



Gender Mainstreaming: The Katalyst Approach

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Shahnewaz is an achiever with over eleven years' project management experience in international development projects worth over \$90 million. He is capable in developing and implementing innovative initiatives to streamline project operations. Strong analytical skills with detail oriented focus helps him achieve program portfolio and project objectives. He is an MBA as well as an MFin and holds PMP designation. Skilled in developing and maintaining business relationships with high profile stakeholders including top tier executives and government representatives, Shahnewaz is known for his ability to engage and achieve objectives with challenging engagements.

Contents

1.	Background and Context.....	1
1.1.	Katalyst.....	1
1.1.1.	Making Markets work for the Poor.....	1
1.1.2.	Gender mainstreaming in Market Development.....	1
1.1.3.	Results outlook.....	2
2.	Gender initiatives in Katalyst	2
2.1.	Rationale	2
2.2.	Target setting	2
2.3.	Phase I.....	3
2.3.1.	Scope and Methodology	3
2.3.2.	Limitations.....	3
2.3.3.	Results and way forward.....	3
2.4.	Phase II.....	3
2.4.1.	Scope and Methodology	3
2.4.2.	Limitations.....	4
2.4.3.	Results	4
3.	The Katalyst Approach to Mainstreaming Gender	5
4.	Analyzing the impact.....	5
4.1.	Analysis of Phase II.....	5
4.1.1.	Maize.....	5
4.1.2.	Vegetable	6
4.1.3.	Prawn	6
4.1.4.	ILGS	6
5.	Way Forward.....	6

1. Background and Context

1.1. Katalyst

Katalyst is one of the largest market development projects in the world. Since its inception in 2003, Katalyst has achieved significant employment and income impact by increasing the competitiveness of farmers and micro, small and medium sized enterprises in selected urban and rural sectors in Bangladesh. It is a jointly-funded programme of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the UK Government, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN). It is implemented under the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) of the Government of Bangladesh by Swisscontact and GTZ International Services. It had two distinct phases. The First phase ran from 2003 to 2008 with a budget of CHF 25.6 million. The second phase started in 2008 and concluded in 2013 with a budget of CHF 50.67 million.

Katalyst follows a pro-poor market development approach in promoting economic growth. It focuses on sectors with high outreach to the poor, high growth potential and good opportunities to include the poor better in the socio-economic systems of the selected sectors. Katalyst partners with a wide range of private enterprises and the government in order to bring about systemic changes, leverage our resources, maximize impact and ensure sustainability.

1.1.1. Making Markets work for the Poor

The pro-poor market development approach implemented by Katalyst is termed Making Markets work for the Poor (M4P) in international development. Its premise is that market 'systems', which are more conducive to the poor's participation, provide the basis for increased enterprise competitiveness and lead to inclusive economic growth, thus reducing poverty. Katalyst focuses on sectors of the economy which are important to large numbers of poor people and which have potential for inclusive growth, in terms of productivity, profitability or jobs, and with prospects for stimulating large-scale and sustainable change.

1.1.2. Gender mainstreaming in Market Development

The initial outlook on incorporating Gender aspects in Market Development was not comprehensive. Because of the all-encompassing nature of the analysis required in Market Development, it was presumed that Gender constraints will automatically be addressed. The idea of an efficient market solving its own problem is at the core of market development interventions, and it was assumed that Gender constraints are a subset of the larger market constraints and can be addressed through the same interventions. However, there are empirical evidence that this is not the case. Just as M4P requires the use of a poverty lens to identify the constraints and the underlying causes, solving gender constraints requires the use of a 'Gender' lens as part of the analysis. The identification that a different perspective is required to understand the nature of the problem is the first step towards mainstreaming Gender in strategy and interventions. Once properly identified and evaluated, it was evident that the incentives differ for market actors when engaging in solving Gender constraints then from generic market development activities. The analysis of proper incentives to develop sustainable interventions addressing Gender constraints was the next step of evolution in the process. It is also the step that

varies mostly amongst practitioners in terms of defining 'Gender mainstreaming' and its impact on the target beneficiary. The perspectives vary on the inclusivity of social and cultural context in the Gender lens and the scope of the nature of interventions designed based on the identified incentives.

1.1.3. Results outlook

Katalyst, through its mainstreaming effort in sectors during Phase II, benefited approximately 152,000 women farmers, family labourer, commercial homestead producers, and paid labourers. It has enabled an additional mSME income of 8,369,000 USD throughout the lifetime of the Katalyst Phase II. The outreach and impact were achieved through evolution of Katalyst's approach towards Gender mainstreaming during the phase.

2. Gender initiatives in Katalyst

2.1. Rationale

Economic empowerment without considering Gender aspects tends to be fragile as the roles played by both sexes in the production and distribution process tend to have an impact on the overall efficiency of the economy itself. In the context of Bangladesh's rural agriculture and the emerging industrial sectors, the engagement of women as entrepreneurs and paid and in-kind laborers are increasing and gaining importance in the market systems. Katalyst's overriding goal is to raise income among poor women and poor men in Bangladesh by increasing enterprise competitiveness within market systems. However, women participate in and benefit from economic growth in different ways from men. To achieve pro-poor growth, it is important to understand these differences and tailor interventions accordingly. Adhering to pro-poor principles, Katalyst works to ensure that the benefits of systemic changes achieved within the market accrue principally to its target group – the poor. Therefore, when Katalyst, based on its principles of sustainable economic development was initiated, the concepts of addressing Gender constraints were deemed to be an integral part of the solution itself.

2.2. Target setting

Although the rationale for engagement in Gender empowerment was evident, the pathway for achieving parity through market development was not so certain. The two phases of Katalyst therefore saw two distinct process of setting up Gender related targets:

For phase I, the objective was to gain further knowledge into the process of engaging in Gender related issues through action research. The target was tied with the total number of interventions taken up by the projects. At least 10% of all the interventions had to consider gender aspects in its design.

For phase II, however, the lessons from phase I have instilled a comparatively clearer pathway into what works and what can be further improved for Gender empowerment in the context of M4P and the project. The Monitoring and Results Management foundation for the project has also improved further. This enabled the reporting of Gender disaggregated data both in terms of outreach and income.

2.3. Phase I

2.3.1. Scope and Methodology

The engagement of Katalyst in identifying and solving Gender issues in the project geographic areas of phase I mainly consisted of-

- Research to develop a better understanding of women and men's participation within, and contribution to, specific economic sectors
- Design of specific, stand-alone pilot interventions targeting female producers and entrepreneurs
- Identification of opportunities to reach women via mainstream sector interventions.

A focus on Gender during Sector selection, proactive Action research and Piloting small scale interventions based on opportunities were the strategies utilized by Katalyst.

2.3.2. Limitations

The effort on Gender in phase I had two major limitations. Organizationally, Katalyst structured itself in different functional divisions with no particular assignment of Gender to any of the divisions. Thus, each division engaged in their own initiatives for Gender empowerment leading to a lack of cohesiveness and learnings regarding the interventions. A taskforce comprising of members from each of the divisions was developed in 2006 to address these constraints. However, the reporting and responsibility structure was not encouraging for the taskforce to be effective in all the issues. Operationally, the divisions –rightly termed as ‘Silos’ were operating with their rigid boundaries in their interventions. With no focused reporting apart from the ‘percentage’ target number of interventions, it was up to the intervention managers’ ability to comprehend and address Gender constraints. The situation improved after the formulation of the taskforce. Comprehensive studies trying to identify the ‘Gender’ lens were also conducted. However, the impact of the taskforce was only to the extent of a common reporting format and platform of sharing individual instances of success.

2.3.3. Results and way forward

In Phase I, Katalyst built firm analytical and conceptual foundations, as well as improving institutional capacity through appointing a gender task force. This task force evolved into a dedicated unit for Gender and Environmental and Social Responsible Business (GESRB) in Phase II. Impact wise, 10% of all the designed interventions conformed to the target. However, the objectives of formulating a sound strategy for engaging Gender constraints, or the concept of mainstreaming Gender in Katalyst's initiatives were not realized.

2.4. Phase II

2.4.1. Scope and Methodology

Phase I lessons have been an important guiding principles for phase II. The formulation of the task force was well received, and the development of a ‘Gender’ lens for the M4P approach is considered an important step at the right direction. The project closure reviewers opined that Katalyst achieved many individual successes but has not mainstreamed enough. It is important that Katalyst continues to focus

on integrating gender in all its sectors due to its relevance to poverty alleviation. However, it should be understood that gender should not be mainstreamed indiscriminately into market development, but the opposite: market development should be applied where the approach is most effective, where women participate in the economy¹. There one can find women in accepted roles and private sector with incentives to make best use of them. In most value chains, one can find female skill niches, such as pollination in the seed industry and drying in the maize sector. Based on these learning, Katalyst initiated research and designed pilot activities in phase II. Thus the focus was on

- Formulation of a separate Unit- Gender and Environmental and Social Responsible Business (GESRB)
- Labor market assessments
- Pilot activities and interventions

2.4.2. Limitations

The initiation of phase II started with ambiguous goal for the Gender aspects of the project. The focus was still on further assessments, action-research and pilots. Based on the 'Gender' lens, it was expected that the newly formed unit will be able to assist in conducting the necessary studies, research and interventions with the functional divisions. However, the team was given an office location on the opposite end to the main office in Dhaka for a closer proximity and interaction to its ESRB responsibilities. This resulted in human resource and operational inefficiency of the initiative itself. Furthermore, this 'separation' hindered collaboration opportunities between sectors working with a national focus leading to frustrated functional teams and demotivated 'Gender' unit. Although the team was later moved into the main office, it took management time and effort to ensure proactive communication and sharing of work and engagement towards a common goal.

2.4.3. Results

The initial setback of the new Gender unit had a grim outlook on its impact potential. The utilization of Comprehensive Sector Strategies and the limited representation and utilization of Gender expertise and experience in intervention planning was a part of concern. To leverage potential for synergy and realize opportunities existing within the M4P framework outside Katalyst's core sectors, the management empowered the Gender unit through leadership and necessary capacity development initiatives. A Gender mainstreaming approach was finalized. The unit was elevated to a functional group status with its own separate budget and fiduciary operations. The focus was elaborated into interventions in:

- Gender as a part of the core-sectors initiatives
- Gender focused interventions as part of the larger market initiatives

Within the context of Katalyst Phase II, the reorganization of the Gender group has paid its dividends. The Gender initiatives have successfully benefited approximately 152,000 women farmers, family labourer, commercial homestead producers, and paid labourers with an additional income of 8,369,000 USD.

¹ Mary Morgan, Technical Note No.1, Katalyst 2006

3. The Katalyst Approach to Mainstreaming Gender

Katalyst defined its effort in mainstreaming Gender initiatives through four steps in a practical framework that utilizes the sector strategies:

- I. Sector analysis from a gender perspective;
- II. Alignment of gender interests with commercial interests, within strategies and interventions;
- III. Monitoring impact from a gender perspective;
- IV. Communicating knowledge and building capacity.

4. Analyzing the impact

4.1. Analysis of Phase II

To better understand the nature of the impact achieved by Katalyst in Phase II, a study was commissioned to research the qualitative aspects. A total of 400 beneficiaries was part of the research. The samples were drawn from targeted beneficiaries. Individual interviews alongside focus-group discussions (FGD) were utilized to collect the research data. The focus was to drive the essence of change and as such, queries included general demographics, financial and social aspects and changes. 12 Individual interventions from 4 sectors were selected as the base of the research and they were divided into two major types:

- Gender focused: Interventions aimed at solving specific gender constraints through M4P. The samples were taken from responses of both male and female where females play lead role or get directly affected by the intervention
- Gender neutral: Interventions that are part of wider market constraints. Samples taken from the benefitted males and their wives

The key questions that were sought for were-

- What is the role of Women in the production process?
- What is the level of Women's involvement in household income sharing?
- How much are they involved in knowledge and information sharing process?
- What are the constraints and challenges they face in the production process and terms of input sourcing issues?
- Do they have financial autonomy and control over resources?

The research covered geographically Rajshahi, Rangpur and Barisal regions of Bangladesh. However, due to the political instability of the country, the study duration and completion plan was hindered.

4.1.1. Maize

The research covered the Retailer Training Program initiative facilitated by Katalyst. The findings show that, in terms of social context of gender parity, there is much left to be desired. The societal norms and traditions still binds the women in their ability to achieve equal footing. However, a definite progress can be seen when coupled with economic context. Women who are engaged in economic activities are aspiring higher purchasing power. The availability of better quality fertilizer and seeds are helping to

engage a larger number of women in the sector. This economic empowerment is enabling them to raise their voices regarding their rights as well as take some purchasing decisions.

4.1.2. Vegetable

The safer and judicious usage of pesticide and increasing cropping intensity awareness are the two Katalyst interventions the research focused on in Vegetables sector. A greater liberal attitude can be seen in the sector towards women involvement. It is seen as a convenient way to be actively involved in generating income given the level of education and opportunity. Through active engagement in Katalyst interventions, the beneficiaries have achieved a higher decision making power within their families. They are able to go out for shopping and decide on their children's necessities. They also have decision-making capacity on the next cycle of production and usually have an equal voice about future investments. The increased income has given them an opportunity to improve the living conditions of their family.

4.1.3. Prawn

Three interventions were included in the study. They ranged from Training provision for better cultivation techniques to Awareness regarding better quality input usage. The major findings state a drive for social empowerment through participation in capacity building initiatives, be it formal education or trainings. High involvement in the production process has given them additional financial capacity. It has enriched their decision-making power within the family and increased their social standing.

4.1.4. ILGS

The Improving Local Government Services cross-cutting sector covered a wider economy than most and so five interventions were chosen to identify the impact of the phase II interventions. The research findings show an increased profitability of the women involved, and they are also able to better assist their family's expenses. A higher percentage of the women now have a say in the family's decisions. Access to information and capacity building initiatives have empowered them in achieving higher social standings.

5. Way Forward

The two phases of Katalyst's initiatives to find the right approach to leverage and generate market driven initiatives to solve Gender constraints has culminated in an understanding of the following:

- It is imperative to have a well-defined 'vision' and an adept understanding of the 'Gender' lens. If gender-specific constraints about access and utilization of inputs, services and information are not recognized and analyzed, then system changes cannot be achieved.
- There is no one single approach towards mainstreaming Gender initiatives. The nature of different sectors necessitates different strategies to be adopted as long as the principle of M4P remains behind the strategies.
- Empowerment is a key factor in deciding long term sustainability of interventions. Social and Cultural factors need to be considered and used as a positive force for Gender empowerment.

- Due to the matrix nature of engagement, the operational unit responsible for Gender initiatives requires quick-decision making capacity, strong leadership and continuous exposure to new initiatives taken up for Gender empowerment and M4P.



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