



**MARKET
DEVELOPMENT
IN THE NIGER DELTA**

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TOOLS FOR INCREASING GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN MARKET SYSTEMS-LED PROGRAMMES

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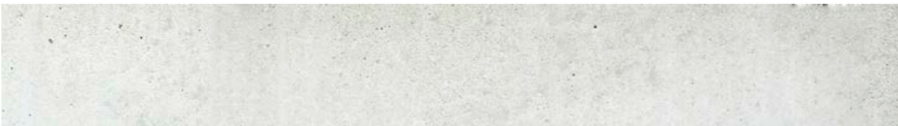
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ACRONYM

A2F	Access to Finance
BBGs	Bulk Buyer Groups
BMO	Business Membership Organisation
CPDS	Cassava Product Development Specialist
DFID	Department for International Development
ESIP	Edo State Investment Programme
FMCGs	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
GBA	Gender-Based Analysis
GTG	Gender Talk Guide
HKI	Helen Keller International
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
KM	Knowledge Management
M4P	Markets for the poor
MADE	Market Development Programme in the Niger Delta
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRM	Monitoring and Results Measurement
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIND	Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta
QBWA	Quintessential Business Women's Association
SME	Small Medium Enterprises
SPRING	Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations
SSPE	Small Scale Processing Equipment
TAG	Technology Adoption Grant
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This 'lessons learned' document seeks to encapsulate the hopes for the future, the concerns of the present and the experiences of the past, to broaden the worthy efforts of both the MADE I & II interventions on a larger scale that the Niger Delta region requires. Recommendations discussed in depth at the conclusion of this document will ideally serve as contextual information and for successful future initiatives become part of the structured architecture of projects.

The purpose of the Market Development Programme (MADE) in the Niger Delta which began implementation in 2013 -2018 (MADE I) and then from 2018 – 2020 (MADE II) was to improve market access for poor producers, increase economic activities and trade and raise incomes of poor men and women, by generating pro-poor and inclusive economic growth in the non-oil sectors of the Niger Delta Region.

Over the year's research has shown that both women and men experience market systems differently, and their particular constraints and opportunities can be determined by gender. With these gender-based variations in mind, M4P interventions that work to realign market actors' incentives, behaviors and functions can make markets operate more efficiently. In contrast, interventions that do not consider gender differentials are missing opportunities to make markets work for poor women and men alike. Increasing women's access to capital skills, access to markets and productive resources and their organization, such as Quintessential Business Women's Association (QBWA) to use these tools can also increase the competitiveness of partners in the private sector.

This led to gender mainstreaming being introduced into the programme a year after inception and despite the possibilities of the programme being disrupted at this early stage the team realized that the potential benefits would outweigh any disruption that might arise. It was imperative that rather than include gender as an add-on a gender mainstreaming strategy be developed that was part of the MADE strategy, ensuring that all issues of gender would be tackled in a balanced and well-thought approach.

After five years of implementation of both phase I and II of the programme The gender mainstreaming and WEE initiatives in specific sectors has demonstrated that a market-driven approach is conceivable and that the poor, especially women if given the right conditions and support can create an inclusive market in which they have access to sell their products, have access to information, access to infrastructure to enable them to perform better. Furthermore, the lessons learned have provided an insight into how others can improve on what the MADE programme has achieved over the years.

A gender-based analysis of the various interventions identified three key constraints women in the Niger Delta face with regards to economic empowerment issues:

- Underrepresentation of women at functional levels of the agricultural value chains.
- The inequality between women and men in access to productive resources such as land and finance.
- The sociocultural influences on gender roles that influence the ownership of key assets (e.g. processing equipment).

Based on these identified challenges coupled with further research carried out by the programme to assess the level of women and men's involvement across the MADE value chains, the results of the study highlighted the fact that gender involvement cuts across a list of activities in each of the targeted sectors. Furthermore, a more detailed analysis of the data using the **Harvard Framework for Gender Analysis** gave the MADE programme a clearer insight of the gender division of labor in the Niger Delta, highlighting the differences in access to and control of resources and an overall understanding of the social and cultural norms in the region. However, the framework was insufficient in capturing the full context of the constraints that women were facing in the Niger Delta.

The led to the MADE programme combining both the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) framework and the Harvard framework in developing a clearing profile of the gender relations to understand the dynamics undermining equality of women and men. The WEE framework was also used for planning the interventions to ensure the interventions are supporting empowerment based on the five levels of equality with men (control, participation, access, welfare, conscientisation). These approaches assisted the programme in developing a gender mainstreaming strategy that the programme is now utilizing.

The MADE Gender Mainstreaming and WEE strategy is a comprehensive approach which pertains to all activities related to the development and human rights and ensures that both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from these in the Niger Delta. The ultimate goal of *gender mainstreaming* is to achieve *gender equality*, hence the MADE Gender Mainstreaming and WEE Strategy has been developed to facilitate the integration of gender equality in the design, planning and execution of all its intervention in the Niger Delta.

The gender mainstreaming and WEE strategy addressed three key issues, namely:

- 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;
- Socio-cultural influences on gender roles that influence the ownership of processing machines in the value chains.

Amongst the lessons learned that have emerged during the implementation cycle of the programme. Include the following:

- **The development of a framework for gender mainstreaming and ensuring its integration at the onset is critical.**
- ***To ensure women inclusion, engage competent women-focused organisations and business membership organisations as they can drive women's effective participation in programme interventions from the onset.***
- ***It is critical to address socio-cultural barriers to women's economic empowerment through the use of tools such as the Gender Talk Group (GTG).***
- ***Training and raising the level of awareness through activities such as gender orientation for staff and partners is crucial.***

Conclusion

In its broadest and most general form, the MADE gender mainstreaming and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) strategies are relatively straightforward. Yet, experience has shown that gender mainstreaming is often difficult to implement in specific circumstances, such as the Niger Delta region. However, a clear lesson from experience over the past 5yrs has shown that gender mainstreaming cannot be achieved without explicit institutional commitment to the strategy and systematic efforts to implement it. This requires the identification of gender perspectives in all sectors and issues covered by the programme of MADE, as well as the identification of entry-points in the great variety of activities undertaken. Utilizing these entry-points to bring greater attention to the gender perspectives identified requires different strategies, as the paper has attempted to illustrate in a limited number of specific contexts. Finally, in following these processes it can be said that the programme has shown significant progress in getting a higher percentage of female beneficiaries through the utilization of innovative approaches which have ensured gender and social inclusion becomes widespread within the programme.



1. INTRODUCTION

MARKET Development for the Niger Delta (MADE) is a UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded development programme, that uses the 'making markets work for the poor' (M4P) approach to generate pro-poor and inclusive economic growth in the non-oil sectors of the Niger Delta Region. The programme aims to improve market access for poor producers, increase economic activity and trade, as well as raise incomes of poor men and women. MADE I (September 2013 – February 2018) surpassed its target in achieving a 15% income increase for 150,000 people in the Niger Delta area across five value chains: Agricultural Input, Cassava, Palm Oil, Poultry and Fisheries. Building on the success of MADE I, DFID approved a costed extension for additional two years (March 2018 – February 2020) with additional target of 155,000 smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs experiencing increased incomes.

It is expected that 30,000 of those with increased incomes will be poor low-skilled youths and women from Edo State that are susceptible to human trafficking. The programme is promoting alternative sources of income that can deter youth and women from attempting a risky migration that may result in them becoming victims of human trafficking. The second phase of the programme is focusing on increasing its impact on the four states with the greatest challenge to stability in the Niger Delta, namely Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States as well as Edo.

Among the 31 million people in the Niger Delta, women face several challenges (social, economic, cultural and political) that inhibit their full involvement in economic activities, thereby reinforcing gender inequality and perpetuating the cycle of poverty in the region. In spite of the challenges women in the Niger Delta are faced with, they play such vital roles in the economy of the region- primarily as caregivers, farmers, farmworkers, and are involved in food production, food processing and marketing. This makes them critical to the welfare of their households and communities where they belong.

This is an indication that both women and men experience market systems differently, and gender can define their unique constraints and opportunities. With these gender-based differences in mind, the initial MADE's programme intervention strategic approach of employing market systems development aimed at realigning market participants' expectations, attitudes and functions in ensuring that markets operate more efficiently. It also operated under the guise that policies that do not recognize gender differentials are losing opportunities to make markets work for disadvantaged men and women alike. It is clear that by Increasing women's access to capital and their organization, such as QBWA to use these services can also increase the competitiveness of partners in the private sector. An example of this has been the partnership with QBWA which began in 2017, MADE managed to increase women representation to 13,500 women across the various interventions by the end of MADE I in 2018. Furthermore, women in the region have also benefited from improved access to productive resources through technology adoption grants (TAGs) which enabled 48 women to purchase improved fish smoking kilns and small-scale processing equipment. Besides, access to production loans improved sales of poultry and other economic opportunities for women. See Box I

Hence MADE's work to integrate women's economic empowerment (WEE) into its M4P approach so women not only have increased access to income and assets but also control/agency – choice and decision making over them¹. The programme's WEE activities are facilitated through Market-based approaches (adapting women favourable business models), as well as the MADE Gender Talk Group – (GTG) aimed at influencing existing norms and institutions limiting women from taking advantage of the opportunities presented to them by the MADE programme.

¹ Golla, A et al Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators

Due to the complexity of the peculiarity of gender issues in the Niger Delta, it took the combination of the Harvard and WEE frameworks to sufficiently capture data. The result of which was the development of an enhanced framework that articulates profiling of gender relations to understand the dynamics undermining equality of women and men. The WEE framework has also been used for planning the interventions to ensure the interventions are supporting empowerment based on the five levels of equality with men (control, participation, access, welfare, conscientisation). The creation of these innovative tools has assisted the programme in developing a gender mainstreaming strategy that the programme is now utilizing.

1.1 Background

The Market Development in the Niger Delta (MADE) programme uses a market systems approach to generate wealth creation and employment in the Niger Delta's non-oil economy. MADE supports the palm oil, poultry, fisheries, cassava, and agricultural inputs. In its second phase (March 2018-February 2020), MADE has a special focus on supporting investment and growth in sectors considered 'aspirational' and attractive to potential victims of trafficking, and thus reduce drivers of emigration through the Edo State Investment Programme (ESIP). MADE has therefore expanded its interventions in the areas of ICT, hospitality and creative industries, which were chosen as alternatives to individuals who might be attracted to human traffickers' offers.

The outcome of the initial phase of the programme (MADE I) especially around cross-cutting issues such as gender have been encouraging, two key issues have been identified during this period:

1. There has been a shift in the behavioural change of lead firms and service providers. For instance, as a result of the intervention lead, firms began to see the benefits of engaging more women as viable market actors. For example, input companies began to focus their product formulation and distribution for crops dominated by women such as vegetables.
2. Most importantly there has been indications of Improved position of women: The programme directly contributed to the improvement of the position of women in the different value chains through its intervention. For example, 40 women became micro retailers of inputs. In addition, more women began playing more strategic roles such as service providers (e.g. demo facilitators and vaccinators), entrepreneurs (e.g. vaccine distributors and "mother units" – a term for intermediaries between livestock breeding companies and poultry keepers).

The purpose of this paper, however, is to outline the key learnings from both the implementation of MADE I & II on essential tools for increasing gender and social inclusion in market systems led programmes. The intention here is to share the programme's practical experiences of the programme's gender mainstreaming and WEE activities, facilitated through Market based approaches (adapting women favorable business models), as well as the Gender Talk Group (GTG) – a platform designed for addressing socio-cultural constraints that limit women from taking advantage of WEE opportunities available in intervention value chains.

In particular, the paper will summarize the key learnings on the MADE gender mainstreaming, social inclusion and WEE strategy, as well as through new innovative approaches such as the Gender Talk Group (GTG) identify areas of success and failures if any. This paper does not purport to be a definitive guide, but it highlights and points to what worked for the MADE programme that could be replicated by other agricultural markets system led donor programmes.

It is intended that MADE's experiences based on this paper will be found useful to the development sector. Also, it is intended that MADE's experiences will be replicated and improved upon by other agricultural markets system led donor programmes in the Niger Delta region and beyond.

2 GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES

The MADE programme which began in September 2014 had looked at assisting women by ensuring its target 50% women representation of the 155,000 poor farmers had to be women through the selected value chains (are agricultural inputs, cassava, fisheries (wild capture and aquaculture), palm oil, and small scale poultry

value chains). The programme had already had a number of significant and ambitious gender targets from the start. For instance, the programme had an aggregate target of increasing the incomes of 152,500 during the lifetime of the programme. Implemented in two-phases from September 2014 to February 2020 (MADE I & II). This represented 50% of the overall target of the programme during each phase. Hence achieving these target meant that the programme needed to have a robust strategy for ensuring effective involvement of women so they could actively benefit from value chain activities the programme is promoting through private sector development.

To meet these set targets, a gender strategy was developed in Year 2 of MADE I (April 2015 – March 2016) to guide the programme implementation and was revised in the second phase (MADE II) taking into consideration ESIP's primary focus of improving livelihoods of potential victims of human trafficking, particularly women and girls as a means of deterring them from irregular migration that predisposes them to the risk of being trafficked.

The development of the gender mainstreaming strategy was based on the Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) of the value chains that included a component of poverty assessment with technical support from Women in Social Development (WISE) Development. A gender review of the interventions deepened the analysis and provided recommendations for strengthening the programme's gender mainstreaming and women economic empowerment (WEE) strategy. Amongst the recommendations that emerged were the need for strengthening of engagements with women groups, and WEE training for intervention teams and partners, further strengthen gender/WEE programming of the interventions, among others. Three key generic issues were identified as follows:

- 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;
- Socio-cultural influences on gender roles that influence the ownership of processing machines in the value chains.

The programme addresses the three major barriers above using a two-prong approach, namely:

- **Gender mainstreaming** – taking into account gender issues across the entire project
- **Women's economic empowerment** - prioritising interventions with the most potential to empower women economically in a sustainable manner.

Gender Mainstreaming Strategies

MADE Nigeria's Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Strategy is a guide for the programme for delivering on the mandate of increasing incomes and job opportunities for poor women within rural and agricultural markets holistically and sustainably. It is also a commitment from the programme to mainstream WEE approaches across all interventions and where necessary, target women directly to unlock their potential. Finally, it is a commitment by the MADE Nigeria team to develop capacity and skills to apply a gender lens in all interventions to identify entry points for WEE.

The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy is focused around three pillars:

1. Pillar I. Gender Mainstreaming. Gender equality is integrated throughout team management, processes and systems, including support for WEE skills and knowledge development, clear leadership at all levels to drive the WEE approach, business processes that monitor and enhance gender equality and good management practice,
2. Pillar II. Gender equality in interventions. Intervention design and implementation to increase women's participation in and benefit from rural market systems, with an approach that increases women's and their control/decision-making capacity over their income and economic assets.
3. Pillar III. Monitoring and Evaluation MADE Nigeria monitoring and evaluation provides a rigorous assessment of sustainable changes in women's economic empowerment.

As a measure for increasing women participation in the various value chains, the following activities were carried out: The gender mainstreaming activities included the following:



- a) The development and implementation of gender mainstreaming for all MADE programme staff and partners in the form of induction courses for all new staff and partners. The WISE Development supported the programme with capacity building and advocacy trainings, especially on improving gender mainstreaming for staff and partners which comprised of (20 MADE staff, 15 media house executives, 60 partners in Cassava, Fisheries, access to finance (A2F) & Household Poultry value chains). This initiative has led to both staff and partners becoming more gender-aware and sensitive in programme implementation in regards to developing gender mainstreaming strategies. However, this momentum must be sustained regularly, thereby reinforcing issues of gender across the board.

The following examples show how gender mainstreaming was applied in specific value chains:

- Work was undertaken to identify existing women's cooperative groups in the palm oil, poultry, fisheries and cassava value chains in Cross River State. As a result of these Intervention Managers (IMs) were able to take steps to ensure that these groups were integrated into their activity plans.
 - In the palm oil, value chain targeted support was provided to women's cooperatives in Edo State where members were sensitized on the cost and time-saving benefits of palm oil processing machines. As a result, women were encouraged to indicate their interest in owning improved harvesting and processing technology.
 - In the fisheries value chain, and the cross-cutting access to finance workstream, MADE collaborated with ZAL Limited (an enterprise development facilitator and integrated farm owner) in the identification and targeting of women's cooperative groups in Bayelsa and Cross Rivers State.
 - Gender analysis and value propositions for new interventions for women economic empowerment (WEE) programmes such as vegetable, plantain and micro retailing interventions were also developed.
 - GBA across both market development and ESIP was conducted and IMs are implementing sector-specific policies for gender and inclusion.
- b) Setting gender targets/quota for outreach to women with partners upfront as well as developing a routine review of cost-share agreements and milestone targets with technical staff; This was achieved by supporting the private sector partners to be more sensitive to women's situation and their business needs, partner agreements and MOUs were reviewed from a gender-lens and suggestions such a gender ratio for micro-retailers and distributors of agricultural inputs were provided. Due to these initiatives, CANDEL set up demos for vegetable women in Bayelsa and Rivers (two frontline states), and this helped to increase the proportion of women reached from 42% at end of Year 2 to the current 47% (and reaching 61,820 women out of the target of 75,000).
- c) Management structure - to improve organisational efficiency and output, the gender unit was placed alongside Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM), ensuring that the MRM Team addresses gender issues head-on, especially in the development of survey tools and in the reporting of findings/programme results. This has resulted in the creation of relevant data and information on gender mainstreaming initiatives and WEE in the region.
- d) Development of sector-specific gender policies – as part of technical support, WISE Development in MADE I developed some sector-specific policies that guided programme delivery. A revision of the policies was carried out in MADE II for each of the value chains, addressing gender issues implicated in each sector including the ESIP component of the programme.
- e) **Partnership with women business membership organizations to increase women's participation in the programme interventions.** This approach has shown that it can reach more women than their male counterparts. MADE has engaged with women BMOs (particularly Quintessential Business Women Association) as an opportunity for mobilizing their members for participation in the interventions. It is expected that through the engagement of QBWA and other BMOs, MADE will achieve a minimum of 50% representation among the programme beneficiaries.

The programme's engagement with women business membership organizations (BMOs) within the Niger Delta region contributed significantly to increased participation of women in interventions. This is evident in the programme's partnership in Year3, of the first phase (2016) with Quintessential Business Women Association (QBWA), a BMO to support women's mobilisation for participation in the different market development interventions. Once QBWA began engagement with MADE I, the programme experienced a surge in outreach to women in almost all interventions/sectors. For example, there was a significant increase throughout the final year of implementation (April 2017 to

February 2018). The programme also observed a reversal of the trend in the proportion of women reached in the palm oil and agricultural inputs sectors that were usually dominated by men before engagement with QBWA. It also reversed the correlation between outreach to women and those in four frontline states. Before April 2017, achievement against gender outreach targets and those in frontline states was almost parallel, but the gap began widening after engagement of QBWA. This strategic partnership has been further sustained with the inclusion of the ESIP component which has led to an increased number of participation of women and is ensuring that impact target of 50% women with increased income in MADE II is achieved.

Box 1: Boosting outreach and livelihood for women in the Niger Delta through partnership with women's associations

Market Development for the Niger Delta (MADE) programme, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) understands that although most women are willing to support their families and communities, they are often not given the opportunity they need to participate economically. MADE, therefore, is working with Quintessential Business Women Association (QBWA), a social business enterprise and pressure group that focuses on the development of solid minerals and agricultural value chains for women's social-economic empowerment, to reach 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 sectors.

MADE reported in 2017, that working with QBWA was responsible for diminishing its gap of gender outreach targets in April 2017. At the time, the programme experienced a surge in the number of women participations in almost all interventions when QBWA helped to mobilise about 13,500 women to demonstration activities by lead firms in all the sectors from its 1st to 4th Quarter of the programme's Year 4. Also achieved, was a sale of 1,268 Noiler breed birds by poultry farmers (99 women and 21 men) mobilised by QBWA in Imo State. Also, 28 technology adoption grant (TAG) supported fish smoking kilns which were sold to farmers (including two bought by men), and 22 TAG supported small scale processing equipment bought by women who were mobilised by QBWA.

"Before engagement with MADE, we focused on subsistence farming, and women's lots in the Niger Delta was far more difficult. But now, there is a more strategic shift in the way we address women's challenges, our understanding of processing, training, and value addition. In the past two years, MADE trained our State Monitoring & Evaluation Officers; they stepped down the training to other women and corporative groups, farmers and organisations such as NAgro, and encouraged them to become trainers. About 1000 youths have benefitted from these pieces of training", said Mrs Shimite Bello, National President QBWA.

Major benefits for the women have been in the areas of training, processing and off-taking. Most of these benefiting women have learned value-adding initiatives such as smoking fish, spicing, packaging and marketing- not to open markets, instead, they approach the supermarkets, and their incomes are increasing. Grants provided by MADE have empowered its recipients to start up sustainable businesses. "We have been taught to be prudent, better farmers, exposed to good agronomic practices, and understand the negative impacts of chemical fertilizers," says Mrs Iyabode Lawal.

- f) **Engagement of women-owned SMEs:** The programme also collaborated with women-owned SMEs in the cassava sector as experience shows that they tend to reach more women than their male counterparts. The programme supported them out-grower schemes and this contributed to the achievement of the gender target. At end of MADE I, partner cassava SME processors owned by women constituted 60% of those engaged.
- g) **Advocacy for improving the position of women:** The programme stepped up its advocacy for improving the position of women in the different sectors. Such roles include service providers such as demo facilitators, micro-retailers of agricultural inputs, vaccine distributors, vaccinators of birds, "mother units" (i.e. intermediaries between livestock breeding companies and poultry keepers), etc. Through the advocacy effort, a potential female micro-retailer of agricultural inputs was identified and linked with Syngenta sales representative who is running one of the demos in Ondo State. This relationship-building has the potential to increase women's participation in demos and adoption of agricultural inputs.

The second approach to addressing the generic constraints above is through Women's economic empowerment (WEE). This initiative is the process of enhancing women with the ability to advance and succeed economically. It is also the process of empowering them through the opportunities to access power (control and share) and

agency (choice) to act on economic decisions. Women's economic empowerment can be achieved through advancing **resources** and transforming **norms/institutions**.

The WEE activities include the following:

- a) Access to stems of Vitamin A fortified cassava that women could use for pastry production. Apart from piloting distribution of stems, women learned how to make pastries at least cost; As a means of increasing women's access to resources through the introduction of other work options/inputs, cassava SME processors in partnering with Harvest Plus introduced the pro-Vitamin A cassava variety to women involved in confectionaries and piloted in Akwa Ibom, Abia, and the Rivers States. The SMEs began a seed multiplication scheme in addition to the distribution of stems to women farmers. In the next harvest season (June to September 2017), the cassava would have matured for harvest and this will increase access to the stems, and this will drive widespread adoption of the variety. Pro-Vitamin A is required inputs for processing of flour used in the production of bread and other pastries. During the year, Harvest Plus trained seven cassava product development specialists (CPDS) who will train other women on how to use vitamin A cassava flour in pastry making and distribution.

Besides, partner NGOs continued facilitating the MADE Talk Group, a gender hub designed to increase women's agency – voice, choice and control. The gender hub also addresses the non-market barriers – socio-cultural norms - to women's economic empowerment utilising a well-developed discussion guide targeted at women, men and traditional gatekeepers of socio-cultural norms. More than 2000 farmers (56% women representation) in the value chains in Cross River, Imo, Ondo and Rivers States participated in the gender hub activities.

- b) Access to Noiler breed of birds, which is a crossbreed between local chickens and broiler. The bird type can be raised at the backyard within homestead and in semi-scavenging condition, implying reduced production cost for women;
- c) Distribution and micro-retailing of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) by women retailers clustered into bulk buyer groups (BBGs) in Edo and the Northern Delta States through an online order Application (PayBayanna);
- d) Findings from a household dietary diversity survey MADE conducted in February, showed that:
 - Consumption of dairy products, eggs and grains are significantly low in four states, except Rivers State.
 - Consumption of root tubers and dark green leafy vegetables is high across the five States (Edo, Imo, Cross River, Ondo, and Rivers);
 - High knowledge differentials still exist between women and men in the communities.
- e) Advocacy about the need for establishing good agronomic practice demos targeting women growing vegetables. Hence, CANDEL, one of the agricultural input companies set up demos for vegetable women in Bayelsa and Rivers (two frontline states), and this helped to increase the proportion of women reached.
- f) **Gender Hub – for increasing women's agency, The Gender Talk Group (GTG)** was designed as a tool for addressing socio-cultural barriers to women's economic empowerment. It contributes to not just increasing women's participation but also changing their position from users (patronage of their male counterparts) to owners of productive resources (improved processing technologies and land). The preliminary poverty and gender assessment (2014) of the MADE programme identified that access and control over land are determined by gender and seniority. The report further states that land ownership and inheritance affect women farmers across the Niger Delta except the 'efiks' in Cross River State. Women farmers are generally accorded user rights which is automatically lost on marriage (family land) or divorce (husband's land) as opposed to ownership and control rights of men.

Partner NGOs have continued facilitation of the Gender Talk Group, utilising a well-developed discussion guide targeted at women, men and traditional gatekeepers of socio-cultural norms/institutions. More than 2000 farmers (56% women representation) in the value chains in Cross River, Imo, Ondo and Rivers States participated in the GTG activities. Furthermore, GTG activities influenced two women in Imo State to adopt improved oil processing technologies – the small scale processing equipment(SSPE) through the technology adoption grant (TAG) facility.

External networking and partnership Participation in the DFID WEE Gender Programmes meetings has led to shared learning and exchanges of ideas, strategies and documentations around WEE approaches and results measurement. For example, MADE in collaboration with Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) and USAID MARKETS II organised events to mark the International Women's Day 2017 held in Benin. The event was an opportunity to showcase women role-models in agribusiness who have adopted MADE piloted technologies and innovations in the use of 'extruders' in the production of vitamin 'A' cassava pastries.

Household nutrition - as a transformative approach, the programme began an initiative aimed at improvement in nutrition as part of her household economic strengthening. This is transformative being that MADE interventions, through Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) initiatives aims at not only increasing the incomes of women but also improving their agency/control in how the income that they generate is spent. This approach assumes that an increase in women's incomes can have a corresponding improvement in the household dietary diversity (i.e. the range of foods and protein intake). Whereas this may be the case, the programme in MADE ii a nutrition baseline on the assessment of dietary diversity and intra-house gender relations amongst programme beneficiaries in five states of the Niger Delta, namely Edo, Imo Cross River, Ondo and Rivers. These states were identified based on agro-ecology and ethnic affinity for the study.

The purpose of the study was for the programme to:

- Learn about the different diets and nutrition sources of people in the Niger Delta communities, to better understand what options people within the area have to improve their nutrition; and
- Gain an understanding of whether participation in the programme and outputs attributable to the interventions are leading to meaningful changes in intra-household gender relations and other positive changes in the lives of women.

The survey outcome forms the programme's nutrition baseline situation which will later be compared with findings from the summative assessment to determine the programme's impact on household nutrition. The summative assessment will be conducted towards the end of programme by December 2019.

Findings of the study indicates that beneficiaries' households' dietary intake lacks the appropriate combination of food groups based on the following consumption patterns seen across the states of study:

- Monotonous traditional food consumption pattern - 80% root and tuber foods as well as green leafy vegetables;
- Significantly low intake of eggs, dairy, and grains (below 40 %) in four States except for Rivers.

This points to the fact that the production of certain foods in high quantities alone is not enough to meet household food security; likewise, raised income alone does not guarantee a change in diet. Therefore, the programme is promoting good nutrition among programme beneficiaries to ensure behaviour change resulting in improved dietary intake/nutrition and ultimately health status of households attributable to the MADE programme. The programme's nutrition intervention is enjoying technical support from Helen Keller International (HKI) in the form of knowledge management products/IEC materials and capacity building. The IEC products were part of a USAID funded programme called 'Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally' (SPRING) implemented by Helen Keller International. The HKI programme has supported MADE with nutrition IEC materials from the 'Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally'(SPRING) programme as well as capacity building for the gender specialist.

3 LESSONS LEARNED AND ADAPTATIONS

With the programme coming to an end shortly, the programme needed to begin taking stock of all that it had done over the years on activities relating to gender mainstreaming within the MADE programme. One way of effectively doing this was to have a field and desk review of the literature and data and tease out the key lessons

learned that have emerged over the years with a hope that this will dovetail into the upcoming exit strategy and eventually serve as a guide for those who wish to adapt or crowd in into the area of gender equality in the Niger Delta.

The MADE programme carried out a ' lessons learned ' exercise, primarily informed by a realistic impact assessment approach, to obtain reliable evidence to understand the context and underlying mechanism of action and outputs of the markets systems approach. Such reviews are invaluable in guiding the project planning, ensuring a fully informed and supportive programme personnel.

The outcome of which is to share the key lessons learned that have emerged from MADE I & II intervention, in particular on the tools for increasing gender and social inclusion through the making markets work for the poor (M4P) approach in the Niger Delta region.

Lesson 3.1: Developing a framework for gender mainstreaming and WEE initiatives integrating it at a very early stage is critical:

- In order to ensure that the gender mainstreaming strategy be sustainably implemented and enforced. The programme employed a gender mainstreaming expert (WISE Gender Consultants) to come in and develop a strategy. The gender experts ensured expertise guidance and training was provided to staff during the development and implementation of the strategy.
- The gender mainstreaming strategy has led to the review of data collection tools and methods submitted by consultants and ensuring summary statistics are disaggregated by gender as appropriate, review of programme progress reports (quarterly and annual reports) from a gender perspective and the development of gender policy for each value chain, addressing gender issues implicated in each sector, prior to the gender mainstreaming strategy none of these measures was in place.
- Gender orientation for all staff and mainstreaming of gender orientation in the induction course for all new staff as well as setting gender targets/quota for outreach to women with partners upfront have led to the MADE programme to be able to define clearer goals and objectives that are realistically more achievable to attain.
- The programme's measures to achieve the ambitious 50% target for gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) are embedded in the set of gender mainstreaming and WEE activities implemented by MADE.
- With the implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy, the strategic tools have enabled the programme to increase its outreach to women, prior to the introduction of a strategic tool the programme was only able to reach 28%, however with the use of a strategic approach/tools the programme was able to increase its outreach by 50% to women.
- Future projects promoting gender mainstreaming should ensure that a strategic approach is developed alongside with the implementation plan at the very early stages.

Lesson 3.2: To ensure women inclusion, it is critical to engage competent women-focused organisations and Business Membership Organisations (BMOs) as they can drive women's effective participation in programme interventions from the onset.

- Before the introduction of a gender mainstreaming strategy, the use of a women's focused organisation had not been utilised and the process of reaching women was not strategic or focussed and therefore was a process that was laborious and time-consuming, especially in bringing women together to perform its demo.
- With the collaboration with a BMO such as QBWA, this approach provided a platform for faster and more efficient dissemination of information. For instance, the collaboration with Quintessential Business Women's Association (QBWA) enabled MADE to leverage on group membership to ensure "faster dissemination of strategic information, a wider target audience reached and efficient adoption of improved technologies"
- This approach was based on the principle that engaging outstanding women in different sectors can lead to the buy-in of other women, leading to their economic and social empowerment. For the MADE

programme the results of utilizing BMO's contributed to the programme accelerated levels of outreach to women during the course of the programme,

- In the first year of MADE I it was only able to reach out to 28% of its women targets, prior to its collaboration with the MADE programme. However, after its engagement with QBWA, the programme was able to increase outreach levels to over 50% by the end of the programme, the indications from the MADE II programme have shown signs of sustainability and increased percentages of increased earnings amongst women.
- Engagement with QBWA also led to the development of building the capacity of women and increase their understanding of how they can vertically integrate across the value chains. QBWA encouraged their members to pull resources together to buy and own improved processing technologies, this led to a total of 26 technology adoption grants (TAG) accessed by female farmers for purchase of fish smoking kilns, as well as 22 TAGs that supported small scale palm oil processing equipment bought by women that QBWA mobilised.
- **Apart from BMO's** Female market actors such as lead firm representatives, and service providers' e.g. micro retailers, vaccinators, etc. can be targeted as they are also effective at reaching women in these sectors than male actors.
- The importance of engaging women actors helps interventions to achieve women outreach. For example; the engagement of female SME owners in the Cassava value chain was instrumental in the achievement of a large outreach.
- Without the partnership of the BMOs and identification of female market actors, it would have taken the programme more time and resources to achieve the targets it did during the first phase of the programme.

Lesson 3.4: There are critical non-market based barriers that limit women's effective participation and should be addressed for maximum impact:

- The GTG is the MADE gender hub designed to address non-economic constraints that limit women from participating in programme interventions and taking advantage of WEE opportunities in value chains. it also assisted contributes to not just increasing women's participation but also changing their position from users (patronage of their male counterparts) to owners of productive resources (improved processing technologies and land).
- Following GTG discussion sessions, women were usually taken to a demo location. For e.g. two women signed on to buy SSPE's for palm oil extraction in Imo State, 40 women became micro-retailers of agric inputs, and more women are became actively involved in strategic roles like service providers (e.g. demo facilitators and vaccinators), entrepreneurs (e.g. vaccine distributors and "mother units" – a term for intermediaries between livestock breeding companies and poultry keepers).
- Engaging with rural farmers through the GTG is showing some signs of socio-cultural transformation of patriarchal practices limiting women economic empowerment especially with regards to inheritance laws and land ownership by women.

Lesson 3.5: MADE must seek gender advocates/champions in private sector, government's ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).

- Gender awareness-raising plays an important role in informing women and men about gender equality and social inclusion, and the consequences of gender inequality;
- Also, gender awareness-raising contributes to change of attitudes, behaviours and beliefs that reinforce inequalities between women and men;
- Alignment of programmes to those of the State Governments will provide the leverage that is needed as an entry point and the enabling environment for economic growth, especially for women.
- The development of training materials on gender and leadership of women in the Niger Delta is critical and the Niger Delta is a complex environment in relations to gender issues.

Lesson 3.6: Access to Finance is critical (A2F) and is a critical tool in empowering women in the Niger Delta.

- Women still face overwhelming odds at gaining access to finance in the Niger Delta and before the gender intervention the support structures were minimal.



- Women still face overwhelming odds at gaining access to finance in the Niger Delta, and before the gender intervention, the support structures were minimal.
- Lessons from eight agricultural value chains and market development programmes revealed that only **one** of such programmes was able to increase women ownership and control of agricultural assets². Across MADE's value chains, women are found at the machine-users end of the market. To increase the number of women owning oil processing mills, mobile cassava graters, fish smoking kilns.
- The MADE programme addressed this by introducing the MADE technology adoption grants (TAGs). These grants increased the number of women owning improved technologies promoted by the programme; Through the TAGs initiative 48 grants were dispersed and enabled women to purchase improved small-scale processing equipment.
- TAG grants covered 40% of the cost of the equipment with the borrower contributing the remaining 60%).

Lesson 3.7: Building capacity of women-focused groups and BMOs has the potential for empowering individual members of the group:

- It is important to create advocacy strategies, especially those that focus on the need for establishing good agronomic practice demos targeting women growing vegetables.
- Training of QBWA members on the programme's approach, data collection and good agronomic practices(GAP) demos targeting women e.g women growing vegetables (CANDEL - agricultural input company set up demos in Bayelsa and Rivers thereby increasing outreach to women;
- Advocacy led to the improvement in the position of some women from users of services to service providers (demo facilitators, micro-retailers of agri inputs, vaccinators of birds, as well as commercial poultry farmers - Noiler birds "Mother-Units);
- Development of training materials on gender and leadership of women, considering the complex gender dynamics of the Niger Delta region.
- Farming as a business training, particularly modules on costing allowed for farmers or traders to understand how the cost of inputs can be transferred to the consumer. This was demonstrated in the aquaculture and poultry (esp. for the component of the introduction of vaccines) interventions.
- Agribusiness capacity development to be coupled with the introduction of new technology to ensure adoption beyond the programme lifespan: A common barrier to technology adoption is often the price of the inputs and failure to know how to transfer these costs to the consumer.
- Information and capacity development should ensure women are linked with the main market to ensure greater margins: Interventions in the poultry sector demonstrated that women are poultry keepers (subsistence farming) as opposed to poultry farmers (commercial rearing). Men seemed to be linked with a wider array of commercial and retail outlets, including restaurants. While women often aggregated chickens to sell to middlemen who in essence lower the farmers' profit margins.

Lesson 3.8: Advocacy is a powerful tool for influencing women agency and control:

- Female market actors such as lead firm representatives, and service providers' e.g. micro-retailers, vaccinators, SME processors etc., should be targeted as they are very effective in reaching women in these sectors than male actors;
- The importance of engaging women actors helps interventions to achieve women outreach. For example, the engagement of female SME owners in the Cassava value chain was instrumental women owned cassava SME processors constituting 60% of farmers engaged with;
- Partnership with BMOs and identification of female market actors, enabled the programme to achieve gender targets at less time and resources in MADE I
- Advocacy of interventions or activities are critical, for instance, there has been a lot of inaccuracies of information in regards to the rearing of Noiler birds which have in turn hampered the scaling up of Noiler breeding in the Niger Delta. The use of advocacy can help dispel these issues of inaccuracy as they arise.

² See Gender, Assets and Agricultural Development: Lessons from Eight Programmes (IFPRI, 2015)

Lesson 3.9: It is critical to embed activities such as nutritional assessments and other similar activities in gender mainstreaming activities at the planning stage.

- This approach enables the programme to have a wider perspective of the challenges that women are facing and develop tools to mitigate these issues more effectively.
- Issues as the nutritional assessment are critical as they indicate the levels of poverty that women are facing in the environment and it allows the programme to develop strategies to tackle this type of issues.

4. CONCLUSION

This Lessons Learned exercise has brought to light the substantive undertaking of activities by the MADE gender team, in its broadest and most general form, the MADE gender mainstreaming strategy is relatively straightforward. Yet, experience has shown that gender mainstreaming is often difficult to implement in specific circumstances, such as the Niger Delta region. However, a clear lesson from experience over the past 5yrs has shown that gender mainstreaming cannot be achieved without an explicit institutional commitment to the strategy and systematic efforts to implement it. This requires the identification of gender perspectives in all sectors and issues covered by the work programme of MADE, as well as the identification of entry-points in the great variety of activities undertaken. Utilizing these entry-points to bring greater attention to the gender perspectives identified requires different strategies, as the paper has attempted to illustrate in a limited number of specific contexts. Finally, in following these processes it can be said that the programme has shown significant progress in getting a higher percentage of female beneficiaries through a number of efforts as mentioned above.

The focused approach adopted by MADE on gender mainstreaming and WEE strategies has begun to show signs of dividends after an initial slow start with 28% women participation at end of March 2015, the programme achieved 50% outreach to women in the first phase of the programme as well as 49% by the end of year I, MADE II. In addition, the programme contributed to improvement in the position of women in the different value chains. For example, 40 women became micro retailers of inputs. Also, more women began playing more strategic roles such as service providers (e.g. demo facilitators and vaccinators), entrepreneurs (e.g. vaccine distributors and "mother units" – a term for intermediaries)

however, there is still a long way to go before we can begin to see substantial changes in the market environment and a considerable change in the attitudinal changes of the populace. Both men and women still expect things to be done for them rather than they do things for themselves in terms of creating a thriving market that addresses the needs of the poor. The NGO's must be encouraged to engage the private sector independently to stimulate the necessary market conditions that will ensure that the markets thrive.

Access to finance is another critical area that needs to be addressed more sustainably, from the MADE programmes foray into this area, it is quite clear that the commercial banking institutions need to be more flexible, understand the agriculture business better and know the needs of the farmers.

The role of the State governments is also becoming very clear now, and that is to create an enabling environment through the implementation of policy's and regulations that favour smallholder farmers to be able to participate in the market more effectively. The creation of network roads, the eradication of multiple taxations and the encouragement of the private sector to create sustainable engagements with the smallholder farmers is critical.

Finally, there is need for other programmes and the private sector to adapt and crowd-in into the Niger delta to continue the work that has already been done by MADE and PIND to ensure the continuation of all these activities and when they do so, they must address all these issues from a gender perspective so as to ensure that women are not marginalized.

