



GENDER MARKER CASE STUDY

Gender transformative livelihoods work: Souquona

This case study offers one example of gender transformative programming in livelihoods and value chains work. Read alongside the Gender Marker Vetting Form to see how the project's approaches correspond with each section of the Gender Marker.

ABOUT SOUQUONA

The Souquona project aimed to address the constraints women (including young women) face in dairy and sheep value chains with components for engaging men and the private sector. CARE and partners implemented this model in 5 locations in the Northern Area of West Bank. This project introduced the conversation of women's roles in sheep and dairy value chains within the context of occupied Palestine, to set a new precedent for Palestinian women's (local) farming leadership. Souquona's theory of change explicitly included agency, structural and relational level changes toward equity and inclusion in value chains:

"If women (including young women) improve their capability, confidence and choice to identify and pursue economic opportunities within sheep and goat dairy value gains (agency-level change); and if power holder, private sector, formal and informal institutions in target areas enable and respect women's equal access to and control over economic resources and/or opportunities (relational and structural change), then women will have greater engagement and voice across the value chain."

This project explicitly challenges gender roles and relations – go to column B

ANALYSIS

Undertaking the analysis in collaboration with community stakeholders (female farmers, young people in the communities and several value chain actors) helped the project understand barriers and

opportunities in context. Specific analyses Souqona undertook were:

Power Mapping to understand dynamics across household, business, community and value chains

Gendered Market System Analysis to understand barriers, needs and possibilities facing women and girls across the value chain.

Gender Analysis for a human centered design approach¹, to customize the package according to women's needs, barriers and aspirations. Areas of inquiry included:

- Access to public spaces and services : restrictions to women's ability to be engage in economic activities (e.g.,restrictions on mobility, access to resources (including financial resources),
- Social norms: impact of cultural and social norms/ practices (workload connected to reproductive roles, decision making, access and control over income, self-confidence as economic actors etc
- Aspirations: women self-confidence, aspirations, hopes and motivation (their own definition of empowerment, major women entrepreneurs' traits)
- Public participation and networks: women voice and representation and existing social networks that women engage in or have access to (e.g., self-help groups, other community organizations)

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS: From the analysis, Souqona found women lacked access to resources and control such as inheritance rights, owning farming equipment, and productive resources (e.g., flock). As Palestinians, access to grazing lands were further restricted through Israeli military patrols in the area. Additional gender inequities women faced, created through cultural and social norms, included restrictions on innovation and technology, markets and employment opportunities (e.g., women working as unpaid laborers), and skills and knowledge (e.g., most training for farming practices are controlled and implemented by men with little investment in the education of women). Women also typically act as primary care-givers, which adds on to their daily workload, while lacking decision-making and a voice in value chain work that are reinforced by discriminatory policies and laws.

Analysis Criteria for Column B:

ACTIVITIES

Souqona's social inclusion activities on the ground addressed social cultural barriers, weak enabling environments, use of outdated production and processing techniques, and attracting private sectors to work with women at different stages.

Activities included work across Agency, Relations and Structures:

Agency

- The project led training sessions on barn management techniques with women, alongside sessions on life skills, aspi-

rations, working with other actors, and supporting women in nontraditional roles.

- Women were encouraged to join a community committee in Beit Fourik
- More women engaged and participated in community based organization activities
- Souqona supported young women as community mobilizers/animators

Structures

- The project built a strong business case for private sector actors and investors on utilizing women's skills, and capabilities to benefit the value chain. These companies later designed extension packages for women.
- The project met with Bardala milk collection hub, and began to work with the female workers (existing women civil based organizations) who ran the milk collection hub. Souqona-based assessments were used in terms of business with a "do no harm" to monitor and mitigate community backlash. The female actors created a door to door campaign and engaged women household heads to join this activity. The project facilitated trainings with them on aspirations and beliefs, self-esteem, analysis, engaging with different business actors, dealing with stereotypes, and negotiation skills.

Relations

- Souqona gave families the choice of cheese processing versus solely selling milk, while equipping them with access to semi-automated equipment that reduced workloads associated with cheese processing (this new equipment was designed with recommendations from women on purpose and design). The project engaged men and women to talk about equitable workloads within the home.
- Souqona model organized visits with private sector actors to support women in this value chain. Processors tested the the milk, and later closed deals spearheaded by women, between the hub and the factories.
- The project engaged boys, men, and leaders to support women and youth and discuss sensitive social norms and rights issues (e.g., inheritance rights).
- Souqona partnered with the national referral committee that is composed of specialized organizations with relevant experience on GBV, women's rights, inheritance rights; the committee also provides related services with communities

Activities Criteria for Column B:

PARTICIPATION

The Souqona project involved women from the analysis, to design process and evaluation. During project implementation, women comprised the project steering committees to ensure women voices are heard. Specifically, women program participants informed activities and locations of the project. They also advised to strengthen inclusion of young women within activities. Feedback mechanisms with women also helped surface sensitive issues (i.e. sexual harassment, domestic violence, community backlash, etc.). Women's participation also help schedule timing and location of activities. Souqona worked with female animators to support women's access and participation.

During the evaluation, and follow up, project staff documented feedback as a basis for adjusting activities at various levels: technical decisions (customization of selected tools/ agribusiness approaches building on women producers needs and demands i.e. semi-automized pressers and milking machines to reduce workload), management decisions (hiring female extension agents), and session topics (i.e. integration of negotiation for business and body language reading as part of agency building package). While women smallholder farmers were at the centre of the program, Souqona's market system

approach ensured that all stakeholders across the value chain were engaged at some level. In addition to that, the project used “power mapping”; not just to ensure buy-in but to build allies in support of women’s and youth’s participation.

Participation Criteria for Column B:

Information Sharing:

Involvement in Decision-Making:

Responsive Feedback Mechanism:

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

To understand changes in gender roles and relations Souqona examined specific indicators on women’s roles/capacities in value chains; access to credits, savings and services for women; as well as community and family supporting women in value chains and gender-equitable decision-making.

Sex and Age Disaggregated Data: The project disaggregated data by sex and age to assess women and men’s different needs. Additionally, Souqona is seeking to report on how effectively the project benefits women as well as men and to measure the impact of all levels.

Unintended Consequences: The project took a very broad approach to Do No Harm, exploring that potential unintended negative effects on women’s workload, health, freedom and mobility. Staff was therefore guided always to keep a broad view of negative impacts, beyond the more common indicators. To understand unintended consequences, the project undertook field observations, interviews with stakeholders and held reflective conversations between staff and women in value chains for feedback. Souqona staff also conducted several visits to women on their farms to discuss opportunities and interventions that could support them.

Sustainability: The project also aimed to assess sustainability of change. The team assessed women’s capacities, opportunities, gaps and relationships in engaging this work. The project also aimed to explore material gains women in the project experienced.

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MEL Criteria for Column B:

Changes in gender roles and relations

Sex and age disaggregated data

Unintended consequences

Changing protection risks and needs

