traditional distribution of inputs to women, facilitating women's access to financial services and/or business deals with input suppliers, and building women's capacities in business management contribute to sustainable changes in private sector perceptions about women as equal actors and partners.

- These private sector linkages achieve better sustainable economic and gender equality results (preparing women to play non-traditional economic roles) if business and financial skills, management skills, quality assurance and standards skills are part of the skills development package.
- While respecting women's choice of value chain, practitioners can still affect women's roles by facilitating access to a wider range of skills development and new technical knowledge related to new crops, breeding and farming.
- Projects must find the right balance to address constraints within communities (i.e., what is acceptable and what may be more challenging). **Coping with the constraints on women without addressing root causes of inequities will not lead to equality.** There is no one solution that fits all contexts. Conservative communities may require women-only meetings with female facilitators, providing them with a safe space to participate and voice their opinions freely. In other cases, it may be possible to hold a public debate

## Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning

### Example 1: Souqona Project (West Bank & Gaza)

Souqona facilitated women's access to innovative inputs (e.g., water-saving drip irrigation and safe fertilizers) through business deals with input provider companies. These companies were originally not interested in selling to women because they did not trust their purchasing power. Simple demonstrations helped to change private sector perceptions, once the farmers organized themselves into collectives and negotiated reduced prices and coordinated quantity and delivery. This activity achieved three objectives: the financial benefit (reduced prices and use of resources), a shifted private sector perception of women, and a changed community perception of women as decision-makers and business actors. The capacity building package that was provided to these women groups not only focused on technical skills, but included negotiation, communication, self-esteem, and business and financial management—all crucial for the new role that women started to play in the value chain.

### Example 2: Syria Resilience Program, CARE Syria

This program targeted women in the sheep and goat dairy VC—mostly in conservative Bedouin communities. Prior to implementing any activities, the team developed a capacity-building package for partners to ensure their gender sensitivity, but also to identify potential joint solutions with communities for solving women's con-



### **When Does This Happen?**

**3. When constraints that restrict women's participation and engagement are addressed.**

### **Learning & Insights**

with non-traditional female leaders talking to men and boys on potential power changes at the household level.

- Ensure that the project captures women's perceptions of what is acceptable or not (through focus groups, community participatory research, etc.) and use the results to customize the activities (e.g., capacity building and community awareness-raising).
- Culture-related checks should be integrated into implementation, not only the inception phase, and prior to any major interventions as part of the Do No Harm approach. This can be as simple as ensuring that program timing is convenient for both men and women.

### **Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning**

straints. One major constraint was access to skills and trainings. Women processors and their husbands were trained in flock management, milking, productivity, veterinary services (a first for most of the female farmers), and business skills. Female farmers received information so they could benefit (if only men attended, they would be unlikely to share information with female household members). This approach gained the trust of male members of the community. They saw the impact on their business, the change in women's business and negotiation capacities and started to accept that women play non-traditional roles—including household decision-making on the selection of animal feed, dealer selection, and pricing. Most importantly, women had more flexibility to attend and access trainings, services and markets inside and outside their communities.

# Responsive

Program activities help men and women examine societal gender expectations, stereotypes, and discrimination, and their impact on male and female rights and relationships.

## When Does This Happen?

**1. When positive change is triggered in discourse and in perceptions about economic role of women.**

**2. When women's access to markets is facilitated by encouraging them to produce new marketable products, supported by contracts with marketing companies/aggregators.**

## Learning & Insights

Political or crisis situations can provide a space for changes in gender roles. If used smartly, this space can be used to make equality enduring in women's roles, decision-making, and mobility. In the community, public discussions, role modeling by women leaders, and supportive male family members, can support.

## Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning

**Example 1: Baderi Project, CARE Jordan**  
Baderi used role model activities to raise community awareness of women in non-traditional and leadership roles. Not only were women impacted by these activities, but the perceptions of project target community members were changed. Constructive interactive discussions were facilitated with women leaders across the country, addressing: 1) the impact of women's new roles on household dynamics; 2) the challenges facing women and how different actors overcame them- including their male family members.

### **Example 2: Rawasi Project (West Bank & Gaza)**

The Rawasi project was looking for a way to alleviate women's workload in cheese processing without affecting the popular product. Women were engaged in analyzing the process, and cooperation with the private sector resulted in the design of semi-automated machines that would hugely reduce the workload and physical effort required. The project invested in the cost of the prototype and was able to demonstrate its market potential. The machines are currently produced at commercial scale at affordable prices and are able to reduce most women's workload and save time.

### **When Does This Happen?**

**3. When private sector actors or investors are convinced to contribute/invest in services/products customized to women's needs.**

### **Learning & Insights**

**Private sector interventions should demonstrate the economic benefits of engaging women as economic leaders—reaching beyond small-scale participation, and targeting them as potential customers and consumers.** Investors and private sector actors are willing to invest in gender equality (e.g. enhanced workplace safety or accessibility, the introduction of new products that respond to women's needs, or contracts for new products made by women) if they are approached in the proper way. WEE activities should not be promoted solely as corporate social responsibility.

### **Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning**

#### **Example 3: Souqona Project (West Bank & Gaza)**

Based on market analysis, the Souqona project was able to create market demand for a new product: safe vegetables. The team was able to leverage investment to pilot and train selected women to produce safer products. The project facilitated training in the Ministry of Agriculture, which then developed guidelines based on working with women. Women were not promoted as simple workers but as leader farmers, able to manage and run farms according to specific guidelines and produce high quality products. The investor is now signing contracts with these female farmers to aggregate their produce throughout the year at fair prices.

# Transformative

Projects “actively” seek to build equitable social norms and structures in addition to individual gender-equitable behavior.

## When Does This Happen?

1. When women engage in community structures to increase their active participation and decision-making (especially in male-dominated settings).

2. When women act as role models and leaders in non-traditional roles (as extension agents, aggregators, supervisors, marketers and trainers).

3. When there is real change in household economic decision-making and control over income or assets.

## Learning & Insights

**Economic empowerment is an entry point for broader social change at both household and community level.**

- Projects should aim to work with women to identify potential leaders and encourage them to run for local elections.

- Ensure that women’s voices and needs are channeled in community-wide decision-making structures as part of the governance of each project. Here women can learn, test their potential, and channel their demands—not only in CBOs, but also in the wider community.

## Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning

Throughout the last five years **WEE programming in Jordan, West Bank and Gaza, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Serbia** has contributed to changing policies affecting women as economic leaders. By partnering with women’s organizations, several women attained local and district decision-making positions, ensuring that women’s voices are heard. These women were mainly elected by their peers who trusted their abilities and wanted to ensure that their needs and demands are effectively voiced in local structures and fora.

### **Example 1: Obader Project**

Through the Obader project, female entrepreneurs are not only accessing customized service packages, but are also forming national sectoral advocacy bodies that are connected to decision-makers so as to channel their demands for more pro-women business-enabling environment policies.

**Example 2: CARE Balkans’** project team combined public decision-making power with WEE by requesting that women return a portion of their start-up grant (usually 20%) to the community, once their business made a profit. Normally this money would be given to the municipality. However, CARE Balkans put women themselves in charge of allocating these community contributions. Women discussed and decided on potential beneficiaries’ selection criteria, poverty lines, social aspects, gender aspects, etc. This not only built women’s confidence but also contributed to a change in perception around their roles (from being seen as vulnerable seasonal agricultural workers to effective community decision-makers).

### When Does This Happen?

4. When private sector policies or practices are influenced to serve the interests/needs of women. This includes encouraging private sector actors to change product/service offerings to meet the needs of female consumers (as expressed by consumer demand surveys).

### Learning & Insights

- While changing household decision-making takes a long time, it is very important to track how WEE programming is contributing to changes in the decision-making process (e.g., through joint decision-making or consultations with women). This can be achieved by engaging men and boys throughout the project with activities that address them.

### Practical Approaches Based on MENA Learning

**Example 3: CARE Georgia** targeted women with special needs—not as aid recipients but as agents of change. The project designed income-generating activities for women that simultaneously built agency as the women maintained control of project management. Work followed with other actors including their families, private sector, municipalities, finance institutions, etc. The community's perception of women with special needs shifted completely. The group's quality social enterprise products are in demand. Women are sought after as key speakers at public events, to speak on topics such as their demands and needs. They further decide with municipalities on which community projects to prioritize.

**Example 4: In Souqona Project** and within the vegetables value chain, baselines showed that only 3% of women made VC-related decisions, and 18% made household decisions. Men initially held the view that women lacked the skills and knowledge required to make decisions. Souqona implemented women-led school farms aimed at demonstrating women's skills. These successful demonstrations not only changed perceptions about women's skills, capabilities, and knowledge as business actors, but they also proved that women can drive and own innovations. These workshops were accompanied by training to build agency in both women and men. The documented impact of this activity showed an increase in women's household decision-making power—not only in relation to the selection of agricultural inputs.



Family farming baby cucumbers in Palestine (photo courtesy of CARE Palestine (WBG))

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## 4. Thematic Learning Insights

This section covers six thematic areas:

1. **Agency-building:** Presenting the MENA framework for developing women’s agency, and, the main components of a holistic approach to building women’s agency.
2. **Engaging men and boys including:** A Do No Harm analysis, family dynamics (considering opportunities for positive impact), and understanding and addressing men’s roles and vulnerabilities.
3. **Integrating prevention of GBV in WEE/ livelihood programming:** Using WEE as entry point to create awareness and generating a holistic GBV response by partnering with women, men, market actors, and service agencies
4. **Engaging and leveraging the local private sector:** Making the business case for women as business partners, showcasing how to transfer “needs” into business opportunities, and stimulating private sector investment for WEE.
5. **Capturing transformative change:** Gender analysis and its components, and MEAL systems that capture transformative change on two main WEE/ livelihood components—gender equality and economic advancement.
6. **Advocacy and governance:** Focusing on the importance of advocacy work in WEE programming in MENA along with successful examples from the field

Although these areas do not reflect all aspects of WEE programming, they were prioritized in this guidance document in accordance with the feedback received by practitioners during the consultation process.

Besides describing learning captured under each theme, this section also highlights existing tools that have been tested and proven to be successful in many contexts. These can be shared upon request, to be further adapted as the context requires.

## 1. Agency-Building

CARE's framework for building women's agency in the MENA region was developed using evidence from programming in fragile contexts—including [CARE Palestine \(WBG's National Skills Gaps research\)](#) and CARE Palestine (WBG's gender insights platform)—as well as numerous research pieces on gender in agriculture and markets from countries across the region. It incorporates not only technical and practical skills, but also soft skills (crucial to improving women's position socially, strengthening their relationships, and mitigating any pushback or restrictions arising from social norms). It also calls for improving business/entrepreneurial skills, increasing women's aspirations through new experiences and role models (a starting point for unlocking women's full potential), creating rights awareness, and increasing connections with and support from social, economic, and political networks.

When working to increase women's aspirations, it is crucial that interventions also give women the capacity and tools to match their increased aspirations. Connecting women with new ideas is one important step, but without added capacity, new effort can lead to failure—for example, when aspirations are not accompanied by practical business training, unsuccessful business expansion can result. Beyond the consequences of individual failure, this negative outcome also reinforces the broader idea that women are not successful in business.

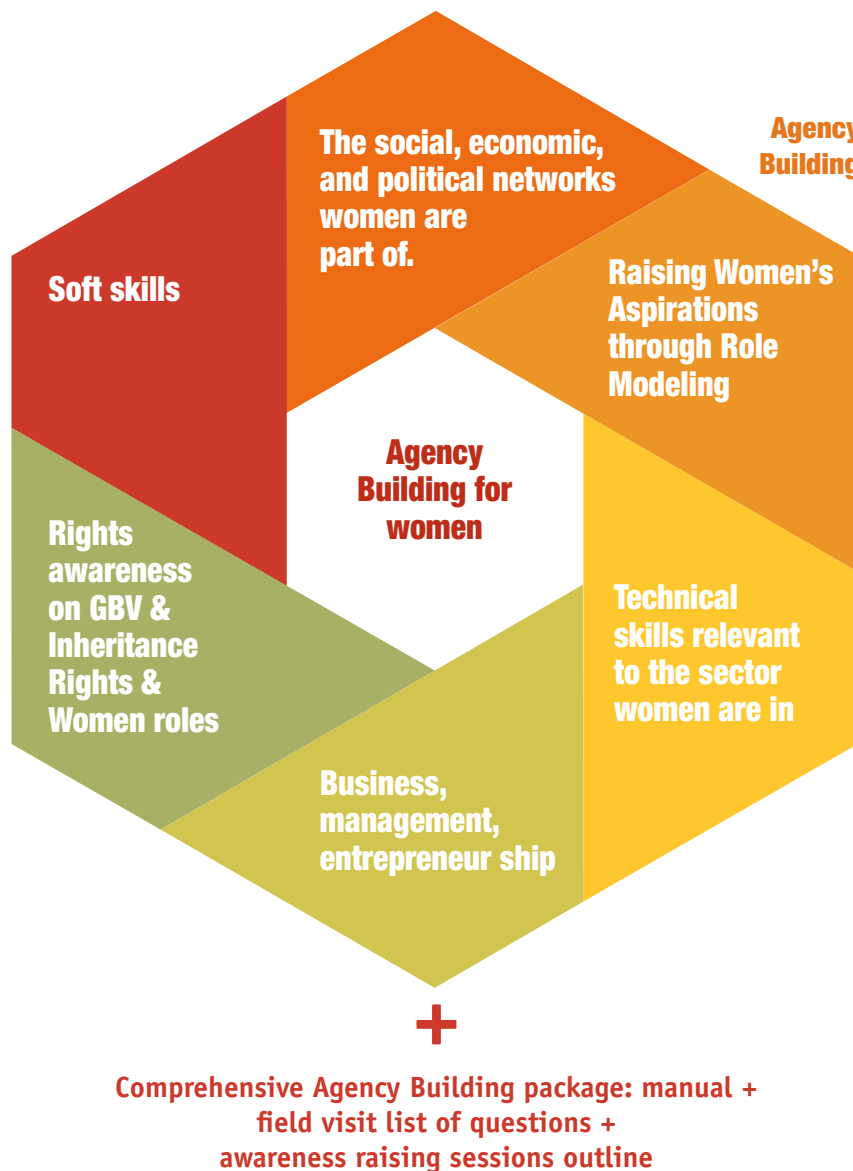


Figure 4: Framework of the Agency-Building Package by the Hub, 2018



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## Main Components of A package for building women’s agency

The agency-building package adopts a learner-centered approach that not only provides technical and theoretical information, but also includes practical and experimental space for different actors to test their potential. It provides targeted women with real-life learning that goes beyond what society accepts for women, and that relates to them as capable actors having a variety of socio-economic roles. The combination of tools can be summarized as follows:

**1. Attendance in training sessions that make use of agency-building manuals or training guides**, such as the training material (a manual and simplified training handouts for participants) developed by CARE Palestine (WBG) that were tested and proven to support agribusiness producers and cooperatives. These sessions should interweave both technical (i.e. agricultural methods) and soft skills (i.e. negotiation and leadership skills) that encourage women to play non-traditional roles within a value chain (these might include new cropping, pricing, entrepreneurship, management, implementing standards, and negotiating).

**2. Participation in rights awareness-raising sessions** (i.e., decision-making at all levels, GBV, inheritance rights, socio-economic rights including equal access to resources and services, the legal context, etc.) that are held for women only, for communities (combining women and men, girls and boys), and with decision makers.

**3. Attendance in practical technical and non-technical activities** including field days, exchange visits, selected relevant public meetings, and discussions with shadow councils/female-led community structures.

**4. Participation in a role-model program** that allows women to learn from inspiring and successful socio-economic female leaders who have not only advanced economically but also introduced change in their families and communities.

**5. Learning by doing**, i.e. testing gained skills in real life meetings with decision makers, local authority representatives, ministry of agriculture agents, private sector actors, and even dealers. This step is an advanced one that should come after women have had a chance to work on their negotiation and communication

skills. It is a particularly critical step to avoid—as mentioned above—having a harmful impact (e.g., if women fail to negotiate their rights/demands/business-related conditions) and strengthening negative stereotypes of women’s capabilities as negotiators.



### Tools Available for Sharing:

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

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## 2. Engaging Men & Boys (EMB) for Women's economic empowerment

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

**1. Do No Harm principles:** Context and gender analysis should create insights into how and why male attitudes and behaviors can influence women's lives to contribute to positive change and avoid doing harm. This should be part of the inception and design stage as results might shape the final selection of project activities. Baseline tools and samples are available upon request.

**2. Family dynamics:** When working with women, it is crucial to understand family dynamics and the perceptions of their fathers/husbands/brothers/sons prior to actual implementation of the activities. Project teams sensitize male family members to the projects' ideas, explain the likely impact on women, assess barriers within families and smartly address the same during implementation (please see gender equality continuum learning in Section Two).

**3. Men's different roles:** Men in a wide range of roles can become supporters and even role models and champions. These roles include those of community leaders, fathers, husbands, policymakers, market actors, local business owners, owners of means of production and land, and influential personalities like religious leaders, artists, and others.

**4. Men's vulnerability:** Understanding how men are vulnerable should be part of a project's economic, financial and social analysis. This is especially valid when women's roles change—either during a crisis, at early recovery stages, and even during resiliency and developmental

programming. Being aware of how men and boys are affected by social expectations and norms is crucial to ensuring both women's and men's wellbeing (to reduce GBV, backlash from the community, and possible male competitors in the market, VC or household due to changes in women roles). An important aspect of effective dialogue processes is to support development/use of critical consciousness amongst participants—namely participants' ability to critically analyze and deconstruct the reasons why social norms and practices exist and how these affect WEE at the four different levels portrayed in Figure 4.

Since the late 1990s, CARE has worked with men and boys as allies for gender equality. Our experience demonstrates that achieving real and lasting progress toward gender equality requires proactive work with men and boys, alongside work with women and girls beyond bringing them as allies, but rather as change makers advocating for gender equality.

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

Community	Household	Value Chain & Market Actors	Policy
<p>Positively engage with influential decision-makers, religious leaders, lawyers, local authorities to raise awareness on women's rights, political participation, GBV &amp; inheritance rights (through sessions and community initiatives)</p> <p>Role modeling for male gender equality champions at both the community and household levels</p>	<p>Adopt family approach involving men and youth in capacity building and also as direct support for wives' work sites (so they are able to access their capital/ resources/ networks)</p> <p>Household dialogue on task division/decision-making processes/enabling environment activities (joint and separate trainings and sessions)</p>	<p>Work with male family members/ Ministry of Agriculture/ private sector to facilitate female farmers' access to extension services</p> <p>Understand perception and incentives of VC/ market actors (investors/ private sector/ municipal actors/ input providers) and highlight the opportunities to engage with women</p>	<p>Gather evidence through context-specific gender assessments/ results/ databases to inform decision-making on community &amp; country levels (accurate M&amp;E)</p> <p>Joint community committees involving men, women and youth ensure their needs are channeled and understood when making decisions</p>

Figure 5: Practical examples of successful EMB activities for livelihood projects conducted on four levels (Source: CARE WBG)



#### Tools Available for Sharing:

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

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### 3. Integrating Prevention of Gender Based Violence in women's economic empowerment projects

GBV in public and private spheres is still all too common. The risk of GBV can increase when women start to claim and practice their economic rights and household dynamics are challenged, such as when women start to earn an income or express their voices in public. Also, in public spheres women can experience increased GBV—in the workplace, when using public services, or when participating in community structures. CARE therefore incorporates GBV prevention components proactively—and not simply reactively when negative GBV trends are observed. This is done at different levels with the aim of achieving a positive impact on the reduction of acceptance for GBV, a decline in the incidence of GBV, and an increase in support, services and justice

for women. Below is an illustrative list of activities integrated into WEE gender equality programming in MENA:

- **Work with women directly** through a variety of activities can be integrated—depending on context, common threats identified to women, and the urgency of these challenges—that work on the awareness among women, supportive social structure and tools present in the community and services available for women. Often, GBV awareness can be integrated as part of the agency-building package that women receive. In a very sensitive manner, such activities try to address and change women's personal perceptions of GBV and domestic violence (as very often women find excuses

and accept domestic violence from male family members). Moreover, CARE has had success with the involvement of trusted female community animators (who act as trainers, social workers, or group leaders). They are equipped by the team to capture any signs of potential GBV. In many cases these animators build trusting relationships with women and create either a group environment or personal setting where women can open up, share their personal experiences, and offer each other support. Another possible tool is the development of women's safe spaces or houses where awareness, counseling, support groups and rehabilitation activities can be combined for victims of GBV or women under threat of GBV.



#### Case from Jordan: women's safe spaces

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



## Case from Egypt: tuktuk drivers

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

- **Work with male members of the household and community** WEE/live-lihood programs should aim to change the environment for women's economic engagement with a clear understanding by all stakeholders that there is no successful societal development without women's equal inclusion. Many projects have utilized social relations and existing networks in the community, such as religious or community members or leaders, and engaged them as male champions, role models, and advocates at the community level. Awareness-raising workshops and other support groups complement these community-level activities for men and women. In these sessions, groups acknowledge behaviors and attitudes to be changed, and assume their active role as supportive partners (along with women) to achieve joint goals. Other engagement activities can be designed, depending on context, that directly work on reducing the presence of GBV in society and decreasing its acceptance, such as campaigns that promote

respectful treatment of women in public spaces and making use of public services.

- **Work with VC and market actors** is another crucial dimension to achieving success in WEE and becoming aware of any threats women might encounter when exercising their economic rights. In addition to activities with community members (who can also be VC actors), a gender analysis can assist the team's understanding of potential partners for WEE and reducing GBV. CARE has developed simplified gender analysis criteria as part of private sector assessment tools that allow teams to indicate the attitudes of private sector actors with whom women will interact. Through such analysis, practices that have an impact on women exercising their economic rights are unearthed, including workplace harassment, GBV when using public places or services, or inequality enshrined in policies. These practices can be successfully addressed by connecting directly with private sector actors (see Section 4 below), as well as

through advocacy campaigns focusing on stronger protections against GBV.

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



### Tools Available for Sharing:

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

## 4. Local Private Sector Engagement & Investment Stimulation

The aim of engaging with local private sector actors in gender equality WEE programming is to make the market system more equal, open, and beneficial to female producers in a sustainable manner. Knowledge about both sides—the markets and women—can lead interventions to create sustainable shifts in market relations, roles, and responsibilities and a better position for women within them. Therefore, a good understanding is needed of both the markets

(needs, gaps, opportunities) as well as of target women and other relevant private sector actors (needs, gaps and opportunities). The right language should be adopted to show the benefits and importance of why private sector actors should cooperate and co-invest in gender equality solutions.

A first important step in the engagement with private sector actors is an adapted market systems and VC analysis.

This can be adapted to facilitate strong gender integration, and to assist with evidence for the selection of market actors (based on criteria such as existing skills of private sector actors in relation to existing needs, and their willingness to engage with both women and men). An example of such analysis, and the activities that were designed based on the collected data, is given in 6 and was used in an agricultural value chain project.

### Private Sector Engagement in WEE Programming

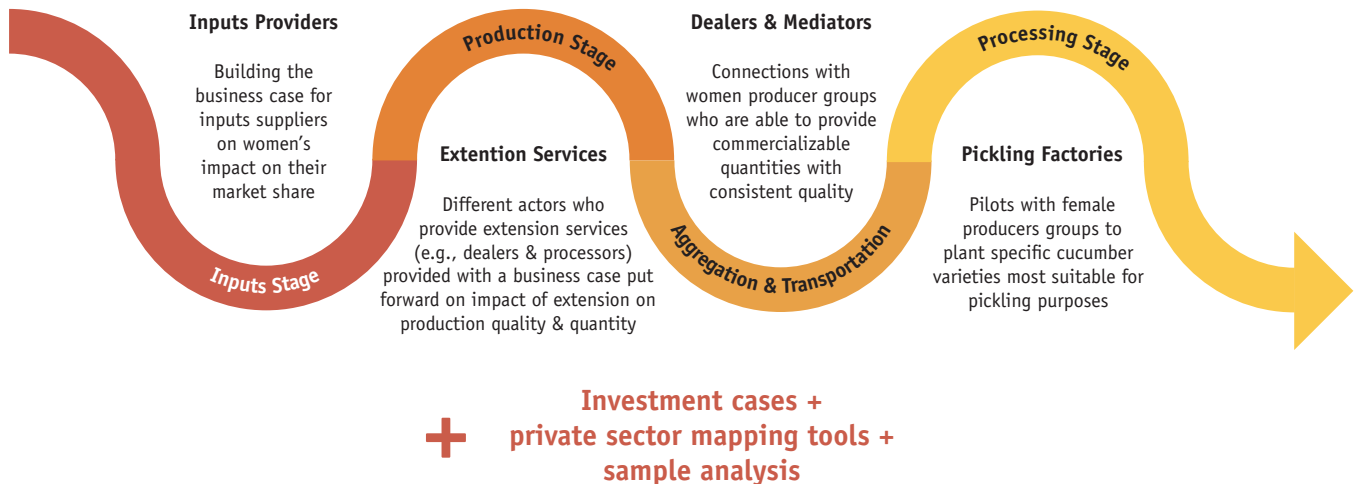


Figure 6: Sample of private sector actors along the different stages of the value chain

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

**1. Increase in company/private sector market share.** In the vegetable value chain, CARE was able to convince input suppliers to invest in demonstrations led by women to try new innovative techniques such as mono fertilizers and balanced drip irrigation networks. Among farmers—especially female farmers—the

two innovations aim to reduce production costs and increase net income due to decreased use of water and fertilizers. The private sector benefitted through an increased market share by convincing farmers to shift their practices and use new products and techniques. Traditionally, such private sector actors would invest in pilots led by large-scale (male) farmers. However, through CARE's intervention the private sector carried out women-led demonstrations to facilitate women's access to the innovations and then to demonstrate the potential impact on their families when women are seen as meaningful economic actors.

**2. Reduction of customers' acquisition cost** as businesses connect more easily with new customers. In the livestock/dairy value chain, CARE was able to convince an existing animal feed factory to produce a special high-protein mix to be incorporated into sheep and goat fodder. Among farmers, this mix would increase milk productivity by 30%, providing greater financial benefits to the household. For the animal feed factory, being connected to CARE and the Ministry of Agriculture's field-school farms greatly reduced the cost of marketing and customer acquisition. Female farmers were the first to be convinced, as they are usually responsible for milking. They

were able to see and track the resulting increase in productivity, which was key for the farmers in adopting this new mix in their livestock's diet. In this case, women's groups received reduced prices from the factory given the role women played as influential economic partners.

**3. Enhanced quality/quantity of private sector actors' production.** In Egypt, CARE identified a vegetable-processing factory as a potential large employer of women in one of CARE's targeted locations. The factory was willing to expand its hiring of staff. A gender assessment, however, showed that the factory did not provide women-friendly working conditions (e.g. no toilets for females, no day-care for children, no female representative on the workers' committee). The project team saw a strong correlation between this and the high turnover of female staff, which created higher costs for the factory due to the costs of hiring, orientation training, and overall low worker productivity. During a pilot phase, the resulting project showed a higher return on the factory's investment, as workers stayed, were more committed, and more productive. In addition, the factory started to introduce incentives for female workers who excelled in their positions, resulting in higher quality and quantity daily production.

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**4. Private sector engagement can give NGOs a means of influencing policy and practice.** Engagement at this level is based on the understanding of how policies/practices improve private sector financial viability and is part of their “core business.” This moves beyond traditional views that private sector engagement with the community/NGOs is mostly about corporate social responsibility (“being good corporate citizens”) but instead about making the business more efficient/competitive/profitable. When private sector actors are convinced, they will not only adapt their services to become more women-oriented or inclusive, but they will also be willing to invest and pay for the potential impact. Some examples are as follows:

- As a result of a detailed investment case put forward by CARE, one of the largest investors in the MENA region is currently financing the opening of a national animal feed factory at a total investment of USD \$15 million (no further information is available at this point due to confidentiality). This factory will facilitate female and male farmers’ access to high-quality affordable animal feed, which is one of their major production constraints (inconsistent quality with high prices resulting in some locations as up to 75% of production costs). This investment was triggered through an

investment case and business dialogue that cost the project about \$10,000, but clearly spoke a language that the private sector would understand.

- A national dairy processing company was willing to invest in milk collection hubs led by women and youth in order to launch a sheep and goat dairy production line. The investment was triggered based on one pilot (milk collected from 60 farmers in one location) where the factory received one shipment of milk to test the quality, the sanitation, and the quality of products made using this milk. Establishing the milk collection hub not only guaranteed fair prices of milk for the farmers, but it also reduced the women’s workload as they no longer needed to process milk into cheese. Moreover, value was added through the aggregation in comparison with small-scale processing.

- In the sheep and goat dairy VC, private sector actors were engaged to invest in producing a semi-automatic milk-pressing machine. In the project, CARE invested in the prototype and promoted it among dairy processing families as a simple affordable tool that would hugely reduce efforts needed to process milk (a task mostly done by women). Traditionally, women would be lifting huge rocks to press the milk into cheese. The created machine is more

efficient and requires no lifting action at all. It is currently widely used in the Palestinian market, reducing women’s workload and securing benefits for the factory as a piece of equipment that solved an existing challenge.



**Tools Available for Sharing:**

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



## 5. Capturing Equality Change: Gender Analysis & Learning

Capturing equality change through organizational Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems in WEE programs should be done simultaneous-

ly on interconnected aspects: gender equity, potential risks (e.g. increased GBV) and economic advancement. Since equality change requires working

with diverse actors on a variety of levels, learning should be perceived as a comprehensive process that captures change on all levels.

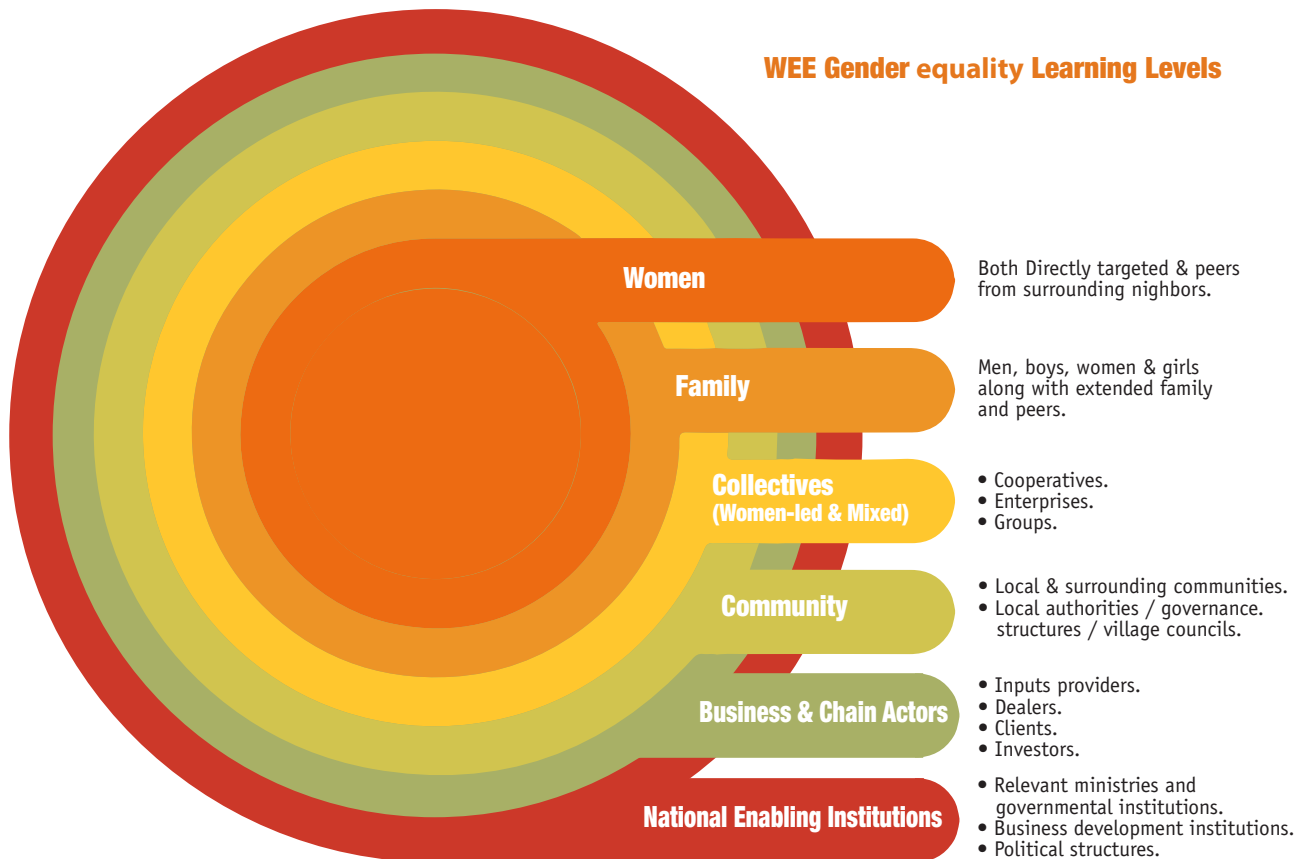


Figure 7: Levels to be tracked for equality change in Women's Economic Empowerment programming (Source: CARE Palestine (WBG))

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It is very important to note that both programming and MEL with the different stakeholders must take into account all three domains of the Women’s Empowerment Framework—agency, relations, and structure. In fact, smart design and implementation of any given activity will have a ripple effect, starting from women

that center the intervention and radiating out to different national institutions (figure 7).

A closer look at one of the successful WEE initiatives in the West Bank illustrates the variety of arenas such MEL systems should look at. Were one to restrict capturing

the impact of the dried herbs unit to its impact on income, family livelihood, or the viability of women-led businesses, one would miss the immense social impact and social change introduced by the project. A more complex vision and multi-layered MEL system is needed to measure the broad impact of such initiatives.



## Case from Palestine: Tatweer Project

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

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

- **Women/enterprise:** In addition to tracking the increase in income and viability of their business, tracked changes include women's capacities; acquired and applied new technical, business and life skills; self-esteem and confidence in new economic roles; awareness of their rights; and their perceptions of GBV.

- **Family:** In addition to assessing the impact on family livelihoods, the learning focused on changes introduced and men and boys' perceptions and actions with regard to the following: 1) gender roles in the household, 2) women's enhanced mobility, 3) recognition of women as economic actors, 4) joint decision making

(including decisions related to asset transfer and income).

- **Collectives, CBOs or enterprises:** Change was tracked regarding women's quality of production, enhanced attributes, and ability to negotiate both deals with other business actors (including inputs providers, clients, dealers, investors, etc.), and with members in the same collective (especially in collectives including both men and women).

- **Communities:** Changes were observed in community perceptions towards women (and their collectives) as economic actors who can play non-traditional roles, in community awareness and respect for women's rights (including inheritance rights and GBV), and in community acknowledgements and consultations with women about their needs in the development of public community plans (i.e., roads, schools, health facilities, etc.).

- **Business and value chain actors:** Perceptions of private sector actors related to women's roles, the development of inclusive packages/ services, and workplace changes that were introduced (policies on sexual harassment, equal wages, etc.) were also tracked.

- **National enabling institutions:** Any inclusive policy change introduced by government (e.g. facilitating women's access to extension services), customized gender sensitive services, or capacity building packages by business development institutions or micro finance institutions, along with acceptance of women playing non-traditional roles as socio-economic actors including at political level (both at community village councils or in political parties) were also observed for change.

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

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

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### **Integrated Gender Equality Analysis:**

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

- **Baseline assessment:** Complemented by a root causes analysis behind gender inequity, the gendered baseline assessment includes a full section on the aforementioned topics along with specific components for analysis dedicated to communities (including norms, attitudes, behaviors, cultural sensitivities and power holders), men and boys (please see learning on EMB under Header 2 on p. XX).
- **Market system and value chain analysis** are gendered, ensuring that learning on women's roles, constraints, and opportunities are captured at every stage of the value chain. These assessments also incorporate a gendered analysis of the enabling environment, service providers, and market actors—looking at, for example, how sensitive their services are towards women as a target group.

- **Partner mapping and analysis includes gender analysis components** that document partners' perceptions, policies, skills, and willingness to work with women. Partners include CBOs, enterprises and private sector actors and companies. Also, this should include mapping and possibly the selection of non-traditional partners (to complement economic partners) who can push the agenda for gender equality change, including those that work on GBV protection and safe spaces, media partners who can scale-up changing perceptions at a national level, and women's rights organizations, etc.

- **Rolling profiles:** This qualitative tool is a human-interest story built around an average (not exceptional) participant in the program, combined with qualitative interviewing and a longitudinal study that observes changes in the participant's outlook and language. It helps to track changes in perceptions/attitudes of stakeholders over time, specifically relating to gender equality and women's role in the economic sphere.

All the aforementioned components of the learning process are aligned with CARE's Gender Equality Framework; however, they are implemented (and should thus be monitored) in an integrated and practical manner with no clear division between its three interconnected

domains: agency, relations, and structure. Working on enhancing women's technical and business skills (agency) will allow them to enhance the quality and quantity of production and thus lead to more recognition from their families and communities (relations). That will be translated into fair business deals with private sector actors (structure). Thus, teams should build their own analysis and monitoring activities in such a way as to track this theory of change.



### **Tools Available for Sharing:**

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

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## 6. Advocacy

Advocacy is highlighted as a key means for CARE to multiply impact. It should further be recognized as a critical approach in WEE programming—especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Many countries in MENA deal with conflict, displacement, occupation, lack of accountable governments, corruption, unstable governmental systems, and loss of institutional capacities and service providers, to name but a few structural obstacles. Coupled with male-dominated sectors and social norms, these conditions have left women to suffer from worsening access to information, business development, job opportunities, and access to and control over financial resources and markets alongside the violations of their rights, GBV in all its forms, and a lack of women’s participation in decision-making processes and forums.

Fragility and crises present significant challenges but also opportunities for (gender) change due to more fluid social norms, changing power dynamics, and sometimes shifting institutions and leadership.

Key areas of opportunities for advocacy in WEE programming, which teams are encouraged to use more boldly, are listed below:

- **Women’s participation and voice at all levels:** Especially in the economic sphere, we have seen that humanitarian and development actors mostly work with male dominated partners, governmental actors, cooperatives, and private sector parties. Including women’s voices and women-led partners is crucial and this again does not only refer to economic partners, but also non-economic ones.

- **Programmatic and evidenced-based advocacy** provides significant opportunities. Our experience has provided many examples of advocacy initiatives that were successful because they were built on evidence coming from programmatic analysis and evidence on the ground. An excellent example is the way in which the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture improved extension services to women (by hiring more female extension agents) based on a gendered market system analysis by CARE, showcasing the loss in productivity to many agricultural sectors as a result of ignoring women’s access to information and services. Another strong example is CARE’s work in bridging the skills gap between educational outputs and market demands, which is quite significant in many countries in MENA. Successfully addressing this gap included developing a national knowledge product, convening national campaigns, triggering dialogue, and producing several policy briefs (available upon request). The lesson is to develop

and leverage programmatic evidence and data that can be used to influence local actors in MENA and beyond.

- **Engaging/mobilizing local actors and amplifying their voices** is a strong tool that has been successful in advocating on behalf of women’s rights. CARE Egypt’s initiative of using Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLAs) to facilitate women’s access to financial resources is one example. Once the VSLAs expanded, it became clear that they could benefit from more systematic management and sustainable financial inclusion. Therefore, women representatives, along with CARE and other actors, established a platform to mobilize the Central Bank of Egypt and other financial institutions to amend the law and enhance women’s financial inclusion by linking VSLAs with banks. As a result of this work, the Bank of Alexandria has launched a pilot with established women’s groups to make it happen.

- **Advocacy oriented towards the private sector** can influence policies and practices that block (or might enable) women’s engagement, including pay equality, childcare, women’s representation in management, etc.

- **Advocacy to encourage government or civil society** actors to adopt a convener/facilitator role in market system development can also be supportive.

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9 For general insights on Advocacy see [CARE’s International Guidebook on Advocacy](#) (2014)



Young Animators - North of West Bank (Photo Courtesy CARE Palestine (WBG))

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## 5. Conclusions & Recommendations

This detailed learning and reflection product was triggered by a lack of documented evidence in the sector on what works in gender equality programming in WEE. At the same time, CARE country offices and their projects were capturing many case studies and lessons and it was recognized that using these for collective learning is an important cornerstone for growing our collective impact. CARE's Regional Hub has capitalized on this opportunity and collected some of the many impact stories together to encourage teams to reflect on their own gender integration. The Hub and consulted thought leaders reimagine a future where impact and learning systems produce much more impact evidence (beyond merely output monitoring) and share stories, case studies, and data to build clear answers to strategic WEE questions.

This product provides readers with a stepping-stone towards a longer (and ongoing) reflection process on the type of gender integration that is relevant and needed in their contexts. Many of the topics discussed in the brief could be addressed in a much more elaborate manner than is possible here (including, for example, women and financial inclusion, gender and private sector engagement, or gender and Nexus programming). However, this brief also aims to provide crucial insights into the different ways gender equality programming can be successfully integrated into WEE programming—even in contexts suffering from prolonged fragility and persistent, restrictive social norms.

Practitioners are encouraged to build on the approaches, tools, and experience available within their organizations and

the entire sector in order to improve the impact and effectiveness of their programming for women and girls. This document shows how the Gender Equality Framework can be integrated into WEE programming more effectively, while aiming for both sustainable economic advancement, lasting empowerment, and greater equality. It makes the case that this framework should be integrated as early as possible and consistently at each step of the project cycle in order to achieve the best results. The Gender Marker is a great tool for both learning and reflection on better ways to make activities attain greater women's empowerment. Practitioners, managers, and teams can therefore use this entire Learning Brief, especially its insert, to reflect on existing practices and programs and to uncover new opportunities for additional gender equality programming.



Agricultural communities benefiting from the Seed Multiplication Bank, a Social Enterprise established in Palestine.  
(Photo credit by CARE Palestine (WBG)).



# 6. Annex 1

## WEE Gender Equality Continuum

	Impact Harmful on women / Gender Blind	Support women to advance Economically	Women Economically Empowered		
	Gender Harmful	Gender Neutral	Gender Sensitive	Gender Responsive	Gender Equality
<b>Description</b>	Poor economic &/or women empowerment approaches that turn to be harmful	Driven by economic side with no specific interventions to promote women economic inclusion or empowerment	Advance women's economic status & access without responding to root causes of socio-economic dis-empowerment	Root causes & Structural barriers taken into account to broaden & deepen women economic inclusion & empowerment	Actively addressing root causes & structural barriers to women economic inclusion and empowerment
<b>Example from MENA (skills)</b>	Skills coupled with income generating activities that turn into financial liabilities for women & their families, strengthening stereotypes about women roles or increasing workload	Strengthening traditional technical skills in activities that women already perform	Improving women access to relevant information about markets, innovative practices, but still in activities that they perform	technical skills in "new" crops & livestock enterprises; financial literacy; entrepreneurship & business skills, specialized skills in standards; & life skills	Women role models & leaders in extension groups, supervisors in processing enterprises, extension agents, vets & trainers with different service providers
<b>Impact on GBV</b>	Increased GBV	Threat of backlash from community or increased GBV	Little consideration of risks & prevalence of GBV in communities or workplace	Significantly reduce risk of backlash & GBV	Address prevalence of GBV at household & workplace
<b>M&amp;E</b>	No gender specific indicators which doesn't allow for assessing impact on women	No gender specific indicators which doesn't allow for assessing impact on women	Gender sensitive M&E and learning plan (data segregated by age & sex)	Measures changes on women's economic participation & decision making	Measures equality change towards gender socio-economic equality



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