



External Review of Outcome 2 of the Project ‘Improving Employment and Income through Development of Egypt’s Aquaculture Sector (IEIDEAS)’ from a gender perspective

Report by Dr. Alessandra Galie*



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1. Background information on the Project

The IEIDEAS project started in late 2011 and focuses on generating employment and economic opportunities along the value chain by improving profitability and production in existing fish farms while improving the policy environment for aquaculture development. The project is also designed to test development approaches which could later be applied 'at scale' including ways to improve the livelihoods of female fish retailers, the development of appropriate technologies for expansion of aquaculture in Upper Egypt and making sure that aquaculture benefits the poor.

After two years of implementation the project has started to generate significant outcomes. While there have been regular internal reviews of project progress, an external review of progress towards end-of-project (December 2014) objectives was considered opportune as there is still time to make adjustments to the final year's activities. An external review was considered to also assist in planning for a second phase proposal, due to be submitted to SDC by mid-2014.

a. Background info on the gender evaluation

A specific review of the gender component of the project was commissioned to assess the progress of the project on the second outcome: 'Livelihoods and working conditions of women fish retailers improved through pilot-scale interventions in Sharkia, Kafr El Sheikh, Behera, Fayoum and El Mineya' And the related output: 'Fish retailing organizations established and functioning in 5 governorates'.

The specific aims of the gender evaluations were:

- Assess current (and likely EOP) contribution of current and planned project activities towards achieving Project Output and Outcome 2 and Livestock and Fish IDOs related to gender.
- Recommend additional corrective/complementary/new actions (not planned in the current project) that could generate added value to the project and increase the likeliness of achieving project output and outcome 2.
- Assess whether the documentation plan for outcome 2 will capture sufficient information on project processes and outcomes, and contribute to learning.
- Make recommendations on gender-focused activity areas and objectives for a phase two IEIDEAS project proposal.

The evaluation took place February 25-28 following the schedule below:

Feb 25: Evaluator's travel Nairobi-Cairo

Feb 26: Introduction by CARE and WorldFish to the project

Feb 27: 1 day of fieldwork in Abu Hammad

Feb 28: 1 day fieldwork Shakshuk

Feb 28-29: travel Cairo-Nairobi

Both days of fieldwork were facilitated by Dr Ehab Anwar from CARE who translated the interviews with the following groups in both villages: Community Development Associations (CDA) management, women fish retailer committees, women and men fish retailers.

1 Skype call with the overall project evaluator (April 1, 2014).

b. An overview of this report

This report is based on the following documents provided by the project staff:

Retailers' survey; SDC proposal 'Improving employment and income through development of Egypt's aquaculture sector'; July 2012 Women Retailers' Report; IEDEAS Results chain logframe.

Furthermore, the report is based on the interviews during the two days of fieldwork (Annexes in this document) and the introduction day with CARE and WorldFish.

The report is organised based on three main components: Background information on the project; Findings and lessons learnt; Recommendations for improvement.

2. Findings and lessons learnt

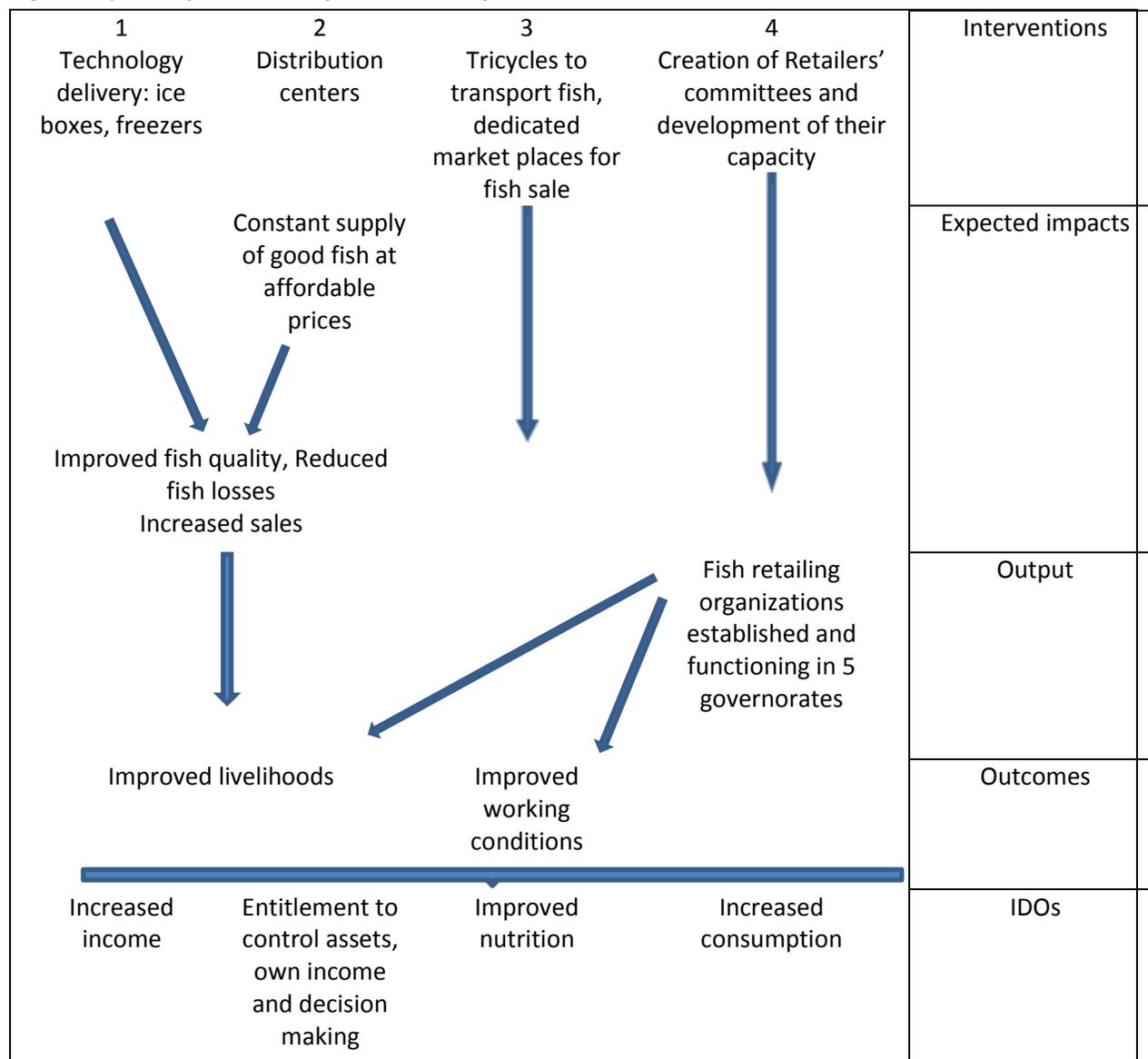
a. Overview of project impact pathway

The project aims to achieve the outcome of 'Livelihoods and working conditions of women fish retailers improved through pilot-scale interventions in Sharkia, Kafr El Sheikh, Behera, Fayoum and El Mineya' through 4 major interventions:

1. Providing the women retailers with technologies – iceboxes and freezers - that might facilitate the transportation, preservation and hygiene of the fish.
2. Creating fish distribution centres for fish retailers to access a constant supply of good fish at affordable prices
3. Providing tricycles to transport fish and spaces for marketing of fish and for purchasing fish at a fixed and convenient price.
4. Building women retailer committees, their capacity and the capacity of the CDA through trainings.

These interventions are believed to result in improved fish quality - only if the fish is delivered to retailers in good condition (clean, chilled or live), which is only possible in areas close to the main supply routes. Improved quality should result in reduced losses and increased sales. Links between this and higher profits, increased incomes, increased consumption and improved nutrition have yet to be demonstrated. The project output is: 'Fish retailing organizations established and functioning in 5 governorates'. Figure 1 shows the project impact pathway as it seems to currently stand.

Fig 1. Project Impact Pathway as it currently stands



The effectiveness of the intervention activities in contributing to the planned project outcome is discussed below with suggestions for improvement.

b. Analysis of the problems according to the fish retailers

The women interviewed during the evaluation fieldwork days reported the following problems: mistreatment by shopkeepers, policemen and other street sellers when they stop nearby them to sell the fish; difficulties with transportation to nearby villages because of expensive prices, complaints by co-passengers about the bad smell of the fish and large fish trays that do not fit in the transport; unreliable supply of fish by wholesalers who do not come to the villages every day and have the monopoly over prices; fish spoilage after few hours at the market because of high temperatures and lack of storage facilities. As a consequence of fish spoilage, the women complained about the loss of income, their

inability to pay back the debt accumulated with the wholesaler when purchasing the fish, and the fact that their debt makes them depend for future purchases on this wholesaler who might also impose a higher price. The women also mentioned: having to pay bribes to policemen when selling on the street without permission, to avoid losing their produce; and a very expensive tax system that takes all their savings in case one of the fish retailers decided to invest money in a formal shop. The interviewed men faced very similar challenges but added that they had an easier time avoiding policemen because they could run away while carrying their fish; some could fish their own fish in nearby areas when the wholesaler did not show up. Also, men could transport their own fish by motorbike and also reach more strategic places for marketing in town.

c. Overview of interventions

Interventions 1 and 3. Technology delivery, tricycles and dedicated market places. The technologies delivered by the project (ice boxes, freezers and tricycles) address the practical hurdles mentioned by the women fish retailer during the interviews. These technologies facilitate the transportation of fish and the hygienic conditions of fish preservation thereby reducing losses and marginally increasing the income of the retailers. However, the number of technologies and their reach are still limited; in the case of Abu Hammad, particularly, only the retailer committee members accessed them.

Intervention 2. Distribution centers

The creation of distribution centers (in progress in Abu Hammad and implemented in Shakshuk) seems to resolve the problem, mentioned by the interviewed women, of unreliable supply of fish by the wholesalers and their monopoly over (high) prices. It also seems to address the condition - expressed in the project impact pathway as necessary to achieve the outcome - that interventions 1 and 2 can result in improved fish quality only if the fish is delivered to retailers in good condition (clean, chilled or live)(Document: IEIDEAS project impact pathways, theory of change and revised logframe). In Abu Hammad the center had not been created yet and during the interviews numerous retailers came to ask about the opening date, showing a great interest in the initiative. In Shakshuk, the distribution center was said to have been boycotted by wholesalers who lowered their prices below costs to regain their customers and undermine the sales of the distribution center.

Intervention 4. Creation of the retailer committee and development of their capacity. The retailer committee members in Abu Hammad did not seem to be aware of their role as representatives of the women retailers in their community. They also could not identify the approximate date of the committee creation. The only comment that indicated an awareness of their role was the mention that they needed to become a formalized entity to claim the rights of women fish retailers – like a syndicate, as they agreed. The women retailers interviewed from the communities did not know about the existence of the committee. The committee representatives enjoyed almost if not all the benefits of the intervention (the technologies did not reach non-committee members). Project trainings to enhance the committee’s ability to act as a group seemed to have been only partly effective. After one training the committee thought of creating a fund to support financially the needy women retailers, this was the only initiative they mentioned. In Shakshuk, on the contrary, the retailers committee members were well aware of their

role as ‘representatives’, could mention problems faced by other women retailers but not themselves, and listed initiatives they had taken to address the problems of the women fish retailer (express their problems to the CDA or the government officials, organizing common pricing policies etc). In both villages awareness of how the trainings contributed to their role as committee members was not clear.

d. Contribution of interventions to the output

The project output is ‘Fish retailing organizations established and functioning in 5 governorates’. The connections between project intervention 4, that directly contributes to the output, and interventions 1, 2, and 3 might need further clarification. Also, the ways interventions 1, 2 and 3 contribute to the output might need to be more explicitly stated.

Based on the evidence from Abu Hammad (above), the existence of the committee seemed a mechanism that, rather than widening the participation of fish retailers, concentrated the enjoyment of benefits to a small group – that of the committee members themselves. Also, the committee seemed not to be aware about their roles as ‘representatives’ of women fish retailers. One reason for this can be the way members were selected by the CDA: rather than engaging the community in a process to select their representative, the CDA recruited the women fish retailers who appeared to be most active. The committee members in Shakshuk, however, were selected in similar ways and seemed aware of their role and actively engaging in solving the problems of the fish retailers. This evidence suggests that the project needs to identify what mechanisms are most effective to establish the committee as functioning entities in order to achieve its output. The project needs to evaluate what mechanisms can increase the ‘representativeness’ of the retailers committee and how to better implement intervention 4 in order for the retailing organizations to function effectively.

e. Contribution of interventions to outcomes

The project outcomes include: ‘Improved livelihoods’ and ‘Improved working conditions’.

Intervention 3 seems to directly contribute to the outcome ‘Improved working conditions’ by providing tricycles that facilitate the transportation of fish, and covered market spaces where women fish retailers are authorized to sell. These spaces are also provided with water and facilities that improve the hygienic conditions of the fish sale. Intervention 4, the creation of the retailers committee, is also a mechanism to give voice to the retailers through the CDA so that their problems can be addressed. The effectiveness of the committees in voicing the needs of the women retailers has been discussed above. Whether the CDA in turn, has the capabilities to address these problems needs understanding. In both Abu Hammad and Shakshuk, and particularly in the former, the success of the CDA negotiations with the local government seemed alternate. In Abu Hammad, the CDA had failed to agree on a marketing space for the retailers and to sensitize the local government officials to the issue of harassment. A strategy to improve the collaboration between the CDA and the local government might be needed to strengthen the ‘improved government relations’ mentioned in the Project Impact Pathway (fig 2). Finally, this report recommends that the project addresses social stigma towards fish retailers (see below) as the key and most sustainable change behind the improvement of working conditions.

The outcome ‘improved livelihoods’ rests on the assumption that the retailers access good quality fish at affordable prices. Intervention 2 addresses this issue directly by creating distribution centers. However, a number of problems were encountered when setting up the distribution centers in Shakshuk (above). A better understanding of the dynamics at play in Shakshuk and of more effective models to integrate the distribution center in the current fish sale system seems necessary to avoid marginalizing other categories in the value chain (e.g. the wholesalers) possibly compromising the effectiveness of the intervention. Initiatives alternative to the distribution centers to improve fish delivery might also be considered.

Intervention 1 helps keep the fish in better conditions reducing losses and therefore increasing income. The reach of this intervention was still limited up to the time of this report. The respondent retailers who had access to ice boxes and freezers did mention a reduction in losses and an increase in income. However, the project might want to assess on a larger scale the connections between interventions 1 and 2 and the outcome ‘improved livelihoods’ (as expressed in the impact pathway, page 4 in this document). In addition, this report recommends the adoption of a gender approach (more information below) that might reveal intra-household dynamics at play in controlling the income and expenditures highlighting who benefits mostly from the improved income thereby adding a more nuanced view on ‘improved livelihoods’.

f. Contribution of interventions to IDOs

The project IDOs related to the CRP Livestock and Fish include: ‘Increased income’, ‘Entitlement to control assets, own income and decision making’, ‘Improved nutrition’, and ‘Increased consumption’.

The contribution of the interventions to ‘increased income’ has been discussed above. Similarly, the previous section argues that only a gender approach to intra-household dynamics can reveal whether women and/or men control assets and income, and are involved in decision-making. Overlooking such an analysis implies assuming that the households of the fish retailers are functional unit with equal relations of power or disagreement.

The IDOs ‘improved nutrition’ and ‘increased consumption’ seem to need a specific focus to be achieved. Many respondents mentioned fish sourced in non-clean waters, wholesalers selling already dead fish and aquaculture fish being fed improperly. Because the quality of the fish does not seem to be monitored, currently, the project might want to study the hygienic conditions of the fish sale and related food safety considerations. A gender approach to intra-household food consumption is recommended to reveal how household expenditures are managed vis-à-vis food purchases and who accesses and controls food consumption.

3. Recommendations for improvement

a. Next months

Distribution centers. The project needs to monitor whether the distribution centers can provide retailers with constant provision of good quality fish at affordable prices. Also, given the experience in Shakshuk, the project might want to understand better the dynamics at play in the community that led the wholesaler to boycott the initiative. A more effective model to integrate the distribution center in the current fish sale system seems necessary. Also, initiatives alternative to the distribution centers to improve fish delivery might also be considered.

Technology delivery. The ways in which the delivery of technologies (iceboxes, freezers and tricycles) contributes to the overall sustainability of the intervention needs to be assessed because currently the retailers do not have financial resources or market access to purchase the items without the mediation of the project.

Retailer committees. The committee members in Abu Hammad seemed not to be aware of their roles as community representatives maybe because of the committee selection mechanism adopted by the CDA. This same selection mechanism, however, was implemented successfully in Shakshuk. This report, therefore, recommends a further analysis of the mechanisms that made the same approach successful in one case and less successful in another. Also, the project might engage in assessing 1. what type of interventions are needed to increase the capacity of the committee and 2. what trainings are needed and how their will increased the functioning of the committee.

This understanding and assessment will be key to implement effective approaches to achieve the output of the current project and ensure the successfulness and sustainability of the second phase.

Gender issues rather than women only. The effectiveness of addressing gender issues - rather than working with women only - has been highlighted in gender and development literature. Also in the case of this project, it seems recommendable to approach the project with a gender lens (see below for more details). In the next months the project might want to engage in assessing in what ways the shift from a focus on women to a focus on gender might affect their activities, approach and project organization in order to build a stronger proposal for phase two.

Documentation plan. The following items might be integrated in the current documentation plan (although the items below require a research component): Appreciate how a shift from women to gender might affect activities approach and project organization; Understand how to better integrate the distribution centers in the current fish marketing system; Explore alternatives to provide retailers with reliable, quality and affordable fish; Assess what mechanisms can make retailers committees more effective (including capacity development needs).

Human resources. The suggested research and documentation requirements for gender analysis in the next months might entail that extra resources are dedicated to both expand the CARE team to include a gender expert and to increase the involvement of gender scientists at WorldFish.

b. Phase two

Phase two aims to address poverty reduction goals by extending the approach to other parts of the country. Strengthening the links between the interventions and the IDOs in the project impact pathway and based on the experience of phase 1 seem crucial.

Focus on gender and transformative approaches. Phase one of the project was successful in addressing some of the issues faced by the women fish retailers and revealed the potential of other planned interventions. However, phase two might consider adopting a gender lens rather than focus on women only. Fish retailers, whether men or women, seem to face similar challenges although some differences existed – as exemplified by men’s better ability to respond to aggression by policemen or move to better marketing places. By addressing the problems of fish retailers with a gender approach the project might be able to more sustainably improve their situation and avoid transforming it into a ‘women’s issue’. Involving women and men in the intervention might leverage their collective action and be more effective by leveraging the strengths and opportunities of each group. On the contrary, the interviewed men fish retailers felt excluded from the project - despite the fact that they faced issues similar to the women retailers – in one case were discouraged from using the market place created for the women and generally developed a sense of competition rather than collaboration with the women retailers in solving their common problems.

Finally, adopting a gender approach allows the appreciation of the situation of women fish retailers in the wider context where their life takes place: their families and communities. Some of the interviewed women retailers mentioned that their husbands supported them in their work after seeing the income they earned. An appreciation of the social context of the women fish retailers might reveal new problems and opportunities that the project can take into account to increase the sustainability of its intervention. The adoption of a gender transformative approach might facilitate the acceptance by men of the involvement of women in representational roles, as expressed by one CDA member, who, after the gender training, accepted that his wife takes such an opportunity. This decision pushed other families to also allow their teacher wives to take on new opportunities at work, he added.

Finally, it is advisable that phase two integrates a gender approach throughout the project rather than in one component of the project as is currently the case.

Gender in value chains. The project might also consider integrating gender in a value chain approach. The interviewed fish retailers seemed to be engaged in their activities for lack of alternatives. A gender-sensitive value chain approach can help ensure that women are not only represented in the less income-generating activities of the chain, as is currently the case, but are integrated also in more lucrative segments of the fish value chain. A gender transformative approach might be essential to facilitate the integration of fish retailers in better employment options along the value chain.

Address social stigma. The interviewed women and men retailers from both villages reported hostile treatment or even aggressive behavior by shop keepers, public transport passengers, policemen and other street sellers related to the bad smell of the fish. Both women and men fish retailers agreed men are in a better position to face these aggressions. The project might want to consider engaging in transforming social perceptions of fish retailers at community level in order to reduce the social stigma associated with

the profession. This might help improve the work environment and reduce the marginalization of fish retailers. The importance of addressing social stigma is also indicated by a young unemployed couple: they both held a degree but had not jobs. They could not utilize the shop they owned to sell fish because, according to the family of the young man, this was below their social status. It was preferable for the young wife to accompany her mother and sell fish informally on the street, a less visible activity than having a shop.

Working with social perceptions in communities, means engaging different stakeholders, such as policemen, wholesalers and policy makers to increase their awareness of the issues the project is dealing with and possibly facilitate their buying in rather than antagonistic approaches. The example of the wholesalers in Shakshouk who lowered their price below costs to undermine the distribution center they perceived as an intrusion in their system, is a revealing case. Engaging the community and addressing their social perceptions can be a long-lasting change that affects the working and life environment of the retailers in a sustainable manner, i.e. beyond the end of the project.

Sustainability When asked about the future of the project activities after the end of the project, CDA members in Abu Hammad mentioned only the distribution centre they were building as a lasting output of the project. Before the project, women fish retailers were not their target group and they were not sure they would be after the end of the project. In Shakshuk, on the contrary, fish retailers are a large component of the community that constituted the target group of the CDA before the project and, according to the CDA this situation would not change after the end of the project. The project might therefore engage in more sustainable interventions by possibly addressing some of the governance, gender and social norms mentioned above. By strengthening the fish retailers as a group, facilitating the creation of a representational system and providing a mechanism for them to voice their needs, fish retailers might continue to be supported by the CDA in Abu Hammad also in the future. The need to strengthen the CDA's capability to support the committee in addressing their problems has been discussed above.

This report recommends also an analysis of good strategies to create effective committees. This analysis might reveal the circumstances under which the creation of a retailers' committee can enhance the sustainability of the project intervention by empowering the retailers. The findings can be used to inform the refinement of strategies to better target the approach to the project localities.

Address the issue of nutrition. To progress towards increased nutrition and the project might address the issues of the hygienic conditions of the fish sale and related food safety considerations. Evidence about fish safety and nutrition might support in consolidating the Project Impact Pathway (Fig 1 below)

Capacity development. Phase two might consider strengthening the correlation between the trainings and the project goals. The trainings organized by the project in phase one seem to have been partly successful even though the trainees both in the committees and the CDAs seemed not to be able to directly relate them to the project or their work. The selection of the trainings might be reviewed and alternative capacity development approaches considered to strengthen, among other issues, the capacity

