
Women Friendly Market



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Statement of the Executive Director

Nepal is an agrarian country and women have made significant contributions in this sector. Various statistics evident that out of 65.5 percent of the working population in agriculture, 98 percent are women. Despite this dominance of women in agriculture their contribution has not been effectively recognized. The single key reason for this is lack of respect and undervaluation of women's contribution.

Desire, ability, or power and opportunity are an essential elements for successful execution of any work. Amongst the various factors of empowerment, education, skills as well as leadership opportunities empower people and make them independent. Similarly, labor market, economic policy, legal and policy framework, gender values, social environment play important roles in economic empowerment.

These above mentioned & similar other factors have been lacking in the empowerment of women in Nepal. A large number of women are employed in agriculture production and processing, yet they are not closely linked to the market. As a consequence of this, women have lesser access and control over the market resources. At the same time, there is a lack of women's leadership as well as effective participation in market.

From this perspective, it is strongly evident that women's access to the market is a challenging task. Rural women's contribution has not been given due recognition and they have been considered only as labor in Unpaid Care Work (UCW). One of the key reasons for gender imbalance in the country's economy is due to lack of accurate and proper evaluation of women's economic contribution. Despite this clarity, there have been very few integrated initiatives and programme to empower women & enhance their capacity. In terms of economics, male dominance is very evident in the forefront of value chain suggesting that the market is the domain of men. This is despite the vital role of rural women in production, processing to product readiness for sale in the market.

Women are constrained by the knowledge of market operations, buyers information, market dynamics of buyer & seller, about market demand & supply, product profitability despite being involved in major production work. To overcome this limitations, it is necessary to develop the market mechanism & form a comprehensive framework by addressing & prioritizing issues faced by women. Implementation of these actions can address both the issue of consumer demands as well as the development of market system.

Due to these circumstances, ActionAid Firmly believes that it is important for women to have access and control over of market resources along with their leadership and effective participation. This belief forms the premise for advocating the concept of women-friendly market. I hope, this publication to some extent will help to bring the positive changes to the environment.

Sujeeta Mathema
Executive Director
ActionAid Nepal

Women Friendly Market

Generally, the word "women-friendly market" refers only to the physical structure of the market, where provision of women friendly infrastructures are in place. The concept of women friendly market has a boarder reference in this publication and cannot be limited to a physical infrastructure only. "Women-friendly market" refers to women's access and meaningful participation in the marketplace. This concept refers to women friendly elements in every steps of the value chain from production to consumption including women's access to factors of production, product processing, product commercialization, marketing resources etc. Once every step of value chain becomes women friendly, then only we can claim to have a women friendly marketplace. Therefore, the initiative and concept of making every level of value chain and every stakeholder's thought and practices women friendly is effectively a women friendly market.



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Women Friendly Market Promotion

1

Mapping of potential local products

1.1

To find potential products at the local level



The concept of access to market mainly emphasizes the demand-based production of commodities. However, not all producers can produce all kinds of goods and services. Producers have little knowledge about the conditions and capabilities of the consumer. Therefore, it is important to know what kind of product is suitable for as per condition, environment, resources, and culture of any given location.

It is also important to analyze the year-round production and supply of the products, the food security of the family, burden of unpaid care work and the household workload borne by women. In context of market access, who (women, men) is producing what kind of product should be assessed. Such analysis gives adequate opportunity to the producers to address the demands of the market.

1.2 To analyze production cost and income

The total production cost should be assessed before selling the product. The following points should be taken into consideration while analyzing production cost and income: ;

- Determine which products are economically profitable and which are not
- Identify when and how resources can be used more effectively and take precautionary measure to minimize the production cost.
- Discuss before fixing fair pricing of products.
- When determining the fair price of a product, the calculation of women's labor and time cost should also be inculcated and ensure that they make a profit.



1.3 To analyze power and gender dynamics in production and marketing

On the basis of gender disparities, it is important to analyze & understand who has better access to and control over means of production, marketing resources. There are many activities involved in any production and marketing such as: purchase of agricultural inputs for agricultural production, land preparation, irrigation, intercultural operation, pest management, harvesting, cleaning, processing, packaging, labelling, transportation, quality control, record keeping etc. The following questions need to be asked to examine the level and structure of power.

- Who owns and controls the resources required during production and marketing activity?
- What is the relationship between men and women in relation to production and marketing?
- What is the role of men and women in every step of value chain?



2

Collective discussion on market issues

2.1

To analyze the producers experience on market engagement

To create access to the market, it is essential to understand what product buyers are looking for and why. There are two types of buyers in the market viz; wholesalers, who buy in large quantities and retailers who buy goods for the purpose of re-selling to the general consumer, who in turn buy for their own consumption.

Producers have to sell goods to wholesalers at lower prices while they can fetch higher prices when selling to consumers. But by selling directly to the wholesaler, large quantities can be sold. When analyzing the market, it should analyze both types of buyers and explore which segment to focus on. Similarly, what sort of relationship is to be formed with which category of sellers and buyers also needs to be examined.

2.2

To have discussions with the market representatives about the market conditions.

Selling and distributing to wholesaler and/or selling directly to consumers are two different mediums of market access. Similarly, selling to institutions (school nutrition programs, etc.) and selling to wholesale buyers through intermediaries are other possible marketing mediums.

The producer group should analyze the market system & medium in the market and its relationship with their products. While doing so, the producers have to analyze & examine their current products and potential future products and services they could offer in the market.



3

Expand relation with market

3.1

To understand the value proposition of a products

Why are consumers willing to pay a market price when purchasing any goods or services?

For example:

- Is it because of the nutrition value of the food ?
- Is it because of good packaging or durability?
- Will it help in getting this product to the market and expand the market to other consumers?
- How much will it help in raising the living standard of women in poverty?
- Are women and children exploited while producing these products or not?



A value proposition is a detailed explanation of what factor motivates a buyer to purchase a product. In the past, producers used to fix price with the sole objective of making profit for their contribution and producers & service providers provided products or services for the same reason. Doing so caused harm to people, places, and nature at different levels. In the production process, women and children were exploited with low wages, environment was polluted, pesticides used, land and resources were expropriated without compensation. Apart from this, big buyers controlled the market and use this clout to purchase produces at unfair prices.

Since then, the market conditions have changed to some extent. Increasing access to information and communication has enabled consumers to take interest in the production process, such as where the goods come from and how they are made. This, has led to a reduction in the number of large buyers exploiting the consumers and use of unfair market practices.

3.2

To expand the relationship with the market representatives

Expanding relationships in the market is important. The relationship with the market can be enhanced if the producer can provide the product that the consumer wants rather than the product that the producer has produced. So, producers must understand the needs of the market. In line with this, the price of the product must be fixed. This will help in enhancing the relation with the market and establish the access to the market.

3.3

Analyze the demand and supply of goods in the market and expand relationships with buyers accordingly

The interaction of the producer with the buyers and consumers is deepened, when the producers understand the value propositions of his/her products price. If a producer has a good understanding of his/her value proposition he/she can effectively reach connect with the right buyers and consumers. When a product is tailored to meet the market demand, producers can reach out to new and genuine buyers by production of specific goods and services. Communication with the buyer helps the producer group to test their product as well as establish its value.

Such effective communication can also create demands from new buyers. Based on the information received from the genuine buyers, it is possible to find out which producer to work with.



4

The basis for building a women-friendly market

4.1

To analyze value chains from the point of view of women's rights.

Women's rights issues are also being discussed while doing value chain mapping. Value chain mapping should also consider the opportunities and challenges associated with women. As women contributions is the highest in the agriculture value chain, they should not be left out from the equation. It will be easy to plan and operationalize the effective value chain, once producer and market know all the characters of the value chain, the actors, the products, its marketing aspects, and the areas of improvement.. Likewise, women's workload should be reduced, and their contribution recognized.

4.2

To recognize the role and contribution of women in the value chain.

As discussed in point number 4.1 above, the real situation of women's role in every value chain can also be known. Doing so reveals what kind of gender disparities need to be amended in every step to enhance the efficacy of the value chain. At the same time, identification of women's role, associate problems and possible solutions can also be identified.

4.3

To identify the major challenges for women in the value chain.

As discussed above, by now the risks and challenges of a value chain are identified and particularly the risk and challenges associated with women. For example: How safe is the market for women? How much market information do they have? Are women allowed to go to market from home or not? Is there a women friendly toilet or not? etc. such issues can arise.



5

Analysis of the risks, challenges, and weaknesses in the value chain.

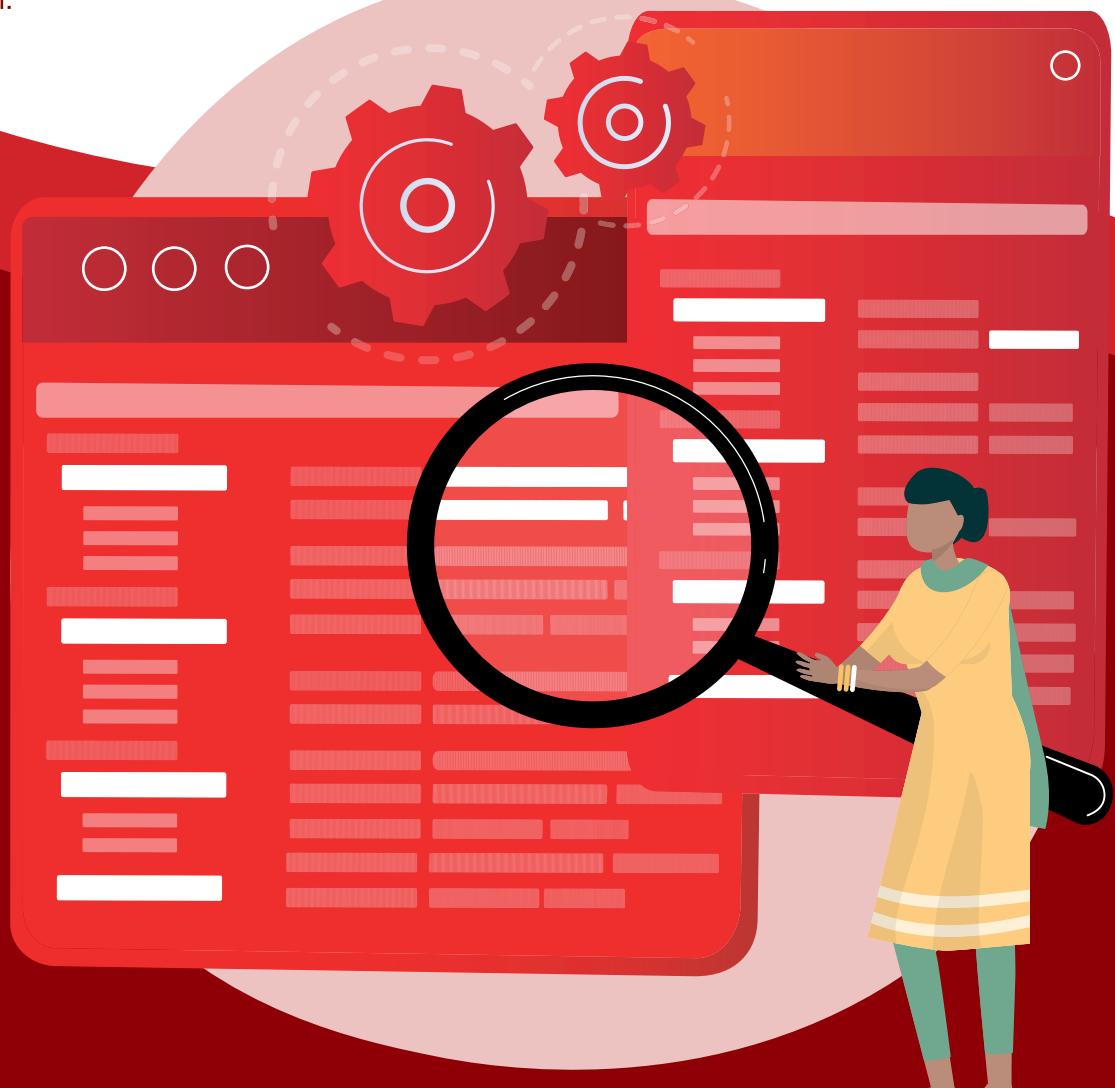
5.1 To analyze income and expenditure

At this stage, the investment needed in every step of the value chain and possible expected benefit is evaluated. By doing this, investor will know whether the investment will yield the expected return or not and which product should be given more importance and priority. Such analysis will also provide information about expected investment and possible measure to reduce such investment. This will also give you market information, information that you lack and how and where to access such information.

5.2

To Identify weaknesses and barriers through the lens of producers

From the producers perspective, the kind of skill, infrastructure, and natural resources one has access can indicate the kind of market & the competition once can face. For example, if the farmer knows how to grow cauliflower but does not know how to protect it from pests and diseases, then this could be the farmer's weakness and thus unable to compete in the market. Similarly, it is difficult for women to carry heavy goods to distances markets. The alternative to this is to use vehicle for transportation which too is not easily accessible. So, to compete in the market place, producers must know their strengths, find out what they lack and possible alternatives & solutions.



5.3

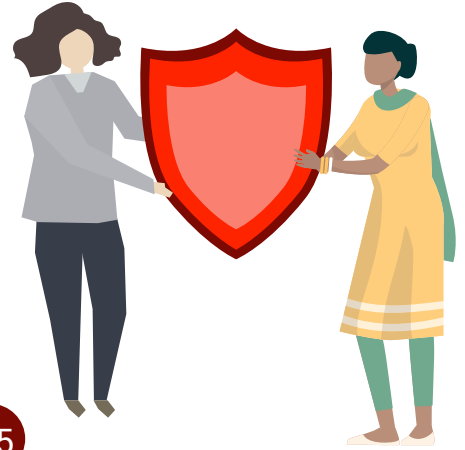
To analyze power based on risks and weakness

In the context of marketplace, power means resources and control over those resources. Those actors who have the control over resources are the powerful players in the marketplace. Here, we will analyze the power and actors. For example, a truck is used for transporting goods to the village, but the truck is empty on its way back. But if an environment can be created wherein the truck owner can carry goods on the way back it can be beneficial for both the parties. By doing this, utilization of resources can be maximized too.

5.4

To Identify enabling and hindering policies and programs & necessary required changes

The policies and regulations that enable a women friendly market has to be studied and assessed. While doing so, it is necessary to determine which policies promote a women friendly market and which policies hinder it. Advocacy and lobbying should be done to amend policy and regulations that hinder it.



5.5

To Analyze whether women are safe in the market or not

It is mandatory to analyze how safe the market is for women. This includes whether the people who come to the market are aware of violence against women, whether there is safe space for women or not, whether there is a toilet or not, whether there is information to report a complaint in case there is any violence against women etc. Such safety and precautionary measures need to be in place in a women friendly market.



Women friendly market construction

6.1 Producers

Small farmers, especially women farmers, micro and small women entrepreneurs, who produce agro-based as well as non-agro-based products can be called producers. When access to the means of production and resources is established for them and to ensure healthy production and market access, it is necessary to run and operationalize effective programmes.

6.3 Market

To establish market access for small women farmers and women micro-entrepreneurs and to make the women friendly marketplace, following structures are to be made ready:

1. Coordinate with the local government to build a marketplace, vegetable collection center as well as a sales outlet. Make safe and t women friendly marketplace with the provision of toilets, drinking water, children's play area, provision to change and dispose sanitary pads and ensure safety of women in the market.
2. To operate a women friendly market, form a management committee under the leadership of women. Cooperative based market promotion can also be done under the leadership of women.
3. Conduct programmes and informative campaigns to keep the market clean and healthy. Also, regularly conduct training and discussion on marketplace management.
4. To establish a system of information and communication on what can be done and what cannot in the marketplace.
5. Creating a working environment in partnership with the private sector for proper management of market waste.
6. To work closely with the local government to develop a market information system.
7. To work in collaboration with the local government for the establishment of storage rooms to keep the agricultural produce and other products safe in the market.

There is a need to build a women-friendly market by doing the following things. The concept is proposed according to the characters of the value chain.

6.2 production and processing

Small farmer women and small women entrepreneurs themselves may engaged in processing of products and other raw materials, various programs should be conducted on the basis of prior study to establish their access to the required skills and resources. Groups can also market themselves by labeling and branding.

8. To the extent possible, orientation to secure digital transactions in the marketplace.
9. To keep a notice board to disseminate information about the reporting mechanism of complaint against violence against women and children.
10. To conduct discussions with the market related traders in regular time interval.

6.4 Local traders, retailers and wholesalers

Develop structures to encourage local traders to sale local products locally. This shortens the value chain and creates an environment for producers and consumers to buy and sell good produce at the reasonable price.

6.5 Consumers

To conduct programs to inform the general consumers about clean, healthy and safe fooding habits in collaboration with the organizations working for the rights and interests of the consumers at the local level. In particularly conduct activities to disseminate & inform on healthy, clean & safe food habits especially to women or kitchen workers and those who regularly buy agricultural produce in the market.

6.4 Other stakeholders

Create necessary environment for building a healthy, clean, and safe marketplace by working closely with all stakeholders at the local level, who are related with the market and the market system. Have the local government play a major role in leading and establishing the women friendly marketplace.

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