



FEED ^{THE} FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



CASE STUDY: INCLUSIVE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GRANT PORTFOLIO



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA1	Associate Award 1
GIRL	Girls Improving Resilience Through Livelihoods
GYSI	Gender, Youth, and Social Inclusion
FTF	Feed the Future
LMS	Livestock Market Systems
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MSD	Market Systems Development
NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
REAP	Rural Enterprise Access Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Market Systems Development (MSD) programs often depend on grants provided to market actors to accomplish their objectives. These grants are typically given to local organizations or private sector actors to encourage or expand innovative solutions to challenges in market systems or to enhance the capacity of private sector actors. The Feed the Future Livestock Market Systems (LMS) is an MSD project funded by USAID and implemented by ACIDI/VOCA and partners in northern Kenya. USAID LMS is an integrated program that aims to enhance people's resilience to shocks and stresses and reduce poverty, household hunger, and chronic malnutrition in northern Kenya. Like other MSD projects, USAID LMS utilized its grants program as a key mechanism to achieve its overarching goal of expanding and diversifying viable economic opportunities in northern Kenya. The project awarded grants through competitive processes to market actors to create economic opportunities, stimulate enterprise development, and incentivize investments that contribute to strengthening people's resilience in the region.



Fatuma Guyo (right), a small grant recipient and participant of the Girls Improving Resilience Through Livelihoods (GIRL) Program, at her cereal stand at the Moyale Market. Photo credit: David Mutua/ ACIDI/VOCA

USAID LMS had a specific objective of promoting gender equity and women's empowerment by supporting vulnerable women and girls in building incomes and social capital to enhance resilience to shocks. To ensure that activities were designed to achieve this objective, USAID LMS conducted a gender and youth analysis during the startup phase. Using an adapted version of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)¹, the study examined the different patterns of participation and involvement of women and men in livestock and

¹ <https://www.ifpri.org/project/weai>

related markets. It also explored how gender influences access to and distribution of benefits from livestock market systems, such as livestock utilization, livestock products, market information, and services. Additionally, the analysis identified key areas where women face disempowerment in northern Kenya's livestock sector. The study found that despite women's significant involvement and contributions to the livestock sector, they face considerable gender inequalities that limit their participation in and access to benefits from the livestock sector in northern Kenya. Key challenges include:

- Cultural norms surrounding the ownership and management of livestock assets were found to restrict women's access to and involvement in livestock markets. These norms position men as the primary livestock owners and limit women's active engagement in decision-making related to livestock, including production and sales, within the household. However, it was observed that women held cultural responsibility for and had control over the commercialization of milk and the proceeds from its sales.
- Women in northern Kenya faced a disproportionately heavier burden of childcare and domestic work, which, combined with social restrictions on their mobility, hindered their participation and profitable engagement in livestock and other income-generating activities (IGAs). These restrictions included limited travel outside of their homes and limited access to information necessary for making informed decisions and choices regarding resilient livelihoods.
- Women in northern Kenya faced lower literacy levels and lower social status compared to men. Negative stereotypes around women's leadership abilities further hindered their participation in community decision-making forums, such as livestock market associations.
- Gender-based inequalities and discriminatory social norms also played a significant role. These included limited decision-making power for women, restricted access to and control over assets, and high levels of illiteracy. These factors combined to limit women's access to credit, finance, and business support services, ultimately resulting in poor business performance and limited growth prospects for their enterprises. The predominantly informal nature of women-owned businesses further hindered their ability to access credit or loans from formal financial institutions.
- Female entrepreneurs in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) faced challenges in accessing opportunities to develop and enhance their business skills. Their participation in skill-building activities was hindered by low levels of literacy and numeracy. Social restrictions on their mobility, which confined them to their homesteads, further limited their ability to engage in such activities. Additionally, the heavy burden of domestic work placed on them restricted the time available for participating in skill-building programs.

Recognizing these gender inequalities and their impact on women's participation in the livestock sector and overall economic empowerment, AA1 developed a Gender and Youth Strategy² that aligned with USAID's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy³ and ACIDI/VOCA's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy and Gender First approach⁴. The strategy acknowledged the importance of women's empowerment⁵ for household food security and nutritional outcomes in northern Kenya. The strategy also included various activities to promote women's and girls' participation in livestock sectors, decision-making over resources, income generation opportunities, and market access.

2 ACIDI/VOCA. 2020. *Kenya Livestock Market Systems Activity. Gender and Youth Strategy: A Gender Transformative Approach to Implementing Inclusive Livestock Market Systems Programs*. Kenya Livestock Market Systems Activity.

3 2023 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy | Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment | U.S. Agency for International Development ([usaid.gov](https://www.usaid.gov))

4 Gender First - ACIDI/VOCA ([acdivoca.org](https://www.acdivoca.org))

5 Defined as an increase in women's capacity (agency) to choose from existing alternatives (resources) that have the potential to improve their existing situations (achievements). Source: Kabeer, N. (1999) *Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment*. *Development and Change*, 30, 435-464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125>

One of the main strategies employed by USAID LMS to promote women's entrepreneurship, improve access to finance, and enhance business competitiveness in the livestock sector was the utilization of the grants portfolio. This strategy involved providing support to a greater number of women-owned businesses, facilitating the diversification of livestock enterprises, and making investments in women-oriented markets along different value chains within the livestock sector.

This case study is the first of two case studies focused on gender inclusion in USAID LMS's grants portfolio. It explores the steps that USAID LMS took to incorporate inclusion considerations in the design and implementation of its grants portfolio. It will be followed by a second case study which will explore the effectiveness of the grants mechanism within the USAID LMS portfolio in addressing gender-specific barriers to participation, promoting female entrepreneurship, and empowering women in the livestock and related sectors of the ASALs in northern Kenya.

SUMMARY OF USAID LMS'S GRANTS PORTFOLIO

USAID LMS implemented several categories of grants to tackle challenges in the livestock and related sectors of northern Kenya. A sum of \$2.5 million in competitive grants was disbursed to 75 small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with grant amounts ranging from \$700 to \$245,000. Additionally, these enterprises were able to leverage an additional \$531,871. Please see Table 1 for a summary of each grant type, its purpose, and the intended beneficiaries.

Table 1: Types of Grants Issued by USAID LMS

Large/Growth Grant	Designed to support the development and expansion of established livestock-related businesses that create demand for inputs and services that require aggregators and input providers at the supply end, creating a pull effect in the livestock market. The grants were invested in the construction of production and processing infrastructure. The grant amount was \$15,000-25,000.
Medium Grant	Designed to support new technologies and community development activities. Target recipients of this grant were community-level institutions or Ward Planning Committees (WAPC) and private sector entities. The grants were invested in the purchase of water pans, fencing water resources, solar irrigation systems, drilling and equipping boreholes, and food preservation techniques. The grant amount was up to \$10,000.
Small Size Grant- Income generation and supplementation	Designed to support start-up or expansion of businesses along livestock and related value chains. The grant targeted small SMEs operating in the livestock sector such as small-scale traders and suppliers to large entrepreneurs. The grant amount was \$3,500.
Small Size Grant- Multipurpose	Designed to support various income-generating activities (IGAs) that improve resilience. Target beneficiaries of this grant include women/girls in the GIRL ⁶ and REAP ⁷ groups as well as community groups. The grants were issued to support IGAs such as the establishment of milk kiosks and market stalls. The grant amount was \$500.
Small Size Grant: Youth Workforce	Designed to enhance youth employability and workforce development. The grant targeted youth (18-35yrs) and was used to provide partial scholarships to support apprenticeship, vocational or technical training. The grant amount was up to \$500.
Cooperative Grant	Designed to support counties' cooperative developments and strengthen member-based organizations. It targeted technical staff, registered members, and management committees. The grant amount was \$92,000-220,000.

⁶ *Girls Improving Resilience Through Livelihoods Program*

⁷ *Rural Enterprise Access Program.*

GENDER INTEGRATION IN USAID LMS GRANTS DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The following are the six main steps that USAID LMS undertook to ensure the integration of gender considerations in the design and implementation of USAID LMS grants:

Gender Inclusive Language in Solicitation (Call for Proposals)

USAID LMS placed a strong emphasis on ensuring the inclusion of women and youth livestock market actors in the grants process, starting from the design stage. This involved a thorough review of the grant's manual to ensure the use of inclusive language and the integration of gender equality principles throughout the solicitation process. For example, by highlighting equal opportunity and non-discrimination based on gender or other social identities, and encouraging youth, especially young girls, who were unable to attain up to form four of secondary education because of early

Gender Question in the Application Form



How do you intend to integrate female and youth empowerment, nutrition, or water, sanitation, and health objectives into your business activities?

Example of Gender-specific Language in Application: Description of the Target Group



“The group targeted will be women, youth, and men within Isiolo central and Kinna wards. Focus will be the households that are mainly of low-income earners, with existing interest or experience in the poultry production, to move them to the next level and model them for cascade training for the rest.”

marriages and teenage pregnancies to be eligible to apply for the youth grants.

Grant applicants were also required to provide gender-specific data, including information on the sex of the applicant, and to provide gender-related information about their businesses. For example, a general eligibility criterion in the notice of funding for large grants was that the “applicant can incorporate gender and youth-sensitive interventions in the proposed activities.”

The call for concept notes also provided explicit gendered information on the targeted groups.

Gender Sensitive Evaluation Criteria and Review Process



USAID LMS developed gender-sensitive criteria for the grant selection process, ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment were explicitly considered when evaluating grant proposals.

In selecting investment opportunities, USAID LMS considered the potential impact of the grants/investments on the poor and marginalized by incorporating intentional inclusion efforts into grantees' business and operational plans. The evaluation criteria went beyond the gender of the applicant or business owner and allowed for a reflection on gender-related issues that may not have been directly addressed in the application but could potentially influence the decision. The criteria also facilitated a comparison between male and female application and approval ratios and included strategies to address cases of unequal gender distribution if they arose. Examples of cross-cutting considerations in the evaluation of the grant proposals were:

“The extent to which the proposed investment integrates female and youth empowerment, nutrition, or water, sanitation and health objectives.”

— NOFO (Large/Growth Grants)

“The extent to which business products or income earned bring nutritional or health status change to the beneficiary households; improve women’s empowerment; positively impact on the community and ability/capability to conserve the environment through proper waste management.”

— NOFO (Small grants)

The selection criteria also incorporated specific requirements regarding gender equity, such as the inclusion of women in community leadership positions or support for women-led businesses. Through community-level sensitization efforts, USAID LMS facilitated the inclusion of women in the Community Ward Planning Committee (CWPC), which consisted of elders, women, youth, and persons with disabilities. USAID LMS also bundled training on the ward-based development approach that was delivered to the CWPC (to help them identify investment priorities that are eligible for funding) with targeted gender support and sensitization. Both actions ensured that women's voices were heard in determining community development priorities and communities prioritized community development projects with a strong potential to benefit women. An example of such a project is the construction of water pans near households to reduce the time women spend fetching water from rivers.

Finally, the technical committee responsible for reviewing all grant applications included USAID LMS's Gender and Youth Specialist who provided additional guidance to the committee on issues of inclusion and ensured gender-equitable access to opportunities for all grant applicants.

Gender Sensitization and Capacity Building for USAID LMS Staff



USAID LMS conducted capacity-building sessions on gender integration and social inclusion for project staff, including the grants manager and grants team. The objective of these training sessions was to deepen their understanding of gender issues and empower them with the skills needed to successfully integrate gender considerations throughout the grant design and implementation process.

Specifically, the grants team underwent gender training to ensure a collective comprehension of gender and social inclusion (GSI) considerations for the project, as well as the strategies employed by the project to incorporate these considerations into all aspects of its programming with a particular focus on grants. This training aimed to enhance their capacity to foster inclusive design and implementation of USAID LMS activities.



*Narumu Lekeriya is a pioneer camel trader in USAID-supported Merille Livestock Market in Marsabit County.
Photo credit: Mercy Mbuge/ ACIDI/VOCA*



Through USAID LMS, Agnes Wangu the proprietor of Invems Agencies, a dairy and poultry farm in Isiolo County has diversified to making youghurt as well as providing training to other people in the sector ensuring sustainability of her business. Photo credit: Mercy Mbuge/ ACDI/VOCA

Additionally, USAID LMS staff members received training on gender integration in market systems development (MSD) which strengthened their capabilities to adopt a gender lens in the mapping of players in the livestock market, in the analysis of systemic constraints (root causes of under-performance in livestock markets), and in the identification of interventions that will contribute to the achievement of a systemic change in the sector. The training heightened the team's awareness of gender dimensions of the challenges in the livestock sector and why an inclusion lens was necessary in the design of the grants portfolio to help the project achieve its outcomes/goals.

Gender Responsive Grants Information Dissemination

Building upon the insights gained from the gender and youth analysis, which highlighted gender disparities in access to information and utilization of various communication channels, USAID LMS implemented a gender-responsive approach to disseminating the call for applications. This approach included utilizing communication strategies that considered the specific needs and circumstances of women such as women's lower literacy levels, limited mobility, and traditional gender roles that confine them to domestic spaces. For example, using Swahili and other popular vernacular languages in the counties and platforms that women frequent such as churches and hospitals to share information on the opportunity. By using communication strategies and platforms that were accessible to women, USAID LMS aimed to ensure that women in the project zone of influence were well-informed about the opportunity to apply for grants.

Facilitated Linkages between Grantees and Business Support Service Providers

To ensure the effective implementation of the grants by the grantees so that the grants contribute to gender equity and women's empowerment, USAID LMS incorporated additional measures to address the gender disparities

highlighted in the gender and youth analysis. Because female entrepreneurs lack access to business development services and training opportunities in northern Kenya, USAID LMS facilitated female grantees' access to such services to support their participation and profitability in livestock and related markets.

Grantees were also provided with targeted training in areas such as bookkeeping, organization management, and marketing. These training sessions were specifically tailored to address gender-specific barriers that hindered women's access to training and support services. Factors such as literacy levels, heavy workloads, and mobility restrictions were considered when designing the training programs, ensuring they were responsive to the unique needs and circumstances of female entrepreneurs. By incorporating these gender-responsive training initiatives, USAID LMS aimed to enhance the capacity and skills of female entrepreneurs, empowering them to overcome barriers and succeed in livestock and related sectors.

Gender-sensitive Grant Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning



USAID LMS's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system played a crucial role in capturing evidence and promoting gender-focused learning. The MEL system ensured that sex-disaggregated data and gender-specific indicators were tracked, allowing the project to measure and monitor the extent to which women were accessing and leveraging opportunities provided by the grants and contributing to the project's overall gender equality and women's empowerment goals. Furthermore, the MEL plan incorporated gender-sensitive learning and research approaches to allow for a deeper exploration of the gender-specific outcomes and experiences related to the grants.

By integrating gender considerations into the MEL system, USAID LMS ensured that gendered insights were generated, enabling evidence-based decision-making and continuous learning to further enhance the impact of the grants on women's lives. In the second case study, we capture impact stories behind the sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators that the project tracked around its grants portfolio.



LESSONS FOR FUTURE GRANTS PROGRAMS

Grants are essential tools for piloting and scaling up innovations, and they can play a crucial role in removing barriers to profitable female entrepreneurship and promoting women's empowerment. However, to achieve these outcomes, it is crucial for projects to intentionally integrate a gender and inclusion lens throughout the design and implementation of grants.

The findings from a gender and youth analysis are not just valuable for informing project interventions but should also be integrated into all aspects of a grant program. Grants should be designed with a gender lens by providing Gender and Youth Specialist support, integrating inclusion considerations into grants evaluation criteria, and building the capacity of the grants team to ensure gender-responsive implementation are all critical components for achieving the desired outcomes.



WHAT'S NEXT?

In the second case study, we will delve into how USAID LMS, through its grants portfolio, successfully facilitated and encouraged women's participation and entrepreneurship in the livestock sector, which has historically been dominated by men.



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