

A woman wearing a light blue headwrap and a patterned sleeveless top is standing in a field. She is holding a blue plastic basket filled with yellow and orange tomatoes. The background shows a rural landscape with trees and a cloudy sky.

GOAL

LEARNING BRIEF

INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

STRENGTHENING GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH PRIVATE
SECTOR ENGAGEMENTS IN A MARKET SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

DATE

May 2023

THEMESGESI; Market Systems;
Livelihoods**LOCATION**Karamoja, Acholi, Lango,
Bunyoro and Tooro
regions of Uganda**DONOR**

Mastercard Foundation

PARTNERSPartners applicable to
project/learning brief**INTERVENTION DATES**

2020 - 2025

COST

USD 24 million

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This learning brief outlines how GOAL Uganda and private sector actors (PSAs) collaborate to strengthen gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in the Young Africa Works in Uganda: Markets for Youth programme. The approach has been partly based on the experiences gained in earlier livelihood programmes implemented by GOAL Uganda. This brief explores why gender equality and social inclusion are important for the programme and presents the key lessons learned in this regard. It outlines the learnings specifically in relation to PSAs as well as some broader learnings for livelihoods programming.

**THE YOUNG AFRICA WORKS IN UGANDA:
MARKETS FOR YOUTH PROGRAMME**

GOAL Uganda, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, is implementing the Young Africa Works in Uganda: Markets for Youth programme (hereafter 'Markets for Youth'). This is a market systems development intervention that aims to directly enable 300,000 young rural women and men to access dignified and fulfilling work by 2025 across 18 districts in Karamoja, Acholi, Lango, Bunyoro and Tooro regions of Uganda. 210,000 of them will be young women, 30,000 young refugees, and 15,000 young persons with disabilities. In addition, the programme envisions 600,000 people benefiting indirectly through the multiplier effect of the different interventions. The programme has a total budget of USD 24 million. Key focus areas of the programme are access to finance, access to skills and information, access to agricultural input and output markets, and youth engagement for enhanced youth voice and collective bargaining power as pathways to transition youth into work.

The programme leverages the agriculture sector to create employment opportunities, and its implementation is through PSAs - mainly agricultural input and output companies, formal financial institutions and skilling, business development and ICT services providers, as well as through civil society organisations. GOAL Uganda's support to the private sector under the programme is targeted to strengthen partners' business models to enhance last-mile distribution of products and services and buy-back outputs from farmers. This is in addition to developing youth-friendly products and services to create economic opportunities for young women and men, including refugees, youth with disabilities, and their enterprises at scale.



THE IMPORTANCE OF GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Gender equality and social inclusion are universal human rights issues and, therefore, important goals in and of themselves. They are necessary to accelerate progress towards achieving a wide range of development outcomes, including, for example, those related to economic growth and decent work, poverty reduction, agricultural production, and food security.¹ It is estimated that gender-based discrimination costs USD 12 trillion for the global economy,² with some estimates stating that up to USD 28 trillion could be added to the global annual GDP in 2025 if the global gender gap were to be closed.³

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING, GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI)?

Inclusive Programming is about ensuring that all persons can participate in and benefit from a programme on equal terms, irrespective of their status or background. It typically encompasses the principles of **gender equality**, which refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for girls and boys and women and men,⁴ and the principles of social inclusion. **Social inclusion** is the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for the purposes of this project focusing on people who are disadvantaged on bases such as age, sex, disability, socioeconomic status, and migrations status, through enhancing opportunities, access to and control over resources, voice, and respect for rights.⁵

The programme partners with multiple types of actors to enhance GESI in its approach, including PSAs, civil society organisations, government stakeholders and the young women and men themselves. PSAs are playing a key role in advancing GESI, and many have a growing interest in affecting a positive impact on social inclusion through their work.⁶ Indeed, it has been noted that “*without private-sector engagement, gender equality, which is instrumental to realising the Sustainable Development Goals, will not be achieved.*”⁷ Additionally, not only are such concepts development objectives in their own rights, but enhancing gender equality is “smart economics”, supporting economic efficiency and other development outcomes.⁸ Recognising the social and gender exclusions that are prevalent in access to education, skills, resources, work, and agricultural market systems at large, the Markets for Youth programme seeks to reach 300,000 youth, intentionally targeting young women (70%) and men (30%), of which 10% are refugees and 5% are youth with disabilities. The programme has a dual strategy to promote systemic change:

1. Support and improve the competitiveness of those excluded in the selected markets, and
2. Identify actions for transformational opportunities in potential markets that tend to be segmented, often by gender.

Therefore, working alongside PSAs to strengthen GESI within the programme approach has been fundamental to achieving the objectives of the Markets for Youth programme.



10 STEPS TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Step 1:

Developing a
GESI Strategy

Step 2:

Joint
programming
for GESI

Step 3:

GESI in PSA
Onboarding

Step 4:

Selecting GESI
Champions

Step 5:

PSA Action
Planning for GESI

Step 6:

Cascading GESI
Information

Step 7:

Engaging
in a Gender
Community
of Practice

Step 8:

Supporting
Multi-Stakeholder
Efforts for GESI

Step 9:

Routine
Sensitisation
of Programme
Stakeholders on
GESI

Step 10:

Conducting
Research
on GESI;
Documenting
and Sharing
Learning

LESSONS LEARNED

Through these initial steps of working towards gender equality and social inclusion, several areas of reflection and learning have emerged, as described below. Reflections and learnings specific to PSAs are presented first, followed by reflections that are relevant to the Markets for Youth programme more broadly.

REFLECTIONS ON WORKING WITH PSAS TO STRENGTHEN GESI IN THE MARKETS FOR YOUTH PROGRAMME:

- 1. Understanding the Incentive for PSAs:** While gender equality and social inclusion are critical outcomes in their own right, different types of programme partners, whether PSAs, civil society organisations, international non-governmental organisations, government stakeholders or others, have additional drivers that are important to consider; a key incentive for PSAs is the ability to make a profit. It has been useful to engage with PSAs using relatable business language and concepts, linking the importance and benefits of integrating efforts towards GESI and their work in a way that acknowledges and incorporates their key incentives (for example, exploring how supporting GESI is “smart economics” and both a social and economic imperative). In key informant interviews, all PSAs mentioned that through more intentionally integrating GESI considerations into their work, their client bases have widened, either as users of their service or suppliers of produce.
- 2. A Shared Understanding:** It has been important to establish a shared understanding with PSAs on concepts related to GESI and practical approaches that Markets for Youth employs. This is why the GESI-focused sessions with PSA staff during the co-design of interventions, implementation and indeed the rollout of the Gender Equality & Refugee Inclusion Strategy and the Disability Inclusion Strategy have been critical in moving towards such a shared understanding.
- 3. Leverage What is Already in Place:** Some PSAs already have existing policies in place as well as dedicated staff members identified as Gender Champions, for example. This provides a solid foundation to build upon what is already in place, and such PSAs serve as good “role models” or examples for other PSAs to follow. For instance, one PSA partner updated and strengthened its already existing Gender Policy and developed Gender Inclusion and Disability Inclusion Action Plans as a result of engagement with the programme.
- 4. Whole-of-Organisation Approach:** Integrating and strengthening GESI in the work of private sector actors require a whole-of-organisation approach, from those engaging with clients to human resource departments, finance departments, and more. Private sector management support is critical to drive efforts towards and retain a focus on GESI within a company. Furthermore, it has proven effective for PSAs to have identified GESI Champions across a variety of functions within their organisations. These GESI Champions can then drive awareness and understanding among their colleagues, Markets for Youth participants, and communities more broadly. This has been reinforced through GESI training with 147 GESI Champions from 11 private sector partners who are then equipped to cascade GESI-related information to Youth Champions and beyond.
- 5. GESI-Responsive Budgeting:** GESI-responsive budgeting within private sector partners is essential for ensuring that young women and men, including refugees and those with disabilities, can equitably participate and avail of opportunities in Markets for Youth. This might include identifying where additional resourcing may be required at the outset and being able to budget in a flexible way for potentially unseen costs which arise later. This remains an area of challenge, particularly for those PSAs who may not have previously considered expenditure from a GESI perspective. Under Markets for Youth, PSA partners have been able to utilise GESI-responsive budgeting to accommodate costs relating to language (including sign language) interpretation, use of accessible locations and facilities for programme activities, accompaniment by nannies or childcare for parents of young children, facilitating personal assistants/support persons for those who may require them, and so on.



REFLECTIONS ON STRENGTHENING GESI IN PROGRAMMING MORE BROADLY:

- 1. Collaborate with GESI Specialists:** One valuable approach that the Markets for Youth programme has taken is drawing upon the expertise of GESI specialists. For example, the programme has benefitted from its engagement with Light for the World, an organisation with a focus on disability inclusion. This collaboration has been instrumental in the participatory development of the programme's Disability Inclusion Strategy, whereby 11 PSAs participated in Disability Inclusion Action Planning, helping PSAs to position themselves to enhance disability inclusion in their work strongly.
- 2. GESI Personnel:** Having dedicated personnel for GESI is critical to supporting efforts for GESI in the programme and working with PSAs to achieve this together. For example, GOAL Uganda created a Gender Equality & Social Inclusion Advisor role to deliver support for GESI throughout the Markets for Youth programme. This role provides ongoing engagement with PSAs and other partners and stakeholders, working alongside them to identify and address challenges, opportunities, and barriers related to GESI.
- 3. Adaptive Management for GESI:** Having an adaptive management approach has been important to ensure that Markets for Youth can respond to the preferences, priorities and needs of youth in an inclusive manner. For example, one PSA partner working on agribusiness incubation expanded and adapted their activities to include cuniculture. This was in response to a request from a participant with a physical disability who felt that this activity would be more suitable for their needs and preferences.

LEARNING AND SHARING

Opportunities remain for improving the capturing and sharing of the approaches used, challenges and opportunities faced, and results and learning that PSAs have experienced in integrating GESI in their work. Strengthening how this is captured and documented, alongside case studies and human-interest stories, can help to enhance the exchange of experiences between PSA partners and, indeed, with other actors, supporting further knowledge sharing and learning. One example of this comes from a PSA partner that has begun documenting practices related to GESI through a newly developed Gender Inclusion Magazine in which stories and experiences have been shared.

CONCLUSION

To be inclusive, a market systems development programme needs to work alongside the private sector to integrate gender equality and social inclusion in its approach. This involves understanding the drivers for market actors, ensuring there is a shared understanding between stakeholders on GESI, and leveraging what private sector actors already have in place to strengthen GESI in the programme further. To support this, a whole-of-organisation approach is required, alongside budgeting that is responsive to GESI-related needs. More broadly, collaborating with GESI specialists, appointing dedicated GESI technical roles to support the programme, and ensuring that the programme can be responsive and adaptable in ways that strengthen inclusion have been critical in embedding GESI in the Markets for Youth programme. Working with private sector partners to strengthen GESI in the Markets for Youth programme remains an area of continuous learning, with further opportunities to be explored.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the learnings from our engagement with private sector actors, it is recommended to:

- ensure GESI is integrated from the outset of the programme, from the initial planning and design stage.
- ensure that the approach to GESI is strategic and comprehensive (i.e., clear development of strategic approach and actions, assigned responsibilities, monitoring, rollout, etc.).
- allocate resources to GESI (time, human resources, financial resources, partnering with GESI specialists, etc.).
- support and tailor technical assistance to the private sector partners and “talk” their language and to their ambitions; to understand their incentives and have a shared understanding.
- be flexible and adaptive since GESI remains an area of continuous learning; and
- allow time for partners to comprehend and integrate GESI principles in their work fully. Changing mindsets and behaviours will not happen overnight.

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