

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a blue top with yellow and white patterns, is smiling broadly and looking upwards. She is standing in front of large green palm fronds. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the tropical setting.

Market Development in the Niger Delta (MADE)

# **Gender Case Studies and Success Stories across MADE's Value Chain Sectors**





# ABOUT MADE

Market Development in the Niger Delta (MADE) programme is advancing rural agricultural markets and other sectors that impact on poor people, to reduce poverty and conflict in the Niger Delta region. Funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and implemented by Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI), the programme is facilitating increase in income for poor smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs in target sectors of cassava, fisheries, agricultural inputs, oil palm and poultry. The first phase of programming (September 2013 – February 2018) made significant progress and was able to surpass its target in achieving a 15% income increase for 154,225 people in the Niger Delta area.

Building on the success of MADE I, DFID approved a costed extension for an additional two years (March 2018 – February 2020) and has another target of 155,000 smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs with increased incomes. The expectation is that 30,000 of those with increased incomes will be poor low-skilled youths and women from Edo State, who are susceptible to human trafficking.

The sectors that the MADE programme intervened include Agricultural Inputs, Cassava, Fisheries, Palm Oil and Poultry in 9 Niger Delta States - Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. MADE II added additional components in select 'aspirational' sectors such as Apiculture, Feed Finishing, Micro-Retailing, Skills Development, Waste to Wealth and other initiatives





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# ACRONYMS

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<b>ESIP</b>	Edo State Investment Portfolio
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GAP</b>	Good Agronomic Practices
<b>GTG</b>	Gender Talk Groups
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>M4P</b>	Making Markets Work for the Poor
<b>MADE</b>	Market Development for the Niger Delta
<b>MDS</b>	Modern Day Slavery
<b>MTG</b>	MADE Talk Group
<b>NAEC</b>	National Agricultural Enterprise Curriculum
<b>PIND</b>	Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta
<b>PMT</b>	Pond Management Training
<b>QBWA</b>	Quintessential Business Women's Association
<b>SME</b>	Small / Medium Enterprise
<b>SSPE</b>	Small Scale Processing Equipment
<b>WEE</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

*Market Development in Niger Delta (MADE) was a DFID funded programme which raised the incomes of 154,225 poor people, 50 per cent of whom were women*



Market Development in Niger Delta (MADE) was a DFID funded programme which raised the incomes of 154,225 poor people, 50 per cent of whom were women, by at least 15 per cent between September 2013 and February 2018. MADE uses the “Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P)” approach to design systemic and sustainable interventions that generate pro-poor and inclusive economic growth in the non-oil sectors of the nine Niger Delta states. Based on the success of the first phase, DFID funded MADE II, a two year project extension with two major components: market development activities in the Niger Delta which are designed to address systemic constraints in target markets and an investment portfolio in Edo State that seeks to identify and address livelihood and economic factors contributing to human trafficking, forced labour and modern-day slavery (MDS) in the region, particularly in Edo state and northern Delta state.

In the first year, MADE II continued to work across the nine states of the Niger Delta. It consolidated its work in five value chains (agricultural inputs, poultry, cassava, oil palm, and fisheries) improving integration of cross-cutting support areas, especially gender mainstreaming, advocacy, communications, and knowledge management, into the sectors. MADE II is building on the first phase of activities implemented across the nine states of the Niger Delta. The target of MADE II is to raise incomes of an additional 155,000 poor men and women within two years. This will be achieved by improving market access for poor producers and by encouraging increased economic activity and trade.

MADE II is also committed to Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and has a target for reaching at least 77,500 women with increase in income. Therefore, women's economic empowerment is still placed at the core of all programme implementation activities. The definition of WEE used by MADE is where women have the ability to advance and succeed economically. This includes empowering them with the power (control and share) and agency (choice) to act on economic decisions and can be achieved through advancing resources and transforming the norms/institutions that currently create gender unequal relationships and access to economic power and decision making.

In this regard, MADE II is interested in documenting case studies of WEE across selected interventions.

## Objectives of the Assignment

- Develop case studies or success stories of selected MADE's interventions across value chains;
- Review relevant literatures to extract information needed to develop the case study;
- Conduct field visit to hold focus group discussions, interview major individuals for information gathering; and;
- Develop initial draft for review by team, before finalization of the document.

## Objectives of Case Study Survey

To carry out the work, the WISE team carried out a survey of MADE beneficiaries to provide the background information. The survey covered a cross section of i) individual women and groups across agricultural value chains who have either directly or remotely benefitted from MADE's value chain intervention support and ii) individual women and

groups who are willing to share their experiences and success stories for the benefit of improving economic livelihood and status of women in agricultural value chains. Specific Objectives include:

- Determine socio-economic gender characteristics and dimensions in relation to women in the respective agricultural value chains;
- Understand the impact of, and success stories from, MADE's intervention on the economic livelihoods of the women; and
- Address challenges to women's role in the agricultural value chains and suggest possible ways or strategies for enhancing women's participation and growth in the value chains.

## Methodology/Approach

Preliminary discussions were held between the WISE consultants and the MADE Gender Specialist resulting in agreed specific interventions to focus on. The WISE team developed a set of structured instruments tailored to capture data both in the form of Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The instruments explored the socio-economic dynamics around the livelihoods of the women, the power dynamics in the value chains, and how they fared within, or navigated, these dynamics to benefit effectively from MADE's interventions. The interviews were also designed to explore status of women's economic flexibility within the respective value chains, opportunities for growth and/or multiple incomes streaming, as well as the power of networking and peer mentorship for increased productivity.

## Sampling Status

The field interviews were held from the 3rd of October to the 9th of October, with women in 5 States across MADE's interventions –Edo, Delta, Imo, Cross Rivers and Rivers States. A total of six (6) FGDs and seven (7) KIs, were held, with 32 and 7 participants, respectively. Based on prior consultations with the MADE Gender Specialist, the six (6) intervention areas of focus for this case study field work included - Poultry (Noiler), Access to Market, Cassava, Gender Talk Group (GTG), Oil Palm, and Quintessential Business Women Association (QBWA).

## Limitations to the Field Study

In general, the fieldwork was successful but with a few hiccups that might need addressing for future purposes. On logistics, there was time constraint due to the scope/distance of the geographical coverage of the respective Niger Delta communities involved within a relatively limited timeframe to juggle strenuous road travel time and data collection involved. This in some way also affected the quality of field assistance in notetaking as there were either delays (late arrival) on the field in this regard or truncated interview scheduling/note taking assistance.

On data collection, the initial FGD team that was mobilised for the Noiler bird intervention was not forth coming with useful information in the context of the objectives of the field inquiry. However, to mitigate this gap, an adhoc arrangement was made with a couple other Noiler beneficiaries, but who (at the time of the study) could only share their limited experience (albeit positive) on the Noiler bird business and this also affected the depth of the data in this regard.





# CHAPTER TWO

# THE CASE STUDIES

## CASE STUDY ONE:

### *Gender Talk Group (GTG) as a Success Story on Women's Economic Empowerment*



*Gender advocacy efforts through the GTG are targeted at influencing positive change by facilitating civic engagement and collective action of both women and men to spur up productivity and increase their incomes.*



### **Background and Overview of the GTG Concept:**

The Gender Talk Group (GTG) is the MADE gender hub designed in the first phase of the programme (2015 and put into application in 2016) to address non-economic constraints that limit women from participating in programme interventions and taking advantage of WEE opportunities in value chains. It is also a means of improving women's agency (voice, choices and control) and contributes to transformation of the social structures and institutions that perpetuate gender inequality. These socio-cultural issues among other key generic issues were identified during the initial MADE gender assessment as constraints limiting women from participating and taking advantage of WEE opportunities within value chains. They are:

- Under-representation of women at functional levels of the Value Chains;
- Inequality between women and men in access to productive resources such as land and finance; and
- Socio-cultural influences on gender roles that influence the ownership of key assets (e.g. processing equipment).

Gender advocacy efforts through the GTG are targeted at influencing positive change by facilitating civic engagement and collective action of both women and men to spur up productivity and increase their incomes. Hence the GTG platform serves as a discussion forum that brings together both female and male farmers as well as agro-entrepreneurs

periodically to discuss socio-cultural issues affecting them and collectively find lasting solutions for their common interests. Specifically, the main purposes of the GTG include<sup>1</sup>:

- To promote more equitable gender representation in agri-business particularly with female participation;
- To promote participant-led solutions on increasing access to productive resources, preventing modern day slavery and improving health, nutrition and women's economic empowerment in the Niger Delta; and
- To positively influence socio-cultural norms and institution on land use or gender related issues and empower communities to themselves see the need for, lead and advocate for social change.

A follow-up to GTG review meeting held in the last quarter of 2018 with representatives of women BMOs, NGOs/CBOs (as well as a few men) came up with some resolutions including -the need to revise and streamline / simplify the GTG discussion guide to include info graphics, need to include household nutrition and human trafficking issues. To address the programme's emerging realities and needs, two new modules were introduced:

- Human Trafficking and Modern-day Slavery (MDS), which the ESIP component is addressing; and
- Poor nutrition identified as an issue among farmers.

Further resolutions included the need to develop a mechanism to mainstream communication with GTG members, local actors to be engaged in coordinating and facilitating GTG meetings at the grassroots as well as experts in various thematic areas to make presentations during capacity building sessions with GTG members.

Notably, the GTG discussion sessions are moderated by trained facilitators from civil society organisations (CSOs) across MADE's intervention locations in the Niger Delta. Participants of the discussion sessions comprise women, men and sometimes youth who are value chain actors (namely - farmers, processors, labourers, fabricators, etc) and associated stakeholders (from government, financial sector, CSOs, interest groups, etc) working in or serving small or medium agribusinesses with interest in working together to come up with solutions to the problems they see in the different value chains. The topics of discussion are chosen from the well-articulated Discussion Guide<sup>2</sup>/ manual covering four modules including:

- Increasing Gender Representation;
- Increasing Access to Productive Resources;
- Ending Modern-day Slavery; and
- Women's Health and Economic Empowerment as well as Household Nutrition.

Each module of the discussion guide covers different themes related to agribusiness - ranging between four to eight topics (totalling 25 topics in all). The designated moderators/facilitators are responsible for choosing the topic for discussion (depending on the prevailing issue members want to address) and familiarise themselves with the topic to be discussed. Also, they are responsible for selecting and inviting the most suitable participants for each discussion session whether from a mix of value chains, from single value chain, or from associated stakeholders who are committed to move the discussions into action.

## Gender Barriers and Norms in the Context of WEE

From the interviews, it is evident that women are more economically disadvantaged than men in terms of economic livelihoods and this is not unconnected to patriarchal cultural dynamics. There seems to be

<sup>1</sup> Gender Talk Group (GTG) Discussion Guide (2019)

<sup>2</sup> MADE Gender Talk Group (GTG) Discussion Guide,

First drafted in 2015 and revised in 2019, the guide simplifies content for facilitators, outlining procedures and activities for each discussion session within the different modules, presenting discussion questions and suggesting simple doable calls to action that facilitators can discuss with participants in order to move the discussions to action.

a general belief that the man owns the woman and everything that belongs to her automatically belongs to him. In some cases, the cultural limitations placed on the woman further affect her ability (or interest) to explore and aspire for more avenues/streams of incomes. This is coupled with the fact that they have limited access to information. This disadvantage generally faced by women is not because they do not have the capacity, but they have been socialised and culturally conditioned to be comfortable with the limited resources available to them.

It was unanimously agreed that men made most of the decisions in the home especially financial decisions even if they are not necessarily the major income earners. Women's decision making (largely about welfare of the children, feeding etc) are still subject to the final decision of the man. There is also the constraint by women's domestic responsibilities that they have juggle with their productive income earning work. All the women interviewed voiced the opinion that although there are some socio-cultural constraints, gender barriers, norms and practices against women's full participation in agricultural value chain, the GTG capacity building sessions have helped them to work around these systemic constraints as much as possible.

Also, women's access to certain technologies, such as fish smoking kilns, harvesters of fresh fruit bunches, or palm oil small scale processing equipment (SSPE) is limited due to lack of capital to purchase these. However, they have begun to navigate these barriers in different ways. One of the respondents shared an instance with cassava value chain; the machines are mainly fabricated and operated by the men in most communities, but recently in her community of Isiala Mbandu, the challenge of having to depend on the availability of the men or youth to grind their cassava tubers has been addressed by training the young school girls and women on how to operate the machine using the GTG module. Regardless of this innovative approach by the women, they still faced some cultural constraints in the form of men resisting the idea of their wives 'working' for another woman, which they saw as a dent on their ego.

## The Intervention with MADE Nigeria: Benefits of the Approach

The interviews revealed that the GTG initiative was a good response to the fact that women needed agency, voice and encouragement to talk about their issues in general and about their economic livelihoods specifically (as both are inter-linked). The flexibility and decentralised approach of the GTG provided that platform to erase the fears that women sometimes face in sharing their stories as a result of the way they had been socialised not to voice their opinions and challenges. The platform allows them to build trust, peer-influence, and peer-learn in order to improve on their businesses and quality of life.

The FGD participants shared that they benefited from GTG discussion forums in 2018, and it has served as an eye opener as they are able to freely discuss issues that affect them and collectively find solutions that work for them. The GTG capacity building model also encourages them to explore and grow within value chains. For instance, one of the participants that benefited in Noiler bird intervention stated that she also went into egg production which is another source of income for her. She also shared that 50 women from her community have benefited from Noiler intervention to improve on home nutrition, though 8 of them are doing it for commercial purposes. Other respondents expressed that they gained knowledge especially in the area of training such as Pond Management Training (PMT), National Agricultural Enterprise Curriculum (NAEC), and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

One of the beneficiaries told a story of how some women who used to peel one bag of cassava for N1000 for other people on a daily basis were advised in one of the GTG sessions to form a group of 8 women, to contribute and save little money made from their peeling of cassava tubers in order to start buying cassava tubers in bulk.

According to her, the advice worked for them and not only are they buying cassava in bulk, but they are also able to engage and pay workers who peel for them. Hence, a system of creating a chain of empowerment. Another testimony of this chain of empowerment was shared by one of the GTG facilitators who said that GTG has also given women access to better information through the peer information sharing model. For instance, a particular woman mentored another woman in poultry farming, who then went on to manage a poultry farm, as well as starting her own fish smoking and egg selling business, all as a result of mentorship from GTG peer learning. The Networking and information sharing amongst women is valuable. There was an instance of a woman in the group who got a better price deal for a fish tank than market price due to the information received through the GTG.

## Transformations and Persistent Challenges

Due to the fact that the means of production such as land, has always been less accessible to women than men (due to limited inheritance rights of women in most cultures) women hardly own farmland or spaces. So according to the women interviewed, having a space to farm is a default challenge but which they have tried to navigate by renting farm spaces. Another challenge is procurement of agricultural inputs because they lack the financial capacity to do so. There is also the issue of domestic power dynamics playing out in the form of their husband not encouraging them to put their GTG capacity building learning to use afterwards as well as the stigma and bias around a woman working for another woman. The GTG sessions provide the opportunity for them to tackle these challenges.

In terms of the outcomes, they stated that the most significant impact of GTG activities across the value chains, on their economic livelihood, financial status and decision-making power in the homes include the following:

- Helped them to engage in serious businesses like poultry, oil palm processing and cassava value chains;
- Improved household nutrition-one of the respondents said that she has stopped consuming beef since her participation in GTG, she only consumes fish and chicken and according to her, it has improved her health;
- It has helped increase their incomes, knowledge on good agricultural practices and good poultry keeping practices;
- It also helps in creating employment (including for women) by engaging people who now work for them in their farms;
- According to one of the GTG facilitators, *“women can now speak out, share their challenges and experiences to one another and can now detect the root of their problem and also find a lasting solution to it.”*

On whether the successes of the GTG model can be replicated, the participants suggested that it could be replicated by building women leaders' capacity in their various communities, so they can share the knowledge they gained with other women. They further suggested that existing platforms through which more women could be easily reached include - religious platforms like churches, the yearly historical Ibo women's 'August meeting' (which they had used already) or any other village meeting platforms. There is need for consistent self-development for the women to enable them grow with their businesses. There is also need to explore other areas of the value chain that are more profitable and where men are more prominent and find ways of integrating women into those value chains (e.g. fish farming).

## Conclusion

From the interviews/conversations held with women across the value chains during the field case study under review, the flexibility of the GTG approach as a WEE strategy resonates strongly with the women. It further validates one of the key recommendations by WISE regarding using the platform of women's groups/networks to enhance their participation and growth in the value chains. (eg suppliers), engaging (eg other development organisations), and supporting (eg State government and agencies).



## CASE STUDY TWO:

### *Women's Cassava Processing and Increased Access to Improved Technologies in Abavo Community, Delta State.*

#### **Background and Overview of Women's Cassava Processing**

Cassava processing in the Niger Delta is dominated by women, and this is very much the case in Abavo community where cassava is a core crop for women as subsistence farmers and survivalist entrepreneurs selling processed cassava on the open market. The interviews in Abavo confirmed that women do the manual labour both in the farming and processing themselves, although they will sometimes hire farm labourers, but only very periodically like during major farming seasons. Sometimes they are also able to enlist their husbands' help in the farming process.

Cassava processing is a gendered stream of work, this has become a major part of women's income generation. Women's cassava production also supplements the family food basket and is therefore a key part of women's food sovereignty and household food security and nutritional outcomes. Processed products like garri, fufu, edible starch, kpokpo gari and abacha are women's mainstays for sale on the market. The women shared that it is often their only income stream.

#### **Gender Barriers and Norms in the Context Of WEE**

Land ownership is male dominated in the community. Land inheritance is still predominantly the exclusive rights of men, although women can acquire land if they have the resources. However, with most women having low cash flow and unable to raise collateral for loans,

their farm access are predominantly small holdings within the family (and largely husband-owned) land.

Livelihoods are mainly based on farming, but men dominate the farming of crops such as yam, plantain, and oil palm, while women are more into retailing. Sometimes women buy from the men's farm produce and sell. It gives them relatively good income but not as much as men are able to earn as the primary producers of staple crops in the area.

Whether land is rented or loaned from their husbands, women's resource ownership is exceptionally low and their sovereignty over the production process is a precarious one in comparison to the more secure situation of their male counterparts. This already low operating base, coupled with additional gendered norms around women's intrinsic role in household food production, continues to structurally disadvantage women's rewards for their economic production in comparison to men. What little money is made from cassava goes back into meeting the cost of production, like the rented farmland, manpower, etc, as well as directly into the household food basket. Critically, the women of Abavo community indicated that the demarcation between cassava that is processed for the home and that for market is often hard to measure. This blurry line between their private and public production is a major barrier to their income increase and any wider WEE outcomes, especially as the women indicated that their subsistence yields are often the fall back in the household food basket, with women's crops and products being consumed *"anytime it is needed"*.

And with the profit made from sales usually going into taking care of domestic/family needs, women's opportunities to reinvest into their production process

remains a challenge. Whilst men in the household also contribute to the household, the relationship between women's subsistence production and women's income with household expenditure appears to be disproportionately higher, which – given their more disadvantaged economic positions overall – places them in a cycle of production that is far from economically empowered.

The combination of patriarchal norms surrounding land rights and the subsequent relegation of women to survivalist processing within the value chain is further compounded by the fact that very few women get to develop their processing businesses into cottage enterprises, or become viable growth entrepreneurs. Not many women are found owning the processing equipment needed to make their work more efficient, and so as a result, women cassava producers are therefore largely reliant on male dominated SME processors and aggregators for the off take of their produce.

## The Intervention with MADE: Benefits of the Approach

The MADE intervention focused on providing Good Agronomic Practice (GAP) training to increase productivity and then link the women cassava farmers, to alternative markets directly or through aggregators. This has provided a more consistent access to the market, allowing them to sell their cassava anytime they harvest, and at an agreed and “comfortable” price. Previously, the women had been at the mercy of the middlemen, who could control the price and disadvantage the women significantly. With a more assured and consistent off-take as a result of these linkages, women's access to market within their cassava production has been made more secure. As a result of the linkages with buyers such as WINOSA farms, an SME cassava processor in Abavo community, the women also have an additional income stream of frying garri for a price that the women considered fair (in this case at 500 naira per container of produce of

about 25kg). Greater market assurance is therefore the most significant achievement from the MADE intervention because it has increased incomes. Like WINOSA, other aggregators also hire the women for additional menial labour like garri frying.

The challenge of partial farm productivity has also been reduced, following the provision of good agronomic practice sessions at demonstration farms organised by MADE's service providers where the women were taught on how to space during planting and other land preparation and maintenance through to harvest. Most importantly, by not simply relying on increased yield as a lead to increased incomes, MADE has successfully addressed the issue of access to market as an assurance for yield increases. This is a critical point, as survivalist women entrepreneurs carry a far greater risk within a value chain of no sale outlets for their roots and products given their far lower resource base, where very high cost of transportation and no storage facilities (especially for perishable produce) means that they suffer disproportionately from spoilage and subsequent sale of goods below market value.

## Transformations and Persistent Challenges

The women of Abavo were clear that their economic livelihoods have been transformed in the area of profits making. Prior to MADE's intervention their vulnerability within the market due to their position on the value chain left them with very little negotiating power in terms of price setting, often negotiating prices was based on land size. The relationship with buyers previously was deeply unequal, with buyers only purchasing based on their own stated prices, often waiting until the women had no choice than selling on harsher terms. These linkages have therefore played a role in assisting women with accessing markets and selling at fairer prices as well as a more consistent market. However, it is not completely clear the extent to which the women have any say in the setting of prices, and so whilst their negotiating power is no longer being consistently undermined by market forces, there is still a question mark regarding the full nature of their power relationships within the market.

Increases in income have resulted in greater financial security for the women in terms of meeting the rent, their children's school fees, and other family household supports. The women also reported having extra disposable incomes for their own personal needs. More broadly, some women indicated that their role in household financial planning had also improved.

Where control of income is concerned however, the intervention has been unable to deliver a clear transformative outcome. For the most part the women indicated that they were in "control" on the amounts of money spent and of how they spent their income on household expenditure. However, discussion with their husbands as to how they spent their incomes was also obligatory. And when there is a major decision to be made on any household issue, husbands also have the final say. Given how much of women's incomes appear to go to household expenditure, the line of control of their income is once again blurred. There is also a lack of clarity over how much autonomy the women have when it comes to spending their incomes on their own personal needs.

### **The Case of A Successful Woman Growth Entrepreneur in Cassava Processing:**

Stella Ereyukomhen is a cassava processor from Abavo community with about 20 people on her payroll, eight of whom are women. She registered her company (WINOSA Global Ventures) in 2006 and started larger scale production in 2008. Prior to cassava processing, she had been involved in the retail side of buying and selling of motor spare parts.

Stella is one of the few women operating at this level of the value chain, and is very clear on the reasons behind this: "There are less women cassava farmers at a higher level of the value chain because it is capital intensive and unlike men, women have limited access to capital/loans etc".

Stella makes a profit she describes as "reasonable" from her enterprise. It is currently the main source of her income. Producing cassava for sale is more profitable for her than offering processing services. Her business as a growth enterprise is very important to her and it is clear that it is a source of empowerment to some families beyond the profits she makes: *"my happiest moment is when I pay salaries. That I can pay 5 people ...10 people....etc., I am happy."* She also has a distribution outlet.

MADE linked her to cassava farmers and suppliers in 2015. The farmers were trained on good agronomic practices by MADE partners with 30 demo farms established in 4 Local Government Areas. About 2,000 farmers were trained and about 80 farmers in the respective clusters supply her factory with cassava. The aggregator pays them for their produce, and she in turn pays the aggregators (all part of the linkage made by the MADE programme). She also employs some of the women cassava farmers in frying and packaging garri, which she then sells on, thus providing her with another income stream. Previously she was dependent on government for off take, but since MADE's intervention, and her improved packaging, the market has become more open and demands have been pouring in. She is producing more, paying salaries, paying suppliers, and servicing equipment.

In terms of her economic empowerment and agency, the success of her business has clearly led to increased earnings. As a growth entrepreneur within the processing section of the value chain with access to premises, equipment for large scale production, and the ability to hire steady labour, she is also in a greater position of economic power within the chain overall. Her ownership and control of resources within the chain separates her experience of cassava production from the majority of women in the community.

At the household level, she participates fully in domestic decision-making, but admitted that her husband makes the final decisions. She shared that her husband is the key source of financing for her business, thus making her need to access more formal means of finance such as a loan unnecessary. She did state however that she is not dependent on her husband for most of her financial responsibility, sharing that the relationship with her husband is now "better and sweeter and there is mutual respect". The mixed reality this presents (deference to spousal decision making but without further financial reliance on him now her business is thriving) is a conflicted one, but not unexpected given the initial reliance on spousal finance at start-up stage.

## Conclusion

MADE's intervention with women within the cassava value chain has successfully assisted women with increased profits and more secure markets for their production. This has clearly transformed their profit making, and in so doing provided them with additional incomes that contribute to necessary household expenditures such as rent, food, and also to their children's education. With women often carrying the responsibility of such expenditures (regardless of whether they earn far less than their husbands), this contribution to household security is important from a social perspective.

MADE has also supported the successful development of a woman growth entrepreneur within cassava production, and in so doing have bucked the gender norm – even individually - of a woman's positioning and power within that value chain. It is important to note however, that her experience remains an anomalous one from a gender perspective – not only is she one of very few women able to work at that level, she has also been able to do so with the financial support of her husband, a dynamic that is not generally available many women.

In terms of WEE more broadly, the linkages with aggregators has made some contribution to increasing the agency of women's subsistence and survivalist cassava producers within the value chain. These links have alleviated the risk and precariousness of those women's usual transactions on the open market, where their positioning on the value chain leaves them at the mercy of buyers. Whilst it is unclear how far their bargaining power has actually improved, the semi-formalisation of their trade in this manner has created a base level of acceptable pricing as well as more secure demand for their goods.

However, it is important to note that they are still survivalist entrepreneurs, and still subject to the ebbs and flows of the cassava market, just as indeed are the buyers (but with greater precarity), although any increases in the women's power as actors with a say within the market itself (for example, to influence prices) remains unclear. This reality is underscored by the women's own call for additional empowerment and livelihoods skills across other areas to be introduced within their community, highlighting that “when demand for garri is low, so income will also be low”. Compared to the buyers however, the majority of women cassava producers continue to operate at a subsistence survivalist level continue to carry greater proportional risks within the market.

In the meantime, structural inequalities need to shift in order for WEE to be comprehensively achieved so as to change those realities that remain. The issue of access to land (and land rights / inheritance rights within that) is a structural barrier to gender equality and women's genuine economic empowerment that even improved access to more secure markets cannot address. Whilst improved access to finance can help to alleviate this to a certain extent, the fundamental difference of land resource (relatively steady, secure, interest free) compared to loans and credit as a resource (subject to interest rates and more hazardous fluctuations of the financial market) means that men and women continue to produce and are asked to compete (include amongst each other) on fundamentally unequal terms.



# CASE STUDY THREE:

## *Poultry Interventions Noiler as a Success Story on Women's Economic Empowerment*

### **Background and Overview of the Improving Access to Affordable Improved Breeds for Smallholder Farmers**

In any Women's Economic Empowerment intervention, certain social factors are usually considered, including (but not limited to) the traditional 'domestic' role of women in a patriarchal society. This domestic role (reproduction, family nutrition, healthcare etc) in most cases inform their level of engagement in particular agricultural value chains that are largely domestic oriented, and in the context under review, the Poultry Noiler birds. Poultry represents one of the primary sources of nutrition across the Niger Delta. Poultry birds have several advantages over other livestock: they are good convertors of feed into useable protein, poultry enterprises can be started with minimal investments and eggs, a by-product, are one of the most affordable protein sources for rural dwellers. It is estimated that at least 3 million households across the Niger Delta keep poultry, even in the remotest of communities.

Across the Niger Delta, many households keep poultry breeds as micro-level income generating assets, however the production cost and eventual yield per bird creates a challenge for rural households who often must choose between the high yield/high cost broiler birds and low cost/ low yield traditional or local birds. Poor households often produce the low cost local/traditional birds, yet do not provide sufficient nutrition for the households. Local birds typically have low productivity, long lead times to table weight of up to a year and low achievable table weight of 0.8 -1.2 kg. They are also characterized by lower laying rates - average of 40 eggs from achievement of table weight to

consumption. They are however hardy, less fatty, good brooders, and are preferred by some consumers for their taste. Exotic breeds such as boilers and layers on the other hand require intensive rearing system which requires good technical expertise and heavy financial investment from the farmers. The financial requirement for production of broilers often leads households into opting for the local birds that can free range and are more resistant to diseases.

The introduction of improved breeds will reduce these risks, but there was limited awareness and uptake of these breeds in the region. MADE sought to improve access by supporting the creation and capacity strengthening of Mother Units (intermediate brooding enterprises) to improve access to affordable improved breeds (e.g. Noiler) for uptake by households and smallholder farmers.

Noiler birds are a high yield, low input (HYLI) breed of chicken patented by Amo Farms Sieberer Hatcher to address the challenges of poor protein nutrition and food insecurity in rural communities that traditionally raise birds as a primary source of nutrition. These breeds are cross breed of indigenous and exotic birds with combined benefits of higher table weight/higher meat on bone when compared to indigenous breeds while been hardier than, thrive on low quality feeds primarily consisting of locally available food materials and can be reared in semi intensive conditions compared to boilers. The semi intensive husbandry care required to raise these improved breeds to same table weight as broiler birds makes it affordable and ensures availability of protein requirement for poor households.

## Gender Barriers and Norms in the Context of WEE

Poultry Noiler was identified by the programme to improve income-generating activities by households and smallholder farmers as well as to improve nutrition for poor households. Hence the programme identified the potential WEE (Women's Economic Empowerment) component of the Noiler Birds. The lucrative WEE component – from the income increase indicator – of the Noiler Bird was confirmed by the feedback from the MADE beneficiaries.

During the second phase of MADE II, MADE initiated an intervention targeted at creating and strengthening intermediate brooding enterprise (mother units<sup>3</sup>) to improve access to affordable improved breeds<sup>4</sup>. MADE sought to improve access by supporting the creation and capacity strengthening of Mother Units to improve supply and availability of improved chicken breed (Noiler) to improve income-generating activities by households and smallholder farmers as well as ensures availability of protein requirement for small scale farmers who then raise the birds to table weight (ready at 16 weeks) or for eggs with a production cycle of 18 months in semi-intensive conditions with reduced mortality rate of about 5% compared to extensive conditions with average mortality rate of 30%. This generates average gross margin of N 45,375 (with average flock size of 50 units per farmer) after sales.

MADE, in partnership with Amo Farms, supported a network of 23 Mother units in Imo and Edo states with an average of 1,000 birds capacity each, provided them with technical support on proper husbandry information, bulk sourcing facilities, and enhanced capacity to promote the breed to poultry farmers. MADE shared cost on the first production cycle, supported the mother units with feeds and day-old chicks for 1,000 birds with the mother units continuing to produce birds of up to 4 production cycles per annum.

All the women interviewed largely opined that men had more economic advantage and usually made the final financial decisions. However, in some cases, individual dynamics played out in domestic relationships which may allow the women to also take some decisions. It was observed that men were more interested in the poultry farming as business, but women took it as a means of survival and in some cases (interestingly) as a passion. In some cases, men sold their poultry products in bulk while women largely run it as a micro enterprise. One of the respondents mentioned that men have more access to information and the markets and as such, are able to establish contacts to sell. One of the respondents opined that “Men have access to resources more than women, although the women make more money than them in terms of utilizing the farm more. Men have more economic power.” In essence, and as expressed earlier, while it is not necessarily the case that the men worked harder than the women, but it is the fact that women's hard labour and farm productivity/yield do not automatically translate to equal access to, and control of, finance (both capital and profit after sales) as the men still had the ultimate control.

However it was also established that some cultural practices (such as women's limited access to - farm land and related means of production) that limit women's role in the markets have evolved over the years and that unlike before, more women can now own their personal houses and are gradually engaging in economic activities (albeit not at the same pace and scope as the men). It is good to note that Noiler birds are more cost effective than the broilers and more productive than traditional birds, thus reducing the barrier for women in the commercial poultry rearing and hence the access to improved breed intervention. However, regarding the general gender dynamics in poultry farming, women are mostly involved with the

<sup>3</sup> Mother Units are specialized poultry brooding facilities that provide husbandry services to ensure growth and low mortality of these birds during the most vulnerable period of their life cycle which is primarily from the day-old chick stage to 6 weeks. After the age of 6 weeks, the birds are sold to small scale poultry farmers to be reared to table weight.

<sup>4</sup> These breeds are cross breed of indigenous and exotic birds with combined benefits of higher table weight / meat on bone when compared to indigenous breeds while being hardier than exotic breeds, thrive on low quality feeds and can be reared in semi intensive conditions

rearing of the smaller flock sizes (e.g. less than 50 birds). The gender dynamics tend to change when the birds increase to a commercial quantity and the men begin to get more involved –especially at the commercial market and more profitable level. Hence women’s involvement in poultry farming (as in other agricultural value chains), is not as mainstreamed as the men’s involvement due to the fact that the men still have more access to finance, market information, resources, decision-making powers and time (women’s time is taken up by their triple burden role of reproduction, production and community service).

## The Intervention with MADE Nigeria: Benefits of the Approach

One of the themes that ran through the feedback from most of the respondents was that of capacity building by Amo Farms (MADE’s poultry intervention partner. In particular, the approach to training on Good Poultry Keeping Practices (GPKP) has been beneficial to the women that shared their experiences. Also beneficial was the use of different strategies (including the use of media) to raise awareness about the intervention. According to Rev. Mrs. Lucy, she had listened to Maxi Azubuike – a Noiler champion on radio in April 2019, and later bought her the first set of Noiler birds of 50 from the MADE supported Mother Unit. She made a significant profit after the sales of the birds. Also, Rev. Sister Miriam Ezeonye participated at a farmers’ forum supported by Amo Farms and MADE and so became interested in raising noiler birds. She bought 75 Noiler birds at six weeks and raised them to 5 months old, making significant profit after sales. According to Mrs Ugoeze, another beneficiary of the improved breed intervention birds, she made significant profit after sales. Another beneficiary in Benin, Mrs. Lawal Iyabode, QBWA coordinator, Edo State who is a Mother Unit operator, said that she started the business after knowing about noiler birds at farmers’ forum supported by Amo Farms and MADE.

## Transformations and Persistent Challenges

All the women interviewed seemed excited about the Noiler bird initiative and said it was profitable and less vulnerable to diseases in comparison with the regular poultry. They also spoke about its nutritional value, which they found to be as important as the profit they made from the sales. Linkage to market activities by Amo Farms and its partners has led to more orders for the birds. Mrs. Ugoeze (earlier quoted), had this to say “My husband is aware and supports the women initiative in the community including the Noiler initiative.” In talking about the impact of the Noiler initiative, one of the respondents said “the most significant impact is the increased profit from the sale of Noiler birds. I am eager to expand the Noiler business to 1000 birds.” Another respondent spoke about the increased profit compared to Broilers and fisheries.

One of the respondents from a church community, when asked about mentoring and sharing information, about the income generating potential of the Noiler birds, said “Yes, I used the church platform to raise awareness about Noiler...” One of the participants said she spoke to members of her church community (Catechists, Reverend Fathers, Catholic Women Organisation members etc). The interesting part of the Noiler birds is that the participants mentioned that they both sell as well as consume the birds and the eggs – hence the nutritional value is well utilised alongside the commercial value. The key informant in Edo state said that “Over 50 women have been mentored based on poultry supported by MADE.”” She further remarked that the women’s economic lives have been transformed. Another respondent from the church community said, “Yes. I am making more money, I have sold two cycles of birds.” Mrs. Ugoeze further said – “The women in the community like the Noiler business as it helps them augment their income.”

In terms of profit, Mother Unit starts from day-old to 5 weeks and cost of production for 1000 birds is about 450,000 naira. Mortality rate is between 5%-7% (which equals about 50 birds). So assuming that total alive is

950 birds, the profit is about 100 naira (or more) per bird, which could be between 95,000 naira to 130,000 naira for about 950 birds (depending on the level of mortality management) for the 950 birds. At the off-takers level, they take about 50 birds at 35,000 naira, which also covers a bag of feed and their transportation to their farms. They rear the birds for another 8 weeks after which they are ready for sale. At 8 weeks, the 50 birds will need about 10 bags of feed at 3,600 per bag (36,000 naira). The male bird (cockerel) would sell for about 4,000 naira and the female usually between 3,000 and 3,500 naira per bird. The female ones will also lay eggs which are sold at a profit of e.g. 30 eggs from 30 birds per day at 900 naira per day and about 328,500 for a one year cycle (excluding possible crisis of some birds not laying eggs etc). So, for the 50 Noiler birds, there is an average profit (after production costs) of 79,000 naira, which is about 60-65% profit. Even if the birds (for any crisis reason) are sold at a lower rate of about 2,500 naira, there will still be a significant profit for the small holder farmers.

In terms of challenges, some of the participants talked about limited domestic space to rear the Noilers. They spoke about possibility of getting more space to enable them to expand the business. One of the participants shared that she had to relocate to a bigger accommodation for this purpose. Another challenge expressed by some of the participants was that they were not able to meet up with the demands from the people they had spoken to about the intervention, as the supply from the Mother Units was not consistent and they could not respond to all the demands. The risk in this is that it has the potential to weaken the interest and trust by other potential farmers who might have been successfully convinced on the viability of the Noiler bird value chain - especially being a relatively new intervention. So, there is need to make this process more self sustaining and not dependent on supplies from Mother Units. Furthermore, the peer sharing of information and mentoring of other women by the existing beneficiaries can be very WEE resourceful and these could be achieved through already existing platforms such as the GTG and QBWA.

One of the Mother Unit beneficiaries who is also a key member of QBWA (Iyabode Lawal) can be a potential mentor to other women who might be interested but need some form of guide and encouragement to upgrade from off-takers to mother-units. QBWA's mandate includes supporting women agricultural value chain entrepreneurs with linkages to financial support and this could be used as a platform to support more women mother units. Through these platforms also, further market linkages and information-sharing can enhance the sustainability of the Noiler value chain.

## Conclusions

The Noiler Bird intervention is still relatively new albeit already demonstrated very promising WEE benefits combined with nutritional benefits. Some of the respondents suggested the need for more awareness and sensitisation on the Noiler birds for more women to benefit. Other recommendations include:

- Identify poultry farmers with passion for poultry farming. This is key as observed from the field that the success of poultry farming is enhanced by the individual's passion and interest. With passion comes the required determination and creativity needed to sustain the business and make profit. It was noted in some cases, that women who went into farming or particular value chains did not really have the passion but got into it for not having an alternative source of livelihood or occupation, and thus did not put in as much effort as those with the passion for it. That passion is also what motivates primary beneficiaries to mentor other women and thus increasing the scale of WEE beneficiaries.

- Mentorship of other women by those that have benefited. This, they had already started doing in their various capacities of community engagements and diverse platforms (a good model too that MADE's approach of engagement facilitated).

The benefit of increased incomes for women in agricultural value chains no doubt helps to give them a stronger sense of self and voice both in their homes and their communities, which they have expressed in the conversations held. This is paramount regarding women's economic empowerment. However, the full success story of this intervention will be better evaluated after further series of production and off-take cycles. In the meantime, existing gender related platforms such as the QBWA and other women business membership organizations (BMOs) could leverage on the GTG to effectively to enhance the WEE benefits of the Noiler birds for its members. The flexibility of the GTG model provides an effective platform for reaching out to more women across communities and mentoring them on the benefits of investing in noiler bird. This has already started but needs to be sustained. According to Mrs. Jennifer Christopher, one of the GTG pilot facilitators shared the story of a particular woman (retired teacher) who participated in the GTG discussion session and started her poultry farm and then mentored several other women in her community to do same. The QBWA (as earlier mentioned) is a strong empowering network of women entrepreneurs with strong WEE objectives. This platform should be further used to enhance WEE potential of noiler birds - through peer-learning, information sharing, financial support, and mentorship (all key ingredients of WEE).

## CASE STUDY FOUR:

*Successful partnership Quintessential Business Women's Association (QBWA) – Women Business Membership Organization (BMO) in the Niger Delta:*

### **Background and Overview of QBWA**

The Quintessential Business Women's Association (QBWA) – a women's business membership organisation (BMO) was formed in 2000 and started in the North West and North East of the country, initially and later expanded its activities to the South-South/ Niger Delta with a focus on the development of solid minerals and agricultural value chains for women's social-economic empowerment. MADE's partnership with QBWA was targeted at reaching out to these

women, facilitate improvement of their income, and their position in the value chains across the cassava, poultry, agricultural inputs, palm oil and aquaculture as well as the ESIP component aspirational sectors especially micro-distribution and retailing. MADE reports are clear of the fact that working with QBWA to mobilise its members to demonstration activities by lead firms contributed to diminishing its gaps of gender outreach targets and increased women's participation in almost all interventions thereby benefiting her members through various WEE interventions across value chains. According to Mrs. Shimite Bello - QBWA national president, "prior to engagement with MADE

we focused on subsistence farming....., but now there is a strategic shift in the way we address women's challenges because now have understanding of processing and value addition”.

## Gender Barriers and Norms in the Context of WEE

As with previous responses, QBWA's experience of working with women in the Niger Delta involves working on numerous gender barriers that specifically disadvantage women, in particular socio-cultural constraints were women don't inherit land, disadvantaging them compared to male counterparts due to the rental fees and other overheads such as labour which ultimately eats into their income disproportionately. As a result, women either avoid agricultural value chains or are placed in less advantages places within it. QBWA's membership is made-up of women across multiple value chains that cover all areas of MADE's various interventions, so the barriers and norms discussed across the document apply. As business women's organisation it also has a significant number of micro-retailers as members.

## The Intervention with MADE: Benefits of the Approach

The experience of the QBWA partnership with MADE included linking women involved in micro retailing within value chains to bulk buyers and wider, larger markets, improving the women's knowledge base around agro inputs in particular. MADE partners taught them better ways of farming, agro input use, processing from the equipment bought, and micro-retailing. The women's participation in various interventions also gave the women the opportunity to look at the different aspects of the value chains and decide which aspect they are interested in.

More broadly, the approach of working through an established, well-functioning women's organisation like QBWA was a strategic success on the part of MADE. MADE was able to leverage QBWA's broad membership base to use QBWA as a conduit for sharing information on greater market access overall through the shared knowledge in agro inputs and technology and to link more women to MADE's commercial partners. In addition, the QBWA as a group creates market for those in micro retailing within value chains, giving them a more prominent voice. As a peer group they have a shared/common goal, helping women to find solutions to their various economic problems whilst strengthening their autonomy.

For MADE, the opportunity to impact women in larger numbers through QBWA was just one benefit. The approach of MADE's partners engaging with women already organised through a collective is widely recognised as being far more effective in delivering more transformative outcomes where empowerment is concerned, allowing women to transcend the isolation of being marginalised individuals through collective action and voice that has greater resonance in challenging the structural barriers around them. Ultimately, women have more power when in groups than individually. This resonates across various areas of empowerment: for example: members spoke of how husbands have greater respect for their opinions around financial decision making since they became a part of QBWA.

## Transformations and persistent challenges

The most significant positive impact of MADE's engagement with QBWA has been the economic financial empowerment and market creation in production and processing value chains by including the QBWA members into the market system. This led members reporting increased profits as a result of

increased knowledge around agro inputs in particular. Women's lack of land through negative inheritance norms remains a continued barrier, but due to this enhanced financial capacity generated by those inputs and a higher frequency of farm mechanization and access to equipment, women's economic production has increased, especially in cassava, oil palm, okra, and other women are now more involved in the processing end of the value chain and micro retailing. This has placed them in a much better position to then access land through purchase or hire. Another economic transformation has been the demonstration from MADE partners in their intervention and the various value chains introduced, such as the fish smoking kiln and the women who benefited testified that it had improved their incomes significantly.

From a wider empowerment perspective, investment in QBWA and its work in this area has led to greater outcomes in engagement with the community leaders, traditional/religious leaders, leading to greater voice in political decision making. One of the women interviewed, the QBWA coordinator for Okpe Local Government, Delta State is now in charge of the market. Another of the women became a leader of the widows in Ndokwa East Local Government, Delta State and she is paid by the government to ensure that the poor widows get the monthly grants allocated to them. In terms of the power dynamic in decision making and financial support at home, this also appears to have improved, with their engagement in an active economic

group and the greater confidence and support that comes with that being a key part of that.

Persistent challenges do still remain, however. These include issues such as transportation and wider logistical issues (such as in the riverine areas that are infrastructurally even less enabling), and on-going issues with some of the interventions introduced. For example, some women indicated that the fish smoking kiln method remained a challenge in terms of marketing to new customers. So, whilst some women benefitted, not all did, with some loss in profits for the latter. Greater sensitisation among customers to the new produce and linkages to larger markets and bulk buyers were asked for by those women, along with the introduction of women's aquaculture to the value chain. Similarly, women involved in the cassava value chain indicated that they are facing challenges with agro input availability, are indicating supply side glitches that still need ironing out. For women who have now committed their farming practices to commercial products, the importance of ensuring that supply is constant is critical to ensure they do not become vulnerable to shocks, as it would be difficult for them to simply return to organic practices.

Lack of adequate financing remains a persistent challenge, with many women still having to draw on personal funds in order to finance their businesses. Education and wider exposure are also still needed.

## Conclusions

In working with QBWA, MADE has delivered one of its most strategic and arguably successful approaches to women's economic empowerment that includes income increase but – very importantly – goes beyond it. By leveraging the already existing work of the QBWA in women's empowerment more broadly, MADE has been able to greatly increase women's participation in the market systems, and invest in a more transformative process that has more potential to deliver real and more sustainable change in women's economic empowerment. As noted already, women are far better able to challenge gender barriers that limit their power across spheres – including the economic - when they organise collectively. The process of knowledge sharing, shared support mechanisms and strengthened political positioning to challenge oppressive norms and structural inequality is far more effective

than if women are attempting to address these things individually, simply in the pursuit of increased income in an atomised and isolated manner. Improvements in gender equity and interpersonal power relationships are more likely to occur on the back of collective action to address inequalities. By investing in QBWA's work and providing greater economic opportunities directly into the groups through the varied intervention portfolios, MADE is making a direct contribution to the possibility of more tangible outcomes for women over a longer period of time. Importantly, the partnership with a women's organisation is also more likely to ensure that those transformations are owned by the women themselves, which in itself is critical to the changes are more meaningful and sustainable.



## CASE STUDY FIVE:

### *Access to Market in the Pineapple Value Chain in Ehor Community, Edo State.*

## Background and Overview of the Pineapple Intervention

One of the banes of women's economic empowerment across agricultural value chains (as in other entrepreneurship endeavours), has been limited access to market. This of course is not unconnected to the systemic patriarchal culture that limits women's access to resources, information, mobility and other avenues that will ease access to markets. Thus, Access to Market for Rural Producers is a key strategy of MADE aimed at facilitating linkages between farmers across value chains to aggregators and off-takers. The pineapple farmers came in contact with Hills Harvest, an agribusiness supply chain company based in Lagos who was invited by MADE into Edo State to explore sourcing opportunities for crops with comparative advantage within the state including pineapple. Hills Harvest identified and mapped the pineapple farmers within the state including the women pineapple farmers in Ehor community. Hills Harvest trained the women on on post-harvest handling of pineapple so as to reduce post-harvest losses and to enable them meet off-takers' requirements. With this improved knowledge, the farmers were able to supply over 500 tons of pineapple to Hills Harvest through its local aggregator and with at least 20 women farmers benefiting from off-takers.

## Gender Barriers and Norms in the Context Of WEE

As with other sampled communities and across value chains, the gender dynamics reflect male domination in major decision-making roles. Although men are in charge, there is largely a peaceful relationship in the

domestic sphere as the men listen to the advice of their wives. As in other agricultural contexts under review, deeply rooted culture has a significant influence in economic livelihoods in the Ehor community. According to the FGD participants, most women work and provide for the home more than the men, though, the men control the usage of the finance (this is similar to the other experiences under review). There are no formal laws restricting women from agricultural business. However, due to cultural dynamics, men have easy access to farmland either through inheritance or they acquire it with their money (and they have more access to finance than the women). To navigate this barrier, the women would mostly look for land to lease between 3-5yrs or more, depending on the financial capacity of the woman. Most of the women in Ehor are using their husband's farmland. Pineapple farming requires more strength hence women pay for labourers while men can easily handle the labour in their farmland. They pay between 80,000 – 120,000 naira to labourers. So, in addition to the gender dynamics, there are also the physiological limitations faced by the women.

In terms of the power dynamics involved in economic decision making in the home, the man largely decides for the home on how money is spent because most of the women assist their husband to sell their harvest and some of them also use their husbands' farmland. However, the women that have their own personal farmland and also pay labourers to work on the farm seem to have more financial control over their finances than the women who are largely dependent on their husbands' farmland or lease. So, this explains the fact that access to, and ownership of, means of production across value chains determine the level of women's economic decision-making strength.

But in general, men have the final control as one of the key informant pineapple farm owner asserted “No matter the money a woman has made for herself the man has the disbursement power over the money.”

Regarding the gender dynamics and decision-making in the market, the men cultivate and the women plant and harvest. Along the line, while the men are cultivating tubers the women spice the land with legumes. In Ehor, cocoyam, yams, pineapple, etc. are called ‘men crops’ while tomatoes, pepper, okra, vegetables, etc. are called ‘women crops’. The men crops are obviously the more lucrative ones. Most men support their women during cultivation but the single women face all the farming expenses on their own and there is a comparative variation in their harvest. For instance, one of the FGD participants revealed that when her husband was alive, she would normally harvest between 15 – 20 dozens of pineapple daily because the house responsibility was not solely on her but when she lost her husband and responsibility increased, she had to harvest between 100 – 130 dozens of pineapple daily to meet the domestic demands.

The women are engaged largely in taking the farm products to the market to sell but according to one of the FGD participants (and validated by the others) “the men collect the money after sales and decide what happens to the money.”

## The Intervention with MADE Nigeria: Benefits of the Approach

As a result of the initial meeting with MADE and having benefited from the sensitisation talk, the pineapple farmers in Ehor community were linked to Hill Harvest off-taker and this linkage proved quite beneficial to the farmers. In line with MADE’s M4P market approach, MADE helped to facilitate access to market for the farmers as well as build their capacity in agricultural best management practices.

## Transformations and Persistent Challenges

The access to market linkage by MADE was very useful and strategic because after the linkage, each pineapple farmer harvested between 70-180 dozens of pineapple daily during pineapple season. Bearing in mind the fact that the market in Ehor is normally saturated, getting guaranteed buyers from other locations helped them increase their sales. In terms of how they benefited from this access to market linkage, they highlighted the following –

- Products are harvested and sold directly from the farm, hence stress of moving large products has stopped;
- Cost [5000-8000 naira] of transporting products from farm to market has been saved;
- Sales have improved significantly as large quantity of pineapples is off taken by Hill Harvest (albeit not regular). This is due to the fact that the quantity harvested has to be sufficiently large for Hills Harvest to fill a truck and off-take;
- Reduced market loss;
- The pineapples are sold fresher than before.

However, there were a couple of challenges encountered in the access to market intervention. These include the fact that Hill Harvest did not give quantity specification hence pineapple farmers encountered product wastage. The issue of wastage is usually a significant drawback for women’s economic empowerment across agricultural value chains and requires mitigation strategies at the onset of the respective value chain intervention. Also, off taking was not regular with Hill Harvest, hence the lack of consistency meant that the women sold to another independent buyer but likely at a lower price. It also meant that some other women they tried to mobilise/ sensitise lost interest.

## Conclusions

In terms of how the market approach can be replicated in other communities, it was suggested that the visibility of the Ehor success can encourage replication in other communities but not without regular off-taking strategies. Also, a pineapple demo plot on the importance of fertilizer and how it can be applied will bring about success stories. Further suggestions include:

- Hill Harvest should off-take regularly. They should also specify and agree minimum quantity for off-take in order to manage expectations of the women;
- The quantity needed by Hill Harvest should be made known to the farmers before coming for off-take to avoid wastage or spoilage;
- MADE should help identify more off-takers e.g. Fruit juice processing factories. However, as further gathered from MADE, Hills Harvest is in the process of acquiring the local pineapple plant factory in Ehor where the pineapples will be processed;
- Linkages to financial support to acquire more labourers and farmland;
- MADE should advocate for government to finalize plans to open the factory they built in Ehor. Further information from MADE in the context of this recommendation, revealed that the factory was acquired by an individual investor who got a loan using the property. The factory became moribund after a number of operations. It is presently (as of the time of the report under review) in the care of the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON) who has received a request for the purchase/change of ownership by Hills Harvest.

Access to market is no doubt a huge factor in women's economic empowerment, and the Pineapple case study has demonstrated the importance of this strategy. There will be need to expand this initiative/model for a wider outreach.

## CASE STUDY SIX:

*Women in the Palm Oil Value Chain in Mbarakom Community, Akamkpa Local Government Area, Cross River State.*

### Background and Overview of Women in the Palm Oil Value Chain

Roles in the palm oil value chain tend to be segregated based on gender with women heavily concentrated at the processing end of the chain. In Cross River, women's participation in production of the oil palm is limited due to constraints of land ownership and leading

to fewer women owning oil palm farms and plantations compared to men who are favoured with the traditional land ownership systems. Where communal oil palm plantations are available for harvesting, women are further challenged by the physical demands of oil palm harvesting as this is still widely done manually by highly skilled climbers using rope and cutlass. These limitations to ownership of the oil palm leaves women taking up role of processors within the value chain

which entails purchasing Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB) or loose fruits palm fruits from markets and plantations and processing into palm oil at the mills, either as mill owners or non-mill owner processors. Mostly, the women operate as non-mill owner processors who pay fees to use mills, where they often engage family labour to help out with processing operations in order to reduce cost instead of hiring paid labour. In many communities, women are able to rent/lease oil palm plantations from where they harvest Fresh Fruit Bunches using the services of harvesters. Women also function in marketing of palm oil where they engage in wholesale and retailing of palm oil. Women processors may sell their palm oil to wholesalers and retailers or sell directly to the end users. Engaging with the value chain as processors and wholesalers or retailers of palm oil is therefore their most accessible means of earning and income.

## Gender Barriers and Norms in the Context of WEE

As noted above, unequal land ownership across many communities that preclude women's inheritance disadvantages women from oil palm production. Men are therefore in a better position to earn an income from oil palm farming through sale of FFB and palm oil and, as a result, are much better able to invest in their business. In Mbarakom community where the palm oil value chain is of pivotal importance to many women's incomes, many of these women do have access to palm fruits through farms, but also work on their husband's farms. In the latter case, gendered power imbalance at the household level will determine variables such as whether they are paid in kind (with fruits) or in cash for their labour by their husbands or other male family members whose land they work, or indeed if not at all. All of these impacts on their ability to both engage and compete within the chain. Some women hire land, whilst others simply purchase the fruits and then process. Working as paid labourers on other oil palm farms to earn additional incomes is not seen as a very viable option due to the physical demands of the job which leaves them unable to compete on an equal footing with men.

For the most part however, there are no cultural prohibitions on women buying land if they have the means, or indeed engaging in any other part of the value chain as they see fit if they have the resources to do so. Very few women are also mill owners; unsurprisingly, given the amount of investment that is required to own mills and collateral requirements for loans to purchase processing and ancillary equipment. As a result, the vast majority of women are dependent on being able to access milling services for their processing endeavours.

## The Intervention with MADE: Benefits of the Approach

MADE's intervention within the value chain targeting women processors included improving access to improved processing technologies aimed at increasing oil yields through usage of improved processing technologies and improving quality of palm oil through better processing practices (please see box for case study around support to a woman entrepreneur who adopted by investing in the palm oil small scale processing equipment -SSPE and offered services to other small scale women processors). Previously, some of the women from Mbarakom community had been accessing another mill further away, so the closeness of the site has improved their accessibility, minimising transport costs and the overall labour burden of transportation. More ready access to appropriately scaled and less expensive small scale processing equipment (SSPE) ensures increased quantity and improved quality of the palm oil produced. This then implies the opportunity for increased income for the farmers who access these services, offering better processing times, increases in quantities of fruits processed per given period, cost savings from less labour, and quantity of palm oil (depending on fruit type).

## Transformations and Persistent Challenges

Increased income as a result of the easier accessibility to the higher productivity mill has been the main benefit for the women of the community. The women noted that their increased incomes had a positive impact on spousal relationships.

The relationship with the mill owner is good, and she offers a fixed cost for use of her machines similar to other mills, but they get more oil from their fruit. Buyers also come to the mill regularly, so the women also benefit from regular off-take of their processed oil closer to their homes without needing to accrue additional costs in marketing, although some women still will engage in additional micro retailing in the local market spaces.

In terms of income control, the women indicated that for the most part they had independence although they

also sought their husbands' opinions on how to spend their incomes. Whether this was a reciprocal practice is not clear, however, it was explained that the community has a practice of cohabiting and having children outside of marriage. What this means in terms of women's autonomy is unclear, although less formalised marital institutions within the community might explain why the responses around women's income control were generally more positive. Although evidence exists to support such an extrapolation, this is speculative at present and would require further interrogation at the household level.

Persistent challenges experienced by women processors appear to be largely based on access to finance in order to purchase more fruits, leading to a higher palm oil output and higher income. As a result, expansion seems to be a continuous issue for the women, and the extent to which they continue to be survivalist as opposed to growth-oriented in enterprise capacities needs further interrogation if the changes in their lives are to be more meaningful.

### THE CASE OF A SUCCESSFUL WOMAN GROWTH ENTREPRENEUR IN PALM OIL PROCESSING

Mary Okon Emmanuel is a palm oil mill owner who was supported by MADE Nigeria to establish a mill in Mbarakom community, Cross River State, in 2017 following a training with PIND the year before.

Mary is one of the few women operating at this level of the value chain: "some women own mills, but not a lot. Milling is capital intensive and women are risk adverse [to taking on the kind of loans needed]. There is also a belief that if a woman is wealthy, men will stay away from her" she explains, adding that in her own trajectory as an entrepreneur she has also had to contend with social pressures about having left her hometown to pursue business investments in the village, and the levels of risks that entails.

Mary is involved in all stages of the value chain. She has a farm in Iwuru, also in Cross River State. She earns more money from production (farming and processing) and marketing, in addition to sale of palm kernels. In her experience there is more money in the kernel cracking and she would like to focus on expanding that aspect of the business by supplying cracked kernels directly to companies rather than relying on offtakers.

Mary provides opportunities for other women within the value chain, giving them work at her mill stripping the Fresh Fruit Bunches (separating fruits from bunches), and also in fibre separation. This allows them to earn income in addition to utilising the equipment within the mill for processing. Her strategy is to involve as many women as possible in the processing and in that way they can earn a little extra money.

In terms of her own personal transformation as a businesswoman, the most significant impact has been her ability to purchase and establish the SSPE mill in Mbarakom. She was supported in setting-up with 40% of the cost of the SSPE, and also got support from Commercial Agric Project to cover the 60%. She now earns more income and does less manual labour. She only needs one person supporting her when the machine is running, and so does not have any salary outlays. Her main challenge is a current need to refabricate her machinery so that it can also process tenera, or "agric palms" for increased productivity, which ties-in with her dreams of expanding the businesses beyond its current parameters.

She is unmarried and without children and is therefore without the challenges of negotiating income control, expenditure, and other household decision making with a spouse.

## Conclusions

Broadly, MADE's intervention in Mbarakom has helped women processors to increase quantity of palm oil extracted per quantity of fruits as against what was realised with the same quantity of fruits using the traditional and manual press mills which has had a positive effect on incomes generally among non-mill owner women processors using SSPE. Hence, the women now have additional quantity of oil to sell and this increases their earned income from their agribusiness.

The major impact on mill owners however has been seen more clearly in the investment made by the growth entrepreneur Mary Emmanuel, who is currently succeeding as a mill owner and therefore at a point within the value chain where women are rarely found. Her success so far indicates that she will remain in business and likely expand, and more women processors will have access to improved milling services with the opportunity to earn higher income. Similar to Stella Ereyukomhe, the growth entrepreneur within the cassava value chain in our earlier case study, these women are excellent examples of entrepreneurial success created for individual women by MADE Nigeria, but unfortunately remain anomalous and not the norm in relation to the reality for most women within the value chain.





# CHAPTER THREE

# FINAL CONCLUSIONS

## Confirmation of the Structural Inequalities Women Face

The six case studies presented in this document have confirmed some of the key challenges faced by women where economic power is concerned. Across the Niger Delta, well-known barriers such as access to land and other resources, as well disadvantageous positioning within value chains, persist. In almost all of the case studies we see women having to use portions of their husband's land in order to partake in farming. This plays a significant role in blurring the lines between the private and public spheres that men and women operate in, with women continuously beholden to male ownership of resources as a result. Also, as a result of these gendered economic divisions of power, we see women engaging in only certain types of crop production, with the most profitable cash-based value chains dominated by men, whilst women are more prevalent in the production of household consumable crops. Blurred lines therefore persist between women's ability to engage in independent income generation and their structurally determined responsibility to the household food basket. Unpaid care for children and the elderly is also a burden that women disproportionately face, and these gendered economic patterns of production, ownership, and control are all integral in reproducing those realities, particularly where state provision of social care and safety nets that respond to the needs of both women and the poorest are glaringly absent.



*As a result of these gendered economic divisions of power, we see women engaging in only certain types of crop production, with the most profitable cash-based value chains dominated by men*



When women do engage in large value chains, such as palm oil and pineapple, the vast majority of women are poorly placed as a result of these constraints. Lack of land ownership either places them at the more labour-intensive processing end of the value chain as is the case with palm oil, or requires that they work their husbands' lands, being paid in kind for consumption or retailing the produce they harvest as best as they can. Limited decision-making power and ability to transcend the risks associated with market participation as sole traders therefore aligns closely with their limited ownership of the means of production. Where women do own land and are in a position to hire labourers, the case studies demonstrated far greater instances of economic power.

## MADE's Successes in Women's Income Increase

It is within this wider structural context that MADE has attempted to bring-in some aspects of WEE, with a primary focus on income increase through improved economic opportunities. With strong gendered analysis of where these inequalities and economic disparities lay within the programme's chosen value chains, MADE has been able to hone-in and target key areas that have delivered income increase gains for women, and greater market access overall. The cassava, Noiler poultry, and pineapple case studies are all examples of this.

In the case of cassava, strengthened economic livelihoods across the women in the community were reported on the back of gender-targeted GAP training that increased productively, but just as importantly the linkages with buyers via the WINOSA farms processing unit ensured a market access that did not exist previously. Similarly, the Noiler poultry case study – largely as a result of the highly innovative breed of the bird in question and the choice by MADE to pursue that as an opportunity for women – has successfully addressed the disadvantages that women faced in engaging with meaningful livestock farming for profit as well as a more sustainable source of nutrition for the household food basket. In the case of the pineapple

value chain, where market saturation was a major challenge and women faced the issue of spoilage and loss of sales, the provision of direct off-taker linkages meant that not only were women able to sell more of the produce, but were also less beholden to transportation costs, which can sometimes be economically crippling.

## MADE's Engagement with Women's Collective Agency as a Path Towards Transformative WEE

Beyond income increase, MADE also recognized and made significant strides towards trying to address the wider definition of WEE within the framework of a market system programme. Persistent challenges in terms of WEE found across the case studies indicate two very broad categories when it comes to both actual structural transformation and sustainability of gains made: firstly, the continued structural inequalities that persist for women even when economic opportunities are being innovatively challenged by some of the intervention approaches as deployed by MADE; and secondly the reality that the more transformative aspects of WEE which pertain to women's control over incomes and decision-making power are difficult to challenge with only economic programming.

In the first case, it is important to acknowledge that whilst women continue to lack ownership of the means of production and gender the imbalances in core resources such as land persist, they will continue to be unequal within value chains. Whilst finance may be able to address this to a certain extent, as a product in itself – and one that comes with its own financial outlay – women remain unequal in their economic resilience compared to men. Most women also continue to operate at the survivalist level of entrepreneurship within those chains, with only a tiny number successfully growing their businesses to SME level. MADE has been successful in identifying and supporting several growth-oriented women entrepreneurs to become owners of SSPE's in their own mills, and this presents

a key step forward to challenging stereotypes and expectations around where women can and should engage economically. However, whilst the vast majority of women continue to face persistent inequalities in resource ownership within the chain, such examples are anomalous, with WEE remaining as a success story on an individualized level, as opposed to a structural one.

In the second case, the structural inequalities that women face as determined by gender norms that play-out in the private sphere are also difficult to address simply with an income increase approach. Lack of control over those incomes and persistent inequality in decision-making in the household can arguably nullify gains; after all, how much progress do can one gain from earning more money if a person does not retain the right to spend it as they choose? More pointedly, this micro-level experience of diminished power within household norms tends to be mirrored in the more macro level institutions that facilitate economic activity, such as in the markets, making the achievement of WEE a many layered endeavor that goes beyond earnings.

Two case studies documented here – the GTG and engagement with QBWA – are both testimonies to how MADE added layers within their programming to address issues of voice, choice and control. In the case of the GTG, the initiative itself understood the importance of creating a space where women can engage collectively on the key issues that challenge them economically. The capacity building model within the GTG was also instrumental in providing greater economic opportunities. More critically, it provided a platform, which included men, for women to find solutions as a group, and to start to build the mechanisms for challenging some of the structural inequalities they are facing. In the case of QBWA, the decision to engage through an already established women's group was critical to not only accessing more women but doing so on terms that were determined by the women themselves. As a business women's association, QBWA's experience in addressing gendered challenges meant that an intervention brought in by MADE would also benefit

from the additional layers needed to try and facilitate WEE beyond the one-dimensional indicator of income increase.

## Women-Centred Critical Lessons Going Forward Towards Genuine Structural Change

The absolute success of the case studies in terms of WEE is hard to fully gage without a WEE measurement framework that goes beyond that solitary income indicator. However, in the compilation of these case studies there has been an illumination of where successes have occurred for MADE in terms of its measurable impact (income increase), and where market systems programmes can improve their programming by including aspects that address agency in their logframes. These limitations are important to acknowledge and interrogate going forward – either for MADE or any other market systems programme – where women's rights and WEE are concerned.

The case studies have also demonstrated – in the case of the GTG and QBWA in particular – what is possible if the programme is willing to go outside of its more traditional remit. At the very least, they highlight the importance of an agency's lens on the issues that women face within the economy. With social protection mechanisms largely absent in Nigeria to cater for the gendered needs of women in a similar manner to what women in much of the global north have become accustomed as their own lives have improved, it is important that global northern funded programmes be critically appraised for seeking to foster economic growth without similar recognition of the need for such protections on the global south. This is important if double standards are to be avoided. For women's roles to be demonstrably improved, and especially if the aim is for it to also be sustainable and genuinely resilient to patriarchal regressions on the back of market fluctuations, more commitment both in terms of investment to social and economic empowerment policy and programming is needed in line with state-based responsibilities and private sector accountability.

