Sustainable Development Goals and Savings Groups
Designing for Impact Beyond Financial Inclusion

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SMDP/Plan International Webinar Series
Savings Groups and Beyond Inclusion, Equity and Transformation
How would you rate your current understanding of the SDGs?

Use the polling tool to choose which option below best represents you:

a) I’m not sure what the ‘SDGs’ are
b) I’ve heard of them, but not much more
c) I’m fairly confident with the SDGs, but could know more
d) I’ve spoken on a panel/given a presentation on the SDGs
17 SDGs

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-Being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals
MDGs:
Fixing socio-economic problems in the global south

achieving greater equality and social justice across the globe

- **Universal** rather than for developing countries
- **Transformative**: people and planet-centered, human rights-based, gender-sensitive, sustainable development
- **Comprehensive** – covering issues related to all human rights, including social, economic, civil and political rights
- **Inclusive** - leave no-one behind, envisaging “a world of universal respect for equality and non-discrimination” between and within countries, including gender equality
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MDG/SDG Comparison:
Financial services and Inclusion

In the MDGs:
NO explicit mention of access to financial services or its connection to poverty reduction despite commitment to:

Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1.25 a day

Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people

In the SDGs:
‘Ensure all men and women... have equal rights to economic resources... and financial services including microfinance.’ (1.4)

‘Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.’ (8.3)

Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all (8.10)

Importance of secure and equal financial services for women, marginalised groups, farmers (linked to gender equality goal 5 and hunger goal 2). Also linked to sustainable industrialisation (goal 9).
Para 4: ‘As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.’
Now what?

Implementation

‘Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. Each government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies.’

Monitoring

‘A robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework will make a vital contribution to implementation and will help countries to maximize and track progress in implementing this Agenda in order to ensure that no one is left behind.’
Transforming Savings Groups

...from a development methodology improving savings towards a tool for increasing social equality?
MDGs: Fixing socio-economic problems in the global south

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Have You Been Involved In Designing Savings Groups Programs?

Use the polling tool to choose which option below best represents you:

a) Yes
b) No
What Was The Primary Goal Of Your Savings Group Project?

Use the polling tool to choose which option below best represents you:

a) Increase Family Savings and Income Raising Potential
b) Increase Family Investment in Social Services
   (Ex: Health, Education)
c) Promote Social Norm Change
   (Ex: Gender Equality)
d) Mobilize Members for Social Change
   (Ex: Community Development)
Do Savings Groups contribute to greater (gender) equality and achievement of human rights?

Not automatically!

• SGs generally do:
  • Enable poor and vulnerable populations to increase savings and income generating potential and become more resilient to economic shock
  • Strengthen financial and economic skills of members
  • Strengthen trust and solidarity amongst members
  • Tend to increase family/women’s investments in health and education

• Evidence shows that SGs might:
  • or might not change existing power relations within couples and families
  • Increase the risk for Gender Based Violence
  • Strengthen male power position by allowing them to exercise authority over women’s savings
  • Create double burdens for women
  • Be used as a platform for broader social change initiated by members
  • Transform into institutions that influence broader political agendas and challenge inequality

To make Savings groups work for social justice and greater equality, project design should start applying a human rights based approach to programming.
A paradigm shift for designing Savings Groups Initiatives

Human Rights Based Approach:

Goals:
• Realization of Human Rights

Principles*:
• Equality and non-discrimination
• Participation and inclusion
• Accountability and rule of law

Outcomes:
• Increased capacity of rights holders to claim rights and duty bearers to fulfil obligations

Critical Questions for Savings Groups design

Whose rights are at stake?

Which rights are at stake and what are the root-causes for their non-realization?

How do we believe SGs will help to contribute to the realization of these rights?

Who participates, who doesn’t, and why?

Who is meant to reap the benefits of the initiative? And what needs to be done to ensure that this is happening?

Who has a say in project design and decision-making?

How will the initiative strengthen capabilities of and relationships between rights holders and duty bearers?

*Other human rights principles are: Universality and inalienability; Indivisibility; Interdependence and Inter-relatedness
Savings and Internal Lending Communities + Gender Transformative Approach Pilot Project, Zambia

**Constraints**
- SILC tends to target women as beneficiaries.
- Yet norms & power relations that present obstacles to achieving sustainable, social & economic empowerment not addressed.
- Men not engaged to help support & participate in group activities.
- Adverse outcomes & limitations, e.g.,
  - Women can become overburdened performing both entrepreneurial & domestic duties.
  - Women’s control over loans not guaranteed.
  - Men can feel resentment or powerlessness due to their wives’ increasing economic independence, resulting in heightened tensions/violence.

**Strengthening the SILC methodology with a GTA**
- Adopt a gender transformative approach to microfinance by engaging men & women in participatory sessions that aim to transform harmful norms & power relations.
- Develop the capacities of SILC facilitators to integrate gender transformative (GT) sessions during SILC group meetings.
- Develop & implement a GT manual to help guide facilitation of the GT sessions.
- Employ mixed-methodology to M&E for evidence & learning purposes.

**Improved gender relations and functioning of SILC groups**
- SILC group members better understand the social & gender constraints that prohibit their groups from adequately functioning.
- Gender relations begin to improve within & outside SILC groups, & more importantly within homes.
- Increased savings & lending opportunities given men’s support (both economic & domestic).
- Increased investments in productive resources & sustainable business activities.
- Strengthened gender capacities of SILC facilitators.

**Development Impact**
- Improved gender relations within & outside the home.
- More investments in productive activities, thereby reducing poverty levels.
- SILC groups regarded as important entry points for other government & non-government development activities.
- Formal microfinance institutions view SILC groups as important places to invest & grow.

**A theory of change for the savings and internal lending communities + gender transformative approach (SILC+GTA) pilot project**
Early Evidence of Success
Improving Savings Groups in Zambia with a Gender Transformative Approach

- Increased sharing of responsibilities including child care
- Decreasing workload for some women due to sharing work with husbands and other family members resulting in more time to attend SILC meetings
- Increased knowledge and knowledge sharing within SILC groups
- Increased cooperation around decision making within families resulting in better management of income and sound decision-making on investments
- Increased interest in development activities
- Increased show of respect amongst community members
- In some households recognition of the importance of gender