

EMPOWERING MARGINALISED ACTORS CORE GUIDANCE

In a nutshell:

A set of strategies for empowering and building the capacity of marginalised actors to have the basic set of skills and power to kick start engagement with other market actors.

Status:

Core Tool

Introduction & overview

Empowerment – why?

PMSD includes a strong focus on facilitating market systems to become not only more efficient and productive, but also more inclusive and equitable. This is informed by the historical evidence around ‘trickle-down growth’ and the idea that ‘a rising tide lifts all boats’ – dominant narratives in economic development in the 1980s and 1990s. We now know that these ideas aren’t borne out by reality: markets can perpetuate and entrench marginalisation and poverty, and need to be purposively shaped to ensure the poorest benefit. In this way PMSD is in line with the UN’s ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ that pledges that “no one will be left behind”.

Empowerment – for whom?

Preliminary Market Mapping and Analysis will have helped identify which actors within a market system are **marginalised**. Often these are poor small-scale producers and farmers, but can also include workers, local service providers, and small-scale intermediaries. These marginalised actors are the key stakeholders in this step in the PMSD process.

Definition – Marginalisation in the market system: *Actors who form part of the system, but who face disadvantage due to a lack of bargaining power, knowledge, political influence, socio-economic status, etc.*

As the definition above makes clear, ‘marginalisation’ goes beyond simple income or asset poverty, it encompasses social exclusion and its multitude of contributing factors, including (but not limited to): economic, social, political, cultural, religious, technological, informational and psycho-social factors.

Linked to this, it is important to recognise that whilst focused on market systems, PMSD sees these systems as much broader than simple sets of economic transactions. Market systems are full of opportunities for the poor – even for the poorest of the poor; by providing spaces to build relationships, self-esteem and knowledge.

Think about gender!

Gender is one of the four core principles of PMSD. Across the globe women and girls are subject to more extensive discrimination and disadvantage compared to men and boys. The picture isn't uniform, of course there are variations in terms of the ways and means and the extent, but nonetheless the overall trend is clear. Therefore, whenever we start considering who is marginalised and how, we need to be exploring the differences and similarities in experiences of women and men.

Empowerment – what is it?

Let's start with what is not 'empowerment'. Within the gambit of PMSD, the provision of technical training to improve knowledge and skills of marginalised actors is not empowerment. It's important, but it's not empowerment, and it's not the role of Practical Action (when practising PMSD). The market system should provide these services, and PMSD is designed to catalyse it to do so.

Empowerment is about providing marginalised market actors with a **minimum initial set of skills and attitudes** that enable them to engage with other market actors in ways that are:

- **Proactive:** marginalised actors see potential business and market opportunities and go for them themselves, instead of waiting for NGOs or other market actors to tell them what to do.
- **Creative:** marginalised actors bring their knowledge and/or combine knowledge from other actors to propose new solutions that are appropriate and relevant.
- **Effective:** marginalised actors get business deals done and build relationships that work for them and add value for other actors in the market system.

What we're aiming for is engagement between actors that enables the system to unlock cycles of marginalisation, poverty and environmental degradation that currently affect marginalised actors.

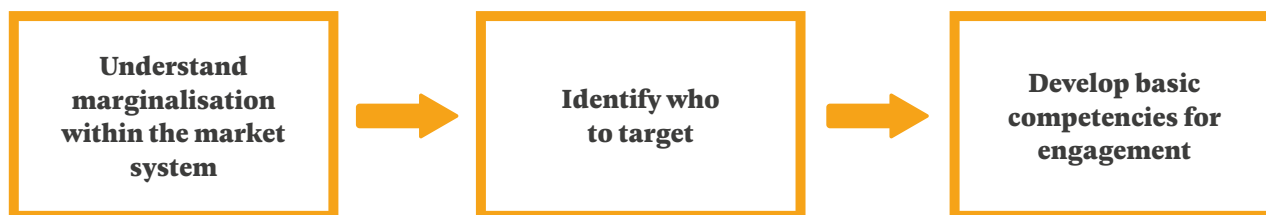
Empowerment – how?

Fundamental to empowering marginalised actors to engage with others in ways that are proactive, creative and effective are three minimum competencies:

- Representation and mobilisation
- Market literacy
- Dialogue and negotiation.

These are explained in more detail in section 3 below. Practical Action's role is to support marginalised market actors to develop a minimum and initial level of confidence and competence in these three areas. Due to both cumulative impacts of discrimination and disadvantage, and due to differing social-norms around women's and men's roles and responsibility, it may be appropriate at times to take different approaches to supporting female and male market actors.

An Overview of the key stages



- Review 'Preliminary Market Mapping & Analysis'
- Facilitate discussions with market actors
- Ensure marginalised actors play an active part in analysis
- Agree the 'aspects of marginalisation'

- Invest time in getting this right
- Assess each actor against the 'aspects of marginalisation'
- Identify the 'target group' and other actors who can engage better with the target group

- Mentor, train, support facilitate marginalised actors to improve skills, knowledge & attitudes around 3 core competencies: 1, representation & mobilisation; 2, market literacy; 3, dialogue & negotiation

Stage 1 – Understand marginalisation within the market system

Introduction

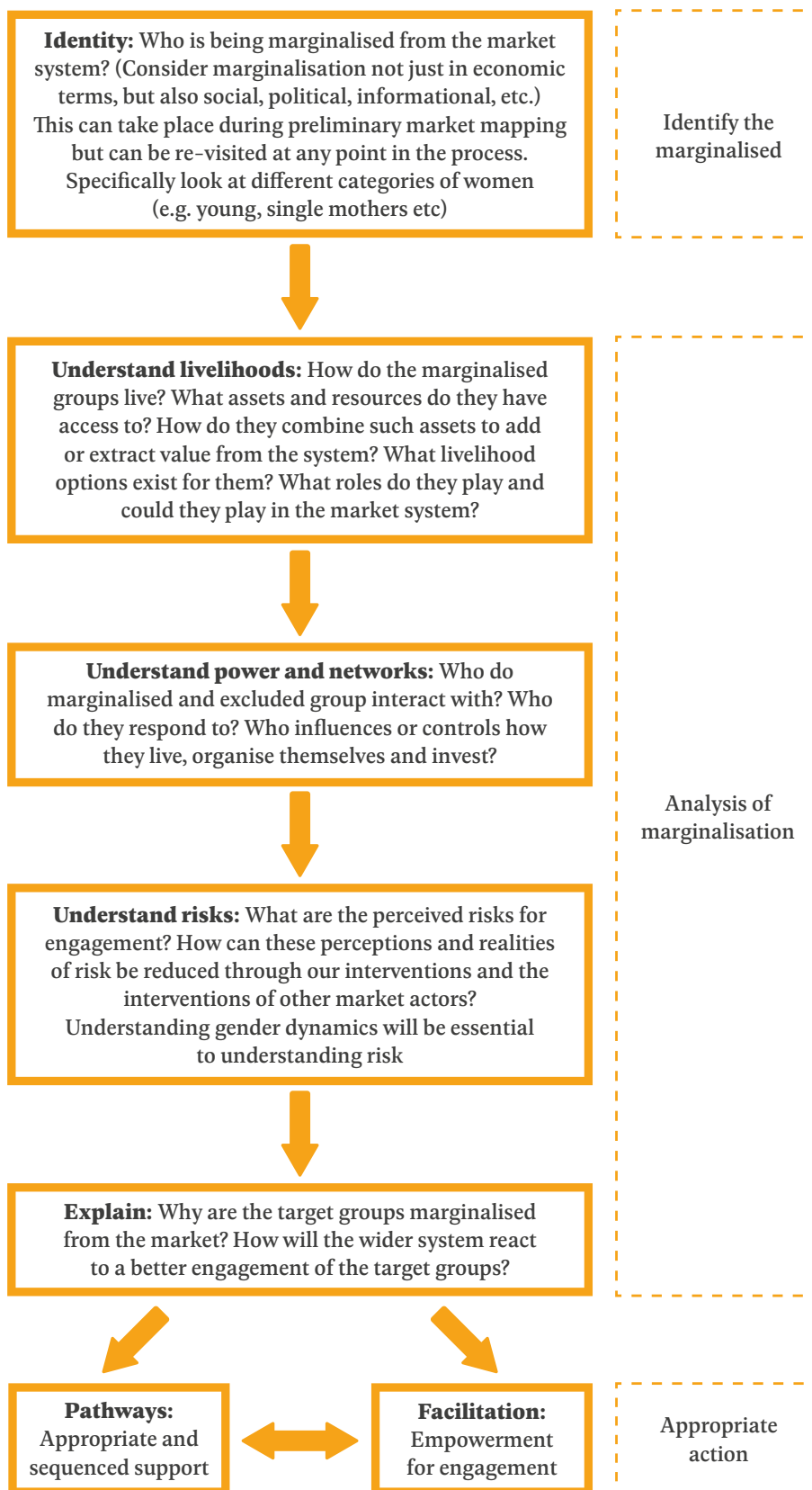
As noted in the introduction, the previously completed Preliminary Market Mapping and Analysis will have helped identify which actors within a market system are marginalised. However, PMSD is an iterative cyclical process, so is worth returning to this step and reviewing the mapping. There are likely to be gaps or limitations where gaining deeper insight will be helpful, this is the purpose of this stage.

As Practical Action we are intentionally targeting market systems with the potential to reduce poverty of marginalised actors, so even at the stage of Market System Selection, some consideration of marginalisation will have taken place. It can be worth looking back at the rationale for market system selection to reconnect with these considerations.

A process

The following diagram provides a model to gain deeper insight into the marginalised target groups within a market system.

Figure 2: The process of understanding marginalisation - a useful model.



Facilitate discussions with market actors

PMSD is not only about “making markets work better for the poor” but also about empowering the poor to make their markets work better for them. Remember, throughout the whole PMSD process Practical Action’s role is as a facilitator. Therefore, even at the stage of analysing marginalisation within the market system, we shouldn’t do all the analysis ourselves, we should help actors to analyse the system and its aspects of marginalisation for themselves.

Facilitated discussions or forums can be used to promote reflection amongst marginalised actors and other strategic stakeholders. Facilitation skills are crucial here, it’s not about surveying or interviewing people, but about using open questions and active listening to guide and prompt reflection. Some guiding questions and suggestions:

- **How do participants understand poverty?** Take note of aspects they mention. Try to understand if participants see poverty as resource scarcity, or as exclusion from economic, social, political and informational processes, or as something different. Do women and men have differing views on poverty? How do these different views reflect differences in the realities experienced by women and men?
- **How do participants experience poverty?** In other words, how is poverty manifesting in their lives? For example, what is articulated as “lack of jobs” may be manifested in the fact that men have to migrate and leave their families for long periods of time. Are these experiences different for women and men? Are they different for people at different stages of the life-cycles and/or for people of different ethnic, religious, caste or linguistic groups.
- **What are the knock-on effects of poverty?** Do they result in cycles? Try to explore as many knock-on effects as possible and help participants to reflect on connections between different effects. For example, actors not being able to be close to their children could contribute to the children missing school on a regular basis, and therefore decrease their chances of finding a good job in the future. Are the knock-on effects different for women and for men? Do differences reflect differences in gendered roles and responsibilities, and/or gendered differences in access to resources and social networks?
- **What do participants see as the causes of their poverty and marginalisation?** Who or what do they see as the driving forces? Are views on causes and driving forces different between women and men? Are there situations or processes where they are contributing to their own marginalisation? Help participants to reflect about values, beliefs, attitudes, preconceptions, institutions, that may be fuelling poverty – explore differences and similarities between women and men in this.

Think about gender!

As noted, gender is one of the four core principles of PMSD. When facilitating discussions with market actors, we need to be deliberate and intentional on ensuring these are conducted with gender sensitivity.

- Women are the best authority on their own lives, and men on theirs. Ensure we **engage directly** with both men and women.
- **Don’t assume** that men can speak on behalf of women – no matter whether they are fathers, husbands, community leaders or service providers working directly with women.
- Often it is best to ensure at least some of the engagement is with women and men **separately**. In many contexts it is more effective if women staff members engage with women, and male staff members with men. People may be more trusting of people of their own gender and therefore more willing to discuss sensitive issues in their presence.
- Everyone has busy lives, but women especially so. This is sometimes referred to as the ‘triple burden’ – where women are expected to earn money (‘productive work’), look after the home, children and other dependents (‘reproductive work’), and participate in community forums and institutions (‘community work’). Stakeholder engagement activities must be scheduled to **minimise disruptions** to women’s schedules and **minimise any additional burden**. Consider timings and locations: when are women least likely to be busy; are women able to travel to these places without undue burden (time, cost) or causing negative repercussions (e.g. rumours or reprimands for contravening social norms).

- Women and men are not homogeneous groups, other aspects of identity overlap and intersect – **‘intersectionality’**. Therefore, it is worth exploring these aspects. This may include understanding differences for men and women at different stages of the life cycle (age), or how relations between ethnicities, castes, religions or linguistic groups interact with gender roles.
- **Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tools** are an excellent way to understand roles, responsibilities and relations. They can also be effective at building trust and supporting people to collaborate and gain new insights. Although they take time, when facilitated well, the **quality of information** generated is often higher than that gained through discussions and interviews.
- Finally, don’t assume that everything is negative for women and girls! Whilst of course the evidence is clear that across much of the world women and girls face more discrimination and disadvantage than men and boys, nonetheless **women and girls everywhere have skills, knowledge, ideas, resources, and social capital**.

Identify the key aspects of marginalisation

Analyse the information gathered in 1.3 above and in **Preliminary Market Mapping** to draw out the **‘key aspects of marginalisation’** – the ways in which and processes through which actors are marginalised. These can be **categorised** as: economic, social, political, cultural, religious, technological, informational and psycho-social.

Remember, these aspects may not be uniform across all marginalised market actors, and more specifically, in some cases are likely to vary with gender. Be sure to examine where there are differences for women and men actors, what is driving these differences, and whether there are signs that these are changing for younger compared to older generations.

Stage 2 – Identify who to target

Introduction

Identifying who the right actors are is challenging and time consuming, but the rewards are high. Once the right actors are empowered to engage, the rest is easier and more effective in terms of poverty reduction at scale.

The preliminary market mapping and stakeholder analysis completed in **Preliminary Market Mapping** should provide an initial list of people to engage in the PMSD process. Stage 1 of this step (above) should have provided deeper insight in the dynamics of marginalisation.

As you engage with market actors, some challenges to be alert to:

- Some market actors do not like to look weak or admit that they need help
- Some actors pretend to be or sincerely believe that they are weaker than they really are
- Some market actors do not know what skills and attitudes are needed to engage with the rest

Identification

Broadly, there are two groups of actors who may need to be empowered

1. The target group: the ‘marginalised’ groups you identify
2. The not-so-poor or the better-off, who need to be empowered to engage better with the target group (generally in the form of orientation or awareness raising)

Bring together the list of actors developed in Preliminary Market Mapping and the list of ‘aspects of marginalisation’ identified in section 1.4 above.

Use the following questions for each of the target groups:

- a. Is this target group (community, group, network, etc.) marginalised in [aspect A]?
- b. How is this marginalisation manifesting in the lives of the target group? Is this marginalisation different for women compared to men?
- c. What basic and minimum skills or attitudes does this target group need to engage better with [actor 1]. How are current levels of skills in this regard, do they vary between women and men?
- d. If the target group is successfully empowered, will [actor 1] engage well? Is this the case for both women and men from the target groups? Are other socio-cultural norms at play which are likely to result in different outcomes for women and men?
 - If not: are there similar actors who would engage positively?
 - Yes: Then engage them
 - No: what basic and minimum skills/attitudes should [actor 1] have to engage well with the target group?

NB: Try to work with market actors who are supportive of the principles of PMSD, who have incentives to engage or who find it easy to understand the value of market-wide improvements. In highly dysfunctional market systems you may have no choice but to invest time and resources in the few actors who are available to the target groups. If so, keep this in mind for your work plan and budget!

Further considerations.

Once the representatives of the target populations and other marginalised actors have been identified, it is convenient to work with them as groups. In PMSD, these groups are referred to as ‘Market Opportunity Groups’ (MOGs), because their main objective is to explore new market opportunities for their peers. MOGs are the focus of most of the empowerment for engagement processes that follow.

Remember throughout: PMSD is an iterative process. Don’t be afraid to go back to the initial market mapping and review and revise. Equally don’t be afraid to return to Stage 1 above, and further explore marginalisation, either more deeply or with other market actors. In addition, make time within the project team and with market actors to have systematic and periodic reflections about which aspects of marginalisation you are paying attention to and why.

Stage 3 – Develop basic competencies for engagement

Introduction

Our aim is to empower marginalised market actors by providing a **minimum initial set of skills and attitudes** that enable them to engage with other market actors in ways that are: **proactive, creative, effective**. To do so, it is critical to build three core competencies that are often lacking:

- **Representation and mobilisation:** The abilities of market actors to organise themselves and choose leaders to represent them. The ability of the representatives to report back to their constituencies, and to mobilise them to take action towards the plans and agreements that are struck via the participatory process.

- **Market literacy:** The ability of marginalised actors – and their representatives in particular – to understand the market system in which they participate, the different actors within it and how they can interact to make the system work better as a whole.
- **Dialogue and negotiation:** The ability of marginalised actors, and particularly their representatives, to get their point across in meetings with more powerful actors, and to communicate their potential and needs persuasively.

Developing Competencies

There are numerous ways in which to develop these competencies, many of which Practical Action staff will have used on numerous interventions beyond PMSD. Suggestions include:

- Mobilising market actors to form ‘market opportunity groups’, including electing leaders.
- Mentoring, training and peer-to-peer learning to support the development of leaders.
- Foundational (soft) skills trainings around managing groups, group governance and accountability, communication, networking, business skills, market mapping.
- Exchange visits to existing ‘market opportunity groups’ or other producer collectives.
- Market actor forums where actors meet, share ideas, strengthen networks, build alliances.

The key thing here is to focus on the **behaviours** we want to see practised by marginalised actors in relation to each of the three core competencies. Activities and approaches should be selected based upon how best to cultivate these within the specific context in question and the identified needs of the market actors.

Key behaviours for marginalised actors to practice in order to engage better with other market actors

Representation and mobilisation

- Engage with other market actors with the interests of your peers at heart.
- Use the position of power that the PMSD process gives you responsibly and strategically. This is your chance to speak up for your peers within spaces like the participatory market mapping workshops or the interest forums.
- Report back to your peers about what is happening in the PMSD process.
- Help your peers to align their strategies and investment plans with those coming out of the negotiations with the other market actors in the PMSD process.

Market literacy

- Negotiate mainly in terms of quality and quantity; not only price.
- Know what the buyer and their buyers need or desire.
- Make repeated sales (buyers coming back for more) your main objective; making a lot of money once is not sustainable.
- Build trust and transparency with your buyers and providers.

Dialogue and negotiation:

- Other market actors will engage with you out of interest; not out of pity or because they want to help you.
- Some of the interests of some of the market actors are complementary or similar to yours; use them to build trust, explore business opportunities, collaborative relationships or coordination of efforts.
- Listen carefully, be kind, be patient, be respectful to others. Put yourself in the situation of the person talking with you.
- Very few market actors have ill intentions; most actors' behaviour stems from their interests, assumptions and preconceptions, imperfect and incomplete information, and even fear, etc. The PMSD process will help you and all other actors to find out compatible interests, clarify assumptions, learn from one another and build trust.
- Dialogue and negotiation takes time. Be prepared for several meetings, many of which will be frustrating. Do not give up at the first obstacle.

Further information about the competencies is included in Annex 1.

Remember, gender! Gender is defined as “*Socially constructed roles and relations between men and women, boys and girls.*” Gender varies across cultures and over time. Therefore, whilst the ‘behaviours’ we’re aiming for may have uniformity across women and men market actors, the extent to which socio-cultural norms will help or hinder these will vary between cultures. It may be important to discuss and analyse these directly with the market actors. Cultures are not static, they are continually adapting and changing. It will be important to understand from women and men directly (and sometimes separately) where local socio-cultural norms can support changes towards gender equality, where there is likely to be resistance and how best to overcome that resistance.

It is important to also consider where the opportunities and push-back may come from within the marginalised market actors we’re working with. Male marginalised actors, may be hesitant or even resistant to sharing the fruits of improved market systems with women for example. Similarly, thinking back to the ‘triple burden’ that women face, women marginalised actors may not want to participate in all new behaviours that are opening-up via PMSD.

The important point here is continued and iterative reflection, consultation, analysis and adaptation. The guidance on pg.8 above will be helpful with this.

Further considerations

The three core competencies are synergic. Working on one set of skills will build the other two. For example, if you managed to facilitate a good process of selection of representatives, it is very likely that these people will be good at (or are prone to) effective dialogue and negotiation; or if you build basic market literacy, the representatives will tend to be more effective negotiators.

Use approaches, methods and tools your team members already know. This guideline assumes that you have some experience in working with marginalised actors.

Avoid training market actors in skills that the market system should provide. Do this only when you need to demonstrate the effect of new ideas, technologies or models, or to create opportunities for market actors to come together to build trust, new forms of collaboration and coordination, and friendship. For example, hands-on, technical training events and field visits.

Further info on Market Opportunity Groups

Introduction

Market opportunity groups (MOGs) are small groups of representatives of marginalised producers (5-10 people per MOG). Representatives are normally selected democratically or via consensus amongst larger numbers of peers. MOGs act as mobilisers of wider groups of marginalised producers, and as a bridge between these and the members of the interest forum. The degree to which they can be effective in these two functions will have a significant effect on how inclusive and scalable the process of market development is.

Main functions of MOGs

The main functions of Market Opportunity Groups are as follows.

- To explore market opportunities, challenges and solutions with other market actors in the interest forums on behalf of their peers (other marginalised producers).
- To take these opportunities, challenges and solutions back to their peers.
- To explore adaptations to these opportunities, challenges and solutions with their peers that will make them more appropriate or relevant to them and therefore increasing the chances of sustainability and scalability.
- To bring counter-proposals or new ideas from the marginalised producers back to the interest forum.
- To mobilise their peers around plans agreed upon by the interest forums.

New or existing groups?

There is no easy answer to the question of whether to create MOGs from scratch or to leverage existing groups. Decide based on your team's experience, contextual knowledge, analysis of stakeholders, preliminary market mapping and information gathered from the market actors themselves. Do not get stuck in the traditionally accepted idea that pre-existing organisations are always best; do not be afraid to promote new groups if evaluations and intuitions tell you that they will help you to facilitate the process more effectively. The following table describes some opportunities and risks in both approaches:

	Working through existing groups	Creating new groups
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Draw on existing cohesion, levels of trust and decision-making mechanisms● Channel to reach existing membership base● Take advantage of other complementary functions of the organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ensure representation and participation of the poor through its design● Emphasise economic partnerships, keep focused on market development● Create opportunities for new leaders and ideas to emerge
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reinforce existing community power structures, community level marginalisation and exclusion● Reduce opportunities for innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Additional resource support likely required● Takes time to develop self-determination● May not avoid existing community power structures

MOGs and Gender

Gender needs to be considered during the formation of MOGs and throughout the provision of support. In some socio-cultural contexts, single-gender MOGs are more appropriate and in others mixed-gender MOGs will be. Decisions should be informed by the team's understanding of context and more importantly by the preferences and priorities of the marginalised actors themselves (both women and men). There are many examples of mixed-gender producer organisations where male members and leaders have come to dominate discussions and decision-making – and in some cases, women leadership on paper has been a smokescreen for male dominance in practice. Practical Action needs to be aware and alert to these risks. In some contexts, women have had more exposure to working in groups (e.g. in areas where NGOs have promoted savings and credit schemes for example) – their knowledge and experience can be invaluable in building the skills and knowledge of male members, provided male members are open and receptive. Equally in many contexts, women are less recognised for their (non-domestic) economic roles and have more limited social networks in this regard. Tailored support to rectify these inequalities can be part of Practical Action's role as well as (and ideally) the role of the wider market system. Sensitising other actors around gender in the market systems can also be critical.

Assessing MOGs

The following questions are useful for assessing MOGs. It's worth using these at least annually to provide a consistent and structured process for reviewing MOGs participating in PMSD. Like everything, MOGs change over time and you may need to adjust your incentives, strategies or activities as a facilitator to make sure the market opportunity group performs effectively.

Table 1: Steering questions for assessing existing groups.

1. **Purpose:** What is the overall purpose of the market opportunity group (MOG)?
2. **Functions:** What are the specific functions of the MOG?
3. **Membership:** Who are the members of the MOG? Have the attitudes of the members changed? Is there still a good balance between translators, connectors and opinion-makers.
4. **Leadership:** Who leads the MOG? Does it have a strategic vision? How are key decisions made, and by whom?
5. **Coordination:** How is the MOG coordinated and managed? Are the processes formalised or are they informal and fluid?
6. **Finances:** How sound is the financial management of the MOG? How are the MOG's activities funded?
7. **Location:** Where do the members meet? How often? How long does it take members to reach the meeting place?
8. **Perceptions of stakeholders:** What are the members' perceptions of the effectiveness of the MOG? What are the perceptions of other non-member stakeholders? How do the people the MOG represents see the group?
9. **Track record:** What is the MOG's history and track record? What are its biggest success stories and past difficulties?
10. **Current challenges and opportunities:** What are the MOG's current challenges and opportunities?

Annex A – Further information about the three core competencies

Representation and mobilisation

Typically, marginalised actors are very numerous. PMSD can achieve impacts on a large scale because it brings about changes in the system that impact this wide base of actors. It is not feasible however to involve the entire population in participatory activities that bring them together with other market actors. Effective representation is therefore absolutely essential, and is usually done using market opportunity groups (MOGs). Leaders - nominated or elected in some way - must represent the interest of the wider population of marginalised actors.

In our experience, a wide participation of stakeholders in the election of their representatives tends to work better than appointments made by the project or by a small number of people. However, keep in mind that a group of very popular representatives who have been democratically elected may lack fundamental traits and attitudes when it comes to negotiation, communication and mobilisation. If this is the case, the empowerment process will take longer and will be more expensive than if you have the right combination of profiles. A good way of overcoming this apparent dilemma is by allowing people to elect their representatives keeping in mind that for their “team” to be successful it has to have a combination of three types of actors: translators, connectors and opinion-makers.¹

- **Translators:** actors who can translate ideas between different groups of market actors in ways that they can all understand (e.g. farmers and agricultural researchers, policy-makers or buyers)
- **Connectors:** actors who can connect different types of market actors (i.e. they have very good interpersonal relationships and are prone to share their social capital)
- **Opinion-makers:** actors who can influence the choices and investments of their peers.

In practice, most people can display more than one of these abilities; however it can sometimes be difficult to find actors who are very strong in these areas, especially when they are acting outside of their comfort zone (i.e. interacting with unfamiliar actors). The crucial task here is to try to influence the process of selection as much as possible so that the chosen representatives, as a collective, cover all three behaviour types. The key question is: how to do it without losing neutrality, becoming dictatorial or undermining local leaderships?

One concrete way of doing this is by explaining the importance of these three characteristics to the people who will select their representatives and to the leaders of the community. Another way is to gather information from formal and informal leaders of the community about potential candidates, create three groups of preselected, keen candidates under the three categories, and ask people to select representatives from each group. This will produce a group that will have at least one of each type.

For a more detailed explanation of how to promote effective mobilisation, including the scale-up and adoption of new ideas please refer to Step 10 - Communicating Evidence for Uptake.

Facilitators must ensure that the representatives they engage in PMSD have the skills, tools, tendencies and interest to report the lessons learned and action plans agreed back to their peers, connect them with other key actors (e.g. local buyers and service providers) and mobilise them to put the action plans into practice. This will increase the chances that the potential benefits and advantages are realised by the actors they represent.

One concrete way of doing this is by explaining the importance of these three characteristics to the people who will select their representatives and to the leaders of the community. Another way is to gather information from formal and informal leaders of the community about potential candidates, create three groups of preselected, keen candidates under the three categories, and ask people to select representatives from each group. This will produce a group that will have at least one of each type.

¹ This classification was proposed by E. M. Rogers in his seminal book “Diffusion of Innovations” and later popularised by M. Gladwell in “The Tipping Point”.

For a more detailed explanation of how to promote effective mobilisation, including the scale-up and adoption of new ideas please refer to Step 10 - Communicating Evidence for Uptake.

Facilitators must ensure that the representatives they engage in PMSD have the skills, tools, tendencies and interest to report the lessons learned and action plans agreed back to their peers, connect them with other key actors (e.g. local buyers and service providers) and mobilise them to put the action plans into practice. This will increase the chances that the potential benefits and advantages are realised by the actors they represent.

Market literacy

Market literacy skills enable actors to understand the factors that shape the market systems in which they participate. They emphasise the **interconnectedness** and **interdependency** of different actors and, therefore, **the importance of relationships and interactions** between these actors when it comes to making their market system more inclusive, productive and efficient.

Market literacy skills also **emphasise the economic factors that strongly influence behaviour** of market actors. Helping marginalised actors understand why other market actors make the choices that they do is very important. It enables **them to strategize how they can interact with other actors** on terms that will interest them.

Market literacy skills can also cover a large number of other issues. These include household financial management, operations of cooperative and marketing groups, basic geographical awareness of where inputs, services, advice and buyers can be accessed to name a few. Precisely what type of skills and knowledge marginalised actors need will depend on the local context and the selected market system.

Factors that will affect this include the education levels of the marginalised actors, whether the interventions are encouraging producers to enter into entirely new subsectors or market functions, social cohesion and how long the actors have lived in the area. It is important to reflect about these issues and discuss with the marginalised actors themselves to know precisely what skills and information they need.

Dialogue and negotiation

Dialogue and negotiation skills enable marginalised actors to have the confidence to interact with more powerful actors in the market system, and to make these interactions as effective as possible.

There is a vast body of theory and practice out there about dialogue and negotiation approaches, techniques and skills. The following are useful reference materials that you can use:

- The Partnering Initiative/International Business Leaders' Forum: Developing interest based negotiation skills.
- Center for Creative Leadership: Giving effective feedback: The Situation + Behaviour + Impact (SBI) model. (More on this in Step 7: Participatory Planning)

There are, however, some considerations that you need to keep in mind when trying to build dialogue and negotiation skills and attitudes:

- Remember that this is the one set of skills that several groups of market actors will need help with, not just the most marginalised. It is common to see well-off, highly educated and influential market actors in dire straits when it comes to finding common ground with marginalised actors.
- Keep the negotiation focused on feasible business opportunities and measurable reference points (e.g. the price of fish in the nearest market or the costs of fuel to get produce from point A to B). When you see that the discussion is moving towards recrimination, personal aggression and subjective judgements based on preconceptions (e.g. "you are just a greedy firm" or "these poor farmers do not know about business"), help the parties to focus back on the business potential. You could make them aware of the situation, propose a break, invite a new actor to bring new perspectives, etc. You can find more about this in section 2 of Step 7: Participatory Planning

- Allow for several sessions of negotiations (participatory market mapping workshops, one-to-one meetings, round tables, business fairs, etc.) in your budgets and activity plans. There is no magical formula to predict how many iterations or types of meetings you will need. This all depends on your knowledge of the possible market actors and the dynamics of the particular market system you selected (your preliminary investigations in steps 1-3 will be crucial to this). One thing is for sure though: you will almost certainly need to plan for more than one iteration.
- Remember that despite the initial focus on the business aspects of the market development process, these negotiations are permeated by social, institutional and political issues. In Nepal, for example, Practical Action had to invite representatives of the main political parties to the market mapping workshops because of the tensions and mistrust that still remain in the country around social gatherings after many years of civil conflict.
- The objective is to help the actors to focus – initially on the things that can bring them together. These things are normally linked to business opportunities that have the potential to benefit all or most of the parties involved in the negotiations.
- Regarding **private** market actors, dialogue and negotiation skills must give marginalised actors the basic, minimum abilities and attitudes to use **temporary and quick interactions** with buyers, input providers and service providers to build **long-term business relationships** based on trust, quality and timeliness of delivery.
- Regarding **public** market actors, dialogue and interactions skills must give marginalised actors the basic, minimum abilities and attitudes to **understand the policies and public institutions** that affect their possibilities of engaging with private market actors. These skills must also build their **confidence and organisational capabilities** to engage with policy-makers and politicians who will be able to make a difference in the enabling environment.