

# WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS AND RESILIENCE IN COMPLEX AND VOLATILE ENVIRONMENTS

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**An Analysis of Best Practices**

Written by Ophelie Namiech



**NOVEMBER 2020**

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**Photo credit:** Fair Planet (p.6), Eliran Douenias (p.10), Courtesy of Pixabay.com (p.14), Courtesy of Pixabay.com (p.26), Fair Planet (p.48), Eliran Douenias (p.58)

**Publishing Director:** Leora Wine, JDC

**Published by** American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Inc.

**Year of publication:** 2020

# Forward

*"I raise up my voice not so I can shout but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back"*

**Malala Yousafzai**

Women and girls in the Global South are significantly more vulnerable to food insecurity than men, and consequently can adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as survival sex, and/or are subject to abuses such as early forced marriage and human trafficking. Yet at the same time, they are also powerful agents for social and economic change and a source of hope for reducing risks and vulnerability and promoting resilience in their families and communities.

Together with local partners, in the coming years JDC-GRID — the disaster relief and international development arm of JDC — will catalyze innovative economic opportunities for women to thrive and to imagine more for themselves, their families, and their communities. We wish to do so while creating a “sisterhood” of women from the Global South, Israel, and Jewish communities around the world.

To achieve maximum impact and plan effective interventions, we looked at successful models that embody best practices in the field today. In this report we analyze what makes these initiatives effective and provide tools for developing future interventions on this topic.

With this report, we also want to highlight the inspiring strengths, opportunities, and positive coping mechanisms of women and girls, so that their capacities and assets can be truly maximized to build resilient societies.

**Avital Sandler Loeff**  
**JDC GRID Executive Director**

# Terminologies

**Livelihood interventions:** Programmatic interventions that enhance people's income-generating capacities by increasing their assets through the provision of cash transfers, infrastructure, support services, market expansion activities and training.<sup>1</sup>

**Resilience:** The ability to cope with shocks and stresses, and to adapt and learn to live with changes and uncertainty. Resilience refers to the capacity of individuals, communities and systems to effectively prepare for and respond to crises, recover quickly, and reach long-term solutions to meaningfully reduce risks, vulnerabilities and needs.<sup>2</sup>

**Women's economic empowerment:** The process of achieving women's equal access to, and control over, economic resources, and of ensuring they can use these resources to exert increased control over their lives.<sup>3</sup>

**Gender:** This concept refers to the way society perceives men and women, irrespective of their biological characteristics. 'Gender' implies social, cultural and psychological characteristics as opposed to 'sex', which relates to biological characteristics.

**Complex and volatile environments:** Locations with high levels of social, political, environmental and/or economic vulnerabilities, combined with high levels of vulnerabilities to shocks and stresses, and low institutional coping capacity.

**Crises, disasters, hazards, shocks and stresses:** A **shock** is defined as a 'sudden event (hazard) that impacts the vulnerability of a system and its components'. A **stress** is a 'long-term trend that undermines the potential of a given system and increases the vulnerability of actors within it'. The impact of shocks and stresses at the community level depends on the intensity of the hazard, combined with the vulnerability of those affected and their capacity to cope with those shocks and stresses.<sup>4</sup>

**Innovation:** An iterative learning process to create or adapt an existing product, process, method or system with the aim of improving the way we think, act and live. When applied to humanitarian-development settings, it refers to an iterative process that identifies, adjusts and diffuses ideas and solutions that can reduce (or help actors reduce) risks and vulnerabilities, and eventually end needs.

**Humanitarian-development nexus:** An approach connecting the once-separated humanitarian and development sectors. This concept focuses on the work needed to coherently address people's vulnerability before, during and after crises.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# Key Messages

1. As the nature of emergencies is rapidly changing and global development challenges are becoming more pressing than ever, women are particularly at risk of bearing the harmful social and economic impact of recurring shocks and stresses. There is a need to identify effective, sustainable, cost-effective and innovative practices to strengthen the capacity of women to reduce risks and vulnerabilities, while preserving and strengthening their rights, dignity, livelihoods and overall well-being.
2. The core objectives of women's livelihood programs should be defined around these deliverables:
  - Women meet basic vital subsistence needs without resorting to negative coping mechanisms.
  - Women generate income and assets to meet needs in a sustainable manner.
  - Women have information about, and can access and control, economic resources.
  - Women can anticipate and mitigate shocks and stress and reduce the latter's harmful impact on their social and economic well-being and those of their families.<sup>5</sup>Ultimately, social and economic well-being is achieved when major vulnerabilities are meaningfully reduced, and when the exposure of women, their families and communities to more risks is eliminated or significantly lowered.
3. Successful women's livelihood programs must analyze gender roles, norms, power and other social dynamics, to durably transform power relations between women and men.
4. Livelihood interventions should embrace a system-based approach which recognizes that isolated interventions are not sufficient to address root causes and complex problems. Livelihood programming should integrate inter-related components from other sectors, such as protection, climate resilience, energy, education and health.
5. As crises are occurring more often than ever before, livelihood programs and resilience strategies have become interdependent. 'Successful livelihood programs must incorporate mechanisms for coping and bouncing back when difficulties emerge'.<sup>6</sup>

# Best practices in the implementation of women's livelihood programs

This report explores best practices for the following types of interventions:

## Market-based and market-strengthening programs

Such activities aim at supporting the 'recovery, development and strengthening of markets' in fragile and volatile environments. They include market development, market diversification, and value chain development.<sup>7</sup>

## Associations and cooperatives

Associations or cooperatives for the commercialization of agricultural or non-agricultural products can counteract the barriers of distorted value chains and enhance the social and economic influence of women. However, cooperatives should not be applied as a default solution. Rather, program managers should conduct careful contextual analysis in order to establish whether the targeted environment is favorable to cooperatives.

## General training, vocational training and income-generating activities

- 1. General training approaches:** Training alone has proved to have very limited – if any – impact.<sup>8</sup> It must be accompanied by other interventions, such as cash injection, market development components, community-based activities to build trust, awareness-raising activities to tackle social norms, institutional advocacy, support with work placements or with access to markets, ongoing business mentoring, etc.
- 2. Vocational training:** Successful vocational training programs include a combination of:
  - Comprehensive market analysis and value chain analysis
  - Comprehensive gender analysis and social norms analysis

- A parallel technology analysis to assess which technology can help achieve the set goals
- Comprehensive, demand-driven training in technical skills
- Training in value chains, access to market, business literacy and marketing
- Partnerships with external actors such as businesses or employers
- Parallel community-based activities to build trust and promote social and economic cohesion
- Basic educational skills especially when working with women who face chronic poverty or with vulnerable youth

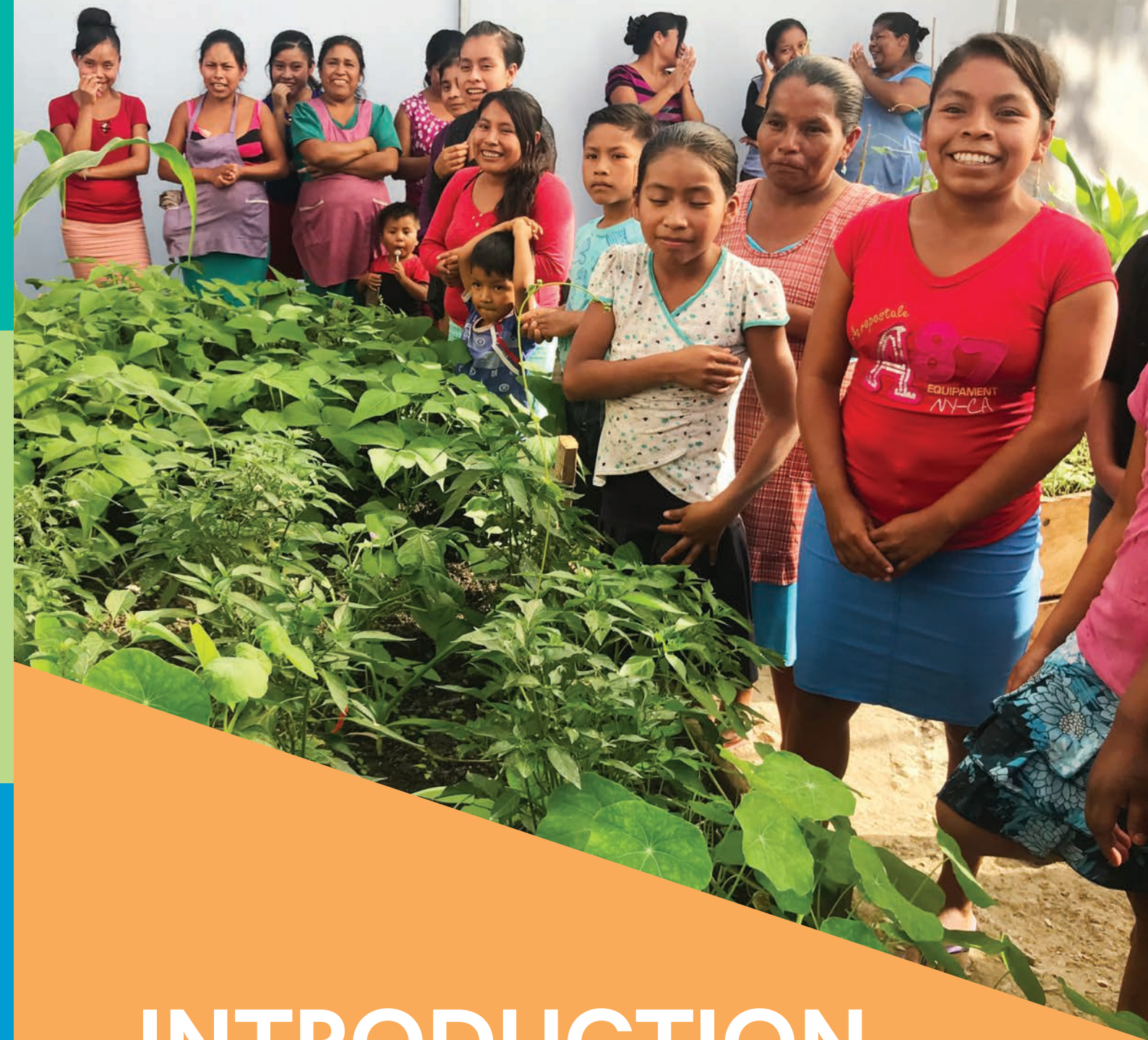
**3. Income-generating activities:** Vocational training programs should not only focus on enhancing knowledge and skills but should also offer clear pathways towards income-generating activities. Best practices show that the core focus and objectives of livelihood programs should be income-generating activities supported by a series of integrated training courses – organized either before or throughout the income-generating activities.

### Cash support to micro, small and medium women's businesses

Livelihood interventions can help women launch small businesses with targeted injections of capital, provided that this cash support is combined with vocational training and support for income-generating activities.

### Innovation and technology

Technological innovations can help women reach sustainable livelihoods in complex and volatile environments, provided they are **contextualized, simple and sustainable, and do not exacerbate existing divisions nor create new ones**. Local or regional technologies should be, whenever possible, prioritized over technologies brought from the northern hemisphere that may be expensive, irrelevant, complex or difficult to maintain, and that perpetuate dependency on external actors. Partnerships with national innovation hubs can maximize local innovation and fuel local economies. When local technologies are not available, technology transfer from other parts of the world can address gaps, provided that sustainability, relevance, ethics and procurement criteria are met.



# INTRODUCTION

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# Rationale

In 2020, 168 million people need humanitarian assistance, which represents 1 person out of 45 in the world and is the largest number in decades.<sup>9</sup> Humanitarian needs have soared due to global instability and climate change, which disrupt lives and livelihoods, undermine coping capacities, and increase vulnerability to recurring shocks and stresses.<sup>10</sup>

In complex and volatile environments, women are differently and disproportionately affected by stresses and shocks – including conflicts, food insecurity, economic fluctuations, social inequalities, environmental degradation and climate-related disasters. At the same time, women are also powerful agents of social, economic and political change. They play a central role within their families, communities and society. As such, they are in a unique position to identify and adopt prevention, adaptation and mitigation strategies that can enhance their well-being and livelihoods, while promoting individual, community and systemic resilience.

**Problem statement:** As the nature of emergencies is rapidly changing and global development challenges are becoming more pressing than ever, women are particularly at risk of bearing the harmful social and economic price of recurring shocks and stresses. There is a need, therefore, to identify effective, sustainable, cost-effective and innovative practices to strengthen the capacity of women to reduce risks and vulnerabilities, while preserving and strengthening their rights, dignity, livelihoods and overall well-being.

JDC-GRID<sup>i</sup> works to promote social and economic opportunities for women living in complex and volatile environments, including crisis and post-crisis settings and areas prone to disasters. As part of the process it has undertaken to strengthen its vision and revise its programmatic strategy, GRID requested an analysis of needs, best practices, and recommendations on sustainable livelihood strategies for women living in such contexts.

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<sup>i</sup> JDC is the leading Jewish humanitarian organization, working in 70 countries to lift lives and strengthen communities. GRID is JDC's platform for disaster response and international development. To learn more, go to [www.jdc.org](http://www.jdc.org).

# Objectives, scope & methodology

## Objectives

The **objectives** of the present analysis are:

1. To better understand the extended livelihood challenges and opportunities faced by women in complex and volatile environments
2. To identify and reflect on global best practices and lessons learned

The **ultimate goal** is to help humanitarian-development agencies develop innovative and high-quality programs that exert a significant and sustainable impact on the social and economic well-being of women, their families and communities worldwide.

## Scope

### Sectors of focus

**Livelihood** – The entry point of this analysis is ‘livelihood’, i.e. programmatic interventions that enhance people’s income-generating capacities. However, the livelihood sector should not be examined in a vacuum, but rather through a holistic lens. As such, this report will highlight the importance of integrating other intertwined sectors, such as resilience, protection (especially gender-based violence, or GBV), food security, health, energy and education, into livelihood programs.

**Gender-transformative approach** – This research embraces a gender-transformative mindset to livelihood. Such an approach does not simply seek to enhance economic opportunities for women, but also intends to integrate and address the structural causes of gender inequalities and the barriers that prevent women from accessing, using and controlling social and economic resources.

**Resilience** – Resilience is a programmatic mindset that bridges humanitarian and development needs and practice in a sustainable manner. Humanitarian and development organizations must promote resilience-based strategies to move away from aid dependency. This includes maximizing communities’ capacity to address vulnerabilities, understand and anticipate risks, identify mitigation strategies and move towards sustainable development.

Focus on resilience in livelihood programs	Examples
Work with communities to understand how shocks and stress negatively impact their livelihoods.	<p>For livelihood programs targeting agriculture, this could mean, for instance, working with smallholder farmers to develop climate-resilient agricultural techniques that will prevent, anticipate, effectively prepare for and/or respond to climate and environmental shocks, and reduce the harmful impact of crises on agricultural input and livelihoods.</p> <p>This also means analyzing and anticipating other possible risks, such as economic shocks, health hazards, conflicts, etc.</p>

**Innovation and technology** – The research emphasizes how technologies and innovative processes can help achieve sustainable livelihoods for women, their families and communities.

## Geographical scope

The report focuses on ‘volatile and complex environments’ – that is, countries or regions that are particularly vulnerable to shocks and stresses, that present high levels of internal social and economic vulnerabilities, and whose institutional coping capacity is low or reduced.<sup>11</sup>

## Methodology

**Two core methods were used for this analysis:**

1. A comprehensive literature review (see *Annex 1*) of resources and best practices from leading humanitarian and development actors
2. Interviews with experts from the sector

**Limitations:**

1. **Coronavirus period:** The analysis was conducted, coincidentally, during the COVID-19 global pandemic, which created challenges (such as availability of practitioners and the need to address other priorities on the global agenda).
2. **Limited needs and gap analysis:** To address time constraints, this report essentially focused on best practices. Additional research should be conducted on the structural causes of gender inequalities, gender roles and norms, as well as on the interconnection between livelihood needs and other sectors.



# PART I

## WOMEN'S SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS: NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

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This section underlines the main livelihood challenges faced by women in different contexts, and the existing positive coping mechanisms they use to prevent, mitigate and respond to these challenges.

# Women and poverty

## Gender barriers

**The needs** - The gender barriers women face which can undermine their economic empowerment can be divided into four categories:<sup>ii</sup>

### 1. Structural or macro barriers:

- **Cultural norms:** Perceptions of gender norms and roles within a particular society at a certain period in time that result in discriminatory social norms and practice
- **Institutional barriers:** Parameters defined by formal institutions, such as fiscal policy, legal and policy frameworks, and labor market characteristics

### 2. Community barriers:

Barriers related to the status and role that women have in the community

### 3. Household barriers:

Barriers related to the power dynamics within the household and the role women play at home

### 4. Individual barriers:

Factors related to self-esteem, fear and doubts that prevent women from seeking jobs, public status and other social and economic opportunities

These barriers result in the following types of discrimination:<sup>12</sup>

- Differences in levels of education and skills acquisition
- Inequalities in domestic responsibilities

<sup>ii</sup> This resonates with Hunt and Samman's research that identifies three levels of factors enabling or constraining women's economic empowerment: 1) structural or macro factors; 2) social factors enabling women to drive change; and 3) micro factors driving women's own ability to earn and control income. In **Abigail Hunt and Emma Samman**, *Women's economic empowerment: Navigating enablers and constraints*, ODI, September 2016, at: <https://www.odi.org/publications/10483-womens-economic-empowerment-navigating-enablers-and-constraints>.

- Barriers to key assets
- Lesser professional, economic and social opportunities for women
- Higher vulnerability to violence
- Higher vulnerability to shocks and stresses

**The opportunity** – Gender barriers are associated with gender roles that are attributed to women and men based on the perceptions that society has of such roles. Gender roles are socially constructed and can change across cultures and over time. Livelihood programs targeting women should therefore identify and address the gender roles that are specifically harmful to women and society – as well as those that are favorable to women and society – in order to effectively abolish the barriers that prevent women from reaching sustainable livelihoods and general well-being.

## Women and chronic poverty

**The needs** – Chronic poverty refers to extreme poverty that persists over years and is often transmitted intergenerationally.<sup>13</sup> It reflects multiple disadvantages affecting women such as: poor income; discrimination; lack of engagement in markets; restrained access to resources, information, services and opportunities; and high vulnerability to shocks and stresses. Together, these obstacles make women excessively exposed to poverty.<sup>14</sup>

Women facing chronic poverty must be able to influence the political, economic and social processes that determine and hinder their livelihood opportunities. This is a necessary step towards ensuring that no one is left behind in the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>15</sup>

**The opportunity** – The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has determined that women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development. It explains that 'gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts', for example, in food security and health.<sup>16</sup> A study of women's empowerment and poverty dynamics in Uganda between 1992 and 2005 found that women's empowerment at the community level helped the community break the cycle of poverty.<sup>17</sup>

## Women and food insecurity

**The needs** – According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the global number of undernourished people has soared due to conflicts, disasters and economic shocks. Today, 113 million people, more than half of whom are in Africa, suffer from acute hunger.<sup>18</sup> According to the United Nations Food Agriculture Organization (FAO), ‘people facing severe food insecurity have likely run out of food, experienced hunger and, at the most extreme, gone for days without eating, putting their health and well-being at grave risk’.<sup>19</sup> Women and girls are 10% more vulnerable to food insecurity than men.<sup>20</sup> Due to the fact that, in many contexts, women are the main duty bearer and food provider in their families, this reality has dramatic consequences for the livelihood, health and general well-being of entire families and communities.

**The opportunity** – These facts demonstrate the importance of working with women on both: 1) strengthening subsistence mechanisms (e.g., crop production, livestock) and 2) developing income-generating activities to secure durable livelihoods, while 3) supporting mechanisms to anticipate, prepare for and respond to shocks that may affect these vital livelihood opportunities.

To circumvent food insecurity, women may adopt negative survival coping mechanisms, including exchanging sex for food, submitting to early forced marriages or human trafficking, and other unsafe behaviors that aggravate their vulnerabilities. Yet, women everywhere have also developed positive coping mechanisms to deal with shocks and stresses. For instance, they organize collective walks to protect themselves when looking for food, or seek alternatives to firewood for cooking to avoid walking in dangerous areas to fetch wood.<sup>21</sup>

# Women's livelihoods, climate change and environmental degradation

**The needs** – Women are disproportionately affected by climate change and disasters, both because of the roles they play in providing for the food, energy and water needs of their families, and because they heavily rely on natural resources for their livelihoods.<sup>22</sup>

Climate change and related shocks represent one of the major causes of severe food crises and have therefore significantly contributed to the recent rise in global hunger. In Sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture-reliant communities are already affected by 'heavier rainfalls, prolonged droughts, higher temperatures, increased crop failure, livestock loss and increasing food insecurity'<sup>23</sup> – especially in areas that are vulnerable to both food insecurity and climatic hazards.

Additionally, the impact of climate change exacerbates the risk of violence against women. As changing weather patterns significantly impact subsistence and income-generating agriculture and livestock activities, women find themselves walking longer distance to find firewood, water and food – putting themselves at higher risk of sexual and physical assaults, accidents and health hazards.

**The opportunity** – Women play important roles in core sectors affected by climate change, such as agriculture, livestock management and energy, and as such, are powerful agents of social change who can identify and adopt positive coping mechanisms and mitigation strategies. They can be strong advocates for and contributors to climate action and sustainability.<sup>24</sup> Working with women to promote climate-resilient and sustainable livelihoods can therefore create a sustainable multiplier effect that positively affects families, communities and society at large.

# Women's livelihood needs and opportunities in crisis and displacement

**The needs** – In many contexts, women and girls displaced by conflict, generalized violence, or persecution, or as the result of environmental or climate-related shocks, often bear the burden of finding means of subsistence to survive and meet the livelihood needs of their families. When resilience is non-existent or has eroded due to multiple layers of vulnerability, communities depend on aid and are therefore unable to break the cycle of vulnerability and poverty.

In addition, there is an intrinsic connection between livelihood needs in times of crisis and GBV. Crises exacerbate the occurrence and risks of violence against women and girls including rape, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, early and forced marriage, sexual exploitation and trafficking.<sup>25</sup> First, GBV remains prevalent in many armed conflicts, where it is used as a 'weapon of war'. Second, in times of crisis, women and girls may resort to negative and harmful coping mechanisms to meet their livelihood needs (e.g. sex for food, sex for services, early forced marriages to cope with loss of income, etc.). Third, livelihood interventions can create and exacerbate GBV – including domestic or economic violence – especially when those programs boost women's economic opportunities without considering gender norms and power dynamics between men and women.<sup>26</sup>

**The opportunity** – Beyond the acute response after a crisis when affected populations can usually benefit from food distribution, livelihood interventions targeting women are particularly relevant afterwards, in the recovery and stabilization phases of emergencies, as such programs allow families to rebuild and plan ahead.

# The gender-livelihoods-health nexus

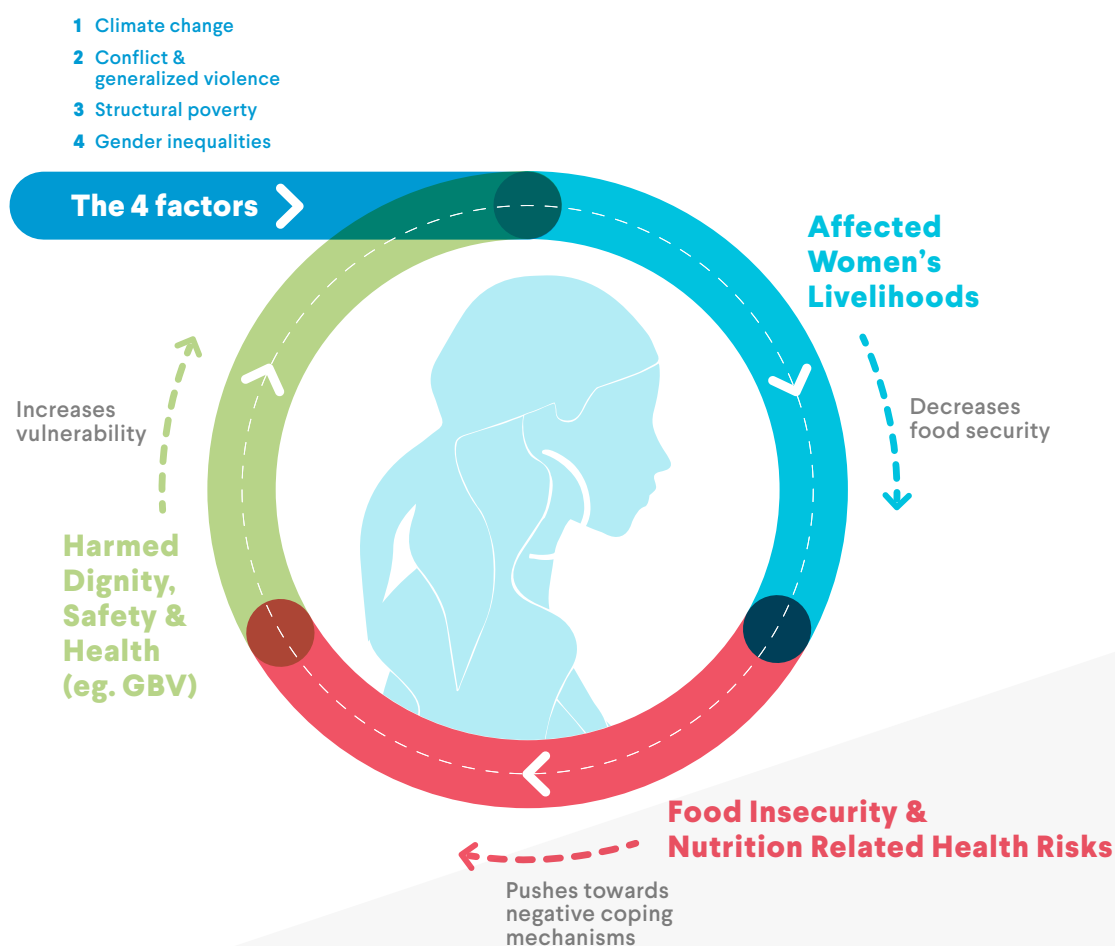
**The needs** – Gender roles can also have a significant impact on exposure to viruses and access to health care. Because women, in many settings, are often responsible for collecting water and preparing food, they are more exposed to diseases such as cholera. In certain regions, women and girls are more vulnerable to contracting HIV due to greater exposure to sexual violence and exploitation as they seek to address their livelihood needs. Additionally, the lack of reproductive and sexual health services for women and girls in volatile and complex environments exacerbates the burden placed on women when it comes to their childbearing, family care and related responsibilities.

**The opportunity** – Many linear livelihood projects fail to integrate this health nexus despite the fact that this link is not only evident but vital. The recent global COVID-19 pandemic further illustrated the intersection between health crises and livelihood shocks and stresses – especially for at-risk demographic groups such as displaced people, single mothers, pregnant women, adolescent girls, etc.

Even though the previous sub-sections were divided to highlight the specific needs related to women and livelihoods, the above parameters are inter-dependent. Together, they form a vicious circle of vulnerability and poverty that is particularly severe for women and girls: the combination of 1) structural causes of gender inequalities deeply rooted in social and cultural norms, together with 2) social, economic and political factors associated with chronic poverty, 3) the impact of climate change and environmental degradation, and finally 4) widespread generalized violence and conflict **1** severely impact the livelihoods of women, girls and other at-risk groups, **2** fuels food insecurity and affects health. This dynamic then may force women and girls to resort to negative coping mechanisms. **3** This severely undermines the safety, dignity and health of women, girls, families and communities, and further exacerbates inequalities and marginalization, creating a situation in which women and girls become even more vulnerable to shocks and stresses and more profoundly impacted by crises.

There is therefore a vital need to break this cycle of vulnerability and poverty, beginning with the understanding that livelihood needs and related interventions are not linear. The figure below portrays a complex web of interconnected and interdependent factors that must be carefully considered in women's livelihood programming.

**Figure 1: The vicious circle of vulnerability and poverty**



# Geographical analysis

This sub-section highlights the overall livelihood-related needs of women in three regions of the Global South in accordance with the UNOCHA 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

## Sub-Saharan Africa

Climate change and environmental degradation intensify the negative effects of chronic poverty, economic inequality and political instability. According to UNOCHA's 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the 2018–2019 rainy season was particularly poor in **central and western Southern Africa**, with large parts of the region recording their lowest rainfall since 1981, while other regions suffered the effects of cyclones, pests and disease. Angola, Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia all declared drought disasters, while the Comoros, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe faced states of emergency due to Cyclones Idai and Kenneth. Zimbabwe has been addressing its worst economic crisis in a decade, while Zambia is witnessing its highest levels of severe food insecurity in recent years. Internal displacement in the region rose in 2019 due to cyclones and drought. Families are adopting extreme coping mechanisms, including child labor, child trafficking, early marriage and transactional sex to address these serious shocks and stresses.

Similarly, conflict and violence, droughts, floods and economic shocks significantly increased humanitarian needs in **Eastern Africa** in 2019 and continue to be the main drivers of needs in 2020. Conflict or climatic shocks have resulted in the displacement of almost 12.8 million people across the region. In 2019, 27.8 million people were severely food insecure in the sub-region. The 2019 floods in the Horn of Africa hit many countries during their harvest period and have caused increased food insecurity in 2020.

**West and Central Africa** are among the most risk-prone regions in the world. Climate change, extreme poverty, rapid population growth and insecurity are driving high levels of vulnerability. Violent conflict, forced displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, epidemics and environmental shocks continue to devastate communities.



## Case study: Ethiopia<sup>27</sup>

According to the Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), an estimated 8 million people were severely food insecure in 2019.<sup>28</sup> Several factors exacerbated food insecurity in Ethiopia. Conflict and climatic factors disrupted livelihood activities and weakened food market systems and prices. Below-average rainfall in some regions of the Afar, Oromia, Somali, Tigray and SNNP regions curtailed food production and reduced livestock production. High prices for staple foods were registered in these regions, thus limiting food access for the poorest.

### 2020 Needs:

In 2020, it is estimated that 3.7 million people continue to be chronically food insecure. Seasonal flooding and invasions by desert locusts and other pests have contributed to significant losses of crop harvests and pastures in the Afar, Amhara, Oromia and Somali regions. Steps to be taken include:

- Scale up activities to meet the needs of all food-insecure populations
- Restore and enhance the livelihood of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees, and vulnerable farming and pastoralist communities by subsidizing basic commodities and agricultural inputs
- Scale up public works programs and rehabilitate rural community assets
- Support ongoing social cohesion and peacebuilding initiatives to reduce the impact of conflicts on food security, nutrition and livelihoods
- Improve access to water to support community-based initiatives that contribute to the stabilization and maintenance of livelihoods
- Support integrated food security, nutrition, livelihood and health programs in areas affected by diseases such as malaria and cholera by reducing the impact of diseases on household livelihoods

'Adverse climatic conditions and shocks, conflict, price hikes and economic instability were the main drivers of food insecurity in 2019. Hence, current and future responses should consider additional investments in resilience and adaptation to climate change to provide food-insecure households with a buffer against future shocks and to stop the cycle of recurring food crisis.'

## Asia and the Pacific

Asia and the Pacific is the region of the world most prone to climate- and environment-related disasters; in the past five years, earthquakes, typhoons/cyclones, flooding, tsunamis, volcanoes, drought and food shortages have affected 760 million people.<sup>29</sup> Climate change and environmental risks further aggravate the potential for large disasters. This vulnerability has led governments to make disaster management a priority. In recent years, the region's disaster preparedness and mitigation strategy has blossomed, supported by local, national and regional Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) mechanisms. For instance, most countries in the region have established national disaster management authorities and invested in national systems capable of managing small- and medium-scale disasters. Livelihood strategies thus incorporate DRR mechanisms, to reduce the negative impact of future crises on communities' livelihoods.



### Case study: Philippines<sup>30</sup>

From 1998 to 2017, Philippines ranked fourth among the countries most affected by extreme weather events (together with Haiti). According to the *Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery*, at least 60% of the country's total land area is exposed to hazards and 74% of the population is vulnerable to their impact.<sup>31</sup>

In the Philippines, main sources of livelihood include agriculture, mining, forestry, fishing and services. Large-scale disasters can affect the food supply on a national scale. For instance, Typhoon Haiyan resulted in the loss of 260,000 tons of rice, leading to severe food shortages; 2.5 million people needed food assistance and the livelihoods of one million farmers were affected.<sup>32</sup> Approximately one million people fell into poverty. The most vulnerable socio-economic groups are disproportionately affected by climate change, environmental degradation, related disasters and the resulting losses of livelihoods in Philippines, especially smallholder fishermen/shellfish companies and small-scale farmers. Women are also particularly and differently affected by disasters due to cultural norms and perceptions influencing gendered behavior in the country. Climate change is most likely to severely hinder agricultural output and endanger the livelihoods of subsistence farmers or other low-income households dependent on the environment. As such, support for livelihoods has been identified as a top priority in national DRR strategies, including exploring alternative livelihood options, subsidies and risk-transfers.

## Latin America and the Caribbean

This region is the second most affected by climate and environmental disasters after Asia and the Pacific. Strong seasonal hurricanes in the Atlantic and recurring climate shocks in Central America are increasing the vulnerability of the region. The impacts of these shocks aggravate existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities, as demonstrated in the case of Haiti.



### Case study: Haiti<sup>33</sup>

Haiti remains a top global humanitarian priority, with 4.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2020. Haiti is affected by a continuing and deepening political and socioeconomic crisis, resulting in high inflation, increased poverty, severe food insecurity, malnutrition, and deeper vulnerabilities to recurrent man-made and climate-/weather-related and environmental crises. As a result, the number of food-insecure people rose from 2.6 million in 2018 to 3.7 million in 2019. According to UNOCHA, this number is expected to increase to 4.2 million in 2020. In 2020, UNOCHA anticipates that the situation will further undermine the country's economy and, consequently, the ability of the poorest Haitians to meet their basic needs as well as the capacity of the state to provide essential services.

Haiti also remains highly vulnerable to climate-/weather-related and environmental disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts and floods. According to the ND-GAIN country index, the country is the eighth country most vulnerable to climate change in the world.<sup>34</sup> The long period of rainfall deficit from 2018 to mid-2019 is affecting 2020 agricultural production, further exacerbating the severity of needs. The most vulnerable include people with health care needs; those facing food insecurity; those with little or no access to safe drinking water; people who lost their homes as a result of the floods in late 2019; and about 30,000 extremely vulnerable people who did not receive shelter assistance after the 2018 earthquake and are highly susceptible to further shocks.

Livelihoods preparedness is therefore a top priority for the humanitarian community and the government in Haiti. The humanitarian response is focused on the most affected and at-risk groups, including single-headed households, pregnant and lactating women, unaccompanied or separated children, people with disabilities, GBV survivors.



# PART II

## BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED

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Part II is organized according to sets of best practices that respond to the above interconnected needs and opportunities. Each sub-section features concrete examples of successful programs operated by entities ranging from large agencies (UN agencies, World Bank, large NGOs), to medium and small-scale international and national NGOs. The best practices were selected based on the following criteria:

- Best practices related to the above interconnected needs
- Best practices that were recognized as successful by evidenced evaluation
- Best practices that are genuinely community-led or community-centered and that reflect recognized global international standards, practices and ethics<sup>35</sup>
- Best practices that are resilient, holistic and gender transformative
- Best practices that embrace a humanitarian-development nexus approach

## Best practices in the conceptualization of livelihood programming

### Defining program objectives

The core outcomes of women's livelihood programs should be defined around these deliverables:

1. Women meet basic vital subsistence needs for themselves and their families without resorting to negative coping mechanisms.
2. Women generate income and assets to meet essential needs (including food security, access to water, and health) in a sustainable manner.
3. Women have information about, and can access and control, economic resources.
4. Women can anticipate and mitigate shocks and stresses and reduce the latter's harmful impact on their social and economic well-being and that of their families.<sup>36</sup>

Ultimately, social and economic well-being is achieved when major vulnerabilities are meaningfully reduced and when the exposure of women, their families and communities to more risks is eliminated or significantly lowered.

## Designing gender-transformative programmatic frameworks

As we saw in the first section, the 'livelihood needs' picture is complex and defined by numerous layers of barriers that prevent women from achieving durable social and economic well-being. As such, successful women's livelihood programs must analyze gender roles, norms, power and other social dynamics throughout the entire program cycle in the context of operations in order to durably transform power relations between women and men.

### In practice

- **Conducting a gender analysis:** Programs should be built on a comprehensive gender and power analysis (see *Annex 2*) which informs each phase. Gender analysis includes questions on power dynamics, ownership, division of labor, control and decision-making in the household and the community, such as:
  - Who brings in income/assets? Who owns and controls income/assets? How are income/assets spent? Who decides how income/assets are spent?
- **Involving men in program design and implementation:** There is abundant literature demonstrating that women's empowerment programs that focused exclusively on women had limited or no impact, but also created more harm in many instances.

### The failure of women's livelihood programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)<sup>37</sup>

Some women's economic empowerment programs, such as vocational training programs, micro-finance projects or in-kind support, provided assistance almost solely to women. Such programs did not involve men and failed to understand men's roles and perceptions in society. Inviting women to such projects outside the home created vulnerabilities for their husbands. **Men started to feel that these programs reinforced women at their expense.**

They also feared the reactions of other men: 'If men are left alone at home to take care of the children, the house and the animals, then they will be perceived to be the women of the house'.

In response to these perceived threats and male vulnerabilities, **men started to display aggressive and violent behaviors, including forced access to sex, aimed at reasserting their power and authority.** There were instances of men sabotaging opportunities for women. In such cases, families were left without the benefits of the project, such as the acquisition of chickens or goats, which are vital sources of food or income. In addition to creating further divides between men and women, those programs perpetuated cycles of violence at home, for example, men assaulting their wives as acts of revenge.

- **Considering all levels of programmatic interventions: The UK Department of Foreign Investment and Development (DFID)** identifies four levels of gender-transformative interventions that must be holistically considered when designing the program:
  1. **The societal level:** Interventions that seek to influence institutions, laws and policies
  2. **The community level:** Community-based interventions that aim at changing social and cultural norms, values and practices that undermine gender equality
  3. **The household level:** Interventions that target relationships within the family and marriage and within sexual relationships
  4. **The individual level:** Activities that focus on influencing an individual's self-confidence, knowledge or self-awareness<sup>38</sup>

### In practice:

 The Mastercard Foundation identified programmatic activities that successfully overcame gendered barriers within livelihood programs by:<sup>39</sup>

- Encouraging quotas for equal participation of young women and men
- Offering child-care support options for women to attend activities
- Ensuring flexible training schedules to enable young women to participate
- Adapting curricula, including, for instance, training in life skills and sexual and reproductive health

- Prioritizing strategies that build women's self-confidence and skills
- Role modelling designed to show participants they have options beyond traditional caregiving roles (for instance, using interventions of influential women in the communities)
- Challenging gender-based job segregation through community and individual sensitization, and through work with potential employers and trainers
- Supporting business and employment activities that can be done at home, or in close proximity, to address the mobility constraints of mothers
- Sensitizing gender equality in paid work and promoting domestic collaboration
- Promoting equal treatment in training and activities and equal participation
- Supporting specific socio-economic groups that are excluded or marginalized, such as young/single mothers, adolescent girls, GBV survivors and young female entrepreneurs

## Ensuring the integrated nature of programming

Livelihood interventions should reflect the whole complexity of the livelihood spectrum. They should embrace a systems-based approach which recognizes that isolated interventions are not sufficient to address root causes and complex problems.

### In practice:

Livelihood programming should integrate the following inter-related components from other sectors:

Sector	Examples
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing women's resources through a livelihood program may create or exacerbate domestic or economic violence. Understanding gender power dynamics and how they can positively or negatively influence the program is essential.</li> </ul>
Climate resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most livelihood programs should ask the following questions: How may livelihoods be affected by crises? What are the best prevention, preparation, mitigation and response strategies to ensure that livelihoods are effectively preserved before, during and after shocks?</li> </ul>

Sector	Examples
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many livelihood programs aim to increase women's economic and social opportunities by focusing on producing, using and selling alternative energy mechanisms.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs, especially those targeting women facing chronic poverty, may include sessions on basic skills (e.g., English, literacy).</li> <li>Organizations offer livelihood opportunities for women around early childhood education (e.g., establishing childcare centers as small businesses led by women).<sup>40</sup></li> </ul>
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs may incorporate sessions on sexual and reproductive health for both men and women.</li> </ul>



### Best practice of the Barefoot College approach in India

The **Hatheli Sanstan program** aims to train Indian artisans and craftspeople to join the global supply chain and to turn grassroots activities into a viable industry. It offers a comprehensive approach that has proved successful where linear approaches have failed. This includes:

- Sustainable knowledge and skills for communities (e.g., training in technical skills that reflect cultural factors, market needs and technological opportunities)
- Adoption of an environmentally harmonious lifestyle (e.g., embracing an environmentally friendly approach, climate resilience by focusing on alternative energy sources)
- Community transformation and empowerment (e.g., work on gender roles, social structures, cohesion and social equalities)

Likewise, the **ENRICH program** offers a comprehensive and successful approach that includes the following interconnected components:

- Participatory workshops tailored to women's needs (awareness, confidence and skills building)
- Livelihood skills relevant to local resources and market opportunities (with in-kind seed capital)
- Community outreach and mobilization where women share their skills and knowledge
- Mentoring, financial and market -oriented services

## Embracing a resilience-based approach

As crises are recurring more often than ever before, livelihood programs and resilience strategies have become interdependent. As the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) explains: 'Successful livelihood programs must incorporate mechanisms for coping and bouncing back when difficulties emerge.'<sup>41</sup>

### In practice

Resilience-based livelihood interventions for women generally focus on working with women and their communities to identify the vulnerabilities and risks they face and to adopt context-specific mitigation strategies. For instance, if women identify 'fetching firewood' as one of their main protection and livelihood concerns, then a resilience-based program can help provide a platform for women to safely discuss and identify solutions. Such platforms should be built on existing coping mechanisms already used by women, such as women's groups or faith-based groups. Under such conditions, women have developed concrete solutions grounded in the realm of their daily realities (i.e. not imposed by external actors). External actors can provide technical support by exploring, for instance, how technologies can help women mitigate the risks they have identified. For example, women may want to find alternative energy sources to minimize their dependence on firewood. New technologies based on renewable energies can help address this concern. Women can be given the opportunity to build their own alternative energy-based stoves, as was done in Uganda and Sri Lanka.<sup>42</sup>



### Sustainable livelihood and resilience program in Somalia (BRCiS program)<sup>43</sup>

Somalia faces prolonged drought, ethnic tensions, political unrest, malnutrition, displacement, climate change impact and the resulting competition over natural resources.

BRCiS uses a flexible, integrated approach focused on building community resilience in sectors identified by the communities themselves. This community graduation model<sup>iii</sup> builds on communities' own capacities and promotes livelihood strategies that can help people adapt to climate change and other shocks, respect the environment and ultimately break the cycle of poverty. BRCiS focuses on three pillars: 1) building resilience, 2) supplying humanitarian assistance, and 3) improving livelihoods:

- In the 'resilience' pillar, the program established community-based early warning systems by supplementing traditional knowledge with technology (e.g., 'early action' systems, such as a tracking system for disasters).
- Activities included community mobilization (e.g., the formation of village councils, participatory consultations, etc.) and training in DRR and natural resource management.

The program showed that promoting strong partnerships and links between communities, public authorities, international donors and the private sector are key to effective and sustainable community resilience and livelihood programs.

iii Based on BRAC's graduation model, at: <http://www.brac.net/program/ultra-poor-graduation/>. The idea is for communities to 'graduate' from humanitarian needs to long-term development.

# Best practices in the implementation of women's livelihood programs

This sub-section presents best practices in the implementation of the above-described framework. Although these best practices are separated into different categories of livelihood interventions, multiple categories should be combined to ensure programmatic success.

## Market-based and market-strengthening programs

This type of intervention aims at supporting the 'recovery, development and strengthening of markets' in fragile and volatile environments. Such programs 'engage with markets before, during and after crises in order to assess needs across market supply and demand, address gaps in market systems and develop market-relevant interventions for more sustainable impact'.<sup>44</sup> They include:<sup>45</sup>

- 1. Market development:** Activities promoting the development of private sector markets in a way that makes them more beneficial to specific groups, such as initiatives that create or reinforce markets for women's handicraft goods.
- 2. Market diversification:** Activities that help a business either expand to new markets or diversify or transform products. For instance, a program in Cameroon helped women process and transform cocoa into chocolate powder and other derivatives and enabled them to target new markets.<sup>46</sup>

Diversification within agriculture and related activities is a solid strategy that can help break the cycle of poverty.<sup>47</sup> As such, diversification is both a risk reduction strategy and a coping strategy, but can also be employed as a strategy for a sustained poverty escape.

**3. Value chain development:** Value chain development digs deeper into market structures and refers to the full range of activities that bring a product (or a service) from conception through the different phases of production to delivery to consumers and eventually to disposal.<sup>48</sup> Understanding these pathways, and how producers interact with them, is an essential component of livelihood strategies.

For instance, women in rural Uganda who grew and sold horticultural crops were the victims of value chain distortions and abuse as they sold their products through ‘middlemen’ who took advantage by overcharging them.<sup>49</sup> This is a common gendered obstacle faced by many female smallholder farmers in developing countries. To counter this pattern, women may seek to join or form associations or cooperatives if the cultural, social and economic context is favorable.

Other potential approaches include cooperation with the private sector through enterprise-based training or bottom-up approaches to value chain development.<sup>50</sup>

## In practice

Even though a small-scale livelihood program might not choose market strengthening as its core strategy, the program should still be fully informed by market dynamics. There are several tools available to help program managers better grasp market needs, gaps, obstacles and drivers:

- **IRC Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Toolkit (EMMA)**<sup>51</sup>
- **IRC Pre-Crisis Market Analysis (PCMA):** PCMA is a practical resource to guide practitioners in conducting market assessments in contexts that are prone to recurring crises. This early analysis helps practitioners anticipate how certain markets will behave if and when shocks occur.<sup>52</sup>
- **General market analysis:** This tool analyzes market research data to support decision-making.
- **Value chain analysis:** This tool explores the process of product development from conception to consumption, and analyzes the different actors operating throughout the process.<sup>53</sup>



### Example

The agricultural value chain project in Uganda can help women move into farming as a business. In Northern Uganda, the IRC supported internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had previously been small farmers to re-enter profitable agricultural value chains, such as soya, beans, cotton and maize. Participants were trained in agricultural practices utilizing new, simple, contextualized technologies, as well as in marketing strategies, and were given access to information and financial services.<sup>54</sup>

## Associations and cooperatives

A common approach used in women's livelihoods to counteract distorted value chains and to enhance women's social and economic influence is the creation of associations or cooperatives for the commercialization of products or services.

### In practice

Cooperatives can offer a solid option for women's empowerment, but they should not be perceived as the default solution. A careful contextual analysis should allow program managers to understand whether the targeted environment is favorable to cooperatives. In some contexts, the economic culture can prioritize individual entrepreneurship over collective action. Additionally, program managers should be aware of national governmental strategies related to cooperatives to see whether a favorable institutional framework exists.



### Examples<sup>55</sup>

- **Uttarakhand, northern India:** Engagement in community-level women's empowerment programs, including support groups, literacy camps, adult education classes and vocational training, increased women's access to employment, physical mobility and political participation, and added to their bargaining power.
- **Western Uganda:** Research on 26 self-help groups in a joint microfinance and coffee cooperative observed that women members generated higher income than the rest of the community. They were able to use their group status to foster broader changes, including

a reduction in tolerance of GBV and more positive attitudes towards joint landholding with spouses.

- **Northern Uganda:** Combining business skills training and an individual start-up grant of \$150, group formation and related support was highly effective in raising women's monthly income and increasing their control over durable assets.
- **Ethiopia, Mali and Tanzania:** Collective action in agricultural markets triggered significant economic benefits. Women's group members were more productive, and their products were of better quality, resulting in higher average incomes. Being part of a group also improved access to credit and market information, while training and the use of improved technology helped raise quality and productivity.

## General training, vocational training, and income-generating activities

### General training and vocational training

Training is not an end in and of itself, but a means towards a much more sustainable goal. As such, training alone has proved to have very limited – if any – impact.<sup>56</sup> It must be accompanied by other interventions, such as cash injection, market development components, community-based activities to build trust, awareness-raising activities to tackle social norms, institutional advocacy, support with work placements or access to markets, ongoing business mentoring, etc.

A 2014 literature review by ODI found that 'when designed with attention to the local context and power dynamics, training and vocational skills programs in [fragile and complex] environments can significantly improve livelihood opportunities. They may even generate additional benefits, such as increased self-esteem, reduced violence and improved gender relations'.<sup>57</sup>

Hence, alternative training methodologies, such as peer-led sessions, peer-to-peer working groups, exchange of best practices, simulations, demonstrations and other horizontal participatory methodologies, are increasingly being used.

## In practice

- Successful vocational training programs include a combination of:
  - A comprehensive market analysis and value chain analysis
  - A comprehensive gender analysis and social norms analysis
  - A parallel technology analysis to assess which technology can help achieve set goals
  - Comprehensive, demand-driven training in technical skills
  - Training in value chain, market access, business literacy and marketing
  - Partnerships with external actors – such as businesses or employers
  - Parallel and integrated community-based activities to build trust and promote social and economic cohesion
- Adding basic educational skills into such programs has also proved to be valuable – especially when working with women who face chronic poverty and at-risk youth.
- The focus and scope of vocational training programs should be carefully analyzed using the following criteria:
  - Actual market needs (supply and demand)
  - Value chain status: barriers and drivers
  - Cultural and social norms
  - The true interests of the community (analysis of what participants want and need)
  - The organization's actual expertise and added value
  - Technological factors informed by the technology analysis

## Income-generating activities:

Vocational training programs should not only focus on enhancing knowledge and skills but should also offer clear pathways towards income-generating activities. Best practices show that the core focus and objectives of livelihood programs should be income-generating activities supported by a series of integrated training courses.



## Examples of more traditional vocational and income-generating activities

### **Focus: Manual professions: carpentry, welding, etc.**

- Women learn skills to obtain employment in traditional manual service industries.
- Programs offer vocational training and pathways to employment with businesses.

### **Possible advantages:**

- Programs can tackle gender roles and perceptions.
- Programs can target very vulnerable groups and help navigate the literacy challenge.
- Programs can be demand based, in partnership with businesses.

### **Possible limitations:**

- Gendered barriers may create further divides or enhance resentment or even violence.
- Such activities may be supply-based as opposed to demand-based.

### **Examples:**

- Faith-based organizations, such as Don Bosco vocational training programs, provide comprehensive market-oriented programs worldwide.

### **Focus: STEM (Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Math)**

- Women and girls develop skills to work in sciences and technical professions.
- Programs offer vocational training for women and education curricula for girls at schools, with broader pathways towards employment.

### **Possible advantages:**

- This is a promising field that may open opportunities.
- Such programs can target gender roles by focusing on women and girls.
- Both vocational training and educational programs can be offered through schools.

### **Possible limitations:**

- Gender barriers due to social norms can be an obstacle.
- Such programs require infrastructures and higher budgets.

### **Examples:**

- The **ICT Girls project** in South Sudan has been very successful (for more information see section below on 'women's livelihoods and technology').<sup>58</sup>

**Focus: Handicrafts**

- Women and girls make and sell embroideries and cultural handicrafts.
- They also use the platform to bond as women and to discuss topics of concern.

**Possible advantages:**

- Programs are cheap and relatively easy to implement.
- Programs do not require a lot of logistics.
- Programs can easily be integrated into existing women's groups.
- Women can create handicrafts while talking about issues that concern them and identifying risks and mitigation strategies. This can be a good entry point for further development of livelihoods or protection activities.

**Possible limitations:**

- The social impact is usually bigger than the economic impact. The demand for handicrafts may be limited unless there is a steady partnership with hotels, tourism industry, expat industries or a global partnership.
- To be fully impactful, such programs must be combined with other vocational activities – or be included as one component of an integrated 'protection' program.

**Examples:**

- **Barefoot College's Hatheli Sanstan** program promotes artisan industries and rural livelihoods which produce products for sale within India and abroad. The mission is to develop and train artisans for a global supply chain.<sup>59</sup>

**Focus: Cooking and other service industries**

- Women learn how to cook, sell and market their own cooking services.
- Women learn how to cook for commercial purposes and are then linked to hotels, restaurants and other businesses.

**Possible advantages:**

- Little challenge to existing social norms and gender roles.

**Possible limitations:**

- To be truly successful, training needs to be combined with work placement and partnerships with hotel chains, restaurants, big companies or municipalities, etc.

- For programs helping women to open their own food and beverage businesses, careful analysis of local market dynamics should be conducted in advance to make sure there are demand-based opportunities.

#### Examples:

- Through **AJEEC-NISPED's Bedouin women's catering initiative in Rahat, Israel**, Bedouin women established a catering business to make and provide meals to Bedouin schools via strategic partnerships with the municipality and the Ministry of Education. This project combines: women's livelihood, education, peacebuilding/social cohesion, nutrition and cultural sensitivity.<sup>60</sup>

#### Focus: Agriculture (crops)

- Women learn improved extension agriculture techniques, business and marketing skills, and value chain.

#### Possible advantages:

- If the model works, the impact can be significant.
- Women can play a central role and have a key impact on family well-being and community development.
- This sector has a strong and necessary link to climate resilience.
- Programs can focus on household consumption and small-scale sales.
- Such programs can attract institutional funding with their resilience and gender components.

#### Possible limitations:

- Programs involve complex programming.
- Programs and budgets should be a minimum of two years (and ideally five years).

#### Examples:

- **IRC's small-scale activities** include household garden and small livestock programs in Syria, aimed at food consumption and sales. These include agricultural inputs; training in sustainable production techniques and nutritional information; sustainable water management for micronutrient-rich vegetable crops; and low-input crop management.<sup>61</sup>

- **The FAO provided an emergency agriculture livelihood response in Yemen.**<sup>62</sup> Initially, farming households lacked access to inputs because of reduced purchasing power and the disruption of markets. With the acquisition of backyard production kits, families were able to produce nutritious food close to their homes and earn much-needed income.

#### **Focus: Livestock**

- Women are trained in income-generating activities involving livestock.

#### **Possible advantages:**

- Raising poultry is an acceptable activity for women in many traditional societies.
- Relatively easy and cost-efficient to implement.

#### **Possible limitations:**

- Gender dynamics can be challenging with regards to larger livestock.
- Women may become targets (livestock can be liabilities and sources of tensions).

#### **Examples:**

- A goat-lending program in **Uganda** gave a pair of goats to a family who kept the goats but returned the first three kids to the scheme, which then gave them to another family. This method can help counter patriarchal norms around livestock ownership and markets.<sup>63</sup>
- **Other initiatives** might include chicken / poultry and egg production, and beekeeping for both pollination and /or honey making.

### **Examples of innovative vocational and income-generating activities**

#### **Focus: Training in alternative energy**

- Women either learn to build, use and sell alternative energy stoves, or to install and maintain solar panels.
- Women are trained to produce and sell alternative sources of energy (e.g., turning plastic into energy).
- Women can utilize the new source of alternative energy to develop small businesses.

**Possible advantages:**

- Such activities address interconnected problems: protection, GBV (i.e. women's safety when fetching wood) and energy (carbon gas emissions).
- They address a gap that women can fill – thus changing the roles, leadership and status of women in communities.
- Women can utilize the new source of alternative energy to develop small businesses (e.g., hairdresser salons, phone charging stations, etc.).

**Possible limitations:**

- Gender barriers can present challenges.
- There is a heavier technological component which might require higher budgets.

**Examples:**

- Through the **World Food Program (WFP) project in Sri Lanka**, women are trained to build, use and sell alternative energy stoves. This provides alternative livelihoods for women engaged in the traditional collection and sale of firewood.<sup>64</sup>
- Through **Barefoot College's project in India, Africa and Latin America**, women in rural villages are trained to install and maintain solar energies, thus 1) addressing a niche and 2) changing the status of women.<sup>65</sup>
- An **OXFAM project in a Jordanian refugee camp** transformed plastic into alternative energy – thus opening up new business opportunities for women (collecting and selling plastic, selling energy, making small businesses out of energy).<sup>66</sup>

**Focus: Menstrual health management**

- Women are trained to make and sell reusable sanitary pads.

**Possible advantages:**

- Addresses a real need for women and girls and can provide a livelihood opportunity.

**Possible limitations:**

- Taboos, perceptions and social norms may present challenges.

**Examples:**

- **UNICEF** developed a model to teach women and girls to make and sell reusable pads.<sup>67</sup>

## Cash support to micro, small and medium women's businesses

Livelihood interventions can help women launch small businesses with targeted injections of capital. A combination of vocational training, income-generating activities and cash or in-kind business supports have proved successful in many instances.

### Examples

- **Northern Uganda** (Women's Income-Generating Support Program): The combination of business skills training, an individual start-up grant of \$150, group formation and ongoing support was highly effective in raising women's monthly cash income and in increasing their control over durable assets compared with the control group.<sup>68</sup>
- **Microfinance:** In some instances, microfinance can help build the asset base of chronically poor women. This may include the cultivation and selling of horticultural crops, petty trading, services (e.g., hairdressing), micro-dairy units, poultry, etc. However, this could be a high-risk strategy for chronically poor women who are vulnerable to shocks and can easily fall into debt cycles.<sup>69</sup> In a context where women's financial literacy is limited and gender barriers are very high, microfinance programs may be harmful; for instance, rural Ugandan women received micro-credit for their horticulture sales and ended up in credit spirals. Microfinance schemes remain complicated and are not always relevant in complex and volatile environments.<sup>70</sup>

### BRAC's graduation approach in Bangladesh<sup>71</sup>

BRAC's graduation approach proved successful in both reaching the poorest people and ensuring sustainable pathways out of extreme poverty. **This concept** refers to graduation from extreme poverty after reaching a threshold beyond which the probabilities of slipping back into poverty are significantly reduced.

**In practice**, the graduation approach is a multi-layered set of interventions aimed at moving extremely poor individuals into economically sustainable livelihoods within a specified time, **generally 18 to 36 months**. It begins with consumption assistance. This may be delivered as an in-kind transfer (food supplies) or as a cash transfer to address immediate needs. Once those urgent needs are met, the graduation approach moves on to interventions aimed at building long-term economic self-sufficiency. Those interventions include financial services, usually

involving financial education, i.e. facilitating access to safe and affordable financial services (e.g., savings), practicing financial discipline, and strengthening cash management skills. The approach delivers technical skills training in a livelihood for which a participant has shown some aptitude along with seed capital to launch that livelihood. Regular one-on-one mentoring throughout the program helps build the participants' confidence.

## Livelihood responses in crisis<sup>72</sup>

Livelihood interventions in crisis and post-crisis settings can take different forms:

Phase	Livelihood needs	Type of interventions
Acute response	Immediate vital food security responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash-based interventions (e.g. cash transfers, cash-for-work)</li> <li>• Distribution of food</li> <li>• Emergency provision of animal feed to save and protect livestock (for pastoralist societies displaced with livestock)</li> <li>• Manufacture of items specifically needed for the emergency (and responding to a temporary market arising from the emergency situation): e.g., making water filter, shelters, blankets, soaps, masks</li> </ul>
Recovery	Short-term protective measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution of livelihood kits (e.g., to plant kitchen gardens)</li> <li>• Provision of animal feed and animal health services (vaccination and treatment) to protect and safeguard animals</li> <li>• Emergency provision of essential agricultural inputs</li> <li>• Support for small-scale irrigation for household vegetable production</li> </ul>
Stabilization	Longer-term activities focused on resilience  Preparedness and mitigation strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities to strengthen animal husbandry practices and value chains</li> <li>• Energy-saving devices – such as solar pumps and drip irrigation</li> <li>• Backyard kitchen gardens or poultry keeping</li> <li>• Fishing activities</li> <li>• Beekeeping activities</li> </ul>
Protracted contexts	Longer-term resilience activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See stabilization period above</li> </ul>

# Innovation and technology

Technological innovations can help people attain sustainable livelihoods in complex and volatile environments provided they are **contextualized, simple and durable, and do not exacerbate existing divisions nor create new ones.**

Technologies should always be used as part of a system rather than as isolated elements. The search for suitable technologies should be based on knowledge accumulated within community activities (e.g., training, community engagement sessions, etc.) to avoid the counterproductive top-down approach of technology transfer. Choices of technologies should be decided by an inclusive committee comprising diverse actors such as community representatives, local entrepreneurs, local NGOs, local innovation hubs, etc.

Local or regional technologies should be prioritized, whenever possible, over technologies brought from the Northern hemisphere that may be expensive, irrelevant, complex or difficult to maintain, and that perpetuate dependency on external actors. Partnerships with national innovation hubs should also be arranged to maximize local innovation and fuel local economies.

When local technologies are not available, technology transfer from other parts of the world can address gaps, provided that sustainability, relevance, ethics and procurement criteria are met (*see Annex 3*).

It is worth noting that innovation is not just about technology; new ways of approaching livelihood programming can be tested and scaled up in a sustainable way that may provide new practices for the global community.

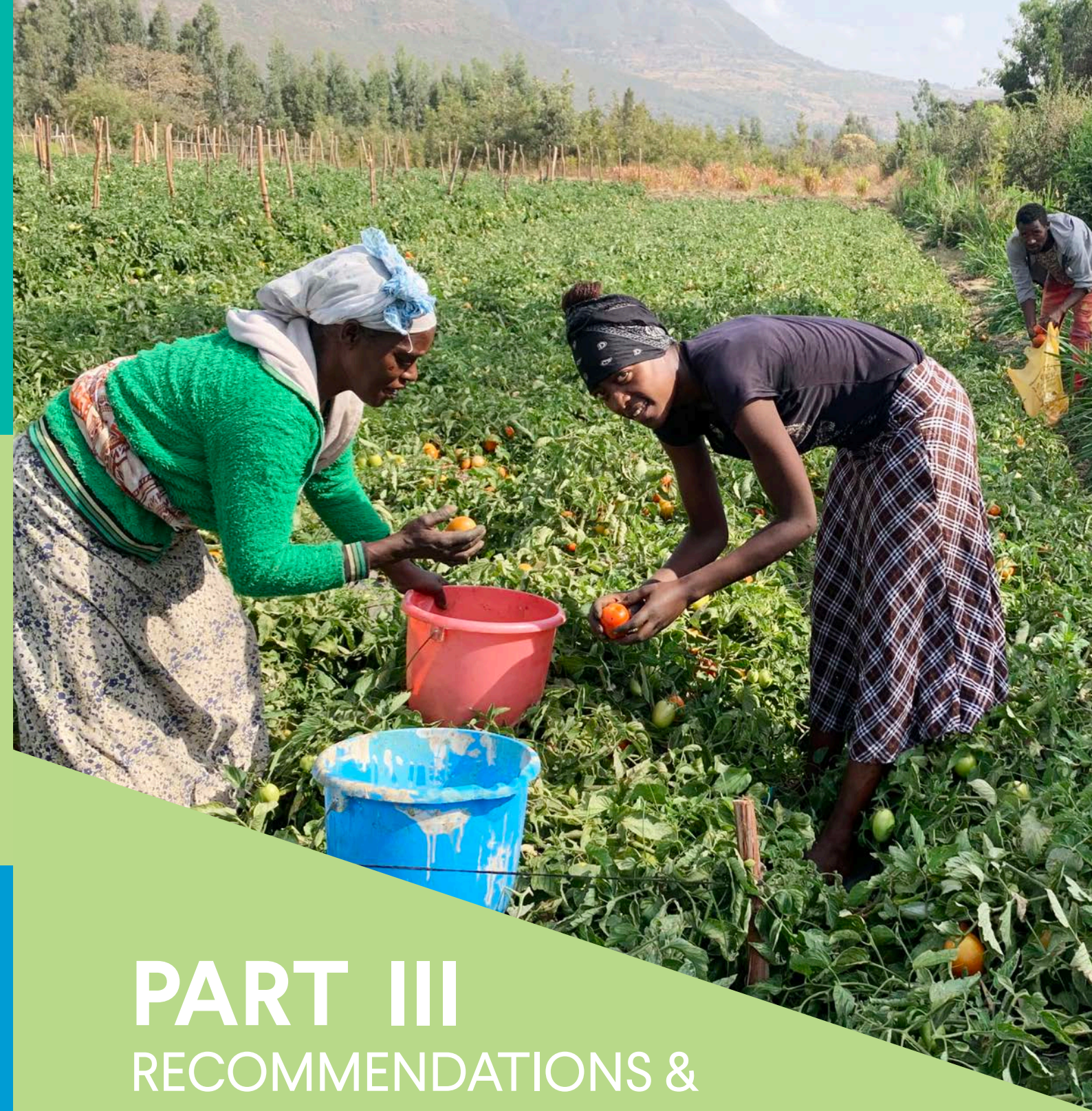
Emerging countries increasingly boast thriving innovation ecosystems that should be maximized. International NGOs should seek partnerships with such actors to enhance local innovation, build horizontal and complementary South-North innovation collaborations, and advocate for synergies between international and national entrepreneurs. These channels are effective in unlocking the potential of innovation to achieve the SDGs.

In parallel, there exists a plethora of international in-country labs, such as WFP labs (for food security and livelihoods) or UN Development Program (UNDP) accelerator labs (for development innovation), that can facilitate local partnerships, technical support and funding while capturing contextualized realities.



### Examples of technology integration

- **Barefoot College's technology approach:** The organization identified simple, context-appropriate and easy-to-maintain products and tools that rural communities can build, use, share and sell. For instance, they trained women as solar engineers, innovators and educators, who then return to their homes. Likewise, they created a women's association that builds, installs and maintains parabolic solar cookers in villages and shares knowledge with the community. Women who once spent long hours searching for firewood can spend their time on other productive activities. Communities with solar cookers can expand their livelihood opportunities and limit the negative effects of deforestation and pollution.
- **ICT Girls in South Sudan:** This initiative provides a good example of a context-specific technology-based project, the #TTOSICT project, which empowers women and girls in Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM). The project aims to encourage girls to stay in school through creative problem-solving strategies that use technology. Moreover, ICT challenges offer prizes that pay the school fees of girls, especially those who might have dropped out of the education system.<sup>73</sup>
- **Triangular partnerships between an NGO, a donor (UN agency) and start-up/entrepreneur and/or a local innovation hub:** These mechanisms are particularly effective in maximizing and integrating technologies within livelihood programs.



# PART III

## RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

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This report provides an overview of programmatic directions and best practices for organizations interested in strengthening their sustainable livelihoods strategy.

The ultimate goal is for women to reach and maintain sustainable social and economic stability while maintaining safety, dignity and human rights, and to contribute to the social and economic development of their communities and society at large.

**Table 1 below provides a summary of recommended livelihood frameworks, while the second Table 2 offers some guidance for organizations to further define the scope of their livelihood programs.**

**Table 1: Summary of recommended livelihood frameworks**

Programmatic objectives and scope	
<b>1. Gender-transformative approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A comprehensive gender analysis and social norms analysis should inform program design and implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Beneficiary strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although programs focus on women and youth, they should involve men and obtain the buy-in of the entire community by involving influential community leaders.</li> <li>Community members should be meaningfully involved in program design from the beginning and throughout all stages.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Market-based approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs should be informed equally by comprehensive market analysis and value chain analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Technology-based approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parallel technology analyses should be conducted to assess which technology can help achieve the goals set:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of technology during training for educational purposes</li> <li>Training in development and/or use of technology (e.g. training women in how to build and use an alternative energy stove).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Implementation plan

### 1. Integrated approach

Programs should be developed based on the following pillars:

**Pillar 1: Comprehensive analysis** (gender, market, technology) – Sufficient time should be allocated for building trust with communities and for program design. **This is the most important phase, as it will determine the success of any program.**

**Pillar 2: Comprehensive vocational-technical strategy, including modules on:**

- Technical skills (depending on the focus chosen: crops, livestock, micro-entrepreneurships)
- Business literacy: access to market, value chain analysis
- Community resilience (to mitigate impact of crisis on livelihoods)
- Community development, gender roles and social norms

**Pillar 3: Support for income-generating activities:**

- Provision of in-kind or cash support to promote women's businesses or activities
- Formation of women's groups/collectives (ideally maximizing existing community structures) and restructuring them into more organized, yet flexible, collective structures
- Technical business support, mentoring
- Diversification and value chain development
- Introduction of technologies to boost income-generating activities

**Pillar 4: Market development and partnership-building (intertwined with Pillar 3):**

- Partnerships with external actors, such as businesses or employers

**Pillar 5: Parallel community development activities:**

- Maximization of existing community structures
- Weekly or bi-weekly community-based activities (e.g., women and youth groups, activities involving men, community outreach, educational activities, **fun cohesion-building activities to increase trust**)
- Discussion groups on key topics (e.g., sexual and reproductive health, GBV protection, etc.)
- Possible addition of an educational component

<b>2. Risk identification and mitigation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• External interventions through the introduction of resources can disrupt fragile relationships within communities and create harm.</li><li>• Interventions enhancing community resilience should be tailored to the specific characteristics of the local context.</li><li>• Risk assessments should include an analysis of both the risks of potential market distortions and risks associated with gender norms and vulnerabilities.</li><li>• Programs should embrace a do-no-harm analysis (or conflict analysis) exploring community dividers and connectors.</li><li>• Programs should work directly with communities to identify risks and mitigation strategies.</li><li>• Programs should allow enough time for design, trust building and implementation (taking into account livelihood cycles).</li></ul>
<b>3. Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular review of the changing context should be factored into program activities.</li><li>• Livelihood committees should be established with communities to assess progress towards program objectives.</li><li>• A feedback mechanism should be in place for women, girls, boys and men to anonymously and safely share feedback, ideas and complaints.</li><li>• Regular surveys should be conducted to capture key attitudes and perceptions.</li></ul>

**Table 2: Defining the scope of livelihood programs**

The focus and scope of programs should be carefully analyzed and defined, using the following criteria:

Criteria category	Criteria indicators
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community attitude towards external actors</li> <li>• Community needs</li> <li>• Community willingness, interest and commitment</li> <li>• Social divisions, conflict drivers and sources of tensions</li> <li>• Community power dynamics</li> <li>• Corruption dynamics</li> </ul>
<b>Business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual market needs (supply and demand analysis), economic barriers and drivers, inflation, market fluctuations, gaps and opportunities, vulnerability to crisis</li> <li>• Value chain status: actors, barriers and opportunities</li> <li>• Opportunity to support livelihood scheme with contextualized technologies</li> </ul>
<b>Social norms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature of society (e.g. patriarchal, pastoralist, agriculture-based)</li> <li>• Social norms</li> <li>• Gender norms and roles, and gendered barriers</li> <li>• Acceptability and perception factors</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise of local partners</li> <li>• Complementarity and non-duplication with other international agencies</li> <li>• Opportunities for international partnerships (priorities in line with global trends)</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for traditional funding</li> <li>• Opportunities for international funding</li> <li>• Areas of activity in line with global funding trends</li> </ul>

## Concluding Remarks

As our daily humanitarian and development works demonstrates, the nature of emergencies is rapidly changing. Structural economic, social, political and environmental fragilities are ultimately correlated with vulnerability to shocks and stresses.

Our conceptualization and operationalization of humanitarian and development assistance have shown their limitations. Too often, humanitarian actors are trapped in short-term repetitive actions that prevent us from effectively addressing the root causes of women's and girls' vulnerabilities and risks. In many instances, programs are struggling to tackle the longer-term transformational changes needed to address increasingly compounded and interdependent vulnerabilities.

To address these intertwined vulnerabilities, it is important to provide life-saving support to women and girls affected by shocks and stresses, as well as to invest, in parallel, in strategies that address the systemic causes of vulnerabilities. Such 'nexus' programming offers a better chance of reducing the impact of cyclical or recurrent shocks and stresses not only by taking into account the various factors influencing vulnerability, but also by recognizing and maximizing the strengths and resilience of women, girls and communities worldwide.

As such, we call on humanitarian and development actors to work more closely together to **coherently address women's and girls' vulnerability before, during and after crises and to maximize the existing capacities and assets of individuals, communities and local institutions in complex and volatile environments**. With this report, we hope to provide organizations with a coherent framework and practical tools to put these recommendations into meaningful practice.

# Endnotes

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# ANNEXES

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**List of annexes:**

- Annex 1: Literature review
- Annex 2: Gender analysis and guidelines
- Annex 3: Technology sustainability, relevance and procurement checklist

## Annex 1: Literature Review

### Academic articles and learning papers (by order of appearance in this report).

- John Twigg and Margherita Calderon, [Building livelihood and community resilience: Lessons from Somalia and Zimbabwe](#), ODI working paper 545, January 2019.
- Paola Perezniето & Georgia Taylor, [A review of approaches and methods to measure economic empowerment of women and girls](#), Gender & Development, 22:2, 233–251, June 2014.
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## Humanitarian toolkits and other practical guidelines

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- BRAC, [\*BRAC's graduation model\*](#).
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## Other

- Annik Gevers, Tina Musuya, Paul Bukuluki, [\*Why climate changes fuel violence against women\*](#), UNDP, January 2020.
- Mindset-PCS's guidelines on innovative community engagement methods.
- [\*Trash Talk: Turning waste into work in Jordan Za'atari refugee camp\*](#), Oxfam Discussion paper, August 2017.
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- Mindset-PCS's funding guidelines on how to get international partnerships.
- World Bank Easy to Make Business Index, <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings>.

## Annex 2: Gender Analysis and Guidelines<sup>iv</sup>

**Rationale:** Gender analysis is a method of exploring the different roles that women and men play in a community, the different opportunities and barriers they face, and the different levels of power they hold.

A gender analysis fulfills several **objectives**:

- To better understand the communities where we work
- To promote gender equality through our work
- To expose the barriers to women's full participation and economic development
- To help us find the best strategies and solutions with which to address the different needs and opportunities of men and women in complex and volatile environments

A gender analysis should be conducted during the initial design of a project, together with communities and partners, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation phases. The gender analysis should place **equal emphasis on both men and women**, and should also comprehensively consider the particularities and needs of different age groups and other specific demographic and socio-economic categories (e.g. people with disabilities, adolescents, the elderly, lactating mothers, pregnant women, female single-headed households, etc.).

A gender analysis addresses a series of questions about men and women in the community that are organized into three categories:

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iv The **Gender Analysis Toolkit** from the **Vibrant Communities Gender and Poverty Project** provides solid gender analysis tools specifically adapted to small- and medium-scale projects (not recommended, however, for large-scale projects or advocacy projects); see for instance: <http://www.tools4dev.org/resources/doing-basic-gender-analysis-for-your-project/> and [http://dme4peace.org/sites/default/files/CIDA\\_Gender%20Analysis%20Tools.pdf](http://dme4peace.org/sites/default/files/CIDA_Gender%20Analysis%20Tools.pdf).

## Gender roles and activities (Who does what?)

### General questions:

- What roles do men and women typically play in the community? At home?
- Who works for pay?
- Who cares for children and covers other family work ('reproductive work')?
- How many hours a day are spent on home and family care?
- How many hours are spent doing unpaid, underpaid or undervalued work?
- Is there a family member involved in a community organization or volunteer work? Who? For how many hours a week?
- Describe a specific day in the household from the perspective of the woman and from the perspective of the man.

### Questions specifically related to the project:

- What roles do men and women typically play in the project?
- Does the project change the activity patterns of men or women, and how? Does the project increase or decrease women's or men's workload (reproductive or productive)?
- Can the project change the relationships between men and women, within a household, a family, a community at large?
- E.g., if a project provides micro-finance grant to women, can this affect the relationship between wives and husbands?

## Access and control (Who has what?)

### General questions:

- How many households in the community are headed by women?
- Who owns property and homes?
- Are women paid different wages than men for their work?
- Who controls household income? Who has access to it?
- Which decisions in the home do men and women typically make?
- Which decisions in the community do men and women typically make?

- What level of education and/or training do men and women have?
- Which information do women and men access (e.g., financial information, information about work opportunities and rights)?

### Questions specifically related to the project:

- Who makes decisions and who does the groundwork in the project?
- What knowledge do women and men have about the particular sector or issue addressed by the project? Who has access to information? How?
- Do women and men have equal access to project events, benefits or services?
- Who benefits most from the project? Directly and indirectly?
- Can the project create new – or exacerbate existing – social, economic, political, cultural divisions between men and women?
- How would people outside of the project (women and men) perceive the participation (of women and men) in the project? What are they going to say?

### Influencing factors (Why are things the way they are?)

- Influencing factors can be: • Race • Demographic Factors • Economic Factors • Political/ Institutional Structures • Health and Disability • Education and Training • Cultural and Religious Factors • History • Disasters •

#### Examples:

- In what ways does disability affect poverty levels among men and among women?
- How does family violence affect poverty levels among women and among men?
- What is the economic and social impact of a conflict/crisis on women? On men?

To answer gender analysis questions, both **traditional methods** (e.g., focus group discussions, interviews) and **non-traditional methods** may be used.

However, practice shows that participatory engagement methods tend to build a more “honest” and comfortable relationship between the researcher/program designer and the communities.

We recommend a combination of both methods. Each method should be carefully contextualized to avoid affecting community dynamics and creating harm.

**Examples of methods may include:**

- Focus group discussions combined with participatory activities – see below
- Interviews with key informants
- Immersions
- On-site observations
- Peers observing peers

**Participatory activities may include<sup>74</sup>:**

- [Conversation starters](#)
- [Card sorting](#)
- Drawing (particularly relevant for gender analysis / safety audits to understand risk perceptions)
- [Collage](#)
- [Resource flow](#) (particularly relevant to assess the above-mentioned second set of questions about resources)
- [Experience / journey mapping](#)
- Analysis of daily household schedules



**NOTE:**

**Before engaging communities, always:**

- Conduct a careful do-no-harm analysis
- Review the guidelines for safe and ethical assessment (e.g., how to introduce oneself, manage expectations, obtain consent, manage cultural differences, etc.)

- For more information about community engagement methods and tools, refer to Mindset-PCS's toolkit document on community engagement strategies which explains in further detail which tools to use, when and how.
- For more information about when and how to use the tools and produce relevant analysis, refer to: [http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/CIDA\\_Gender%20Analysis%20Tools.pdf](http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/CIDA_Gender%20Analysis%20Tools.pdf).

# Annex 3: Technology Sustainability & Relevance Checklist

SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA		
Criteria	Questions to ask	Status
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can the technology be maintained locally without depending on external supplies/interventions?</li> <li>Can the technology be easily maintained?</li> <li>Who will do the maintenance? How much does it cost?</li> <li>Will maintenance require training? Who pays for it?</li> </ul>	
Dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will the use of the product rely on external intervention (training, supplying parts, etc.)? If so, for how long? What happens afterwards?</li> </ul>	
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can the product have a harmful impact on environment? Can its maintenance?</li> </ul>	
Local ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were the communities engaged in the innovation process (desirability, feasibility, design, pilot)?</li> <li>Is the product truly desired/needed by communities?</li> <li>Do you have local/national partners?</li> </ul>	
Do-no-harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the connectors and drivers that can positively/negatively influence the product's use/implementation?</li> <li>Can the product have a negative impact on community dynamics? Can it exacerbate existing social and economic divisions? Can it create new ones? Can it fuel tensions?</li> <li>Is the technology equally accessible for men and women? The most vulnerable groups? People with disabilities?</li> </ul>	

RELEVANCE CRITERIA		
Criteria	Questions to ask	Status
Cultural context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the technology adapted to the cultural context? Is each of its components adapted?</li> <li>• Is the design adapted to the cultural context?</li> <li>• Can it positively/negatively affect social norms, gender dynamics, gender roles?</li> <li>• Does its use contradict religious, social, cultural practices?</li> <li>• Will the product require behavioral change? Is this change needed, necessary, wanted? How do you know?</li> <li>• Was the issue the product addresses truly harmful? To whom? How do you know?</li> </ul>	
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you test all your assumptions regarding the product? Why do you think it is needed in this particular environment?</li> </ul>	
Contextualized design and engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the product (and its components) resistant to the weather in the targeted location (e.g. sandstorm, heavy rains, arid climate)?</li> <li>• Is the product adapted to the topography and environment?</li> </ul>	
PROCUREMENT CRITERIA		
Criteria	Questions to ask	Status
Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the product easily be procured in the area of operation (e.g., transport, customs regulations etc.)? How much does procurement cost? Who will be in charge? Are there any barriers?</li> </ul>	
Legal and administrative requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the use of the technology legally authorized in the targeted location (e.g. use of recycled grey water)?</li> <li>• Does your company/NGO need to be registered to test/sell the product?</li> </ul>	

