

Gendered Enterprise and Markets Initiative

Oxfam's Gendered Enterprise and Markets (GEM) Initiative is a cutting edge market systems approach to sustainable livelihoods development. It brings together our experience and expertise in three areas; improving smallholder power in agricultural markets; women's economic leadership; and climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. This will dramatically improve the long-term sustainability and scale of impact of our smallholder livelihoods programmes. The GEM Initiative aims to directly improve the livelihoods of an estimated 40,000 smallholder farmers whilst bringing indirect benefits to almost half a million people living in poverty.



The challenge

Oxfam believes that one of the best ways to help people move out of poverty is to support them to find sustainable livelihoods. The majority of the world's poor live in rural areas where the main livelihood activity is smallholder farming, and so we work with smallholders to improve their access to, and power in, agricultural markets since these frequently offer the best opportunities for a sustainable exit from poverty.

However, in many developing countries, power imbalances between different market actors, or environmental risks (such as drought, flooding or climate change), can prevent marginalised smallholders from accessing and thriving within their local or national agricultural market economies. Entrenched gender inequality means that women find it especially hard to gain positions in markets, especially within the more profitable activities around processing and trading.



The GEM solution

The real value of the GEM initiative is that, for the first time, we have consolidated our considerable experience and expertise across three critical areas affecting enterprise and market systems development, in order to significantly improve the impact and scale of our work with marginalised smallholders;

1. Power in Markets

For over twenty years, Oxfam has been developing approaches to address power imbalances between smallholders and other agricultural market actors. Working collectively increases the power of smallholders and so we support the organisational development of community groups, business enterprises, co-operatives, and unions. We also facilitate multi-stakeholder platforms, to influence local and national government, private sector companies, and other market actors, by showing both the specific and wider socio-economic benefits of investment in smallholder agriculture.

2. Women's Economic Leadership (WEL)

Since 2008, Oxfam has been developing a methodology for programme design to better identify and address power imbalances between men and women in agricultural markets. WEL is about selecting market sub-sectors, or roles, that have the most potential to increase women's power in market activities, as

well as at a household and community level. WEL promotes gender equality in economic decision-making and roles for smallholder women that go beyond production, into more profitable and less risky market activities.

3. Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

For many years, Oxfam has worked with smallholder communities to help them set up their own systems to identify, assess, monitor, mitigate and respond or adapt to environmental risks such as natural disasters (e.g. floods or drought) and, more recently, longer-term gradual changes caused by climate change (e.g. temperature increase or decrease in rainfall). Since smallholders' limited assets are vulnerable to environmental changes, participating in agricultural markets can be a risky business if existing, or emerging, hazards are not adequately addressed - such as appropriate crop selection based on information about climate changes, or vulnerability to disasters.



Project examples

- In Colombia, a dairy company was reluctant to pay for training for women smallholders. When we demonstrated that on farms supplying milk, women were responsible for cleaning milking utensils, the company agreed to invest in hygiene training. By formalising their market role the women increased their political power and generated additional income, while the company was able to improve the quality of its products, increasing sales and profit.
- Dorothy Musoke, a smallholder farmer in Kasese, Uganda, noticed an increased variability in seasonal patterns. With support from Oxfam she has adapted her farm to manage the more frequent rains and is trialling

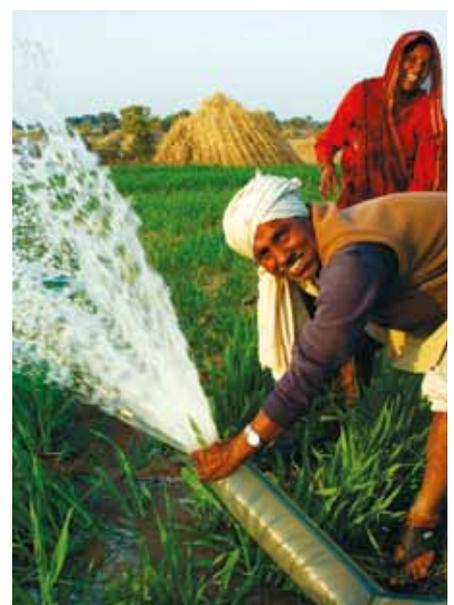
new crops to manage increasing periods of drought, offering her and her family hope in the face of future uncertainty.

- Over the past decade, we've developed a cotton textile supply-chain project in southern India. This combines activities such as training in sustainable organic farming practices, forming an 8,000-member community enterprise, and facilitating buying relationships with an international retail company and India's largest cotton processor. In the project's first seven years, the producers' net profits from cotton sales grew by 112%.



GEM in short...

- GEM is a holistic proposition for creating sustainable income opportunities for women and men living in some of the world's poorest communities.
- GEM is a market systems approach which looks at the whole market environment in order to identify Oxfam's key intervention points to gain the maximum positive sustainable impact for marginalised smallholder communities.
- GEM combines lessons and approaches from three areas of our smallholder work; power in markets, women's economic leadership, and climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
- GEM reduces the economic and environmental risks faced by smallholders by integrating these three critical areas of market analysis, providing a huge opportunity for long term and sustainable solutions to poverty.
- GEM consists of several products; a toolkit for sustainable livelihoods practitioners; a global action learning process and community of practice to share knowledge and encourage investment; and a gallery of at least twelve focus country projects to develop and improve livelihoods programmes across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America.



Find out more and get involved by contacting gem@oxfam.org.uk or visit policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/gem