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**Understanding the Organizational Approaches of Funders and Project
Implementers to Strengthen Women’s Empowerment through
Agricultural Collectives**

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on approaches for strengthening women’s empowerment that were implemented by project partners involved in the International Food Policy Research (IFPRI)-led Applying New Evidence for Women’s Empowerment (ANEW) project funded by the Walmart Foundation. The study explores the partner organizations’ websites and publications, project materials, and selected staff interviews to better understand how each envisions women’s empowerment and the pathways for supporting it. The four implementing project partners are Grameen Foundation, Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) in India, Root Capital in Mexico, and TechnoServe in Guatemala. Their programs and their organizational approaches vary in whether they primarily focus on women rather than more broadly targeting both women and men and their gender relationships. Some organizations are more “organic” in integrating attention to gender and empowerment into their programs, designing and implementing an approach on a case by case basis. Others are more intentional in establishing organization-wide policies, strategies, and monitoring systems. The organizations also differ in their positions on supporting “economic empowerment” and clear economic benefits such as prioritizing increased income or assets in contrast to those that also seek to actively change social norms and achieve other social dimensions of empowerment that encompass behaviors around decision-making, mobility, and self-confidence. Another variation is in the organizations’ attention to enterprise development and, consequently to entrepreneurship and upgrading, and what aspects of women's empowerment are most critical for achieving those goals. This paper offers implementers and their funders insight into organizational differences in approaches to women’s empowerment. The review demonstrates that both funders and implementers continue to focus on strengthening women’s economic empowerment by increasing women’s incomes and assets, often with good results. However, they often lack clear theories of change or explicit strategies to strengthen other dimensions of women’s empowerment. More nuanced, evidence-based theories of change and targeted actions could strengthen program design to expand and support women’s achievement of empowerment across all its dimensions.

Keywords: women’s economic empowerment, women’s empowerment, gender policies

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ACRONYMS

ANEW	Applying New Evidence for Women’s Empowerment
DGX	Agribusiness Diagnostic
FPO	Farmer Producer Organization
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
GAAP	Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project
GEA	Gender Equity Advisory (GEA) Services
GEG	Gender Equity Grants
GLI	Gender Lens Investing
LEAP	Livelihood Enhancement through Market Access and Women Empowerment
MANDI	Market Access eNabled by Digital Innovation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PRADAN	Professional Assistance for Development Action
SHG	Self Help Group
SMA	Smallholder Market Access Program
TOC	Theory of Change
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WAI	Women in Agriculture Initiative
pro-WEAI+MI	project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index for Market Inclusion
WEAI	Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WEE	Women’s Economic Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

The Applying New Evidence for Women’s Empowerment (ANEW) portfolio project worked with four agricultural projects between 2021 and 2023 to develop market inclusion indicators on aspects of empowerment relevant to different types of agricultural collectives working to effectively link producers with markets. The partner projects included two in India, and one each in Mexico and Guatemala¹ and all work through collectives, specifically farmer producer organizations (FPOs) and cooperatives, which facilitate women’s engagement in market systems. The project goal has been to better understand whether cooperatives, in their efforts to strengthen farmers’ and processors’ links to markets, can not only enhance economic returns but also strengthen women’s empowerment. Implemented by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and its partners with support from the Walmart Foundation,² each project in the ANEW portfolio conducted both a quantitative impact evaluation and a qualitative study. These studies have informed the development of additional women’s empowerment indicators that can be used by collectives working with high-value agricultural commodities. The new indicators are part of the project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index for Market Inclusion (pro-WEAI+MI). They include indicators for use in higher frequency monitoring and evaluation data collection (WEAI M&E) to measure empowerment in activities designed to strengthen market inclusion.

This report is one of multiple products produced under the ANEW project to document the critical and measurable gender-related dimensions of collective-based market-oriented agricultural interventions. ANEW quantitative studies report on indicators measuring men’s and women’s empowerment as reflected in the on-the-ground experiences of project participants, as well as non-participants in control groups. The qualitative studies also investigate the varied meanings of empowerment among these groups as well as document their views on cooperative membership and leadership and their thoughts about changes brought about by their engagement in project activities.

¹ The results of the qualitative studies are reported on in separate reports cited in the discussion of each organization in the text and listed in the references.

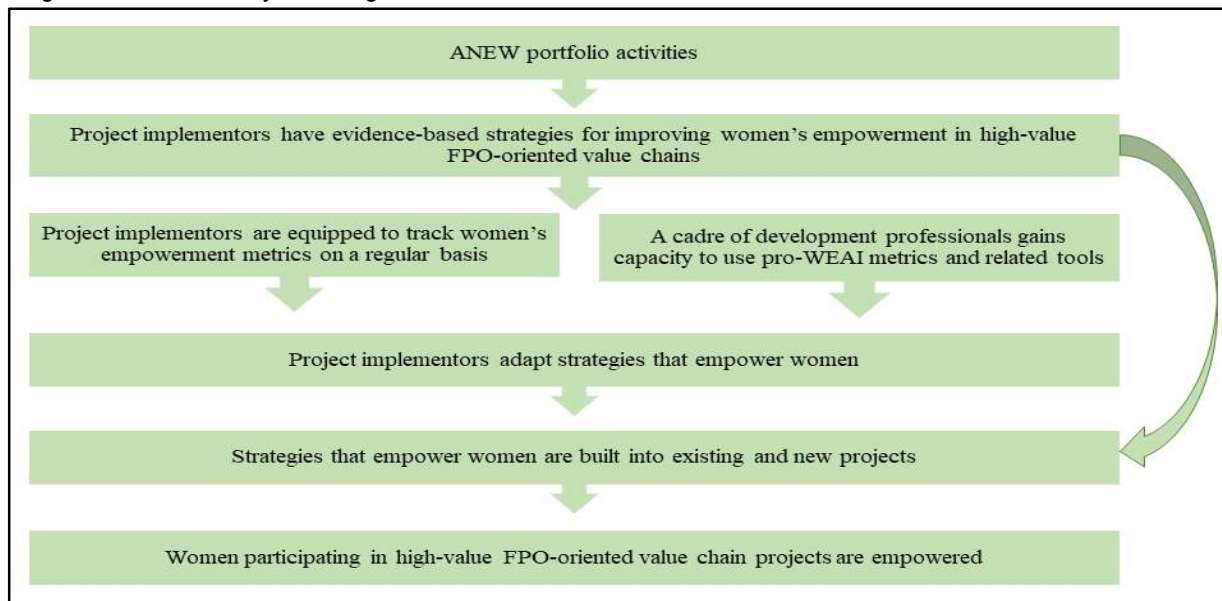
² Grant Number: 64697577

This report offers a different perspective by studying the institutions funding and implementing the projects. The research subjects are the organizations and their projects: including the implementing organizations partnering in ANEW and the Walmart Foundation. It describes how women’s empowerment is conceptualized within those organizations, in their policies and strategies, as well as in other communications and reports. The purpose is to understand the institutions’ approaches to women’s empowerment and their expression at the project level. The report discusses the similarities and differences across the projects and institutions, compared to how women’s empowerment is framed in the WEAI+MI work.

This organizational study was inspired by an earlier IFPRI project, the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project Phase 1 (GAAP1).³ GAAP’s theory of change identified a simple pathway from project research to positive outcomes on women’s assets through the application and dissemination of research results by funding organizations and project implementing institutions.

The ANEW project, and its theory of change (Figure 1) illuminates a more detailed set of steps leading from project implementation to improved project design and implementation. The specific

Figure 2: ANEW Theory of Change



Source: IFPRI (2020)

³ IFPRI jointly implemented GAAP1 with the International Livestock Research Institute with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010-2015). See <https://gaap.ifpri.info/findings>.

mechanisms or steps by which this occurs in the projects are not yet detailed, to allow multiple pathways to be identified. ANEW thus offered an opportunity to investigate the process, as documented in multiple types of project and institutional documents, background literature, and some interviews with staff members of project partners.

Following this introduction, the report discusses the methods used in this study, followed by brief reviews of two topics that relate to the type of projects Walmart Foundation supports in the ANEW portfolio. Both topics inform, to varying degrees, project design and implementation in supporting women's market inclusion. The first topic reviews the concept of empowerment, particularly how women's economic empowerment is distinguished from other dimensions of women's empowerment. The second topic addresses the arguments for and mechanisms used to support FPOs as a vehicle for strengthening women's empowerment. The thematic review section is followed by a description of how the Walmart Foundation and each of the four partner organizations and projects within ANEW reflect these topics in their approaches to strengthening women's engagement in markets through collectives. For each organization, a brief historical background and overview of current program approach(es) is followed by a section on their approaches to empowerment as reflected in their public documents, including any available gender policies or strategies, project reports, as well as interview data. A short review of each ANEW project follows. The discussion section compares the different organizational approaches, and the conclusion offers recommendations for next steps for research and project design.

2. METHODS

This study begins with the premise that clarifying how funders and implementers view the relationships between agricultural interventions and women's empowerment could illuminate practices or policies that inhibit or support project's abilities to achieve women's empowerment. This led to two research questions:

1. How does the Walmart Foundation and each of the project implementing organizations conceptualize and apply to their programs their understanding(s) of women's empowerment?
2. Where are the areas of commonality and difference across the organizations?

This report is not an evaluation or assessment of Walmart Foundation's Market Access Portfolio or of the ANEW portfolio of projects. It is an exploration of how each organization expresses its approach to women's empowerment and to understand how that approach influences project implementation. The study, described in this report, focuses on the institutions and institutional context of the ANEW projects, and is referred to here as "organizational research." It was originally intended to be formative research for other quantitative and qualitative studies. However, delays in startup meant this study paralleled the other qualitative research studies timeline. The process involved carrying out a review of both scholarly articles and practitioner reports, as well as informational materials prepared by and about the organizations, e.g., from websites and annual reports. These materials provided insights into program and project goals and practices and approaches to women's empowerment of each organization and in each of the projects that are part of the ANEW portfolio, as well as the Walmart Foundation. Between 2021 and 2022, interviews were carried out with one or two staff members in executive and technical positions in the four implementing organizations (Grameen, PRADAN, Root Capital, TechnoServe) and one person from the Walmart Foundation. The interviews included questions about how empowerment was understood for the respondent and the organization, whether there was organizational guidance on women's participation in projects and achieving empowerment, experiences of challenges and successes, as well as their expectations around the value of pro-WEAI+MI results for future programming (Annex 1). Informal interviews on similar topics were also held with other staff and advisors involved with the ANEW portfolio. Both

documentary and interview materials were coded and analyzed by identifying common and contrasting themes and categories. Interviewees have not been quoted directly.

This study uses qualitative methods to address the two research questions. The research employs key dimensions of anthropological methods and perspective, presenting in a written report the results of interviews, observation, and a study of materials to understand the meanings of the relevant organizational actors (Yanow, van Hulst, and Ybema 2012). As a member of the IFPRI project team, I also draw on my experiences as a participant in the design of the project, interactions with both IFPRI and project staff at different points during the life of the project including discussions at webinars and workshops, and reflections on the process and my personal knowledge of the field as a gender specialist and a development practitioner. Project-based qualitative studies were carried out by research teams for each project in the ANEW portfolio. These focused on the meaning of empowerment as understood by project participants and a similar group of non-participants.⁴ Earlier qualitative protocols developed for use with the pro-WEAI⁵ were used as a starting point but the ANEW protocols were then refined and adapted to include additional topics and address specific interests of the project partners. These reports, as well as other papers on developing the pro-WEAI+MI also inform later parts of this paper that summarize project activities (see Bhanjdeo 2024; Eissler et al. 2024; Kedia, Gray, and Brown. 2023; Malapit et al. 2019; and Myers and Heckert (forthcoming)).

There is an important limitation to this study. Each program's website and other documentation in project and research documents differs in the types, quantity, and quality of materials they make publicly available, and this report relies heavily on those public descriptions. As much as possible, additional information was sought from the organizations' staff as well as from the scholarly and grey literature to fill or confirm gaps. Nonetheless, the descriptions for some organizations are more robust than for others related to the topics discussed in the report.

⁴ In the case of Root Capital, it was not possible to work with a control group because of logistical and budget issues in the time frame available for the field work.

⁵ <https://weai.ifpri.info/weai-resource-center/guides-and-instruments/>

3. THEMATIC REVIEW

The section below addresses two topics that frame the later discussion on organizational approaches to women's empowerment. While not a comprehensive review, the section "understanding empowerment" is intended to highlight key points about how the concept of empowerment is referenced and applied in agricultural development interventions, distinguishing between a broad definition and the narrower one of "economic empowerment." The second topic summarizes a growing literature studying the use of collectives, particularly FPOs, to both improve producers' market engagement as well as to strengthen women's empowerment.

3.1 Understanding women's empowerment

Empowerment has long been addressed in multiple social science disciplines including economics, anthropology, psychology, and political science, with application to international development emerging in the 1970s and 1980s only becoming institutionalized, to varying degrees, in the 2000s (e.g., Afshar 1998; Kabeer 1999; Calvés 2009; Cornwall 2014; Priya, Venkatesh, and Shukla 2021). Women's empowerment was enshrined as Millennium Development Goal #3, "Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women" and later as Sustainable Development Goal #5, "Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls."⁶ The 2030 Agenda reinforces these goals with the commitment to "leave no one behind" that explicitly promotes policies and practices of social inclusion to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment (FAO 2017: 161).

The literature on women's empowerment in development has experienced a "steep rise" (Priya, Venkatesh, and Shukla 2021:2) since Naila Kabeer published a foundational piece in 1999. In Kabeer's definition, empowerment means expanding people's ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts in which this ability had been denied to them. In this formulation, the ability to exercise choice encompasses three dimensions: resources (which include current access as well as future claims to material, human, and social resources), agency (including processes of decision-making, negotiation, and even

⁶ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

deception and manipulation), and achievements (well-being outcomes). In later writing, Kabeer (2009) and others (Alkire 2008; Alsop and Heinson 2005) have written about how enabling women's empowerment involves recognizing that individual agency typically requires an enabling environment. The focus on strategic decision-making and the three dimensions that enable and sustain empowerment are now common in conceptualizations and efforts to measure empowerment (Malapit et al. 2019), including the pro-WEAI+MI that is used in the ANEW portfolio.

3.1.1 Women's economic empowerment

The linkage between broader empowerment and economic empowerment is, however, quite complex. In achieving economic empowerment, the ability to make and carry through on one's decisions entails having access to productive resources, including, for example, knowledge, capital, land, and/or equipment as well other rights and opportunities. Some scholars explain that becoming economically empowered depends on other non-economic capabilities and support stating:

A woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions.

- To succeed and advance economically, women need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions.
- To have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits (Golla et al. 2011:4).

A study supported by the Exxon Mobil Foundation on the role of the private sector in achieving women's empowerment is explicit in its focus on economic empowerment (Scott 2017). Scott identified key strategies that private sector firms, specifically multi-nationals, could employ to strengthen women's economic empowerment as measured by an increase in their market participation, and the income they gain from their participation, including:

- Improve the yields of women farmers;

- Bring women-owned businesses into the supply chains;
- Provide job training and entrepreneurship courses;
- Improve women's access to digital and financial programs;
- Develop programs to address needs in education, health care, and safety (Scott 2017).

Such strategies are also featured in the organizational strategies of the ANEW projects discussed in this paper as well as other Walmart Foundation-supported projects listed in Annex 2.

As other scholars and practitioners have pointed out, these strategies, even with the real income or the education and health benefits they provide do not automatically lead to the broader vision of empowerment embedded in Kabeer's and others' definitions. Jones (2019:3) expresses this argument as follows:

...objective realities do not tell the full story: simply because a woman earns an income doesn't mean she had decision-making power over that income; just because she is able to participate in the workforce doesn't mean she can do so free from harassment in her workplace, she may have legal rights, but that doesn't necessarily mean that those rights will be systematically enforced.

3.2 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) for Market Inclusion and Women's Empowerment

Historically, there have been many collective models implemented to strengthen agricultural development. In most cases, the goals of collective organizations have focused on reaping economic benefits for members from product aggregation and the provision of services, and benefits in securing more stable supplies and quality for buyers.

Recently, attention has expanded to look at non-economic benefits of different types of farmers' groups, including women's empowerment, from small Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) to larger FPOs and cooperatives. A systematic review of 34 studies on the empowerment effects of SHGs identified four empowerment outcome categories: economic, political, social, and psychological (de Hoop et al. 2019:5). It found positive impacts on the first three empowerment outcomes, and that results were stronger when the groups were provided with training opportunities.

Positive economic empowerment results were associated with providing training (e.g., on handling money or business skills) rather than offering micro-loans alone (de Hoop et al. 2019:12). This “bundling” of credit and training or services has also been found to strengthen women’s economic outcomes at different nodes of market systems (Buvinic and O’Donnell 2016).

FPOs contrast with SHGs as the former are “formal legal entities of primary producers formed to specifically provide them with multiple services enabling market access” (Mwambi, Bijman, and Mshenga 2020).⁷ As a mechanism for empowerment, FPOs and cooperatives draw on some of the structural and social successes of the smaller SHGs and VSLAs, such as their ability to build trust and confidence and promoting information exchanges, while adding market-oriented services that agricultural producers need to expand production and productivity, gain access to extension and advisory services, market information, and credit. Members also gain from the FPOs benefits from aggregation that help to secure better market prices and more timely payment for their produce (Mwambi, Bijman, and Mshenga 2020). In India, FPOs have been promoted by numerous government policies and programs, and are seen to offer producers “bargaining power, better market and price discovery, access to credit and insurance, and sharing of assets and costs” and to strengthen resilience from both market and climate shocks (Kumar and Bali 2022: 16). In short, membership in an FPO helps members to “reduce barriers to entry into markets by improving their bargaining power with buyers and intermediary (Markelova, Meinzen-Dick, et al. 2009:2). These benefits facilitate FPOs to “reemerge” as a mechanism “to increase smallholder participation in markets and ensure that they realize the benefits of market participation” (Bernard and Spielman 2009: 60).

Lecoutere (2017) found that in Uganda, agricultural cooperatives had positive impacts on dimensions of women’s empowerment beyond increasing incomes, but also on women’s decision-making

⁷ For the purposes of this report, FPOs and agricultural cooperatives whose memberships are producers are considered to be the same. Agricultural cooperatives are defined as a network of farmers who benefit “from doing business as a unit. Individual farms work together to buy necessary supplies and services, as well as distribute, market, and sell their products. Farmers save costs and access goods and services otherwise unavailable to them” (NCBA CLUSA). Benefits are typically distributed proportionately based on members’ production (Ortmann and King 2007). There is both overlap in these two categories as well as regional differences in how the terms are used, with FPO a common label in South Asia, (sometimes used interchangeably with Farmer Producer Companies or FPCs as well, see Kumar and Bali 2022), while farmers’ groups in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean are more often labeled as cooperatives.

power within the household and outside it, in the group and the wider community. There was however no impact for women members on the intra-household division of labor either on-farm or on domestic responsibilities (2017: 21 and 23).

Two situations can negatively affect the benefits of FPO membership on women's empowerment. Lecoutere writes that "the potential of co-operatives for empowering women is contingent on women's ability to effectively participate, their command over and returns from productive resources, and their access to leadership skills and roles" (2017:16). These factors originate in the larger socio-economic environment. Mwambi, Bijman, and Mshenga (2020) look to the internal structures of the cooperative or FPO and the extent to which it has an inclusive structure, building on work carried out by Bernard and Spielman (2009) in Ethiopia. Bernard and Spielman found that members' ability to join groups could be constrained for poorer farmers when the criteria for joining were, for example, related to specific size of land holdings or required payment of fees for a share in the cooperative. The type of cooperative governance structure also affected input into decision making if participatory processes were limited to voting in group elections (2009). In Mwambi, Bijman, and Mshenga's study of dairy producer organizations in Kenya, they found that the purpose of the FPO, whether for bargaining or processing, also informed results on different levels of inclusivity of farmers with limited endowments, stating that a "competitive strategy may lead to the exclusion of poor households when those farmers cannot comply with buyer requirements" (Mwambi, Bijman, and Mshenga 2020).

Thus, while there is significant support behind FPOs and cooperatives as avenues for both economic empowerment and social and political empowerment more broadly, it is clear from this short review that it is necessary to be intentional in the design of the governance and financial structures of the organizations to ensure that women producers, who often start from a position of having fewer resources than men in their households or communities, have equal opportunities to join and benefit from their membership in these collectives.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACHES TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Findings related to the first research question, “How does the Walmart Foundation and each of the project implementing organizations conceptualize and apply to their programs their understanding(s) of women’s empowerment?” form the basis of this section of the report. For each organization, a short description of the background and overall organization’s goals and objectives is described. A review of each organization’s approaches to empowerment follows, with attention to gender policies, strategies, or other guidance. The amount and quality of this information varied greatly. The last portion of each description described how attention to gender and women’s empowerment was reflected in the project that is in the ANEW portfolio.

4.1 Walmart and Walmart Foundation

4.1.1 Background and organizational approach

The Walmart Foundation, established in 1979, is separate and independent from Walmart, and is recognized as a US tax-exempt private foundation. The Walmart Foundation’s support to rural women and to FPOs was initiated through an earlier and broader effort by Walmart and Walmart Foundation to improve women’s economic opportunities globally. In 2011, Walmart and Walmart Foundation launched the five-year Global Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) Initiative. At Walmart, the initiative had multiple components to support its retail store work force and to bring more women into leadership. A central goal was to increase sourcing of products from women-owned businesses located in the U.S, and from women for our international markets.⁸

At Walmart Foundation, the initiative included charitable grants to train women in farms and factories.

A study by Prof. Linda Scott at the Said Business School initially supported by a grant from Exxon Mobil Foundation to the University of Oxford, with later contributions from corporations that became

⁸ <https://corporate.walmart.com/news/2011/09/14/leslie-dach-global-womens-economic-empowerment-initiative>

members of the Global Business Coalition for Women's Economic Empowerment, including Walmart (the company) (Scott 2017:6). It explores how women's economic empowerment could be supported through private sector linkages, specifically with large multinational corporations. The report noted that the initial program was successful in surpassing its initial targets:

Since the launch of its women's economic empowerment programmes in 2011, through January 2017, Walmart has sourced \$21.2 billion from women-owned suppliers. Walmart and the Walmart Foundation have also provided funding for the training for 128,000 women in factories and more than 600,000 on farms, as well as providing \$139 million in grants to support women's economic empowerment (Scott 2017:69).

4.1.2 Policies, guidance, and approaches to women's empowerment and/or gender equality

The success of the Women's Economic Empowerment initiative led to the Walmart Foundation undertaking other activities providing more direct services to strengthen the governance and operations of FPOs, such as providing technological support for sustainable agricultural practices, financial and market services (especially digital), and facilitating market linkages. In three years from the launch of the Market Access portfolio in 2017, the Walmart Foundation expected to reach about 61,250 women (35% of the total target of 175,000 smallholder farmers) in activities specifically centered on increasing the capacities of FPOs (Walmart Foundation 2021:1). In 2019, the Walmart Foundation awarded a grant to the Tata-Cornell Institute for Agricultural and Nutrition (TCI) to work in India on aggregation models, including building a data base of FPOs to meet both research and programming needs. TCI received an additional award from the Walmart Foundation to continue their work on aggregation in 2022 (see Annex 2). In 2023, Walmart Foundation awarded a new grant to support Grameen Foundation's Market Access eNabled by Digital Innovation in India (MANDI) project (see later in the report and in Annex 1).

Accelerators of women's economic prosperity

Building on its grantees' initial experiences with FPOs, the Walmart Foundation identified four "accelerators" of women's economic prosperity in FPOs (Walmart Foundation 2021):

1. Increasing women's membership and leadership in FPOs

Support in this pillar has three forms: i) increasing women's membership in groups with both men and women; ii) supporting women-only groups; and iii) supporting grantees to test "FPOs that are fully governed, managed, and controlled by women" (Walmart Foundation 2021: 5).

2. Developing women's skills and capacity in farm production systems

Support of multi-layered interventions to increase sustainable crops production by women is the central focus of this approach by providing information, training, and tools. Efforts have included both *technical topics*, e.g., on small-scale irrigation, chemical application, certification, as well as post-harvest skills and infrastructure and digital tools; and *equity topics* such as gender sensitization to women's work in households and communities (Walmart Foundation 2021: 10).

3. Supporting women's inclusive crop and marketing programs

The goal in this set of activities is to increase crop diversification to build income across several seasons while also expanding the types of crops available for home consumption and market sales. Some of the activities involved initiating and training women-only FPOs, providing critical extension and advisory services that addressed not only production, but also post-harvest handling and processing and business development (Walmart Foundation 2021: 13-14).

4. Improving women's access to finance

Access to credit is a critical component that facilitates women's abilities to invest in their own and their household's agricultural activities as well as to obtain insurance, mobile phones, and other assets. Walmart grantees have sought to create partnerships with other actors to provide financial services for FPOs. Some have also developed financial products that meet FPO members' needs, including digital tools. However, increasing women's uptake of financial options has been

challenging and remains low in comparison to other technical or knowledge offerings, in part because of few products tailored for women (Walmart Foundation 2021: 18).

Walmart and Walmart Foundation Institutional principles

In 2021, based on publicly available documents, Walmart Foundation did not have a publicly available formal gender or women’s empowerment policy or strategy for the organization. However, Walmart clearly describes its approach to empowerment. For example, in describing the Global WEE initiative, Walmart made the following statements about empowerment:

For Walmart, empowering women isn’t just the right thing to do, it’s also smart business – helping us better understand and serve our customers, find the best talent, and promote economic growth in the communities we serve.⁹

And, in a 2013 statement,

Walmart believes empowering women economically will make us a more successful retailer. The majority of our 200 million customers are women, and women control \$20 trillion of annual consumer spending globally. Our women’s empowerment initiative will help us better serve and understand our customers around the world.¹⁰

More recently though its grants in the Market Access portfolio, the Walmart Foundation states it is seeking to advance the “economic prosperity of women smallholder farmers” (Walmart Foundation 2021:1). The relationship between economic prosperity of women and women’s empowerment is not directly addressed in its public-facing materials. For example, the Market Access program description found on the Walmart.org website begins, “We support initiatives for smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs in emerging

⁹ Originally found at <https://cdn.corporate.walmart.com/ea/cc/20f1ac8c4bb88f9640f58cdc45dc/global-womens-economic-empowerment-initiative-fact-sheet-2013.pdf>. This site is now inactive. However, a similar statement is seen in Walmart’s 2015 Global Responsibility Report (2016:34) (accessed September 16, 2024).

¹⁰ Originally found at <https://cdn.corporate.walmart.com/ea/cc/20f1ac8c4bb88f9640f58cdc45dc/global-womens-economic-empowerment-initiative-fact-sheet-2013.pdf>. This site is now inactive. However, the same quote can be found used by Triple Pundit in a blog post entitled, “Walmart Highlights Products From Women-Owned Businesses” at <https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2014/walmart-highlights-products-women-owned-businesses/42521> (accessed September 16, 2024).

markets to help improve their skills, market access and to build resilience.” The same paragraph, which describes different project strategies, such as support for value chain participation, credit opportunities, and building market linkages, ends by noting they also support the “strengthening [of] Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and empowering women farmers in FPOs.” Unlike the list of specific economic strategies and how they will increase income and rural livelihoods, there is no specific characterization of the process that will result in empowerment.

Similarly, the Livelihood Enhancement through Market Access and Women Empowerment (LEAP) program implemented by Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) and funded by Walmart Foundation uses “empowerment” in its title and is in the ANEW portfolio, refers to economic or productive goals, rather than other dimensions of empowerment, such as decision-making, stating it “supports marginalized women to work together in FPOs to adopt sustainable farming practices, diversify and intensify their output, and improve their livelihoods.”¹¹

In its section on women’s empowerment impacts, an impact study of Walmart Foundation’s Market Access Program in India reports largely positive results on women farmers’ greater access to advisory services and training through FPOs, as well as improvements in technical areas such as crop diversification (Sambōdhi 2023). However, it notes that a deeper understanding is needed of how these practices influence women’s “awareness, assimilation, and adoption of training” and suggests a stronger focus on the connections between power relations and discrimination. It reports that while many grantee interventions have been successful, women still have limited decision making, concluding:

If the momentum.... through the market access program is to be maintained and accelerated, there is need for single-minded focus on mainstreaming needs and concerns as a central and resources element in planning implementation, and capacity building. This implies looking beyond purely economic and market concerns to issues of non-market work and activities (Sambōdhi 2023: 31).

¹¹ <https://walmart.org/what-we-do/advancing-sustainability/people-in-supply-chains>

The Walmart Foundation has built an approach that explicitly leads through business. It reflects the position that “gender equality is smart economics” (e.g., World Bank 2012), and that investments in women’s empowerment can benefit not only women and their households, but also businesses at multiple points in the market system. The Market Access portfolio report (Walmart Foundation 2021) focuses on strengthening both FPO operations and effectiveness as well as women’s participation and membership in FPOs. Although emphasizing efforts to increase income by reducing barriers to credit, improving skills, and strengthening market participation, the report also sometimes reports on achievements reflecting a broader vision of women’s empowerment. For example, a description of the results of a Tanager project in Andhra Pradesh, India in which women’s income increased also states that “some women farmers felt more empowered to participate in leadership roles in their FPOs” (2021: 7).

A new grant in 2022 to Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN from the Walmart Foundation (see below and Annex 2), expands support explicitly to women-led FPOs, with a new focus on women in tribal areas in Eastern India. The description of the award¹² suggests an upgrading strategy for the FPOs with the provision of technical assistance for developing business plans and governance systems, and market facilitation services.

The “leading through business” approach is apparent in the comment of a PRADAN representative, quoted in this recent award announcement, who stated:

Our work through the Livelihood Enhancement through Market Access and Women Empowerment (LEAP) and Prowess of organized resources & women-farmers for transforming FPOs into independent institutions (PROWFIT) projects is very significant, not only for creating the identity of the marginalized, rural women as “women farmers” but also helping establish them as business leaders and entrepreneurs, with the support extended to more than 60 women-led FPOs.¹³

¹² <https://walmart.org/news/2022/walmart-foundation-announces-new-grant-to-pradan-to-support-the-growth-and-development-of-women-led-fpos>

¹³ <https://walmart.org/news/2022/walmart-foundation-announces-new-grant-to-pradan-to-support-the-growth-and-development-of-women-led-fpos>

4.2 Grameen (India)

4.2.1 Background and organizational approach

Grameen Foundation USA (Grameen) was founded in 1997, inspired by the work of Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank and a global leader in the fight against poverty. Grameen Bank provides a portfolio of financial services, including microcredit, to the poor of Bangladesh, with a targeted focus on poor women. In contrast to many people at the time who believed that poor people were not creditworthy (Yunus 2004), Yunus believed that they were only “lacking in resources but not trustworthiness or financial sensibility.”¹⁴ Grameen has since been extremely successful in globally scaling the original efforts of Grameen Bank but has also diversified its programmatic efforts into agriculture, technology, and health with a strong focus on benefitting women. The Impact Brief 2023 states, “In 2023, Grameen Foundation continued our work to end poverty by investing in the POWER of women. We’re not here to empower women, they already have their own power. Grameen exists to unleash the power they have.”¹⁵

In 2016, Grameen joined with the global nonprofit Freedom from Hunger. The union is described as bringing together complementary skill sets of “evidence-based, integrated programming” and “human - center solutions” from Grameen.¹⁶ Together they have a “collective mission.... to empower the poor, especially women, to create a world without poverty and hunger.”¹⁷

4.2.2 Policies, guidance, and approaches to women’s empowerment and/or gender equality

Women have historically been and continue to be at the center of the Grameen’s work. The website features program after program that points directly to women as their target population. The organization’s home page (grameenfoundation.org) leaves no doubt, leading with this image (Figure 2):

¹⁴ <https://grameenfoundation.org/about-us/why-grameen>

¹⁵ <https://grameenfoundation.org/documents/Grameen-Foundation-Impact-Brief-2023.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://grameenfoundation.org/freedom-from-hunger>

¹⁷ <https://grameenfoundation.org/freedom-from-hunger>

Figure 2: Categories of Grameen's Target Populations



Source: "The Women We Work With" (<https://grameenfoundation.org/>)

Many of Grameen's active projects have gender policies. For example, as part of the Market Access eNabled by Digital Innovation in India (MANDI) project that is in the ANEW portfolio, and described below, capacity development support to FPOs resulted in "38 FPOs reported drafting a new gender policy document within the first six months of the project" (Vardhan, Jain, and Gray 2023:5).

Grameen implements many gender equity principles and practices and follows gender policies it has developed through its projects and for the organization. For example, as a component of the Reducing Incidence of Child Labor and Harmful Conditions of Work in Economic Strengthening Initiatives (RICHES) project, Grameen has developed a comprehensive program to address both child protection and harmful work environments in women's entrepreneurship activities. The RICHES Social Performance Management Guide is structured in three parts:

- Phase 1: Setting the Foundation
- Phase 2: Build the Structure; and
- Phase 3: Engage Participants.

It includes in its documentation detailed tools and guidance for their use, along with a glossary of key terms. Tool 3, for example, provides a Gender Policy Template intended for use by organizations or projects ("actors") enabling them to "demonstrate [their] commitment to gender equity and equality and women's economic empowerment (WEE). Tool 6 provides step-by-step guidance to conduct a "Do No Harm" assessment based on the one that Grameen uses more broadly in its work. Other tools cover

safeguarding and codes of conduct. The tool is one of several internal processes in the development of project-level Scopes of Work that set targets and the approaches to be used to build gender equity in programs, projects, and among implementing partners (Gray and Kuklewicz 2022). In addition, the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning system tracks results related to the number and percentage of women participating in projects along with other economic and social indicators. The goal is to achieve both women's participation and measurable impacts. Grameen is also one of the endorsers of the global principles embodied in the Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality.

Grameen also works with men, both directly as project participants and through men's engagement in projects targeting women. The proportion of men and women varies by context, targeted crops, as well as funders' preferences. Grameen supported a study to investigate the evidence on the extent to which engaging men impacted women's economic empowerment (Smith, Crookston, and Gray 2021). One of the recommendations from the report was to encourage Grameen to be intentional in cultivating more men to be "advocates for women [sic] empowerment" by creating programs to educate "influential men in communities the Grameen Foundation works in [to possibly] create a cultural shift surrounding women's empowerment, and consequently increase the male role in women's empowerment" (Sheranian and Taylor 2021: 26).

4.2.3 Project in ANEW portfolio

The Market Access eNabled by Digital Innovation (MANDI) in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, India is a Grameen project that started in 2020 and continued into 2023. It supported 40 FPOs with targeted capacity building for engaging in markets to increase incomes and strengthen resiliency. A recent review by Grameen staff states that the project "positively impacted" over 170,000 people while also tripling revenues for two-thirds the project's supported FPOs (Sinha and Kedia 2023:1).

This project also focused on strengthening access to and use of digital technologies and the data that can be created and/or transferred to support better decision-making and market linkages. These tools

are described as “key to increasing operational efficiency and enabling market access.” This emphasis on digital tools and data is clearly noted in its project “model” or Theory of Change:

The MANDI model postulates that "IF the capacity of FPOs to leverage digital technology and data, address gender dynamics, and deepen access to finance for their members is strengthened, and IF FPOs are sufficiently capitalized, THEN smallholder farmers, especially women, will gain improved access to targeted extension services, market opportunities, and financial services THAT WILL enable them to diversify and intensify their production LEADING TO improved incomes and resilience (Sinha and Kedia (2023:1).

At the start of the project, the bulk of the members in the supported FPOs were men, so significant support was given to increasing the number of women members and in leadership positions.¹⁸ In addition, project activities such as community and household dialogues were intended to shift intra-household norms, and the introduction of “women-friendly” technologies to promote women’s participation in the FPOs (Sinha and Kedia 2023: 3).

Other gender-related achievements include the development of gender policy documents in 38 of the 40 FPOs (95%), with a similar number of FPOs reported greater inclusivity in their governance. Women’s participation in the FPOs also increased significantly, by 122% (Sinha and Kedia 2023: 3).

A new award in September 2023 made by the Walmart Foundation provides an additional US\$2 million grant to Grameen Foundation USA for a second phase of the MANDI project. This support will be implemented in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal to strengthen FPOs and will continue to have a focus on women smallholder farmers.¹⁹

¹⁸ Webinar presentation by Bobbi Gray to the ANEW Community of Practice (November 27, 2023).

¹⁹ See <https://walmart.org/news/2023/walmart-foundation-supports-grameen-foundation-s-launch-of-mandi-ii-in-eastern-up-and-west-bengal>

4.3 PRADAN (India)

4.3.1 Background and approach

Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) was founded in 1983 on the principle that “well-educated professionals working within communities can bring both the empathy and knowledge needed to help poor people to improve their lives.”²⁰ PRADAN’s founders, Deep Joshi and Vijay Mahajan, led the growth of the NGO to its current size of over 800 professionals, both men and women, who work on projects to strengthen rural livelihoods in the poorest states of India. The PRADAN website states it currently “works with over 1,000,000 women organized into 83,315 SHGs.”²¹

PRADAN works primarily with women through both SHGs and FPOs. It recognizes women as “capable of driving the change they need” despite being at a disadvantage compared to men in Indian society. In some cases, management positions at the higher levels of FPOs and regional groups are held by men as well as women, in part a result of a lack of available women candidates. PRADAN also provides agricultural trainings to women that are sometimes attended by men as well. PRADAN’s professionals and development interns include both women and men. They are seen as catalysts who do not directly provide services but who share their knowledge and skills to enable communities to access government services.

4.3.2 Policies, guidance, and approaches to women’s empowerment and/or gender equality

As an organization, PRADAN places a high priority on working with and enabling rural women to improve their livelihoods. Its approach to working with rural women as agricultural producers focuses on strengthening their abilities to generate incomes and to develop a range of skills enabling this outcome, including learning about labor-saving technologies, opportunities to cultivate higher-value crops, and to connect with input suppliers as well as establish market linkages. Attention to women is embedded within PRADAN’s six focal topics. These include social mobilization, which explicitly targets the poorest communities and carries the goal of “building women’s self-reliant collectives as change agents.”²² Other

²⁰ The quote and the information in this paragraph are drawn from the PRADAN website (pradan.net)

²¹ <https://www.pradan.net/our-impact/#storiesofimpact> (Accessed 9/16/2024)

²² <https://www.pradan.net/what-we-do/#ourbelief> (Accessed 9/16/2024)

topics are food security, managing natural resources, building alternative livelihoods, market linkages, and governance, described as “making the community aware of its rights, empowering them to have a say in the way things are run.”²³ Within the activities of each topic, PRADAN uses a gender integration approach in design and implementation, and has achieved significant and positive results.

Efforts in the field, however, were for some time not applied equally well within the organization, leading to key improvements in recent years. A summary of the process leading to the development of a new Gender Policy for PRADAN is described below. The new Gender Policy commits to “uphold gender equality within the organization,” while acknowledging that there are “complexities and difficulties of trying to be gender equal” in all aspects of its work.²⁴ The Gender Policy is not currently available on PRADAN’s public website. It is under review as part of the drafting of the Perspective Plan to 2030.

The process of strengthening gender equality in both field programs and in PRADAN’s human resources was initiated in 2010, when PRADAN partnered with Jagori, a feminist organization, to implement a grant from the United Nations Fund for Gender Equality to support rural women in India in the Gender Equality Program. Activities under the grant included carrying out an initial assessment and then having:

Jagori trainers and resource people systematically engaged with PRADAN professionals—a majority of whom are men from technical backgrounds—to consider positions of power and build a nuanced perspective on gender to apply in their development practice. They also worked with rural women’s collectives, some mature and others just starting out, to build feminist consciousness, develop strategies to address discrimination and violence in their communities and access their rights. (Bhattacharjee and Silliman. 2016: II).

After the four years of the grant program, the report concludes that “PRADAN and Jagori [have] not only transformed the lives of rural women, but also transformed the professional perspectives and

²³ <https://www.pradan.net/what-we-do/#ourbelief>

²⁴ PRADAN Gender Policy, internal document. Personal Communication.

personal lives of PRADAN professionals at the frontlines of this initiative” (Bhattacharjee and Silliman. 2016: VII).

Following the grant’s completion, some staff members continued to raise concerns about several personnel issues, such as unequal hiring, retention, and promotion practices in the organization. In 2014, PRADAN conducted a scoping study with the support of two experts- Gagan Sethi and Nandini Narula to understand the factors responsible for the increasing dropout of women at various levels. As part of the study, strategies were suggested for making the organization a better place for women, PRADAN adopted four key strategies: i) conducting a Gender Audit designed on the basis of “Gender at Work framework” (Rao and Kelleher model) across the organization; ii) forming a Women Caucus as an informal group of women colleagues at the Development Cluster level; iii) creating a gender curriculum for the Development Apprentices; and iv) forming a Men in Gender program to groom internal champions within the organization. In 2015 a Gender Steering Group was formed with equal representation of men and women from different work units to develop a gender strategy and a gender policy.

The audit questions covered five major topics: i) consciousness or awareness of staff, ii) changes in individuals’ conditions around voice, freedom from violence, and opportunities; iii) formal rules and policies; iv) informal norms and “deep structure,” and v) political will and technical capacity in the organization to create and maintain change (Chaudhuri and Ghosh 2020: 145).

The audit showed that multiple areas needed improvement, especially around communication of organizational policies about benefits (“provisions”) such as employees’ access to childcare when traveling for work. Knowledge about policies on sexual harassment was also limited. The review of formal rules and policies indicated an absence of policies related to women’s health, e.g., during menstruation and pre-and post-natal stages. Women also lacked separate toilet facilities and medical and other supplies. In the section on political will, the review revealed “lack of faith in leadership’s efforts to ensure changes required for making the space more gender equal” (Chaudhuri and Ghosh 2020: 147)

Several changes have occurred in response to these results, including instituting training on sexual harassment and a change in maternity policies to allow for 6 months of paid leave. Hygiene issues were

addressed as well. Disparities continue to exist in the number of men and women employed in the organization and in the levels at which they each work. There are still more men than women in the organization. However, the leadership has agreed to repeat the audit every five years (Chaudhuri and Ghosh 2020: 147-148). The new Gender Policy now incorporates these provisions. PRADAN has prepared a gender equality plan for the coming five years incorporating the following areas: i) increasing women's representation across all levels; ii) enhancing agency and voice of women; iii) creating enabling environment for women to excel in leadership roles; and iv) structural integration of gender equality.

Challenges remain in women's representation at various levels and bringing more women into leadership positions, although the organization announced a goal of increasing the number of its women employees by 30% in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2023, adding the statement that “[T]he organization believes that women's empathetic skills align with their core vision of building communities and uplifting lives, and aims to create a more inclusive and equitable gender-based society.”²⁵ An interviewee mentioned in 2021 that at least one project has developed its own gender policy and that the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning process tracks achievements related to many aspects of women's and men's participation in its indicators as well as in annual plan and progress templates.

Project design meetings are sometimes workshopped, with input gathered from a range of technical staff. An interviewee stated that the technical specialists work closely with the project teams and make field visits when possible. In at least one project, women who were project participants were enlisted in the research itself in a participatory manner. PRADAN was reported to use their research results in the design of new projects. An evaluation of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research-funded project, “Promoting socially inclusive and sustainable agricultural intensification in West Bengal and Bangladesh” provides another perspective on PRADAN's approach, describing the organization as having an “institutional focus on empowering women by developing individual and group self-agency and self-efficacy” (Carter et al. 2019:19).

²⁵ <https://indiacsr.in/csr-pradan-aims-to-increase-female-workforce/>

4.3.3 Project in ANEW portfolio²⁶

PRADAN implements the Livelihood Enhancement through market Access and women emPowerment (LEAP) program in West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand in eastern India.²⁷ Starting with funding of US\$ 1.9 million from the Walmart Foundation, LEAP has brought women together in FPOs to adopt new farming practices that can help to both increase the diversity and productivity of their farms, as well as to start building profitable farming-related businesses.²⁸ Many of the women engaged with LEAP are from what are designated in the Indian Constitution as Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste communities (70%) with most of the others from Other Backward Classes (27%). A project note prepared by PRADAN explains that women who participated in LEAP were part of SHGs that were encouraged to join producer groups (PGs) to work in agriculture, that then evolved into more formal FPOs. The project provided support to strengthen the groups' governance.

The project has three main objectives:

1. To support the formation of two types of women's farmer groups: i) groups of PGs at the village level, and ii) larger groupings of the producer groups into FPOs at the block level.
2. To support these farmers in increasing agricultural productivity through the provision of trainings, extension and advisory services, and facilitating access to infrastructure, financial service providers and market agents.
3. To carry out gender sensitization activities with leaders at both group levels, PGs and FPOs, to increase their understanding of how women's engagement in agriculture can lead to group members' empowerment, collective action, and change in gender relations (Bhanjdeo 2024).

The LEAP project works with women in several types of FPOs. Some of those FPOs were mobilized by PRADAN through the LEAP project; other FPOs now involved in the LEAP project were initially mobilized by other projects or organizations of the Indian government, e.g., the National Bank for

²⁶ This section is informed by PRADAN project documents, presentations at ANEW workshops, as well as the qualitative study report by Arundhita Bhanjdeo (2024).

²⁷ <https://www.pradan.net/leap/> (Accessed 9/16/2024)

²⁸ <https://walmart.org/news/2022/walmart-foundation-announces-new-grant-to-pradan-to-support-the-growth-and-development-of-women-led-fpos> (Accessed 9/16/2024).

Agricultural and Rural Development.²⁹ FPOs are also registered as different types of entities—as formal cooperatives, but also as trusts or companies. The higher-level Board of Directors include women. There are also some men who are community resource persons who help to facilitate market linkages for some Producer Groups. FPO leaders and members engaged with LEAP are women (Bhanjdeo 2024, Krishna 2022).

Women participants in the LEAP project report many benefits from the assistance provided in their PGs and FPOs, including having learned to make organic compost, and to increase yields, especially (though not only) of vegetables. Through the FPOs, LEAP assists its members in engaging with markets to sell their produce.

Building on LEAP, a new grant from the Walmart Foundation for US\$ 2 million was launched in November 2022. Entitled “Prowess of organized resources and Women farmers for transforming FPOs into independent institutions” or PROWFIT will provide support to 60 women-led FPOs for 30 months.³⁰

4.4 Root Capital (Mexico)

4.4.1 Background and organizational approach³¹

Root Capital was founded in 1999 by Willy Foote, the current Chief Executive Officer. He was motivated to build a mechanism to provide capital to businesses that, in his words, “are too big for microfinance and too risky for commercial banks” after spending time in rural areas of Southern Mexico and observing that farmer cooperatives often failed from lack of finance. He left his position as a financial analyst in the US to launch and lead Root Capital. The organization’s focus is working with agricultural enterprises to achieve “more prosperous, inclusive and resilient rural communities.”

²⁹ Supporting FPOs is an important component of the bank’s activities. By January 2021, it had helped to promote 4,868 FPOs around the nation (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/nabard-lays-emphasis-on-farmer-producer-organisation/articleshow/80785772.cms>). (Accessed 9/16/2024). It has a Producers Organisation Development Fund for this purpose (<https://www.nabard.org/contentsearch.aspx?AID=300&Key=Producers%25252bOrganisation%25252bDevelopment%25252bFund>)

³⁰ <https://www.pradan.net/about-prowfit/>

³¹ The quote and the information in this paragraph are drawn from the Root Capital website (rootcapital.org) and project documents.

Root Capital focuses on agricultural enterprises, both as small businesses and cooperatives, not only because agriculture is a key livelihood in rural areas but also because of the potential of agribusinesses for growth. They are actors in value chains for both food and for higher value export crops such as coffee. This quote from a Root Capital blog post stresses opportunities for youth in agriculture, both young men and women, but it applies more generally across the rural population. It points to the potential in the business of agriculture if farmers are enabled with relevant skills, credit, and information:

Agriculture will only be an attractive career to the extent that it offers dynamic, creative, and prosperous opportunities for young people. Thankfully, the complexity of agricultural supply chains—combined with the rising demand for food and a finite supply of natural resources—means that opportunities for creativity and entrepreneurial mindset are endless. Indeed, by looking beyond a narrow focus on farming, there are countless ways in which young people can help transform one of the world’s oldest industries (Foerster 2016).³²

The problem constraining farmer’s future prosperity, as defined by Root Capital, is the lack of capital, training, and tools they need. These gaps are not met in today’s economic, political, and financial environment. Root Capital facilitates this needed access to finance for its clients, the agricultural enterprises. It uses a “triangulation model” in which Root Capital makes a loan to an enterprise that allows it to pay its members for their crops when they bring them to the cooperative. When the cooperative receives its payment for the crop, sometimes months later, it uses those funds to repay its loan and interest from Root Capital, with any balance going back into the cooperative. Depending on its specific needs, a cooperative may receive a loan for equipment or other needs, such as to make credit available to its members for farm-level investments.³³ Recently added climate action loans, which are loans targeting farm-or business-level investments towards climate resilience, will also help farmers become more successful and more bankable, gaining the ability to apply for and receive larger loans from commercial providers.

³² <https://rootcapital.org/cultivating-the-next-crop-of-agricultural-entrepreneurs>

³³ This paragraph draws from the Root Capital presentation entitled “Root Capital 101_Lending and Advisory Products” and other information provided by Root Capital staff.

Root Capital also provides diagnostic tools, such as its Agribusiness Diagnostic (DGX), to determine client’s needs. Then, based on these assessments and diagnoses, it offers enterprise leaders training on topics including financial management, cooperative governance, technical agricultural problems, and the use of digital tools to inform business decisions. Since 2021, they have also offered training on gender equality.

4.4.2 Policies, guidance, and approaches to women’s empowerment and/or gender equality³⁴

Since launching the Women in Agriculture Initiative (WAI) in 2012, Root Capital has significantly deepened its commitments to promote gender equity and women's inclusion in agriculture. This commitment has included developing a Gender Theory of Change (TOC)³⁵ to depict their approach to addressing rural women's needs for land, credit, training, and time. The TOC also identifies monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that its programs and interventions collect relevant data on both women and men. Root Capital’s focus is to increase its clients’ economic benefits around income, their ability to receive and manage loans, and to increase the numbers of women who are members and leaders in cooperatives or who are identified as agribusiness women.

Root Capital is supporting gender equity in several other ways and has had impact since its launch of the Women in Agriculture Initiative (WAI) in 2012, which consolidated work on gender issues into a single program (Root Capital 2018; Naeve and Moehler 2022). Under the WAI umbrella, it initiated Gender Equity Grants (GEG), improve gender inclusion within their operations and communities—specifically, by supplementing the initial costs and [*reducing*]³⁶ risks for a business to implement gender-inclusive policies and programs” (Value for Women 2021:4). Through the GEG, Root Capital provides partial funding for projects that address social norms and practical barriers, to enable women to participate fully in the agricultural sector. In addition, Root Capital’s initiative to strengthen Gender Lens Investing (GLI) was strengthened in 2021 with a new award from the Walmart Foundation. The new funding will allow Root

³⁴ This section draws on the qualitative study of Root Capital for ANEW in Eissler et al. (2024).

³⁵ Not available publicly to date but provided for this report.

³⁶ “Reducing” in italics added by report author for clarification.

Capital “to overcome the operational cost and risk barriers associated with reaching early-stage, gender-inclusive and women-led businesses” (Root Capital 2021a).

In Mexico and Central America, the GEGs were introduced in 2016. To be selected, grant applications need to demonstrate a commitment to gender inclusion and to willingness to improve policies and practices to strengthen gender equity within the enterprises. Grants given have helped to improve cooperative members’ awareness of climate resilient production practices, better understanding of links between climate resilience and gender, and designing a credit product for rural women, among other goals (Value for Women, 2021). By 2023, the service was operational for 89 clients across Africa, Latin America, and Indonesia, with the goal to reach 105 clients by 2025. In Chiapas, Mexico, grant funds helped, for example, to establish a daycare center for dual-worker families; to hold training on building off-farm skills to generate income; and to locate a collection center to allow easier access for farmers, helping reduce risks of violence to women (Eissler et al. 2024).

A detailed evaluation by Value for Women of two GEG grants found that women members in both cooperatives they studied reported appreciation of the support provided and for having been given training, and interviews showed learning around climate issues, while also reporting multiple challenges faced by women to implement recommended actions (Value for Women 2021). The evaluation also found that additional support and resources were needed to overcome barriers of language and cultural difference in reaching some rural women. In addition, similar support was needed to help institutions lacking experience with gender inclusion “to secure leadership buy-in,” concluding that both programmatic and institutional changes are often needed at the agri-business or cooperative level to ensure success (Value for Women 2021:5).

Root Capital also established Gender Equity Advisory (GEA) Services as part of the suite of advisory services staff offer to clients. Launched in 2021, these services encourage clients to conduct internal diagnostics involving stakeholders and develop targeted action plans to address gender disparities and to strengthen clients’ policies and practices for addressing gender equity (Root Capital 2021b).

Root Capital's work, as described in the Theory of Change, reports, and blogs, firmly focuses on women's economic empowerment. This approach is described in the "Inclusion Pays Report" (Naeve and Moehler 2022), which presents a strong business case for women's inclusion in agriculture, leading to a significant enhancement in Root Capital's efforts and funding towards gender inclusion actions. In 2021, Walmart Foundation awarded a grant to Root Capital to enhance efforts to amplify the scope of credit options for gender-inclusive and women-led businesses.³⁷ Root Capital set ambitious goals for its client portfolio that they had already exceeded in 2023.

In 2021, a new member with expertise in gender, women's economic empowerment, and financial inclusion joined the Board of Directors. Further support for women leaders has followed with the establishment of the Women's Council in 2023, creating a forum for women leaders to address key issues facing women in agriculture, such as climate change, access to finance, and gender barriers. According to a Root Capital staff member, "[T]his initiative sets a precedent for transformative change in the sector." The first meeting was convened in Nairobi, with five African clients. Two meetings for the Latin American region will be launched in Costa Rica and Peru in 2024.

4.4.3 Project in ANEW portfolio

The Root Capital project in the ANEW portfolio is called, "Strengthening the Measurement Tools and Evidence Base for Collective Approaches to Smallholder Livelihoods: The Impact of Coffee Collectives on Women's Empowerment in Mexico." The research conducted under ANEW and other GLI activities were supported by the Walmart Foundation.

³⁷ Root Capital defines a "gender-inclusive enterprise" as one in which over 30% of employees, artisans, and farmers are women; or over 20% of employees, artisans, and farmers are women AND the enterprise is led by a woman. a women-led enterprise is one that meets one of the following criteria: i) one or more women hold the position of executive director, senior manager, director of operations, president, or the equivalent level of leadership; at least 51% or more of managers are women; at least 51% of the membership of the cooperative or the membership of the board of directors (or similar governance group) are women; or at least 51% or more of the enterprise is owned by women (Naeve and Moehler 2022: 12).

Root Capital works in Chiapas, Mexico with 70 coffee collectives. The region, Mexico's poorest state, produces between 30-40% of the nation's coffee. The services that Root Capital provides its client enterprises, including cooperatives, focus on strengthening agribusiness operations and management, gender equity, agricultural practices, and value addition, as well as lending services are intended to strengthen the cooperative operation and governance. In Chiapas, the formal Gender Equity Advisory Services activities that seek to strengthen clients' policies and practices on gender equity were initiated only late in 2021 and had not yet been implemented by the two cooperatives that were part of the qualitative study carried out by Cultural Practice, LLC. Root Capital's 2022 report on its Gender Equity Advisory Services, states that:

To track the success of our GEA services, we monitor how many of our clients [*i.e., the cooperatives and businesses*] develop, sign, and commit to implementing the policies and programs outlined in the gender equity action plan developed during our advisory training sessions. As of year-end 2022, 86% of our clients had committed to implementing gender inclusion policies and programs. By the end of Q2 2023, that percentage had risen to 89% (Root Capital 2023:3)

While these results of inclusive policy adoption at the cooperative level are impressive, and a vital starting point, a commitment to policies does not ensure successful implementation. There is not yet global evidence on outcomes of change among staff or cooperative members attitudes and behaviors resulting from the uptake of more inclusive policies. As noted in the quote above, the standard indicators used by Root Capital track its work at the organization level and do not capture how the activities provided by the program affect empowerment-related outcomes in women's agency among producers or employees.

The qualitative study in Chiapas interviewed cooperative leaders and members at two cooperatives about their awareness of and benefits from Root Capital support, however neither had yet received the GEA services. That data, as well as that in a previous study mentioned by Value for Women, report on some farmer-level benefits. One cooperative used a loan to purchase a truck that provided transport of coffee beans from their farms to the collection site. This reduction in both time and labor has potentially

measurable benefits for both women and men coffee farmers (Eissler et al. 2024). In 2023, Root Capital acted on findings from a quantitative study in Chiapas, Mexico, for example, to disaggregate monitoring data by sex to allow for a gendered comparison of payments made to producers. However, more systematic tracking of members' experience would be valuable to better understand the impact of inclusive policies and practices.

4.5 TechnoServe (Guatemala)

4.5.1 Background and organizational approach

TechnoServe's vision is to provide "solutions to poverty by harnessing the power of the private sector."³⁸ The NGO's founder, Ed Bullard, a US businessman, was motivated by his experiences living in Ghana in the early 1960s. He started TechnoServe in 1968 as an organization built on the premise that poor people can grow out of poverty through enterprise development. Today, TechnoServe programming builds the skills, confidence, and connections of women and men to establish competitive farms, businesses, and industries in 30 countries across Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The 2023 annual report (2024) provides examples from a range of activities that exemplify how TechnoServe provides small-scale farmers and businesspeople with the skills and knowledge to increase their incomes; connects producers, processors, and small businesses to better markets suppliers, and financing; the use of regenerative practices of land management.³⁹

4.5.2 Policies, guidance, and approaches to women's empowerment and/or gender equality

Addressing the needs of women and ensuring that they are project beneficiaries along with men is also important. TechnoServe previously set a target of ensuring that women were 40% of their beneficiaries by 2017, a figure that reflected a level that was perceived as an achievable target (TechnoServe 2016). Although it has taken additional time, by the end of 2023 the percentage of women beneficiaries had reached

³⁸ The quote and the information in this paragraph are drawn from the TechnoServe website (<https://www.technoserve.org/about-us/>).

³⁹ https://www.technoserve.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Annual-Report-2023_English_Digital_Compressed-1.pdf

42%.⁴⁰ The organization’s 2022 strategic plan now sets out an aspirational goal to increase the percentage of women clients to 50% (TechnoServe 2022c: 3).

Interviews with staff members noted that in recent years there had been significant attention placed on monitoring performance on how projects address gender issues and what results they are achieving in increasing women’s participation as well as income earned. Over the last ten years, the organization has significantly strengthened its gender policies, guidance on design as well as implementation, and targets (TechnoServe 2015, 2016, 2022a).⁴¹ ⁴² One interviewee explained that the broad guidance offered by the gender policy documents is regularly contextualized, and that they aim to do a gender assessment ideally before or at the beginning of each project to inform the design. This gender assessment informs how the team will structure the approach to women’s economic empowerment throughout the project. The 2022 Gender Equality Policy states that gender analysis is required for all projects and contributes to the development of the gender action plan. It states:

We focus on women specifically because women often face greater discrimination and more severe constraints than men to participate in and benefit from the economy. Addressing these inequalities is critical to enhancing scale and deepening the impact of our programs. We recognize that engaging, empowering, and benefitting women and men is required to maximize inclusive, climate and nature-positive economic growth and achieve widespread prosperity (TechnoServe 2022a).

The policy expands its attention to terminology on gender to include explicit definitions of:

- **Empowerment** as “the expansion of people’s ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts in which this ability had been denied to them” and

⁴⁰ <https://www.technoserve.org/2023-annual-report/#>

⁴¹ <https://www.technoserve.org/about-us/>

⁴² <https://www.technoserve.org/about-us/>

- **Women’s economic empowerment** as “the process by which women and girls are able to succeed and advance economically and have the power to make and act on economic decisions” (TechnoServe 2022a: 1).

The 2022 Gender Equality Policy affirms that all staff, not only gender advisors, are “responsible for upholding the commitments in this Policy” and are expected to know and understand its contents (TechnoServe 2022a:3). Guidance for “Creating or Updating a Gender Action Plan” provides a step-by-step introduction and key resources for program managers and other relevant staff members to assist them in developing the plan (TechnoServe 2023). This guidance explains the purpose of the Gender Action Plan and what information it should contain and offers a template. It further distinguishes between a “basic” plan and a “high quality” plan, with the latter identifying gender-based constraints and well as describing “opportunities for women and men to participate, perform, and benefit from program” (TechnoServe 2023). TechnoServe is also one of the endorsers of the global principles embodied in Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality.

TechnoServe’s historical enterprise focus and its more recent recognition of the need to address the constraints faced by women lends itself to designing and implementing projects that seek to promote and strengthen women’s economic empowerment. Their programs sometimes focus on women as producers or as entrepreneurs. In most cases the focus is to increase women’s incomes and opportunities through reducing constraints that can negatively affect productivity and business growth. These constraints can include limited time availability, social networks, access to technology and digital services, as well as limits on decision making and mobility (TechnoServe 2022a).

4.5.3 Project in ANEW portfolio

Walmart Foundation awarded a grant to TechnoServe to support the Smallholder Market Access Program in Central America (SMA) activity. For its work in Guatemala, the country project included in the ANEW portfolio, SMA has three key objectives:⁴³

1. To increase the financial benefits from production of fresh produce for smallholder farmers;
2. To increase the resilience of smallholder farmers from shocks originating from climate change, unforeseen weather events, and external economic shifts; and
3. To increase women's economic empowerment across the fresh produce market system.

As documented in the 2020 draft gender strategy and action plan, the project followed TechnoServe's gender policy and carried out a gender analysis during project start-up phase "to understand the constraints and opportunities to support women's economic empowerment in SMA" (TechnoServe 2020:4). The findings of the assessment revealed that although women are actively involved in farming, they have less business and agronomic knowledge than men. It also found that women "lack opportunities to participate in important decision-making and family financial management" and have less access to land and other productive resources. The lack of women's access to land is a constraint on their participation in cooperatives that require land as a membership criterion (TechnoServe 2020:4-5). The findings from the gender analysis informed the design of several SMA activities so that they could better "overcome the gender-based constraints that reduce women's and men's ability to participate, perform, and benefit" from the program (TechnoServe 2020:5).

The project strategy to achieve these goals is to work with three groups: farmers, FPOs, and anchor firms⁴⁴ who buy products. The support strengthens farmers' ability to connect with buyers through FPOs that facilitate their access to finance, as well as help with value addition and pricing. At the market level,

⁴³ This section is informed by TechnoServe project documents, presentations at ANEW workshops, as well as the draft qualitative study report by Myers and Heckert (forthcoming). See also TechnoServe (ND) blog post, "Improving Market Access for Smallholder Farmers in Central America."

⁴⁴ Anchor firm or buyer is the term used by TechnoServe to describe large and/or influential businesses "that purchase large amounts of crops from smallholder farmers" (See "Lessons from our Projects," technoserve.org/our-work/what-we-learned).

SMA will assist both farmers and FPOs to gain access to formal financing that will further invest in their production.

TechnoServe works with multiple actors in the producer-buyer relationship. Training is an important component of the project and the gender analysis recommended numerous points to address different needs of men and women to ensure that recruitment processes, meeting venues, content delivery, and equitable representation of women and men were followed (TechnoServe 2020: 6). Training on agricultural topics such as agronomy and farm management are offered to both women and men. In addition, the project introduces new production techniques on demonstration plots and sends project staff to FPO members' fields for follow-up visits. The agricultural training efforts are intended to help both men and women farmers improve production yields and crop quality so that they can increase incomes with sales of their harvested produce. The project also provides training on women's leadership to strengthen the low participation and leadership rates of women in FPOs.

Another training component addresses gender issues to build awareness of both men and women of gender disparities in the market system, and more practically in areas of sourcing and helping buyers "understand...and identify the challenges facing different farmers to meet anchor firm requirements" (TechnoServe 2020: 7). To strengthen the ability of the buyers to work effectively with producers, it shares best practices on sourcing, helps buyers to adapt their pricing and logistics, and to develop procurement strategies that "can increase the volume of produce sourced from women farmers" (TechnoServe 2020:7).

Additional support provided to the FPOs included organizational support, e.g., in business administration, value addition, and other aspects of financial management. TechnoServe first assesses each organization's needs for finance. This approach allows them to assist FPO leaders and members in identifying the types of financial products that are available to them (TechnoServe 2020:7).

An additional Walmart Foundation grant to TechnoServe in 2022 supported a second phase of the SMA project, building on lessons learned from Phase 1, with an intentional focus to increase women's economic empowerment through the horticultural market system by supporting a more inclusive supply chain. The new emphasis on women's economic empowerment involved working with both women and

men farmers, providing additional training on improving gender equality in the supply chains of the anchor firms, and supporting the same firms in implementing their gender equality action plans. New indicators were employed to measure changes in women's economic empowerment (TechnoServe 2022b). In early 2024, Walmart Foundation awarded a third grant to TechnoServe to build on previous phases of work in Guatemala.

5. DISCUSSION

This report began with the premise that clarifying how funders and implementers view the relationships between agricultural interventions and women’s empowerment could illuminate practices or policies that inhibit or support project’s abilities to achieve women’s empowerment. This section discusses how organizations’ positions on key gaps in women’s abilities to engage in and benefit from market engagement shape their target populations and the types of activities they support.

First, programs and their organizational approaches vary depending on who they identify as their target population. Both Grameen and PRADAN have a primary focus on women as their target populations. However, their approaches to reaching women differ. Grameen maintains a strong focus on women stemming from its initial success in its microcredit activities that found poor women to demonstrate high repayment rates for their small loans. Over the years it has expanded attention to men, recognizing that positive change results when men are engaged both as allies as well as direct participants in project activities. Grameen Foundation activities often employ household dialogues and other household-based approaches to raise issues of inequality within the household, documenting multiple examples where “[m]ale engagement is associated with better health and economic outcomes, and is crucial to the success of programs” from maternal health to women’s economic empowerment (Smith, Crookston, and Gray (2021:1). A review of Grameen’s efforts to engage men also notes that there is little agreement on “best practices” since “social norms of power and gender can impact both men and women” at multiple levels and in different ways (Smith, Crookston, and Gray (2021:1),

PRADAN also focuses their programs on women. It supports FPOs formed of only women members, however, men sometimes fill resource positions such as to facilitate market linkages for Producer Groups (Bhanjdeo 2024). Both women and men also receive agricultural trainings, as part of a strategy to involve families. As an organization, PRADAN was found in the past to have a disproportionate number of men in positions of authority and leadership and has since taken strong measure to address that disparity as well as to improve benefits related to pregnancy, childcare and menstrual health for its employees.

Both Grameen and PRADAN acknowledge that women are often found in disadvantaged positions relative to men in many societies. Grameen describes, in its review on men’s engagement, the power of “patriarchal norms” and “hegemonic masculinity,” which points to the need to deliberately work to change unequal social norms (Smith, Crookston, and Gray 2021:2). This awareness of the strength of discriminatory social norms and the importance of identifying ways to address them is a theme in Grameen’s endline report on the MANDI project in the ANEW portfolio, which notes that these relationships are complex and take time to overcome. They found that “deeply ingrained social norms, rigid mindsets, and various forms of discrimination continue to hinder women’s mobility and active participation in these groups and collectives” (Vardhan, Jain, and Gray: 2023: 25). The role of restrictive social norms in constraining some aspects of women’s participation in Producer Groups was also noted in the LEAP project (Bhandjeo 2024).

Root Capital and TechnoServe have historically had greater engagement with men than women, although both organizations are working to improve the proportion of women they reach and benefit through their programs. Root Capital, as described above, has over the last decade put in place several initiatives to create greater awareness of the impact of gender disparities on women’s ability to engage in enterprises, and to provide support to overcome them. TechnoServe continues to support men and women as producers and entrepreneurs and has recently reached its target of 40% women beneficiaries. For both organizations, there is an explicit focus on filling identified gaps in business- or enterprise-related skills and services, and working with private firms, and a less direct focus on changing unequal social norms.

Second, as an outgrowth of their chosen focus on women or both women and men, the projects and their parent organizations, reveal different understandings of and strategies for achieving women’s empowerment. All the organizations and their ANEW projects are oriented towards achieving economic empowerment for women, often stating this as a clear and strategic goal. Strengthening decision-making over economic resources is also important. However, clear strategies that map the pathways from increased income and/or assets to women’s empowerment more broadly are vague. The continuum of attention to economic empowerment would put Root Capital on one end with the strongest focus, as demonstrated by

its attention to enterprises as their target clients. In different ways the other three organizations—TechnoServe, Grameen, and PRADAN—seek to address both economic and broader empowerment goals, however the latter are not always a component of their monitoring systems. TechnoServe provides detailed guidance to staff and training to cooperative and anchor firms on creating more inclusive programming for women. The MANDI project used household dialogues to address discriminatory social norms and to explore issues related to division of labor and control over resources. PRADAN is clearest on the need to support women directly in economic and social areas. None of the organizations have yet articulated, either through their TOCs or their workplans, a step-by-step mapping of how increased income and/or benefits from that income resulting from their economic activities can be harnessed to achieve broader social outcomes that would demonstrate “empowerment” in its broader sense.

Third, some organizations take a more “organic” approach to integrating attention to gender equality and women’s empowerment into their programs, while others are more deliberate and intentional. TechnoServe appears to be the most intentional. It has clear and public targets for women’s participation and clear guidance for its staff about expectations for working with women producers. Grameen’s recent RICHES toolkit, described above similarly details how to create more equitable working environments and organizations, including attention to gender-based violence. Root Capital and PRADAN have both recently revised a gender TOC or policy, but they are less detailed than those of the other two organizations.

Fourth, another variation is an organization’s attention to enterprise development and, consequently, to upgrading women’s position in agricultural value chains and supporting women’s entrepreneurship. Root Capital is a strong supporter of growing small businesses, whether for women or men. TechnoServe also has a strong goal of enterprise development as the pathway to prosperity and has many projects that work with women producers and entrepreneurs. But at least in the project review for this report, it seems that for both these organizations there are projects for producers and other activities for emerging or existing agripreneurs, without significant support for transforming producers into entrepreneurs.

In interviews, at least one respondent from each organization stated that they hoped that the research conducted by ANEW would ultimately provide “hands on advice” enabling their teams to design projects to support women’s empowerment more effectively. This point was also raised at one of the webinar presentations on the ANEW results. At the same time, the respondents readily acknowledged that research findings in any one location would have to be adapted when considered in another geography, and it was not clear that staff responsible for new project design always had the skills to think through the needed adaptations. For example, one interviewee commented that in considering the potential of FPOs or cooperatives in different countries, it would be necessary to understand the how different legal regimes around property, marriage, and inheritance, as well as social norms interact to facilitate or inhibit greater access and participation for women members. Another barrier to organizational uptake of research is that it is hard to institutionalize, and that maintaining progress in program implementation often ultimately depends on individual leadership. Several of the projects experienced a turnover in key staff over the past two years, adding to the difficulty of making the best use of research.

Nonetheless, research done as part of assessments and evaluations was also seen as making a valuable contribution to project operations. Overall, the results of the ANEW research offer a better metric for women’s empowerment in programs working through agricultural collectives. The qualitative work studies help to inform how projects can develop clear strategies supporting women’s empowerment.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Programs and funding to address the disparities between women and men agricultural producers have evolved significantly over the past quarter-century since Kabeer (1999) defined women's empowerment and called for greater support for women's agency over their lives. There remain, of course, important questions to answer about the "how" of supporting women and men to be both engage in market systems and benefit from them, while also using their earnings and skills, gained through FPO membership, to the ability to make strategic decisions and act on them.

Gaps in both data and analysis continue to exist, notwithstanding the significant investments that have been made in new tools for data collection on women's agricultural labor, engagement in food and market systems, and for measuring women's empowerment in agriculture. However, there are still gaps around the drivers of women's empowerment and the consequences of women's empowerment (Priya, Venkatesh, and Shukla2021: 8). Scott's study (2017:30) on women's empowerment in the private sector also identified remaining data gaps about women's unpaid labor, and labor in industries where data is not sex disaggregated. She argues that until this picture is clearer, women's full contributions to the global economy will remain "invisible," inhibiting the creation of appropriate solutions to overcoming the factors that continue to limit women's economic empowerment.

An important next step would be to analyze how the quantitative results from the pro-WEAI+MI impact assessments map to the issues discussed in this report. Did the projects led by organizations that explicitly focus on some of the broader dimensions of women's empowerment also have better results as measured by the index? Did projects that focus more directly on economic outcomes enhance women's decision-making over economic assets in comparison to results on other indicators? In theory, such an analysis could provide additional evidence that could inform program design, so that new interventions might create and sustain more inclusive FPOs so that they can fulfill the promise of providing a pathway to better livelihoods and better lives.

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Grameen Foundation (<https://grameenfoundation.org>)

PRADAN (<https://www.pradan.net/>)

Root Capital (<https://rootcapital.org/>)

Tata-Cornell Institute for Agriculture and Nutrition (<https://tci.cornell.edu/>)

TechnoServe (<https://www.technoserve.org/>)

Walmart Foundation (<https://www.walmart.org>)

ANNEX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STAFF OF WALMART FOUNDATION AND ANEW PORTFOLIO PROJECT ORGANIZATIONS

Between 2021 and 2022, semi-structured interviews were carried out with one or two staff members in executive and technical positions in the four implementing organizations (Grameen, PRADAN, Root Capital, TechnoServe) and one person from the Walmart Foundation. These Interviews took between 30 to 60 minutes. Other informal interviews were carried out with additional project-level staff over the life of the ANEW project.

The following exploratory questions were asked to better understand the organizations' approaches to women's empowerment both at the organizational and project levels. The questions were adjusted based on the interviewee's position and organization.

1. Could you tell us about your responsibilities in the organization?
2. In your view, what is the organization's approach to supporting women's empowerment in its programs?
3. Please clarify how you define women's empowerment.
4. What guidance, either formal or informal, is given to programs or projects on addressing gender issues in the design of new activities?
5. What about any guidance specifically on strengthening women's empowerment?
6. Can you give an example of a case where the guidance was followed and achieved particularly good results in strengthening women's empowerment?
7. Describe some of your organization's other successes and achievements in reducing gender disparities.
8. What challenges are you aware of related to supporting women's empowerment?
9. What gaps still need to be filled that could contribute to your organization's programming to strengthen women's opportunities and benefits from market inclusion?
10. Based on your experience and expertise, what are the most important priorities for strengthening opportunities for women engaged in agriculture?
11. How would an organization such as yours plan to use the results of the pro-WEAI for Market Inclusion studies?

ANNEX 2: WALMART FOUNDATION SUPPORT TO WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE THROUGH FPOS

This list, while not comprehensive, includes both projects that preceded the ANEW portfolio projects as well as current project participants from 2011-2023. It illustrates the range of agricultural projects and various crops supported by the Walmart Foundation in its target regions of India as well as in Mexico and Central America.

Projects in India

- Andhra Pradesh Market Readiness Project (APFMRP) I and II implemented by Tanager, an ACDI/VOCA affiliate, and partner PRADAN combined gender sensitization training with providing equipment, such as digital scales, to strengthen transparency in market interactions.⁴⁵
- Through its Sustainable Livelihoods Program, TechnoServe India supported women’s membership in FPOs in Andhra and Uttar Pradesh to strengthen access to credit, market information and digital scales, resulting in better prices.⁴⁶
- In September 2023, Walmart awarded a US\$2 million grant to Grameen Foundation a second phase of its “Market Access eNabled by Digital Innovation in India (MANDI)” project. This support will be implemented in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal to strengthen FPOs, with a focus on women smallholder farmers.⁴⁷
- Starting in 2019, the Tata-Cornell Institute for Agricultural and Nutrition (TCI) received funding from the Walmart Foundation in India to build a national database of FPOs that will provide comprehensive information on these groups to FPOs, researchers, and other stakeholders, with the goal of using the data to build effectiveness in FPO operations. Additional support in 2022 will investigate different types of farm aggregation models, building on an earlier grant, “FPO-Led Small Farm Market Access Models.”⁴⁸
- The Livelihoods Enhancement through market Access and women empowerment project (LEAP) started in July 2020, supported by US\$ 1.9 million. It reached 45,000 smallholder women farmers in the Indian states of Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal. It worked with women farmers to form or join FPOs to adopt new farming practices, diversify and intensify their output, and embark on profitable farming-related businesses.
- In November 2022, the Walmart Foundation is continuing its support to PRADAN and to the growth of women-led FPOs with an award for a project called “Prowess of organized resources & women-farmers for transforming FPOs into independent institutions” (PROWFIT). The project will give special attention to women farmers in “the tribal regions of the eastern states.” The grant of US\$ 2 million will fund 30 months and support 60 women-led FPOs that will in turn “aim to empower nearly 120,000 women to create viable businesses.”

⁴⁵ See <https://tanangerintl.org/portfolio/andhra-pradesh-farmer-market-readiness-project-apfmrp/> and https://tanangerintl.org/2020/09/17/walmart_apfmrp_phase_ii/

⁴⁶ See <https://www.technoserve.org/our-work/projects/12917-2/>

⁴⁷ See <https://walmart.org/news/2023/walmart-foundation-supports-grameen-foundation-s-launch-of-mandi-ii-in-eastern-up-and-west-bengal>

⁴⁸ See [https://tci.cornell.edu/?news=tci-awarded-a-new-grant-from-walmart-foundation-to-enhance-its-fpo--database#:~:text=TCI%20Awarded%20a%20New%20Grant%20from%20Walmart%20Foundation%20to%20Enhance%20Its%20FPO%20Database,-NEWS&text=The%20Tata%20Cornell%20Institute%20for,producer%20organization%20\(FPO\)%20models](https://tci.cornell.edu/?news=tci-awarded-a-new-grant-from-walmart-foundation-to-enhance-its-fpo--database#:~:text=TCI%20Awarded%20a%20New%20Grant%20from%20Walmart%20Foundation%20to%20Enhance%20Its%20FPO%20Database,-NEWS&text=The%20Tata%20Cornell%20Institute%20for,producer%20organization%20(FPO)%20models)

Projects in Mexico and Central America

- Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs partnered with Value for Women to work in Mexico on an assessment tool for small and growing businesses that addresses gender inclusion.⁴⁹
- CIMMYT developed a program on crop diversification and financial services in Southern Mexico, using FPOs to offer technical services, including for postharvest handling, as well as financial advisory services.⁵⁰
- Heifer International has received funding to implement the “Accelerating Incomes Through Diversification” program in Mexico to strengthen women’s empowerment, environmental conservation, and agricultural-related production of honey, eggs, and beef in concert with an expansion of women-only, or women and youth FPOs.⁵¹
- Root Capital received two awards from the Walmart Foundation in its work to provide advisory services, including gender equity advisory services, and loans to smallholders, including women, through their participation in FPOs. They have developed both a “gender diagnostic” and a toolkit of technical services to guide interventions. They have partnered with Value for Women in this effort.⁵²

⁴⁹ See <http://giabiz.v4w.org/> to access and try the gender inclusion tool.

⁵⁰ See <https://www.cimmyt.org/blogs/improve-rural-womens-financial-access-to-help-solve-hunger/>

⁵¹ See <https://www.heifer.org/about-us/media-center/press-releases/heifer-and-walmart-partner-to-strengthen-farmers.html>

⁵² See <https://rootcapital.org/root-capital-announces-new-initiative-to-strengthen-gender-lens-investing-in-agriculture/>

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